

Backshoring: Towards International Business and Economic Geography Research Agenda

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Abstract

Backshoring keeps gaining popularity with consultancies, politicians and businesses alike, yet academic research lags behind this seemingly increasing practice. Through a narrative, critical overview of literature the paper demonstrates incipient nature of backshoring research and identifies international business and economic geography as most relevant disciplines in furthering the understanding of the phenomenon and its managerial, policy and developmental significance.

The number of firms which backshored some or all of their activities from locations abroad appears to be growing, however due to unavailability of reliable data it is difficult to accurately assess how common backshoring is. There is a problem even with estimating the scale of the phenomenon which stems from the fact that the concept remains to be ill-defined. Consequently current research is dominated by contradicting observations disallowing meaningful conclusions. However it is this shortcoming which arguably offers an unmissable opportunity for theory testing and development, and contribution to managerial practice and policy design.

Key words: backshoring, reshoring, international business, economic geography, research agenda

Introduction

In recent years *backshoring* became a much used, and often abused term. Global consulting houses regularly identify it as a growing trend in corporate relocation providing stimulus for 'western' governments to quickly respond with policies encouraging firms to return from offshore in hope to reverse years of de-industrialisation. Firms which successfully backshored all or parts of their activities reinvent marketing campaigns to stress their products have been 'made locally'. Often, such is the picture emerging from reading of popular and specialist press, as well as some sections of academic research. However a more careful study of wider literature suggests the situation is far more complex and nuanced. In fact, based on currently accessible evidence the picture is unclear and dominated by inconclusive observations. Thus, it is the aim of this paper to reveal empirical and conceptual inconsistencies dominating the debate, systemise current literature and identify directions for future studies. The overview of available research demonstrates how current backshoring discussion remains partial and confusing, yet, it is argued, this is the very fact which offers plentiful opportunities and incentive for theory testing and development.

For several decades the focus on manufacturing, and later services, relocation and global value chains reconfigurations has been subsumed to outsourcing and offshoring decisions, reflecting the dominant trends driven by the multinational enterprises' (MNEs) desire to benefit from efficiency advantages offered by low-cost economies (e.g. Apte & Mason 1995, Gereffi 1999, Capik & Drahokoupil, 2011, Coe 2011, Peng 2013). More recently corporate attention has shifted towards examining whether or not low-cost locations still provide optimal conditions for competitive and profitable operations (UNCTAD 2013, Dicken 2015). Simultaneously, one of the outcomes of the recent global recession has been a noticeable increase in support for 'made locally' expressed by customers and politicians alike, particularly in advanced nations (Canham & Hamilton 2013, Shih 2014, Grappi et al 2015). Both, the recession

and 'made locally' attitudes, contribute to reconfiguration of global value chains, changing sourcing and production strategies employed by MNEs and a move towards *reshoring or backshoring* of economic activity (McKinsey & Company 2012, Fratocchi et al 2014, Kinkel 2014). While the global shift-back is yet to fully materialise, such emerging trends in firm relocation and the reconfiguration of value and production networks of manufacturing and service branches have extensive managerial implications, and influence directions and volumes of trade and inward investment, thus creating varied developmental consequences and policy responses in home and host economies (Ellram et al 2013, Bailey & De Propis 2014, Tate 2014).

In January 2016 an article in *Industry Week* asked if “*reshoring is increasing or declining?*” The analysis of two reports recently published by competing global consultancy firms led the author to conclude that the answer is...“*not obvious*”. This is an accurate and fitting illustration of the current state of knowledge on, indeed, all-things backshoring. However, it is this novelty of the phenomenon and persisting limited understanding of its different facets related to both international business and broadly defined economic geography, which presents a unique opportunity for inquiry and potentially significant theoretical contribution from and in both of these disciplines.

Current knowledge of backshoring is based largely on consultancy reports and supply chain-focused research. The fragmented evidence sheds some light on key trends, including the scale, sectors, firm characteristics and motivation (e.g. Fisch & Zschoche 2012, Ellram et al 2013, Dachs & Zanker, 2015, Robinson & Hsieh 2016). Other, sporadic studies consider obstacles and impacts leading to policy and practice recommendations (e.g. Shih 2014, Grandinett & Tabacco 2015). However, as will be demonstrated below, the emerging discourse is inconclusive at best, and often downright contradictory. Therefore, this paper sets a research agenda rooted in international business (strategy) and economic geography (regional development studies) and calls for further inquiry into the scale, motivation, characteristics and

consequences of backshoring to advance theory and inform future managerial practice and policy-making.

