Abstract:

This study is the first to verify with longitudinal data on individual work histories some of the statements concerning changes in the Polish labor market during and after the postcommunist transition. Specifically, it describes the dynamics of interrupting employment and resuming paid work after an interruption in Poland in the period 1988–2008. I focus on three main issues: the sharp drop of employment stability following 1989, gender differences, and differences between age and educational groups in employment stability and in returning to the labor market after job interruption. I use the unique data on individual employment histories collected in the Polish POLPAN panel study over twenty years, and the statistical method of survival analysis. My results show that the postcommunist transformation brought unprecedented instability to employment: the risk of interrupting paid work grew about tenfold after the systemic change. Yet the chances of returning to employment after an interruption remained stable throughout the years. Regarding possible gender differences, I find that women in Poland do not suffer from a higher risk of interrupting work than men, however – once they do interrupt their work – it is more difficult for them to resume employment.