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Regional Labour Markets in Germany: Statistical Analysis of Spatio-Temporal Disparities and Network Structures

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Thesis Summary

In recent years, researchers and policy makers have shown a rising interest in the study and interpretation of socio-economic processes at the meso- or regional level. From that perspective, the region is often considered to be the ‘place of action’, where micro-behaviour and macro-outcomes come together.

The present study offers a novel statistical analysis of the development of regional labour markets in Germany. The objective of the dissertation is to analyse their patterns and evolution, as well as the associated spatial disparities. In particular, Germany – with its large number of small geographical units (NUTS-3 districts in EU terminology) and complex socio-economic ramifications emerging from the reunification of 1990 – is a textbook case for such spatial-economic analyses.

The first empirical part of the study concerns the spatio-temporal analysis of regional labour market aggregates. The focus is on two main issues: (a) the forecast of regional employment variations; and (b) the analysis of unemployment differentials in the presence of spatial autocorrelation. The second empirical part concerns the analysis of the diversification of journey-to-work trips. In particular, we focus on the investigation of the commuting flows’ heterogeneity/homogeneity and of the related level of ‘openness’ of regions. The results draw a fairly consistent picture of German regional labour markets and their hierarchies, in which spatial heterogeneity is persistent in time, and can be explained only in part by recent socio-economic trends or regional interactions.