

Economic Specialisations in Metropolitan Areas Revisited: Transactional Occupations in Hamburg/Germany

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Abstract

To characterize economic activities in which metropolitan areas are specialized, recourse is commonly taken to categories like producer or (knowledge-intensive) business services, derived from efforts to differentiate the notoriously heterogeneous service sector. An alternative approach to categorize economic activities is explored in this paper, building on the notion of transactional activities theoretically founded in 'new institutional economics'. To test this approach, which surpasses the manufacturing-services dichotomy, the 328 occupations of the German classification system are reclassified into three main groups (transaction, production/transformation and R&D occupations) and subgroups thereof. Comparing the occupational structure of Hamburg and Germany reveals that production/transformation activities still predominate nationwide, whereas Hamburg is primarily specialized in transaction activities. Specialization is particularly evident in certain transactional subgroups, like advertising or agents/brokers/auctioneers. For other subgroups, like publishing or wholesale, habitually undervalued in urban research, specialization is also significant, while decisive R&D occupations are less important. In sum, a new and productive way to represent and analyze the complexities of the spatial division of labor opens up.