

Dynamic perspectives on knowledge exchange configurations in innovation processes. Practices from Eastern Germany and Estonia

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Background

Within the debate on economic peripheralisation, innovation activities take on a focal role: a lack of innovation is considered an essential driver of peripheralisation processes, fueling regional disparities. Hence, innovations are deemed a prime mechanism for responding to peripheralisation and for inducing endogenous regional change. However, places affected by peripheralisation processes only receive minor attention within innovation debates, due to a bias in policy and academic discourses towards highly dynamic localities and high-tech industries.

Which practices do businesses in regions affected by peripheralisation processes adopt in order to generate innovations?

Objective is to shed light...

- on how innovations come into being in regions perceived as peripheries (context);
- on how innovations evolve throughout time and space (dynamics);
- on practices in innovation processes by which actors circumvent potential weaknesses of their environment;

Theoretical framework

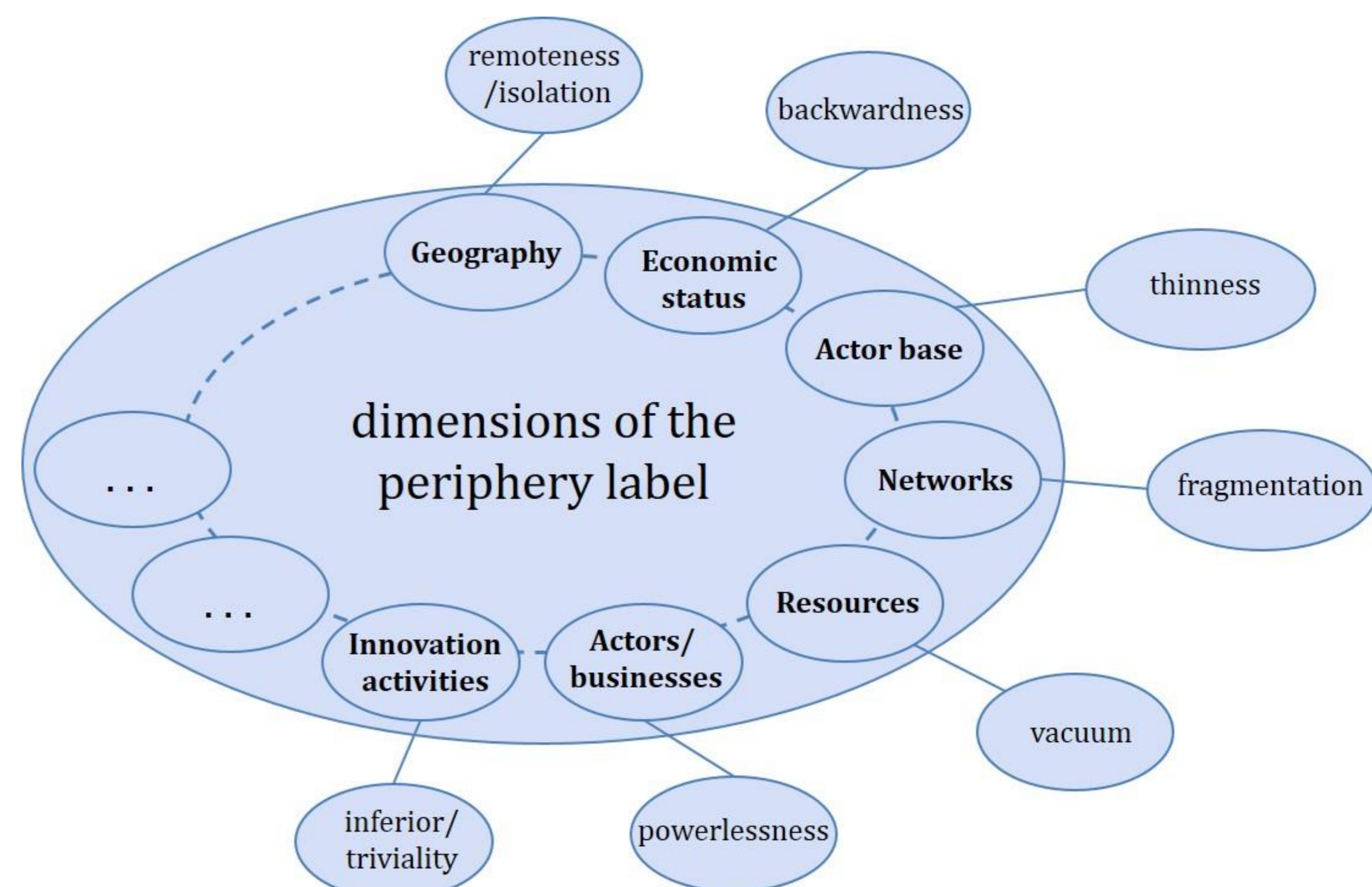
- innovation viewed as knowledge-based, interactive and evolutionary organisational transformation processes;
- closeness & distance as a central conceptual pair in economic geography; spatial & relational proximities seen as factors explaining why actors connect, exchange knowledge and learning is facilitated;

Simmie (2005) identifies 'explanations of how to generate innovation in places where it is not already part of the economic landscape' as a pressing theoretical and practical concern.

Indications from initial interviews

- processes of economic transition ('shock') as stimulus for innovation;
- widening scope of the innovation process over time, e.g. terms of actor composition and geography;
- substantive function of trade fairs (temporary co-presence) within the innovation process;

Picture: the periphery label in economic geography and innovation studies



Methodological approach

Actor-centred approach and micro-level unit of analysis at the process level;

Innovation biographies: ex-post reconstruction of innovation processes:

- Semi-structured (narrative) interviews with business representatives;
- Network analysis (ego-centred, innovation process as central node); triangulation

