

Signs of Life Sciences in Scotland: The Implications of Life Science Commodity Chains for Less-favoured Regions

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ABSTRACT

As manufacturing employment has shifted from economically developed countries to the developing world because of lower labour costs in the latter, developed countries have had to find new ways to compete within the global economy. In part they have done so through the promotion of the so-called 'knowledge economy' constituted by new innovations and new markets produced by high-tech sectors like the life sciences. However, for less-favoured regions (LFRs) in these countries, already suffering from the effects of deindustrialisation and consequent unemployment, this shift to the knowledge economy raises a number of issues. First, the existing uneven development of such high-tech sectors means that LFRs often lack the basic infrastructure required to attract and embed these new types of knowledge economy employment, compounding their already disadvantaged position. Second, the success of a few 'growth regions' such as Silicon Valley or the City of London reinforces continuing uneven development through the international connections and linkages that tie these growth regions into wider, global knowledge networks and further excludes LFRs. Finally, regional actors in growth regions are often more powerful than those in LFRs, which helps to reproduce the uneven position of these different regions in the commodity chain.

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