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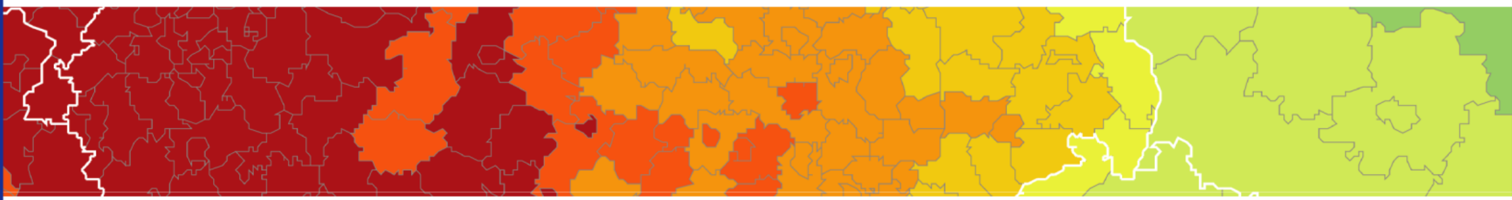
Inspire policy making by territorial evidence



The Geography of New Employment Dynamics in Europe

Applied Research

Annex to Chapter 6
Case study methodology

Final Version
09.03.2018

This applied research activity is conducted within the framework of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme, partly financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

The ESPON EGTC is the Single Beneficiary of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme. The Single Operation within the programme is implemented by the ESPON EGTC and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the EU Member States and the Partner States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

Authors

Simone Busetti, Serena Drufuca, Erica Melloni, Monica Patrizio, Manuela Samek Lodovici (project leader), Cristina Vasilescu, IRS- Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale (IT)
Lucia Barbone, Stefan Speckesser, Kari Hadjivassiliou, Rosa Marvell, Chiara Manzoni, Martha Green, Institute for Employment Studies (UK)
Andreas Brück, Felicitas Hillmann, Leibniz IRS / TU Berlin (DE)
Johannes Gajewski, Leibniz IRS (DE)
Ewa Ślęzak, Cracow University of Economics (PL)

Advisory Group

Project Support Team: Adam Dennett (UCL, London, UK); Bruno Dente (Politecnico Milano, IT); Claudio Lucifora (Università Cattolica, Milano, IT), Felicitas Hillmann (Leibniz IRS / TU Berlin DE)

Technical Support

Karen Patient, Institute for Employment Studies (UK)

Acknowledgements

Sophie Hedges, Andreina Naddeo, Institute for Employment Studies (UK)

The Geography of New Employment Dynamics in Europe

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1 Objectives of case studies

Case studies aim to provide data and lessons for the development of innovative place-based strategies to support European regions seeking to exploit their territorial diversity and assets for smart specialisation. In particular, the case studies contribute to enriching the findings obtained in Task 2 with regards to two main issues**.** The first is the relation between knowledge economy, new patterns of employment creation, labour mobility and territorial disparities. The second refers to the effectiveness of the adopted policy instruments, and in particular of Cohesion Policy tools, by bringing context variables into the picture, and ascertaining the achievements recorded.

In order to provide evidence on the above-mentioned issues, the case study analysis focuses on:

- the socio-economic and institutional features influencing the KE businesses' location preferences and the mobility patterns of (young) knowledge workers;
- the contribution of the adopted policy strategies, with a particular focus on Cohesion Policy, and of their delivery mechanisms, to the knowledge economy;
- the main mechanisms at work ensuring the effectiveness of the analysed policy strategies and the conditions for transferability.

2 Selection of case studies

Case studies have been selected using a double-step procedure:

- Firstly a cluster analysis has been carried out using the following criteria:
  - Labour migration trends (providing areas, significantly impacted by out-migration, and "attracting" areas, able to have increased their active population over the years);
  - Geographical distribution: location (North, South, Central and Eastern EU MS); old and new MS, given the wide differences between Old and New Member States in terms of knowledge economy and (youth) migration patterns;
  - Urban and Rural regional patterns, based on the regional typologies developed by DG Agriculture and Rural Development, the Joint Research Centre and DG Regio based on a variation on the OECD methodology[1] .
  - Intensity of the Cohesion support, in terms of ESI Funds (ESF, ERDF and CF) allocated to the priority themes related to the KE.
- Secondly, a literature review of EU/national literature on knowledge economy and migration has been carried out. The following main issues have been tackled: the level of development of knowledge economy in the region; evidence of purposive strategies (Cohesion based, or not) adopted to support the KE and to re-capture or to attract high skilled human capital; evidence (perceptions or data) on the contribution of KE to changes in mobility trends and spill-over effects on the local economy.

The selected case studies are: the Abruzzo region in Italy; the Malopolska region in Poland; the North-East region in Romania; the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern region and the Berlin region in Germany, and the London region in the UK.

The six case studies include exemplar cases of both 'sending regions' (North-East Region in Romania; Abruzzo region in Italy; the Malopolska region in Poland; Mecklenburg- Vorpommern region in Germany) towards other territorial areas and 'receivin regions' (Berlin and London regions).

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[1] OECD (2013), Rural-Urban Partnerships: An Integrated Approach to Economic Development, http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/urban-rural-and-regional-development/rural-urban-partnerships_9789264204812-en#.V5sXGOTr1PY

3 Methodological approach

In investigating the selected case studies, we use the **Process Tracing (PT) methodology**[2] (Beach and Pedersen 2013; Bennett and Checkel, 2015).

