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Intentions to move, residential preferences and mobility behaviour: a longitudinal perspective

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4 Life events and the gap between intention to move and actual mobility

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ABSTRACT Life events are frequently mentioned as a reason why people do not behave according to their mobility intentions. However, there is little empirical evidence concerning the role of life events in the discrepancy between stated mobility intentions and actual mobility behaviour. The authors clarify the role of life events in this discrepancy using a longitudinal data set from the Netherlands, in which the Housing Demand Survey 2002 is enriched with register data from the Social Statistical Database. Union dissolution, union formation, and childbirth trigger moves among people who had initially intended to stay in the current home. These events also act as an extra stimulus to move for those who already intended to move for reasons other than household or job change. In contrast, the event of losing a job prevents people from realising their intention to move. The results also suggest that the majority of the moves after union dissolution are made by people who did not have an initial intention to move.

4.1 Introduction

The mobility behaviour of individuals and households has widespread consequences for societies (Cadwallader, 1992). It has a profound influence on the demographic and socioeconomic composition of neighbourhoods and the changes therein, including processes of segregation of low-income households and immigrants or minority ethnic groups. A major issue of debate is whether such processes result from voluntary action – whereby people move or stay when and where they want – or from differentiated constraints on moving – whereby some people move freely and others remain trapped in less desirable housing or neighbourhoods. It is therefore relevant to understand why some people move without having intended to do so and others remain despite having an initial intention to change residence. Insight into the factors that hamper the execution of mobility intentions might set a direction for urban housing policy that is, at least in the Netherlands, directed at achieving a more equal distribution of lower income households over space (Bolt et al., 2008).

Since Rossi's classical work *Why Families Move* (1955), several studies have been published concerning the discrepancy between stated intentions to move (or to stay) and subsequent mobility behaviour. They have all shown that a substantial proportion of those who initially intend to move do not change residence (Kan, 1999; Moore, 1986). Furthermore, several studies show that some people move, although they previously had not intended to do so (Lu, 1998; Rossi, 1955). In the literature, several explanations can be found for why people do not realise their stated intentions to move. People may not realise their mobility intention due to a lack of financial resources or housing opportunities (Mulder & Hooimeijer, 1999), or because their need for moving is not very urgent (Goetgeluk, 1997). A discrepancy between intention and actual behaviour may also arise because people change their initial intention to move (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Initial intentions to move (or to stay) are based on a person's current characteristics (for example, household situation and income), as well as on their expectations about these characteristics. If these expectations are not fulfilled due to unanticipated changes, people may adjust their initial mobility intentions (Anderson et al., 1986). Life events may lead to the postponement or cancellation of an initial intention to move (Speare, 1974), but they may also constitute an unanticipated trigger for moving and a subsequent move among people who had not intended to move before that event took place (Kan, 1999; Rossi, 1955).

Although several studies suggest that life events are a reason why people do not behave according to their initial intention to move or to stay, only a few researchers have investigated the impact of life events in the discrepancy

between stated intentions and actual moving behaviour. Rossi (1955) showed that becoming unemployed or a divorce, triggers people to move unexpectedly. However, this analysis was based on a very small sample and therefore lacks statistical power. Based on Canadian panel data, Moore (1986) found that life events have a disruptive effect on individual mobility plans, although “the results are not as clear as had been expected” (p. 512). Goetgeluk (1997), who used a small panel in the Netherlands, showed that the postponement of initial intentions to move is partly due to unanticipated life events, such as a new job. From data from the large-scale Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) for the United States, Kan (1999) revealed that some life events force a household to change its mobility expectations. Moreover, the impact of life events that are difficult to predict well beforehand (such as job change) on actual mobility behaviour differ between those expecting to move and those expecting to stay. Yet it remains unclear as to whether the life events were indeed unanticipated at the moment of interview.

The aim in this study is to gain more insight into the extent to which life events play a role in the discrepancy between initial intentions to move and actual mobility behaviour. Whereas mobility studies usually focus on the role of life events on moves without considering initial intentions to move or to stay (e.g., Fischer & Malmberg, 2001), we examine the impact of life events in the household and employment which occur after people have indicated whether they intend to move. If the stated intention to move is prompted by these life events (that is, if the events were anticipated), it is somewhat trivial to analyse the impact of the actual occurrence of the events on the extent to which intended movers do indeed move. Among those with an intention to move, we therefore focus on those whose intention has not been triggered by life events in the household or occupational career. In this manner, we attempt to analyse the impact of unanticipated triggers for moving.

