

The Regional Studies Association Research Network on "REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGING GEOGRAPHY OF OUTSOURCING BUSINESS SERVICES IN AN ENLARGED EUROPE".

We are pleased to announce the creation of the new Regional Studies Association Research Network on "Regional Development and Changing Geography of Outsourcing Business Services in an Enlarged Europe". The Research Network has been jointly proposed by Paweł Capik (University of the West of Scotland), Jane Hardy (University of Hertfordshire) and Grzegorz Micek (Jagiellonian University, Kraków).

The Research Network emerges in response to the recent changes and trends in nature and structural composition of investment flows globally and across Europe. While there has been extensive research on delocalisation and the emerging division of labour in the real goods sector, the recent array of press headlines and consultants reports on offshoring and outsourcing suggests that this process has now spread to new segments of the service sector. Certain kinds of software and hardware design can now be done more cheaply in South-East Asia than in the United States, Western Europe or Japan. More recently a growing array of knowledge-intensive business services, such as accounting and financial analysis, HR management, legal services, business consulting, and R&D have begun to move offshore as well.

The Research Network aims to build upon the theoretical framework of value chains and the changing division of labour, which will be embedded in an understanding of recent trends in corporate restructuring. Further, the Research Network will also apply the institutional approach in order to identify main stakeholders and describe the asymmetries of power relations.

Within the general objective of examining the emerging divisions of labour in business services and their impacts on the development of home and host regional economies, the Research Network will search to answer the following questions:

- What are the factors driving firms to concentrate on their core competences and to outsource and offshore all or parts of their business services?
- What is the regional pattern of business service outsourcing and offshoring in comparison with other forms of foreign investment? To what extent can patterns of high skilled and low skilled functions be discerned within this broader pattern?
- Which European countries are the major sources of and recipients of business service outsourcing?
- What is the relative attractiveness of EU post-communist economies as a location for business service investment compared to (i) alternative destinations within the home country, (ii) the wider European region (Ukraine, Turkey, Russia), (iii) Asian destinations and India, in particular?
- What structural and institutional factors explain why some regions in Europe and Asia are experiencing clusters in business services?

- How can institutions intervene to attract and regionally embed business services? Can approaches adopted by the Asian public authorities be successfully applied in the European context?
- What are the regional development implications of receipt of inward investment in (i) routine business services such as data processing, and (ii) higher level functions such as software development?

Apart from providing an international platform for debate and discussion of these subjects in the policy context, three seminar meetings are planned, each focusing on a particular set of issues. The Research Network has been created with the aim of promoting networking, exchange of ideas and cooperation between academics, practitioners and policy makers in the area of regional development and service sectors, and remains open to all interested participants who are willing to contribute in whatever form they are able to.

The three seminars will take place at the home institutions of the organisers. The first workshop, to be held at the University of the West of Scotland in Paisley (September 2008), will explore *'Outsourcing and Offshoring Business Services: Theoretical Perspectives and Global Empirical Trends'*. The second seminar will be held at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków (summer 2009) and will focus on *'The Role of Business Services in Knowledge Transfer and Cluster Formation in Central and Eastern Europe'*. The final meeting will be held at the University of Hertfordshire (spring 2010), and will examine *'The Implications for Sender Country Regions of Outsourcing Business Services'*.

Each of the Seminars will include keynote addresses by practitioners and policy makers. The meetings will allow ample time for discussion facilitating the development of the ongoing research projects and contributing to the creation of new ones. The papers presented at each of the meetings will be published in the host institutions' research papers series. Additionally upon the conclusion of the Research Network there are plans to publish a selection of papers in a book form.

While the Network's website is currently under construction, the dedicated mailing list is aimed at fostering communication between the Network participants. The e-mail address is: [BPO-GEOGRAPHY@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:BPO-GEOGRAPHY@jiscmail.ac.uk) (Please note: to be able to send and receive messages from this list you first need to register at: [www.jiscmail.ac.uk](http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk)).

**Contact details of the organisers:**

Paweł Capik (University of the West of Scotland): [pawel.capik@uws.ac.uk](mailto:pawel.capik@uws.ac.uk)

Professor Jane Hardy (University of Hertfordshire): [j.a.hardy@herts.ac.uk](mailto:j.a.hardy@herts.ac.uk)

Dr Grzegorz Micek (Jagiellonian University): [g.micek@geo.uj.edu.pl](mailto:g.micek@geo.uj.edu.pl)