

Part I

Unemployment sequences and the risk of poverty: From counting duration to contextualising sequences*

Abstract

Research has consistently shown that unemployment is a strong predictor for income poverty. So far, most studies have focused on the duration of unemployment to account for differences in income poverty. However, this practice may mistreat trajectories which conform less to the norm of continuous full-time employment before unemployment. In this article, I first develop a generalised framework which contextualizes unemployment sequences according to duration as well as timing and order. Second, I apply a sequence analysis to longitudinal data from five European welfare states—Austria, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and Sweden—using the EU-SILC. Thereby, I construct a typology of unemployment sequences which includes some non-standard types of unemployment sequences. These sequences contain inactivity, part-time employment and self-employment spells and have an increased poverty risk. Thus, the sequence-based framework and the sequence analysis are able to contextualize unemployment sequences better than the conventional measure of unemployment duration.

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Part II

Occupational mobility and unemployment in Europe during the crisis: Did the social elevator break?*

Abstract

Sudden, disruptive social change resulting from economic crises may affect occupational structure and mobility. However, studies on social mobility have concentrated on secular trends of social change while recent studies on the impact of the Great Recession and the Eurozone debt crisis have focused on unemployment and wages. Therefore, it is unclear what effect these economic crises had on occupational mobility. In this study, I sketch out a theory of occupational mobility during economic crises reviewing arguments for downgrading (threat of the 'reserve army'), polarization (labour market segmentation) and upgrading ('creative destruction') from the literature. Then, I discuss how institutions in different types of market economies in Europe moderate these effects. Afterwards, I compare patterns of occupational mobility as movements between different skill levels in Europe before and during the Great Recession and the Eurozone crisis using longitudinal data from the EU-SILC for 27 European countries. First, I examine mobility rates; second, I fit a series of log-linear topological models to test whether upgrading, downgrading or polarization prevailed during the crisis. To account for differences in unemployment and re-employment risks, I include unemployment in the analysis. The results show that downward mobility in particular soared during the crisis, especially in the mixed market economies.

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