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Att stanna kvar

Arbete, plats och mobilitet i småstaden

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The aim of this dissertation is to contribute to a deeper understanding of how young adults in an industrial small town in Sweden perceive and negotiate their work opportunities and their position in the local labour market. The study is theoretically informed by a relational understanding of place, mobility and immobility in addition to concepts such as capital, habitus and field. Empirically drawing on qualitative interviews with young adults, as well as local actors, the study makes visible the different negotiations and tensions dealing with a changing labour market and dominant notions and norms on mobility. The main findings suggest that those who have mainly social capital are oriented towards staying in the local area. In contrast, those who have educational capital have a more ambiguous spatial horizon and are not convinced that they will be able to fulfil their career aspirations locally. Dominant notions and norms on mobility are challenged by local values such as place-loyalty and work-ethics. The young adults find themselves in-between value systems where mobility, place and work have different meanings causing them to reflexively relate to sometimes contradictory norms and values. The study makes visible the local structural conditions in terms of access to labour market and housing that make it more beneficial and desirable for some young adults to stay locally, rather than to move to bigger cities. However, this is not an advantage that is equally accessible to all. The young adults' different spatial horizons, strategies and perceived opportunities have been conceptualized as having different place-specific habitus: identified as adaptable habitus, cleft habitus, marginalized habitus and disoriented habitus. Through the theoretical frames of the study, the analysis contributes to a complex understanding of labour market negotiations among young adults and how these negotiations are shaped by access to different resources and the local structural conditions in the industrial small town.

Keywords: mobility, place, work, labour market, working life, young adults, youth research.