

Call for papers:

Digital and spatial transformation: structures and relations in the knowledge economy

Organizers

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Special Session: Digital and spatial transformation: structures and relations in the knowledge economy

The global economic landscape appears to be more dynamic than ever. Digital transformation, structural change towards the knowledge economy as well as the economic and financial crisis from 2008/09 have brought about structural challenges for many advanced economies. Since the 1990s, the knowledge economy has continuously gained importance and is now diversifying rapidly anew. New technologies and tools like data analytics or cloud computing spur digital transformation, automatization as well as industrialization of almost all services industries.

Therewith, firms reorganize their localized value chains continuously in order to exploit agglomeration and network economies and to sustain competitive advantage. The abilities of firms and regions to innovate, to reposition themselves and to generate new knowledge become more diverse. We observe increasing uncertainty, which involves the lack of information about upcoming events, technological challenges whose solutions are unknown, and the inability to foresee the consequences of one's actions. Consequently, functional urban areas are confronted with a multitude of different structural and spatial driving forces. The importance of being close and being connected at the same time vary across time, spatial scales, technologies and institutional settings.

A geographical shift – on supra-regional, national and global scale – is observable from at least two perspectives: The development of spatial structural attributes (employment, population, gross value added, accessibility etc.) and the relations among functional urban areas. A combination of attribute based analyses and relational approaches helps to understand the evolution of the functional urban transformation. How do these constituent parts interact with each other? To what extent does structural change towards a knowledge economy and the digital transformation lead to a re-concentration of business location in functional urban areas? Or to the contrary: do these processes lead individual elements of economic value chains to be relocated to peripheral locations – near-shoring and far-shoring – in order to lower production costs and to tap into new knowledge and specialized labor markets? More fundamentally, though: does digital transformation have the power for “creative destruction” and for to be spatially disruptive? If the answer would be yes, then this outcome would constitute a structural breakdown, which – driven by innovation – is manifested in pronounced reconfigurations of employment strata and in value chains, newly structured and organized in space.

Submitting papers

Our special session calls for papers that explore, analyze and visualize the changing patterns of urban hierarchies and flows on different spatial scales. Advanced forms of data collection, theoretical reflections, methodical approaches and techniques of analysis and visualization are welcome:

1. Cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis of network structures in the knowledge economy and the geographical shift in the context of digital transformation.

2. Theoretical and methodological reflections on the inter-relationship of agglomeration economies, network economies and the concept of proximity in the context of digitation and urban transformation.

We aim to allow 30 minutes for each presentation. Each presentation will be discussed by a discussant. Please note the following deadlines:

- Presenters apply for our special session based on a (draft) paper or an extended abstract that has to be uploaded on the ERSA 2019 submission website before February 28th 2019.
- Presentations scheduled in our special session are based on a (draft) paper that has to be uploaded on the ERSA 2019 submission website before June 10th 2019.

In addition, please send expression of interest, questions and extended abstract and/or (draft) paper by e-mail to Stefan Lüthi (stefan.luethi@hslu.ch), so that we can put together the session as early as possible.

Many thanks and see you in Lyon!