

New working spaces, migration and regional regeneration

Intended Supervisory Team: Dr Mariachiara Barzotto and Professor Phil Tomlinson

We are looking for highly motivated candidates from any disciplinary background who have strong quantitative skills (or would be able and willing to develop them) and/or strong qualitative skills to explore the socio-economic effects and the policy implications of neighbourhood co-working and maker spaces (e.g. Fab Labs), especially in lagging regions.

Disruptive technological change, precarious self-employment, along with the COVID-19 pandemic, has meant **working is becoming less dependent on distance, location and time**. Increasingly, people work outside regular working hours - outside the traditional office (often their homes), where new technologies are used extensively. Moreover, whilst workers in information and communication technologies prefer a high flexibility and hybridisation of workplaces, self-employed and freelance workers still need social and professional interaction in order to reduce risks of isolation (particularly high in-home working) and to increase networking opportunities. These are some of the reasons that have fostered **the creation and diffusion of new workspaces such as neighbourhood coworking spaces, maker spaces** - including Fab Labs - open creative labs which facilitate the 'making of things' (Merkel, 2018).

In Covid-19 times, many workers decided to leave urban areas and work remotely in more peripheral environments. The relocation of workers during the pandemic has fostered the demand for coworking spaces in these locations. Current studies have largely ignored the socio-economic impact of new working spaces on regional growth paths. This is a live policy issue in lagging regions, which typically lack skills, knowledge, technologies and network capabilities, but currently are receiving rising attention within policy debates; especially the discourse on **promoting more inclusive and balanced regional growth, reviving economically depressed regions**.

Within this context, public incentives at the regional level, policy tools and measures subsidising entrepreneurship, employment creation via the establishment of new working spaces may reduce the disadvantages of the peripheral areas, thus raising their economic performance.

The following are indicative of the types of projects we would be interested in supporting:

- Proposals seeking to analyse **industrial policy design and evaluation** covering different theoretical and empirical perspectives on new working spaces, such as coworking and maker spaces, in peripheral economies.
- Proposals exploring **socio-economic ecosystems in peripheral areas** located in advanced economies in order to evaluate how the presence of new working spaces may sustain an inclusive development and competitiveness in peripheral areas.
- Proposal investigating the role played by new working spaces during the pandemic and how new working spaces may foster **urban (re)generation** and encourage **migration** process of knowledge workers in peripheral areas, especially in the post-COVID-19 panorama.
- Proposals seeking to **identify and evaluate place-sensitive planning measures** on how new working spaces can drive of the economic change in the periphery.

Other proposals on similar regional economic themes are encouraged.

Informal applications should be directed to Dr Mariachiara Barzotto (mb2602@bath.ac.uk) or Professor Phil Tomlinson (P.R.Tomlinson@bath.ac.uk). This should include an outline of your proposed research (approximately 2,500 to 3,000 words/up to six pages), which must include:

Your name
Proposed programme of study
Tentative title of thesis
Aims and objectives

Rationale
Methodology
Timeline
Bibliography

