



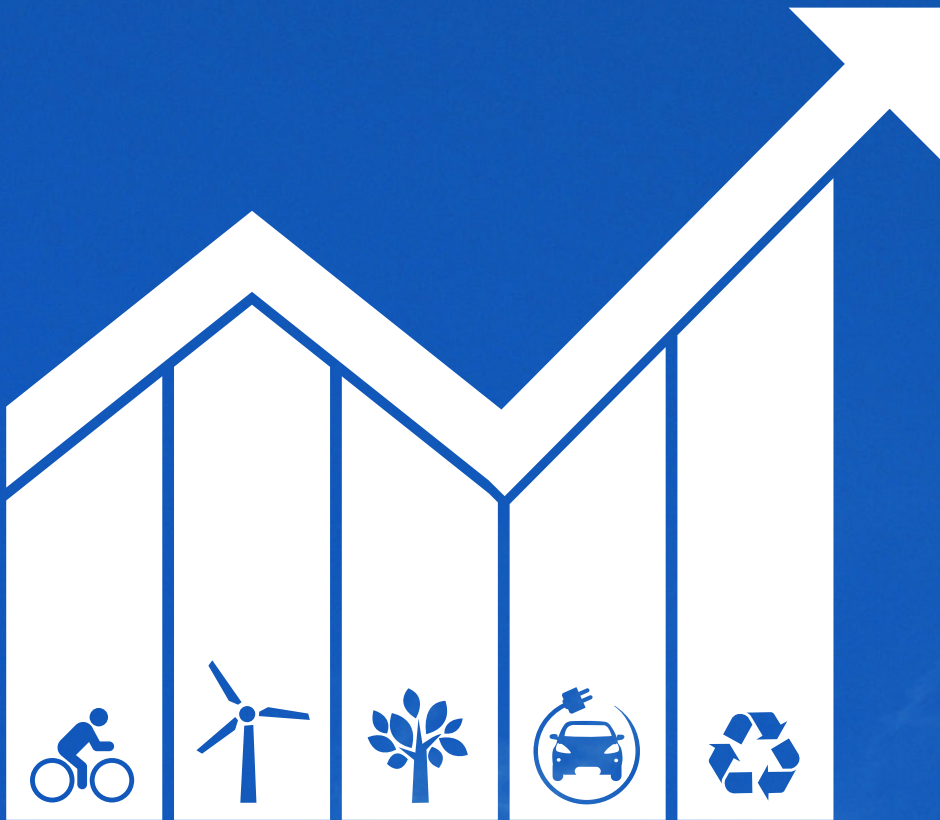
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Listening to the buzz: firm creation and regional relational structure as reflected by social media

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Working paper series

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University of Groningen/Campus Fryslân

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Editor: Niels Faber
Academic director: Dr. Gjalt de Jong
Design (cover): David-Imre Kanselaar

Listening to the buzz: firm creation and regional relational structure as reflected by social media

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October 2021

Abstract

This paper presents a novel approach to capture ‘buzz’, the vibrancy and knowledge exchange propensity of localised informal communication flows. Building on a conceptual framework based on relational economic geography, we argue the content of buzz may allow to probe into the character of places and investigate what is ‘in the air’ within regional entrepreneurial milieux. In particular, we analyse big data to listen for the presence of an innovative buzz – defined by discursive practices that reflect an innovative atmosphere – and explore how this may influence regional firm creation. Using information from 180 million geolocated Tweets comprising almost two billion words across NUTS3 regions in the UK for the year 2014, our results offer novel evidence, robust to different model specifications, that regions characterised by a relatively higher intensity of discussion and vibrancy around topics related to innovation may provide a more effective set of informal resources for sharing and recombination of ideas, defining regional capabilities to support and facilitate entrepreneurial processes. The findings contribute to the literature on the intangible dimensions in the geography of innovation and offer new insights on the potential of natural language processing for economic geography research.

Keywords: Buzz, innovation, entrepreneurship, Twitter.