

Return to work and vocational rehabilitation in Sweden

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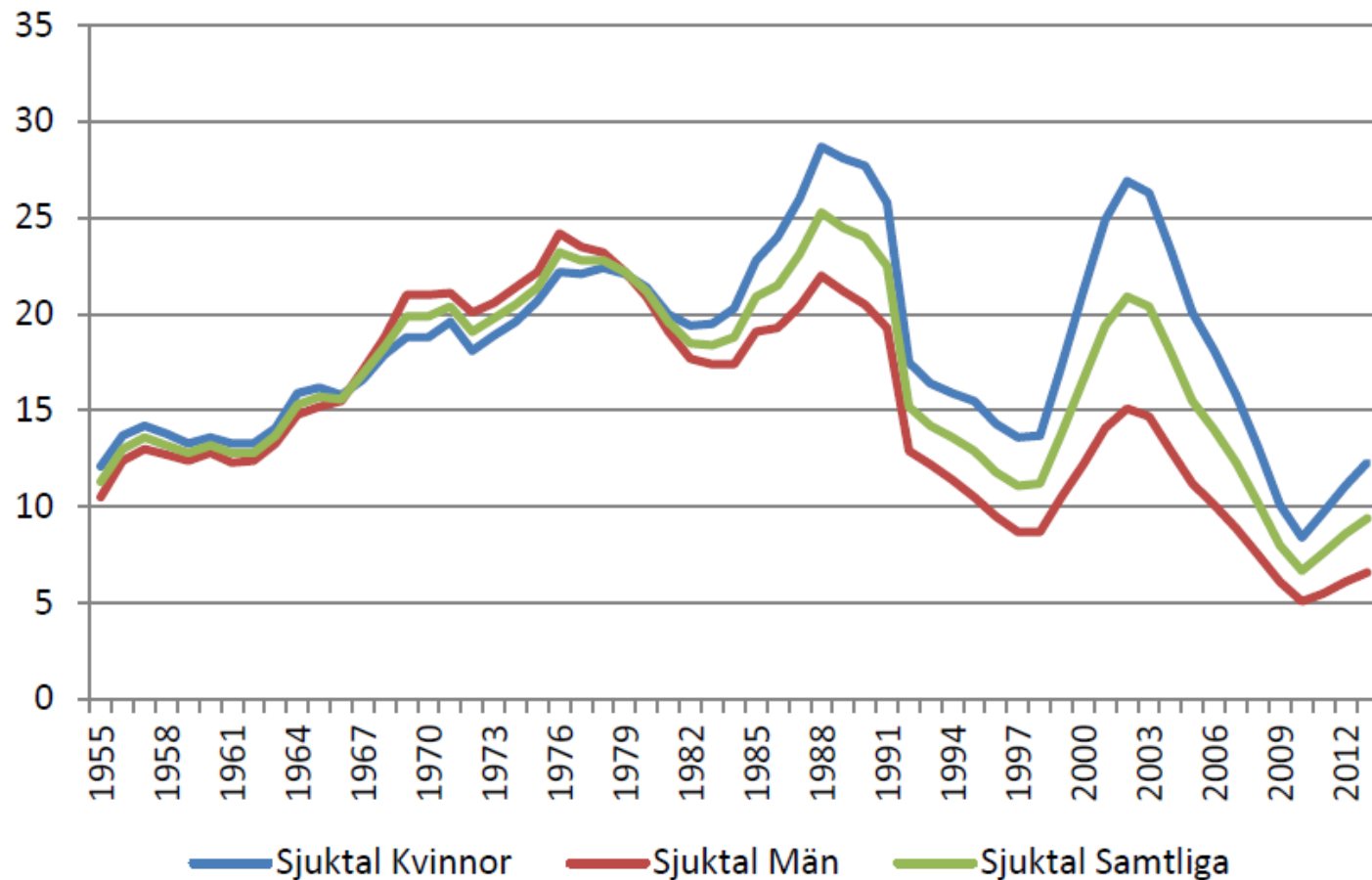
National Centre for Work & Rehabilitation

