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We take the brains: effects of post-WW2 knowledge exploitation programs on German inventors' networks

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Abstract

We look at the effect of involuntary short-term stays abroad on inventors' networks. We use a British post-WW2-program aimed to exploit German knowledge as a natural experiment to investigate its effects on German scientists and technicians. We use a newly created dataset to test if short but involuntary stays abroad have the same positive effects on inventors' networks that have been found for other types of migration. We use a Swiss control group to do a difference- in-differences estimation

to find the effect of the treatment. We find a clear increase in productivity (measured by patent output) for the treated Germans and a higher probability to find employment in the UK, while only very few Germans shifted all of their activity to the UK. On the other hand, we only find weak evidence for the productivity increase being caused by an extended knowledge base (as measured by patent citations) in the UK, and no evidence for new relationships between German experts that were interned together.