We use a longitudinal data set for the Netherlands in which survey data from the 2002 Housing Demand Survey (HDS) about mobility intentions are enriched with information about life events and actual moves extracted from the Social Statistical Database (SSD) 1999–2005 of Statistics Netherlands. The method used was logistic regression analysis of person years.

4.2 Background and theory

4.2.1 *Intentions to move, and the link with life events and mobility behaviour*

An intention to move indicates that one is willing to change residence (De Jong, 1999). Other concepts with respect to (positive) attitudes towards mobility behaviour are unconstrained attitudes, such as wishes and desires (Lu, 1998), and constrained attitudes, such as expectations (Kan, 1999), where “constrained” refers to the idea that people take into account constraints on migration when they form an expectation to move (see also Crowder, 2001; Sheeran, 2002). A desire to move may not turn into an intention to move if people believe that the constraints cannot be overcome (Gardner et al., 1985). Conversely, intentions do not necessarily entail a desire: they can be motivated by obligation or necessity rather than desire (Davis, 1984; McHugh, 1984). Intentions are also different from expectations, as the concept of expectations also reflects whether individuals think that the behaviour is likely to happen in the future (Sheeran, 2002). We use the term “intention” in this paper, even though our measurement of intentions is rather simple (see Section 4.3).

Anticipated life events are an important reason why people may intend to move. Life events may trigger an intention to move by creating or eliminating a demand for an independent housing unit, or by altering specific housing needs (Clark & Onaka, 1983; Rossi, 1955). In either case, intentions to move or to stay are based on current characteristics and expectations about these characteristics. If these expectations turn out to be incorrect due to unanticipated life events, people may change their initial intention to move or to stay in three ways.

First, unanticipated life events may cause an unexpected need to move among those who had not intended to move before the event took place. Depending on the urgency of moving, life events may trigger a move within a very short period of time. In particular, life events which imply a move are expected to trigger moves among those without an initial intention to move [e.g., union formation and union dissolution, which require at least one move by one of the (ex-)partners].

Second, life events may lead to the postponement or cancellation of the initial intention to move. This holds in particular for events that are expected to have a negative impact on the financial resources that people can spend (or are willing to spend) on a new home.

Third, life events may increase the urgency level of the initial intention to move, resulting in an extra stimulus to move within a short period of time. In particular, unanticipated life events that imply a move are expected to increase the need to move among those who had already intended to move before the event occurred.

4.2.2 The role of specific life events in the intention–behaviour gap

The formation and break-up of unions

Breaking up a co-residential union has a large impact on a person's well-being. Consequently, when the decision to break up has been made, at least one of the partners will generally move out as soon as possible. Not surprisingly, the decision to break up and the actual move out of the former joint home often occur in the same month [own calculations from the survey "Divorce in the Netherlands 1998" (Kalmijn et al., 2000)]. In most cases, one partner stays behind in the former joint home (Gram-Hanssen & Bech-Danielsen, 2008) but, in the years following the union dissolution, the remaining partner is also likely to move (Sullivan, 1986). Union dissolution is therefore expected to have a strong positive impact on the probability of moving in the same year as well as in the following year for those without an intention to move, and for those who had already intended to move for reasons other than household change.

The unanticipated event of becoming a widow(er) is also likely to trigger moves among those who had intended to stay because of an excess of space in the current home and preferences to live closer to children or other members of the social network (Feijten, 2005; Hooimeijer et al., 1986). Moreover, becoming a widow(er) has negative financial consequences (Zick & Smith, 1986) which may result in the need to move to a more affordable home. It should be noted, however, that in the Netherlands, this last effect is often counterbalanced by widow(er) pensions, benefits from life insurance (particularly for homeowners), or by a rise in housing benefits (for renters) (see also Feijten, 2005). For the same reasons as for those initially not intending to move, becoming a widow(er) might act as an additional stimulus to move for those who had been intending to change residence. However, there are also reasons why becoming a widow(er) might result in a cancellation of the initial intention to move. First, the need or desire to move might fade due to the unanticipated event. Second, the event is associated with a decline in the financial resources needed for a new home. This decline may conflict with the fact that many intended moves are associated with "upward-moves" which may thus require more financial resources.