Linköping University

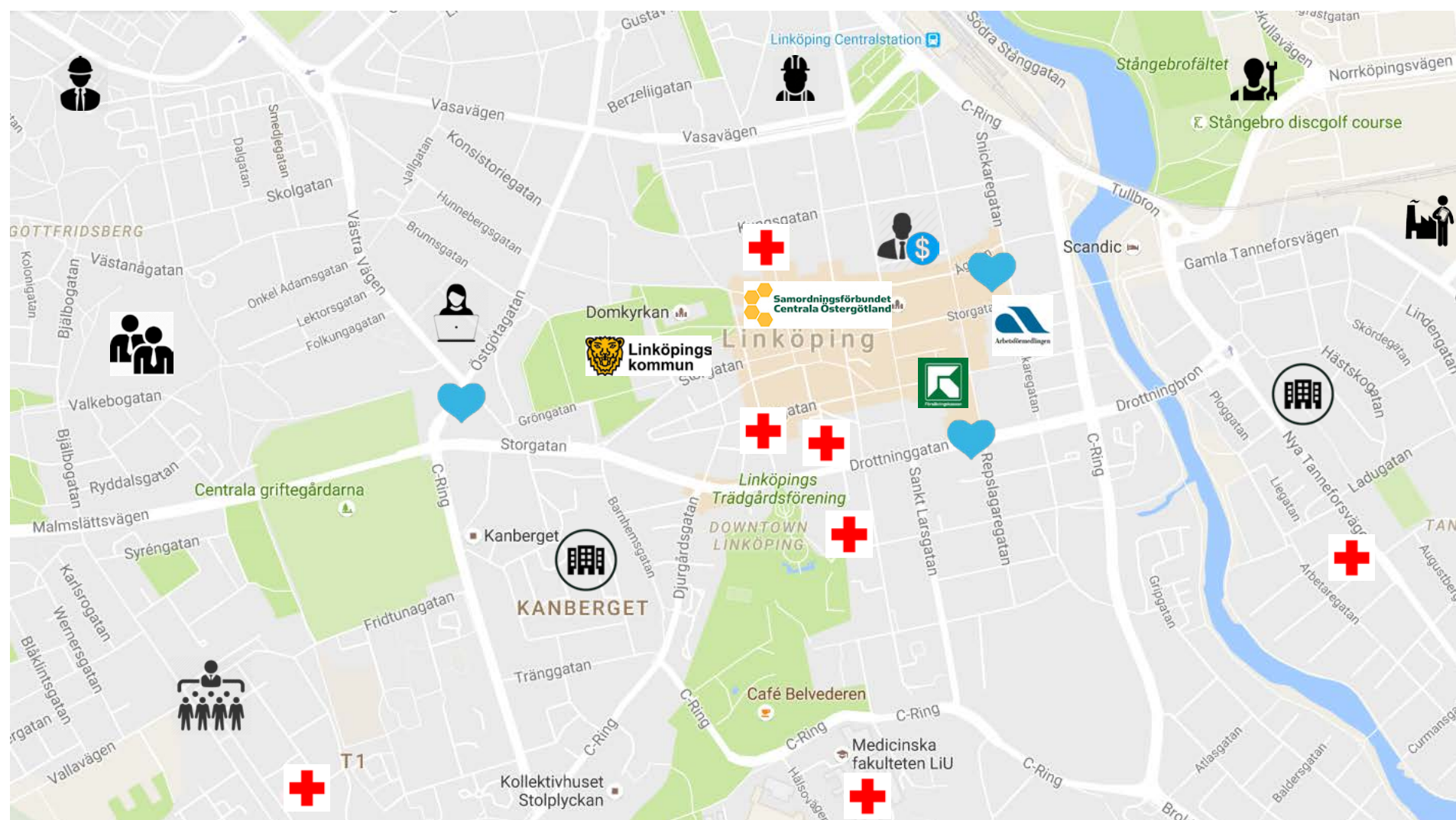
Eligibility criteria in the Swedish sickness insurance system

- Anyone who is working in Sweden is eligible for sickness benefits if work disabled >25%
- 14 days sick pay by employer, thereafter sickness benefits from the Social Insurance Agency
- Sickness benefits are offered without time limit if the client is eligible
- Work ability is assessed in wider terms over time (initially in relation to current job, after 3 months to other jobs with the employer, after 180 days in relation to any job on the labor market)
- Assessment are based on medical certificates by a GP

Days on sickness benefits per person



The Swedish landscape of sickness insurance, rehabilitation and return to work





Employers'
Islands

The Barrens of
Medical Care

The Insurance
Mountains

The forest of
Occupational Health

The Labour Depository

The Desert of
Unemployment

The Ivory Tower

Employers'
Oasis

Responsibilities in VR: Healthcare

- Primary healthcare and hospitals are responsible for medical rehabilitation; may be public or private, but publicly funded
- Specialized rehabilitation clinics exist but are rare and not mandatory actors
- Occupational healthcare is voluntary and paid by employers

Responsibilities in VR: Workplaces

- Employers are by law required to arrange and pay for work adaptations when possible in order to promote RTW
- Requirements regulated through the work environment and social insurance acts
- No specific requirements for employing disabled workers
- Little actual focus on employer responsibilities, but has recently gotten more government attention

Responsibilities in VR: Authorities

- The Social Insurance Agency is responsible for sickness benefits, and for coordinating other actors
- The Public Employment Service is responsible for vocational rehabilitation for the unemployed
 - May offer specialized rehabilitation services if the clients have specific diagnoses or functional disabilities
- Municipal social services may be involved as a last resort (financially) or offering social rehabilitation

Integration onto the labor market

- RTW processes primarily in the first 180 days of sick leave, involves employer, healthcare, social insurance
- Labor market re-integration programs and services for the employed after 180 days, for the unemployed from day 1
 - General support from the employment service
 - Specialized coordinated support for specific groups

Cooperative services

- Cooperative services are offered to clients with more complex needs through different programs
 - Strengthened cooperation, a structured cooperation for specific groups where social insurance and employment services make joint planning
 - Coordination Associations, performing (project-based) activities including social insurance, employment services, social services and healthcare

Interactions in and efficiency of the system

- The general system has little required cooperation
 - Especially poor communication between the public authorities/health care and the employers
- Few good studies of the efficiency of the system
 - Sick leave rates are increasing (from a low level)
 - Studies points to the system being unfavorable for those with less resources (e.g., Burström 2011)
- Different governmental financial incentives have been tried without much effect
 - E.g., the rehabilitation guarantee did not improved RTW, much due to focus on medical/individual aspects of sick leave

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