Occupational Opportunities in the GDR: A Privilege of the Older Generations?

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Abstract: Compared to the amount of information available concerning the other former state socialist countries there is a research deficit regarding the rates and patterns of occupational mobility in the GDR. This deficit is especially unfortunate since the GDR can be characterized as having been a state socialist country par excellence where many crucial features of state socialism were realized in a more consequential way than, for example, in Poland or Hungary. In this article the authors try to give a more thorough analysis of occupational opportunities and their historical change in the GDR. The analysis is based on work histories of 1141 East German men born in four cohorts: 1929–31, 1939–41, 1951–53 and 1959–61. These retrospective data are taken from the East German Life History Study of the Max Planck Institute for Human Development and Education, Berlin. Based on descriptive analysis and logit regression models the main conclusion is that starting at a high level in the post-war period, occupational opportunities of men decreased over cohorts, but by the 1980s they were not completely eliminated by any means. Overt system loyalty, i.e., party membership or having an official function in a party organization, improved the chances of upward mobility in all cohorts.

1. Introduction

One of the most important consequences of the German unification process is the radical change that has taken place in the labor market structure of East Germany which has created new demands on the labor force to be flexible and mobile. The question that arises here is: Do the citizens of the New Federal States have experience with processes of occupational mobility which they can use to cope with the new situation?

Knowledge about intragenerational mobility in the former GDR is quite unsystematic and episodical, and therefore this question is not simple to answer. There is a research deficit regarding the GDR as compared to other former state socialist countries. We can find several studies on occupational mobility in Hungary and Poland (e.g., Wong/Hauser 1987; Andorka 1983; Mach et al. 1991; Szelenyi 1988). This research deficit is especially unfortunate since the “German Democratic Republic” can be characterized as having been a state socialist country par excellence. Many of the crucial features which define “state socialism” were realized in a more consequential way in the GDR than, for example, in Poland and Hungary. Evidence for this is the extent to which liquidation of private ownership was achieved, as well as the marginalization of petty commodity production, in addition to the achieved level of industrialization, and the greater range and influence of centralized control. In light of these specific characteristics of the GDR, it is interesting to see whether the results of mobility studies done in the other state socialist countries also apply to the GDR. Or do we find some modifications in the mobility patterns that can complete our picture of “state socialism”?

From Polish or Hungarian studies, for example, we know that in the first stage of socialist development, i.e., in the first two decades of the post-war period, a déclassement of the old elite took place. "Those associated with the old regime were removed from high positions and numbers of persons of working-class origins were thrust into administrative positions in the party, government, and industry" (Simkus 1981: 173) – whereby intra
generational mobility of these working-class people played an important role (Wesolowski/Mach 1985; Szelenyi 1988). We also know that in the second stage of socialist development "there had been a considerable rigidification of the stratification process" (Szelenyi 1988: 192). Several studies (Andorka 1983; Simkus/Andorka 1982; Wong/Hauser 1987; Wesolowski/Mach 1985; Szelenyi 1988) have shown that in this period rates of social mobility contracted, and new barriers in the opportunity structure emerged. And thirdly, there is the finding that party membership played an important role for the allocation to career trajectories in state socialist countries (Szelenyi 1987; Wesolowski/Mach 1985).

These findings lead to the hypothesis that the rates and patterns of mobility in state socialist nations were much more subject to political control and to changes in policy than is the case in Western industrialized nations (Simkus 1981: 172). In this respect, an analysis of occupational mobility of the former GDR cannot only fill the gap of missing information about one of the socialist countries, but it can also contribute to strengthen the arguments for this hypothesis. Namely, we can assume that political control and changes in policy influenced mobility processes in the GDR more consequentially than in the other countries because: (1) the replacement of the old elite was also connected with denazification, (2) the possibility of fairly easy emigration to West Germany (until 1961), (3) the process of socialist development in the GDR was not influenced by such severe crises as, for example, the Prague Spring in 1968, the suppressed 1956-revolution in Hungary, or "Solidarnosc" in the beginning of the 1980s, 2 and (4) the power of the ruling party, the SED, was stronger than, for example, in Poland.

In this article we will give a more thorough analysis of occupational opportunities and their historical change in the GDR. We use data from a retrospective study conducted in East Germany. The East German Life History Study (EGLHS) of the Max Planck Institute for Human Development and Education in Berlin is one of the very few studies which allow comprehensive and detailed analyses of work histories in the former GDR (Huininck 1992). 3 We analyze data from 1141 East German male respondents of this study from four birth cohorts: 1929–31, 1939–41, 1951–53, 1959–61.

Although we do have data on work histories of East German women, here we only focus on men. From the literature (Belwe 1988; Helwig/Nickel 1993; Nickel 1990, 1991, 1992; Schenk/Schlegel 1993; Wiegandt 1989; Winkler 1990) and first analyses of the EGLHS (Sørensen/Trappe 1994; Solga 1994; Trappe 1994) we know that there exist considerable differences between the career trajectories of men and women also in the GDR. We cannot deal with the various specific aspects of gender comparison here, and thus leave this topic for a separate publication.

The main concern of this paper, namely the patterns of job mobility of men in the GDR, is analyzed in two steps. In the first step we ask whether there was any job mobility at all and, if so, what kind of job-shift patterns did exist. We answer this question with some descriptive analysis of the work histories of the male respondents analyzed. In the second step we ask how job mobility was affected by the different sources of individuals. Here, we estimate a logit regression model of upward mobility between employment status categories.

2. Some historical and theoretical considerations

Job mobility and mobility between occupations in the GDR as a socialist state can be debated within the context of two different theoretical frameworks.