The majority of current singles expect to live with a partner in the future, although many do not know when and with whom (Mulder & Wagner, 1998). When people decide to form a co-residential union at least one of the partners has to move in order to establish the new household, although it is not uncommon that both partners move to a new joint home (Steenhof & Harmsen, 2002). Because those who want to form a union have the possibility of pooling their resources, it might be easier for them to find a home than it is for stable singles. Newly emerging plans to form a co-residential union are expected to

trigger moves among people who previously had intended to stay. We also expect union formation to be likely to cause an extra stimulus to move for those who were already intending to move for reasons other than household change.

Childbirth

Most people will have an idea of whether they desire (more) children in the (near) future; however, the timing of a pregnancy is often difficult to plan (Delbanco et al., 1997). Childbirth may change residential preferences: for example, by creating a desire for a larger home or a child-friendly neighbourhood. If the current housing situation does not match the altered preferences, a trigger to move may arise. Thus, childbirth is related to mobility with a simultaneous consideration of the adequacy of the current home (Pickles & Davies, 1991). We hypothesise that people living in a crowded home are particularly likely to move to a new home in response to or in anticipation of childbirth (compare Michielin & Mulder, 2008). This hypothesis pertains equally to those with and those without an initial intention to move.

Changes in the labour market situation

Although a change of employer – an event that is difficult to foresee one year in advance – does not necessarily imply a move, empirical research has shown a clear connection between job changes and mobility behaviour (Clark & Withers, 1999). An unanticipated job change may trigger a move if the change of employer increases the commuting distance between residence and work, resulting in a need to move closer to the new workplace (Van Wissen & Bonnerman, 1991). In the Netherlands this triggering mechanism might be less pronounced than in other countries as geographical distances are generally smaller and, as Van Ham (2005) shows, the probability of job-related migration decreases as the number of jobs within reach of the residence increases. However, job change is still expected to trigger moves among those without an initial intention to move as well as among those already intending to move for reasons other than job change.

For the same reasons as job change, finding employment is expected to trigger a move among those who are unemployed and have no initial intention to change residence. We also expect positive effects for those already intending to move (for nonoccupational reasons). The transition out of unemployment may increase the financial resources that can be spent on housing, and may therefore have a positive impact on the probability of moving. It might take some time, however, before the transition out of unemployment triggers a move because

such transitions are partly transitions to temporary jobs (Bover & Gómez, 2004; De Graaf-Zijl et al., 2005).

Becoming unemployed is often difficult to foresee and, although this event does not necessarily imply a move, previous research has documented a positive relationship between job loss and the incidence of moving (Fischer & Malmberg, 2001). Becoming unemployed is likely to have negative financial consequences (especially noticeable in the long term) and may therefore create difficulty in meeting monthly living expenses, resulting in a need to move among those who did not have an initial intention to move. The event of becoming unemployed may also hamper moves among those initially intending to move due to the negative impact of the event on the financial resources needed for housing.

4.2.3 The influence of other characteristics

Resources and restrictions also determine mobility behaviour. Income likely affects the extent to which people are able to move, since it partly determines the number of dwellings within financial reach (Mulder & Hooimeijer, 1999). A high income is likely to facilitate moves among those without and those with an initial mobility intention. A high level of education may also have a positive impact on the range of affordable homes, and thus the probability of moving, as it is an indicator of career prospects (Mulder & Hooimeijer, 1999). We have no reason to expect this effect to be different for those without than those with an intention to move. Homeownership is associated with strong financial ties to the current home (Helderma et al., 2004). It also takes more time and effort to sell a home than to cancel a tenancy. Homeowners are hypothesised to be less likely to move than renters, regardless of whether they have an initial intention to move.

Furthermore, housing market opportunities are expected to affect mobility behaviour. Both people with an initial intention to move and people without an initial intention to move are hypothesised to be less likely to move if they live (or search for a home) in the Randstad than in the national periphery, as the availability and affordability of owner-occupied dwellings is particularly problematic in the Randstad (Renes et al., 2006). Furthermore, the waiting lists for a social rental home are generally longer in the Randstad – especially in large cities such as Amsterdam and Utrecht (REA, 2006). A number of socio-demographic characteristics – age, gender, and migrant status – are known to play a role in the extent to which people move, and are therefore accounted for.