The approach adopted in this paper builds on previous contributions offered partially by Tate (2014), Arlbjørn and Mikkelsen (2014), and Ancarrani et al 2015, and more comprehensively by Bals et al (2016) and Stentoft et al (2016), but offers a distinct perspectives rooted in international business and economic geography contexts. Such a focus, as discussed throughout the paper, best reflects the character of backshoring which by its nature involves company's strategy-driven move(s) in and across space, including crossing of national boundaries. It is in these sorts of circumstances that Beugelsdijk et al (2010) and McCann (2011) advocate the adoption of international business-economic geography lens which enables observation and clear explanations of spatial behaviour of multinational enterprises.

The reminder of the paper is structured as follows. The next part defines backshoring and delimits its scope. Subsequent two sections provide a critical, narrative review of existing literature demonstrating contradictory evidence related to its scale, characteristics of firms engaging in backshoring, their motivation, and the obstacles they face. Next, key methodological shortcomings of backshoring research are explored. The discussion identifies the scope for further studies and opportunities for both international business and economic geography theory testing and building, which is explored in the subsequent part. The paper concludes by posing a number of research questions which, arguably, should be best addressed by multi-disciplinary approaches.

The Scope of Backshoring

Diversity of vocabulary and varied definitions of backshoring, are only two examples of how incipient its academic discourse is. Reshoring, back-reshoring, inshoring, homeshoring, reverse offshoring, onshoring and in some cases de-

internationalisation, divestment and insourcing have all been used to describe the process of relocation of some (or all) of value adding activities to (or in the greater proximity of) the firm's home country (e.g. Tate 2014, Gylling et al 2015, Bals et al 2016, Młody 2016). Backshoring and reshoring are most commonly used, with the latter particularly dominant in English-speaking countries. However, since reshoring may also involve relocation to a third country, in this paper the term backshoring is preferred as it better reflects the *return* direction of the relocation process.

Next to its geography and direction, ownership also matters for terminology, definition and scope of backshoring. The definition proposed by Fernandes (2012: 93) best illustrates both dilemmas. In her view "*reverse offshoring*" is a "*return of offshored activities to the original country*", regardless of the ownership modes, which relate either to network (i.e. supply chain) or physical (capacity) relocation. Similarly Fratocchi et al (2014) and Ancarani et al (2015) and others see backshoring as a process of relocation, irrespective of the ownership mode. Also Młody (2016) elaborates four different ownership/location alternatives, peculiar sub-categories, when defining backshoring:

- 1) In-house backshoring - relocation of production from firm's foreign subsidiary (captive offshoring) to its facilities in the home country;
- 2) Backshoring for outsourcing - transfer of production from the subsidiary owned by the firm to an external provider in its home country;
- 3) Backshoring for insourcing – transfer of production from foreign supplier (offshore outsourcing) to within firm's structures in its home country;
- 4) Outsourced backshoring – transfer of production from firm's foreign supplier to a supplier in its home market.

Additionally Fernandes (2012: 93) identifies "*pericentral reverse offshoring*" as a form of reverse offshoring which involves relocation to a country close to the firm's original

base. Others in this context use the term nearshoring (e.g. Joubioux & Vanpoucke 2016).

Geographical scope and direction as well as mode of ownership embed backshoring phenomenon (and research) firmly within economic geography and international business. It will benefit future research to make a clear distinction between the different relocation and ownership alternatives (Bals et al 2016) by decoupling backshoring from other forms of relocation, value chain management and sourcing options.

Consequently in the forthcoming sections of the paper, based on Dachs and Zanker's (2015) proposition, backshoring is understood as a relocation of firm-owned value-adding activities from abroad to the home country of the firm. It is further recognised that such relocations are highly heterogenous in terms of production specificity, value and employment levels and predominantly, although not exclusively, do not involve the full repatriation or closure of entire company's offshore activities (Fratocchi et al 2014). It is a complex process motivated by multiplicity of factors, often guided by pro-active, strategic rationale and extending beyond a simple reversal of earlier offshore decision.

