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Exploring Retail Adjustment in Relation to Changing Working Patterns across London: A Multi-Source Spatial Analysis of Office Submarkets and Commuting-Linked Residential Areas

Post-pandemic hybrid working has raised concerns that reduced weekday office attendance may weaken Central London's retail economies. However, existing research often examines commuting, office markets and retail change separately, and rarely connects weekday travel patterns to commercial outcomes across workplace and residential locations. This study examines how post-pandemic changes in working and commuting patterns, together with office-market adjustment, are associated with retail change across five Central London office submarkets and commuting-linked residential areas. It combines TfL station activity data, Census origin-destination flows, OpenLocal administrative property records and safeguarded Green Street retail data. A commuter-demand shock score identifies stations where Monday and Friday activity weakened relative to the pre-pandemic working week, then links workplace MSOAs to residential origins. Retail stock, value, floorspace, consumer-facing activity, vacancy, turnover and office-unit structure are examined through spatial analysis, regression and pattern classification. Findings show uneven commercial adjustment. Stronger shock was associated with retail change in workplace areas, but not a consistent retail-stock decline. The study also identifies five retail development models within the core areas. To examine the performance differences among these models, the study defines office fragmentation and the persistent large-office structure as two metrics. By reconciling consumer-facing and administrative property data, this dissertation offers a transferable spatial framework. It provides a new spatial perspective for future research and monitoring of how office districts, linked residential areas, and local retail markets adapt to changing work patterns.