On the one hand, there is the general argument that industrialization and modernization tend to go along with increasing individual occupational opportunities in the labor market (Ganjeboom et al. 1988; Treiman 1970). One consequence of modernization should be the assimilation of individual conditions for occupational careers and increasing equality of individual career chances. The latter argument should be of particular importance in the work histories of the respondents in the New Federal States (Projektgruppe "Das Sozio-ökonomische Panel" 1991). However, detailed information about individual jobs is only given for the last job, i.e., that held in 1988/89, and only includes the work experience since 1990, when the panel in East Germany was started. Hence this data base provides opportunities to analyze occupational mobility during the transition period. But there is almost no information on work history and mobility patterns before 1989.
case of a socialist society where social equality was the centerpiece of the state ideology.

On the other hand, there is the thesis that in a society with a centralized and state-governed labor force allocation, opportunities for job mobility should be very small. The range of occupational choice is assumed to be restricted because of a strong relationship between job entitlements and achieved qualifications. Therefore “state socialist work structures are believed to be overadministered, rigid in job allocation and limiting in the scope of career mobility through administrative regulation, standardization, and bureaucratic obstacles“ (Mach et al. 1991: 4). Consequently, the socialist society is often characterized as an immobile society.

From our point of view, these two general, macro-sociological hypotheses are not able to explain the specific development in the GDR after the Second World War. It is not possible to discuss occupational mobility in the GDR while at the same time abstracting from the particular consequences of the political turnover after the war, as well as the economic and demographic situation during the forty-year history of the country. Therefore, the present analysis is, above all, a historical analysis.

Very roughly we distinguish between three major historical periods in the economic development of the former GDR: the period of revolutionary implementation of the state-socialist system, the period of extensive economic growth connected with attempts at decentralization, while maintaining the centralized occupational and educational institutions, and the period of centralization of the economy. The first phase covers the historical period from the end of World War II to the early 1960s when the East German authorities tried to establish a society with a functioning socialist economy and corresponding institutions. In a nutshell, this meant destroying the roots of the former system, and to this end, the new rulers enforced a large number of political measures to get rid of the old political, economic, and, partially, also the bourgeois intellectual elite. Examples of such measures were expropriation, the abolition of the status of civil servants and the process of denazification. The policies of the Party in the period from 1945 to 1961 led to the considerable downward mobility of former teachers, lawyers and a remarkable portion of the highly qualified civil servants, as well as other parts of the work force with higher qualifications (Belwe 1989).

The positions these persons held to be filled by other persons who were loyal to the new system in order to guarantee the functioning of the fundamental institutions of the developing society and economy and to build up the new basic institutions of the socialistic regime. This purging of pre-war personnel partly explains the urgent need for highly qualified manpower that arose in nearly all segments of society, but particularly in administration.

Another cause of the general shortage of labor was that a large number of men and women left the GDR during the 1950s. Many people, from all occupational status groups, left the GDR via West Germany because of experiencing expropriation, loss of status, but also because of disappointing prospects with regard to their standard of living. About 1.9 Million people emigrated between 1950 and 1960 (Belwe 1989: 127). The vacuum had to be filled.

In addition, the Party had an interest in legitimizing the GDR as a “state of workers and farmers,” and this explains why there were special measures to promote members of the formerly underprivileged classes. These measures were called the “worker-and-farmer-children’s bonus."

In accordance with the modernization arguments presented above we can also expect that the sharp increase in the demand for skilled labor caused by reindustrialization of the East-German economy led to a major improvement in the occupational opportunities of men who started from lower levels of qualification.

Finally, a great deal of the fluctuation in occupational careers in the 1950s was probably caused by the fact that the economic and institutional development during the first period was hindered by a lack of consistent long term economic planning due to severe restrictions on the economic capacities of the East German society and due to the weaknesses of a strict and centralized planning system (Cornelsen 1989: 262). This phase ended with the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 by which the outflow of manpower to the West was stopped.

In the second phase during the 1960s new attempts were made to make the economy more efficient. The aim was to cautiously decentralize the econo-
my following the concepts of the “NÖS“-program (“New Economic System“). Corresponding to this, a great emphasis was put on an accelerated development of the scientific and technical level of the economy. Consequently, opportunities to achieve high-level qualifications and, in particular, to gain access to universities improved substantially during this period (Belwe 1989: 131). Starting their work life under the conditions of an established planned economy with state-controlled entry to a well-structured occupational system, young people generally had a “qualified labor force entry.“

Despite a phase of promising economic growth during the 1960s, in the end, a considerable improvement in the economy could not be achieved, and severe problems destroyed the chances for a successful continuation of the “NÖS“-program.

As a consequence, substantial changes in the main goals of government policies took place again after Erich Honecker came to power in 1971.

This can be seen as the beginning of the third major phase in the history of the GDR. Probably the most significant economic change that took place in this period was the recentralization of the economy after 1971, leading to its reorganization into “Kombinat.“ In addition, expansion of the universities not only ceased, but the number of people being allowed to study was even reduced. Priori it is actually quite difficult to propose exactly what the chances of access to high-status positions were in the early 1970s. Many people profited from the expansion of higher-level education during the 1960s. This fact, together with the job opportunities caused by the reconstruction of the East German economy during the 1970s, probably led at least to a higher proportion of people starting their careers already at a higher level job than in the previous cohorts.

By the late 1970s the structure of industrial branches, occupations, organizational hierarchies and a corresponding system of vocational training had become more or less fixed. Careers in the late 1970s were affected by an increasing influence of the so-called “state-governed labor force allocation.“ This system of labor allocation restricted the younger cohorts in their choice of occupational training, as well as of their job later on. Since the 1960s, the government of the GDR had tried to establish a “socialist economy of education“ that would manage the structures of educational degrees and occupations systematically. Upon leaving school, young adults were allocated into occupations for which there was a set quota. The allocation process to jobs of higher status became increasingly characterized by a state-controlled opportunity of achieving a technical college or university degree. The consequence of this procedure was that many young people did not get the occupation they wanted. Dissatisfied men from the younger cohorts could only try to change their work within their occupational careers via adult education.

