



A quarter of a century of job transitions in Germany[☆]

Ralph Kattenbach^{a,*}, Thomas M. Schneidhofer^b, Janine Lücke^c, Markus Latzke^b,
Bernadette Loacker^d, Florian Schramm^c, Wolfgang Mayrhofer^b

^a Tongji University, Sino-German School of Postgraduate Studies, Shanghai, China

^b WU Vienna University of Economics and Business, Austria

^c University of Hamburg, Germany

^d Lund University, School of Economics and Management, Sweden

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 20 August 2013

Available online 15 November 2013

Keywords:

Career

Job transition

GDP

Age

Qualified employees

ABSTRACT

By examining trends in intra-organizational and inter-organizational job transition probabilities among professional and managerial employees in Germany, we test the applicability of mainstream career theory to a specific context and challenge its implied change assumption. Drawing on data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP), we apply linear probability models to show the influence of time, economic cycle and age on the probability of job transitions between 1984 and 2010. Results indicate a slight negative trend in the frequency of job transitions during the analyzed time span, owing to a pronounced decrease in intra-organizational transitions, which is only partly offset by a comparatively weaker positive trend towards increased inter-organizational transitions. The latter is strongly influenced by fluctuations in the economic cycle. Finally, the probability of job transitions keeps declining steadily through the course of one's working life. In contrast to inter-organizational transitions, however, this age effect for intra-organizational transitions has decreased over time.

© 2013 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Since the mid-1980s, Western societies have been witnessing changes in the organization of work, careers, and employment relations. These changes are often related to a paradigm shift from “Fordistic” to “post-Fordistic” forms of organization (Opitz, 2004) or a shift from “bureaucratic” to “post-bureaucratic” or “entrepreneurial” modes of work and career regulation (du Gay, Salaman, & Rees, 1996). The effects of socio-cultural and politico-economic transformation processes have been differently evaluated in work, employment and organization studies (Courpasson & Reed, 2004; McCabe, 2009; Roper, Ganesh, & Inkson, 2010), in sociology (Bauman, 2000; Boltanski & Chiapello, 2006) and in contemporary management and career studies (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996b; Kanter, 1997).

Concerning the latter, metaphors like the boundaryless (Arthur, 1994), protean (Hall, 1996), post-corporate (Peiperl & Baruch, 1997), chronically flexible (Iellatchitch, Mayrhofer, & Meyer, 2003), or kaleidoscope career (Maniero & Sullivan, 2005) aim to reflect these developments. In a nutshell, they tend to emphasize increased individual freedom and autonomies in individuals' careers, which now allegedly develop beyond the constraints of single organizations (Inkson, 2006, p. 49) which provided “traditional” careers. Due to technological changes, organizational restructuring, layoffs, and demographical developments, individuals are increasingly pushed and pulled into a changing career world. Numerous authors expect radical changes in employment patterns due to these developments (Giesecke & Heisig, 2010, p. 406).

Recently, scholars have issued a call to “tackle the next stage of the research cycle, i.e. empirical study” (Dries & Verbruggen, 2012, p. 269). One quantifiable indicator for changing career environments is the number of job transitions, which is said to be

[☆] This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: r.kattenbach@cdhk.tongji.edu.cn (R. Kattenbach).

soaring (Rodrigues & Guest, 2010). But there are substantial doubts concerning the extent of job mobility (Chudzikowski, 2012; Guest & McKenzie-Davey, 1996) and some literature even claims that no fundamental change in career behavior and career perceptions has occurred at all (e.g., Diwald & Sill, 2005; Jacoby, 1999; Kattenbach, Lücke, Schlese, & Schramm, 2011). In addition, while the literature on new careers tends to acknowledge contextual and institutional factors, less importance is given to these factors empirically (Mayrhofer, Steyrer, & Meyer, 2007). This raises two questions. First, do these concepts, which have mainly been developed in the Anglo-American context, adequately describe what is happening in different institutional environments such as Germany, which is arguably different in terms of dismissal protection, social insurance institutions, education system, and industrial relations (Hall & Soskice, 2001)? Second, to what extent is the underlying change assumption in career studies (Mayrhofer, 2012) a valid one?

