

# Wage Inequality and the Spatial Expansion of Firms\*

Benny Kleinman  
Princeton University<sup>†</sup>

June 19, 2023

[Click here for latest version.](#)

## Abstract

Multi-location firms increasingly dominate the U.S. economy. I study the implications of this change to labor-market inequalities. I document that multi-region service firms account for most of the increase in wage inequality since the 1980s, and show that the expansion of their headquarters-branch networks played a key role in this trend. I integrate this structure into a general equilibrium model, in which (a) firms open branches to serve local markets; (b) the output of headquarters workers is non-rival across branches; (c) firms have wage-setting power. The resulting wage distribution depends on the full network of firm spatial activity, and inequality rises with firms' geographical scope. The model admits tractable aggregation despite its complex micro-structure and I estimate it for hundreds of U.S. local labor markets, inferring frictions to spatial expansion from the universe of cross-region headquarters-branch linkages. Quantitatively, the decline in these frictions since the 1980s can account for multiple trends in U.S. labor markets, including rising wage dispersion – between and within firms – and higher inequality and segregation across space.

---

\*I am grateful to my advisors Gene Grossman, Ezra Oberfield, Stephen Redding, and Richard Rogerson for their continued guidance and support. I am particularly grateful to Esteban Rossi-Hansberg for insightful discussions, to Ernest Liu for detailed comments, and to Hannah Rubinton and Jose P. Vasquez for discussing the paper. This paper has also benefited from discussions with Mark Aguiar, Elena Aguilar, Juanma Castro-Vincenzi, Oren Danieli, Greg Dobbels, Pablo D. Fajgelbaum, Manuel García-Santana, Cecile Gaubert, John R. Grigsby, Gregor Jarosch, Hugo Lhuillier, Isabela Manelici, Joan Monras, Eduardo Morales, Hannah Rubinton, Gianluca Violante, and Conor Walsh, as well as numerous seminar participants. I thank Shai Bernstein, Shirley Liu, and Hannah Rubinton for help with the data. This research benefited from financial support from the International Economics Section (IES), the Simpson Center for the Study of Macroeconomics, and the Industrial Relations Section (IRS) in Princeton University, as well as the Washington Center for Equitable Growth.

Any views expressed are those of the authors and not those of the U.S. Census Bureau. The Census Bureau's Disclosure Review Board and Disclosure Avoidance Officers have reviewed this information product for unauthorized disclosure of confidential information and have approved the disclosure avoidance practices applied to this release. This research was performed at a Federal Statistical Research Data Center under FSRDC Project Number 2542.

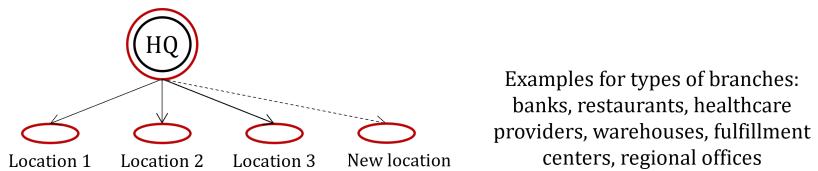
<sup>†</sup>Princeton University, binyamin@princeton.edu.

# 1 Introduction

The U.S. economy is increasingly dominated by multi-region firms that operate establishments across multiple local markets. This trend is evident across a wide range of service sectors, from retail and food services to finance and healthcare. In this paper, I study the labor market implications of this trend, and link it to the evolution of the wage distribution in the economy. I argue that the spatial expansion of firms has played an important role in the rise of wage inequality in recent decades, and that it can account for multiple dimensions of the rise in inequality, speaking simultaneously to growing wage dispersion across establishments, across firms, and across space.

I conceptualize multi-region firms as networks of local branches linked by national headquarters – see Figure 1 – in which the output of branches is *non-tradable*, and the output of headquarters is *non-rival* across the firm’s locations. Examples include banks, retail chains, healthcare networks, real-estate management companies and telecommunications firms. I investigate the distributional implications from the expansion of these firms in several steps. First, I provide evidence for the increased prevalence of this class of firms in the economy and for their central role in the rise of inequality. Second, I develop a general equilibrium model that incorporates this form of organization. Third, I provide an analytical characterization of the relationship between firm structure and inequality in the model. Fourth, I estimate the model and recover costs to spatial firm expansion. Fifth, through a series of model counterfactuals, I show that the decline in these costs can account for multiple trends in U.S. labor markets since the 1980s. Finally, I demonstrate how this model can be used to evaluate the aggregate and distributional implications of policies that affect the ability of firms to expand in space.

**Figure 1: Illustration - the structure of multi-region service firms**



I begin by documenting key facts about multi-region firms in the U.S. economy since the 1980s. To this end, I utilize administrative data from the U.S. Census Bureau on the structure, geography, and payroll of U.S. firms, as well as commercial datasets on the organization of multi-location firms from Dun & Bradstreet and the online job-postings of multi-location firms from Lightcast. I first confirm previous findings about the substantial spatial expansion of firms in service sectors over the covered period, and then document new facts about their central role in the rise of inequality. In particular, I show that: (a) multi-region service firms account for most of the increase in the variance of log wages in the U.S. economy, including within narrowly defined industries; (b) much of their role is

due to rising dispersion across different establishments within these firms, highlighting the importance of their internal structure for the study of inequality; (c) a substantial part of these trends can be accounted for by the expansion of these firms' headquarters-branch networks.

To rationalize these trends and analyze the labor market implications of firm expansion, I develop a spatial general equilibrium model with the above form of organization at its core. In the model, firms grow by expanding the network of their branches across local markets, subject to downward-sloping demand and upward-sloping labor supply curves in each of these markets. In addition, firms can improve the productivity of their branches by hiring workers at their national headquarters, such that the output of their headquarters workers is *non-rival* across the firm's locations. These headquarters-branch linkages are subject to spatial frictions, capturing for example travel and communication costs that limit the firm's ability to provide its headquarters output in distant branches. Finally, factor intensities differ between headquarters and branches, with higher skill-intensity at the headquarters. Firms thus choose where to locate their headquarters and branches, how many workers to hire in all of these locations, and which wages to pay them. Despite this complex micro-structure, the model admits tractable aggregation, and its equilibrium can be represented as a set of non-linear equations only in terms of region-level aggregates.

In the model's equilibrium, the distribution of wages depends on the structure of multi-region firms and their geographical scope. Larger firms serve more markets and pay higher wages on average, both due to exogenous differences in productivity, and due to endogenous productivity improvements through their non-rival headquarters output. At the same time, larger firms are also characterized by higher inequality within them, particularly between their headquarters and their branches: compensation to headquarters workers scales with total firm revenues across all locations, whereas compensation to branch workers scales only with local revenues. As a result, headquarters-branch wage differentials rise as firms get access to more markets. An increase in firms' ability to expand in space can thus raise inequality both across firms and within them, consistent with the data.

The model also generates implications for regional inequality. Firms demand more skilled labor and pay higher wages in their headquarters locations, and local markets can specialize in hosting these headquarters (supplying services to other regions), resulting in spatial differences in income and skill intensity. The scope for such specialization depends on the ability of firms to expand in space. The model can thus generate an increase in regional inequality and segregation following a reduction in frictions to firm expansion, consistent with the data.

To quantify these effects, I estimate the model for 391 labor market areas of the contiguous U.S. in 1980. I recover the frictions to firm spatial expansion from the universe of headquarters-branch linkages in the data. To estimate the main parameters of the

production block of the model, I employ a Simulated Method of Moments (henceforth SMM) approach, targeting the variance decomposition of wages and the importance of multi-region firms for wage inequality from my reduced-form analysis. Region-level fundamental parameters are recovered through inversion of the model’s equilibrium conditions, nested in the SMM loop. The estimated model is able to capture key features of the spatial distribution of economic activity and of the wage structure of multi-region firms.

In the main counterfactual analysis, I focus on three shocks to the baseline equilibrium, capturing key changes in the economic environment since the 1980s. The first shock is a decline in the frictions to operate headquarters-branch linkages over space. I measure an average decline of approximately 30% in these frictions between 1980-2017, and relate them to improvements in communication technologies and air-travel. Part of this decline is also due to weaker state-border effects, potentially reflecting the deregulation of cross-state firm activity in some services sectors in the 1980s and the 1990s, such as banking and transportation services. The second shock is a change in demand, motivated by the significant increase in the aggregate expenditure on services in the data (“structural transformation”). The third shock is a homogenous increase in the skill-intensity of production, in line with the literature on skill-biased technical-change.

Quantitatively, I find that lower frictions to firm expansion can account for multiple secular changes in U.S. labor markets since the 1980s. Wage inequality rises by around 20% of the equivalent within-industry change in the data. In line with the data, inequality rises both within firms – across their different establishments – and between them. Also in line with the data, part of the rise in inequality is across local labor markets, with greater wage gains in markets that ex-ante specialize in providing headquarters services. These markets also experience an increase in the relative price and quantity of skilled labor, raising the urban wage premium and intensifying spatial segregation. Furthermore, these effects are amplified when lower frictions to expansion are interacted with the increase in demand for services or with the homogenous increase in the skill intensity of production.

To assess the welfare implications of these changes, I use the model-based measure of real income, reflecting wage-gains as well as local prices of housing and non-tradable services. Holding preferences constant, the measured reduction in spatial frictions to firm expansion is associated with average employment-weighted welfare gains of around 4%, resulting from higher economy-wide productivity and variety of jobs and services. However, these gains exhibit substantial heterogeneity. Real income increases the most for households that reside in locations with ex-ante specialization in hosting headquarters – e.g. New York City – and particularly so for skilled labor in these locations. Regional income growth is associated with an increase in housing prices, but also with an increase in the variety of local jobs and services.

As a final exercise, I demonstrate how the model can be used to evaluate the aggregate and distributional consequences of policies that relate to firms’ ability to expand in space.

I focus on the deregulation of cross-state firm activity, as captured by the decline in the importance of state border effects between 1980 and 2017, mimicking the wave of deregulation in multiple service industries in the 1980s. I recover a 10% decline in the frictions to operate cross-state firm linkages for this period, resulting in average welfare gains of 0.4%. These average gains mask vast heterogeneity, ranging between -1.5% to +6% across local labor markets.

I conclude with a brief comparison of the above mechanism to other theories in the literature on rising wage inequality, highlighting four key benefits of my approach. First, the model can simultaneously rationalize several dimensions of inequality that have been studied in the literature. Second, it generates distinctive predictions that existing studies do not speak to. Third, it offers a connection between rising inequality and the substantial changes in firm organization observed in recent decades. Finally, it provides a natural framework to understand inequality in services sectors, wherein the majority of the surge in inequality has occurred.

This paper connects to several strands of recent literature. First, I relate to the recent literature that documents empirically the spatial expansion of firms, such as Cao et al. (2017), Aghion et al. (2019), Jiang (2021), Rossi-Hansberg et al. (2021), and Hsieh and Rossi-Hansberg (2022). Building on this literature, I turn to study the labor market implications of firm expansion, with a focus on the relationship between the spatial organization of firms and the distribution of wages in the economy.

Second, I relate to the empirical literature that studies the role of firms in the growth of wage inequality. Barth et al. (2016), Song et al. (2019) and Haltiwanger et al. (2022) document rising wage dispersion across firms and establishments in the U.S.. Relative to these studies, I provide new evidence on the central role of multi-region firms and their organization in generating these trends, and rationalize them by modelling the expansion of multi-region firms in a spatial general equilibrium setting.

Third, this paper relates to the literature on “the great divergence” in the spatial economics literature which studies the increased skill differentials in allocations and wages across space, e.g. Berry and Glaeser (2005), Moretti (2012), Diamond (2016), Giannone (2017), Eckert (2019), Rubinton (2020), Card et al. (2021), and Eckert et al. (2022). I contribute a new mechanism to explain these patterns that focuses on within-firm trade across regions and its increased importance due to firm geographical expansion.

From a theoretical perspective, I relate to studies that model the expansion of firms through space, including Jia (2008) and Holmes (2011) in the industrial organization literature; Argente et al. (2020), Oberfield et al. (2020), and Giroud et al. (2021) in the macroeconomics literature; and Helpman (1984), Ramondo and Rodríguez-Clare (2013), Tintelnot (2017), and Arkolakis et al. (2018) in the literature on trade and multinational firms. My two main innovations are to model endogenous headquarters-level decisions that shape branch-level productivity and wages; and to study spatial firm expansion

in an economic geography setting that allows for location decisions by both firms and workers, with firms determining locations of both headquarters and branches.

I also relate to the theoretical literature that connects within-firm wage inequality to firms' hierarchical organization, e.g. [Garicano and Rossi-Hansberg \(2004\)](#) and [Garicano and Rossi-Hansberg \(2006\)](#). In contrast to these papers, I model firm headquarters as a set of tasks for which the output is non-rival within the firm, and not as a hierarchical layer that arises due to managers' limited span-of-control. This theoretical distinction is empirically important, since it allows me to speak to broader patterns of inequality than those captured by firm hierarchies, rationalizing wage increases for occupations that span multiple layers of organization (consider for example programmers, designers, and financial analysts). In addition, adding the spatial aspect to firm organization allows me to naturally link these trends to the literature on rising spatial disparities.

Fifth, I relate to the large literature that documents and models the flows of intangible knowledge and know-how within firms, including [Atalay et al. \(2014\)](#), [Fort \(2017\)](#), [Alviarez et al. \(2020\)](#) and [Ding et al. \(2022\)](#). I emphasize the role of skilled-labor at the firm's headquarters in the production of such knowledge. In addition, I show that this structure has important implications for the rise of wage inequality, in light of firms' growing ability to spread intangible knowledge to their branches through space. I use the structure of the model to overcome the challenge in measuring these flows, and recover frictions to within-firm communication using the empirical network of HQ-branch linkages.

Finally, I relate to the empirical literature on firm-wage setting in multi-location firms, e.g. [Derenoncourt et al. \(2021\)](#) and [Hazell et al. \(2021\)](#). I contribute to this literature by providing micro-foundations for why branch-level wages across space are more similar within firms than across firms, while also highlighting the importance of wage differentials between firm headquarters and branches.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, I provide evidence for the spatial expansion of firms in recent decades and for the centrality of multi-region service firms in the growth of wage inequality. In Section 3, I lay out a model of multi-region service firms in spatial general equilibrium. I characterize the equilibrium in Section 4, highlighting how this type of firm structure shapes labor market inequalities. In Section 5, I estimate the model, matching key aspects of the United States in 1980, and evaluate the model's fit to the data. Section 6 analyzes the labor market implications of firm expansion through the lens of the model using a series of counterfactuals, with a focus on declining within-firm communication frictions and rising expenditure on services. In Section 7, I discuss how the mechanism put forward in this paper relates to existing mechanisms in the literature on wage inequality. Section 8 concludes.

## 2 Descriptive evidence

In this Section, I provide evidence on the spatial expansion of firms in recent decades and its link to the rise of U.S. wage inequality.

### 2.1 Data and definitions

The analysis uses four main data sources, described more thoroughly in Appendix Section B. First, data on the spatial structure of firms and on wage inequality across firms and establishments are obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau Longitudinal Business Database (henceforth LBD). Second, I use data on individual earnings and characteristics from the U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census and American Community Survey. In particular, I use these data to contrast the rise of inequality across firms and establishments to the rise of inequality across U.S. workers. Third, I use additional data on firm spatial structure from Dun & Bradstreet, complementing the data from the LBD, especially to distinguish between firm branches and headquarters. Finally, I also investigate the link between firm spatial structure and inequality using commercial data on firm online job-postings from Lightcast. While this last source lacks the historical perspective of the previous data sources, it provides more detailed information on firms' demand for different skills and occupations across space.

In all data sources, I define a region or a local labor market according to 1990 commuting zones (CZs) as in [Tolbert and Sizer \(1996\)](#). In the model, I consider a slight aggregation of these commuting zones that groups together very small neighboring commuting zones into labor market areas (henceforth LMAs). I focus on the contiguous U.S., excluding Alaska, Hawaii and the American territories, yielding a total of 722 commuting zones that aggregate into 391 LMAs.

**Longitudinal Business Database.** I define establishment level wages as the ratio of annual payroll to establishment employment. My definition of a firm follows the standard Census Bureau firm identifiers that link different establishments together based on IRS employer identification numbers (EINs) and ownership data from enterprise-level surveys. A multi-establishment firm is defined as having at least two establishments, and I define a multi-region firm as a firm that has establishments in at least two commuting zones.

To classify firms into different sectors, I rely on the industry classification of their establishments. Specifically, I define firm-level industry and firm-level sector according to the 4-digits and 2-digits NAICS codes that account for the largest share of the firm's payroll, respectively. See additional details in Appendix B. I classify firms as "Service firms" if establishments in services-producing sectors – as defined by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) – account for at least half of the firm's total payroll. Otherwise, firms are defined as "Goods-producing firms".

The Census Bureau lacks a clear identifier for headquarters establishments and head-

quarters locations of multi-establishment firms. To address this problem, I apply two alternative approaches. The first approach uses establishments classified under the NAICS-55 industry code (“Management of Companies and Enterprises”) to detect headquarters activity. Under this approach, I define the *headquarters location* of a firm as the commuting zone with the highest share of payroll out of its NAICS-55 establishments. I restrict this definition to firms in which at least half of their NAICS-55 payroll is in a single commuting zone. This restriction turns out to exclude only a small percentage of all firms with any NAICS-55 establishments, since payroll in this sector tends to be highly spatially-concentrated within firms. The main problem with this approach is that most firms do not have any NAICS-55 establishments, including a high percentage of the multi-establishment firms.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, as an alternative approach, I define the headquarters market of a firm based on the commuting zone that includes the firm-level mailing address from the Business Register. For the subset of firms with both a firm-level mailing address and NAICS-55 establishments, there is a very high correlation in the identity of the headquarters commuting zone across these two approaches.

**Data on Firm Spatial Structure from Dun & Bradstreet.** I use data from the Dun & Bradstreet individual business files as another source of information on firm geographical structure. This source includes establishment-level data with firm linkages and classification of establishments according to their role within the firm. In general, it is less accurate than the LBD – especially for data on establishment-level employment – and it lacks data on wages. However, a key advantage relative to the LBD is that it clearly distinguishes between firm headquarters and branches. Therefore, I use this data to compute cross-region headquarters-branch linkages. See Barnatchez et al. (2017) for additional discussion of this dataset, including evidence on its good coverage of the spatial allocation of firms.

**Online Job Postings Data from Lightcast.** A limitation of the LBD data is the lack of job-level or worker-level information. Therefore, I complement the analysis using online job-posting data from Lightcast,<sup>2</sup> which provides information about the spatial distribution of jobs within firms. In these data, a firm is defined based on the set of job postings that share the same codified employer name.<sup>3</sup> The Lightcast data lacks establishment identifiers, but the geographic location of the posting is known, allowing me to compare firms’ postings across different commuting zones and LMAs. These data are only available since 2010, but it is nevertheless useful for understanding how multi-region

---

<sup>1</sup>This is not due to lack of headquarters activity in these firms. The absence of NAICS-55 establishments in the Census data can indicate that the headquarters establishments are engaged in additional activities and are classified accordingly. This seems to be particularly common in the information and finance sectors, in which firms seem to classify headquarters establishments in accordance to their core activity. Alternatively, it could just indicate measurement errors in the industry classification.

<sup>2</sup>See <https://lightcast.io/>.

<sup>3</sup>Lightcast claim to invest much effort into name codification to ensure that they capture the same entities.

service firms are structured. To distinguish between firm headquarters and branches, I merge the Lightcast data with firm geography from Dun & Bradstreet using name and location matching. This process results in around 75,000 multi-region firms, out of which around 64,000 are in service sectors.

I now provide a set of stylized facts on the structure of multi-region service firms and their centrality in the rise of inequality. These facts will guide features of the model that I develop below.

## 2.2 The spatial expansion of firms

I begin by revisiting key facts on the substantial expansion of firms in recent decades, as been documented for example by [Hsieh and Rossi-Hansberg \(2022\)](#) and [Cao et al. \(2017\)](#). Table 1 shows that between 1980 and 2017, the employment share of multi-region service firms has increased from 24% of the total workforce to 41% of the total workforce. This reallocation reflects both the general transition from goods to services (“structural transformation”) and the evolution of services from single-region to multi-region firms. Looking only within the services sector, the share of multi-region firms has increased from 35% to 48%.

**Table 1: Statistics on firm spatial expansion**

Type of firm	Year	Firms	% of workforce	Emp. per firm	Estabs. per firm	CZs per firm
Goods-producing firms	1980	639800	31%	38.0	1.2	1.1
Goods-producing firms	2017	778400	14%	23.3	1.1	1.1
Services, single estab.	1980	2407000	40%	12.7	1.0	1.0
Services, single estab.	2017	3769000	38%	13.1	1.0	1.0
Services, multi-estab. and single-CZ	1980	69000	5%	53.2	2.9	1.0
Services, multi-estab. and single-CZ	2017	72500	7%	125.3	3.5	1.0
Services, multi-estab. and multi-CZ	1980	43500	24%	432.6	12.2	5.0
Services, multi-estab. and multi-CZ	2017	72500	41%	748.2	20.4	6.4

Note: Data from the Census Bureau Longitudinal Business Database. Goods- and services-producing firms stand for firms with at least half of their wage bill across all establishments in goods- and services-producing sectors, respectively. Multi-estab. stands for a firm with at least two establishments, and multi-CZ stands for a firm with establishments in at least two 1990 commuting zones. See Section 2.1 for additional details on sample selection and definitions.

In the services sectors, spatial expansion accounts for much of the growth in average firm size. Employment in single establishment service firms has increased by 3% from an average of 12.7 employees to 13.1 employees, whereas the average multi-region firm has expanded its employment by over 70%, from 432 to 748 employees. Moreover, the expansion in employment in multi-region firms reflects mostly an increase in the average

number of establishments per firm, not an increase in employment per establishment. Much of this expansion took place across local markets, with the average number of commuting-zones per firm increasing by almost 30%. Finally, note that in contrast to services, average firm size and average number of establishments per firm in the goods sector have both declined.<sup>4</sup> Finally, note that this pattern of spatial firm expansion is common to a wide range of services sectors, ranging from 0.13 in Accommodation and Food Services, to 1.19 in Real Estate, Rental and Leasing. See appendix Figure 12 for additional details. For the sake of brevity, Table 1 combines all types of firms in the goods sector together, but additional breakdown by firm type is reported in Appendix Table 12.

I summarize these patterns in the following:

**Fact 1. Firm spatial expansion:** *Between 1980-2017, the average number of markets per firm and the share of employment in multi-region firms have both increased in services-producing sectors.*

### 2.3 Multi-region firms and wage inequality

I now turn to provide new facts on the central role of multi-establishment and multi-region firms in the rise of U.S. wage inequality, and the importance their internal structure for this trend. In line with past literature, I focus on the variance of log wages in the economy as my leading measure of wage inequality.

I first establish that inequality across establishments accounts for most of the increase in overall inequality in the economy. Consequentially, I will be able to use data on establishments in the LBD to further decompose the rise in inequality. To this end, Table 2 compares the change in the variance of log wages between 1980 and 2017 across multiple data sources. The first row in Table 2 shows the change in this variance using data on individual-level reported wage earnings in the Decennial Census and the American Community Survey. Between 1980-2017, this variance has increased by 0.17 points. Similar magnitudes have been found by Song et al. (2019) using data from the U.S. Social Security Administration, and by Barth et al. (2016) using data from the BLS Current Population Survey (CPS). The second row in Table 2 repeats this exercise for establishment-level wages in the LBD, weighting different establishments by their employment. Evidently, both sources yield the same increase in the variance of log wages. Formally, let  $w_i$  be the log of earnings for individual  $i$ , and let  $e(i)$  be the establishment that employs individual  $i$ . By the law of total variance, the total change in variance equals to the sum of change

---

<sup>4</sup>Holmes and Stevens (2014) provide one potential explanation for this trend, based on the idea that rising international trade has shifted the production of large-scale standardized goods to other countries, leaving the domestic production of manufacturing goods more concentrated on custom or specialty goods. In any case, in this paper I do not analyze the decline in the size and scope of manufacturing firms, and focus mostly on the expansion of firms in services.

in variance across establishments and the average change within establishments,

$$\underbrace{\Delta \text{Var} [w_i]}_{\text{Total change in variance}} = \underbrace{\Delta \text{Var} [\mathbb{E} [w_i | e(i)]]}_{\text{Change in variance across establishments}} + \underbrace{\Delta \mathbb{E} [\text{Var} [w_i | e(i)]]}_{\text{Change in variance within establishments}}.$$

Both the left-hand-side of this equation and the first term on its right-hand-side equal to approximately 0.17. Therefore, the last term that captures rising within-establishment variance is found to be close to zero.

The second Column in Table 2 repeats these findings for within-industry inequality, by demeaning detailed industry fixed-effects from log individual and establishment wages before computing the increase in the variance. Again, I find similar magnitudes across the Census/ACS and the LBD datasets, reinforcing the small role of within-establishment variance in the overall increase in inequality. Overall, rising within-industry wage dispersion accounts for slightly over half of the total increase in inequality.<sup>5</sup> Similar magnitudes for the role of within-industry trends are obtained when utilizing data from the CPS.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 2: Rising variance of log wages in the U.S. economy**

Change in the variance of log wages (1980-2017)		
Data	Total change	Within-industry change
Decennial Census / ACS - across U.S. workers	0.17	0.1
LBD - across all establishments	0.17	0.09

Note: This table summarizes changes in the variance of log wages in the U.S. economy between 1980-2017. The first row computes this measure from individual-level reported wage earnings in the Decennial Census and the American Community Survey. The second row reports this measure for average establishment-level payroll in the LBD. The first column shows the overall change, and the second column reports this change after controlling for industry-level fixed effects.

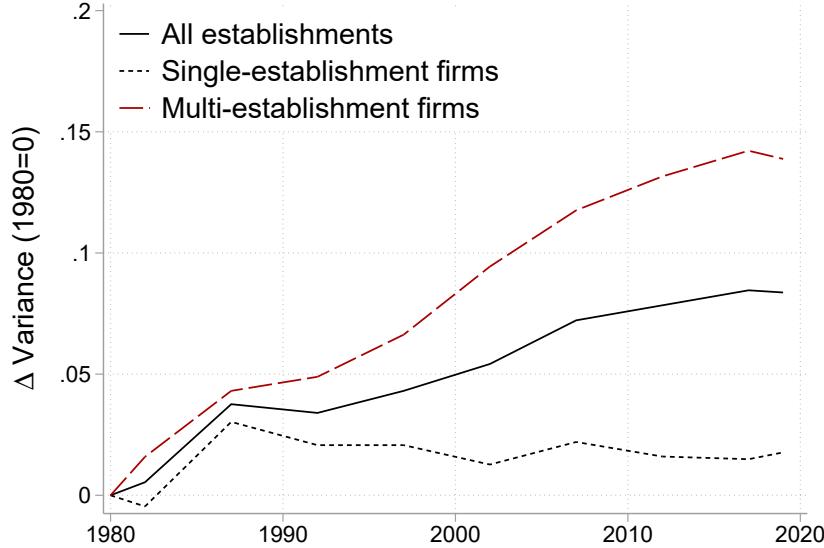
Based on these findings, I now turn to investigate which firms drive the increase in the variance of log wages across establishments in the LBD, starting with a visual representation of the importance of multi-establishment firms. Figure 2 shows the change in within-industry variance of log wages across all establishments (solid black line), and then shows the same change for two separate subgroups: establishments that belong to multi-establishment firms (dashed red line) and establishments that belong to single-establishment firms (dotted gray line). The figure shows a sharp increase in this variance for establishments that belong to multi-establishment firms. In contrast, for single-establishment firms, there is only a mild increase in the 1980s, and if anything, a declining trend since then. Note that I focus here on within-industry inequality since this will be

<sup>5</sup>Haltiwanger et al. (2022) find that a slightly higher share – around 60% – of the rise in total inequality in the LEHD is due to differences between industries starting from the late 90s. Indeed, as can be seen in Figure 2, the importance of differences between industries becomes larger in the latter part of the sample, reconciling the figures reported here with their findings.

<sup>6</sup>Comparing these moments to the Social Security Administration data as in Song et al. (2019) is infeasible due to the lack of high-quality industry identifiers in that data.

the main moment of interest when I turn to the quantitative model, but the same pattern holds when considering raw wages without demeaning industry fixed effects, as can be seen in Appendix Figure 13.

**Figure 2: The role of multi-establishment firms in the rise of wage inequality**



Note: this figure shows changes in the employment-weighted variance of log average payroll across establishments in the Longitudinal Business Dataset (LBD) in selected years relative to 1980, after demeaning industry fixed effects (4 digits NAICS code) from establishment log wages. The change in variance for the universe of all establishments is given by the solid-black line. The dashed-red line shows this change for establishments in multi-establishment firms, and the dotted-gray line for single-establishment firms.

More formally, I quantify the importance of multi-establishment firms for the rise in inequality using a variance decomposition of log wages. To this end, consider a partition of the universe of establishments into  $G$  distinct groups. The total change in variance equals to the sum of several components:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \underbrace{\Delta\sigma_t^2}_{\text{Change in variance}} &= \underbrace{s_{g',0} (\Delta\sigma_{g',t}^2)}_{\text{Variance within group } g'} + \underbrace{\sum_{g \in G} (\Delta s_{g,t}) \sigma_{g,0}^2}_{\text{Emp. reallocation across groups}} \\
 &+ \underbrace{\sum_{g \in G} (\Delta s_{g,t}) (\Delta\sigma_{g,t}^2)}_{\text{Comovement of variance and emp.}} + \underbrace{\sum_{g \in G/g'} s_{g,0} (\Delta\sigma_{g,t}^2)}_{\text{Variance within other groups}} + \underbrace{\sum_{g \in G} \Delta s_{g,t} (\mu_{g,t}^2 - \mu_t^2)}_{\text{Variance between groups}} \quad (1) \\
 &\qquad\qquad\qquad \text{Residual}
 \end{aligned}$$

where  $s_{g,t}$  is the employment-share of group  $g$  in period  $t$ ;  $\mu_{g,t}$  is the employment-weighted mean of log-wages in group  $g$ , period  $t$ ;  $\sigma_{g,t}^2$  is the employment-weighted variance in group  $g$ , period  $t$ ;  $\mu_t$  is the aggregate mean; and 0 and 1 mark the initial and the final period. In this equation, the first term captures the rise in variance for a particular group  $g' \in G$ ,

e.g. establishments that belong to multi-establishment firms, multiplied by its initial share of total employment. The second term captures reallocation of employment across groups, keeping constant the variance of each group at its base level. The third term captures cross-changes: it adds a positive value to total variance when a group with rising variance also sees an increase in its employment share. Finally, I include all other terms in a residual, which comprised of the rising variance within all other groups  $g \in G/g'$  and rising variance between groups.

