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# The Call of the Wild: Call Centers and Economic Development in Rural Areas

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## Abstract

This paper attempts to reflect critically on the role which telephone call centers might play in the economic development of rural places in the 'information age', drawing mainly on a case study of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. It argues that although call center employment tends mainly to be urban-based, the growth of this form of work does present opportunities for some rural areas. The paper considers the locational factors rural areas would have to possess or develop in order to attract such work. It suggests call centers can make a valuable, though limited, contribution towards rural economic development, principally through the creation of additional employment opportunities and the stimulation of new skills and competencies. It also suggests that call centers do not represent a panacea for rural areas and that, indeed, it would be dangerous for rural areas to become over-reliant on employment in this sector.

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