



Policy issues for learning regions

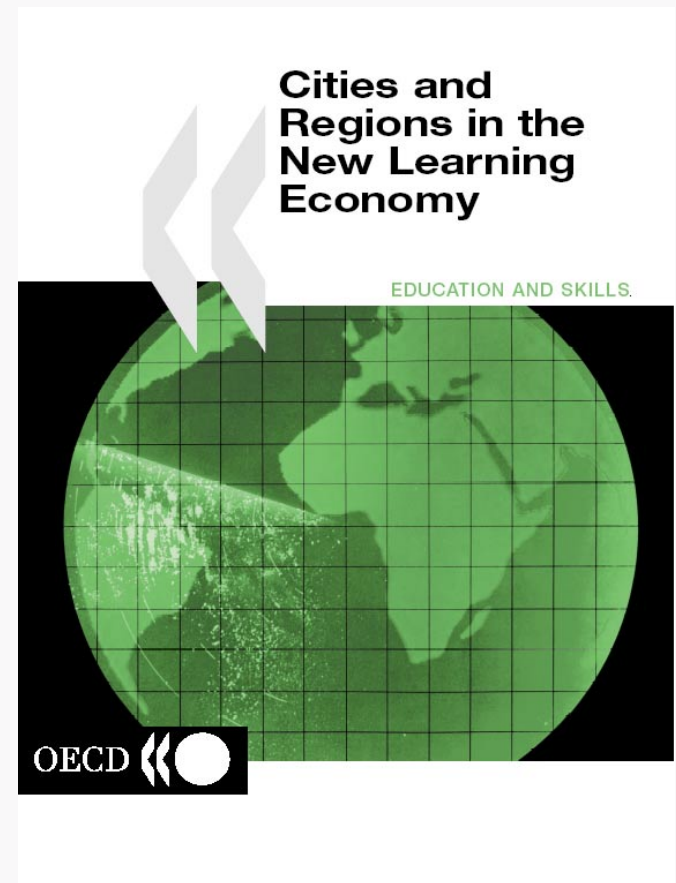
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Cities and regions in the learning economy

- ▶ **Approach: Regional systems of innovation**
- ▶ **Empirical analysis**
 - **Statistical: 180 EU regions**
 - **5 case studies**
- ▶ **Policy principles to foster learning cities and regions**





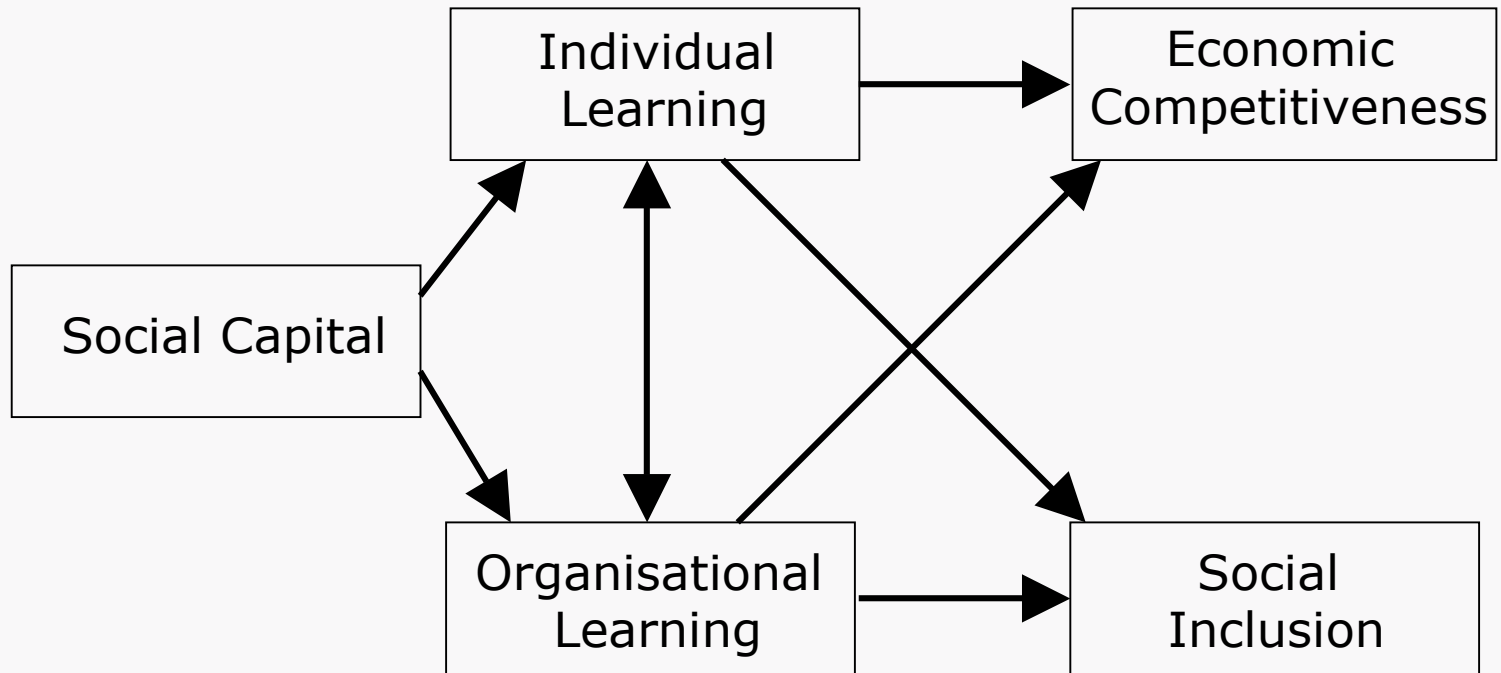
What is a learning region?