4.3 Data and methods

4.3.1 Data

For this study we use a data set in which the Housing Demand Survey (HDS) 2002 is enriched with register data of the longitudinal Satellite Spatial and Social Mobility of the Social Statistical Database (SSD) 1999–2005 of Statistics Netherlands (Bakker, 2002). The HDS is a large cross-sectional survey in the Netherlands of the population aged 18 years and over and not living in institutions. The survey provides detailed information about individual and households characteristics, mobility intentions, and the current housing situation. The interviews for the HDS 2002 were conducted between January 2002 and March 2003.

The HDS 2002 data were enriched with SSD data using a unique personal identification number. The SSD contains register data of all persons who have lived in the Netherlands at any time since 1995, and was used to monitor life events and moves of HDS respondents up to two years after the interview. The SSD data are available by month and sometimes by quarter (information related to the partnership status). Therefore, it is only possible to determine whether events occurred approximately within the first or second year after the time of the interview. For example, to derive partnership transitions in the first observation year for those interviewed at the beginning of February 2002, we analysed whether a transition took place in the period between January 2002 and January 2003.

Within the SSD we used data derived from registers on income tax and social security, and from the population register (Dutch acronym GBA). The population register contains some measurement error: people do not always (immediately) reregister after they have moved to another address. The magnitude of this error is unknown, but it is probably largest for young people (Harmsen & Israëls, 2003). Furthermore, there is some uncertainty about the partnership status of persons who share an address with another person without having a family relation with this other person (they are unmarried, they do not have a registered partnership, nor do they share the parenthood of a child). Because it is not registered in the GBA whether people live together as a couple or merely share a home, Statistics Netherlands assigns the partnership status by several allocation rules and stochastic imputation (Harmsen & Israëls, 2003). Although this implies that the partnership status according to the SSD may not correspond to the respondent's real partnership status, a comparison between SSD and HDS 2002 data showed that 95 per cent of those who are classified as a "partner in a cohabiting couple" in the SSD do indeed consider themselves as cohabiting (HDS data).

We selected respondents who lived in an independent dwelling. We excluded respondents expecting an involuntary move (for example, because of housing demolition), those who had already found a new home at the time of the interview, and those who died in the two years following the HDS interview. Furthermore, we excluded respondents with missing information concerning the registered address at any observation moment. Finally, we excluded those wishing to move abroad and those who actually emigrated because the SSD contains no information about people after they have left the Netherlands.

In the analyses we distinguish between respondents with an intention to move and those with no intention to move. The intentions were derived from the respondent's answer to the HDS question "Do you want to move within the next two years?" Respondents who gave a positive answer ("Possibly yes, maybe", "I would like to, but I cannot find anything", or "Most certainly yes") were coded as having an intention to move. This measurement is rather simple, but we believe it comes closer to the intention concept than to the desire or expectation concepts. Among those with an intention to move, we made an additional selection consisting of respondents whose intention to move did not stem from union dissolution, union formation, or job change (as unanticipated life events in particular are hypothesised to affect initial intentions to move). Because childbirth, as well as widowhood, are not included in the list of motives for moving in the HDS, the selection was further restricted to those not expecting a household change after the intended move has taken place. It is uncertain whether this restriction does indeed exclude all people who might intend to move because of childbirth, because not all these will expect a household change immediately after the move has taken place.

Obviously, there might be a time lag between the occurrence of the life events and a move. To be reasonably sure that the move is related to the life event, life events and mobility behaviour were studied within the same observation year. Depending on whether people move in anticipation of (or in response to) a life event, moves may also occur in the year before (or after) the year in which the event took place. In order to analyse such relations, the data were transformed into a person-year format (Yamaguchi, 1991). For those who moved in the second year and for censored respondents (those who did not move within two years after the moment of interview), the maximum of two person years were created. Our research sample includes 61,075 respondents (118,753 person years), among whom there were 48,597 respondents (95,990 person years) without an intention to move and 12,478 respondents (22,763 person years) with an intention to move. This last group contains 9,596

respondents (17,552 person years) who intended to move for reasons other than household or job change.

4.3.2 Variables

With the exception of the variables indicating moves and life events, all variables were derived from the HDS and refer to the situation at the moment of the HDS interview. Moves and life events were derived from the SSD and refer to transitions occurring in the first or second year after the time of the interview. The descriptive statistics of the dependent and independent variables are presented in Table 4.1.

