

Are all non-urban places attractive enough to work from home?

Fernando de la Torre Cuevas, Department of Foundations of Economic Analysis, University of Santiago de Compostela, Galicia, Spain.

Bart Los, Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Groningen, The Netherlands

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The rise of working from home (WFH) is arguably one of the most notable effects of the digital transition (Barrero et al., 2023). But whether WFH arrangements can generally contribute to urban sprawl—i.e.: to the population dispersion towards non-urban areas—remains an open question. Fewer commuting days enable higher commuting distances (de Vos et al., 2018). Workers with WFH arrangements can apparently “vote with their feet” more than their on-site colleagues do (Jansen et al., 2024). But, still, a number of studies do not find conclusive evidence supporting this relationship or doubt on the size of its impact because remote workers remain a minority within the overall workforce (Florida et al., 2023). The variety of outcomes in empirical analyses suggests the existence of some space-specific factors affecting the relationship between WFH arrangements and urban sprawl.

In this paper, we aim to study which features make non-urban areas attractive enough for remote workers to move in, while keeping their jobs in the cities. Upon individual census data from a selection of European Union (EU) countries, we predicate a multinomial regression model relating individual residential-job location choices and the probability of WFH arrangements. Local amenities are our key control variable. Our potential contribution to the literature is twofold.

I) First, we provide a test on whether the contribution of WFH arrangements to urban sprawl is spatially invariant. We therefore complement already existing case studies and broader inquiries conducted in EU territory.

II) Second, we identify which amenities correlate with the attractiveness of places for workers choosing WFH arrangements. In this regard, we build upon the extant literature on place attractiveness and drivers for (interregional) migration.

REFERENCES

- Barrero, J. M., Bloom, N., & Davis, S. J. (2023). The Evolution of Work from Home. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 37(4), 23–50. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.37.4.23>
- de Vos, D., Meijers, E., & van Ham, M. (2018). Working from home and the willingness to accept a longer commute. *Annals of Regional Science*, 61(2), 375–398. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00168-018-0873-6>
- Florida, R., Rodríguez-Pose, A., & Storper, M. (2023). Critical Commentary: Cities in a post-COVID world. In *Urban Studies* (Vol. 60, Issue 8, pp. 1509–1531). SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980211018072>
- Jansen, T., Ascani, A., Faggian, A., & Palma, A. (2024). Remote work and location preferences: a study of post-pandemic trends in Italy. *Annals of Regional Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00168-024-01295-w>