- ▶ A model towards which regions need to progress in order to respond more effectively to the knowledge economy
- ▶ The learning region is characterised by regional institutions, which facilitate individual and organisational learning through the co-ordination of flexible networks of economic and political agents

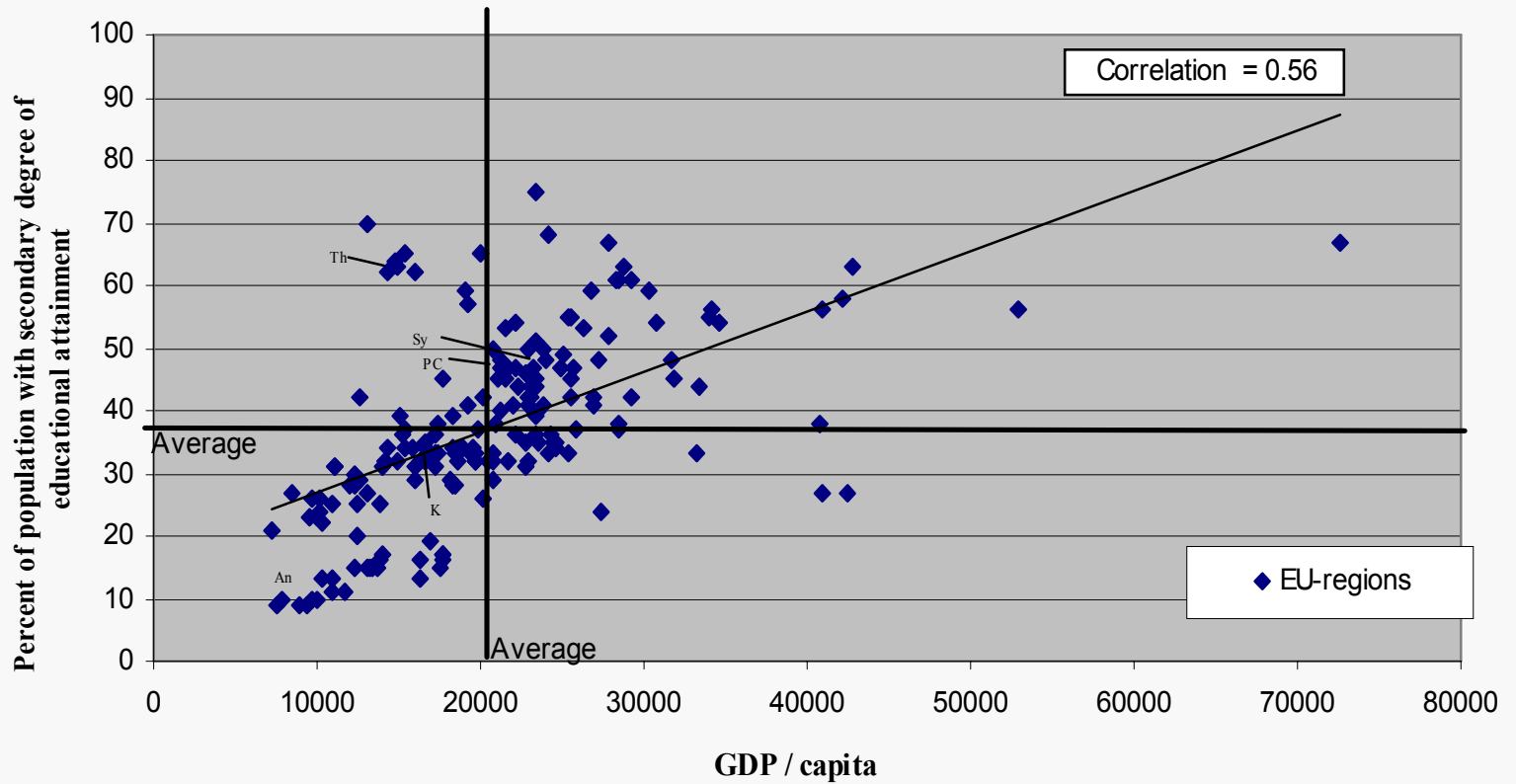




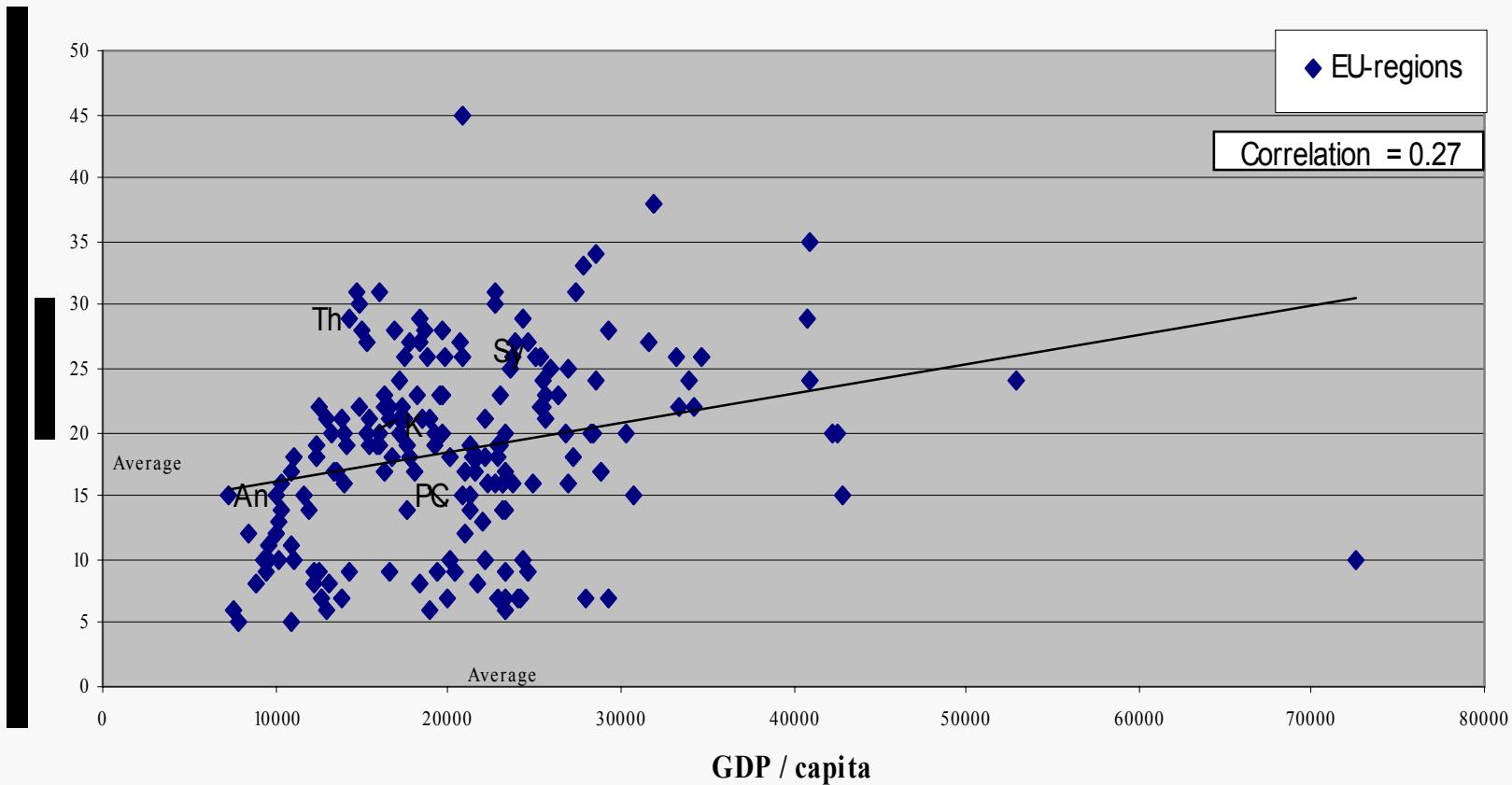
What is a learning region?