Table 3 shows this decomposition for the total rise in within-industry wage inequality. Column (1) considers this decomposition when singling out multi-establishment firms as the group  $g'$ . Consistent with the pattern in Figure 2, Over 80% of the rise in overall (within-industry) wage inequality is due to rising variance across establishments that belong to multi-establishment firms.

**Table 3: Decomposition of the rise in wage inequality**

% of the overall increase in variance (1980-2017)	(1) Multi- estab. firms	(2) Service firms	(3) Multi-CZ services
Rising variance within the group of firms	83%	70%	40%
Changes in employment shares b/w groups (reallocation)	-4%	6%	8%
Comovement of variance and employment shares	9%	10%	20%
Residual	12%	13%	32%
<b>Total change across all firms in the economy</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note: Data from the Census Bureau Longitudinal Business Database. Each column is a separate decomposition of the total increase in within-industry wage inequality across all establishments between 1980 and 2017. The first row shows the share of total increase in variance due to rising variance in the group of firms that is mentioned at the top of each column, matching the first RHS term in Equation (1). The second row shows the share due to changes in employment between that group and the other firms in the sample (employment reallocation), holding constant the change in variance in each group, matching the second RHS term in Equation (1). The third row shows the share that is due to the cross-product of rising variance and rising employment share, matching the third RHS term in Equation (1), and the fourth row is a residual so that the sum for each column is 100%. See Section 2.3 for additional details.

With an eye towards my theoretical model, I now employ the same decomposition to highlight two additional points about the role of multi-establishment firms in the rise of inequality. First, I show that most of the increase in inequality is driven by firms in services-producing sectors. To see this, Column (2) repeats the decomposition in 1 when singling out the group of service-sector firms. In this case, the reallocation and cross-changes terms play a bigger role, due to the rising role of services in the economy: 70% of the increase is accounted by rising variance for services firms, and 16% due to reallocation to services. Second, I highlight the particular importance of multi-region service firms (i.e., multiple commuting zones) in the universe of multi-establishment firms. To see this, Column (3) repeats the decomposition in 1 when narrowing down the focus group to only

multi-region service firms. In this case, 40% of the overall increase in inequality is due to rising inequality for this group, and 28% is due to the reallocation to this group and the cross effect of reallocation and rising variance. The first term is smaller relative to Column (1) since as we have seen in Table 1, multi-region service firms accounted for only 24% of total employment in 1980. Still, even holding this share constant, the rising variance in the group of multi-region service firms accounts for 40% of the overall change. Together with the reallocation of employment to this group, it accounts for 68% of the total rise in inequality. I summarize these findings in:

**Fact 2. *Multi-region firms and inequality:*** *Multi-region firms, particularly in services sectors, account for most of the increase in U.S. wage inequality between 1980-2017. This reflects both an employment reallocation to these firms and rising inequality for this group of firms.*

## 2.4 The importance of internal firm structure

Having established that multi-establishment firms – particularly multi-region service firms – account for most of the increase in wage inequality, I now turn to emphasize the importance of their internal structure for this trend. Specifically, I demonstrate the relevance of the distinction between firm headquarters and branches for the question of rising inequality.

### 2.4.1 Rising wage dispersion within firms

First, I show that rising dispersion within firms plays an important part of the overall role of multi-region service firms. To see this, we can further decompose the above increase in the variance for multi-region service firms,  $\Delta\sigma_{\text{MR-serv},t}^2$ , to changes within firms and changes between firms:

$$\Delta\sigma_{\text{MR-serv},t}^2 = \underbrace{\Delta_t \mathbb{V} [\ln \bar{w}_f]}_{\text{Between-firms - 55\%}} + \underbrace{\Delta_t \mathbb{V} [\ln w_{fj} - \ln \bar{w}_f]}_{\text{Within-firms, between establishments - 45\%}}$$

where  $w_{fj}$  is the average wage in establishment  $j$  in firm  $f$  and  $\ln \bar{w}_f$  is the employment-weighted average of log wages across all establishments in firm  $f$ . Rising differences within firms – between their different establishments – explain around 45% of the overall change  $\Delta\sigma_{\text{MR-serv},t}^2$ . I have thus established:

**Fact 3.** *Close to half of the rise in inequality for multi-region service firms is across different establishments within these firms.*

While the model presented below does not focus exclusively on this part of growing inequality (and addresses rising dispersion across firms as well), establishing this fact is

useful for two reasons. First, it highlights that it is not enough to have a theory with single-unit firms, and that one needs to model the firm's different establishments to get at the full picture of rising inequality. Second, it contrasts the theory in this paper relative to some other firm-based theories of rising inequality. For example, rising outsourcing has been suggested as one potential explanation for rising dispersion across firms - see e.g. the discussion in [Song et al. \(2019\)](#). If anything, rising outsourcing should lead to lower wage dispersion within firms, as firms increasingly focus on their core activities. However, in the data, we observe rising inequality both between and within firms. The theory presented in this paper is well suited to address these patterns.

Next, I turn to demonstrate the specific relevance of the headquarters-branch distinction. This will serve two purposes: first, to show that this distinction is meaningful for the question of wage inequality. Second, to motivate how I later construct my theoretical model. The challenge here is to cleanly classify different establishments as belonging to the theoretical labels of headquarters and branches. To deal with this challenge, I take two complementary approaches. I first look at the industry composition of firms based on establishment-level industry identifiers at the LBD. I then look at the occupational composition of firms by analyzing their online job postings using the Lightcast data.

#### 2.4.2 Firms industry composition

To characterize the structure of firms through the lens of their industry composition, I utilize establishment-level NAICS industry identifiers in the LBD. For each firm, I divide its establishments into three categories. First, I classify establishments as belonging to the firm's core sector if they have the same 2-digit industry classification as that of their firm. Second, I classify establishments as performing headquarters activity if they do not belong to the firm's core sector, and are classified in one of the business-services sectors (NAICS sectors 51, 52, 53, 54, and 55). Note that most of this category – 80% of the total payroll in this category – is accounted for by explicit headquarters activity, i.e. establishments in the NAICS 55 sector (“Management of Companies and Enterprises”), so narrowing the definition to NAICS 55 establishments does not affect the results. The remaining establishments are classified as “other establishments”. This last group would typically include wholesale and retail establishments for firms outside of the wholesale and retail sectors, as well as some manufacturing establishments.

Table 4 shows how total payroll in multi-region service firms is distributed across these three categories. I focus on the group of firms with a clear headquarters location based on NAICS-55 activity as defined in Section 2.1.<sup>7</sup> The typical firm spends around 85%

---

<sup>7</sup>This group of firms has the advantages of: (a) providing informative industry classifications; and (b) have a clear headquarters location. Multi-unit service firms outside of this group tend to be smaller and report very homogenous industry classifications across all of their establishments, which prevents us from using industry classification to analyze the firm's structure. In particular, it is not clear if in these firms all establishments perform the same activity, or if they report a generic industry code for all their

of its payroll on establishments in its core sector, 11% on headquarters activity, and 4% on other types of establishments. Columns 2 and 3 in the same table reveal that the distribution of headquarters activity within the firm is highly spatially concentrated in its headquarters market: 30% of the payroll in the firm’s HQ commuting zone is accounted by establishments that perform headquarters activity, relative to 3% in all other commuting zones. Evidently, headquarters activity is characterized by high spatial concentration within firms, and almost all of the firm’s operations outside of its HQ commuting zone is accounted for by establishments in its main sector of activity.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 4: The industry composition of multi-region service firms**

Firm activity	(1) % of firm payroll	(2) % of HQ-CZ payroll	(3) % of non-HQ-CZ payroll
Establishments in the firm’s core sector	84.4%	67.7%	92.1%
Headquarters activity	11.2%	29.2%	3.0%
Other establishments	4.4%	3.1%	4.9%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Note: Data from the Census Bureau Longitudinal Business Database. The table shows how the total payroll of multi-region service firms is distributed across different activities, in firms with clearly identifiable headquarters location, as discussed in Section 2.1. Column (1) shows the distribution of firm payroll across these activities for the firm as a whole; Column (2) shows it for establishments in the firm’s headquarters commuting zone; and Column (3) shows it for all other commuting zones. Establishments in the firm’s core sector are those with an industry classification identical to the firm-level 2-digit main NAICS code, as discussed in Section 2.1. Headquarters activity is defined by establishments that do not belong to the firm’s core sector and are classified in one of the business services sectors (2-digit NAICS codes 51, 52, 53, 54, 55). Most of this category (80%) is accounted for by establishments in the NAICS-55 sector (“Management of Companies and Enterprises”).

To see what role does this partition play in the rise of wage inequality, I further decompose the rise in within firm wage dispersion from Subsection 2.4. Recall that out of the overall increase in variance for multi-region service firms, close to half is within these firms, across their different establishments. We can compute how much of this within component arises due to differences between headquarters and branches, i.e., how much is explained by the fixed effects for the above categories of establishments. For the subsample of firms with headquarters identifiers as defined above, the share of rising within-firm variance explained by these fixed effects stands on 41%. Unlike the decompositions in previous sections, this computation applies only to the subsample of firms with clear identification of headquarters. Nevertheless, it suggests a meaningful role for this headquarters-branch distinction for the overall rise in inequality.

---

establishments regardless of the activity performed in the establishment.

<sup>8</sup>Table 14 in the appendix reports a similar decomposition at a more granular level, including a breakdown of the firm’s core sector into the core 4-digit industry and other establishments in the core sector; and a breakdown of headquarters activity into NAICS-55 establishments and a residual. The main takeaways remain similar to the analysis in this section.

### 2.4.3 Firms occupational composition

My second approach to demonstrate the importance of the headquarters-branch distinction is to utilize the heterogeneity in firms' occupational structure. To this end, I first construct a measure for the position of each occupation within firms, capturing the tendency of an occupation to be in firms' headquarters. I label this measure the "HQ-intensity" of an occupation, and then ask how much of the overall rise in inequality in the economy can this simple measure account for.

I utilize firms' online job-postings data from Lightcast, merged with firm headquarters locations from Dun & Bradstreet, as described above in Subsection 2.1. For each firm  $f$  and occupation  $o$ , I compute the share of job-postings in the firm's headquarters commuting zone,  $H_{fo}$ . I then take the occupational fixed effect from the projection of  $H_{fo}$  on occupation and firm fixed effects as the occupation-level measure of headquarters intensity. This procedure ensures that my measure of headquarters intensity truly captures differences in the position of an occupation within firms, and not the tendency of some occupations to be hired in particular firms or industries. I compute these measures for 158 distinct occupational codes in the Lightcast data.

Figure 3 shows basic characteristics of these occupational HQ-intensity measures. The right panel plots the HQ-intensity measure against a simple measure of skill-intensity: the share of online-job postings in an occupation that explicitly require a college degree. A strong positive relationship emerges between these two measures, confirming that headquarters activity is highly skill-intensive. The left panel plots it against a simple measure of within-firm spatial concentration, given by the geographic Herfindahl-Hirshmann index for each occupation, averaged across firms.<sup>9</sup> Similarly to the findings in Subsection 3, headquarters activity exhibits substantial spatial-concentration within firms. These characteristics of headquarters activity serve a "sanity-check" for the computation of the headquarters-intensity measures, and will guide the modelling of firms in the theoretical part of this paper.

Going back to the question of rising inequality, I now investigate how much of the overall increase in the variance of log wages can this headquarters-intensity measure account for. To this end, I again decompose the overall increase in variance in the Census-ACS data from Subsection 2.3. I merge the headquarters-intensity measures to the Census-ACS data using workers' occupation codes, and then compute how much of the rise in variance is explained by the increasing importance of this measure between 1980-2017.

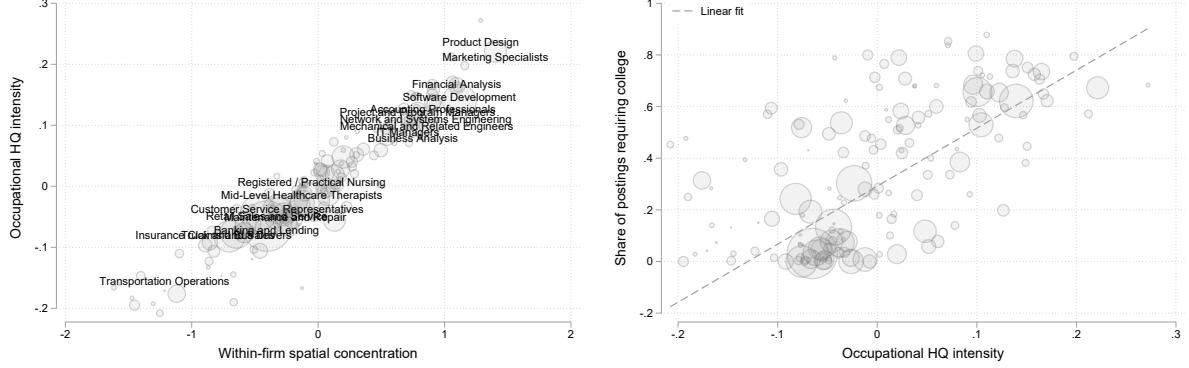
---

<sup>9</sup>I calculate a Herfindahl-Hirshmann index using data on firm job postings in different markets. High concentration means that an occupation tends to be hired only in a small subset of the firm's locations, while low concentration means that an occupation tends to be hired in most of the firm's locations.

Specifically, I define this measure as  $HHI_{fo} \equiv \frac{\left( \sum_j \left( \frac{n_{foj}}{n_{fo}} \right)^2 \right) - \frac{1}{J_{fo}}}{1 - \frac{1}{J_{fo}}}$ , where  $n_{foj}$  is the number of job-postings for firm  $f$ , occupation  $o$  in commuting zone  $j$  over the years 2010-2019,  $n_{fo}$  is the sum of  $n_{foj}$  across the firm's markets, and  $J_{fo}$  is the total number of markets with  $fo$  postings.

**Figure 3: The spatial distribution of occupations within firms**

(a) Occupational spatial concentration within-firms      (b) HQ-intensity and skill requirements



Note: This figure shows key characteristics of the occupational headquarters-intensity measures from Section 2.4.3. Panel (a) relates the geographical concentration of each occupation within firms to the tendency of the occupation to be hired in firm headquarters. The y-axis shows the share of job-postings that are located in the headquarters market (commuting zone) of firms. The x-axis shows the average across firms in the log of within-firm normalized Herfindahl–Hirschman index (HHI). Both measures are shown after demeaning NAICS-2 sector-level effects. Panel (b) shows the share of job-postings that require a college degree for each occupation against the above measure of occupational headquarters-intensity. In both panels, the size of the circle represents total job-postings for an occupation.

Specifically, I project log individual wage earnings on my HQ-intensity measure and other selected individual characteristics, and compute the share of the overall rise in variance this measure accounts for. I include in this projection a series of fixed effects capturing individual educational attainment, geography (commuting zones), and their interactions, in order to highlight the strength of my HQ-intensity measures on top of these other factors. Results from this variance decomposition can be seen in Table 5. As we have seen before, the overall increase in the variance of log wages in the economy over the covered period stands at 0.17 points (recall Table 2 from above). Out of this increase, 46% can be accounted for by my occupational HQ-intensity measure; 18% by the combination of education and geography; and additional 20% by their covariance. Of course, this is only an accounting decomposition, and the substantial role for my HQ-intensity measures could be reflecting other mechanisms that are not related to firm expansion. However, it provides further evidence that the HQ-branch distinction seem to be quantitatively important for the question of rising wage inequality.

I conclude these findings with the following fact:

**Fact 4.** *The distinction between firm headquarters and branches – measured through the industry classification of firms’ establishments or through workers’ occupations – accounts for a substantial part of the rise in wage inequality.*

To recap, I have shown that: (a) multi-region service firms have experienced substantial spatial expansion between 1980-2017; (b) they account for most of the increase in

**Table 5:** Decomposition of the rise in variance of individual earnings

Component of log individual earnings	$\Delta$ Variance 1980-2017	% of total $\Delta$
HQ-intensity of the occupation	0.08	46%
Commuting zone and college attainment	0.03	18%
Covariance	0.03	20%
Residual	0.03	16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note: this table shows a variance decomposition of individual wage earnings from the 1980 Decennial Census and 2015-2019 American Community Survey. Individual earnings are regressed on the interaction of commuting-zone and college attainment fixed effects, and on the continuous measure of occupational headquarters intensity from Section 2.4.3 of the paper. The table shows changes over time in the variance for the predicted part of earnings based on each of these components, and the residual change in variance.

wage inequality between 1980-2017, and specifically the increase in within-industry wage inequality; (c) much of the increase in wage inequality is across different establishments within these firms; (d) much of the increase in wage inequality can be accounted for by the distinction between firm headquarters and branches in these firms. Taken together, these evidence provide the motivation to model multi-location firms and their expansion in the analysis of growing inequality.

Independently of the question of wage inequality, I have also documented key patterns in the structure of multi-region service firms, that will guide the construction of the model. In particular, these firms tend to organize as networks of spatially-dispersed branches linked by spatially-concentrated headquarters. In addition, activity in firm headquarters is more skill intensive.

### 3 A spatial model of firm expansion

In this section I develop a model to analyze how changes in the spatial scope of firms shape labor market outcomes. The model introduces two novel features into an otherwise standard quantitative spatial general equilibrium framework. First, I introduce a production function for multi-region service firms, according to which firms need to open a branch to serve any given market, and the output of their headquarters labor is a non-rival input across branches. Second, I assume that workers have idiosyncratic preferences for different employers,<sup>10</sup> generating monopsony power for the firm in each of its markets.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup>See e.g. Card et al. (2018).

<sup>11</sup>In appendix H, I recast the model with a different mechanism to generate firm-specific wages that allows for unobserved worker heterogeneity. While this implies an alternative interpretation for why workers are paid different wages conditional on their skill group and location (focusing on workers' ability and not on preferences), it maintains the wage structure of multi-region firms and their role in the rise of wage inequality over time.

### 3.1 Setup

The economy consists of  $N$  regions, indexed by  $i$  and  $j$ . There are  $S$  types of workers who differ in skill and indexed by  $s$ , with an aggregate supply of  $\bar{L}_s$  workers of type  $s$ . All households consume services and tradable-goods, and can choose their region  $i$  and employer  $\nu$ .<sup>12</sup> For simplicity, I assume that tradable-goods are homogenous, freely traded and produced using constant returns to scale (henceforth CRS) technology. Since the price of goods is identical in all regions, I choose it as the numeraire. In the services sector, households consume a continuum of varieties in a setting of monopolistic competition. These varieties are partially non-tradable in the sense that part of the value added is generated near the consumer, by hiring local labor; while another part is tradable and generated by hiring workers at a potentially distant headquarters.

### 3.2 Households

Households choose their region  $i$ , employer  $\nu$ , consumption of tradable-goods  $Q_i^g$  and the bundle of local services  $Q_i$  to maximize

$$U_{is\nu} = b_{i\nu} (Q_i)^{\beta} (Q_i^g)^{1-\beta}, \quad Q_i = \left[ \int_{\omega \in \Omega_i} (q_i(\omega))^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} d\omega \right]^{\frac{\sigma}{\sigma-1}}, \quad (2)$$

where  $b_{i\nu}$  is an household-specific idiosyncratic preference shock for region  $i$  and employer  $\nu$ ;  $\beta \in (0, 1)$  is the expenditure share on services;  $Q_i^g$  is a homogenous quantity of goods; and the bundle  $Q_i$  aggregates all service varieties  $\omega$  available in market  $i$ , using a constant elasticity of substitution  $\sigma > 1$ . I denote the price index for local services by  $P_i$ , and the price index that aggregates goods and services by  $\bar{P}_i$ .<sup>13</sup>

**Labor supply.** Households draw the set of idiosyncratic shocks  $b_{i\nu}$  from a nested Fréchet distribution,<sup>14</sup> which guides their sorting decisions across space and across employers. The upper nest reflects preferences across locations with dispersion given by  $\xi$ , capturing a regional labor supply elasticity. The lower nest reflects preferences across employers<sup>15</sup> with dispersion given by  $\epsilon$ , capturing an employer-level labor supply elasticity. As a result, an employer  $\nu$  in region  $i$  that wishes to hire  $l_{is}(\nu)$  workers of skill  $s$  is

<sup>12</sup>An employer can be the local branch of some firm or its headquarters.

<sup>13</sup>The services price index is given by  $P_i = \left( \int_{\omega \in \Omega_i} P_i(\omega)^{1-\sigma} d\omega \right)^{\frac{1}{1-\sigma}}$ . Since the price of goods is set to unity,  $\bar{P}_i = P_i^\beta$ . In the quantification of the model in Section 5 I add local housing, which also enters into the formula for the regional final price index  $\bar{P}_i$ .

<sup>14</sup>Specifically, I assume that  $F(\mathbf{b}) = \exp \left( - \sum_{i=1}^N \left( \int_{\nu \in \mathcal{V}_i} b_{i\nu}^{-\epsilon} d\nu \right)^{\frac{\xi}{\epsilon}} \right)$ .

<sup>15</sup>An employer in the model is a combination of a firm (i.e. a variety  $\omega$ ) and a local market. For example, agents draw different shocks  $b_{i\nu}$  for a Starbucks branch in New-York and a Starbucks branch in Seattle. In addition, I assume that headquarters jobs and branch-level jobs for the same firm are distinct jobs: working for the Starbucks HQ in Seattle is not the same as working for one of its branches there. Therefore, firms face multiple labor supply curves: one for each market in which they have a branch, and another one for their headquarters.

required to pay a wage

$$w_{is}(\nu) = L_{is}^{-\frac{1}{\epsilon}} W_{is} l_{is}(\nu)^{\frac{1}{\epsilon}}, \quad W_{is} = \left( \int_{\nu \in \mathcal{V}_i} w_{is}(\nu)^{\epsilon} d\nu \right)^{\frac{1}{\epsilon}}, \quad (3)$$

where  $L_{is}$  is the measure of type- $s$  workers that choose location  $i$ <sup>16</sup> and  $W_{is}$  is the regional wage index for type- $s$  workers.<sup>17</sup> When the employer-specific labor supply elasticity is infinite ( $\epsilon \rightarrow \infty$ ), all local employers pay a common wage equal to the index  $W_{is}$ . Otherwise, firms need to pay higher wages to attract more workers.

### 3.3 The services production function

The production structure of multi-region firms is the key novel element of the model. I define a firm in the services sector by its technology to produce a unique variety. Consider a firm headquartered in market  $i$  with the capability to produce a variety  $\omega$ . The firm can choose to open a branch in any market  $j$  by paying a fixed cost  $f$  in units of the local final good. A firm that hires  $l_{ijs}$  workers of type  $s$  produces  $q_{ij}(\omega)$  units of output in that market according to

$$q_{ij}(\omega) = \varphi_{ij}(\omega) \prod_{s=1}^S l_{ijs}^{\alpha_s}, \quad (4)$$

where  $\varphi_{ij}(\omega)$  is the productivity of the firm in market  $j$  conditional on having its headquarters in market  $i$ ; and  $\alpha_s$  is the output-elasticity of type- $s$  labor in branch-level production. For example, consider the case of Starbucks branches in San Francisco. In this case,  $\omega$  stands for Starbucks;  $i$  for Seattle – the headquarters location of Starbucks;  $j$  for San Francisco; and  $l_{ijs}$  for Starbucks worker of skill  $s$  in its San Francisco branches.<sup>18</sup>

The productivity term  $\varphi_{ij}(\omega)$  captures the importance of multi-region firms and comprises four parts:

$$\varphi_{ij}(\omega) = A_{ij} z_{\omega,i} \phi_{\omega,j} \left( \prod_{s=1}^S h_{is}^{\rho_s} \right)^\gamma. \quad (5)$$

First, all firms that are headquartered in market  $i$  and serve market  $j$  share a common productivity shifter  $A_{ij}$ . This shifter captures all exogenous factors that affect the ability

<sup>16</sup>The probability that workers of type  $s$  choose location  $i$  is given by  $\frac{L_{is}}{\sum_{j=1}^N L_{js}} = \frac{(W_{is}/\bar{P}_i)^\xi}{\sum_{j=1}^N (W_{js}/\bar{P}_j)^\xi}$ . It increases with real income in location  $i$ , given by the ratio of the local  $s$ -specific wage index  $W_{is}$  to the local price index  $\bar{P}_i$ .

<sup>17</sup>This index aggregates wages across all available employers in market  $i$ ,  $\mathcal{V}_i$ . It takes into account both the level of wages and the variety of jobs.

<sup>18</sup>When I quantify the model in Section 5, I define a region in the model as a U.S. commuting zone. Accordingly, a branch in the model aggregates all establishments of a given firm in a commuting zone. One of the advantages of this approach is that the model can remain generic with respect to the specific industry and types of firms that it considers. For example, Walmart might choose fewer establishments to serve a local market relative to Starbucks, but the model encompasses both by aggregating all activity within a local market.

to operate a HQ-branch relationship between  $i$  and  $j$ , such as distance, availability of transportation and communication infrastructure, and the regulatory environment.<sup>19,20</sup> In the quantification of the model below, I will assume that  $A_{ij} \equiv A_i/\tau_{ij}$ , where  $A_i$  is a unilateral productivity component, and  $\tau_{ij}$  is a bilateral and symmetric term that captures spatial frictions for operating HQ-branch linkages. The second term,  $z_{\omega,i}$ , is firm-level productivity, affecting production across all of firm  $\omega$  branches. The subscript  $i$  captures the dependency of this firm-level component on the firm's headquarters location.<sup>21</sup> The third term,  $\phi_{\omega,j}$ , is a branch specific shock, reflecting all factors that make location  $j$  a particularly successful branch for the firm. In the Starbucks example,  $A_{ij}$  captures the ability of any Seattle-based firm to operate branches in San Francisco;  $z_{\omega,i}$  captures the productivity of Starbucks across all its branches; and  $\phi_{\omega,j}$  is a shock unique to Starbucks in San Francisco.

The final component in the productivity composite (5) reflects the firm's choice of inputs in the headquarters. Firms choose the measure of workers  $h_{is}$  to hire in their HQ, where  $\rho_s$  is the elasticity of the HQ composite to type- $s$  labor. The output of these workers is non-rival across branches, with the parameter  $\gamma$  governing the elasticity of branch productivity to HQ inputs. In the Starbucks example,  $h_{is}$  represents workers in its Seattle HQ, such as Starbucks designers, food-scientists, and programers.

For future reference, the four productivity components are summarized in Table 6 below.

**Table 6:** Firm productivity components

Firm productivity term	Interpretation
$A_{ij}$	Exogenous bilateral shifter, common to all firms with HQ at $i$ and a branch at $j$
$z_{\omega,i}$	Firm-specific draw, common to all the firm's branches if it is HQed at $i$
$\phi_{\omega,j}$	Firm-branch-specific draw in location $j$ - no direct effect on other branches
$\left(\prod_{s=1}^S h_{is}^{\rho_s}\right)^{\gamma}$	Endogenous choice of HQ labor, affecting all the firm's branches

Note: Productivity components for a firm  $\omega$  with headquarters at market  $i$  and a branch at market  $j$ .

---

<sup>19</sup> Inter alia, it also includes all unilateral exogenous features that make location  $i$  particularly attractive for firms to place their headquarters there. For example, the availability of an airport might make it easier for businesses to manage their branches from  $i$  throughout all destinations  $j$ . Note that the supply of labor (including the relative supply of skilled labor) and the size of the market are endogenously determined in the model, so they are excluded from this term.

<sup>20</sup> The U.S. banking sector provides an example in which regulations were responsible for particularly low  $A_{ij}$ , since in the early 1980s banks in many states were still forbidden from operating branches in other states. In the model, this would be captured as  $A_{ij} \rightarrow 0$  when  $i$  and  $j$  are in different states. The removal of these regulations would be interpreted as a transition to positive  $A_{ij}$ .

<sup>21</sup> The firm has a single productivity  $z_{\omega,i}$  once its headquarters location is set. However, as we will see later, it faces multiple  $z_{\omega,i}$  – one for each market – when making its headquarters location decision.

### 3.4 Firm's production problem

From this point on, I omit the reference to the firm's variety  $\omega$ , since all firms with the same headquarters location  $i$  and productivities  $z_i$  and  $\phi \equiv \{\phi_j\}_{j=1}^N$  make the same decisions. The firm's problem is to choose branch-level labor  $\mathbf{l} \equiv \{l_{js}\}$  across all markets  $j$  and HQ-level labor  $\mathbf{h} = \{h_{is}\}$  to maximize profits  $\pi_i(z_i, \phi)$ . Profits are given by the sum of sales across all markets, after deducting variable and fixed costs across all active branches and payments to headquarters labor. The firm internalizes that it faces a downward-sloping demand curve in each market, with demand elasticity  $\sigma$ ; and an upward-sloping labor supply curve for each branch and for the HQ, with labor supply elasticity  $\epsilon$ . Profits for a  $i$ -headquartered firm are thus given by<sup>22</sup>

$$\begin{aligned} \pi_i(z_i, \phi) = \max_{\mathbf{h}, \mathbf{l}} & \sum_j \underbrace{E_j^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} P_j^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} q_{ij}(z_i, \phi)^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}}}_{\text{Sales in market } j} \\ & - \sum_j \mathbb{I}_j \left( \underbrace{\sum_s W_{js} L_{js}^{-\frac{1}{\epsilon}} l_{js}^{\frac{\epsilon+1}{\epsilon}} - \bar{P}_j f}_{\text{Costs in market } j} \right) - \underbrace{\sum_s W_{is} L_{is}^{-\frac{1}{\epsilon}} h_{is}^{\frac{\epsilon+1}{\epsilon}}}_{\text{HQ costs in market } i}, \end{aligned} \quad (6)$$

where  $\mathbb{I}_j$  is an indicator that equals to 1 if the firm is active in market  $j$ .