The economic goals of the East German government remained ambitious in the third period: a rapid increase in economic productivity, significant shifts in the technological and scientific level of production to strengthen the GDR’s position in international competition, and the improvement of the population’s standard of living. However, the rapid expansion of the economy and the associated growth in occupational opportunities that had occurred during the first two periods belonged to the past, and could not be repeated (Adler 1992).

Based on this short historical consideration hypotheses about changes in the job-shift patterns of members of different birth cohorts in the GDR can be formulated.

Hypothesis 1: We assume that a rather large proportion of men who entered into the labor force after the Second World War but before the 1970s experienced considerable mobility in occupation as well as in employment status caused by the outstanding career opportunities in the period before 1961 and, to a moderate extent, also during the 1960s. In particular, the “Aufbaugeneration“, i.e., the generation whose members built up the socialist system in the GDR after the Second World War, had great mobility chances. Starting at a high level in the post-war period the overall job mobility in the occupational careers of men decreased over cohorts in the former GDR. The reasons for this were the increasingly centralized labor market structures on the one hand, and the stagnation in the processes of industrialization and modernization on the other hand.
Hypothesis 2: One could also assume that under the condition of decreasing opportunities at entry into the labor force due to limited access to the universities and due to the strict regulation of entry into the labor force, an increasing proportion of men compensated for an unsatisfactory entry position in the labor force with intra-generational mobility. This hypothesis is based on a different assessment of the relevance of social origin and the consequence of the allocation of men in the labor force caused by the state controlled entry process which often turned out to be unsatisfactory for the individuals involved.

On the one hand, under the condition of a growth in the number of high-status or elite positions within the occupational structure of the GDR, the openness of the status groups could be sustained. This also depends on the degree to which the “worker- and farmer-children’s bonus“ was applied, as it was guaranteed in the constitution. If this bonus could not be realized when entering into the labor force, the intra-generational mobility of the children from such families should be affected. Therefore, in this case we could expect to find upward mobility processes in the occupational careers of workers’ and farmers’ children even after the early 1970s.

Alternatively, one could propose that lateral moves were particularly important for those persons from the younger cohorts who were allocated to occupations they did not want, or who intended to improve their working situation for other reasons (Belwe 1985). Therefore, we assume that at least lateral mobility will hold its importance for the occupational mobility of the East German labor force.

Hypothesis 3: Under the condition of an increasingly fixed distribution of occupational positions since the 1970s, the relative advantage of overt system loyalty increased. In the case of decreasing opportunities of occupational mobility and cuts in the opportunities to gain higher-level education, the competition for occupational positions available should have become stronger. In the GDR one of the strategies to gain advantages in this competition was to engage in official institutions of the system, i.e., to become a member of the ruling SED Party or one of the other block-parties or take on responsibility in one of the pro-party organizations (Engler 1992).

3. Data and Variables

To test our hypotheses we analyze work histories of East German men born in the birth cohorts 1929–31, 1939–41, 1951–53 and 1959–61. These retrospective data are taken from the EGLHS at the Max Planck Institute of Human Development and Education (Huininink 1992). The data were gathered between September 1991 and October 1992 in 420 communities of the former GDR. The total sample size is 2331 men and women. In our study 1141 male respondents are included.

The respondents of the four cohorts have widely varying ages at the time of the interview. Hence, in order to be able to compare the cohorts we follow job careers only until age 30. We also do not include information about the job history after December 1989. Therefore, we cut the life histories of the youngest cohort (1959–61) between age 28 and 30, i.e., in December 1989. We think that such an approach is necessary to exclude job shifts caused by the “Wende“, a process which we do not treat here. Four of our male respondents did not report any job activity until age 30 – therefore they are excluded from the job-shift analysis in part 5.

In the following we look at job-shift patterns of the male respondents in three ways. We distinguish between mobility between jobs, occupations, and employment statuses. The first measure, job shifts as such, allows us to decide whether there was any mobility at all. The other two measures, mobility between occupations and employment statuses, give us the possibility to determine the character of these job shifts in more detail. To measure mobility between employment statuses we use a GDR-specific classification of occupational positions consisting of 20 categories that was collapsed to 5 categories (Solga 1993). These employment status categories are:

- Professional, higher technical, administrative, or managerial positions;
- Semiprofessional positions;
- Workers on a skilled level (blue- and white-collar);

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8 The sample was drawn from the Central Register of Population of the GDR in October 1990. It is a subsample of the infos-master sample (size 300,000 cases). The survey was conducted in cooperation with infos, Bonn-Bad Godesberg.

9 The choice of “age 30” for all cohorts can be evaluated as a conservative convention. As we know from our data, some of the men in the older cohorts still had upward moves after age 30 (Huininink 1993).
Workers on an unskilled level;
 Others (including farmers and the self-employed).

Based on these categories we define upward, downward, and lateral mobility between employment statuses as follows. Upward moves are defined as moves from:

- the unskilled level to every other status group in the 5-category-version of the GDR-occupational-status classification;
- the skilled level or the status group of farmers and self-employed (others) to the level of professional and administrative positions or the level of semiprofessions;
- the status group of semiprofessionals to the highest level.

Downward moves are defined as moves from:

- the level of professional and administrative positions to every other status group;
- the level of semiprofessions to the skilled, unskilled, and other status groups;
- the skilled level or the status group of farmers and self-employed (others) to an unskilled level.

All other possible moves, including that from farmer to skilled worker, even though it involves a change in employment status, are counted as lateral moves. Since the definition of upward and downward mobility is based mainly on the qualification level of the job held, possible moves between these groups are mainly moves on the same level, i.e., on the level of completed vocational training ("Facharbeiter").