Secondary educational attainment and economic performance



Tertiary educational attainment and economic performance





Major results

- ▶ The use of individual learning in firms matters more for regional performance than individual learning *per se*. Growth-inducing firms are not always ‘high-tech’, and the skills that contribute to organisational learning are often those obtained through secondary-level rather than tertiary-level education.
- ▶ Learning is an interactive, organic process, too complex to be completely designed by firm managers or policy-makers. In fact, a central role for regional policy-makers seems to be to remedy ‘path-dependency’: unlearning particular practices and bodies of knowledge that prevent other learning processes from spreading through the region.





Major results

- ▶ Attempts to focus learning on particular areas or levels of a regional economy may be beneficial, but may neglect needed co-ordination with other areas or levels. If regional economic performance is to be based on learning, co-ordination at individual, firm and regional levels is crucial.
- ▶ If improvements in individual learning or changes in public research or industry services are to have a positive impact on organisational learning in firms, they need to be closely co-ordinated with the regional industry structure.
- ▶ For policy-makers, developing a regional learning policy demands a fine balance between focused, interventionist, organisational and institutional design and support and more general infrastructure policy, in order to facilitate bottom-up learning processes between networks of regional economic and social agents.





Some policy principles

Inputs to the learning process

1. ensure that high-quality and well-resourced educational provision is in place, on which effective individual learning throughout people's lives can be developed
2. co-ordinate carefully the supply of skilled and knowledgeable individuals through education and training and the demand for them within the regional economy, so that the full benefits of individual learning may be reaped through its effects on organisational learning
3. establish appropriate framework conditions for the improvement of organisational learning, both within firms and between firms and other organisations in networks of interaction, and demonstrate to firms the benefits of these forms of learning





Some policy principles

Mechanisms of the learning process

4. pay close attention to mechanisms for co-ordinating policies across what have generally been separate departmental responsibilities (for industrial development, R&D, science and technology, education and training and so forth) and between different levels of governance (regional, national and supra-national)
5. develop strategies to foster appropriate forms of social capital as a key mechanism in promoting more effective organisational learning and innovation
6. ensure that the regional strategy for learning and innovation is accorded legitimacy by the population of the region to be transformed





Learning and e-learning regions

A possible application?

- ▶ If regional economic performance is to be based on e-learning, co-ordination at individual, firm and regional levels is crucial.
 - Implies a strong ICT infrastructure (access, support, etc.)
 - ICT skills in the population (acquired in local schools?)
- ▶ E-learning might help co-ordinate the supply of skilled and knowledgeable individuals and the demand for them within the regional economy for it allows to enrol beyond regional borders
 - Widen possible regional access while possibly limiting the regional cost of the strategy
 - Usually requires face-to-face tutorial infrastructure





Learning and e-learning regions

A possible application?

- ▶ E-learning regional policies should follow the mechanisms principles:
 - develop strategies to foster social capital promoting more effective e-learning
 - ensure that the regional strategy for e-learning is accorded legitimacy by the population of the region

- ▶ Regions have generally limited capacity (primary and secondary education)





The potential gains of e-learning are high...

- ▶ help meet the huge demand for education
- ▶ help meet the huge demand for flexible lifelong learning
- ▶ Enhance the cost-effectiveness of learning
- ▶ Increase learners' choice
- ▶ Improve learning outcomes
- ▶ Improve innovation in learning





...but difficult to assess

The future of e-learning: challenges and opportunities

- ▶ Some evidence of success in corporate training
- ▶ Costs-benefits analysis of e-learning at school/university level: more analysis needed.
- ▶ Pedagogical issues: is mixed-mode delivery the way forward?
- ▶ Quality assurance and recognition





Other related OECD work

- ▶ E-Learning: The Partnership challenge (2001)
- ▶ Learning to change: ICT in schools (2001)
- ▶ Information and Communication Technologies and Rural Development (2001)
- ▶ The e-government imperative (2003)
- ▶ Etc.





Ongoing related OECD/CERI projects

- ▶ International Quality Assurance: a mapping exercise
- ▶ E-learning Case Studies in Post-secondary Education and Training
- ▶ Cross-border education and trade





Thank you

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