I impose two additional assumptions to facilitate tractable aggregation of the model. First, I assume that firms choose their HQ inputs  $\mathbf{h}$  before the branch-level shocks  $\phi$  are observed, and that they make branch-level decisions  $\mathbf{l}$  after  $\phi$  are observed. Therefore, firms decide on  $\mathbf{h}$  by forming expectations about which markets they will serve, based on their knowledge of the HQ location  $i$  and their firm-level productivity  $z_i$ . Second, I assume that the branch-level shocks  $\phi$  are drawn independently from a common Pareto distribution with shape parameter  $\theta$ .<sup>23</sup>

### 3.5 Entry and headquarters location decisions

Firms can enter freely in any initial market  $n$  by paying  $f_e$  units of the local final good. Upon entry, firms observe their firm-level productivities  $\mathbf{z}$  across all potential markets and choose where to locate their headquarters to maximize profits  $\pi_i(z_i, \phi)$ ,

$$\max_i \mathbb{E}_\phi [\pi_i(z_i, \phi)]. \quad (7)$$

---

<sup>22</sup>Note that under this specification, every firm has headquarters and branches. A single-establishment firm in the data is therefore captured in the model by a combination of small headquarters and a single branch in the same location. This can be thought of as combination of workers and management in a single establishment. The model remains agnostic on whether these activities occur in the same establishment or different establishments, conditional on occurring in the same labor market.

<sup>23</sup>In practice, I assume that the shape parameter is scaled by  $\theta$  and given by  $\left(\frac{\sigma}{\sigma-1} - \frac{\epsilon}{1+\epsilon}\right)\theta$  for analytical convenience, and that this term is greater than one. Note that since  $\sigma > 1$  and  $\epsilon > 1$ , it is always the case that  $\frac{\sigma}{\sigma-1} - \frac{\epsilon}{1+\epsilon} > 0$ . Also note that  $\sigma$  and  $\epsilon$  remain constant throughout the counterfactual analysis.

Firms thus sort in space based on the knowledge of their potential productivity in each location. However, I introduce a simple friction in this process that allows for a lasting effect of the initial entry location.<sup>24</sup> Specifically, I assume that firms retain only a share  $c \in (0, 1)$  of their productivity if they chose a HQ location  $i$  that is different from their initial entry location  $n$ . The productivities  $\mathbf{z}$  are thus a product of some baseline productivity  $z_{0,i}$  that is drawn upon entry, and the parameter  $c$  if  $i \neq n$ .<sup>25</sup> This friction creates a link between the entry location and the headquarters location, while still allowing for sorting: As  $c \rightarrow 1$ , the entry cost is sunk, and firms sort independently of their initial entry location; as  $c \rightarrow 0$ , ex post sorting is impossible, and the headquarters location is determined by the initial entry location, before firms observe their HQ-level productivities. The loss of productivity expressed in  $c$  captures all kinds of advantages that entrepreneurs face when deciding on keeping their main location of operations in their home market, including familiarity with local economic conditions and regulations, as well as home-bias in preference that might affect the productivity of the firm's management. This structure allows to encompass a range of assumptions on entry and headquarters location by varying the parameter  $c$ .<sup>26</sup> Finally, I assume that the baseline productivities  $z_{0,i}$  are drawn from an i.i.d Fréchet distribution with shape parameter  $\eta > 1$ .

To recap, the entry and headquarters-location block of the model introduces three parameters: entry cost  $f_e$ , the dispersion of HQ-level shocks  $\eta$ , and the productivity loss from moving headquarters away from the firm's entry location,  $c$ .

### 3.6 The tradable-goods sector

Tradable goods are produced under conditions of perfect competition and constant returns to scale, and are freely traded across locations. Firms produce using a Cobb-Douglas production function that combines different types of labor with skill-intensities  $\alpha_{g,s}$ , such that  $\sum_{s=1}^S \alpha_{g,s} = 1$ . I allow productivity to differ across locations, such that goods-producing firms in region  $i$  have a total factor productivity of  $A_{g,i}$ . Similarly to the services sector, firms can enter freely after paying  $f_e$  units of the local final good.<sup>27</sup>

This completes the set-up of the model. I now turn to characterize key properties of the equilibrium, focusing on the structure of wages and inequality.

---

<sup>24</sup>As I discuss later, this allows more variation in firm size across space, which is a key feature of the data.

<sup>25</sup>Specifically,  $z_i = cz_{0,i}$  for market  $i$  if  $i \neq n$ , and  $z_i = z_{0,i}$  if  $i = n$ .

<sup>26</sup>In Section 5 below I estimate  $c$  and find it to be closer to 0, implying a strong connection between headquarters locations and the initial entry locations.

<sup>27</sup>Note that since firms in this sector operate in the same labor markets as service firms, they also face the same firm-specific upward-sloping labor supply curves and earn rents due to labor market power. The free entry condition ensures that net profits are zero in equilibrium.

## 4 Equilibrium characterization

### 4.1 Aggregation

A key property of the model is that it admits tractable aggregation despite the complex firm micro-structure. Specifically, as I show in detail in Appendix Section F, equilibrium can be expressed in terms of region-level variables, without keeping track of firm-level decisions. Firm-level decisions are then obtained as power functions of these regional variables and the exogenous firm productivity terms  $z$  and  $\phi$ . The set of equilibrium regional variables is regional employment and wage indices –  $L_{is}$  and  $W_{is}$  – for all markets and skill-groups; the mass of service-sector entrants, service-sector headquarters and goods-producing firms in each market –  $M_{e,i}$ ,  $M_i$  and  $M_{g,i}$ , respectively; aggregate revenues for  $i$ -headquartered service firms and goods-producing firms,  $R_i$  and  $R_{g,i}$ ; the services price index  $P_i$ ; and average productivity indices  $Z_i$ , capturing the average HQ-level productivity  $z_i$  of firms that place their headquarters in  $i$ . I summarize this property of the model in the following Lemma:

**Lemma 1.** *The model's equilibrium can be expressed as a set of non-linear equations that include as variables only region-level aggregates.*

**Proof:** see Appendix Section F.

### 4.2 Firm wages and inequality

I now turn to characterize wages and inequality. I begin with the structure of branch-level wages, as summarized in the following proposition:

**Proposition 2.** *Consider a firm headquartered in market  $i$  with a branch in market  $j$ , characterized by firm-level productivity  $z$  and branch-level productivity  $\phi$ . The wages that this firm pays for workers of type  $s$  admit a log-linear structure given by*

$$\log w_{ijs}(z, \phi) = \underbrace{\text{const}_s + \frac{1}{\epsilon+1} \log \left( W_{js}^\epsilon L_{js}^{-1} \bar{P}_j^{\frac{\theta-1}{\theta}} \Upsilon_j^{\frac{1}{\theta}} \right)}_{\text{Local market effect}} + \underbrace{\frac{\chi}{\epsilon} \log \phi}_{\text{Branch-specific shock}} \\ + \underbrace{\frac{\chi}{\epsilon} \frac{1}{1-\gamma\chi\theta} \log z}_{\text{Fundamental firm productivity}} + \underbrace{\frac{\gamma\chi}{\epsilon+1} \log \frac{\Lambda_i}{\Gamma_i}}_{\text{HQ market effect}} + \underbrace{\frac{\chi}{\epsilon} \log A_{ij}}_{\text{HQ-branch frictions}},$$

with  $\chi \equiv \frac{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}}{1 - \frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}}$  and where  $\Upsilon_j$ ,  $\Lambda_i$  and  $\Gamma_i$  are regional aggregates that capture the market-potential of operating a branch in  $j$ , the attractiveness of operating headquarters in  $i$ , and the cost of headquarters labor in  $i$ , respectively.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup>See Appendix Section F for a discussion of these terms. The market potential term is given by

**Proof:** see Appendix Section F.

Proposition 2 highlights how wages in this model differ from more standard settings without multi-region firms. I discuss the five terms included in this wage decomposition in turn. The first term is the local market effect that exists in every spatial model - both competitive and monopsonistic - due to the segregation of labor markets across space. When the labor supply elasticity  $\epsilon$  is infinite, this is the only term that remains, and the wage  $w_{ijs}(z, \phi)$  collapses to the market wage index  $W_{js}$ .<sup>29</sup> The second term is the branch-specific effect, that exists in every model with wage differentiation across (single-establishment) firms, and depends on the branch productivity draw  $\phi$ .

The other three components are unique to the current setting of multi-region firms. First, firms with higher fundamental productivity  $z$  pay higher wages across all of their branch locations. When the HQ-branch elasticity  $\gamma$  is zero, the effect of higher  $z$  is the same as higher branch productivity  $\phi$ .<sup>30</sup> With a positive  $\gamma$ , the effect of higher  $z$  is amplified: the greater market size of more productive firms leads them to hire more HQ workers, raising productivity across all branches by a magnitude determined by  $\gamma$ . Second, conditional on  $z$ , being headquartered in a more attractive location  $i$  – either due to larger market size or cheaper HQ labor – also leads to more HQ hiring and higher branch productivity. This is the headquarters market effect, which disappears when  $\gamma \rightarrow 0$ . Finally, the bilateral frictions captured by  $A_{ij}$  also affect the branch productivity and therefore its wages.

Proposition 2 also rationalizes the empirical findings in Section 2 and related findings in the labor literature on wage setting in multi-region firms. Through the firm-level productivity  $z$  and HQ-location effect  $i$ , it provides a rationale for why establishments of the same firm pay similar wages across all of the local labor markets in which they operate, as documented in Hazell et al. (2021). This is also consistent with the large role of inequality *across firms* in accounting for inequality *across establishments*.<sup>31</sup> The proposition also claims that part of the firm effect that is common to all of its branches

---

$\Upsilon_j \equiv \left( E_j^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} P_j^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} C_j^{-(1-\psi)} \bar{P}_j^{-\psi \frac{\theta-1}{\theta}} \right)^{\frac{\theta}{\psi}}$  with  $\psi \equiv 1 - \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\epsilon}{1+\epsilon}$ ; the cost shifter of branch-level labor is given by  $C_j \equiv \prod_s \left( \alpha_s W_{js}^{-1} L_{js}^{\frac{1}{\epsilon}} \right)^{-\alpha_s}$ ; the cost shifter of headquarters labor is given by  $\Gamma_i \equiv \prod_s \left( \rho_s W_{is}^{-1} L_{is}^{\frac{1}{\epsilon}} \right)^{-\rho_s}$ ; and regional headquarters attractiveness is given by  $\Lambda_i \equiv \tilde{\iota} \left( \sum_{j=1}^N A_{ij}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \Upsilon_j \right)^{\frac{1}{\psi}} \Gamma_i^{-\frac{1-\iota}{\iota}}$ , where  $\iota \equiv 1 - \gamma \frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\theta}{\psi}$  and  $\tilde{\iota}$  is a constant that subsumes various parameters.

<sup>29</sup>With a finite  $\epsilon$ , it decreases in labor supply  $L_{js}$  since there is less labor market competition for workers; increases in the market potential from opening branches  $\Upsilon_j$ ; and decreases in the local price index  $\bar{P}_j$ , which prices the fixed cost of opening branches.

<sup>30</sup>This can be seen by the same coefficient  $\chi/\epsilon$  when  $\gamma = 0$ .

<sup>31</sup>This is true even after controlling for the local labor market effects  $j$  that account for the fact that firms open establishments in different markets. In fact, the rise in variance across commuting zones accounts for only a very small part of the overall increase in inequality. Accordingly, the role of inequality between firms in Section 2 cannot be explained purely by differences in the location choices of firms for their establishments.

derives from the location of its headquarters. This result is consistent with findings in the literature on wage setting in multinational firms, in which affiliate wages are increasing with the average wage in the headquarters country of the firm, as in Setzler and Tintelnot (2021). As part of the model estimation in Section 5, I provide evidence for the quantitative importance of this channel, and show that headquarters locations account for between 30%-50% of the wage variance across multi-region firms.

Another important aspect of Proposition 2 is that the wage distribution depends on the spatial equilibrium through two channels: the establishment location  $j$  and the headquarters location  $i$ . Therefore, changes in the spatial distribution of economic activity can affect not only inequality across regions, but also inequality within any region. In addition, the wage distribution is shaped by the full HQ-branch network, highlighting the importance of solving for firm headquarters and branch locations when studying changes in inequality.

Proposition 2 focuses on branch-level wages. I now turn to characterizing the relationship between headquarters wages and branch wages, as stated in the following:

**Proposition 3.** *Firm size and inequality between headquarters and branches:*

- a) *Across firm types: consider two firms with headquarters in location  $i$  and HQ-level productivities  $z'_i$  and  $z_i$  such that  $z'_i > z_i$ . Assume that both are active in market  $j$  and have the same branch-level productivity shock  $\phi_j$ . Then the ratio of headquarters wage to the wage in branch  $j$  for each skill type  $s$  is higher in firm  $z'_i$  than in firm  $z_i$ .*
- b) *For a given firm type: Let  $r_{ij}(z_i, \phi_j)$  be firm revenues in some market  $j$ . For each skill type  $s$ , the ratio of headquarters wages  $w_{is}^{HQ}(z_i)$  to branch wages in the firm's headquarters market  $i$ ,  $w_{is}(z_i, \phi_i)$ , is increasing in the ratio of total expected firm revenues across all locations,  $r_i(z_i) \equiv \mathbb{E}_\phi \left[ \sum_j r_{ij}(z, \phi_j) \right]$ , to local revenues in the headquarters market  $r_{ii}(z_i, \phi_i)$ .*

**Proof:** see Appendix Section F.

The first part of Proposition 3 states that other things equal, firms with higher  $z_i$  have larger wage differentials between headquarters and branches. These firms serve more locations, and accordingly have a greater incentive to hire headquarters-level labor to improve the firm's technology across all these branches. Therefore, the marginal product of headquarters labor rises relative to that of workers employed at the individual branch. Using the same logic, the second part of Proposition 3 states that for a given firm productivity  $z_i$ , HQ-branch differentials rise as the firm expands into more markets, captured by the greater ratio between total firm sales and local firm sales at its headquarters market.

### 4.3 Inequality across worker types and spatial segregation

The model also yields predictions for inequality across worker types and how it varies over space, as summarized in the following:

**Proposition 4.** *Suppose that  $s$  is the group of high-skilled workers.*

- a) *The economy-wide payroll-share of high-skilled workers is independent of the spatial distribution of economic activity, and given by*

$$\frac{\alpha_s + \rho_s \gamma + \alpha_{g,s} \frac{\sigma}{\sigma-1} \frac{1-\beta}{\beta}}{1 + \gamma + \frac{\sigma}{\sigma-1} \frac{1-\beta}{\beta}}.$$

*It increases in the share of services  $\beta$  when services as a whole are more skilled-intensive than production of tradable-goods:  $\frac{\gamma}{\gamma+1} \rho_s + \frac{1}{\gamma+1} \alpha_s > \alpha_{g,s}$ ; and it increases in the HQ-branch elasticity  $\gamma$  when headquarters production is more skill-intensive than branch production:  $\rho_s > \alpha_s$ .*

- b) *The payroll-share of high-skilled workers in some region  $i$  depends on its specialization in providing headquarters services, as summarized by the ratio of total sales by locally-headquartered firms,  $R_i$ , to domestic expenditure on services,  $E_i$ .*

*A sufficient condition for it to rise with  $R_i/E_i$  is that headquarters are sufficiently skill intensive:  $\rho_s > \alpha_{g,s} + \frac{1}{\gamma} (\alpha_{g,s} - \alpha_s)$ ; and that the productivity loss from reallocation of headquarters is small ( $c \rightarrow 0$ ).*

- c) *In the limit economy with no multi-region service firms, i.e.  $A_{ij} \rightarrow 0 \forall i \neq j$ , there are no differences in the payroll-share of high-skilled workers across space.*

**Proof:** see Appendix Section F.

Proposition 4 highlights the importance of multi-region firms for the distribution of wage income across skill groups. The ability to operate branches in other markets allows certain local markets (like Seattle or New York City) to specialize in providing headquarters services. When a local market  $i$  hosts many or particularly large headquarters, the revenues by all  $i$ -headquartered firms,  $R_i$ , are large relative to local spending on services,  $E_i$ . If headquarters activity is very skill-intensive (high  $\rho_s$ ) – as in the data – it yields a high payroll share for skilled labor in market  $i$ . This result gives a natural explanation for the empirical co-location of headquarters activity and skilled labor, and for the rise in the skill premium and the relative supply of skilled labor in local labor markets that specialize in providing headquarters services.<sup>32</sup> In the limit economy with no multi-region firms, the high-skilled payroll share is equalized across all labor markets. More generally,

---

<sup>32</sup>Note that for this effect to take place, the model does not require for services as a whole to be more skill-intensive than the goods sector, but only the tradable part of value-added that crosses regional borders.

a reduction in barriers to firm expansion (higher  $A_{ij}$  for  $i \neq j$ ) increases the scope for specialization and the resulting spatial differences in compensation for skilled workers.

#### 4.4 Additional features of the equilibrium

I now briefly mention several additional, distinctive features of the equilibrium that arise from the structure of multi-region firms in the model.

**Gravity for provision of services.** Total revenues of  $i$ -headquartered firms from branches in market  $j$  admit a log-linear gravity structure. They can be represented as a sum of a headquarters-location fixed effect, a branch-location fixed effect, and the bilateral frictions  $A_{ij}$ .<sup>33</sup> As I discuss in Section 5, this gravity structure provides a good fit for bilateral HQ-branch flows across local labor markets, when  $A_{ij}$  is parameterized as a function of distance. This pattern is reminiscent of the widely-studied gravity structure for multinational firms in the international context.

**Trade imbalances.** Inter-regional trade in goods is often characterized by large imbalances. The model rationalizes this pattern through cross-region flows in (within-firm) headquarters services. These flows are typically unobserved, but can be large in an economy with meaningful activity of multi-region firms, and rise as firms expand in space. The balance of traded goods – regional expenditure minus revenues – is given in the model by

$$\underbrace{\frac{1-\beta}{\beta}E_i - R_{g,i}}_{\text{Traded goods balance}} = \underbrace{\frac{\psi}{\theta}(R_i - E_i)}_{\text{HQ payments balance}} + \underbrace{\left(f_e \bar{P}_i M_{e,i} - \frac{\psi \iota}{\theta} R_i\right)}_{\text{Firms' profit transfers}},$$

such that net-importers of tradable-goods are net-exporters of headquarters services, and vice versa.<sup>34</sup>

**Headquarters sorting.** Recall from Equation (7) that firms choose their headquarters location to maximize expected profits. As I detail further in Appendix F, the probability that a firm chooses some location  $i$  is summarized by the regional HQ-attractiveness shifter  $\Lambda_i$ .<sup>35</sup> This shifter reflects large market size (high market potential term  $\Upsilon_i$ ); high connectivity to other large markets (high  $A_{ij}$ s vis-à-vis other markets with high  $\Upsilon_j$ ); and

---

<sup>33</sup>Specifically, they are given by  $R_{ij} = \frac{A_{ij}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \Upsilon_j}{\sum_{j'=1}^N A_{ij'}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \Upsilon_{j'}} R_i$ , where recall that  $\Upsilon_j$  captures market potential for location  $j$ , and  $R_i$  captures total revenues by  $i$ -headquartered firms.

<sup>34</sup>The constants  $\psi$  and  $\iota$  subsume various model parameters. The third source of bilateral flows in this expression –  $(f_e \bar{P}_i M_{e,i} - \frac{\psi \iota}{\theta} R_i)$  – is due to shifting of firm profits across space due to differences between entry locations and headquarters locations. However, in the quantified model, the net-flows that arise from this part are small.

<sup>35</sup>Specifically, it is given by  $\frac{(c^{\zeta \mathbb{I}_{n \neq i}} \Lambda_i)^{\frac{\eta}{\zeta}}}{\sum_{m=1}^N (c^{\zeta \mathbb{I}_{n \neq m}} \Lambda_m)^{\frac{\eta}{\zeta}}}$ , where  $\zeta$  is a constant that subsumes various parameters of the model, reflecting the elasticity of firm profits to changes in  $\Lambda_i$ ; and recall that  $c$  is the loss of firm productivity when choosing HQ location  $i$  that is different from the entry location  $n$ .

high supply of labor that is intensive in HQ-level production. This pattern aligns with results from empirical studies of HQ location decision, e.g., Bel and Fageda (2008).

## 4.5 Extension: unobserved heterogeneity and worker screening

In the baseline version of the model, workers get different wages conditional on location and skill group due to their idiosyncratic preferences for employers. In Appendix Section H, I develop the model with alternative micro-foundations for such differences in wages, focusing on unobserved worker productivity. Following Helpman et al. (2010), I assume that workers differ in their productivity, and that it is imperfectly observed by firms. Firms can screen higher productivity workers in a frictional labor market subject to a convex screening cost, and wages at any given branch or at the headquarters are determined by the marginal surplus of the firm from employing another worker there.<sup>36</sup> Production in each branch and in the firm’s headquarters depends on the number of hired workers and on their average productivity, reflecting complementarities across workers with different abilities. In Appendix Proposition A.1, I show that the main results about the wage structure of multi region firms and the connection between firm scope and within-firm inequality (Propositions 2 and 3) continue to hold. Furthermore, I show that in such an environment, headquarters are endogenously more skill-intensive than branches, and that this gap grows as firms expand in space (See Proposition A.2). I choose the version with worker idiosyncratic preferences as the baseline model for the quantitative analysis due to its greater tractability.

# 5 Model Quantification

I now turn to estimate the model and use it to quantify the importance of firm expansion for the overall rise in wage inequality. To this end, I match key features of the U.S. economy in 1980. In Section 6, I will subject this baseline economy to a series of shocks that reflect changes in the economic environment between 1980-2017. I define a region in the model as a 1990 labor market area (LMA) of the contiguous United States, yielding  $N = 391$  regions.

## 5.1 Adding regional amenities and housing

I first enrich the model with two additional components that help to discipline the baseline equilibrium and are common in spatial equilibrium models. First, agents choosing location  $i$  now also enjoy an exogenous amenity component  $B_i$  that enters multiplicatively

---

<sup>36</sup>This assumption on wage determination is obtained as a solution to the “Rolodex” game in Brügemann et al. (2019), which corrects the Stole–Zwiebel bargaining protocol from Stole and Zwiebel (1996). See Appendix H, Helpman et al. (2010) and Brügemann et al. (2019) for additional details.

in their utility function.<sup>37</sup> This allows me to match exactly the spatial distribution of wages and employment in 1980.

Second, I add local housing, which introduces a second dispersion force on top of the idiosyncratic preference shocks. Agents spend a share  $\delta$  of their income on housing and a share  $1 - \delta$  on the composite of goods and services. I assume a constant housing supply elasticity  $\varrho$  and that the rights to housing rents are owned by immobile absentee landlords who have a similar structure of preferences for consumption as workers.<sup>38</sup>

## 5.2 External calibration of the households block

I divide the model's parameters into three groups. The first group includes parameters that govern household preferences and the housing market. This group consists of commonly-used building blocks from the literature and I rely on existing estimates to calibrate it. The second group includes regional productivity and amenity fundamentals, which I invert from the model's equilibrium conditions. The final group includes parameters from the production block of the model, which I estimate using Simulated Method of Moments (henceforth SMM).

I begin with the external calibration of the household block. I calibrate the expenditure share on services ( $\beta$ ) to match the share of services value-added in national accounts. I set the dispersion of idiosyncratic shocks across regions ( $\xi$ ) to 2.8, in line with the range of values in the trade and spatial literature, e.g. [Galle et al. \(2017\)](#). I set the dispersion of idiosyncratic shocks across employers ( $\epsilon$ ) to 5.0, matching recent estimates of the average wage markdown in [Lamadon et al. \(2022\)](#), [Berger et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Azar et al. \(2019\)](#), which is given in the model by  $\epsilon/(1 + \epsilon)$ . The elasticity of substitution across varieties  $\sigma$  is set to 5.0, to match a price markup of 25% over marginal cost. This is also in line with the range of existing estimates on substitution between goods in the trade literature, e.g. [Costinot and Rodríguez-Clare \(2014\)](#). The expenditure share on housing is set to 0.24, following [Davis and Ortalo-Magné \(2011\)](#). Finally, I set the local housing supply elasticity to the population-weighted estimate of 1.75 in [Saiz \(2010\)](#). Table 7 summarizes the calibration of this part of the model.

---

<sup>37</sup>In this case, the probability that an agent of type  $s$  chooses location  $i$  is  $\frac{L_{is}}{\sum_{j=1}^N L_{js}} = \frac{(B_i W_{is}/\bar{P}_i)^\xi}{\sum_{j=1}^N (B_j W_{js}/\bar{P}_j)^\xi}$ , where  $\bar{P}_i$  is the price index of the local final good.

<sup>38</sup>The only change in the set of equilibrium conditions following the introduction of housing is that the aggregate price index, previously given by  $P_i^\beta$ , is now equal to

$$\bar{P}_i = \left( \frac{\delta}{\beta(1-\delta)} \right)^{\frac{\delta}{(1+\varrho)-\delta\varrho}} P_i^{\beta(1-\frac{\delta}{(1+\varrho)-\delta\varrho})} E_i^{\frac{\delta}{(1+\varrho)-\delta\varrho}}.$$

I.e., conditional on the price of services  $P_i$ , local cost of living is increasing in expenditure  $E_i$  due to higher cost of housing, where recall that  $E_i$  is the local expenditure on services. The exponent on local expenditure is higher when agents spend more on housing (higher  $\delta$ ) or when housing supply is relatively inelastic (lower  $\varrho$ ).

**Table 7:** Calibration of the households block of the model

Parameter	Interpretation	Source	Value
$\xi$	Dispersion of location preference shocks	Galle et al. (2017)	2.8
$\epsilon$	Dispersion of employer preference shocks	Lamadon et al. (2022), Berger et al. (2022)	5.0
$\sigma$	EoS between varieties	Costinot and Rodríguez-Clare (2014)	5.0
$\beta_k$	Sectoral expenditure shares	Direct computation - BEA NIPA (1980)	[0.64,0.36]
$\delta$	Housing expenditure shares	Davis and Ortalo-Magne (2011)	0.24
$\varrho$	Housing supply elasticity	Saiz (2010)	1.75

I also compute the skill elasticities in production directly from the data. I set  $S = 2$  and choose the skill groups to represent workers with and without a college degree. I compute the skill elasticities  $\bar{\alpha} \equiv \{\alpha_s, \rho_s, \alpha_{g,s}\}_{s=1}^S$  according to the respective shares of total compensation in the data. To this end, I use the BEA KLEMS Integrated Industry-Level Production Account (KLEMS) statistics<sup>39</sup> that provide sectoral accounts of the distribution of labor compensation by college attainment over 1987-2019. I extrapolate the time series backward to get values for 1980. The resulting compensation shares for college graduates out of total compensation in the headquarters bundle ( $\rho_s$ ), branch-level bundle ( $\alpha_s$ ) and goods-production ( $\alpha_{g,s}$ ) are 0.36, 0.26 and 0.2, respectively.<sup>40</sup>

### 5.3 Model inversion

The set of location fundamentals  $\mathcal{A} \equiv \left\{ \{A_{ij}\}_{j=1}^N, B_i, A_{g,i} \right\}_{i=1}^N$  includes bilateral productivity shifters in the services sector, regional amenities, and regional productivity in tradable-goods. I obtain  $\mathcal{A}$  by inverting the model's equilibrium conditions, conditional on all other parameters.<sup>41</sup>

To recover  $A_{ij}$ , I first assume that it is a product of a unilateral productivity term  $A_i$  and symmetric bilateral frictions  $\tau_{ij}$ ,

$$A_{ij} = A_i / \tau_{ij}, \quad (8)$$

such that  $\tau_{ij} > 1$  for  $i \neq j$  and  $\tau_{ii} = 1$ . The set of  $\tau_{ij}$  captures frictions for operating branches away from the headquarters market. These frictions can be recovered in a similar procedure to the method proposed by Head and Ries (2001) to recover trade costs in the international trade literature. The main difference with respect to trade flows is that the flows of value added within firms - between their headquarters and branches - are typically unobserved. However, bilateral activity in the form of HQ-branch relationships

<sup>39</sup><https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/integrated-industry-level-production-account-klems>.

<sup>40</sup>These are the values for 1980. In one of the counterfactuals, I consider a change in these parameters and update them to their 2017 level, given by 0.8, 0.58, and 0.44.

<sup>41</sup>Therefore, I implement this inversion for every guess of the model's parameters when estimating the production block below.

is observed, since many datasets report firm linkages and ownership structures. Let  $M_{ij}$  be the measure of firms with headquarters in location  $i$  and a branch in location  $j$ .  $\tau_{ij}$  can be computed by double-differencing this expression and applying the symmetry assumption:<sup>42</sup>

$$\tau_{ij} = \left( \frac{M_{ij} M_{ji}}{M_{ii} M_{jj}} \right)^{-\frac{1}{\frac{2\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}}}. \quad (9)$$

When mapping  $M_{ij}$  to the data, I compute the number of firms that have headquarters in region  $i$  and any amount of branches in region  $j$ . In practice, I augment the raw data by using a smoothed version of  $M_{ij}$ , taken as the fitted values from a Poisson regression of  $M_{ij}$  on key geographical determinants between  $i$  and  $j$ , using the Poisson Pseudo-Maximum Likelihood estimator from [Silva and Tenreyro \(2006\)](#). This procedure helps me to deal with two problems when taking the model to the data: first, the prevalence of zeros in the data on  $M_{ij}$ ; second, the improvement in the quality of the data over time, which introduces varying degree of measurement error for different years. To this end, I use the following specification:

$$M_{ij} = \exp(\vartheta_i + \varsigma_j + \beta_{\text{Dist}} \log \text{Dist}_{ij} + \beta_{\text{Travel}} \log \text{Travel}_{ij} + \text{AirLink}_{ij} + \text{State}_{ij}) + \varepsilon_{ij},$$

where  $\vartheta_i$  is a fixed effect for the origin headquarters location;  $\varsigma_j$  is a fixed effect for the destination branch location;  $\text{Dist}_{ij}$  is the distance between regions  $i$  and  $j$ ;  $\text{Travel}_{ij}$  is potential travel time between  $i$  and  $j$  that incorporates both driving time for short-distances and air-travel time for long-distances;  $\text{AirLink}_{ij}$  is an indicator that captures the existence of bilateral air-travel activity between  $i$  and  $j$  in 1980;  $\text{State}_{ij}$  is an indicator that equals to one if the two regions belong to the same state (or share state borders, in case of regions that belong to more than one state); and  $\varepsilon_{ij}$  is a residual. This specification accounts for most of the variation in the raw  $M_{ij}$ , with a pseudo R-squared of 0.79 in 1980 and 0.82 in 2017. Note that the addition of  $\text{Travel}_{ij}$  and  $\text{AirLink}_{ij}$  on top of distance is aimed to capture the importance of air-travel for internal cross-region firm activity, as documented for example in [Giroud \(2013\)](#).