Key Trends: Between Festival of Predictions and Modest Reality

Due to the lack of definitional clarity and the resulting measurement problems, and the difficulty of any such measurements, the trends characterising current backshoring activities, its scale, firm characteristics and sectors, remain unclear. However, what is seemingly apparent is the peculiar geography of both origins and destinations of backshored activities.

Reflecting the political weight it carries and the consulting business opportunities on offer, when assessing the scale of the phenomenon one is faced with a festival of predictions authored by the large consulting houses on the one hand, and

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an apparent limited scale demonstrated by academic research, on the other. On the back of political debate on re-industrialisation and manufacturing renaissance of the West, Boston Consulting Group (2013) predicts backshoring will contribute additional 2.5-5million jobs in the USA by 2020. Grant Thornton (2014) forecasts a third of American firms operating abroad will backshore some parts of their activities within a year. In other countries, PriceWaterhouseCoopers (2014) estimates backshoring to increase UK's output by £6-12 billion (or 0.4-0.8% of GDP) and create 100-200 thousands new jobs by mid2020s. Ernst&Young (2015) offers yet bolder predictions - £15 billion and 315 thousands jobs.

While a number of backshoring projects completed by high profile MNEs can be identified (e.g. GE, Apple, Siemens) the bold estimates are confronted by evidence suggesting that, to date, backshoring activities have been rather timid, particularly in the European countries. Dachs and Zanker (2015) suggest backshoring is a rare practice amongst European firms. Between 2010-mid2012 only 4% of them moved production back to the home country, while 3 times as many have established offshore facilities. Around a fourth of Germany firms consider backshoring, yet an estimated 2% (400-700) have done it (Fratocchi et al 2014). Other studies show a higher (up to 7%), however overall similarly limited scale of backshoring conducted by Spanish, Danish, Finish and UK firms (Dachs & Kinkel 2013, Arlbjørn & Mikkelsen 2014, Bailey & De Propis 2014).

The discrepancy between predictions and reality indicates the hopes associated with the potential benefits backshoring can bring to home economies one the one hand, and on the other is one of the best examples of how limited its current understanding remains to be. Equally unclear is the actual characteristics of the firms, particularly their size and sector of operation. There is little agreement about the impact of the size of the firm on its propensity to backshore. While Kinkel (2012) argues large MNEs backshore more keenly than SMEs, Arlbjørn & Mikkelsen (2014) found that it is

in fact the medium-sized firms who are more active than the big and small companies. Furthermore, the size of the firm appears related to geographical origins of backshoring, firm motivation and behaviour during the recent global economic downturn. Though firms backshore from both emerging and developed countries (Choe et al 2014, Albertoni et al 2016), reflecting earlier expansion preferences, large, particularly American companies tend to bring back their activities from East and South-East Asia, while smaller UE firms relocate to home countries from Central-Eastern Europe. In their case backshoring is often motivated by issues related to product quality and reliability of supplies (Holz 2011, Fisch & Zschoche 2012, Gray et al 2013), while large MNEs are frequently driven by the need to be more responsive to market trends by having manufacturing activities located in proximity of their R&D facilities (Arbjørn & Mikkelsen 2014). During the recent crisis SMEs seemed to have increased backshoring, while MNEs have cut down on it (Kinkel 2012, Bailey & De Propis 2014).

Further, it is unclear which industry sectors witness the most dynamic backshoring activity. Firms operating in both high-tech (e.g. electrical equipment, computer hardware) and labour intensive branches (e.g. clothing, footwear) have repatriated their operations (Fratocchi et al 2014, Martinez-Mora & Merino 2014, Dachs & Zanker 2015, Robinson & Hsieh 2016). Existing literature recurrently identifies such sectors as computers (e.g. Dell), electronics (e.g. Motorola), appliances and electrical equipment (e.g. GE), metals, machinery (e.g. Siemens, Bailey Hydropower, hydraulic cylinder maker), furniture, plastics and rubber (e.g. K'Nex, toy manufacturer) (van den Bossche et al 2014, PWC 2014), or in other words products expensive to transport or subjected to demand fluctuations, or where safety concerns are of importance (EPRS 2014, Ancarani et al 2015). Such a varied selection hints towards wide-ranging motivations driving backshoring, discussed next.

