A social perspective of knowledge-based innovation: mobility and aggregation

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Important Dates
- Submission of abstracts: June 30, 2018
- Feedback to authors: July 31, 2018
- Submission of full papers deadline: November 30, 2018
- Feedback from first-round reviews: February 28, 2019
- Deadline for re-submission of papers: April 30, 2019
- Feedback from second-round reviews (if required): May 31, 2019
- Final manuscripts due: July 31, 2019

Background
The debate around the relationship between knowledge and innovation, seen as key drivers of economic growth, has received a great deal of attention by many scholars coming from different disciplines and it continues to be at the forefront of the academic research. Within this domain, this special section aims to contribute to such body of knowledge by providing a social perspective on the dynamics of knowledge generation and transfer. In particular, two phenomena that have important consequences for the society would be considered: the migration flows that have characterized the last few decades (Arslan et al., 2014) and the agglomeration of innovative activities (Fujita and Thisse, 2013).

Regarding the former, a recent literature review (Lissoni, 2017) shows that there is a booming, despite fragmented, literature dealing with the contribution of migration to innovation thanks to the diffusion of scientific and technical knowledge, under the form of trade secrets, private information, know-how or practical skills (Inzelt, 2008; Hoisl, 2009). The downside of this phenomenon could be the view of high-skilled out-migration as “brain drain”, which, however, is increasingly questioned by raising the chance to have access to the destination countries’ knowledge, either through social networks, temporary or return migration, and foreign direct investments (FDIs) (Clemens, 2015; Borjas and Doran 2012; Murakami, 2014).

Concerning the second phenomenon, there is general agreement that the agglomeration of economic activities is essential to the understanding of local growth, because larger markets allow for more efficient sharing of common facilities, foster learning and provide better job-matching opportunities (Duranton and Puga, 2004; Lengyel and Eriksson, 2017). In this context, the role of regions and metropolitan areas assumes particular relevance (Belitski and Delai, 2016; Audretsch and Belitski, 2016). Following Jaffe et al. (1993), an increasing body of literature has investigated the patterns of knowledge externalities by looking at the citation networks of scientific articles and patent documents. In many cases, the context of investigation are innovation networks or alliances, based on the evidence that the quantity and quality of innovation are increasingly the result of collaborative work among scientists, inventors, and organizations (Powell and
Grodal 2005; Singh and Fleming 2010). This is more so when connecting and blending heterogeneous sources of knowledge, as different regions or cultures, from which novel combinations are more likely to arise and generate radical innovations (Bell and Zaheer, 2007; Fleming, 2001).

At the intersection of these phenomena is the consideration that absorptive capacity is required to understand and transform flows of external knowledge, essential for innovation production and growth both at the firm and regional level (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990; Miguélez and Moreno, 2015). Indeed, the variety of a knowledge base is a distinctive property of regional innovation systems: it contributes to the innovative capabilities of local firms and aggregated regional economic growth (Jacobs, 1969; Asheim and Coenen, 2005).

Despite the research around the topic of knowledge flows has largely focused on the conditions favouring them, mainly looking at the characteristics (e.g. co-location, common language) of firms and their interdependencies (e.g. existence of alliances, MNC), recently the literature has enlarged its scope of investigation. Some articles have started to study whether the administrative barriers to mobility influence the direction and magnitude of international knowledge flows (e.g. Orazbayev, 2017; Czaika and Haas, 2016; Appelt et al., 2015), but this topic is still in its infancy.

On such grounds, this Special Section aims to expand on this research, and calls for articles providing a social perspective on knowledge creation and transfer, including topics as:

- Migration and innovative activities
- Mobility of workers as a channel of knowledge and technology transfer
- Human and firm networks as sources of innovative activities
- The role of regional and urban agglomeration in the generation of knowledge
- Regional absorptive capacity
- The impact of Universities and local actors on knowledge and technology transfer

**Keywords**: Knowledge-based innovation; regional studies; migration; agglomeration; regional absorptive capacity

**Information and questions**

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References