I implement this procedure using the Dun & Bradstreet data, which has two main advantages relative to the LBD in this context. First, in Dun & Bradstreet, every multi-establishment firm has a clear headquarters location, while in the LBD the headquarters

---

<sup>42</sup>In the model,  $M_{ij}$  can be shown to equal

$$M_{ij} = \frac{\theta - 1}{\theta} \frac{\psi}{P_j f} \frac{A_{ij}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \left( \frac{\Lambda_i}{\Gamma_i} \right)^{1-\iota} Z_i M_i}{\sum_{n=1}^N A_{nj}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \left( \frac{\Lambda_n}{\Gamma_n} \right)^{1-\iota} Z_n M_n} E_j.$$

Multiplying by  $M_{ji}$  and dividing by  $M_{ii} M_{jj}$  yields an expression that depends only on  $\tau_{ij}$  and model parameters.

location cannot be inferred for a large share of firms, especially in earlier periods.<sup>43</sup> Second, since the number of bilateral frictions increases exponentially with the number of locations, using the LBD data would require to restrict the number of regions in the model or the output from the model to avoid disclosure risk. The Dun & Bradstreet data is well-suited for this purpose, since it puts great emphasis on documenting firm linkages, and since the spatial distribution of firms and establishments is one of the dimensions in which it compares well to administrative datasets.<sup>44</sup>

To get a sense of how these frictions evolved over time, Table 8 presents the results from the above Poisson regression for the baseline estimation year of 1980, as well as for selected future years - 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2017. Unsurprisingly, in all years, the amount of bilateral linkages is decreasing in distance and potential travel time, and increasing if the two regions are in the same state or if they share a direct air-travel connection. In addition, the importance of these determinants has changed over time. Most strikingly, the role of distance exhibits a gradual decline from 1980 to 2017. The role of travel time that incorporates air travel, and of the availability of direct air link, exhibits a smaller decline, concentrated in the 1980s. This might reflect the expansion of the existing air-travel network in the early parts of the sample. In addition, the state border effect also declines slightly in the 1980s, potentially reflecting the deregulation of cross-state activity in multiple service sectors in the 1980s, such as banking and transportation.

Figure 4 provides a visual representation of the resulting frictions ( $\tau_{ij}$ ), plotting them against the distance between  $i$  and  $j$  for 1980 and 2017. In line with results from table 8, these frictions are increasing in distance, but declining over time - especially for large distances. On average, the spatial frictions  $\tau_{ij}$  decline by 30%. I will later use this average decline as a key shock to the baseline 1980 equilibrium.

I recover unilateral fundamentals  $A_i, A_{g,i}, B_i$  by solving for the model's equilibrium with inversion of specific equilibrium conditions. I briefly discuss here the moments in the data that I match as part of this procedure, and leave additional details on the inversion for Appendix G. I obtain the set of unilateral productivity shifters in services  $A_i$  by targeting the specialization in services relative to the production of goods in each region  $i$ . In the model, a sufficient statistic for that specialization is the ratio of payroll in headquarters-tasks within the service sectors to the payroll in branch-level tasks within the service sectors. To get this moment in the data for each region, I utilize my occupational headquarters-intensity measures from Section 2.4.3. To get regional productivity in production of goods  $A_{g,i}$ , I match exactly the aggregate wage bill in each LMA from the BLS Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW). Finally, I recover the set of amenities  $B_i$  by exactly matching the distribution of 1980 employment across regions.

---

<sup>43</sup>In 1980, inferring headquarters locations using the NAICS-55 establishments as described in Section 2.1 is possible for a smaller share of the overall sample relative to 2017. In addition, inferring it using the firm-level mailing address of firms is impossible since this data doesn't exist for the earlier decades.

<sup>44</sup>See Barnatchez et al. (2017) for additional details.

**Table 8: Determinants of cross-region firm activity**

Outcome: HQ-branch linkages	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Year:	1980	1990	2000	2010	2017
Log distance	-0.426*** (0.0575)	-0.393*** (0.0384)	-0.230*** (0.0303)	-0.191*** (0.0274)	-0.145*** (0.0290)
Log potential travel time	-1.235*** (0.0827)	-0.978*** (0.0634)	-1.051*** (0.0546)	-1.008*** (0.0529)	-1.106*** (0.0539)
Direct air link in 1980	0.273*** (0.0502)	0.217*** (0.0411)	0.191*** (0.0343)	0.182*** (0.0329)	0.204*** (0.0348)
Same state	1.013*** (0.0406)	0.899*** (0.0347)	0.902*** (0.0299)	0.875*** (0.0285)	0.893*** (0.0288)
Origin and destination fixed effects	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Number of observations	152490	152490	152490	152490	152490
Pseudo R-squared	0.788	0.802	0.826	0.812	0.820

Note: this table shows the results from a Poisson regression of the number of cross-region headquarters-branch linkages on selected bilateral regional determinants for the years 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2017. Regions are defined by 391 labor market areas (LMAs) of the contiguous U.S. and the linkages of a region with itself are excluded, such that the number of observations is  $N = 391 \times (391 - 1)$ . Cross-region linkages are defined as the number of service firms that have headquarters in origin region  $i$  and a branch in destination region  $j$  in a given year in the Dun & Bradstreet Data. See main text for further details on the regressors. All regressions include origin and destination fixed effects. Robust standard errors in parentheses. \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

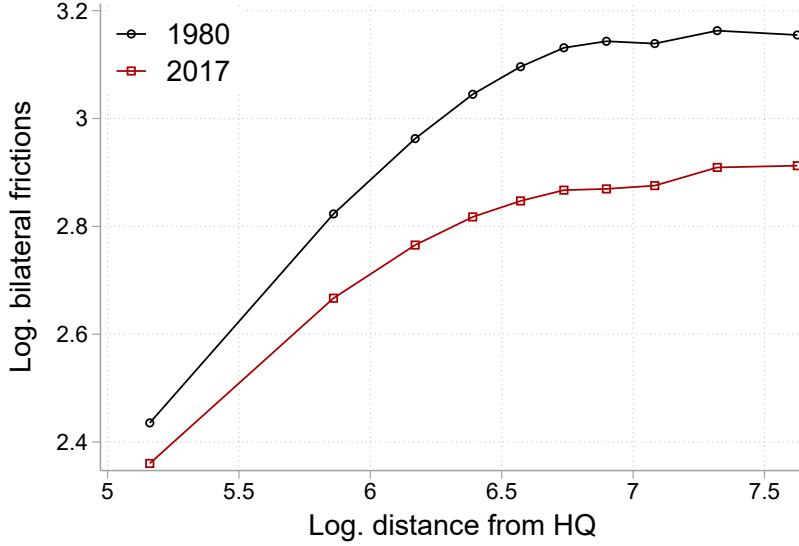
Overall, this procedure makes sure that the model matches average employment, average wages, and specialization in headquarters activity for each region.

## 5.4 Simulated method of moments for the production block

The vector of production parameters  $\Theta \equiv (\gamma, \theta, \eta, c, f, f_e)$  includes the elasticity of branch productivity to headquarters inputs,  $\gamma$ ; dispersion of branch-level and firm-level productivity shocks,  $\theta$  and  $\eta$ ; productivity loss from reallocation of headquarters,  $c$ ; and fixed production and entry costs,  $f$  and  $f_e$ . I estimate these parameters by matching key moments on firm organization and wage structure from Section 2. Below I provide brief intuition for which empirical moment helps to identify each of these parameters, though recall that in practice all moments are jointly determined in equilibrium by all of these parameters.

To facilitate the identification of  $f$  and  $f_e$ , I target the *average number of markets* per multi-region firm and the *average size of firms*. To facilitate the identification of  $\gamma$ ,  $\theta$  and  $\eta$ , I use the model-based decomposition of wages from Proposition 2. First, since  $\eta$  governs the dispersion of  $z_i$ , it relates directly to the role of firm-level wage effects, and

**Figure 4: The reduction in frictions to cross-region firm linkages (1980-2017)**



Note: This figure shows a binscatter plot of the frictions to operate headquarters-branch linkages between regions  $i$  and  $j$  ( $\tau_{ij}$ ) against the distance between regions  $i$  and  $j$ . Both variables are in logs. The black line shows this relationship for 1980, and the red line for 2017. See Section 5.3 for additional details on the computation of  $\tau_{ij}$ .

therefore to the importance of *between-firm variance* of log wages. Second,  $\gamma$  affects the magnitude of market size effects: as  $\gamma \rightarrow 0$ , the HQ-market effect from Proposition 2 disappears. I therefore target the part of between-firm variance that is due to *variation between headquarters markets* (as opposed to variation across firms with headquarters in the same market). Third,  $\theta$  affects the dispersion of branch-level wages within the firm, so I target the *overall variance of log wages*. Finally, the productivity loss from setting the headquarters away from the entry market,  $c$ , affects the allocation of headquarters across space and the responsiveness of the number of headquarters to the regional HQ-attractiveness shifter  $\Lambda_i$ , so I inform this parameter by the covariance of the mass of headquarters and average wages across space.

To estimate  $\Theta$ , I minimize the loss function  $\mathcal{L}(\Theta) \equiv (m(\Theta) - \tilde{m}_{1980})' \mathbf{W} (m(\Theta) - \tilde{m}_{1980})$  where  $m(\Theta)$  is the vector of simulated moments from the model;  $\tilde{m}_{1980}$  are the equivalent moments for 1980 in the data; and  $\mathbf{W}$  is a weighting-matrix, which I set to be diagonal and inversely proportional to the squared values of  $\tilde{m}_{1980}$ , expressing the moments in percentage-deviation terms.<sup>45</sup>

Results from this estimation procedure are provided in Table 9. I estimate a value of 0.13 for the HQ-branch elasticity parameter  $\gamma$ . This value reflects a payroll-share of approximately 12% for headquarters-level labor, and as such aligns with the expenditure share implied by the distribution of firms payroll from Section 2.3. I also estimate a

<sup>45</sup>In practice, I employ the TikTak algorithm for global optimization from Arnoud et al. (2019) with 500 starting points, setting the Nelder–Mead method as the local minimizer.

high value for the productivity loss from moving headquarters away from the initial entry location (captured by a low value for  $c$ ), reflecting limited HQ sorting and important role for the initial firm entry location.

**Table 9:** Parameters for the production block of the model

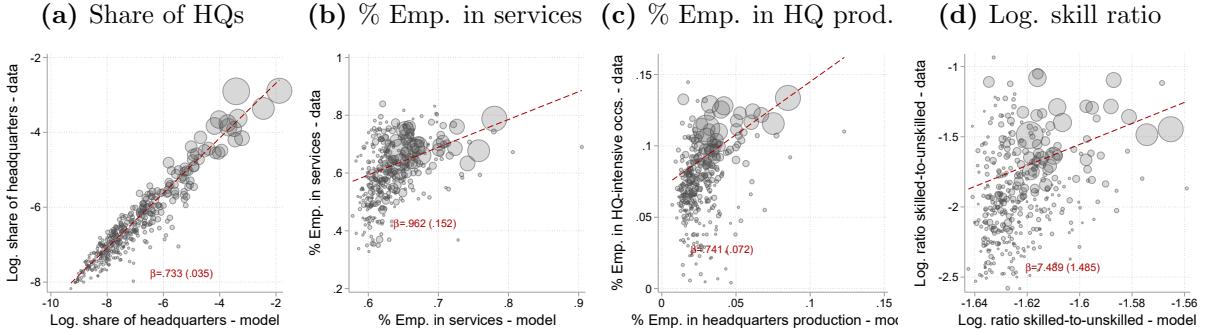
Parameter	Interpretation	Estimate	Main targeted moment	Model	Data (1980)
$\theta$	Shape parameter of branch-level shocks	1.3	Var. of log. wages, MR firms - overall	0.22	0.22
$\eta$	Shape parameter of firm-level shocks	5.53	Var. of log. wages, MR firms - between firms	0.12	0.11
$\gamma$	Elasticity of branch productivity to HQ inputs	0.13	Var. of log. wages, MR firms - between HQ markets	0.05	0.05
$c$	Productivity loss from moving HQ	0.18	Regional covariance of headquarters and wages	0.16	0.2
$f$	Fixed cost of operating a branch	8.31	Average number of markets per multi-region firm	5.04	5.02
$f_e$	Fixed entry cost	301	Average employment per multi-region firm	462	484

## 5.5 Characterization of the baseline equilibrium

In this section, I report features of the baseline 1980 equilibrium, and show how the model compares to the U.S. economy in 1980 when addressing moments that were not targeted in the estimation procedure. I begin with the spatial distribution of economic activity. By construction, the model matches exactly the distribution of employment and average wages across space. Figure 5 shows the variation across space of other variables predicted by the model. Each subplot shows a single moment across all LMAs, in the model (x-axis) and in the data (y-axis). The size of each circle reflects total LMA employment. Panel (a) focuses on the distribution of headquarters across locations and reveals a tight fit between the model and the data. Panel (b) shows the regional share of employment in services sectors (out of total regional workforce). The corresponding measure in the data is computed from the Census Business Dynamics Statistics (BDS). The model yields too little specialization in tradable-goods for the small LMAs, but still the relationship is strong and positive. In particular, the model captures well the positive association between local market size and specialization in services.

Panel (c) shows the share of employment in headquarters tasks as a share of the total regional workforce. I choose as the corresponding measure in the data the employment share in the most HQ-intensive occupations, as computed in Section 2.4.3. In line with panel (b), larger markets tend to specialize in providing headquarters services, with greater employment share in the associated occupations. Finally, panel (d) shows the (log) ratio of skilled to unskilled labor across markets. In the model, the only reason for differences in this measure across space is specialization in providing headquarters services, as summarized in Proposition 4. All other reasons such as within-sector specialization, skill-specific amenities, and regional differences in the factor-bias of technology are excluded. Nevertheless, there is a strong and positive correlation for spatial skill-intensity between the model and the data. Quantitatively, this single mechanism can account for slightly over 20% of the differences in skill-intensity across space.

**Figure 5: Regional characteristics in the baseline equilibrium**



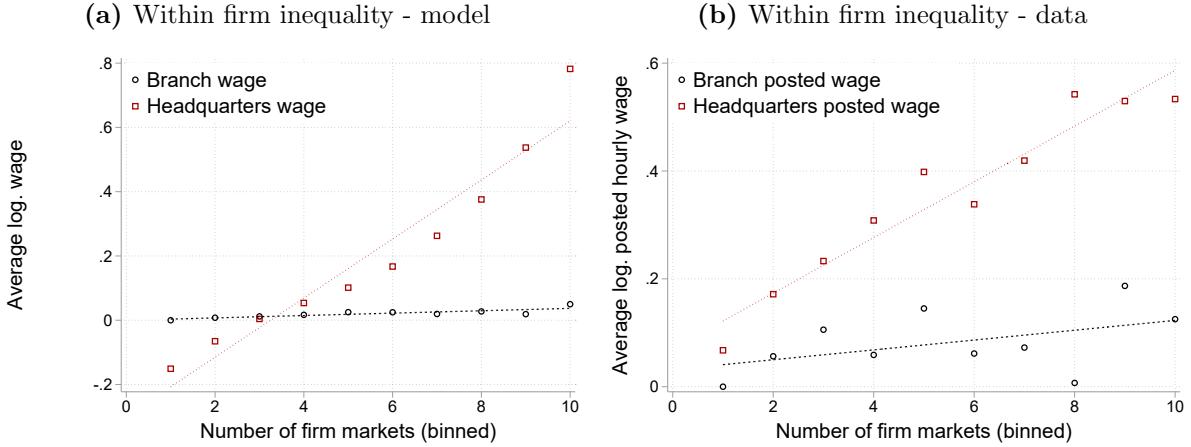
Note: Each subplot shows a single labor market characteristic across labor market areas (LMAs), in the model (x-axis) and in the data (y-axis). Circle size captures total employment in each labor market. Panel (a) shows the distribution of headquarters across locations. Panel (b) shows regional share of employment in services sectors. Panel (c) shows the share of employment in headquarters tasks. The corresponding measure in the data is the share of employment in the most headquarters-intensive occupations, as defined in Section 2.4.3, with the threshold chosen such that the total share of employment in headquarters (across all locations) is equal to its share in the model. Panel (d) shows the (log) ratio of skilled to unskilled labor across markets.

Another key feature of the model is its predictions for the distribution of wages within firms. Figure 6 shows how branch-level wages and headquarters-level wages are related to a firm's geographical scope. I cluster firms into 10 equal-sized bins that capture geographical scope (1 reflects the smallest number of markets; 10 reflects the largest number of markets). The left panel plots separately wages in branches and wages in headquarters of simulated firms from the model. The right panel plots an empirical equivalent using posted wages of multi-region service firms from Lightcast. In both cases, wages rise with firm size, but this increase is much steeper for headquarters jobs, and the HQ-branch wage gap is higher for large firms - in line with Proposition 3. Quantitatively, this gap is somewhat larger in the model for the highest bin (around 70% difference in the model, relative to around 40% in the data), but this might also reflect the fact that job postings in the data capture only part of expected worker compensation, especially in HQ jobs of very large firms. Overall, the model captures well the structure of wages in multi-region firms and the relation of HQ-branch wage dispersion to firm size.

## 6 Counterfactual analysis of firm spatial expansion

I now turn to evaluate how different shocks to the baseline 1980 equilibrium affect the evolution of firm structure and inequality. I focus on three main shocks that capture key changes in the economic environment between 1980-2017. As described below, these shocks can be measured directly from the data, without a full re-estimation of the model for 2017. In particular, I measure them without using data on the evolution of the wage distribution.

**Figure 6: Within-firm inequality in the model and in the data**



Note: Panel (a) plots average simulated log. wages from the model against 10 equally-sized bins that capture the geographical scope of firms, with bin number 1 representing firms that operate in the smallest number of markets and bin number 10 representing firms that operate in the largest number of markets. The red line captures average headquarters wages and the black line captures average branch wages. Panel (b) repeats this exercise with posted wages of multi-region service firms from Burning Glass, where a job posting is classified under “headquarters” if: (a) it is hired in the headquarters market of a multi-region firm; and (b) its occupational headquarters intensity as defined in Section 2.4.3 is above a threshold that guarantees the same overall share of HQ jobs in the data and in the model.

The first shock that I consider is a change in the ability of firms to expand in space, as captured by the bilateral frictions  $\tau_{ij}$  which were recovered in Section 5.3.<sup>46</sup> Recall that a reduction in these frictions captures improvements in transportation and telecommunication infrastructure, as well as the removal of regulations that impede firms from operating branches across multiple markets. Rather than feeding in the full matrix of changes in  $\tau_{ij}$  that reflects both a common trend and idiosyncratic changes, I lower every  $\tau_{ij}$  by the average recovered change across all location pairs.<sup>47</sup>

Next, I consider a change in households preferences in the form of higher expenditure share on services ( $\beta$ ), motivated by the large reallocation of economic activity from goods-producing to services-producing sectors over this time period (“structural transformation”). I measure an increase in  $\beta$  from 64% to 79% in national accounts.<sup>48</sup> On top of the realistic nature of this change, it has direct implications for the expansion of

<sup>46</sup>Note that while I used the market-clearing block of the model to recover these shocks, it did not require estimation of the full model or its parameters. I used no data on wage inequality in this procedure, and these shocks reflect only changes in the geographical structure of firms over time, as measured by changes in the number of branches per firm across markets in Equation 9.

<sup>47</sup>Note that since  $\tau_{ii}$  equals to unity for all  $i$ , this shock captures a common reduction in the cost of operating branches away from the headquarters location, and it does not constitute a positive productivity shock across all firm’s markets.

<sup>48</sup>In the growth and development literature on structural transformation, the change in  $\beta$  is endogenized, e.g. using non-homothetic preferences or non-unitary elasticity of substitution between consumption of goods and services. Since this is not the main subject of the paper, I retain the Cobb-Douglas preferences structure and consider a simple exogenous change in  $\beta$ . An interesting extension of the current study would be to study the interaction between richer preference structure and spatial firm expansion.

firms, since the payoff of opening an additional branch is higher relative to the cost of doing so in an environment with more demand for services.<sup>49</sup> Intuitively, when demand for services is particularly low ( $\beta$  close to 0), firms have no incentive to pay the fixed cost  $f$  to operate branches.

Finally, I consider a shock that reflects homogenous skill-biased technical change (henceforth SBTC). Recall that the skill-intensities  $\alpha \equiv \{\alpha_s, \rho_s, \alpha_{s,g}\}_{s=1}^S$  are constant by construction in the model. However, in the data, they rise over time for the group of college graduates. This change has been studied extensively as a driver of wage inequality in the SBTC literature, and therefore is a natural shock to investigate.<sup>50</sup>

**The effects of lower frictions to expansion ( $\tau$ ).** I begin with the effect of a decline in  $\tau_{ij}$  and summarize the results of this shock to the baseline equilibrium in Table 10. Column (1) in this table shows changes in selected moments in the data between 1980-2017. Column (2) shows changes in these moments in the model, following the reduction in  $\tau_{ij}$ . Column (3) repeats these changes in the model as percentages of the 1980-2017 empirical changes. First, as a result of this shock, firms expand in space: the number of markets served by the average firm rises by 0.3 log points (equivalent to over 100% of the empirical change). Inequality also rises: simulating individual earnings in the model before and after the shock, we obtain a 0.016 points increase in the variance of log wages, rationalizing approximately 20% of the rise in the equivalent moment in the data.<sup>51</sup> The variance of log wages across establishments<sup>52</sup> rises by 0.025 points (18% of the change in the data). Roughly half of this change is within firms, in line with results from Proposition 3. Inequality also rises between regions, capturing 21% of the increase in variance of log wages across local labor markets in the data. These spatial disparities take a particular form in the data and in the model: wage growth is larger in more populated labor markets, especially skilled labor, captured by the regression slopes of (log) average wages and college premium on (log) regional employment.

To gain more intuition into the effects of lower  $\tau$ , I investigate how the spatial equilibrium responds to small changes that reveal the first order effects of such a shock. Figure 7 plots the resulting changes in key regional aggregates against ex-ante specialization in supplying headquarters services (log of  $R_i/E_i$  in the model). This measure is an important sufficient statistic for the regional impact of changes in  $\tau$ . Locations with high specialization in services gain the most from this change: firms in these regions experience a market

---

<sup>49</sup>Recall that the fixed cost of opening a branch is denominated in terms of the local final good, both of which do not scale proportionally with  $\beta$  as the demand for services does.

<sup>50</sup>In this exercise, I study how firm spatial expansion interacts with SBTC using the structure of the model: first by evaluating the effect of higher  $\alpha$  in the current setting, and secondly by comparing it to the effects of lower  $\tau$ . In Section 7 below, I provide additional reduced-form analysis of how the mechanism in this paper differs from SBTC.

<sup>51</sup>Recall that the model does not include narrowly-defined industries, so I compare these changes to the rise in within-industry inequality in the data.

<sup>52</sup>Recall that an establishment in the model is either the combined headquarters of the firm or the representative branch in a single labor market area.

**Table 10: The effect of a reduction in communication frictions  $\tau$**

Moment	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Data: $\Delta 1980-2017$	$\Delta \tau$ - levels	$\Delta \tau$ - % of $\Delta$ Data
Firm expansion			
Log number of markets per firm	0.246	0.300	122%
Economy-wide wage inequality			
Variance of log wages: across individuals (within-industry component)	0.085	0.016	19%
Variance of log wages: multi-region service firms - between and within firms	0.140	0.025	18%
Variance of log wages: multi-region service firms - within firms	0.070	0.015	21%
Spatial inequality and segregation			
Variance of log regional wages	0.034	0.007	21%
Regression slope: log wage on log size	0.060	0.005	8%
Regression slope: log skill-premium on log size	0.052	0.011	22%
Regression slope: log skill-ratio on log size	0.051	0.014	28%

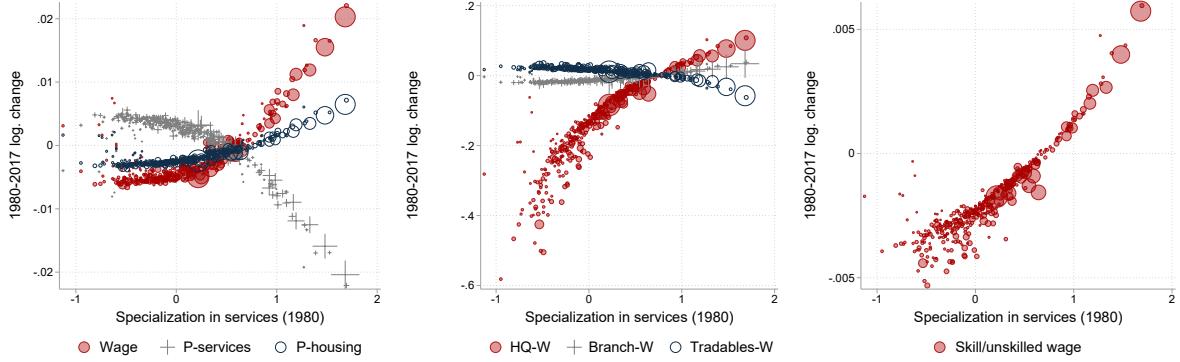
Note: this table shows changes in key moments from the model following a shock to the baseline 1980 equilibrium. Column (1) shows changes in the data. Column (2) considers changes in the model following a homogenous decline in the HQ-branch frictions  $\tau$  according to the average decline recovered in Section 5.3. Column (3) repeats Column (2) as percentage changes relative to the 1980-2017 empirical trends.

size effect and expand into new markets, yielding greater demand for headquarters services in their home location. Each circle represents a labor market area (weighted by 1980 employment), with the rightmost circle capturing the New-York City LMA (henceforth NYC), which is revealed to be particularly specialized in services. The left panel of the figure shows the impact on local wages and prices. Locations like NYC experience higher wage growth, greater decline in the price index of services (due to increased variety), and an increase in housing prices. The middle panel decomposes average wage growth into its different components in the model. In line with the model’s logic, headquarters wages rise the most in locations like NYC, following the elevated demand from firm expansion; and wages in the tradable-goods sector experience a relative decline. Finally, the ratio of skilled to unskilled wages rises in these locations since headquarters activity is relatively skill-intensive, as can be seen in the right panel of that figure. Overall, these changes are consistent with key patterns in the rise of spatial disparities in recent decades, and provide intuition for the spatial effects of lower  $\tau$  in Table 10.

I now turn to compare the decline in the spatial frictions to expansion ( $\tau$ ) to other shocks to the baseline equilibrium, and study also the combined effects of these shocks. I summarize the results in Table 11. The upper panel of the table displays changes in levels following each shock – or combination of shocks – relative to the 1980 equilibrium, and the lower panel displays changes in terms of percentages of the respective empirical trends over 1980-2017. I start by analyzing each of the other shocks separately, as well as the effect of interactions between pairs of shocks (Columns 2-6 in Table 11). This allows me to provide intuition for the sign and magnitude of the effects of each shock and assess their relative importance, and to connect to the analytical results from Section 4. I then conclude with the joint effect of all three shocks combined (Column 7).

**The effects of higher expenditure on services ( $\beta$ ).** Higher  $\beta$  yields quite similar effects to a reduction in the spatial frictions  $\tau$  (Column 3 in Table 11). To see

**Figure 7: The spatial impact of a small reduction in  $\tau$**



Note: This figure shows regional changes in the model following a small reduction in communication frictions  $\tau$ . The x-axis in all three subplots is regional specialization in services in the 1980 equilibrium, given by the log of  $E_i/R_i$  in the model. Each circle represents a labor market area and the size of the circles capture total LMA employment in the baseline equilibrium. The left panel shows log changes in the regional average wage index (solid red circles), regional price of housing (empty blue circles), and regional price index of services (shaded gray circles). The center figure shows log changes in the three components of the regional wage index: headquarters wage index (solid red circles), branches wage index (shaded gray circles), and tradable-goods wage index (empty blue circles). The right panel shows changes in the log ratio of skilled to unskilled wages.

this, recall from Proposition 4 that it raises the aggregate skill-premium.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, the price of headquarters labor rises relative to branch-level labor, leading to higher inequality within firms. In addition, inequality rises across space, with wages again going up the most in locations like NYC that specialize in services.<sup>54</sup> One key difference relative to the reduction in  $\tau$  is that the urban wage premium (the regression slope of log regional wage on log size) goes down. This difference comes from the fact that higher  $\beta$  makes locations with greater variety of services – typically large markets – relatively more attractive,<sup>55</sup> resulting in greater supply of labor following an influx of workers from other markets.

Higher expenditure on services also amplifies the impact of lower spatial frictions  $\tau$  when both shocks are considered together (Column 4 in Table 11). There are two reasons for this amplification. First, in this scenario, HQ wages rise both due to the market-size effect of firm expansion (since HQ labor is non-rival across branches) and due to the higher price of skill (since HQ labor is skill-intensive). Second, the market size effect of firm expansion is greater when there is more demand for services; at the extreme case of  $\beta \rightarrow 0$ , a decline in  $\tau$  has no effect. Jointly, these shocks generate a greater increase in wage inequality than their individual effects – across firms and space.

**The effects of a homogeneous SBTC shock ( $\alpha$ ).** The main effect of the SBTC

<sup>53</sup>This follows from the fact that services as a whole are more skill-intensive than tradable-goods in the data.

<sup>54</sup>See Appendix Figure 19 for a replication of Figure 7 with a small change in  $\beta$ .

<sup>55</sup>Recall that without housing, the regional price index is given by  $P_i^\beta$ . Therefore, the cost of living changes across space even before general equilibrium effects take place. This change can be thought of as an increase in amenities in locations with ex-ante lower  $P_i$ .