Backshoring Motivations

Understanding the reasons behind firms' decision to backshore is of primary importance from both international business and economic geography perspectives. For firms it creates strategic consequences, and for host/home regional economies it bears developmental and policy implications. Ancarani et al (2015: 143) identifies no less than 150 different "elementary' drivers" motivating firms to backshore. Similarly Stentoft et al (2016) quotes plethora of backshoring motives, which they next class into 7 categories including cost, quality, time and flexibility, access to skills and knowledge, risks, and market. However available evidence is fragmented at best and often conflicting, and thus further exploration of backshoring motivations and their systematisation is necessary.

Currently three broad sets of reasons, a combination of pull and push factors, can be distinguished. First, as proposed by Leible et al (2010: 76) backshoring is the effect of "*hidden costs and unintended consequences*" of offshoring. Such costs and consequences often sit within the realms of transaction costs theory and include intellectual property infringements, bribe payments, additional costs of late deliveries, quality and coordination problems, and cultural differences (Kinkel 2012, Gray et al 2013, Mclvor 2013). Other factors identified by some studies include high global oil prices (coupled with low, shale-gas energy prices in the US), global supply chain risk (e.g. Fukushima, volcanic eruptions, piracy), the tendency to shorten supply chain to enhance flexibility and responsiveness to demand (Gray et al 2013, Nelson 2013, Tate 2014, Robinson & Hsieh 2016), the growing importance of 'made locally' (Canham & Hamilton 2013, Shih 2014), lower quality, longer lead-times, increased use of automation in home economy, recognition of advantages of production close to R&D (Arlbjørn & Mikkelsen 2014, Ancarani et al 2015, Gylling 2015).

Other studies suggest that more than a correction of the wrong offshoring decision, backshoring is a reflection of firms' evolving strategy and proactive choice.

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Thus, the second set of backshoring motivations is linked to a gradual change in the business environment of offshore locations eroding their comparative advantage including rising labour costs offshore (Kinkel & Zanker 2013, Tate 2014). For example Dolega (2012) observes that the differential in wages in key areas of China and the US has decreased from 1/40 to 1/10 in 2012. Similarly a Delloite (2009) report suggested that the cost difference between China and the US in 2006-2008 has shrunk from 32% to 17%, and Boston Consulting Group (2013) expected Chinese and US wages to have converged by 2015. In recent years this has been further emphasised by swelling transportation costs and pecuniary costs associated with shipping time lag and inventory costs (Bailey & De Propis 2014). This is coupled with one of the mega trends gaining pace, particularly in advanced economies, namely the technological advancements dubbed 'Industry 4.0', which by requiring high-end technological knowledge and inputs increases the importance of labour qualifications simultaneously pushing labour costs down (Młody 2016).

The third set of motivations sees backshoring as a response to the changing global institutional factors including trade, investment and industrial policies in host and home economies (Ellram et al 2013, Frotocchi et al 2016). Next to ever-more liberal global trade and investment regimes (e.g. the number of international investment agreements between 2000-2014 has increased from 2000 to nearly 3500; in 2014 84% of changes to national investment policies were aimed at supporting investment and 16% at restricting it; [UNCTAD 2015]) recent years have witnessed several industrial policy attempts in the US, UK and other OECD countries, intended to encourage firms to repatriate particularly manufacturing sector activities. Fostering backshoring remains attractive to policy makers for two reasons. First, it is seen as a way of rebuilding some of the fractured, traditional supply chains. Second, there is a hope that returning activities will contribute to redevelopment and strengthening of national industries with

small-and-medium-sized firms, previously squeezed out by large multinationals (Bailey & De Propis 2014).

In 2012 American government instigated 'Reshoring Initiative', and created tax incentives programme to stimulate home manufacturing and encourage firms to backshore their activities from abroad (20% tax income credit to cover expenses of repatriation). At the same time it discouraged offshoring by removing earlier tax breaks. Additionally American businesses rally around facilitating and accelerating backshoring, with Wal-Mart's "Made in the USA" initiative promising to purchase \$50 billion more of US-manufactured goods in the next 10 years (Bailey & De Propis 2014, Shih 2014). In the UK, the £245 million Advanced Manufacturing Supply Chain Initiative and the £24 million National Tooling Fund provided some financial support welcomed by the manufacturing industry (Bailey & De Propis 2015). Similarly, the German government has recently announced its €200 million "Industrie 4.0" scheme (Stentoft et al 2016). As part of the country's "High-Tech Strategy 2020", it aims to enhance Germany's position as a main market and provider of advanced manufacturing solutions. Also the recent EU policies recognise the presumed opportunities presented by industrial renaissance particularly in the regional context, and support *"reshoring initiatives seeking the re-entry of production and services from third countries, specifically in the context of Europe's traditional industrial heartlands"* (EPRS 2014: 6).