We also look at mobility between occupations. For this we use a GDR-specific 4-digit classification scheme of occupations (DDRC), as it provides a variety of opportunities for measuring differences in occupational careers (Solga 1993). The first two digits indicate one of the 54 occupational fields in which the job is located, for example the textile industry, mining, electronics, transportation, agriculture, administration, education, or state apparatus. The third digit indicates the level of qualification needed for the job, ranging from unskilled to highly qualified levels. The last digit allows specification of the concrete job among about 600 jobs included in the scheme.

4. Job-shift patterns of East German men of four birth cohorts –
An empirical description

To test the first and second hypothesis, we now present an overview of the average number of job shifts as well as shifts between occupations of the East German men in our study.

Table 1: Occupational mobility of East-German men by cohort until age 30.

<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average number of job shifts</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shares of shifts* between ...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(in %)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different occupations (2-digit DDRC**)</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different occupations (ISCO***)</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different levels of qualification (3rd-digit DDRC**)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different employment status groups</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different firms</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of cases</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Setting the "average number of job shifts" at 100%, these indices are the percentage of job shifts connected with the respective kind of change. For example, in the cohort 1929–31 59% of the job shifts were connected with changes in occupation.

** DDRC is a 4-digit classification scheme of occupations for the former GDR.

*** ISCO means International Standard Classification of Occupations.


As we can see in the first row of Table 1, where the average number of job shifts is shown, the average number of job shifts reported decreased over the cohorts on average by one shift. Men from the 1929–31 cohort had on average 2.5 job shifts until

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10 In our sample these two groups are so small that it is impossible to analyze them separately in an appropriate way. Hence, we include them as one group in the analysis, controlling for inward and outward moves.
age 30. But even the men in the youngest cohort changed their job on average more than once by age 30. Compared to estimates of the average number of job shifts for West German men born in comparable cohorts, the results are remarkably high. West German men of the two older cohorts had about 2.0 job shifts by age 30. For the cohort 1929–31 this is less than in the GDR. The men of the two younger cohorts in West Germany had about 1.7 job shifts. Therefore, in West Germany the amount of the decrease over the cohorts was less than in the GDR.\textsuperscript{11}

Because of the extended time spent in school and in training, the average age at entry into the labor force increased from 18 to 20 years. Taking that into account, the total labor force experience in the younger cohorts is therefore considerably lower. Estimated frequencies of job shifts per 10 years for the different cohorts decreased over cohorts by a considerably smaller amount than those displayed in Table 1. For the 1929–31 cohort we estimate 2.2 job shifts and for the 1959–61 cohort the estimate is 1.7 job shifts. Obviously the GDR policy of a “state-governed labor force allocation“ could not totally prevent job shifts individually initiated. To a certain extent the state may have even encouraged them out of economic necessity.

In Table 1 we also display the percentage of change between occupations, between levels of qualification of the occupational activity, between employment categories, and between firms of the total average number of job shifts. Here again we observe that the men in all cohorts were mobile. The older cohorts consistently show the highest figures. In the oldest cohort, the number of job shifts connected with changes between occupations was almost twice as high as in the youngest (1959–61) cohort. Furthermore, the frequency of mobility between employment statuses decreased. While men of the 1929–31 cohort experienced a change in their status in 40% of all job shifts, for men of the 1959–61 cohort this was only the case in 20% of the job shifts. About 80% of all job shifts were connected with a change in firm in the oldest cohort; in the youngest cohort shifts between firms ac-

\textsuperscript{11} Based on the ISCO, the share of shifts between occupations remained almost stable over the cohorts of West German men. It only slightly decreased from about 60% in the older cohorts to 50% in the younger ones. These figures are estimated on the basis of data from the Life History Study for West Germany of the Max Planck Institute for Human Development and Education (Mayer/Brückner 1989).

counted for only a little less than half of the job shifts. One reason for this can be found in the process of recentralization after 1971.

With regard to our first two hypotheses we can already summarize that intragenerational mobility considered as simple job shifts as well as shifts between occupations and employment status categories was important in all four cohorts – but it decreased over time.

We now consider the direction of the job shifts between employment status categories over cohorts in terms of upward, lateral, or downward moves.

In Figure 1 we present the distribution of job shifts by upward, lateral, and downward moves. In all cohorts the majority of the job shifts was connected with lateral moves, in the two younger cohorts by a much larger proportion than in the two older ones, especially the oldest cohort. This difference is not due to the fact that the proportion of downward moves became larger the younger the cohorts were. We do not find any difference among cohorts as far as downward moves are concerned. However, we find large differences in the proportion of upward moves among the cohorts. Upward moves account for 27% of the job shifts in the oldest cohort, and therefore nearly four times more than in the youngest cohort where it was only 7%. The small but considerable proportion of downward moves shows that in all cohorts quite a few men had to experience a setback in their occupational career.

These figures for mobility among employment status categories naturally depend, in part, on the distribution of the occupational positions held in the first job.

In Figure 2a, we compare this distribution among the different cohorts. Here we see that in the 1929–31 cohort a fairly high percentage of men started from an unskilled level (about 30%). Similar figures are known from West Germany (Blossfeld 1986). One explanation for this is that many of the members of this cohort were not able to start or finish vocational training at the end of World War II or in the first years afterwards. The proportion of unskilled working men in the first job dropped to less than 10% in the youngest cohort.

The GDR’s goal of qualifying as many young men (and women) as possible was largely achieved. The overwhelming proportion of men in the younger cohorts completed a vocational training, or technical college (“Fachschule”) or university degree. The proportion of skilled blue- and white-collar workers grew from about 60% to more than 70%.
**Figure 1:** Distribution of upward, lateral and downward shifts in employment status of East-German men by cohort until age 30.  