**Table 11: Model counterfactuals - shocks to the 1980 equilibrium**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Changes in levels						
Data: Δ1980-2017	Δτ	Δβ	Δ(τ, β)	Δα	Δ(τ, α)	Δ(τ, β, α)	
	Cross-section of firms						
Log number of markets per firm	0.246	0.300	0.038	0.182	0.029	0.298	0.181
Variance of log wages: multi-region service firms	0.140	0.025	0.008	0.055	0.023	0.046	0.074
Variance of log wages: within-firms	0.070	0.015	0.021	0.045	0.031	0.035	0.055
	Cross-section of labor market areas						
Variance of log regional wages	0.034	0.007	0.003	0.022	0.002	0.012	0.038
Regression slope: log wage on log size	0.060	0.005	-0.016	0.011	0.005	0.017	0.025
Regression slope: log skill-premium on log size	0.052	0.011	0.009	0.012	0.003	0.023	0.025
Regression slope: log skill-ratio on log size	0.051	0.014	0.010	0.013	0.005	0.028	0.029
	% of changes in data (1980-2017)						
	Cross-section of firms						
Log number of markets per firm	100%	122%	16%	74%	12%	121%	74%
Variance of log wages: multi-region service firms	100%	18%	6%	39%	17%	33%	53%
Variance of log wages: within-firms	100%	21%	30%	64%	44%	50%	79%
	Cross-section of labor market areas						
Variance of log regional wages	100%	21%	10%	65%	7%	35%	112%
Regression slope: log wage on log size	100%	8%	-26%	19%	8%	29%	41%
Regression slope: log skill-premium on log size	100%	22%	17%	23%	7%	44%	48%
Regression slope: log skill-ratio on log size	100%	28%	20%	26%	10%	56%	57%

Note: this table shows changes in key moments from the model following a shock to the baseline 1980 equilibrium. The upper panel includes changes in levels, and the lower panel includes percentage changes relative to the 1980-2017 empirical trends. Column (1) shows changes in the data. Column (2) considers changes in the model following a homogenous decline in the HQ-branch frictions  $\tau$  according to the average decline recovered in Section 5.3. Column (3) considers an increase in the aggregate household spending on services  $\beta$ . Column (4) considers the joint effect of a change in  $\tau$  and a change in  $\beta$ . Column (5) considers the effect of changes in the skill-intensities in production  $\alpha$ , and Column (6) considers the joint effect of changes in  $\tau$  and  $\alpha$ . Finally, Column (7) considers the joint effect of all three shocks.

shock (Column 5 in Table 11) is to increase inequality within firms, since it boosts the price of the skill-intensive HQ labor. However, the effects on other measures of inequality are milder relative to the previous two shocks. In addition, similar to higher  $\beta$ , it also amplifies the effect of declining  $\tau$  (Column 6 in Table 11). The same logic applies in this case: the price of HQ labor rises due to high skill-intensity and due to the market size effect from greater expansion. As before, this effect is stronger in markets with ex ante specialization in services like NYC. Overall, the joint effect of higher  $\alpha$  and lower  $\tau$  accounts for much of the rise in inequality across firms and across space. Combining all three shocks generates even larger effects (Column 7 in Table 11), accounting for most (74%) of the spatial expansion of firms; over half of the rise in inequality across and within firms; all of the rise in spatial inequality; and around half of the increase in the association between skill-intensity and market size.

To recap, through these counterfactuals, the model is able to jointly account for multiple trends in U.S. labor markets since the 1980s. It highlights a quantitatively significant role for the reduction in spatial frictions that impede firm expansion ( $\tau$ ). The role of these frictions is amplified when combined with greater demand for services or homogenous skill biased technical change.

## 6.1 Policy application: deregulating cross-state firm activity

As a final counterfactual, I demonstrate how the framework developed in this paper can be used to analyze the aggregate and distributional implications of policies that affect firms' ability to expand in space. Specifically, I focus on the deregulation of cross-state firm activity, mimicking the wave of deregulation in the 1980s which expanded firms' ability to conduct interstate operations in sectors such as banking and transportation.

To this end, I evaluate the implications of a reduction in the state-borders component of the spatial frictions  $\tau_{ij}$ . Recall from Section 5 that these state border effects have declined by 10% between 1980-2017. Then, starting from the baseline 1980 equilibrium, I compute a counterfactual economy in which I allow these state border effects to decline, holding everything else constant.

As a result of the decline in these state border effects, the number of markets for the average firm in the economy increases by 0.4%, and household expenditure share on services from non-local firms increases from 23.9% to 28.2%. Consequentially, average welfare rises by approximately 0.4%, reflecting both increased variety of services and productivity gains from greater investments at firms' headquarters. However, these welfare gains mask vast heterogeneity, with regional welfare gains<sup>56</sup> ranging from -1.5% to +6%. The positive gains are concentrated in local markets with ex-ante specialization in supplying headquarters services to other markets. For example, gains at New York City stand at close to 6%. Negative gains occur in regions that lose significant market share to the non-local expanding firms, thus losing regional income to locations such as NYC.

## 7 Connection to existing theories of rising inequality

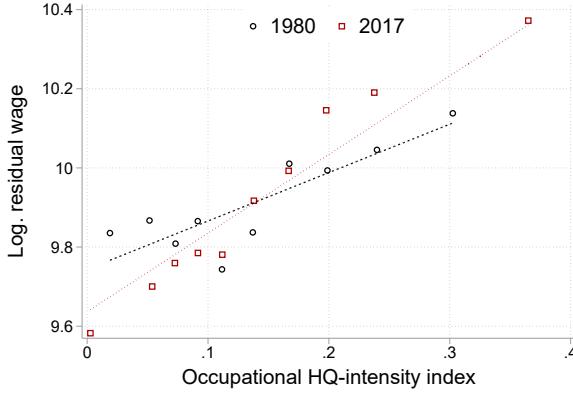
In this section, I briefly discuss how the above model relates to other selected mechanisms discussed in the literature on wage inequality.

**Skill-Biased Technical Change (SBTC).** Tracing back to Katz and Murphy (1992), SBTC has been seen as a key driver of wage inequality. My model complements this literature in two senses. First, it provides a particular form of SBTC that aligns with recent

---

<sup>56</sup>Since workers are mobile, regional welfare gains should be interpreted as the average change in welfare to workers that continue to reside in the same region across equilibria due to strong idiosyncratic preference shocks.

**Figure 8: Residual wages in headquarters-intensive tasks**



Note: This figure shows a binscatter plot of individual wages against the headquarters-intensity of their occupation, after controlling for individual location and educational attainment.

changes in the spatial organization of firms. Therefore, it can speak to changes in the distribution of income across skill groups as summarized in Proposition 4. Second, the model provides a set of predictions that go *beyond changes in skill-premium*, and are quantitatively important for the overall rise in inequality. *Inter alia*, the model predicts that (a) *conditional* on worker skill and location, workers at headquarters-level jobs earn higher wages (due to the non-rival nature of their output); (b) this relationship has a systematic connection to firm size, with greater HQ-branch gaps in larger firms; (c) this conditional headquarters wage premium has risen over time, given the increase in the geographical scope of firms. Evidence for these patterns can be found in the discussion in Section 2 and Appendix D. As an additional visual representation of these patterns, Figure 8 shows a binscatter plot of the relationship between individual wages in the Census-ACS data and my headquarters-intensity measures from Section 2.4.3, conditioning on individual educational attainment, location, and their interaction. The slope from a pooled regression of this residual wage on the HQ-intensity measure in 1980 is 1.26 (standard error of 0.027), and the slope has increased between 1980 and 2017 by a magnitude of 0.75 (standard error of 0.037). Therefore, in line with the model's predictions, we find that there is a clear positive relationship between wages and the likelihood that a job is performed in firm headquarters, even after controlling for location and educational attainment. In addition, this relationship has strengthened over the past decades, as would be expected in response to firms' spatial expansion. Finally, recall from the wage decompositions in Section 2.4.3 that this relationship is quantitatively important for the overall increase in wage inequality.

**Outsourcing.** The literature on outsourcing has documented a decline in wages for outsourced workers relative to peers with similar characteristics who remain within the boundary of the firm – see e.g. Goldschmidt and Schmieder (2017). Therefore, the growth of outsourcing has been proposed as a potential explanation for the rise in inequality.

While outsourcing can raise wage dispersion across firms, it does not account for rising dispersion within firms. If anything, simple models of outsourcing would imply reduced within-firm inequality, following outsourcing of workers that do not take part in the firm’s core activity. However, as discussed in Section 2.3, inequality has risen within firms in parallel to its increase between firms. A mechanism that relies on the spatial expansion of firms can speak to these patterns jointly.

**Firm hierarchies.** Another related literature on firm hierarchies links within-firm wage inequality to firms’ hierarchical organization, e.g. [Garicano and Rossi-Hansberg \(2004\)](#) and [Garicano and Rossi-Hansberg \(2006\)](#). Theoretically, my mechanism differs from this literature by highlighting the distinction between two types of tasks within firms: tasks with non-rival and tradable output, mapped into the notion of firm headquarters; and tasks with rival and non-tradable output, mapped into the notion of firm branches. In contrast, the key theoretical building block in the hierarchies literature is the limited span of control of managers. While similar in some contexts, this theoretical distinction is empirically important. It allows me to explain wider patterns of rising wage inequality that go beyond management occupations, and rationalize significant wage gains across multiple layers of organization, e.g. in occupations such as programmers, designers, and financial analysts. In addition, adding the spatial aspect to firm organization allows me to naturally link these trends to the literature on rising spatial disparities.

**Functional specialization.** A closely related literature on functional specialization studies the separation of production into headquarters and plants across space,<sup>57</sup> providing a rationale for the observed increase in spatial segregation by skill. I emphasize the increase in the geographical scope of firms – conditional on the ability to separate branches from headquarters – which arises naturally in the context of non-tradable sectors. Such expansion can also generate a rise in segregation, along with other dimensions of inequality that are important in the data.

## 8 Conclusion

This paper argues that the spatial expansion of service firms is important to understand observed changes in U.S. labor markets in recent decades. I document that multi-region service firms account for most of the increase in U.S. wage inequality, and highlight a key role for the expansion of their headquarters-branch networks. I integrate this structure into a spatial general equilibrium with firm wage setting, in which firms hire branch-level workers across multiple local markets, and the output of headquarters workers is skill-intensive and non-rival across branches. The model generates distinctive labor market implications, including rising within-firm inequality as firms expand in space, and a link between firm expansion and the rise of spatial inequality and segregation. The es-

---

<sup>57</sup>See e.g. [Duranton and Puga \(2005\)](#).

timated model can account for a substantial share of the observed rise in inequality along these dimensions. It also highlights an important role for the interaction between declining within-firm communication frictions and rising demand for services in generating the rise in inequality.

I highlight four main benefits of the focus on firm expansion in explaining the rise in inequality. First, my model generates distinctive predictions that are quantitatively important in the data and are not covered by existing theories in the literature on wage inequality, such as the growth of wage dispersion across establishments within firms. Second, it is able to simultaneously account for multiple trends in the U.S. labor market. Third, it aligns with the observed trends in the organization of production and the expansion of multi-establishment firms. Finally, it provides a natural explanation for the concentration of these trends in services, due to the non-tradable nature of output in these sectors.

More broadly, the model demonstrates the importance of multi-region firms and the network of HQ-branch linkages for many economic questions, including inequality, the propagation of shocks across space, and the effects of structural transformation. Another relevant topic is the interaction of this firm structure with globalization, since many of the major U.S.-based service firms have parallel operations overseas. Finally, the model offers a framework to investigate policies that shape the location decisions of these firms, including regional business and tax incentives to attract firm headquarters (e.g. as in the case of Amazon's second headquarters), and policies to mitigate the social costs of inter-region competition for these companies.

## References

- Aghion, Philippe, Antonin Bergeaud, Timo Boppart, Peter J Klenow, and Huiyu Li**, “A theory of falling growth and rising rents,” Technical Report, National Bureau of Economic Research 2019.
- Alviarez, Vanessa I, Javier Cravino, and Natalia Ramondo**, “Firm-embedded productivity and cross-country income differences,” Technical Report, National Bureau of Economic Research 2020.
- Argente, David, Sara Moreira, Ezra Oberfield, and Venky Venkateswaran**, “Scalable Expertise,” 2020.
- Arkolakis, Costas, Natalia Ramondo, Andrés Rodríguez-Clare, and Stephen Yeaple**, “Innovation and production in the global economy,” *American Economic Review*, 2018, 108 (8), 2128–73.
- Arnoud, Antoine, Fatih Guvenen, and Tatjana Kleineberg**, “Benchmarking global optimizers,” Technical Report, National Bureau of Economic Research 2019.
- Atalay, Enghin, Ali Hortaçsu, and Chad Syverson**, “Vertical integration and input flows,” *American Economic Review*, 2014, 104 (4), 1120–48.
- Azar, José, Ioana Marinescu, Marshall Steinbaum, and Bledi Taska**, “Concentration in US labor markets: Evidence from online vacancy data,” *Labour Economics*, 2020, 66, 101886.
- , **Steven Berry, and Ioana Elena Marinescu**, “Estimating labor market power,” Available at SSRN 3456277, 2019.
- Barnatchez, Keith, Leland Dod Crane, and Ryan Decker**, “An assessment of the national establishment time series (nets) database,” *Finance and Economics Discussion Series (FEDS)*, 2017.
- Barth, Erling, Alex Bryson, James C Davis, and Richard Freeman**, “It’s where you work: Increases in the dispersion of earnings across establishments and individuals in the United States,” *Journal of Labor Economics*, 2016, 34 (S2), S67–S97.
- Bel, Germa and Xavier Fageda**, “Getting there fast: globalization, intercontinental flights and location of headquarters,” *Journal of Economic Geography*, 2008, 8 (4), 471–495.
- Berger, David, Kyle Herkenhoff, and Simon Mongey**, “Labor market power,” *American Economic Review*, 2022, 112 (4), 1147–93.

- Berry, Christopher R and Edward L Glaeser**, “The divergence of human capital levels across cities,” *Papers in regional science*, 2005, 84 (3), 407–444.
- Brügemann, Björn, Pieter Gautier, and Guido Menzio**, “Intra firm bargaining and Shapley values,” *The Review of Economic Studies*, 2019, 86 (2), 564–592.
- Cao, Dan, Henry R Hyatt, Toshihiko Mukoyama, and Erick Sager**, “Firm growth through new establishments,” *Available at SSRN 3361451*, 2017.
- Card, David, Ana Rute Cardoso, Joerg Heining, and Patrick Kline**, “Firms and labor market inequality: Evidence and some theory,” *Journal of Labor Economics*, 2018, 36 (S1), S13–S70.
- , **Jesse Rothstein, and Moises Yi**, “Location, location, location,” *UC Berkeley*, 2021.
- Costinot, Arnaud and Andrés Rodríguez-Clare**, “Trade theory with numbers: Quantifying the consequences of globalization,” in “Handbook of international economics,” Vol. 4, Elsevier, 2014, pp. 197–261.
- Davis, Morris A and François Ortalo-Magné**, “Household expenditures, wages, rents,” *Review of Economic Dynamics*, 2011, 14 (2), 248–261.
- Derenoncourt, Ellora, Clemens Noelke, David Weil, and Bledi Taska**, “Spillover effects from voluntary employer minimum wages,” Technical Report, National Bureau of Economic Research 2021.
- Diamond, Rebecca**, “The determinants and welfare implications of US workers’ diverging location choices by skill: 1980-2000,” *American Economic Review*, 2016, 106 (3), 479–524.
- Ding, Xiang, Teresa C Fort, Stephen J Redding, and Peter K Schott**, “Structural Change Within Versus Across Firms: Evidence from the United States,” 2022.
- Duranton, Gilles and Diego Puga**, “From sectoral to functional urban specialisation,” *Journal of urban Economics*, 2005, 57 (2), 343–370.
- Eckert, Fabian**, “Growing apart: Tradable services and the fragmentation of the us economy,” *mimeograph, Yale University*, 2019.
- , **Sharat Ganapati, and Conor Walsh**, “Urban-Biased Growth: A Macroeconomic Analysis,” Technical Report, National Bureau of Economic Research 2022.
- Fort, Teresa C**, “Technology and production fragmentation: Domestic versus foreign sourcing,” *The Review of Economic Studies*, 2017, 84 (2), 650–687.

- and **Shawn Klimek**, “The effects of industry classification changes on US employment composition,” *CES Working Paper 18-28, US Census Bureau*, 2018.
- Galle, Simon, Andrés Rodríguez-Clare, and Moises Yi**, “Slicing the pie: Quantifying the aggregate and distributional effects of trade,” Technical Report, National Bureau of Economic Research 2017.
- Garicano, Luis and Esteban Rossi-Hansberg**, “Inequality and the Organization of Knowledge,” *American Economic Review*, 2004, 94 (2), 197–202.
- and \_\_\_, “Organization and inequality in a knowledge economy,” *The Quarterly journal of economics*, 2006, 121 (4), 1383–1435.
- Giannone, Elisa**, “Skilled-biased technical change and regional convergence,” *University of Chicago. Unpublished manuscript*, 2017.
- Giroud, Xavier**, “Proximity and investment: Evidence from plant-level data,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 2013, 128 (2), 861–915.
- , **Simone Lenzu, Quinn Maingi, and Holger Mueller**, “Propagation and amplification of local productivity spillovers,” Technical Report, National Bureau of Economic Research 2021.
- Goldschmidt, Deborah and Johannes F Schmieder**, “The rise of domestic outsourcing and the evolution of the German wage structure,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 2017, 132 (3), 1165–1217.
- Haltiwanger, John C, Henry R Hyatt, and James Spletzer**, “Industries, mega firms, and increasing inequality,” Technical Report, National Bureau of Economic Research 2022.
- Hazell, Jonathon, Christina Patterson, H Sarsons, and B Taska**, “National wage setting,” Technical Report, Working Paper 2021.
- Head, Keith and John Ries**, “Increasing returns versus national product differentiation as an explanation for the pattern of US-Canada trade,” *American Economic Review*, 2001, 91 (4), 858–876.
- Helpman, Elhanan**, “A simple theory of international trade with multinational corporations,” *Journal of political economy*, 1984, 92 (3), 451–471.
- , **Oleg Itskhoki, and Stephen Redding**, “Inequality and unemployment in a global economy,” *Econometrica*, 2010, 78 (4), 1239–1283.

- Holmes, Thomas J**, “The diffusion of Wal-Mart and economies of density,” *Econometrica*, 2011, 79 (1), 253–302.
- and **John J Stevens**, “An alternative theory of the plant size distribution, with geography and intra-and international trade,” *Journal of Political Economy*, 2014, 122 (2), 369–421.
- Hsieh, Chang-Tai and Esteban Rossi-Hansberg**, “The Industrial Revolution in Services,” 2022.
- Jia, Panle**, “What happens when Wal-Mart comes to town: An empirical analysis of the discount retailing industry,” *Econometrica*, 2008, 76 (6), 1263–1316.
- Jiang, Xian**, “Information and Communication Technology and Firm Geographic Expansion,” Technical Report, working paper 2021.
- Katz, Lawrence F and Kevin M Murphy**, “Changes in relative wages, 1963–1987: supply and demand factors,” *The quarterly journal of economics*, 1992, 107 (1), 35–78.
- Lamadon, Thibaut, Magne Mogstad, and Bradley Setzler**, “Imperfect competition, compensating differentials, and rent sharing in the US labor market,” *American Economic Review*, 2022, 112 (1), 169–212.
- Moretti, Enrico**, *The new geography of jobs*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012.
- Oberfield, Ezra, Esteban Rossi-Hansberg, Pierre-Daniel Sarte, and Nicholas Trachter**, “Plants in space,” Technical Report, National Bureau of Economic Research 2020.
- Ramondo, Natalia and Andrés Rodríguez-Clare**, “Trade, multinational production, and the gains from openness,” *Journal of Political Economy*, 2013, 121 (2), 273–322.
- Rossi-Hansberg, Esteban, Pierre-Daniel Sarte, and Nicholas Trachter**, “Diverging trends in national and local concentration,” *NBER Macroeconomics Annual*, 2021, 35 (1), 115–150.
- Rubinton, Hannah**, “The geography of business dynamism and skill biased technical change,” *FRB St. Louis Working Paper*, 2020.
- Ruggles, Steven, Sarah Flood, Sophia Foster, Ronald Goeken, Jose Pacas, Megan Schouweiler, and Matthew Sobek**, “Ipums usa: Version 11.0 [dataset],” *Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS*, 2021, 10, D010.
- Saiz, Albert**, “The geographic determinants of housing supply,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 2010, 125 (3), 1253–1296.

**Setzler, Bradley and Felix Tintelnot**, “The effects of foreign multinationals on workers and firms in the United States,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 2021, 136 (3), 1943–1991.

**Silva, JMC Santos and Silvana Tenreyro**, “The log of gravity,” *The Review of Economics and statistics*, 2006, 88 (4), 641–658.

**Song, Jae, David J Price, Fatih Guvenen, Nicholas Bloom, and Till Von Wachter**, “Firming up inequality,” *The Quarterly journal of economics*, 2019, 134 (1), 1–50.

**Stole, Lars A and Jeffrey Zwiebel**, “Intra-firm bargaining under non-binding contracts,” *The Review of Economic Studies*, 1996, 63 (3), 375–410.

**Tintelnot, Felix**, “Global production with export platforms,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 2017, 132 (1), 157–209.

**Tolbert, Charles M and Molly Sizer**, “US commuting zones and labor market areas: A 1990 update,” Technical Report 1996.

# Appendices

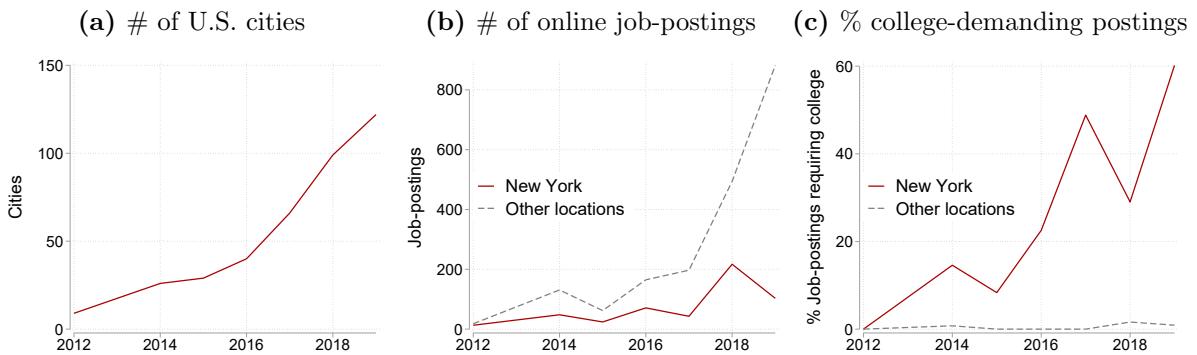
## A Case studies for firm spatial expansion

In this section, I provide two case studies that demonstrate the heterogenous labor market implications of the spatial expansion of firms. Note that in both examples, I use only publicly available data and make no use of the confidential Census Bureau data.

### A.1 The expansion of Shake-Shack

The first case study is the expansion of Shake Shack, an American fast casual restaurant chain based in New York City, which opened its first restaurant outside of New York in 2010. I explore its demand for labor through the lens of its online job postings, as collected by Lightcast. Panel (a) in Figure 9 below shows the number of cities with postings by Shake Shack in the Lightcast data over time, which has risen in parallel to its expansion into more cities across the U.S.. Panel (b) shows that most of these postings were in Shake Shack's new locations, with a significant share of them still posted in the original market of New York City. Panel (c) shows the skill intensity of these jobs, as measured by the share of total postings that explicitly require a college degree. While most of the posted jobs are low-skilled according to this measure, the jobs that Shake Shack opens in New York City are increasingly high-skilled, in line with the expansion of its headquarters in that location. By 2019, 60% of the New York City job postings required a college degree. A closer look reveals that these jobs include traditional headquarters-level occupations, such as management, design, marketing and information-technology specialists.

**Figure 9: Example: the expansion of Shake Shack (online job-postings data)**



This example demonstrates the heterogenous effects of firm expansion across the two main dimensions that are considered in the model: first, in the cross-section of establishments, between firm headquarters and its branches; secondly, across space, between New York City and other locations in the U.S.. This example suggests potentially mean-

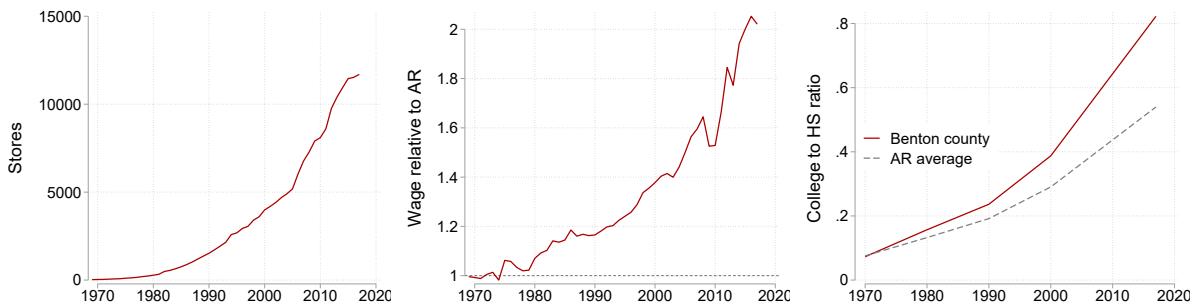
ingful distributional implications at the economy as a whole, given that the *average firm* in the economy has exhibited this kind of spatial expansion in recent decades, as was demonstrated in Figure 12 of the paper.

## A.2 The expansion of Walmart

The second example is the expansion of the retail corporation Walmart, headquartered in Benton county (Bentonville City), Arkansas. Walmart is an outlier in the sense that it is a particularly large firm with headquarters in (what used to be) a relatively remote location. However, precisely because of this property, it provides a good example for the regional effects of firm spatial expansion at its headquarters market. Panel (a) of Figure 10 below shows the spatial expansion of Walmart as measured by its total number of stores (data from Walmart Inc.). The chain's expansion outside of Arkansas started in the late 1960s and has been growing exponentially since then. Panel (b) and (c) show regional outcomes for Benton county, Arkansas, relative to the Arkansas average. In the early 1970s, Benton county used to be an average Arkansas county, with a similar wage to the rest of the state and with similar skill-intensity, as measured by the ratio of workers with a college degree to workers with only high-school diploma. Since then, in parallel to the expansion of Walmart's headquarters in that county, the average wage has diverged from the rest of the state, such that by now it is more than double the average Arkansas wage. At the same time, it has experienced an influx of college graduates, leading to stronger skill-deepening than the rest of the state. These predictions are all in line with the central mechanism of the model, in which the aggregate spatial expansion of firms leads to greater growth of income and demand for skilled labor in locations that specialize in providing headquarters services.

**Figure 10: Example: the expansion of Walmart (Walmart inc. data)**

(a) # of Walmart stores overall (b) Benton to AR avg. wage ratio (c) Benton & AR college/HS ratio



This example demonstrates the heterogenous effects of firm spatial expansion once aggregated to the regional level, with divergence in income and demand for skill across different areas within a single state. As in the case of the previous example of Shake

Shack's expansion, it is suggestive of potentially important heterogenous effects for the economy as a whole given the observed spatial expansion of the average firm in the data.

## B Additional details on the data

### B.1 LBD

**Sample selection.** I follow a similar sample selection procedure to Barth et al. (2016). I drop observations with non-positive employment or payroll, as well as establishments with over 100,000 employees which are likely to capture miscoded records. I compute average wages as the ratio of total annual payroll to total establishment employment. I convert wages to 1982 dollars using the Consumer Price Index and exclude establishments that have an average wage less than half the yearly equivalent of the 1982 minimum wage of \$3.35 an hour for a 40-hour week. I also omit firms in the utilities sector.

**Firm-level industry code.** In the LBD, establishments are classified into industries, but multi-establishment firms do not have a unique industry identifier. I define the firm's industry according to the 4-digit NAICS code that accounts for the largest share of the firm's payroll.<sup>58</sup> For example, a firm's industry is classified as "Restaurants and Other Eating Places" if establishments with a NAICS code of 7225 constitute most of the firm's total wage bill.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, I define firm-level sector as the 2-digit NAICS sector that accounts for the largest part of its payroll. In the example above, the firm's sector would be "Accommodation and Food Services" (NAICS 72). To classify firms into goods and services, I follow the standard Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) definitions for "goods-producing industries" and "services-producing industries".<sup>60</sup> I define a firm as a "service firm" if establishments in services-producing sectors account for at least half of its total payroll.

### B.2 Dun & Bradstreet

I use the Dun & Bradstreet Historical Records which provide data on U.S. private and public companies going back to 1969, with the exception of 1981 and 1984. Each establishment in a multi-establishment firm is linked to its headquarters establishment, and therefore it is possible to infer the headquarters location for all establishments in the data. I combine establishments from different headquarters into the same firm identifier if they share a common parent company and company name. I omit observations with missing firm linkages. I omit establishments in Public Administration and other selected industries that are beyond the scope of the LBD dataset such as Membership Organiza-

---

<sup>58</sup>Throughout the paper, I employ the longitudinally consistent industry codes from Fort and Klimek (2018) that address changes in U.S. industry classification schemes over time.

<sup>59</sup>I construct a separate category for firms without a clear industry classification when no single industry covers at least 40% of the firm's payroll. This group of firms accounts for only a small share of total employment and wage bill, so most firms in the data have a clear firm-level industry identifier.

<sup>60</sup>"Goods-producing industries" include agriculture, mining, construction and manufacturing. "Services-producing industries" include all other sectors with the exception of utilities which are excluded from the analysis.

tions. I employ similar geographic definitions as described for the LBD data in Section 2.1.

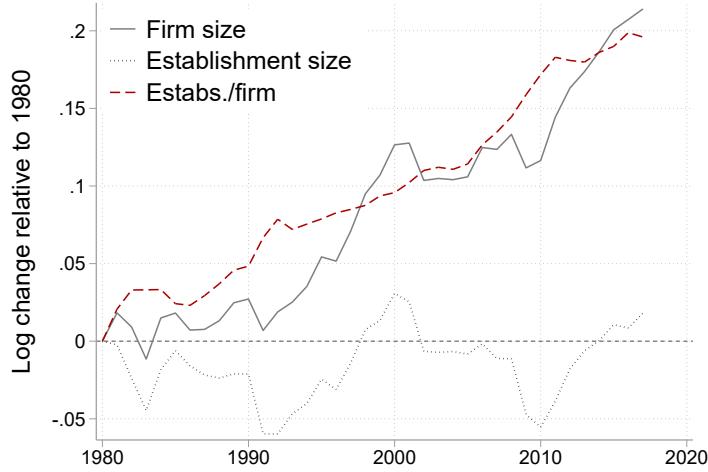
### B.3 Lightcast

Data on online job postings is obtained from Lightcast, a business analytics company, which extracts information from the near-universe of online job postings from a variety of online sources such as job boards and company websites. Lightcast employs a designated algorithm to avoid double counting of postings across multiple sources. The data covers 2010-2019, and includes extracted information on employer, job location, occupation, education-requirement, and for a small subset (approximately a fifth of total observations) also posted wages. See [Azar et al. \(2020\)](#) for additional information on this data.

To analyze the spatial structure of firms with this data, I merge information on firm organization from the above Dun & Bradstreet dataset. I do so using name and location matching for firms that operate in at least two commuting zones in both datasets. I can then deduce for each job posting where is the headquarters of its firm located, and whether the job is located at the firm's headquarters market or not.

