

Heterogeneity in the Related Variety literature: A Meta-Analysis

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Project description

Since the seminal article of Frenken, Van Oort and Verburg (2007), a large number of studies has appeared applying their concept of related variety (RV) to different settings. Related variety means the firms in a region are not all specialized in the same sector, but they are not completely unrelated either. Thus, this concept bridges the gap between the agglomeration externalities classified as Marshallian (pure specialization) and those along the lines of Jane Jacobs (diversity) – a distinction that was first made by Glaeser et al. (1992). Based on the Glaeser paper, the broad field of regional sciences has found it very difficult to close the debate, even though there have been quite a few attempts to do so (De Groot, Poot & Smit, 2015; Caragliu, De Dominicis & de Groot, 2016; Beaudry & Schiffauerova, 2009; van der Panne & van Beers, 2006).

Recently, a review paper of the RV literature was published (Content & Frenken, 2016), covering 21 studies, most of which feature multiple estimation results. This warrants further quantitative analysis, and meta-analysis offers useful tools to do so. It analyses the impact different factors have on the coefficients found for RV. Thus, a meta-analytic study typically first looks at the object studied, including location and timing – of course the context matters for the results found. A particularly promising avenue is to look at the effect of varying population densities, of the relative wealth of the areas studied, and of the types of industries considered. Secondly, meta-analysis will always consider characteristics of the method of the study, such as the use of control variables and econometric techniques. Thirdly, a meta-analysis can test for so-called publication bias, where unfortunately the timing of the article determines whether it is published or not (Stanley, 2005). To summarize, a meta-analysis thus analyses under which circumstances higher or lower effects are likely to be found.

In this project, we construct the dataset for such a meta-analysis, based on the literature review of Content & Frenken (2016). The student assistant will gather and code the data from the individual papers. The existing corpus of papers will be updated to reflect the latest state of the literature. A codebook will then be set up, and the data gathered.

Writing and publishing a full paper falls outside the current application. If their time allows, Jeroen Content (now at PBL) and Koen Frenken (at the Copernicus institute within our Faculty) will co-author that paper; if the research assistant proves to be of excellent quality, s/he will of course also be invited to join.

Job requirements

Literature searching skills (snowball method); otherwise no special special methodological skills needed.