

PUBLICATION FACTS

JOURNAL

REGIONAL STUDIES

PUBLICATION DATE

2005

VOLUME/ISSUE

39 (5)

PAGES

585-601

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DIVERSIFICATION, SPECIALIZATION, CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE OF SECTORAL EMPLOYMENT STRUCTURES IN THE BRITISH URBAN SYSTEM, 1991- 2001

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the changing employment structure of 150 travel-to-work areas (TTWAs) in Britain from 1991 to 2001. Using data from the Annual Employment Survey and the Annual Business Inquiry, 20 sectors of economic activity are defined and investigated. The analysis clearly identifies the continued shift away from primary and manufacturing employment as increasingly more people are employed in the so-called service-based and informational economy. Clear spatial patterns emerge associated with employment change across sectors and these are also explored. Given the changing pattern of employment and the spatial characteristics of each sector, new patterns of specialization and diversification are expected to emerge. The analysis identifies these patterns and places their explanation into the context of changing technology and skills. It becomes clear that at the urban system level there is a weak convergent trend across the urban system. However, when the largest places are examined separately, it is apparent that the largest urban areas in Britain appear to have employment structures that are divergent from the rest of the urban system. This highlights the changing roles played by larger cities in Britain and has obvious implications for local labour markets and policy in those places.

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