**Figure 2a:** Employment status in the first job. Four birth cohorts of East-German men (N = 1137).

**Figure 2b:** Employment status at age 30. Four birth cohorts of East-German men (N = 1137).  
The proportion of men who started their career in the upper employment status group increased from 5% in the 1929–31 cohort to 14% in the 1951–53 cohort. This supports the assumption of quite favorable conditions for achieving higher level qualification at the university during the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s. A fairly high proportion of young men could start their job career already in the two higher employment status groups. However, in the youngest cohorts there is a small decrease in this figure again. This reflects the restrictive policies of the Honecker era when the opportunities to study at universities were reduced and stabilized at a lower level compared to the 1960s and early 1970s.

Turning to the distribution of the employment status held at age 30 (Figure 2b), we can see what the cohort-specific outcomes of the different job-shift pattern described above were. Clearly, men of the two older cohorts could realize upward moves into upper-level positions and jobs on a semiprofessional or skilled level to a considerable extent. Particularly the men of the 1929–31 cohort were able to compensate for disadvantages at the beginning of their work life, ending up in high-level positions by a greater proportion (17%) than men from the youngest cohort (13%). Members of the youngest cohort and also already of the 1951–53 cohort were not able to improve their starting positions. Therefore, the occupational position achieved in the first job became more and more important. Yet, one should not forget that the members of these cohorts already achieved good positions in the first job, whereas the older cohorts were forced to "move" to them.

What are the processes producing this general trend? Why did the processes described in the second hypothesis seem to have no great influence on occupational mobility in the GDR? We now consider the job histories of our four cohorts in more detail.

For example, we look at moves out of unskilled and skilled jobs, respectively, presented as outflow-percentages in Table 2, Panel A and B, and mobility into professional and administrative positions presented as inflow percentages in Table 2, Panel C.

The main upward move out of unskilled jobs was the move into skilled jobs. But surprisingly, the percentage of job shifts out of an unskilled job which led to a skilled blue- or white-collar job declined substantially across the cohorts. The likelihood of remaining in the group of unskilled workers increased from 52% in the 1929–31 cohort up to 76% in the 1959–61 cohort. One reason for this might have been that the unskilled workers in the

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**Table 2:** Selected outflow and inflow mobility of East-German men until age 30 (in % of job shifts).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cohorts</th>
<th>Destination*</th>
<th>Number of spells</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Panel A</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Group 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outflow mobility</td>
<td>1929–31</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of unskilled</td>
<td>1939–41</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>position</td>
<td>1951–53</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1959–61</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Panel B</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Group 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outflow mobility</td>
<td>1929–31</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of skilled</td>
<td>1939–41</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>workers'</td>
<td>1951–53</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positions</td>
<td>1959–61</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Panel C</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Group 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflow mobility</td>
<td>1929–31</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>into profession</td>
<td>1939–41</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and ad-</td>
<td>1951–53</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ministrative</td>
<td>1959–61</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Group 1: professional and administrative positions; group 2: semiprofessionals; group 3: skilled worker; group 4: unskilled worker; group 5: farmers/self-employed.

younger cohorts were a quite selective group. They usually did not achieve the normally obligatory level of schooling and were severely disadvantaged in their opportunity and ability to get a good education and qualification.

We observe that the barrier to the professional and administrative positions for unskilled workers became very strong. We find no moves from unskilled jobs into administrative positions in our data for the two younger cohorts, even though such moves were rare, but possible, in the two older cohorts.

It is, of course, not surprising that men working at a skilled level (Table 2, Panel B) could achieve upward moves into semiprofessional as well as upper-level positions to a greater extent than unskilled workers. On the other hand, these men were also markedly affected by the risk of a downward move into an unskilled job (16% of the job shifts in the oldest cohort and about 10% of the job shifts in the other cohorts). Considering the two directions of moves across the cohorts, one can observe that the chance of upward moves for skilled workers decreased remarkably over the cohorts — from 16% to 4% of all job shifts — but the risk of downward moves into unskilled jobs did not. As we have already stated for the unskilled jobs, the main pattern for the jobs on a skilled level was to remain on that level.

We now look at the pattern of allocation into the professional and administrative positions (Table 2, Panel C). Of course, men who already had occupied such a position in their prior job had the best chance to hold another one in their next job. The percentage of moves into such a position by men already working on the upper status level nearly doubled. The consequence was that the proportion of men remaining in such a position and/or changing their job within this status group increased from 80% in the 1929–31 cohort to more than 90% in the other cohorts. We also see that in the two older cohorts this employment status group was much more frequently recruited from men in jobs on a skilled level than in the two younger cohorts. The same applies for the unskilled level.

In summary: upward mobility in terms of employment status categories decreased substantially over the cohorts. As an explanation, we already referred to the extremely good opportunities caused by the dramatic shortage of executive personnel, professionals and other qualified manual and non-manual employees in the 1950s. For example, in 1948 about 50% of all positions in the managerial hierarchy of the state-owned industry were occupied by former members of the working class (Belwe 1989: 127). As a result, we can find at least two interesting processes affecting the career opportunities up until the early 1960s. First, the members of the old elite were replaced by new people who had mainly entered the labor force in working class positions. Second, the lack of skilled workers needed to carry out reindustrialization after the World War II resulted in a general qualification campaign whereby many of the skilled worker’s certificates were acquired within the framework of adult education. However, because of the problems in the developmental process of the system during the 1950s and the early 1960s, patterns of “fluctuating” occupational careers also occurred.

The outstanding opportunities for intragenerational mobility for those cohorts starting their work life in the 1950s and 1960s can hardly be found for the men entering into the labor force after the early 1970s. We see a substantial drop in career mobility for those born after 1950. The tendency to remain in the employment status group of entry increased across the cohorts, particularly in the higher level status group. Men who entered into the labor force in the early 1970s started on average at a higher level of qualification and succeeded in staying there. Lateral mobility increasingly became the main pattern of job shifts for East German men. And in this sense, also the men of the two younger cohorts were mobile.

