Returning to Work
Geographies of Employment in Turbulent Times

Emelie Hane-Weijman

Akademisk avhandling

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Rektor vid Umeå universitet för
avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen framläggs till offentligt
försvar i Hörsal B, Samhällsvetarhuset,
fredagen den 23 november, kl. 10:00.
Avhandlingen kommer att försvaras på engelska.

Fakultetsopponent: Professor Gillian Bristow,
School of Geography and Planning, Cardiff University, UK.
Abstract
This thesis adds to theorizations of resilience, by placing workers and employment on the center stage. This has been addressed by contextualizing gross employment changes and workers’ way back to employment after redundancy. Swedish longitudinal microdata from 1990-2010 were used. This made it possible to study employer-employee links that disappeared and appeared, and to follow redundant workers over time and space.

The empirical findings conclude there are big regional differences in resilience, absorptive capacity and employment growth. The trajectories of regional net employment growth are diverging – an unequal spatial development that might become reinforced with time as the empirical results show that resilience is a path-dependent phenomenon. Moreover, industry proximity is an important factor when analyzing both regional absorptive capacity and labour matching, thus significantly affecting worker adaptability in times of turbulence. This is explained by the frictions and skill (mis)matching that arise in the labour market and in new employment positions due to industry proximities. A cohesive and diverse region is more resistant to shocks as well as adaptable in the aftermath of the crisis, while a specialized region is more sensitive and less resilient in general. In addition, a worker facing redundancy in a region where there is a big share of the same or related industries to the industry she became redundant from decreases the time to re-employment as there is a big supply of jobs that need similar skills and competences. However, there are significant differences in the mobilities of redundant workers, where some groups are more inclined to diversify into new regions and industries, while some have more invested in the industry and region. However, staying in the same industry that experienced the major lay-off means a less stable employment, but moving into unrelated industries increases the workers’ chances of experiencing skill mismatch and becoming underemployed. Finding a new job in related industries means a more stable employment and increases the chances of upward mobility.

In conclusion, based on these findings, it is argued in the thesis that regional branching into related industries is a good regional resilience strategy. However, it needs to be combined with policies aiming for related labour branching as well in order to be able to reallocate skills into new parts of the economy while avoiding skill mismatch. This provides a good base for regional diversification that can result in path re-orientation and renewal.

Keywords
Regional resilience, adaptability, industry relatedness, labour branching, redundancy, industry mix, re-employment, industry mobility, regional mobility

Language
English

ISBN
978-91-7601-969-6

ISSN
1402-5205

Number of pages
68 + 4 papers