



Special Session Proposal

The Spatial Reorganization of Working and Living: New Opportunities for Peripheral Regions?

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Abstract

The covid pandemic gave working from home a tremendous boost. It turned out the IT infrastructure was mostly there, managers could do without micromanagement after all, and many employees became more productive as well as happier in the process.

In the long run, the increased flexibility in when to work where will change the landscape of economic activity. Employees can live further away from their job if they have to commute only on some days of the week, and they can thus benefit from more spacious, cheaper housing in a less dense environment. Or vice versa, companies in peripheral locations can attract employees who prefer to stay in core areas, with its huge and varied offer of consumption amenities.

On the one hand, teleworking can be good news, since it can substantially level the existing unequal spatial distributions of opportunity and development. Yet there are also downsides. As mainly educated white-collar workers from core areas reconsider their commute and thus benefit from choices in their place of work and residence, others cannot. A decrease in regional disparities in job opportunities thus might come with new inequalities in 'spatial freedom' between different occupations. As a result of the spatial reorganization, both core and peripheral areas may struggle with newcomers and processes of adjustment.

KEY QUESTIONS

We think the research agenda can go in several directions, and welcome contributions in each:

- the changing spatial preferences and behavior of both households and firms due to an increase in teleworking;
- the spatial, economic, and social outcomes of teleworking and spatial reorganizations of households and firms;
- whether and how government interventions at multiple scales and in different spatial contexts are needed to respond to the opportunities and challenges associated with teleworking and the spatial redistribution of jobs and households.