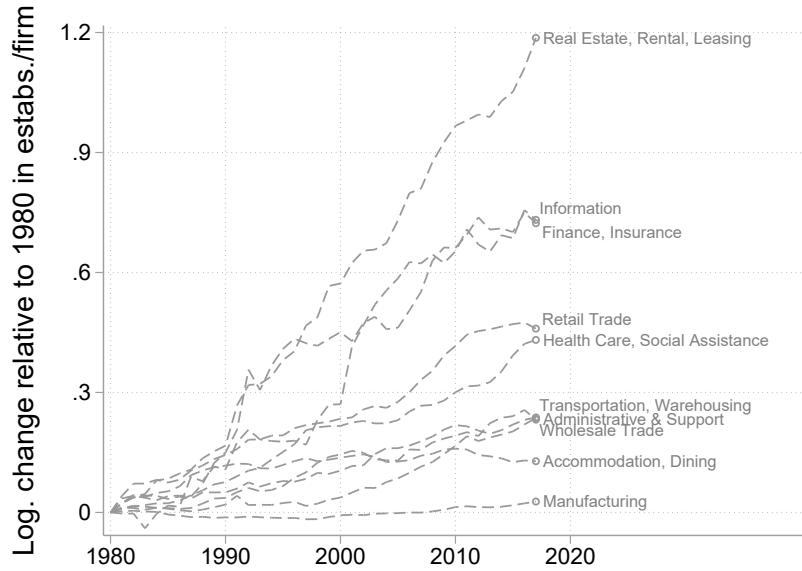
## C Additional figures and tables

**Figure 11:** Firm expansion through the extensive margin



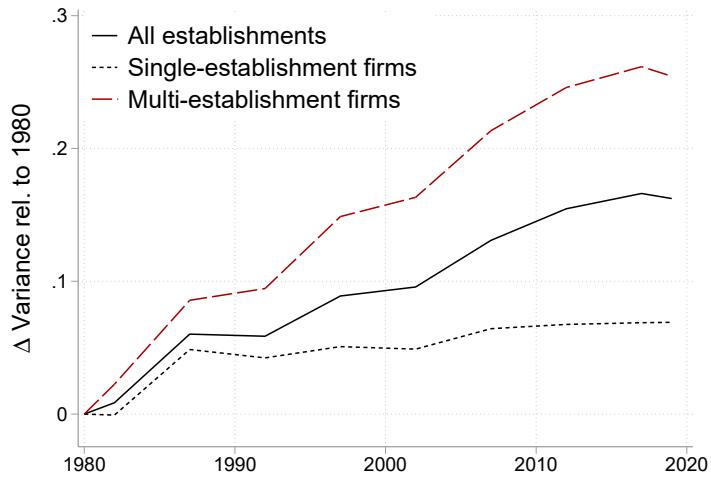
Note: This figure shows that changes in the average number of establishments per firm account for all the increase in average firm size (defined as employment per firm) since 1980, while average establishment size (employment per establishment) remained constant. Data from the U.S. Census Business Dynamics Dataset for firms with at least five employees.

**Figure 12:** Firm expansion by sector

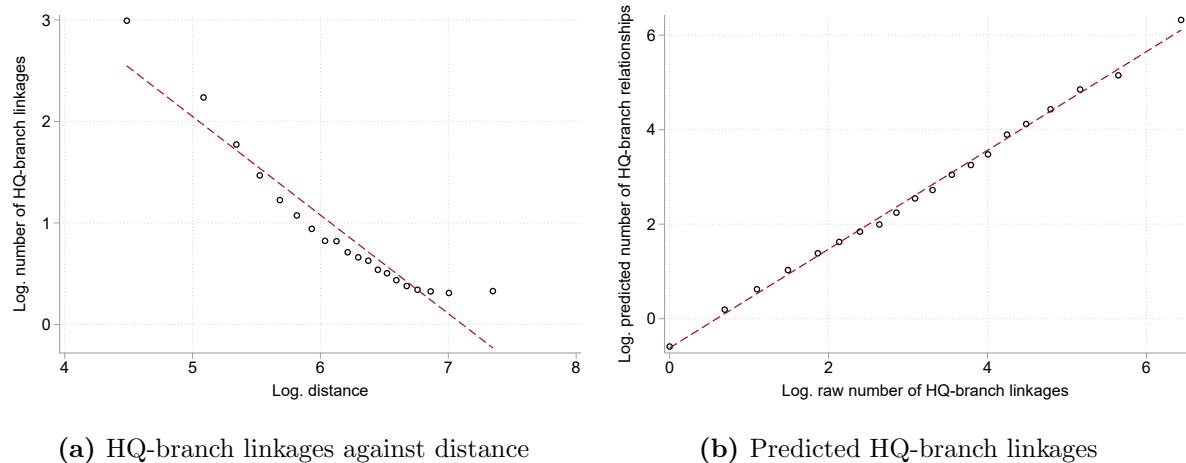


Note: This figure shows the log change in the average number of establishments per firm relative to 1980 by economic sector, for firms with at least 5 employees. Data from the Business Dynamics Statistics dataset.

**Figure 13:** The role of multi-establishment firms in the rise of inequality - raw wages



Note: This figure shows changes in the employment-weighted variance of log average payroll across establishments in the Longitudinal Business Dataset (LBD) in selected years relative to 1978: for all establishments (solid-black line), for multi-establishment firms (dashed-red line) and for single-establishment firms (dotted-gray line). Relative to Figure 2 in the paper, this figure shows this decomposition without first demeaning industry fixed effects.

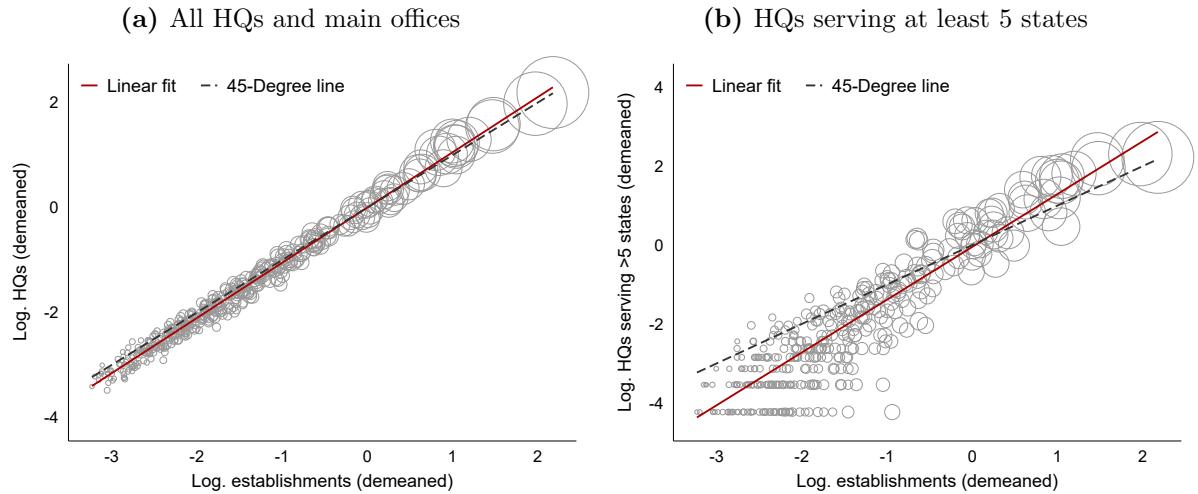


(a) HQ-branch linkages against distance

(b) Predicted HQ-branch linkages

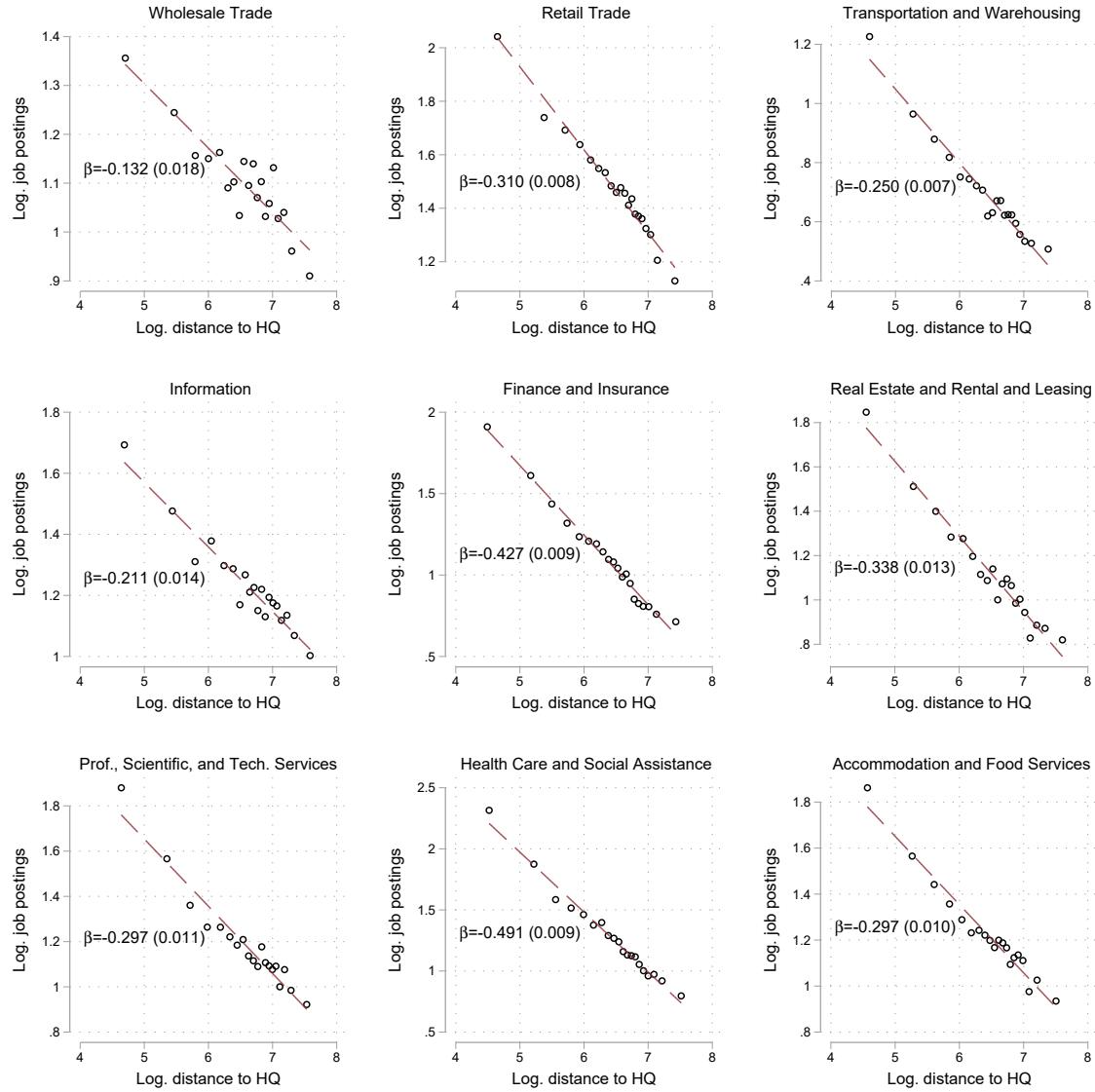
**Figure 14: HQ-branch linkages:** Panel (a) shows the log of bilateral number of headquarters-branch linkages across 1990 labor market areas against the log of distance after controlling for headquarters-location and branch-location fixed effects. Panel (b) shows these bilateral linkages on the x-axis against the predicted part from a Poisson regression of the bilateral linkages on headquarters-location fixed effect, branch-location fixed effect and a polynomial of distance on the y-axis. The data comes from the 1980 venue of the Dun & Bradstreet establishments dataset. Additional details are provided in Section 5.3.

**Figure 15:** The spatial distribution of headquarters in the data



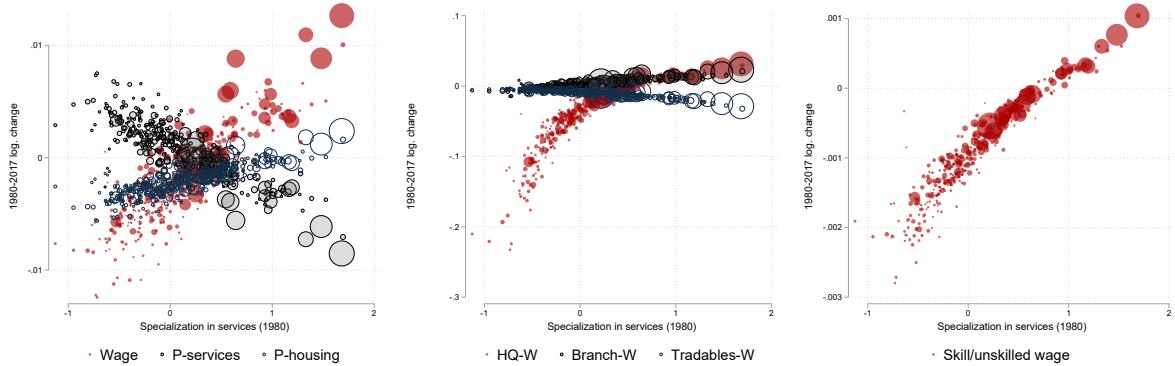
**Figure 16:** Note: This figure shows the log number of headquarters and main offices from the Dun and Bradstreet data against the log number of total establishments from the Business Dynamics Statistics dataset across commuting zones. Both measures are relative to the national average. Panel (a) shows this relationship for all headquarters in the D&B dataset, and panel (b) shows this relationship only for “large” firms that serve at least five states.

**Figure 17:** HQ-branch gravity for firm job-postings across services sectors



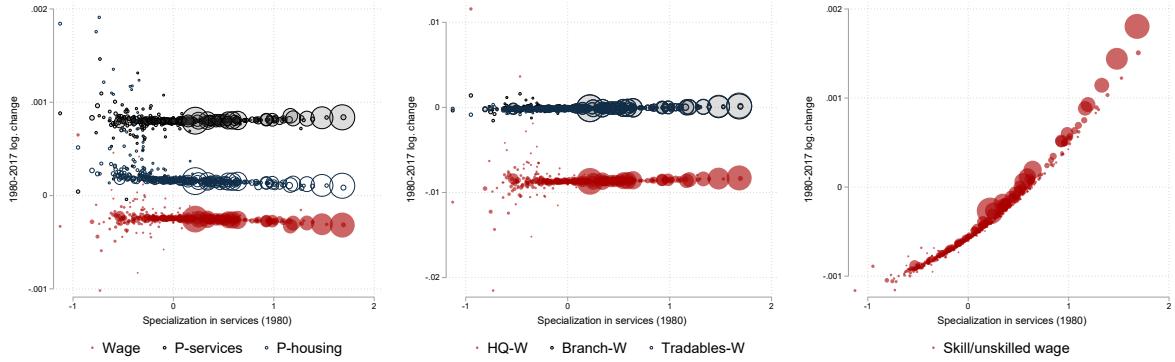
**Figure 18:** Note: This figure reports binscatter plots for the volume of online job postings against the distance between the posting's location and its firm headquarters location. A location is defined as a 1990 commuting zone, and the figures control for headquarters-location and job-location fixed effects. The job postings data is from Lightcast, after merging it with firm headquarters locations from the D&B dataset. Each subplot represents a different NAICS sector (2-digits code).

**Figure 19: The spatial impact of a small increase in  $\beta$**



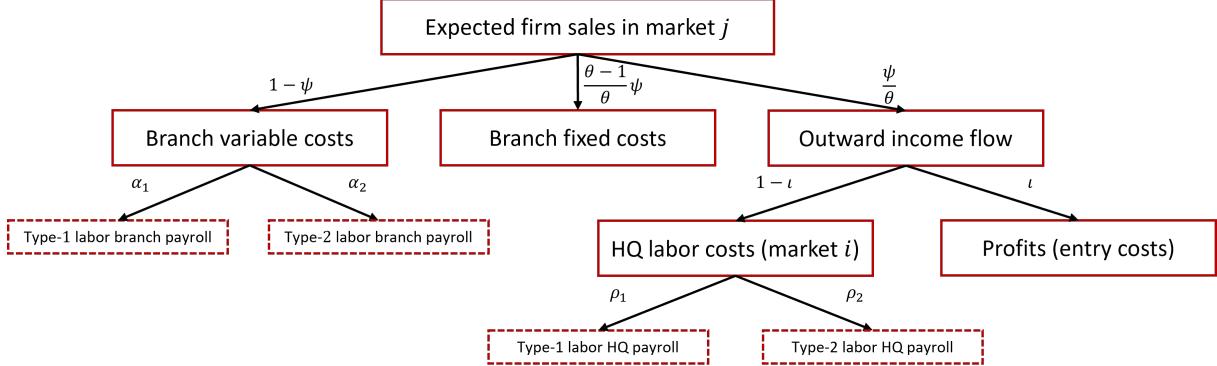
Note: This figure shows regional changes in the model following a small increase in the expenditure share on services  $\beta$ . The x-axis in all three subplots is regional specialization in services in the 1980 equilibrium, given by the log of  $E_i/R_i$  in the model. Each circle represents a labor market area and the size of the circles capture total LMA employment in the baseline equilibrium. The left panel shows log changes in the regional average wage index (solid red circles), regional price of housing (empty blue circles), and regional price index of services (shaded gray circles). The center figure shows log changes in the three components of the regional wage index: headquarters wage index (solid red circles), branches wage index (shaded gray circles), and tradable-goods wage index (empty blue circles). The right panel shows changes in the log ratio of skilled to unskilled wages.

**Figure 20: The spatial impact of a small increase in  $\rho_s$**



Note: This figure shows regional changes in the model following a small increase in the intensity of college graduates in headquarters production  $\rho_s$ . The x-axis in all three subplots is regional specialization in services in the 1980 equilibrium, given by the log of  $E_i/R_i$  in the model. Each circle represents a labor market area and the size of the circles capture total LMA employment in the baseline equilibrium. The left panel shows log changes in the regional average wage index (solid red circles), regional price of housing (empty blue circles), and regional price index of services (shaded gray circles). The center figure shows log changes in the three components of the regional wage index: headquarters wage index (solid red circles), branches wage index (shaded gray circles), and tradable-goods wage index (empty blue circles). The right panel shows changes in the log ratio of skilled to unskilled wages.

**Figure 21: The composition of firm revenues in the model**



Note: This figure shows how the expected sales of a  $i$ -headquartered firm in some market  $j$  are distributed across locations and different types of costs. “Outward income flow” stands for the residual of local revenues after paying local variable and fixed costs. The figure considers two types of worker skills, such that  $S = \{1, 2\}$ . The composite parameters  $\psi$  and  $\iota$  are given by  $\psi \equiv 1 - \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\epsilon}{1+\epsilon}$  and  $\iota \equiv 1 - \gamma \frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\theta}{\psi}$ .

**Table 12: Additional statistics on firm structure in goods-producing sectors**

Type of firm	Year	Firms	% of workforce	Emp. per firm	Estabs. per firm	CZs per firm
Goods, single estab.	1980	623000	11%	49	1.00	1.00
Goods, single estab.	2017	762000	7%	38	1.00	1.00
Goods, multi-estab. and single-CZ	1980	6900	1%	210	1.78	1.00
Goods, multi-estab. and single-CZ	2017	5400	1%	230	1.03	1.00
Goods, multi-estab. and multi-CZ	1980	9900	19%	8942	69.66	18.73
Goods, multi-estab. and multi-CZ	2017	11000	6%	3535	48.22	11.50

Note: Data from the Census Bureau Longitudinal Business Database. The table includes statistics for firms with at least half of their wage bill in establishments in goods-producing sectors. Multi-estab. stands for a firm with at least two establishments, and multi-CZ stands for a firm with establishments in at least two 1990 commuting zone. See Section 2.1 for additional details on sample selection and definitions.

**Table 15: The distribution of demand for skill within firms**

NAICS code	Sector	% Postings in HQ-CZ	% College		$\Delta$
			HQ CZ	Other CZs	
42	Wholesale Trade	15%	54%	16%	38%
44-45	Retail Trade	9%	42%	7%	35%
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	10%	36%	7%	30%
51	Information	30%	63%	43%	20%
52	Finance and Insurance	22%	52%	39%	12%
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	12%	30%	11%	19%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	25%	65%	53%	11%
56	Administrative and Support, Waste Management	15%	33%	13%	20%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	37%	32%	25%	8%
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	26%	26%	14%	13%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	12%	15%	5%	10%
81	Other Services	24%	38%	19%	19%

Note: Data from Lightcast online job-postings. The table is based on online job postings by firms in service sectors that are active in at least two commuting zones and have a matched headquarters location from Dun & Bradstreet data, according to the procedure described in Section 2.1. The sector of a firm is determined by the main 2-digit NAICS code in its job postings, and the table shows sectoral aggregates across all firms in a given sector. The third column shows the percent of job postings in the headquarters commuting zones of firms out of their total postings. The fourth column shows the percent of postings in the headquarters location of firms that require a college degree. The fifth column shows the corresponding figure in all other non-headquarters commuting zones in which firms are active.

**Table 13:** Examples for job postings by selected multi-region service firms

Firm	Type of branch	HQ CZ	CZs	Top occupations in HQ-CZ	Top occupations in other CZs
Equity Residential	Apartments building	Chicago city, IL	61	Accounting Professionals Human Resources Specialists Network and Systems Engineering	Property and Facilities Managers Non-Technical Sales Maintenance and Repair
Bank of America	Bank branch	Charlotte city, NC	453	Software Development Business Analysis	Financial Sales Investment Specialists Banking and Lending
Delta Airlines	Airport hub/office	Atlanta city, GA	189	Marketing Specialists Project and Program Managers Software Development	Maintenance and Repair Hospitality and Travel Customer Service Representatives
Major League Soccer	Stadium / sports center	New York city, NY	21	Software Development Communications and Public Relations Marketing Specialists	Marketing Specialists Sports
T-Mobile	Store / Repair center	Seattle city, WA	407	Software Development Marketing Specialists Network and Systems Engineering	Non-Technical Sales Retail Managers Retail Sales and Service
Union Pacific Railroad	Rail / repair station	Omaha city, NE	287	Engineering Managers Network and Systems Engineering Software Development	Skilled Construction and Building Trades Maintenance and Repair Rail Transportation
Unitedhealth Group	Local office / clinic	Minneapolis, MN	602	Network and Systems Engineering Business Analysis Software Development	Healthcare Administrators and Managers Advanced Nursing and Physician Assistants Registered / Practical Nursing
Walmart	Store	Fayetteville city, AR	630	Human Resources Specialists Software Development Retail Managers	Retail Sales and Service Logistics and Operational Support Retail Managers

Note: This table shows examples for job postings by firms from different service sectors from the Burning Glass Data. The HQ-CZ is the headquarters commuting zone of the firm. CZs stands for the number of commuting zones with postings by this firm in the data. The fifth column shows the top three occupations in the postings of the firm at its headquarters market, and the last column to the right shows the top three occupations in all other locations.

**Table 14: The industry composition of multi-region service firms**

Firm activity	(1) % of firm payroll	(2) % of HQ-CZ payroll	(3) % of non-HQ-CZ payroll
Core industry (main 4-digit NAICS)	34.8%	25.4%	39.2%
Core sector (main 2-digit NAICS)	49.6%	42.4%	52.9%
Explicit headquarters activity (NAICS-55)	9.0%	26.8%	0.9%
Non-core business services (NAICS-5*)	2.2%	2.4%	2.1%
Other non-core activity	4.4%	3.1%	4.9%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Note: This table extends Table 4 from Section 2.4.2 with more granular categories of firm activity. Data from the Census Bureau Longitudinal Business Database. The table shows how the total payroll of multi-region service firms is distributed across different activities, in firms with clearly identifiable headquarters location, as discussed in Section 2.1. The categories of activities are: Core industry - establishments in the same 4-digits NAICS code as the firm-level classification; Core sector - establishments in the same 2-digits NAICS code as the firm; Explicit headquarters activity - establishments in the NAICS-55 sector (“Management of Companies and Enterprises”); Non-core business services - establishments outside of the core sector with a 2-digit NAICS-code of 51, 52, 53 or 54; Other non-core activity - all other establishments. The HQ-market of a firm is the commuting zone with the highest share of NAICS-55 activity.

## D The headquarters wage premium

In this section, I provide further evidence for the wage differentials between HQ-level tasks and branch-level tasks. To this end, Table 16 reports regressions of log posted wages in the Burning Glass data against the occupational HQ-intensity measure developed in Section 2.4.3 of the main text. Column (1) reports this relationship when controlling for whether the job posting requires a college degree, its commuting zone and its industry (NAICS-3 code). Comparing the least HQ-intensive occupation to the most HQ-intensive occupation is associated with a wage differential of around 25% that is not explained by educational attainment, location, or industry. Column (2) shows that this relationship is even stronger when comparing only occupations within the same firm by controlling for firm fixed effects. Column (3) further shows that the difference between headquarters wages and branch-level wages is larger in firms that serve more markets (more commuting zones), in line with Proposition 3 from Section 4. Columns (4)-(6) repeat Columns (1)-(3) in a multi-year setting with year fixed effects. In particular, Column (6) reports also the coefficient on the Log average number of markets served by the firm, which is no longer constant at the firm level when different years are considered. Firms post higher wages as they expand in space, but particularly so for headquarters-level tasks.

**Table 16:** The headquarters wage premium

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Outcome: log posted wage	Single-year			Multi-year		
Occupational HQ-intensity	0.249*** (0.0753)	0.437*** (0.0380)	0.228*** (0.0350)	0.362*** (0.0713)	0.455*** (0.0357)	0.315*** (0.0323)
College requirement	0.406*** (0.0105)	0.348*** (0.00768)	0.347*** (0.00774)	0.387*** (0.0108)	0.335*** (0.00783)	0.335*** (0.00782)
HQ-intensity $\times$ Log CZs			0.0730*** (0.0239)			0.0129* (0.00743)
Log CZs						0.0503** (0.0216)
Commuting zone FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Industry FE	Y	N	N	Y	N	N
Firm FE	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Year FE	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y
Observations	3281863	3281863	3281863	7253996	7253996	7253996

Note: This table shows the results from a regression of a log posted wages in the Burning Glass data on various job characteristics. Columns (1)-(3) consider only 2019 - the year with the largest number of postings that include wages. Columns (4)-(6) consider a multi-year setting covering 2015-2019. Earlier years (2010-2014) are omitted due to limited information on posted wages. “Occupational HQ-intensity” captures the measure developed in Section 2.4.3. “College requirement” is an indicator that equals to one if a posting explicitly requires a college degree. “Log CZs” is the average number of commuting zones in which the firm is active. Standard errors in parentheses, clustered at the firm level. \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

## E A shift-share analysis of firm expansion

In this appendix, I provide additional evidence for the mechanism in the model by exploring the differential exposure of different regions to national industry-level expansion trends. In the model, locations with ex-ante specialization in providing within-firm headquarters services see the greatest increase in income and demand for skill following a decline in frictions to firm expansion. I extend this logic to a multi-industry setting, in which locations that ex-ante specialize in providing headquarters-services in industries with greater decline in such frictions should see the greatest increase in income and demand for skilled labor. A simple example to this logic can be seen in the case of Bentonville, AR from Appendix Section A. In 1970, this local market already specialized in providing headquarters services to retail branches. Since then, the Retail Trade sector witnessed significant technological changes that led to substantial spatial firm expansion, as can be seen in the rise of the average establishments per firm for this sector as a whole in Figure 12 of the main text. Accordingly, this local market experienced greater income growth and skill deepening than the rest of Arkansas.

Specifically, for each commuting zone  $i$  and period  $t$ , I define the following regional exposure to firm spatial expansion  $EE_{it}$ :

$$EE_{it} \equiv \sum_{k \in \text{Industries}} \left( \frac{N_{ik,1980}^{HQ}}{\sum_{k'} N_{ik',1980}^{HQ}} \right) \times \log \left( \frac{\bar{CZ}_{k,t}}{\bar{CZ}_{k,1980}} \right),$$

where  $N_{ik,1980}^{HQ}$  is the number of firm headquarters located in region  $i$  for industry  $k$  in the Dun and Bradstreet dataset; and  $\bar{CZ}_{k,t}$  is the *national* average number of commuting-zones per firm in industry  $k$  for period  $t$ . This shift-share variable yields a high value for region  $i$ , period  $t$ , when the headquarters that region  $i$  hosted in 1980 tend to be from industries that have witnessed greater national spatial expansion between 1980 and  $t$ .

Table 17 below shows the results from a regression of a series of regional outcomes on these expansion-exposure measures. I omit small commuting zones with less than 5000 workers, and I include the years 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2017. The first outcome is log average wages from the BLS Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW). The second outcome is the regional log college premium (average wage for college graduates relative to workers without a college degree), computed from the decennial census files for 1980-2000, and from the 2015-2019 American Community Survey for 2017.<sup>61</sup> Due to the noisier nature of this data, this outcome has less observations, and smaller commuting zones are omitted. The third outcome is the log regional ratio of college-graduates to workers without a college degree.<sup>62</sup> Columns (1)-(3) report the coefficients

---

<sup>61</sup>Data taken from Ruggles et al. (2021).

<sup>62</sup>This data is obtained from the USDA county-level data: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/county-level-data-sets/>.

from regressions of these three outcomes on the expansion-exposure measure, controlling for commuting-zone and year fixed effects, and weighting by commuting zone 1980 employment. Columns (4)-(6) add controls for total (log) commuting zone employment and establishments; and for the manufacturing employment share in a commuting zone, to control for differential structural transformation, though adding these controls does not affect much the estimated coefficients.

In line with the rationale of the mechanism in the model, commuting zones that were more exposed to national firm expansion trends by hosting headquarters of relevant industries in 1980 have witnessed greater income growth. In addition, they have experienced greater increase of the relative price and the relative quantity of skilled-labor, indicating of an upward shift in the demand for skilled labor in these markets relative to less-exposed markets. Note that all initial commuting-zone characteristics such as its size or skill intensity in 1980 are absorbed in the commuting zone fixed effect.