However, next to the diverse motivations underpinning firms' backshoring decisions, there are location and supply chain-related obstacles adversely influencing the scale of the phenomenon. Shih (2014) found deteriorated skills base, lack of development of new skills to fit-in with the new production methods, as well as broken or disappeared supply chains in home locations to prevent firms from engaging in backshoring. Reporting on a recent survey in UK industrial heartland Bailey & De Propis (2014) identify high energy costs, restrictive regulations, high wage costs, lack of skilled labour and limited finance as obstacles to firms' local expansion plans, and

hence the 'bottlenecks' for backshoring. Other studies (e.g. Tate 2014) also stress the non-favourable exchange rates, particularly between the state-subsidised Chinese Yuan and the dollar, as an important factor discouraging firms from backshoring.

As demonstrated in the sections above, despite more than two decades of backshoring activities, academic research within the domains of international business and economic geography, remains limited and permeated by exploratory studies providing often inconclusive or even contradictory results. Existing literature offers general (if not always consistent) characterisation of the phenomenon, its scale and motivations, but says precious little about its significance and consequences to firms and places alike. Studies tend to focus on supply chain management, but the research is fragmented, repeatedly based on single country/firm analysis, leading to neither comparable nor generalizable results.

Backshoring Research Methodology

The methodology of contemporary backshoring research is one of the factors underlying many of its shortcomings. Current literature is dominated by company and sector case studies set within particular national context (e.g. Bailey & De Propis 2014, Martinez-Mora & Merino 2014, Gyllig et al 2015). This in turn is reflective of definitional and measurement problems and associated reporting inconsistencies. Competing definitions of backshoring and its scope lead to research, de facto, exploring different phenomenon (i.e. supply chain or capacity relocations) compromising comparative perspectives and theory building.

There are other challenges related to the scope of backshoring. One of the important aspects not always present in backshoring research is the recognition of firm origin and its multiple locations which adds dimensions to backshoring practice. For example, the American computer hardware company, Dell, several years ago scaled back its substantial operations in Limerick in Ireland and moved them to Łódź in Poland. Should

the company decided to reverse this action, could this be classed as backshoring?

Another methodological challenge associated with the problem of definition concerns measurements. Backshoring involves large scale relocations as well as moves of small parts of firms' total capacities, where the unit of analysis is often below plant level and includes product line(s) or merely their components. Access to such detailed data on the scale allowing large sample research is difficult, if at all possible. The difficulty is further mounted by corporate disclosure and reporting policies. In cases where backshoring is the reversal of the poor offshoring decision, it is expected such an error of judgement to be kept within the boardroom walls.

In result, much of current academic research relies on anecdotal evidence and partial databases such as European Manufacturing Survey (e.g. Dachs & Zanker 2015), purpose-built datasets developed by research institutes (e.g. Fratocchi et al 2014, Cranfield University 2015, Albertoni et al 2016) or industry associations (e.g. Reshoring Institute and Reshoring Initiative in the USA, and EEF, the Manufacturers' Organisation in the UK). Additionally studies assessing countries and regions suitability and potential to attract backshored activities often review different attractiveness factors specific for certain industries and then generalise findings to incorporate other manufacturing and service branches (e.g. Tate 2014, Cranfield University 2015). It is a set of such methodological challenges that make cross-country and cross-sectoral comparisons problematic. In consequence, to date backshoring research have contributed little to advance international business and economic geography theory, while arguably and as will be explained next, this is where its greatest contribution may lay.

Towards a Research Agenda

The empirical inconsistencies and contradictions reflect the incipient nature of backshoring research. Yet, the potential opportunities and the actual scale of the phenomenon, as well as its novel nature present a rare opportunity to test and develop

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established concepts, frameworks and theories within international business and economic geography disciplines.

