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Retail decentralization and land use regulation policies in suburban and rural communities: the case of the Île-de-France region

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Résumé / Summary

The capacity for a suburban or a rural community to maintain retail activities in its town centre have often been considered as an indicator of its viability. But, since the 1970s, the expansion of new forms of retail, such as hypermarkets, shopping malls or retail parks has created a highly competitive environment for the small town centre retail units. Consequently, several central and local governments have developed rules in order to prevent an excessive development of large decentralized stores. In this paper, our goal is to assess the efficiency of land use regulation aiming at protecting existing retail units and its broader impacts on the size and localization of the retail stores in the Île-de-France region, the most populated area in France. The data we use over the 1975-2013 period include the evolution of small retail units, large retail stores and total retail floor space built at a local level. Using spatial statistics and econometric models we study the effects of land use regulation on retail patterns and local restrictiveness towards new large stores in the municipalities of the region during the last 40 years. We conclude that land use policies have impacted retail patterns in the region and that suburban and rural authorities, where town centre activities are crucial to their quality of life, are more restrictive towards large retail stores than urban ones.

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