Process tracing is a single-case method (amenable to be combined with other methods in mixed-method designs) aimed at drawing within-case inferences on the causal process – causal chains and causal mechanisms – that leads from a cause to the outcome of interest (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994).

As all case study methods, process tracing can help in theory building insofar it contributes to formulate a causal model of how a certain outcome is produced. It is particular useful to investigate special outcomes (such as unique events or outliers) and all those phenomena where multi-case analysis is impracticable.

In sum, PT research questions do not aim at testing regularities or measuring effects (that would be impossible for a single case study, since by definition you have no variation), but processes and causality. In other words, appropriate PT research questions are neither *if* or *how much* questions, but *how* and *why* (e.g. not if decentralisation produces greater citizens' participation – or by how much, but how and why decentralisation can produce an increase in participation).

This methodology requires users to be explicit about what theory is being tested, possibly by formalising the theory into a clear representation of a causal chain (Gerring, 2007; Waldner, 2015; Bennett and Checkel, 2015; Beach and Pedersen, 2013). PT either starts with a well-defined hypothesis to be tested (theory-testing PT) or with outcomes and empirical data to be made sense of (theory-building PT). Even when the case study is aimed at explaining a single outcome and has no ambition to reach a validity beyond that case (explaining-outcome PT), it goes looking for a sufficient explanation for that outcome.

By asking users to formulate a solid theory, PT solves some long-standing problems of the case study methods, such as the ambiguity of causal claims, the indeterminacy of results, the lack of internal validity, and the difficulty of external check and replication (Siggelkow, 2007). It does so mainly by reference to two sets of recommendations that make up the remainder of this

[2] Main references: Beach, Derek and Rasmus Brun Pedersen. 2013. Process-Tracing Methods. Foundations and Guidelines. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Bennett, Andrew, and Jeffrey T. Checkel, eds. 2015. Process Tracing. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Brady, Henry E., and David Collier, eds. Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010. Collier, David. 2011. "Understanding Process Tracing." Political Science and Politics, 44(4): 823-830. Gerring, John. 2007. Case Study Research: Principles and Practices. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. King, Gary, Keohane, Robert O., & Verba, Sidney. 1994. Designing social inquiry: Scientific inference in qualitative research. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Siggelkow, icolaj. 2007. "Persuasion with case studies." Academy of Management Journal 50.1: 20-24. Van Evera, Stephen. 1997. Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Waldner, David. 2015. "What Makes Process Tracing Good? Causal Mechanisms, Causal Inference, and the Completeness Standard in Comparative Politics." In Process Tracing, edited by Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel., 126-152. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Yin, Robert. 1994. Case study research: Design and methods. Beverly Hills.

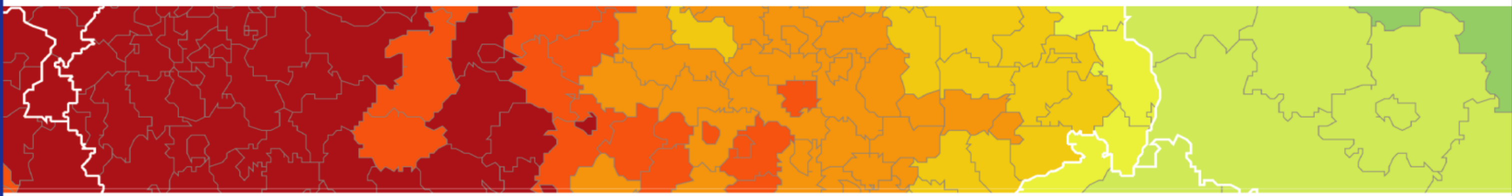
guide: a) how to formulate hypotheses and b) how to use observations as evidence. reduces the opacity of qualitative studies in appraising case study evidence.

On the basis of the PT approach, the case studies have entailed the following steps:

- *Formulating the hypotheses*. Following the literature review, the identified European trends, the review of main policy interventions, and the results of investigating the regional contexts, the research group has formulated for each case study a set of hypotheses to be tested. Such hypotheses concern the effects of national or regional policies to support the growth or development of knowledge economy at local level and reverse emigration.
- *Elaborating empirical tests*. Prior to the collection of evidence, the research group has elaborated empirical tests, identifying which kind of evidence could have tested hypotheses (expected results to be found in order to verify the hypotheses).
- *Drafting the interview guidelines*. Starting with the empirical tests, the research group has drafted an interview template for each target group (policy makers, stakeholders, migrants, etc).
- *Collecting evidence*. Key informants – numbering between five and ten – have been selected for interview. Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with the relevant stakeholders for the analysis, such as policy makers, regional and other administrations' staff in charge of designing and implementing relevant policies or programmes, Cohesion Policy managing authorities, experts, independent evaluators, economic (i.e. business associations in the KE field, relevant enterprises in the KE field) and social actors (i.e. associations of migrants outside and in the analysed region, associations of expats and Erasmus students etc.).

  The semi-structured character of interviews has allowed the team to test the hypotheses, derive key lessons, and identify previously unexplored causal factors.
- *Refining the causal model*. The empirical material has served both to test the hypotheses and to redraft and correct them in order to include new causal factors possibly emerged through the fieldwork.
- *Elaborating the case study report*, according to the common template.

Prior to the case study analysis, the core team drafted a set of guidelines, discussed with case study experts during online briefings. Furthermore, a pilot case study has been drafted (Abruzzo region) in order to guide country experts in the case study analysis.



ESPON 2020 – More information

ESPON EGTC
4 rue Erasme, L-1468 Luxembourg - Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Phone: +352 20 600 280
Email: info@espon.eu
www.espon.eu, [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#)

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