The paper at hand addresses these questions and analyzes trends of transition probabilities among qualified employees in West Germany between 1984 and 2010. We concentrate on this group, defined as employees with managerial tasks and or other highly qualified jobs, because it provides a good test bed for the change hypothesis. Highly qualified employees are more difficult to replace, and they enjoy better job conditions (e.g. in terms of autonomy, power and wage level). Within the context outlined above they should perceive fewer economic boundaries and more opportunities for job changes (Powell & Maniero, 1999; Sherer, Schwab, & Heneman, 1987). We focus on Germany to consider a context with rather rigid institutional structures, characterized by stable welfare institutions and more powerful unions than those in the US (Biemann, Fasang, & Grunow, 2011). We will rely on data from West Germany only, for the assumed change in the career context beginning in the 1980s, and data from East Germany are only available from 1991 on.

Our paper contributes to the career literature in three ways: First, by using representative panel data and longitudinal analyses, it seeks to contribute to the reinvigoration of the study of careers (Savickas, 2002). Second, it challenges the change and universality assumption prevalent in much of career research (Chudzikowski, 2012; Collin, 1998; Mayrhofer, 2012). Although we acknowledge that change takes place, we argue that the change assumption prevalent in careers research may be exaggerated, and that it cannot be generalized across different national contexts. Hence, we do not contest the conceptual quality of mainstream careers theories, most of all the boundaryless career theory, but the universality of their application. Third, and linked with this, the paper points out the relevance of contextual influences exemplified in a highly regulated economy, and it endorses the recently advocated discussion on the impact of institutional factors (Biemann, Zacher, & Feldman, 2012; Inkson, Gunz, Ganesh, & Roper, 2012).

2. Theoretical background

Two conceptualizations of careers, which reflect the above-mentioned developments and put particular emphasis on the agentic quality of career trajectories, have gained substantial attention in career research and represent the contemporary mainstream: protean careers (Hall, 1996; Hall & Mirvis, 1996), on the one hand, and boundaryless careers (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996b; for a comparison see Briscoe, Hall, & DeMuth, 2006) on the other. The former is characterized by careers developing independently of traditional career arrangements (Segers, Inceoglu, Vloeberghs, Bartram, & Henderickx, 2008). It relies on a conception of psychological success resulting from individual career management, as opposed to career planning and development arranged by the organization. Protean careers have been characterized as involving greater mobility, a more holistic life perspective, and a developmental progression (Hall, 1996).

The boundaryless career concept is framed in a similar way. Introduced in the mid-1990s and since then increasingly discussed (see e.g. Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006) and refined (Arthur, 2008; Tams & Arthur, 2010), the boundaryless career is conceptualized as emancipation from organizations, which used to provide traditional ways of development implying a logic of vertical coordination and long-term commitment. It is therefore described as “the opposite of the ‘bounded’, or organizational career” (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996a, p. 3) and characterized by increased boundary crossing by the career actor (Sullivan, 1999), who may perceive a boundaryless future regardless of structural constraints (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996a, p. 5). According to the latter, the boundaryless career implies not only a mobility in terms of job transitions but also a psychological mobility (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006; Verbruggen, 2012). However, in the following we focus on physical mobility.

Both the protean career and the boundaryless career concept share, among other things, the idea of physical mobility across jobs, functions and organizations (Briscoe et al., 2006; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Hence, when these career concepts increase in importance, one may presume both an overall increase in inter-organizational job transitions, meaning job-to-job changes between organizations (for the concept of work role transitions see, e.g. Nicholson, 1984), and an overall decrease in internal job transitions, broadly defined as any essential change in task and duty within an organization, in particular across hierarchical, functional, and inclusion boundaries (Schein, 1971). For the remainder of this study, we will employ the term “external” to denote inter-organizational job transitions, and “internal” to denote intra-organizational job transitions.

3. Hypotheses

Despite theoretical claims about the overall increase of job transitions due to boundaryless and protean careers, admittedly the empirical support for such a rise is modest at best (Chudzikowski, 2012; Pringle & Mallon, 2003). Job tenure and turnover have remained stable in several parts of the world (Rodrigues & Guest, 2010: 1168) and with each successive generation (Lyons, Schweitzer, Ng, & Kuron, 2012). Recently, Rodrigues and Guest (2010) analyzed data from the OECD Employment Statistics Database in order to capture historical trends in job stability for the years 1992 to 2006. They find few changes for job tenure and

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10439129>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10439129>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)