To verify the second hypothesis, if only partially, we now ask if the younger cohorts compensated for the decrease in opportunity with special patterns of lateral mobility. In Table 3 we calculate the proportion of lateral moves which were connected with changes in occupation. In the first row we

12 In 1964 45% of all persons who got a skilled worker certificate achieved it through adult education (Geißler 1990: 100).

13 It should also be mentioned that a great deal of change took place regarding the two groups farmers and self-employed. Both groups were remarkably reduced in their size over time and, in addition, most of the farmers were organized in “co-operatives,” a new form of ownership after 1960. This change had a huge impact on working conditions; agriculture in the GDR became more and more industrialized. As a result, farmers were trained and qualified in the same way and to the same extent as the industrial skilled workers and the differences in working conditions between industrial and agricultural work became smaller.
Table 3: Proportion of lateral shifts with a change in the occupation* of East-German men. By employment status group and cohort (in %).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment status group</th>
<th>Cohorts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All groups</td>
<td>49 42 36 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional and admin</td>
<td>49 31 20 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semiprofessionals</td>
<td>41 42 50 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled workers</td>
<td>33 38 33 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled workers</td>
<td>80 68 68 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>31 20 33 25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* "Change in occupation" is measured as changes in the first two digits of the GDR classification of occupations. This is rather a conservative approach since changes in occupation within the occupational fields themselves are not included.


...tion it is much more difficult to move between professions.15

Regarding the skilled level we find that the frequency of lateral mobility connected with changes in occupation decreased only from the 1951–53 cohort to the youngest cohort, and that means during the 1980s. We may suggest at least one explanation for this finding. Prior to the 1980s the occupational structure of skilled as well as unskilled jobs was subject to several developments in the economic system. For the first two cohorts we already mentioned the process of restructuring and reindustrialization of the East German economy. For the 1951–53 cohort the policy of "scientific technological revolution" had caused partial changes in the occupational structure. New occupations in electronics, biology and chemistry at the skilled level were created which opened up new opportunities. We cannot find any such process in the 1980s when the youngest cohort began to make their job careers.

Something similar happened to jobs at the unskilled level. The exceptionally high percentage of changes in occupation in the oldest cohort (80%) supports the hypothesis of a considerable amount of fluctuative job mobility in this employment category during the 1950s. Thereafter, the opportunities for occupational moves on that level became more restricted. In the course of reorganizing the occupational structure, an ongoing process of renaming unskilled jobs into skilled jobs took place. In 1957, for example, 111 unskilled jobs were renamed into skilled jobs. This meant that they were still the same jobs in terms of content, tasks and operations, but now they required occupational training (Kuhnert 1983).

However, the rate of moves is fairly high, even in the youngest cohort. This also might reflect the fact that the job careers on the unskilled level were characterized by a considerable degree of fluctuation.

5. Outcomes of intragenerational mobility

In the last part of the analysis, we focus on outcomes of the occupational careers of the men of the four birth cohorts described above. That is, we consider the occupational careers with respect to the chance of an upward move in occupational po-

14 By "openness" we do not mean openness as it is understood in the research on intergenerational class mobility. In this paper "openness" means only whether there are opportunities to move between occupations or not.

15 Because the status group of the semiprofessionals is very small, particularly in the younger cohorts, we do not deal with this group in more detail.
sition between the first job and age 30 they provided.
From Figure 2 we learned that the men of the two older cohorts could realize upward moves into executive, managerial, or professional positions and jobs on a semiprofessional or skilled level to a much greater extent than the men of the two younger cohorts.

Was that only due to the effects of the different historical conditions shaping the occupational opportunity structure of men of the different cohorts? Or do we find that also individual attributes which are usually applied in status attainment models – such as social origin or occupational position achieved in the first job – played a role? And particularly, can we verify the hypothesis that overt system loyalty was very important to improve one's prospects for the job career and the chances of upward mobility in the GDR as a "state-socialist country"?

The occupational position achieved in the first job should show a significant effect on the chance of an upward move. Naturally one must expect that the chance for an upward move is especially higher in the lower status groups, because there are more destinations to move up to, and the highest group by definition cannot move up any further.

We include parents' social origin. We mentioned already patterns of upward mobility, caused by the "worker-and-farmer-children's bonus" guaranteed by the constitution and implemented by the authorities. Another phenomenon to be taken into account might be the process of "counter mobility" induced by the aspiration level of the parents belonging to higher status groups when their offspring start on a lower level of employment status (Girod 1971, ch. 2 esp.). It is interesting to see whether differentiation in parental resources would correspond to different investments on the part of the parents to improve the career chances of the respondents, and whether these investments make a difference.

Finally, to test our third hypothesis we include the presence or absence of overt system loyalty before starting the job held at age 30.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Presence of overt system loyalty before shift to the job held at age 30</th>
<th>Presence of overt system loyalty at age 30</th>
<th>Total cohort size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1929–31</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939–41</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951–53</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959–61</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 4 gives an idea of how relevant overt system loyalty was in the GDR. The percentage of men starting their work life in an employment status group not higher than semiprofessional and showing overt system loyalty before the shift to the job held at age 30 differ remarkably between the cohorts. Men from the older cohorts expressed system loyalty, in the form of SED-party membership or involvement in other political organizations, to a much higher degree than members of the younger cohorts.

The same applies to overt system loyalty showed at age 30. A lesser proportion of the men in the younger cohorts showed overt system loyalty, but those who did, more often took the steps to display their loyalty prior to the shift into the job held at

16 "Origin" is measured by the occupational position held by the head of the household when the respondent was 15 years old. That is, independent from who occupied the position, the mother's or father's highest position determines the family's social position.

