

150 YEARS OF THE GEOGRAPHY OF INNOVATION*

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ABSTRACT

Innovation has long been seen as central to long-term regional growth. Due to the absence of comprehensive data on the geography of innovation covering long time periods, quantifying long-term innovation-development linkages has been challenging. We use newly available patent data from the United States coded to consistent geographies over 150 years to document changing patterns in the geography of innovation. Our analysis reveals three findings. First, the high levels of spatial concentration of innovation today are similar to those in the decades after the Civil War. Second, changes in share of the top 1% locations' innovation drive national spatial concentration trends after 1945. Third, regional innovation leadership displays persistence, but the strength of persistence appears to have fallen over time. We relate our analysis recent findings in the literature and suggest promising avenues for future inquiry.

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