**Table 17:** Expansion Exposure

	(1) Log. Wage	(2) Log. SP	(3) Log. HL	(4) Log. Wage	(5) Log. SP	(6) Log. HL
Expansion Exposure	1.150*** (0.188)	0.668** (0.275)	0.670*** (0.224)	0.867*** (0.208)	0.674** (0.284)	0.616*** (0.208)
Log. Employment				0.121 (0.103)	-0.287*** (0.0900)	0.0393 (0.174)
Log. Establishments				0.0850 (0.0882)	0.236** (0.0933)	0.0287 (0.201)
Manufacturing Share				-0.332 (0.300)	0.582** (0.232)	-0.904*** (0.191)
N	2332	1650	2332	2332	1650	2332
CZ and Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: This table shows the results from a regression of a series of regional outcomes on the expansion-exposure measures described in the text. Small commuting zones with less than 5000 workers are omitted. The included years are 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2017. SP is the regional college premium (average wage for college graduates relative to workers without a college degree), computed from the decennial census files for 1980-2000, and from the 2015-2019 American Community Survey for 2017. Due to the noisier nature of this data, this outcome has less observations. HL is the ratio of college-graduates to workers without a college degree. Columns (1)-(3) report the coefficients from regressions of these three outcomes on the expansion-exposure measure, controlling for commuting-zone and year fixed effects, and weighting by commuting zone 1980 employment. Columns (4)-(6) add controls for total (log) commuting zone employment and establishments, and for the manufacturing employment share. Standard errors in parentheses, clustered at the commuting zone level. \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

## F Additional model derivations

### F.1 Additional derivations for the households block

Recall that households maximize

$$U_{is\nu} = b_{i\nu} (Q_i)^\beta (Q_i^g)^{1-\beta}, \quad Q_i = \left[ \int_{\omega \in \Omega_i} (q_i(\omega))^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} d\omega \right]^{\frac{\sigma}{\sigma-1}},$$

where  $b_{i\nu}$  is an household-specific idiosyncratic preference shock for region  $i$  and employer  $\nu$ ;  $\beta \in (0, 1)$  is the expenditure share on services;  $Q_i^g$  is a homogenous quantity of goods; and the bundle of services  $Q_i$  aggregates all service varieties  $\omega$  available in market  $i$ ,  $\Omega_i$ , using a constant elasticity of substitution  $\sigma > 1$ . The ideal price index dual to the composite of services is given by

$$P_i = \left( \int_{\omega \in \Omega_i} P_i(\omega)^{1-\sigma} d\omega \right)^{\frac{1}{1-\sigma}},$$

and I denote the total expenditure on services in market  $j$  by  $E_j$ . Note that  $E_j$  includes expenditure by households, i.e. a share  $\beta$  of total household income, as well as additional expenditure by firms that will be specified later. The aggregate regional price index faced by each consumer is given by

$$\bar{P}_i = P_i^\beta.$$

The idiosyncratic shocks  $\mathbf{b}$  are assumed to be independently draw from

$$F(\mathbf{b}) = \exp \left( - \sum_{i=1}^N \left( \int_{\nu \in \mathcal{V}_i} b_{i\nu}^{-\epsilon} d\nu \right)^{\frac{\xi}{\epsilon}} \right), \quad (\text{A.1})$$

where the parameter  $\xi$  governs the dispersion of shocks across different markets and thus captures the region-level labor supply elasticity;  $\epsilon$  governs the dispersion of shocks across different employers within each location and thus captures the employer-specific labor supply elasticity; and  $\mathcal{V}_i$  is the set of available employers in location  $i$ .

The implied regional labor supply, given by the probability that an agent of type  $s$  chooses region  $i$ , equals to:

$$\frac{L_{is}}{\sum_{j=1}^N L_{js}} = \frac{(W_{is}/\bar{P}_i)^\xi}{\sum_{j=1}^N (W_{js}/\bar{P}_j)^\xi} \quad (\text{A.2})$$

where  $L_{is}$  is the measure of households of type  $s$  that choose location  $i$ , and  $W_{is}$  is the

regional skill-specific ideal wage index, aggregating the employer-specific wages  $w_{is}(\nu)$ :

$$W_{is} = \left( \int_{\nu \in \mathcal{V}_i} w_{is}(\nu)^\epsilon d\nu \right)^{\frac{1}{\epsilon}}. \quad (\text{A.3})$$

$W_{is}$  is the welfare-relevant wage-index, accounting for the level of wages and for the variety of available employers.

Conditional on choosing location  $i$ , the mass of type- $s$  workers that choose employer  $\nu$  is given by

$$l_{is}(\nu) = L_{is} \left( \frac{w_{is}(\nu)}{W_{is}} \right)^\epsilon. \quad (\text{A.4})$$

## F.2 Solving the branch problem

I start by deriving closed-form solutions for the firm's branch-level decisions. First, conditional on the composite of headquarters labor  $h_i \equiv \prod_{s=1}^S h_{is}^{\rho_s}$  and on activity in market  $j$ , we solve for the optimal production decisions in that market:

$$\pi_{0,ij}(z) = \max_{\{l_s\}_{s=1}^S} E_j^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} P_j^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} (q_{ij}(z))^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} - \sum_{s=1}^S W_{js} L_{js}^{-\frac{1}{\epsilon}} l_{js}^{\frac{\epsilon+1}{\epsilon}}. \quad (\text{A.5})$$

The implied  $j$ -market revenues  $r_{ij}(z_i, \phi_j)$ , type- $s$  employment  $l_{js}(z_i, \phi_j)$  and type- $s$  wages  $w_{js}(z_i, \phi_j)$  are given by

$$\begin{aligned} r_{ij}(z_i, \phi_j) &= (1 - \psi)^{\frac{1}{\psi}(1-\psi)} \left( E_j^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} P_j^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\psi}} C_j^{-\frac{1-\psi}{\psi}} \varphi_j(z_i, \phi_j)^{\frac{1}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}}, \\ l_{js}(z_i, \phi_j) &= W_{js}^{-\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}} L_{js}^{\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}} ((1 - \psi) \alpha_s r_{ij}(z_i, \phi_j))^{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}}, \\ w_{js}(z_i, \phi_j) &= W_{js}^{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}} L_{js}^{-\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}} ((1 - \psi) \alpha_s r_{ij}(z_i, \phi_j))^{\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}}, \end{aligned} \quad (\text{A.6})$$

where  $\psi$  captures the share of operating profits from sales in market  $j$ <sup>63</sup>

$$\psi \equiv 1 - \frac{\sigma - 1}{\sigma} \frac{\epsilon}{1 + \epsilon},$$

$C_j$  is a regional cost-shifter that summarizes the price and availability of labor for branch-level production in that market

$$C_j \equiv \prod_s \left( \alpha_s W_{js}^{-1} L_{js}^{\frac{1}{\epsilon}} \right)^{-\alpha_s},$$

and  $\phi_j$  is the firm's productivity at market  $j$ . Intuitively, the firm has greater revenues in market  $j$  when the market size is larger (higher  $E_j$ ), there is less competition (higher  $P_j$ ), branch-labor is cheaper (lower  $C_j$ ), and the firm's productivity is higher. Branch-level

---

<sup>63</sup>I define operating profits in this context as revenues minus local labor costs, excluding fixed costs and headquarters labor costs.

employment and wages are both increasing in the firm's local revenues, and branch-level wages are decreasing in the local supply of labor  $L_{js}$  and increasing in the local wage index  $W_{js}$ . Note that in the limit of perfectly competitive labor markets,  $\epsilon \rightarrow \infty$ , branch-level wages are given by the market  $j$  skill-specific wage index  $W_{js}$ , which itself becomes the average wage for group  $s$  in that market.

### F.3 Solving the branch activity decision

The firm serves market  $j$  if these operating profits are greater than the fixed cost  $\bar{P}_j f$ , where  $\bar{P}_j$  is the aggregate price index in market  $j$  which we use to price the fixed costs  $f$ . This decision takes place when the realization of the market-specific idiosyncratic shock  $\phi_j$  is large enough, or  $\psi r_{ij}(z) > \bar{P}_j f$ . I.e. we require

$$\phi_j^{\frac{1}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} > \frac{\bar{P}_j f}{\psi (1-\psi)^{\frac{1}{\psi}(1-\psi)} \left( E_j^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} P_j^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\psi}} C_j^{-\frac{1-\psi}{\psi}} (A_{ij}\varphi_i(z))^{\frac{1}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}}}. \quad (\text{A.7})$$

For convenience, denote

$$r_{0,ij}(z) \equiv (1-\psi)^{\frac{1}{\psi}(1-\psi)} \left( E_j^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} P_j^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\psi}} C_j^{-\frac{1-\psi}{\psi}} (A_{ij}\varphi_i(z))^{\frac{1}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}}. \quad (\text{A.8})$$

The threshold productivity for activity is thus equal to

$$\tilde{\phi}_j^{\frac{1}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} = \frac{\bar{P}_j f}{\psi r_{0,ij}(z)}, \quad (\text{A.9})$$

and the probability for activity is

$$Pr \left( \phi_j^{\frac{1}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} > \frac{\bar{P}_j f}{\psi r_{0,ij}(z)} \right) = \left( \frac{\bar{P}_j f}{\psi r_{0,ij}(z)} \right)^{-\theta}. \quad (\text{A.10})$$

The resulting unconditional sales are

$$\bar{r}_{ij}(z) = \frac{\theta}{\theta-1} \left( \frac{\bar{P}_j f}{\psi} \right)^{1-\theta} (r_{0,ij}(z))^\theta, \quad (\text{A.11})$$

which can also be written as

$$\bar{r}_{ij}(z) = \tilde{\psi} f^{1-\theta} \Upsilon_j (A_{ij} z_i h_i^\gamma)^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}}, \quad (\text{A.12})$$

where

$$\tilde{\psi} \equiv \left( \frac{\theta}{\theta-1} \psi^{\theta-1} (1-\psi)^{\frac{\theta}{\psi}(1-\psi)} \right),$$

and the regional aggregate  $\Upsilon_j$  captures *market potential* in location  $j$

$$\Upsilon_j \equiv \left( E_j^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} P_j^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \bar{P}_j^{-\psi \frac{\theta-1}{\theta}} C_j^{-(1-\psi)} \right)^{\frac{\theta}{\psi}}. \quad (\text{A.13})$$

The market potential term  $\Upsilon_j$  conveniently summarizes all terms that make some market  $j$  more attractive for operating branches, including greater market size  $E_j$ , the degree of competition (captured by  $P_j$ ), the cost of hiring branch-level labor in that market  $C_j$ , and the price of the fixed branch cost  $\bar{P}_j$ .

The resulting unconditional revenues  $\bar{r}_j(z_i)$  are a power function of  $j$ 's market potential, the bilateral friction between  $i$  and  $j$ ,  $A_{ij}$ , and the firm-level productivity components affecting all branches: fundamental firm productivity  $z_i$  and endogenous headquarters-level bundle  $h_i$ . We thus get a standard gravity structure for firm-level expected sales, and they are log linear in a firm-level component  $(z_i h_i^\gamma)^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}}$ , the destination  $j$  market potential  $\Upsilon_j$ , and bilateral frictions between the firm's headquarters location  $i$  and market  $j$ . Similarly to unconditional sales, expected unconditional employment and wage levels are given by

$$\bar{l}_{ijs}(z) = W_{js}^{-\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}} L_{js}^{\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}} ((1-\psi) \alpha_s)^{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}} \frac{\theta-1}{\theta - \frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}} \left( \frac{\bar{P}_j f}{\psi} \right)^{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}-1} \bar{r}_{ij}(z), \quad (\text{A.14})$$

$$\bar{w}_{ijs}(z) = W_{js}^{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}} L_{js}^{-\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}} ((1-\psi) \alpha_s)^{\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}} \frac{\theta-1}{\theta - \frac{1}{\epsilon+1}} \left( \frac{\bar{P}_j f}{\psi} \right)^{\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}-1} \bar{r}_{ij}(z). \quad (\text{A.15})$$

## F.4 Headquarters and firm-wide solutions

With the above branch-level solutions, I now continue to derive closed-form solutions for headquarters-level decisions. Based on its expected revenues across all markets, the firm solves for optimal headquarters-level hiring  $\{h_{is}\}_{s=1}^S$  and the implied headquarters wages  $\{w_{is}\}_{s=1}^S$ :

$$\max_{\{h_s\}_{s=1}^S} \tilde{\psi} f^{1-\theta} \left( \sum_{j=1}^N A_{ij}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \Upsilon_j \right) \left( z \left( \prod_s h_{is}^{\rho_s} \right)^\gamma \right)^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} - \sum_{s=1}^S W_{is} L_{is}^{-\frac{1}{\epsilon}} h_{is}^{\frac{\epsilon+1}{\epsilon}}. \quad (\text{A.16})$$

The first order conditions yield

$$\underbrace{\rho_s \gamma \frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\psi}{\theta}}_{1-\ell} \bar{r}_i(z) = W_{is} L_{is}^{-\frac{1}{\epsilon}} h_{is}^{\frac{\epsilon+1}{\epsilon}}, \quad (\text{A.17})$$

and the resulting firm choices are

$$h_{is}(z) = \left( \rho_s (1 - \iota) \frac{\psi}{\theta} W_{is}^{-1} L_{is}^{\frac{1}{\epsilon}} \bar{r}_i(z) \right)^{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}}, \quad (\text{A.18})$$

$$w_{is}(z) = W_{is}^{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}} L_{is}^{-\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}} \left( \rho_s (1 - \iota) \frac{\psi}{\theta} \bar{r}_i(z) \right)^{\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}}. \quad (\text{A.19})$$

where  $\bar{r}_i(z_i)$  captures expected firm revenues across all markets, internalizing optimal branch-level and headquarters-level decisions, and on which I elaborate further below. According to the above expressions, the firm hires more headquarters workers and pays them higher wages when firm-level revenues across all markets are higher. This dependency captures the non-rival nature of the HQ output. Accordingly, firms with better expansion opportunities (i.e., higher  $\bar{r}_i(z_i)$  conditional on  $z_i$ ) have larger headquarters and higher branch-level productivity. As the elasticity of branch-productivity to HQ-hiring  $\gamma$  approaches zero, the firm has no incentive to hire HQ labor. Finally, the firm hires more  $s$ -type workers and pays them lower wages when the market-level supply  $L_{is}$  is higher and the ideal wage index  $W_{is}$  is lower.

Internalizing these optimal decisions, the above expected total revenues  $\bar{r}_i(z_i)$  take a simple form

$$\bar{r}_i(z_i) = \Lambda_i z_i^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\theta}{\iota\psi}}. \quad (\text{A.20})$$

where  $\iota$  is a constant capturing the share of operating profits that ends up going to the firm's owners.

The regional aggregate  $\Lambda_i$  conveniently captures all forces that make location  $i$  more attractive for operating headquarters, and is given by

$$\Lambda_i \equiv \tilde{\iota} \underbrace{\left( \sum_{j=1}^N A_{ij}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \Upsilon_j \right)^{\frac{1}{\iota}}}_{\text{HQ market access}} \underbrace{\left( \prod_s \left( \rho_s W_{is}^{-1} L_{is}^{\frac{1}{\epsilon}} \right)^{-\rho_s} \right)^{-\frac{1-\iota}{\iota}}}_{\text{Cost and supply of HQ labor}}, \quad (\text{A.21})$$

where  $\tilde{\iota}$  is a constant that subsumes various parameters, and we define the headquarters-labor cost shifter

$$\Gamma_i \equiv \prod_s \left( \rho_s W_{is}^{-1} L_{is}^{\frac{1}{\epsilon}} \right)^{-\rho_s}. \quad (\text{A.22})$$

Expected firm sales to specific market  $j$  are thus given by

$$\bar{r}_{ij}(z) = \frac{A_{ij}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \Upsilon_j}{\sum_{j'=1}^N A_{ij'}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \Upsilon_{j'}} \Lambda_i z^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\theta}{\iota\psi}}. \quad (\text{A.23})$$

Figure 21 summarizes the breakdown of expected revenues in the model to different types of costs and to profits. A share  $1 - \psi$  of the firm's expected sales in each market  $j$  are paid as compensation to local branch labor, divided across the different skill groups in accordance to the branch-level production function. A share  $\psi(1 - 1/\theta)$  of sales is expected to be spent on fixed branch costs in each market. The residual  $\psi/\theta$  of revenues is split between payments to HQ labor (( $1 - \iota$ ) percentage of this residual), in the headquarters location  $i$ , and between firm profits ( $\iota$  percentage of this residual).

## F.5 Entry and headquarters locations

The equilibrium allocation of headquarters across space admits a simple solution. Recall that the individual firm chooses headquarters location  $i$  to maximize its expected profits from Equation (7).

We now obtain a simple expression for these profits, given by

$$\mathbb{E}_\phi [\pi_i (c^{\mathbb{I}_{i \neq n}} z_{0,i}, \phi)] = \frac{\psi\iota}{\theta} \Lambda_i z_i^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\theta}{\iota\psi}},$$

which is just a constant share  $\psi\iota/\theta$  of expected revenues from Equation (A.20). This share captures the market power of the firm in output and labor markets, captured by the elasticities  $\sigma$  and  $\epsilon$ , both of which appear in the composite constants  $\psi$  and  $\iota$ . In addition, it captures the dispersion of branch-level shocks  $\theta$  that governs the probability of serving individual markets and the HQ-branch elasticity  $\gamma$  that appears in  $\iota$  and governs the ability of the firm to raise revenues across all markets through the non-rival HQ inputs.

The log-linearity of expected profits in the headquarters-productivity term  $z_i$ , together with the assumption that the baseline HQ productivity draws  $z_{0,i}$  are Fréchet-distributed, yield a simple expression for the probability that a firm that entered in location  $n$  chooses  $i$  as its headquarters base, denoted by  $\lambda_{ni}$ :

$$\lambda_{ni} = \frac{c^{\eta \mathbb{I}_{n \neq i}} \Lambda_i^{\eta / (\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\theta}{\iota\psi})}}{\sum_{m=1}^N c^{\eta \mathbb{I}_{n \neq m}} \Lambda_m^{\eta / (\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\theta}{\iota\psi})}}. \quad (\text{A.24})$$

According to this expression, locations with higher  $\Lambda_i$  attract a greater share of entrants from each market  $n$ . Note that in the extreme case that the productivity lose from moving the HQ away from the entry market is particularly high,  $c \rightarrow 0$ , we obtain that all firms stay in their entry market, and there is no sorting based on the set of productivity draws  $\{z_{0,i}\}_{i=1}^N$ . In this case,  $\lambda_{ni} = 1$  for  $n = i$  and is zero otherwise.

Finally, ex-ante expected profits for market  $n$  are given by

$$\pi_{e,n} = \tilde{\pi} \left[ (1 - c^\eta) \Lambda_n^{\eta / (\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\theta}{\iota\psi})} + \sum_{i=1}^N c^\eta \Lambda_i^{\eta / (\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\theta}{\iota\psi})} \right]^{\left(\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\theta}{\iota\psi}\right)/\eta}, \quad (\text{A.25})$$

with  $\tilde{\pi} \equiv \frac{\psi\iota}{\theta}\Gamma\left(1 - \left(\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}\frac{\theta}{\iota\psi}\right)/\eta\right)$ , where  $\Gamma(\cdot)$  is the Gamma-function. This expression shows that ex-ante profits depend on the HQ-attractiveness shifters  $\Lambda_i$  across all locations given the ability to place headquarters away from the firm's entry market  $n$ . In the extreme case when such reallocation is associated with a great productivity loss, i.e.  $c \rightarrow 0$ , expected profits simply scale with the value of  $\Lambda_n$  in the entry location  $n$ . When  $c \rightarrow 1$ , expected profits become a standard power mean of  $\Lambda_i$  across all locations, and the entry location does not matter for the firm's headquarters choice (i.e., the entry cost is a sunk cost).

## F.6 Characterization of firm wages - Propositions 2 and 3

Armed with solutions to the firm's problem, we can now obtain results for Propositions 2 and 3. Consider a firm headquartered in location  $i$  with a branch in location  $j$ , firm-level productivity  $z$  and branch-level productivity  $\phi$ . Combining the expressions for branch wages and revenues from Equation A.6, the wages that it pays for workers of type  $s$  in market  $j$  are given by

$$w_{ijs}(z, \phi) = W_{js}^{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}} L_{js}^{-\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}} \left( (1-\psi) \alpha_s (1-\psi)^{\frac{1}{\psi}(1-\psi)} \left( E_j^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} P_j^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\psi}} C_j^{-\frac{1-\psi}{\psi}} \varphi_{ij}(z, \phi)^{\frac{1}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}}.$$

Based on the solution for the firm headquarters workers from Equation A.18, the productivity term  $\varphi_{ij}(z, \phi)$  equals to

$$\varphi_{ij}(z, \phi) = A_{ij} z \phi \left( \prod_{s=1}^S h_{is}^{\rho_s} \right)^\gamma = A_{ij} \phi \left( (1-\iota) \frac{\psi \Lambda_i}{\theta \Gamma_i} \right)^{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}\gamma} z^{\frac{1}{\iota}}.$$

Plugging it into the expression for branch wages yields an equation for wages in terms of regional aggregates and firm productivities

$$w_{ijs}(z, \phi) = \text{const}_s W_{js}^{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}} L_{js}^{-\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}} \left( \left( E_j^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} P_j^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\psi}} C_j^{-\frac{1-\psi}{\psi}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}} \quad (\text{A.26})$$

$$\times \left( \left( A_{ij} \phi \left( \frac{\Lambda_i}{\Gamma_i} \right)^{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}\gamma} z^{\frac{1}{\iota}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}}. \quad (\text{A.27})$$

Substituting  $\left( E_j^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} P_j^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} C_j^{-(1-\psi)} \right)^{\frac{1}{\psi}} = \Upsilon_j^{\frac{1}{\theta}} \bar{P}_j^{\frac{1}{\theta}-1}$  from the definition of the market potential term  $\Upsilon_j$ , taking logs and rearranging yields the expression from Proposition 2. Recall in this step that for the sake of expositional clarity, the proposition defines the constant  $\chi \equiv \frac{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}}{1 - \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}} = \frac{1-\psi}{\psi}$ .

To get the first result in Proposition 3, recall first the headquarters-level wages are

given by

$$w_{is}(z) = W_{is}^{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}} L_{is}^{-\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}} \left( \rho_s (1-\iota) \frac{\psi}{\theta} \Lambda_i z^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\theta}{\iota\psi}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}}.$$

Using this expression and the expression from Equation A.26, I compute the ratio of headquarters wages to branch wages  $\frac{w_{is}(z)}{w_{ijs}(z,\phi)}$ . Now consider two  $i$ -headquartered firms with firm productivities  $z$  and  $z'$  that are active in market  $j$  and have the same branch level productivity  $\phi$ . Dividing the expression for  $\frac{w_{is}(z)}{w_{ijs}(z,\phi)}$  by the one for  $\frac{w_{is}(z')}{w_{ijs}(z',\phi)}$  yields

$$\left( \frac{w_{is}(z)}{w_{ijs}(z,\phi)} / \frac{w_{is}(z')}{w_{ijs}(z',\phi)} \right) = \left( \frac{z}{z'} \right)^{(\theta-1)\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{1}{\iota\psi} \frac{1}{\epsilon+1}}.$$

Since  $\theta > 1$ , this ratio is increasing in  $z/z'$ . Therefore, the HQ-branch wage differential is higher in the more productive firm, yielding the first part of Proposition 3.

For the second part of Proposition 3, simply divide Equation A.19 by the expression for branch wages from Equation A.18, setting  $i = j$ . Then we get that the ratio of headquarters wages to branch-level wages in the firm's headquarters market is increasing in the ratio of total expected firm sales across all markets to local branch sales in the headquarters market.

## F.7 Aggregation of firm revenues

First, we express aggregate bilateral sales  $R_{ij}$ , which capture the total revenues of  $i$ -headquartered firms from establishments in market  $j$ , by aggregating Equation (A.23) above:

$$R_{ij} = \frac{A_{ij}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \Upsilon_j}{\sum_{j'=1}^N A_{ij'}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \Upsilon_{j'}} \Lambda_i Z_i M_i, \quad (\text{A.28})$$

where  $M_i$  is the mass of firms with headquarters in market  $i$ , and  $Z_i$  is an aggregate term capturing the average productivity of firms with headquarters in location  $i$ :

$$Z_i \equiv \int_z z^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\theta}{\iota\psi}} dG_i(z), \quad (\text{A.29})$$

where  $G_i(z)$  is the distribution of firm productivity  $z$  for firms with headquarters in location  $i$ . Total sales by firms headquartered in location  $i$  are thus given by

$$R_i = \sum_{j=1}^N R_{ij}. \quad (\text{A.30})$$

We can also express bilateral sales in terms of the expenditure shares of location  $j$  on varieties headquartered in location  $i$ ,  $\chi_{ji}$ , given by

$$\chi_{ji} = \frac{A_{ij}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \left( \frac{\Lambda_i}{\Gamma_i} \right)^{1-\iota} Z_i M_i}{\sum_{n=1}^N A_{nj}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \left( \frac{\Lambda_n}{\Gamma_n} \right)^{1-\iota} Z_n M_n}, \quad (\text{A.31})$$

so that

$$R_{ij} = \chi_{ji} E_j. \quad (\text{A.32})$$

## F.8 Services price index

To get the services price index, first note that

$$E_j = \sum_i R_{ij} = \Upsilon_j \sum_i \tilde{\psi} f^{1-\theta} A_{ij}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \left( (1-\iota) \frac{\psi}{\theta} \frac{\Lambda_i}{C_i} \right)^{1-\iota} Z_i M_i. \quad (\text{A.33})$$

Then from the definition of  $\Upsilon_i$

$$\begin{aligned} P_i^{-\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} &= \bar{P}_i^{1-\theta} E_i^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{1}{\sigma}} C_i^{-\frac{\theta}{\psi}(1-\psi)} \Upsilon_i^{-1} \\ &= \bar{P}_i^{1-\theta} E_i^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{1}{\sigma}-1} C_i^{-\frac{\theta}{\psi}(1-\psi)} \frac{E_i}{\Upsilon_i} \\ &= \tilde{\psi} \left( (1-\iota) \frac{\psi}{\theta} \right)^{1-\iota} \bar{P}_i^{1-\theta} E_i^{\frac{\theta}{\psi\sigma}-1} C_i^{-\frac{\theta}{\psi}(1-\psi)} \sum_n f^{1-\theta} A_{ni}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \left( \frac{\Lambda_n}{\Gamma_n} \right)^{1-\iota} Z_n M_n \\ &= \tilde{\psi} \left( (1-\iota) \frac{\psi}{\theta} \right)^{1-\iota} \bar{P}_i^{1-\theta} E_i^{\frac{\theta}{\psi\sigma}-1} C_i^{-\frac{\theta}{\psi}(1-\psi)} \sum_n f^{1-\theta} A_{ni}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \left( \frac{R_n}{\Gamma_n} \right)^{1-\iota} (M_n Z_n)^\iota, \end{aligned}$$

Where the last line uses the fact that

$$R_n = \Lambda_n M_n Z_n,$$

So that

$$P_i = \left[ \tilde{\iota} \bar{P}_i^{1-\theta} E_i^{\frac{\theta}{\psi\sigma}-1} C_i^{-\frac{\theta}{\psi}(1-\psi)} \sum_n A_{ni}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \left( \frac{R_n}{\Gamma_n} \right)^{1-\iota} (M_n Z_n)^\iota \right]^{\frac{1}{-\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}}}, \quad (\text{A.34})$$

where recall that

$$\tilde{\iota} \equiv \left( \tilde{\psi} f^{1-\theta} \left( (1-\iota) \frac{\psi}{\theta} \right)^{1-\iota} \right)^{\frac{1}{\iota}}.$$

## F.9 The tradable-goods sector

Firms in the tradable-goods sector in location  $i$  solve the following profit-maximization problem

$$\max_{\{l_{is}\}_{s=1}^S} A_{g,i} \prod_{s=1}^S l_{is}^{\alpha_{g,s}} - \sum_{s=1}^S W_{is} L_{is}^{-\frac{1}{\epsilon}} l_{is}^{\frac{\epsilon+1}{\epsilon}}. \quad (\text{A.35})$$

The first order condition yields

$$A_{g,i} l_{is} = \frac{\epsilon+1}{\epsilon} W_{is} L_{is}^{-\frac{1}{\epsilon}} l_{is}^{\frac{\epsilon+1}{\epsilon}}. \quad (\text{A.36})$$

The aggregate revenues of the tradable-goods sector in market  $i$  are thus given by

$$R_{g,i} = M_{g,i} \left( \left( \frac{\epsilon}{1+\epsilon} \frac{1}{C_{g,i}} \right)^{\frac{\epsilon}{1+\epsilon}} A_{g,i} \right)^{1+\epsilon}, \quad (\text{A.37})$$

where  $M_{g,i}$  is the mass of goods-producing firms that are active in location  $i$ , and  $C_{g,i}$  is the tradable-goods cost shifter:

$$C_{g,i} \equiv \prod_s \left( \alpha_{g,s} W_{is}^{-1} L_{is}^{\frac{1}{\epsilon}} \right)^{-\alpha_{g,s}}. \quad (\text{A.38})$$

Free entry in the goods sector equates the average local entry cost  $\bar{P}_i f_e$  to the average sectoral profit, and is given by the following equation

$$M_{g,i} \bar{P}_i f_{g,i} = \frac{1}{1+\epsilon} R_{g,i}. \quad (\text{A.39})$$

## F.10 Aggregate wage index

Recall that the aggregate wage index for labor of type  $s$  in region  $i$  is given by

$$W_{is} = \left( \int_{\nu \in \mathcal{V}_i} w_{is}(\nu)^\epsilon d\nu \right)^{\frac{1}{\epsilon}},$$

where  $\mathcal{V}_i$  is the set of local employers, comprised of local branches, headquarters and goods-producing firms. I compute  $W_{is}^\epsilon$  for each of these groups separately, and then combine them.