17 This variable is measured before the respondents started the job they held at age 30, in order to exclude loyalty that might have been a consequence of career mobility – at least as far as the job held at age 30 is concerned. Someone is classified as overtly loyal if he was a member of one of the parties or had an official function in one of the most important mass organizations of the GDR. Because we did not ask the respondents about their engagement in all mass organizations, and because we only include those engagements still held at age 30, there might be a slight underestimation of the number of overtly loyal men. The consequence can be an underestimation of the respective parameter in the logit model. One also would expect a considerable amount of underreporting of this kind of information. However, as can be seen from Table 4, there is no reason to assume that this is a severe problem in our survey.
Table 5: Logit regression of upward mobility in employment status between first job and at age 30. East-German men.  
**Dependent variable = Upward mobility between first job and job at age 30. (N = 244/1025).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cohort</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cohort 1929–31</td>
<td>0,8</td>
<td>0,8</td>
<td>0,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cohort 1939–41</td>
<td>0,3*</td>
<td>0,2*</td>
<td>0,2*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cohort 1951–53</td>
<td>0,2*</td>
<td>0,1*</td>
<td>0,1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social origin</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(group 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group 2</td>
<td>1,0</td>
<td>1,0</td>
<td>1,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group 3</td>
<td>0,6</td>
<td>0,6</td>
<td>0,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group 4</td>
<td>0,4*</td>
<td>0,4*</td>
<td>0,4*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group 5</td>
<td>0,7</td>
<td>0,7</td>
<td>0,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First employment status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(group 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group 2</td>
<td>0,9</td>
<td>0,9</td>
<td>1,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group 3</td>
<td>9,7*</td>
<td>9,7*</td>
<td>11,1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group 5</td>
<td>0,2*</td>
<td>0,2*</td>
<td>0,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty before shift to job held at age 30</td>
<td>4,2*</td>
<td>3,5*</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(no overt loyalty)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional effect of loyalty in the two younger cohorts</strong></td>
<td>1,7</td>
<td>1,7</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty of skilled workers</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5,0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional effect of loyalty in employment status groups other than skilled workers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– in the two older cohorts</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0,4*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– in the two younger cohorts</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3,8*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>0,4*</td>
<td>0,4*</td>
<td>0,4*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improvement of fit</strong></td>
<td>288,9</td>
<td>290,4</td>
<td>294,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of freedom</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Reference category)  
* Significance level 0,05.  
** Equal or close to "1" indicates that there is "no difference" to the respective reference category. Less or greater than "1" indicates the proportional decrease or increase, respectively, in the relative chance of experiencing an upward move.  

age 30, i.e., at a younger age than the older cohorts (Solga 1994).18

In Table 5 we present selected effects of the models for upward mobility in occupational position between the first job and the job held at age 30 – of course, only including men not in the highest status group when starting their work life.

No cohort interactions are considered in Model 1. As we expect, cohort membership has a significant impact on the chance of upward mobility. The chances of intragenerational upward mobility decreased over the cohorts – after controlling for social background, status of first job and loyalty. The contrast between the two older and the two younger cohorts is especially remarkable. The odds that men in the 1951–53 and 1959–61 cohorts would realize an upward move between their first job and the job held at age 30 were only 28% and 16%, respectively, of the odds in the oldest cohort.

Social background certainly played an important role for the occupational position achieved in the first job (Solga 1994). But it obviously also did seem to have some impact on the chance of upward mobility in the later occupational career. In particular, respondents coming from low status families and, even though the parameter is not significant, from a working class background, have lower chances to improve their own occupational position. It is assumed that this might partly be due to the fact that a shift in the procedure of labor force allocation from criteria of social origin to the principles of performance and political loyalty took place over time (Meier 1981).

As we see in Table 5 (Model 1), the position of the first job had a large impact on the chance of realizing an upward move. This finding holds for all cohorts. Compared to skilled workers, unskilled

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18 The reader might miss variables like the level of occupational training or changes in the level of occupational training between entry into the labor force and age 30. But the association between qualification, and occupational position was very strong, and it strengthened over the cohorts. There is only one exception: the association between upward moves in occupational position and upward moves in qualification for the men in the youngest cohort. Here, the men of the youngest cohort had less opportunities to translate upward moves in qualification into upward moves in occupational position. Nevertheless, we were forced to decide which of these variables should be included in the model: employment status or qualification. Since we are interested in career mobility we have chosen employment status of the first job.
workers had a much higher chance to make an upward move. This is due to the fact that the barrier between the skilled and unskilled levels was weaker than the barriers between the other occupational positions. The finding that farmers and self-employed (others) were less able to realize upward moves is not surprising. These men either moved into skilled jobs or had low motivation to give up their enterprise. "It must be kept in mind that the presence of physical capital (shops, farms and tools) ... renders it more difficult for [them] to abandon their position ... in order to move to a new job" (Szelenyi 1988: 124).

In accordance with our third hypothesis we find that system loyalty played an important role for the chance of upward mobility. Men who were overtly loyal to the system had a more than four times greater chance to realize an upward move by age 30 than men with no overt system loyalty.

We tested whether any interaction between the attributes included and cohort membership might have importance. For this we distinguished only between the two older and the two younger cohorts. However, we found no significant improvement of fit. Including all interactions brought about an improvement of fit of 3.8 with 8 additional degrees of freedom.

But the distinction between "loyal" and "non-loyal" men regarding upward mobility increased in the two younger cohorts considerably. Although non-significant, there is an interaction effect showing that the impact of system loyalty differed between the two older and the two younger cohorts (Model 2 in Table 5). The respective odds ratio is 1.7. An analysis of the extent to which this parameter might depend on single cases shows a fairly high stability.

