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► To cite this version:

G rard Lassibille. Book review : "Job access, workplace mobility, and occupational achievement" de Marteen van Ham. 2005, pp.130-131. halshs-01288160

HAL Id: halshs-01288160

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01288160>

Submitted on 8 Jun 2021

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Book review :

‘Job access, workplace mobility, and occupational achievement’ de Marteen van Ham

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Publié dans Economics of Education Review, 24, 2005, pp.130-131

Ham Marteen van, Delft Eburon, Job access, workplace mobility, and occupational achievement, 2002, pp. 165. price 29€ (paper).

This book is a reprint of various research papers by the author on job access, mobility, and occupational achievement in the Netherlands. The book deals mainly with the spatial mismatch between where workers live and where jobs are located. Moreover, the former tries to answer three research questions, namely (a) to what extent spatial differences in job access explain under-employment, (b) under what spatial circumstances do workers use workplace mobility as an instrument in career advancement, and (c) to what extent do work- place mobility and job access help workers advance their careers.

The book is composed of eight chapters. Chapter 1 provides the requisite rationale and summary. In Chapter 2 the author presents an instrument, which aims to measure the job access of residential locations given the level of commuting tolerance of the house-holds. The chapter provides also an empirical application in the form of a series of map images. The latter show for example that low-skilled workers are constrained in their job search due to their limited commuting tolerance and their inability to enter jobs requiring more skills. Chapter 3 sheds light on the regional component of the match between educational and job levels. Based on data from the 1995 and 1996 Netherlands Labor Force Surveys, the author measures the incidence of underemployment by region; by fitting several cumulative logit models he shows that, all things equal, the region of residence plays a part in explaining underemployment and in addition that good access to employment has a negative influence on underemployment. Chapter 4 reports the results of a study on the mechanisms underlying underemployment by looking at job search. The main idea in this chapter is that having poor chances in the labor market discourage people in their job search and this leads to underemployment. Two sources of discouragement are identified: a lack of individual qualifications and poor local labor market conditions, which is measured by the local level of underemployment. In this respect, logistic regressions by gender indicate that for both men and women the probability of being in the active labor force increases with the level of education and decreases with age. However a high local level of underemployment has a negative impact on the participation decision of women and leads to underemployment in the form of non-participation. Additional results show that for the unemployed, the local labor market conditions have no effect on the job search. However, personal characteristics linked with poor chances on the labor market result in less search activity by both men and women, which indicates discouragement. Among the employed, poor labor market conditions have a negative impact on job search for men, while for women personal characteristics are indeed much more important. Chapter 5 analyses workplace mobility (i.e. the acceptance of a job at a great distance from the place of residence), using a direct measure which includes both migration and lengthy commuting as a means for covering this distance. Based on retrospective information on job mobility extracted from the 1994–1997 Labor Force Surveys in the Netherlands, the author explains the probability of finding a job in the year before the interview and for those respondents who accept a job. Several logistic models explaining the probability of accepting a job at a greater distance are adjusted. The results are quite standard. They show for example that older people are less likely to accept a job at a great distance from home, and that the level of education has a positive impact (for both men and women) on the

probability of accepting a job at a great distance. They also show that people living in locations with poor access to suitable employment opportunities more often accept a job at a great distance, which indicates that mobility is partly due to the shortage of suitable local employment opportunities. Chapter 6 reports the results of a study that deals with the effects of mobility over a long distance on the probability of getting better jobs. Using longitudinal data which makes it possible to observe job change and career advancement, as well as to measure the distance over which jobs are accepted, the author shows that workers who accept jobs at greater distance obtain better jobs compared to those who accept jobs closer to their home place. However, living on a location with good job access seems to have no impact on career advancement when people change jobs. Chapter 7 focuses on job access at the beginning of the working life and occupational achievement in the life course. The underlying hypothesis is that living in a location favorable to the spatial distribution of employment opportunities is particularly important because it gives workers the opportunity of fast human capital accumulation while at the same time reducing spatial mobility costs. Based on individual retrospective data, several models explaining the socio-economic status of respondents at different points of their working life are estimated. Results show that access to suitable employment contributes reducing spatial mobility costs and helps in career advancement. Finally, Chapter 8 summarizes the main findings presented throughout the book.