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## On the Spatial Diffusion of Knowledge by Universities Located in Small and Medium Sized Towns

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### ABSTRACT

Many studies, provided by diverse authors and institutions, demonstrate that, at a territorial level, development is directly related to the level of education and R & D. Territories with higher development levels are, generally, those that have a higher level of education and R & D. The relationship between the acquisition of knowledge and institutional education is therefore decisive. In this area, the role of universities is fundamental. The retention of university graduates is one of the main ways that the cities and the regions can adopt to retain those endowed with higher propensity to innovation, enterprise spirit and management capacity. Given that higher education institutions, in general, and universities, in particular, are obviously crucial in the process of knowledge increase, it becomes important to analyse how can these institutions act as ways of spatial diffusion of knowledge given that their graduates may migrate to other regions of the country (or for another country). The alleged increased probability of this migration to occur when the university is located in a small or medium sized town makes that analysis also interesting from the viewpoint of the development role that this kind of cities can perform, not only in the adjacent rural areas, but also across all the urban areas of the territory. The focus of our work consists in this analysis, which complements a theoretical approach with an empirical part based upon the results that can be observed for the influence of one university located in a small/medium sized town (the University of Évora) in the spatial diffusion of knowledge through its graduates.

### KEYWORDS

Human Capital, Small Towns, Spatial Diffusion of Knowledge, Universities

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