I begin with the part of the wage index due to branch-level wages. Consider a firm with headquarters in location  $n$  that has a branch in location  $i$ , characterized by firm-level productivity  $z$  and branch-level productivity  $\phi$ . From the solution of the branch problem,

it pays the following wages to workers of type  $s$

$$w_{nis}(z, \phi) = W_{is}^{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}} L_{is}^{-\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}} ((1 - \psi) \alpha_s r_{ni}(z, \phi))^{\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}},$$

where the branch revenues are given by

$$\begin{aligned} r_{ni}(z, \phi) &= (1 - \psi)^{\frac{1}{\psi}(1-\psi)} \left( (1 - \iota) \frac{\psi}{\theta} \right)^{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1} \frac{1}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \gamma} \\ &\times \left( E_i^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} P_i^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\psi}} C_i^{-\frac{1-\psi}{\psi}} A_{ni}^{\frac{1}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \left( \frac{\Lambda_n}{\Gamma_n} \right)^{\frac{1}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1} \gamma} z^{\frac{1}{\iota} \frac{1}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \phi^{\frac{1}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}}. \end{aligned}$$

The part of the regional wage index due to branch-level wages is obtained by aggregating the expected value of  $w_{nis}(z, \phi)^\epsilon$  across all firms in the economy

$$(W_{is}^{\text{Branches}})^\epsilon \equiv \sum_{n=1}^N M_n \mathbb{E}_{z, \phi} [\mathbb{I}_{ni}(z, \phi) (w_{nis}(z, \phi))^\epsilon],$$

where  $\mathbb{I}_{ni}(z, \phi)$  equals to one if a firm with productivities  $(z, \phi)$  serves market  $i$ , thus taking care of the fact that only a subset of  $n$ -headquartered firms serve market  $i$  for each  $n$ . This expression in turn is given by

$$\begin{aligned} (W_{is}^{\text{Branches}})^\epsilon &= ((1 - \psi) \alpha_s)^{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}} \frac{\theta - 1}{\theta - \frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}} \left( \frac{\psi}{f} \right)^{\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}} \\ &\times \sum_{n=1}^N W_{is}^{\epsilon \frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}} L_{is}^{-\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}} P_i^{-\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}} \frac{A_{ni}^{-\frac{1}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \Upsilon_i}{\sum_{i'=1}^N A_{ni'}^{-\frac{1}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \Upsilon_{i'}} R_n. \end{aligned}$$

Next, recall from the solution to the headquarters problem that a firm with productivity  $z$  with headquarters in  $i$  pays the following wages for type- $s$  HQ workers:

$$w_{is}(z) = W_{is}^{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}} L_{is}^{-\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}} \left( \rho_s (1 - \iota) \frac{\psi}{\theta} \Lambda_i z^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\theta}{\iota \psi}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\epsilon+1}}.$$

Aggregating  $w_{is}^\epsilon$  across all  $i$ -headquartered firms yields the HQ component of the wage index

$$(W_{is}^{\text{HQ}})^\epsilon \equiv M_n \mathbb{E}_z [(w_{is}(z))^\epsilon].$$

Performing the integration yields

$$(W_{is}^{\text{HQ}})^\epsilon = M_i Z_{w,i} W_{is}^{\epsilon \frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}} L_{is}^{-\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}} \left( \rho_s (1 - \iota) \frac{\psi}{\theta} \Lambda_i \right)^{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}},$$

where  $Z_{w,i}$  is an aggregate productivity measure that accounts for labor market power

and given by

$$Z_{w,i} \equiv \int_i z^{\frac{\theta}{\iota} \frac{1-\psi}{\psi}} dG_i(z).$$

Note that when  $\epsilon \rightarrow \infty$ ,  $Z_{w,i} \rightarrow Z_i$ . Finally, the component of the wage index that accounts for goods-producing firms can be shown to equal

$$(W_{is}^{\text{Goods}})^\epsilon = W_{is}^{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}} L_{is}^{-\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}} M_{g,i} \left( \alpha_{g,s} \frac{\epsilon}{1+\epsilon} \frac{R_{g,i}}{M_{g,i}} \right)^{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1}}.$$

Combining all three terms yields the regional wage index

$$W_{is} = \left[ (W_{is}^{\text{Branches}})^\epsilon + (W_{is}^{\text{HQ}})^\epsilon + (W_{is}^{\text{Goods}})^\epsilon \right]^{\frac{1}{\epsilon}}. \quad (\text{A.40})$$

## F.11 Equilibrium in regional aggregates (Lemma 1)

I now present the full set of non-linear equations that determine the model's equilibrium. I separate this set of equations into four blocks.

**Labor market clearing.** First, the labor market clearing block determines the wage levels  $W_{is}$  and employment levels  $L_{is}$ . This block includes the wage-index Equation (A.40) above and the sorting of household across space:

$$\frac{L_{is}}{\sum_{j=1}^N L_{js}} = \frac{(W_{is}/\bar{P}_i)^\xi}{\sum_{j=1}^N (W_{js}/\bar{P}_j)^\xi}$$

**Services market clearing and regional balance of payments.** Secondly, services price indices  $P_i$ , expenditure levels  $E_i$ , and revenues  $R_i$ , are determined by market clearing in the services market,

$$R_i = \sum_{j=1}^N \frac{A_{ij}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \left( \frac{\Lambda_i}{\Gamma_i} \right)^{1-\iota} Z_i M_i}{\sum_{n=1}^N A_{nj}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \left( \frac{\Lambda_n}{\Gamma_n} \right)^{1-\iota} Z_n M_n} E_j$$

the expression for the services price index

$$P_i = \left[ \tilde{i} \bar{P}_i^{1-\theta} E_i^{\frac{\theta}{\psi\sigma}-1} C_i^{-\frac{\theta}{\psi}(1-\psi)} \sum_n A_{ni}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \left( \frac{R_n}{\Gamma_n} \right)^{1-\iota} (M_n Z_n)^\iota \right]^{-\frac{1}{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}}},$$

and the regional balance of payments,

$$\left( \frac{1-\beta}{\beta} + \frac{\psi}{\theta} \right) E_i = R_{g,i} + (1-\iota) \frac{\psi}{\theta} R_i + M_{e,i} \bar{P}_i f_e,$$

where recall that

$$\Lambda_i \equiv \tilde{\iota} \sum_{j=1}^N A_{ij}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \Upsilon_j^{\frac{1}{\iota}} \Gamma_i^{-\frac{1-\iota}{\iota}}, \quad \Gamma_i \equiv \prod_s \left( \rho_s W_{is}^{-1} L_{is}^{\frac{1}{\epsilon}} \right)^{-\rho_s}$$

and

$$\Upsilon_j \equiv \left( E_j^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} P_j^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} - \beta \psi \frac{\theta-1}{\theta}} C_j^{-(1-\psi)} \right)^{\frac{\theta}{\psi}}, \quad C_j \equiv \prod_s \left( \alpha_s W_{js}^{-1} L_{js}^{\frac{1}{\epsilon}} \right)^{-\alpha_s},$$

and that the aggregate price index  $\bar{P}_i$  in the equilibrium with housing is given by

$$\bar{P}_i = \left( \frac{\delta}{\beta(1-\delta)} \right)^{\frac{\delta}{(1+\varrho)-\delta\varrho}} P_i^{\beta(1-\frac{\delta}{(1+\varrho)-\delta\varrho})} E_i^{\frac{\delta}{(1+\varrho)-\delta\varrho}}.$$

**Tradable-goods production and entry.** Third, the regional mass of tradable-goods firms  $M_{g,i}$  and revenues  $R_{g,i}$  are determined by the optimality and free entry conditions for this sector:

$$R_{g,i} = M_{g,i} \left( \left( \frac{\epsilon}{1+\epsilon} \frac{1}{C_{gi}} \right)^{\frac{\epsilon}{1+\epsilon}} A_{g,i} \right)^{1+\epsilon}, \quad C_{g,i} \equiv \prod_s \left( \alpha_{g,s} W_{is}^{-1} L_{is}^{\frac{1}{\epsilon}} \right)^{-\alpha_{g,s}}$$

and

$$M_{g,i} \bar{P}_i f_{g,i} = \frac{1}{1+\epsilon} R_{g,i}$$

**Entry and optimal headquarters-location decisions in the services sector.** Finally, all remaining aggregates  $M_i$ ,  $M_{e,i}$ ,  $Z_i$  and  $Z_{w,i}$  are determined in the entry and HQ-location block for the services sector. The aggregate productivity index  $Z_i$  is given by

$$Z_i = \Gamma \left( 1 - 1 / \left( \frac{\eta}{\zeta} \right) \right) \sum_o \frac{M_{e,o}}{M_i} c^{\zeta \mathbb{I}_{o \neq i}} \lambda_{oi}^{1 - \frac{\zeta}{\eta}}, \quad (\text{A.41})$$

and the labor market productivity term  $Z_{w,i}$  is given by

$$Z_{w,i} = \Gamma \left( 1 - 1 / \left( \frac{\eta}{\zeta_w} \right) \right) \sum_o \frac{M_{e,o}}{M_i} \lambda_{oi}^{1 - \frac{\zeta}{\eta}} c^{\zeta_w \mathbb{I}_{o \neq i}}, \quad (\text{A.42})$$

where  $\Gamma(\cdot)$  is the Gamma-function,  $\zeta$  is a constant of parameters given by  $\zeta \equiv \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\theta}{\psi}$ , and the headquarters probability shares  $\lambda_{ni}$  are given by

$$\lambda_{ni} = \frac{(c^{\zeta \mathbb{I}_{n \neq i}} \Lambda_i)^{\frac{\eta}{\zeta}}}{\sum_{m=1}^N (c^{\zeta \mathbb{I}_{n \neq m}} \Lambda_m)^{\frac{\eta}{\zeta}}}.$$

The mass of entry  $M_{e,i}$  for each market can be recovered from the condition that balances

the flow of firms across locations

$$M_i = \sum_n \lambda_{ni} M_{e,n},$$

and the mass of headquarters  $M_i$  is given by  $M_i = R_i / (\Lambda_i Z_i)$ .

This completes the set of non-linear equations that are required to characterize all regional aggregates in the model.

## F.12 Aggregate and regional skill-intensity (Proposition 4)

First note that the total compensation for labor of type  $s$  in location  $i$  is given by

$$L_{is} W_{a,is} = \underbrace{\alpha_s \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1} E_i}_{\text{Branch-level compensation}} + \underbrace{\rho_s \gamma \frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} R_i}_{\text{HQ compensation}} + \underbrace{\alpha_{g,s} \frac{\epsilon}{1+\epsilon} R_{g,i}}_{\text{Tradable-goods compensation}}, \quad (\text{A.43})$$

where note that  $W_{a,is}$  is the *arithmetic* mean regional wage for group  $s$ , which is different from  $W_{is}$  when  $\epsilon \in (1, \infty)$ . To get the share of group  $s$  in total aggregate labor compensation, we sum the above across all regions, and divide by the sum across all regions and skill groups, to obtain

$$\frac{W_{a,s} L_s}{W_a L} = \frac{\alpha_s + \rho_s \gamma + \alpha_{g,s} \frac{\sigma}{\sigma-1} \frac{1-\beta}{\beta}}{1 + \gamma + \frac{\sigma}{\sigma-1} \frac{1-\beta}{\beta}}, \quad (\text{A.44})$$

where we have used the market clearing condition  $\sum_i R_i = \sum_i E_i$  and the fact that  $\sum_i R_{g,i} = ((1-\beta)/\beta) \sum_i E_i$ .

Now suppose that  $c \rightarrow 0$ , i.e. firms are headquartered in their entry market. The regional balance of payments becomes

$$\frac{1-\beta}{\beta} E_i - R_{g,i} = \frac{\psi}{\theta} (R_i - E_i).$$

Plugging it into Expression (A.43) to eliminate the tradable-goods revenues yields

$$L_{is} W_{a,is} = \frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1} \left( \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \alpha_s + \alpha_{g,s} \frac{1-\beta}{\beta} + \alpha_{g,s} \frac{\psi}{\theta} \right) E_i + \frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1} \left( \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \rho_s \gamma - \alpha_{g,s} \frac{\psi}{\theta} \right) R_i.$$

Summing across all skill groups yields

$$L_i W_{a,i} = \frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1} \left( \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} + \frac{1-\beta}{\beta} + \frac{\psi}{\theta} \right) E_i + \frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1} \left( \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \gamma - \frac{\psi}{\theta} \right) R_i,$$

and taking the ratio of the above expressions yields the share of group  $s$  in total regional

labor compensation:

$$\frac{L_{is}W_{a,is}}{L_iW_{a,i}} = \frac{\alpha_s + \alpha_{g,s}\frac{\sigma}{\sigma-1}\left(\frac{1-\beta}{\beta} + \frac{\psi}{\theta}\right) + (\rho_s\gamma - \alpha_{g,s}\frac{\sigma}{\sigma-1}\frac{\psi}{\theta})R_i/E_i}{\left(1 + \frac{\sigma}{\sigma-1}\frac{1-\beta}{\beta} + \frac{\sigma}{\sigma-1}\frac{\psi}{\theta}\right) + \left(\gamma - \frac{\sigma}{\sigma-1}\frac{\psi}{\theta}\right)R_i/E_i}. \quad (\text{A.45})$$

The above expression increases with the regional specialization in services  $R_i/E_i$  when

$$\begin{aligned} & \left(\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}\rho_s\gamma - \alpha_{g,s}\frac{\psi}{\theta}\right)\left(\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} + \left(\frac{1-\beta}{\beta} + \frac{\psi}{\theta}\right)\right) \\ & - \left(\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}\alpha_s + \alpha_{g,s}\left(\frac{1-\beta}{\beta} + \frac{\psi}{\theta}\right)\right)\left(\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}\gamma - \frac{\psi}{\theta}\right) > 0. \end{aligned}$$

Rearranging this expression, we get

$$(\alpha_{g,s} - \alpha_s)\gamma\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} + [(\rho_s - \alpha_{g,s})\gamma - (\alpha_{g,s} - \alpha_s)]\frac{\psi}{\theta} + (\rho_s - \alpha_{g,s})\gamma\left(\frac{1-\beta}{\beta} + \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}\right) > 0.$$

When type- $s$  intensity in services is greater than in goods, i.e. both  $\alpha_s > \alpha_{g,s}$  and  $\rho_s > \alpha_{g,s}$ , the above always holds. When branch-level type- $s$  intensity is smaller than in the goods sector,  $\alpha_s < \alpha_{g,s}$ , Expression (A.45) increases in  $R_i/E_i$  if the following condition holds:

$$\rho_s > \alpha_{g,s} + \frac{1}{\gamma}(\alpha_{g,s} - \alpha_s), \quad (\text{A.46})$$

i.e. when  $\rho_s$  is large enough relative to  $\alpha_{g,s}$ . In particular, consider the case that when the services sector and the tradable-goods sector are equally intensive in type  $s$  labor at the aggregate, which is obtained when

$$\alpha_{g,s} = \frac{1}{\gamma+1}\alpha_s + \frac{\gamma}{\gamma+1}\rho_s.$$

Then the regional compensation share for type  $s$  labor is increasing in  $R_i/E_i$  if  $\rho_s > \alpha_{g,s}$ .

Finally, in the limit equilibrium without multi-region service firms, i.e.  $A_{ij} \rightarrow 0$  for  $i \neq j$ , the share of type  $s$  in regional labor compensation is equalized across all locations, and given by the aggregate share in Expression (A.44).

## G Additional details on model inversion

In this appendix, I provide additional details on the inversion procedure that allows me to recover the set of unilateral regional fundamentals  $\{A_i, B_i, A_{g,i}\}_{i=1}^N$ .

First, market clearing in the services sector implies that the total sales of all  $i$ -headquartered firms,  $R_i$ , must equal to the total spending on them across all locations

$$R_i = \sum_{j=1}^N \frac{(A_i/\tau_{ij})^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \left(\frac{\Lambda_i}{\Gamma_i}\right)^{1-\iota} Z_i M_i}{\sum_{n=1}^N (A_n/\tau_{nj})^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \left(\frac{\Lambda_n}{\Gamma_n}\right)^{1-\iota} Z_n M_n} E_j. \quad (\text{A.47})$$

Now, note that the aggregate payroll to all headquarters workers in region  $i$  is given by  $\gamma \frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} R_i$ , and the aggregate payroll to all branch workers in region  $i$  is given by  $\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \frac{\epsilon}{1+\epsilon} E_i$ . Therefore, total sales of all  $i$ -headquartered firms is equal to

$$R_i = \varsigma_i \frac{E_i}{\gamma}, \quad (\text{A.48})$$

where  $\varsigma_i$  is the ratio aggregate headquarters-payroll to aggregate branch-payroll in region  $i$ 's service sectors. Armed with data on  $\varsigma_i$  in all regions, I recover a guess for  $A_i$  (up to scale) from the above set of equations, and iterate over it as part of the solution for equilibrium.

To get the set of regional amenities  $\{B_i\}_{i=1}^N$ , I invert the equilibrium conditions for worker sorting across space. Recall that the probability that a worker of type  $s$  chooses region  $i$  is given by

$$\frac{L_{is}}{\bar{L}_s} = \frac{(B_i W_{is}/\bar{P}_i)^\xi}{\sum_{j=1}^N (B_j W_{js}/\bar{P}_j)^\xi}, \quad (\text{A.49})$$

where  $\bar{L}_s$  is the aggregate exogenous measure of type- $s$  workers in the economy. Multiplying by  $\bar{L}_s$  and summing across all skill groups, we obtain an expression for the total equilibrium level of employment in each region,

$$L_i = \sum_{s=1}^S \frac{(B_i W_{is}/\bar{P}_i)^\xi}{\sum_{j=1}^N (B_j W_{js}/\bar{P}_j)^\xi} \bar{L}_s. \quad (\text{A.50})$$

Armed with the observed allocation of employment across space,  $\{L_i\}_{i=1}^N$ , we can use the above expression to exactly recover  $\{B_i\}_{i=1}^N$ . Then, recovering the group-specific measures of workers from (A.49) is immediate.

The final set of fundamentals to recover is regional productivities in production of tradable-goods,  $\{A_{g,i}\}_{i=1}^N$ . I use this set of model residuals to exactly match the distribution of average wages across space. To this end, I first note that the total regional wage

bill in the model can be written as

$$L_i W_{a,i} = \underbrace{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} (E_i + \gamma R_i)}_{\text{Regional wage bill from services}} + \underbrace{\frac{\epsilon}{\epsilon+1} R_{g,i}}_{\text{Regional wage bill from tradable-goods}}, \quad (\text{A.51})$$

where  $W_{a,i}$  is the employment-weighted arithmetic mean of wages in location  $i$ , equivalent to the average regional wage measured in the data. Therefore, conditional on parameters and values for  $R_i$  and  $E_i$ , I recover the implied revenues in the tradable-goods sector  $R_{g,i}$ . Then, we use the equilibrium condition for tradable-goods revenues from Equation A.37

$$R_{g,i} = M_{g,i} \left( \left( \frac{\epsilon}{1+\epsilon} \frac{1}{C_{g,i}} \right)^{\frac{\epsilon}{1+\epsilon}} A_{g,i} \right)^{1+\epsilon}, \quad C_{g,i} \equiv \prod_s \left( \alpha_{g,s} W_{is}^{-1} L_{is}^{\frac{1}{\epsilon}} \right)^{-\alpha_{g,s}},$$

to recover the set of productivities  $\{A_{g,i}\}_{i=1}^N$ .

To conclude, we recover the set of unilateral model fundamentals  $\{A_i, B_i, A_{g,i}\}_{i=1}^N$ , by inverting the equilibrium conditions for services market clearing; worker sorting across space; and aggregate revenues in the tradable-goods sector. To this end, we utilize regional data on employment  $L_i$ , average wage  $W_{a,i}$ , and the headquarters-to-branch aggregate payroll ratio  $\varsigma_i$ .

## H Model extensions

### H.1 Unobserved worker heterogeneity and worker screening

In this section, I develop another version of the model with alternative micro-foundations for wage inequality across workers in the same region. Instead of idiosyncratic preference shocks, households now differ by unobserved ability. I further assume that this ability is imperfectly observed by potential employers, and that firms need to pay a screening cost to recruit higher ability households. This formulation follows Helpman et al. (2010), and it allows me to demonstrate how the main results about the role of multi-region firms arise with alternative assumptions on the source of wage heterogeneity. In this setting, higher wages no longer reflect compensating differentials, and instead capture the screening of higher ability workers by firms. Nevertheless, the main results from Section 4 go through, as stated in Proposition A.1 below. An additional benefit of this formulation is that differences in skill intensity between headquarters and branches are now endogenous. In Proposition A.2 below, I show that similarly to wages, the difference in average worker ability between headquarters and branches is also higher for larger firms, and rises as firms expand in space.

#### H.1.1 Households

Households maximize the same bundle of consumption as in the baseline model, but no longer have idiosyncratic preferences for employers. In addition, households are no longer divided to groups. Instead, households are differentiated by ability  $a$ , unobserved to firms before households and firms are paired. I assume that  $a$  is drawn from a Pareto distribution with shape parameter  $k$  and scale parameter  $a_{min}$ .

#### H.1.2 Production function

The production function is similar to the baseline specification, with the following changes. A firm with HQ in location  $i$ , HQ productivity  $z$  and branch-level productivity  $\phi$  in some market  $j$ , can supply

$$q_{ij}(z, \phi) = \varphi_{ij}(z, \phi) \bar{a} l^\varrho \quad (\text{A.52})$$

units of output in that market. The composite of branch-level inputs from the baseline specification ( $\prod_s l_{js}^{\alpha_s}$ ) is now replaced with  $\bar{a} l^\varrho$ , where  $\bar{a}$  is the average ability of workers in that branch,  $l$  is the measure of workers in the branch, and  $\varrho$  captures branch-level decreasing returns. The productivity term  $\varphi_{ij}(z, \phi)$  is now given by

$$\varphi_{ij}(z, \phi) = A_{ij} z \phi (\bar{b} h^\vartheta)^\gamma. \quad (\text{A.53})$$

The components  $A_{ij}$ ,  $z$  and  $\phi$  remain as in the baseline specification. The fourth component replaces the headquarters bundle of labor ( $\prod_s h_{is}^{\rho_s}$ ). It is now given by  $\bar{b}h^\vartheta$ , where  $\bar{b}$  is the average ability of the headquarters workers,  $h$  is the measure of headquarters workers, and  $\vartheta$  captures HQ-level decreasing returns.

### H.1.3 Labor market frictions

The labor market is characterized by search and matching frictions. Firms randomly match with workers, and can choose the measure of workers to consider for each branch,  $n$ , and for the headquarters,  $m$ . The cost of meeting a random worker is  $c_n$ . Firms then screen these workers by their ability. The firm can choose a minimal ability level of  $a_c$  at a given branch and  $b_c$  at its headquarters, such that only workers with ability  $a > a_c$  (or  $a > b_c$  in the HQ) are hired. This process is costly, and requires the firm to pay a convex cost of  $\delta_0 a_c^\delta$  (or  $\delta_0 b_c^\delta$  in the HQ). For simplicity, I assume that the job-posting costs  $c_n n$  and  $c_m m$ , and the screening costs  $\delta_0 a_c^\delta$  and  $\delta_0 b_c^\delta$ , are all paid in units of the tradable goods, with price  $P_g$  (normalized to 1 in the baseline model). Once the firm hires new workers, wages at any given branch or at the headquarters are determined by the marginal surplus of the firm from employing another worker there. This reflects a solution to a “Rolodex” bargaining game between the firm and its workers as in Brügemann et al. (2019).<sup>64</sup>

### H.1.4 Branch-level problem

The firm’s problem at the level of the branch is to maximize local sales minus payroll, screening and job-posting costs, and the fixed cost of opening a branch, and is given by

$$\max_{\bar{a}, l} E_j^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} P_j^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} (\varphi_{ij}(z, \phi) \bar{a} l^\vartheta)^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} - w(\bar{a}, l) l - P_g (c_n n + \delta_0 a_c^\delta) - \bar{P}_j f$$

Subject to:

$$w(\bar{a}, l) = \frac{\partial \left( E_j^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} P_j^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} (\varphi_{ij}(z, \phi) \bar{a} l^\vartheta)^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} - w(\bar{a}, l) l \right)}{\partial l} \quad (\text{Wage setting})$$

$$\bar{a} = \frac{k}{k-1} a_c, \quad l = n \left( \frac{a_{min}}{a_c} \right)^k \quad (\text{Worker screening}).$$

The solution to the bargaining problem yields:

$$w(\bar{a}, l) = \frac{\varrho^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}}}{\varrho^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} + 1} E_j^{\frac{1}{\sigma}} P_j^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \varphi_{ij}(z, \phi)^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \bar{a}^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} l^{\varrho^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} - 1}.$$

Solving the above problem yields the following expressions for average branch-level ability  $\bar{a}_{ij}(z, \phi)$ , branch-level employment  $l_{ij}(z, \phi)$ , and branch-level wages  $w_{ij}(z, \phi)$ , in terms of

---

<sup>64</sup>This bargaining protocol is a natural generalization of Nash bargaining to the multiple workers and it modifies the Stole–Zwiebel bargaining protocol so that the resulting wages are Shapley values. See Stole and Zwiebel (1996), Helpman et al. (2010), and Brügemann et al. (2019) for additional details.

branch-level revenues,  $r_{ij}(z, \phi)$ :

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{a}_{ij}(z, \phi) &= \bar{a}_0 r_{ij}(z, \phi)^{\frac{1}{\delta}}, \quad \bar{a}_0 \equiv \left( \frac{1}{\delta_0} \frac{\varrho^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}}}{\varrho^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} + 1} \frac{1 - \varrho k}{\varrho \delta} \frac{1}{P_g} \right)^{\frac{1}{\delta}} \\ l_{ij}(z, \phi) &= l_0 r_{ij}(z, \phi)^{1-\frac{k}{\delta}}, \quad l_0 \equiv \frac{1}{c_n \left( \frac{k-1}{k} \frac{1}{a_{min}} \right)^k \bar{a}_0^k \frac{\varrho^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}}}{\varrho^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} + 1}} \left( \frac{1}{P_g} \right)^{1-\frac{k}{\delta}} \\ w_{ij}(z, \phi) &= w_0 (r_{ij}(z, \phi))^{\frac{k}{\delta}}, \quad w_0 \equiv \frac{1}{l_0} \frac{\varrho^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}}}{\varrho^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} + 1} P_g^{1-\frac{k}{\delta}}.\end{aligned}\tag{A.55}$$

And branch-level revenues are given by

$$r_{ij}(z, \phi) = \psi_0 E_j^{\frac{1}{\psi} \frac{1}{\sigma}} P_j^{\frac{1}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \varphi_{ij}(z, \phi)^{\frac{1}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}}, \quad \psi_0 \equiv (\bar{a}_0 l_0^{\varrho})^{\frac{1}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}},\tag{A.56}$$

where  $\psi$  is a parameter subsuming various constants:

$$\psi \equiv 1 - \frac{\sigma - 1}{\sigma} \left( \varrho + \frac{1 - \varrho k}{\delta} \right).$$

This yields a similar structure for branch-level revenues in the baseline model. Accordingly, expected firm revenues in market  $j$  are now given by

$$\bar{r}_{ij}(z, \phi) = \tilde{\psi} f^{1-\theta} \Upsilon_j (A_{ij} z \bar{b}^\gamma h^{\vartheta\gamma})^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}},\tag{A.57}$$

where  $\Upsilon_j$  stands a similar market potential term as in the baseline version of the model, and total expected firm sales (conditional on headquarters choices  $\bar{b}$  and  $h$ ) are given by

$$\bar{r}_i(z, \phi) = \tilde{\psi} f^{1-\theta} \left( \sum_j A_{ij}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \Upsilon_j \right) (z \bar{b}^\gamma h^{\vartheta\gamma})^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}}.$$

### H.1.5 Firm-level decisions

The firm's problem at the headquarters level becomes to maximize expected operating profits across all markets, minus headquarters payroll, hiring and screening costs:

$$\max_{\bar{b}, h} \tilde{\psi} f^{1-\theta} \left( \sum_j A_{ij}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \Upsilon_j \right) (z \bar{b}^\gamma h^{\vartheta\gamma})^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} - w(\bar{b}, h) h - P_g(c_m m + \delta_0 b_c^\delta)$$

Subject to:

$$w(\bar{b}, h) = \frac{\partial \left( \tilde{\psi} f^{1-\theta} \left( \sum_j A_{ij}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \Upsilon_j \right) (z \bar{b}^\gamma h^{\vartheta\gamma})^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} - w(\bar{b}, h) h \right)}{\partial h} \quad (\text{Wage setting})$$

$$\bar{b} = \frac{k}{k-1} b_c, \quad h = m \left( \frac{b_{min}}{b_c} \right)^k \quad (\text{Worker screening}).$$
(A.58)

Solving the above problem yields the following expressions for average HQ-level ability  $\bar{b}_i(z)$ , HQ-level employment  $h_i(z)$ , and HQ-level wages  $w_i^{HQ}(z)$ , in terms of total firm expected revenues,  $\bar{r}_i(z)$ :

$$\begin{aligned} \bar{b}_i(z) &= \bar{b}_0 \bar{r}_i(z)^{\frac{1}{\delta}} \\ h_i(z) &= h_0 \bar{r}_i(z)^{1-\frac{k}{\delta}} \\ w_i^{HQ}(z) &= w_0^{HQ}(\bar{r}_i(z))^{\frac{k}{\delta}}, \end{aligned} \quad (\text{A.59})$$

where  $\bar{b}_0$ ,  $h_0$ , and  $w_0^{HQ}$  are constants that subsume model parameters. The firm-wide sales assume a similar expression to the one in the baseline model,  $\bar{r}_i(z) = \Lambda_i z^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}}$ , where now

$$\Lambda_i \equiv \left[ \tilde{\psi} f^{1-\theta} \left( \sum_j A_{ij}^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \Upsilon_j \right) \left( \bar{b}_0^\gamma h_0^{\vartheta\gamma} \right)^{\frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \right]^{\frac{1}{\iota}},$$

and

$$\iota \equiv 1 - \gamma \frac{\theta}{\psi} \frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma} \left( \frac{1}{\delta} + \vartheta \left( 1 - \frac{k}{\delta} \right) \right).$$

### H.1.6 Results

The role of multi-region firms for the structure of wages remains similar in this model to the baseline formulation from Section 3. In the following, I re-state some of the main results from Section 4 in the current setting:

**Proposition A.1.** *In the model with unobserved worker productivity and costly screening:*

1. *Branch-level wages admit a similar log-linear structure as in Proposition 2 of the baseline model, and depend on a local market effect  $j$ , branch-level productivity  $\phi$ ,*

*firm-level productivity  $z$ , headquarters-market effect  $i$ , and bilateral HQ-branch frictions  $ij$ .*

2. *Proposition 3 from the baseline model continues to hold as stated: wage inequality between headquarters and branches is higher for larger firms.*

In addition, this formulation endogenizes branch-level and HQ-level skill intensity, which rise as firms expand in space. I obtain the following result:

**Proposition A.2.** *The ratio of average worker ability in the headquarters  $\bar{b}$  and the average worker ability in branches  $\bar{a}$  is higher for larger firms:*

1. *Consider two firms with headquarters in location  $i$  and HQ-level productivities  $z'_i$  and  $z_i$  such that  $z'_i > z_i$ . Assume that both are active in market  $j$  and have the same branch-level productivity shock  $\phi_j$ . Then the ratio of headquarters average skill  $\bar{b}_i(z)$  to the average skill in branch  $j$   $\bar{a}_{ij}(z, \phi)$  is higher in firm  $z'_i$  than in firm  $z_i$ .*
2. *Let  $r_{ij}(z_i, \phi_j)$  be firm revenues in some market  $j$ . The ratio of average worker skill  $\bar{b}_i(z)$  to branch wages in the firm's headquarters market  $\bar{a}_{ii}(z, \phi)$  is increasing in the ratio of total expected firm revenues across all locations,  $r_i(z_i) \equiv \mathbb{E}_\phi \left[ \sum_j r_{ij}(z, \phi_j) \right]$ , to local revenues in the headquarters market  $r_{ii}(z_i, \phi_i)$ .*