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# Socio-spatial divisions of labour and advanced services cluster formation in Brussels

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## Abstract

The dynamics of the spatial division of labour are a central issue in the Brussels context of a political division of power and globalisation economic processes. In particular, establishing to what extent the spatiality of service firms has changed in the period of pre- and post-crisis. Previous research has shown the importance of advanced service functions, which in Brussels account for 18 % of the labour market in the Brussels metropolitan region, of which 10 % are made with only the financial services. The argument presented here aims at tracing the localisation economies in the advanced service sector in Brussels and with a focus on the socio-spatial impacts. More specifically the focus goes to the role of traded and untraded interdependencies in the processes of cluster formation of advanced service sectors. The internal workings of urban advanced service clusters can be approached through the concept of ‘project ecologies’ (Grabher, 2004). This concept builds on elements that characterize the project-based partnerships between different actors at intra- or inter-firm level, which are often present in new ways of working in advanced services. To explore these aspects, a survey will be designed and combined with semi-structured interviews with executive managers or human resources managers in selected firms of relevant advanced service sectors\*. The main expected findings are : first, to understand the nature of activities within the subsectors of advanced services firms in relation with the spatial patterns in firms locations ; second, to characterize the service networks in terms of jobs qualification and recruitment profiles ; third, to identify the elements which make Brussels a necessary location for the completion of an advanced service function. Besides seeking to unfold the layers of the socio-spatial dynamics at stake, the evolution of the advanced service sector will be put in perspective with the 2008-crisis and in terms of impacts of the socio-spatial divisions of labour in each of the subsectors.

\* to be determined in the coming year : probably clusters in the financial sector and around the services to the European institutions

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