Further research, particularly within international business strategy should focus on exploring backshoring implications for resources and capabilities development and allocation within the resource-based view. Additional studies of different firm sizes may contribute to concepts related to international entrepreneurship, SMEs internationalisation as well as more generally firm de-internationalisation (e.g. strategies, exit modes and timing [see Ancarani et al 2015 and Młody 2016]). Longitudinal studies may provide significant contribution to the debates on subsidiary typology and evolution. Finally international marketing literature will benefit from exploration of country-of-origin effects based on new backshoring research, and supply chain studies could use it to advance costing and management models. Such contributions will be enabled by research distinguishing between network (supply chain) relocation and physical (capacity) relocation, and further studies of backshoring motivations exploring the evolution of firm core competences and dynamic capabilities. Additional research is needed into the importance of both headquarters and subsidiary (offshore) locations and exploration of liability of foreignness (including upon return to the home country; a kind of “liability of lost familiarity”) and the dynamics of Dunning’s OLI-advantages. Some suggested research questions to guide future studies in those areas include:

- What factors stimulate/prevent backshoring decisions within manufacturing and service sectors? What is their relative importance to the firm and its strategy?
- What was the impact of the crisis on the dynamics and firms' motivations to backshore?
- What is the future of backshoring in manufacturing (re-industrialisation?) and services? (of particular importance to some countries, notably UK and the USA - in the context of predicted Brexit and expected reforms begun by the Trump’s administration)

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-How do companies learn from offshoring failures and backshoring experience? How do these impact their future locations? (Kinkel 2014)

-Do companies that backshore outperform those that do not (or those that backshore late)?

Backshoring also presents opportunities for advancing knowledge in economic geography, particularly regional development studies and concepts related to trade theory and national/regional competitiveness. Future research agenda should focus on multi-country impact studies examining host and home country perspectives. Such investigations should include both manufacturing and service sectors. Additionally further exploration of backshoring motivations within the context of trade and investment attraction and retention policies will be required to inform implications, opportunities and impacts created in host and home regional economies. A possible set of research questions to guide future research include:

-What are the consequences of backshoring for host and home national/regional/local economies?

-How long/short-lived is the competitiveness of places in the 21st century?

-What might be regional policy implications of backshoring of manufacturing and service sectors?

-What is the relationship between backshored activities and regional revival or downgrading of skill base?

-How does backshoring influence knowledge transfers and regional innovation systems?

-How trade and investment policies influence 'shoring' decisions? What is the role of Regional Trading Blocks in 'shoring'? (Particularly relevant given UK's predicted departure from the EU and Donald Trump's stipulations about renegotiations of NAFTA.)

-How can EU/national/regional/local policy influence where (and how) backshoring might occur? (Tate 2014)

Finally backshoring research displays potential to contribute to theories and frameworks relevant both to international business and economic geography including reconfiguration of global value chains, firm location processes and choices, product life cycle (e.g. is backshoring related to 'old' products and extension of their life-cycle, or does it reflect shortening of PLC and creation of new products?), institution-based view of strategy and transaction costs (e.g. what are the costs of re-establishing or re-connecting to supply chains in home countries?). Testing these established concepts should re-invigorate the timely discussion about 'globalisation vs regionalisation' of economic activity, and provide new insights to benefit other areas within management, including organisational behaviour and labour relations.

Conclusions

Current backshoring research is inconsistent and incomplete and as demonstrated in the discussion above it raises more questions than provides answers. The lack of clarity is evident in all areas including scope and scale, key trends, motivations and consequences of backshoring activities.

In extreme cases, some studies embrace a very broad view of backshoring and include supply chain and capacity relocation to home or 'closer to home' countries. Other studies make a distinction between ownership modes and geographical dimensions and instead distinguish three discrete processes. In turn, the definitional ambiguity impacts estimations and measurements of the scale of the phenomenon. In particular there seem to be a considerable discord between consultancy predictions and the actual measured extent of backshoring. Lack of unambiguous delimitation of the scope also compromises the identification and understanding of motivations underpinning firms' backshoring decisions. Finally, current research is dominated by

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small scale exploratory studies often limited in coverage by data accessibility and national variations in reporting standards.

However, it is these very facts that present a unique opportunity for further inquiry leading to potentially significant contributions particularly from and in international business and economic geography theory. Arguably, the search for answers to the set of identified questions provides a once in a lifetime opportunity for theoretical advancements, methodological developments as well as practical improvements within corporate and policy areas.

Notwithstanding that, backshoring present research challenges which are inherently multi-disciplinary in nature and thus its future study should reflect that. It is a complex area based primarily within international business and economic geography, but extending into economics, industrial relations and planning. Looking for a fuller understanding of its different facets calls for a multidisciplinary and mix-method inquiry.

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