

1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of the relations between scientific and technological research and the industries is nowadays undeniable. Such relations are important both for the economic growth and for the development of research activities in public bodies. This connection has become tighter also thanks to specific initiatives from the policy makers and the public bodies. Such initiatives are promoted in order to overcome the classic “market failure” of the allocation of resources to research activities. One of the ways exploited to this end is enabling firms to access more easily the scientific and technological knowledge produced in research institutions.

The present work exploits the outcome of one of these initiatives to clarify a specific topic related to Knowledge transfer. The database underlying this work derives in fact from the surveys realized in the context of PRO.TE.INN., an “embodied Knowledge transfer” program. This program did finance grants for young persons in possess of a university degree. Grantees did spend their working time between a firm and a research center, thus working as “carriers” of knowledge between the two entities. One of the targets of the surveys has been the measure of the efficiency in terms of Knowledge transfer. The analysis of these data, once put in the context of the initiative, may prove helpful in shedding light on the characters of how persons, in possession of a specific body of knowledge and of interpersonal relations, can be able to act as media to transfer knowledge between a research lab and a firm.

A further element of interest towards the specific case is the geographical context

where the knowledge transfer program took place. In fact the initiative was limited to an Italian Province, that is, a partition of a Region: the Province of Torino, in the Region of Piedmont, northwestern Italy. The Council of the Province was the organizer and main sponsor of the initiative. Administrative subdivisions of Regions are not the usual stakeholders in charge of such industrial support initiatives. This makes the specific case even more relevant in its peculiarity.

The following of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 contains the theoretical framework and literature overview. Section 3 presents the context of industry and research of the Province of Torino, where the project took place. Then section 4 outlines the “Knowledge transfer” project that generated the database exploited in the present work. Subsequently, section 5 describes the experimental activity and its results. Sixth and last section contains the conclusions and learned lessons.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE OVERVIEW

Among the theoretical approaches underlying the present contribution, the farthest in time to be acknowledged goes back to the theory of Absorptive capacity of Cohen & Levinthal (1989; 1990). While the absorptive capacity of involved firms is not measured in the present article, its approach does benefit of the statements of Cohen & Levinthal affirming that “the exercise of absorptive capacity represents a sort of learning that differs from learning-by-doing [...] with absorptive capacity a firm may acquire outside knowledge that will permit it to do something quite different” (1989, p. 570). Absorptive capacity is thus a sort of