This prompted us to examine further the relevance of system loyalty in the different cohorts and with respect to different employment status at the start of the job career (Model 3 in Table 5). Only for men starting as skilled workers we find no significant cohort interaction effect with overt loyalty. For them, system loyalty played a great role in the chance to move up in all cohorts, but its relevance did not increase. With the exception of skilled workers, our third hypothesis is supported for all other employment status groups: the effect of loyalty increased for the younger cohorts.\(^{19}\) As a consequence, for the older cohorts system loyalty was more important for skilled workers than for men from the other employment status groups. On the contrary, for the two younger cohorts the effect of system loyalty on the chance of an upward move increased significantly in the other employment status groups, whereas for the skilled workers it was stable.

The different finding for skilled and unskilled workers is particularly surprising. Many of the skilled workers in later cohorts not only might not have had any chance to move up in the status hierarchy, but they also did not want to (Adler 1992; Wesolowski/Mach 1985). For unskilled workers of the two younger cohorts the only chance at all to realize an upward move was to be overtly loyal to the system. Unskilled workers experienced higher rates of upward mobility than skilled workers, but here the differentiation between loyal and non-loyal men was also greater in the younger cohorts.

This finding probably reflects the necessity of specific strategies for unskilled workers under the conditions of the East German economy in the 1980s. Because of the low productivity of the economy, a disproportion between the economic demand for people doing unskilled work and the shrinking pool of people willing to do these jobs can be assumed (Blewé 1985). We mentioned already that the group of unskilled workers in the latter decade of the GDR was a rather selective group, including mainly those who failed to achieve the 10th grade of the polytechnical secondary school (POS), the obligatory schooling level. Therefore, the prospects to leave this occupational level were rather bad and expressing system loyalty could have been one of the rare means to improve one's opportunities. In this situation unskilled workers who were overtly system loyal had a better chance to demand jobs at a skilled level, or to get promoted.

6. Conclusions

What are the main conclusions we can draw from this analysis of patterns of occupational mobility of men in the former GDR?

\(^{19}\) The reported pattern of effects is the same for all these employment status groups (semiprofessionals, unskilled workers, farmers/self-employed). Therefore we do not differentiate by individual group in Table 5, Model 3. Separate estimates show that only the contrast of the interaction effect of loyalty and cohort between the unskilled and skilled workers is significant at the 5% level. However, that is probably caused by the small number of cases in the other groups.
**First**, we find empirical evidence for the first hypothesis that the overall amount of intragenerational mobility of men in the former GDR, whether it is vertical or horizontal mobility, declined cohort by cohort. In particular, the opportunities for upward shifts deteriorated in the younger cohorts while the significance of the level of the first job increased. The 1929–31 cohort, whose members experienced severe hardships and disadvantages with respect to their qualifications and started work life after the Second World War, were able to benefit from the specific historical conditions of the economic and political development in the former GDR during the 1950s and 1960s. While the proportion of men who entered into the labor force at a higher level of qualification increased in the following cohorts, the opportunities for later improvements of employment status deteriorated. For the younger cohorts again opportunities in the access to higher level education were substantially cut by the government. Consequently, the proportion of men in positions of high status at age 30 did not increase over cohorts, it was even smaller in the youngest cohort (1959–61) than in the other cohorts. As a consequence, the competition for the decreasing vacancies in this labor market segment increased. But, it is also important to remember that especially skilled workers were at least partially unwilling to make upward shifts in their career.

**Second**, overt system loyalty, i.e., party membership or having an official function in a pro-party organization, improved the chances of an upward shift in all cohorts. The relevance of system loyalty was larger in the younger cohorts, at least in some of the employment status groups. Taking into account which status groups gained most from loyalty in the younger cohorts, the hypothesis of a stronger competition could, however, not be supported convincingly. Instead, we find loyalty to have been an important tool of unskilled workers to leave their disadvantaged job situation.

**Third**, lateral mobility was the most important process of intragenerational mobility in the job careers of all cohorts in the former GDR. But whereas in the older cohorts it was connected with mobility between occupations at the same hierarchical level of employment status, in the younger cohorts such moves were only "simple" job shifts within the same occupation and employment category.

For the older cohorts, lateral moves connected with shifts in occupations were necessary steps to find a position in the developing structure of industry during the first two decades of the GDR. Many new occupations emerged and other occupations were no longer needed and disappeared. In contrast, the younger cohorts received wide-ranging occupational training after the end of the 1960s. Based on the political concept of the "scientific technological revolution," it was anticipated by the government authorities that the division of labor in industry would increase and that changes within occupations would become necessary. Consequently, the conclusion was drawn that the occupational training system needed to be modified. The idea was to give workers broad knowledge within an occupational field. An attempt to reach this goal was made with the creation of "basic occupations" (Grundberufe).

The result was a reduction in the number of different occupational trainings from 972 in 1957 to only 309 in 1984, among them now 98 "basic occupations" (Gewande 1990: 45). The expectation was that greater long-term flexibility in the qualification structure of the labor force would be thereby guaranteed (Schmidt 1984).

Hence, adjustments to the changing demands of industry became easier for the younger cohorts. This also means that they were forced to undertake job shifts which by then were not necessarily connected with changes in their occupations. Up to now we have not been able to find empirically convincing evidence of an increasing amount of lateral occupational mobility which might be caused when individuals tried to obtain the occupation or working conditions that they did not get through the state-controlled system of allocation.

The story of occupational mobility for our cohorts is therefore one of an ongoing process of decreasing career opportunities - both in the sense of mobility between employment status groups and in the sense of mobility between occupations.

**Fourth**, the change in the patterns of occupational mobility in the GDR cannot be understood and explained without a historical analysis of the specific societal conditions of career opportunities. General macrosociological theories cannot fulfil this task. However, this analysis confirms the main patterns of occupational mobility found in other state-socialist countries. Our findings strengthen the hypothesis that changes in policy, and its economic and institutional consequences, play a major role in shaping the opportunity structure in state socialist societies.
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Berlin und Bonn: Sonderveröffentlichung des Bundesinstituts für Berufsbildung.