The dependent variable is whether someone actually moved in a given year. A move was classified as a change in the registered address of the respondent; only first relocations were included.

The partnership-transition variable was coded as: stable single, stable couple, this year union formation, this year union dissolution, last year union dissolution; transition to widowhood, and unknown. To measure partnership transitions, we used information about the marital status and the registered address of the respondent. For those who were living with a partner at one of the observation moments, we also used information about the personal identification number of the partner(s) and about the registered address(es) of the partner(s). The measurement of partnership transitions is somewhat problematic, as the partnership status for those sharing an address with other (nonrelated) people was derived separately for each SSD year (see previous section). Consequently, there is a chance of an incorrect assignment of partnership status (and thus event). To reduce the effect of misclassifications, “union formation” was assigned only if the respondent and the new partner were registered at different addresses at the beginning of the observation year. Similarly, “union dissolution” was assigned only if the respondent and the former partner were registered at different addresses at the end of the year. The category “union dissolution” also includes those living with a different partner at the end of the observation year. Those who were widowed in the year of observation or the year before were assigned to the category “transition to widowhood”. We did not have information about widowhood among cohabiting couples or among those in registered partnerships. Consequently, cohabiting persons who became widowed (likely a small number of respondents) were mistakenly assigned to the category “union dissolution”. The immediate effect of a partnership transition was given priority: if a respondent experienced union dissolution in the first year and union formation in the second year, the category “this year union formation” was assigned to the second year (rather than “last year union dissolution”).

Table 4.1 Descriptive statistics of dependent and independent variables (based on person-years)

Categorical variables	All person-years		No intention to move		Intention to move		Intention to move (no event anticipated)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Moving behaviour (dependent variable)								
did not move	111419	93.8	92799	96.7	18620	81.8	14468	82.4
moved	7334	6.2	3191	3.3	4143	18.2	3084	17.6
Partnership status								
stable single	37030	31.2	28912	30.1	8118	35.7	5978	34.1
stable family or couple	77107	64.9	64094	66.8	13013	57.2	10560	60.2
this year cohabitation	1677	1.4	968	1.0	709	3.1	348	2.0
this year union dissolution	1492	1.3	968	1.0	524	2.3	370	2.1
last year union dissolution	326	0.3	218	0.2	108	0.5	80	0.5
transition to widowhood	574	0.5	483	0.5	91	0.4	82	0.5
unknown	547	0.5	347	0.4	200	0.9	134	0.8
Transitions in labour market status								
stable employed	51788	43.6	41644	43.4	10144	44.6	7565	43.1
job change	12100	10.2	9057	9.4	3043	13.4	2175	12.4
transition to unemployment	1305	1.1	871	0.9	434	1.9	318	1.8
transition to employment	751	0.6	514	0.5	237	1.0	163	0.9
pensioner	25699	21.6	22800	23.8	2899	12.7	2607	14.9
stable benefit receiver	10379	8.7	7884	8.2	2495	11.0	2095	11.9
stable inactive	7709	6.5	6554	6.8	1155	5.1	919	5.2
other	9022	7.6	6666	6.9	2356	10.4	1710	9.7
Childbirth								
no birth	111338	93.8	90498	94.3	20840	91.6	16442	93.7
birth	7415	6.2	5492	5.7	1923	8.4	1110	6.3
Crowding								
crowded	17197	14.5	12609	13.1	4588	20.2	3717	21.2
neutral	34808	29.3	28481	29.7	6327	27.8	4734	27.0
spacious	66748	56.2	54900	57.2	11848	52.0	9101	51.9
Migrant status								
native Dutch	101094	85.1	83208	86.7	17886	78.6	13695	78.0
Western immigrant	9290	7.8	7290	7.6	2000	8.8	1541	8.8
non-Western immigrant	8369	7.0	5492	5.7	2877	12.6	2316	13.2
Gender								
male	54131	45.6	43470	45.3	10661	46.8	8097	46.1
female	64622	54.4	52520	54.7	12102	53.2	9455	53.9
Current tenure								
homeowner	68248	57.5	59050	61.5	9198	40.4	6889	39.2
renter	50505	42.5	36940	38.5	13565	59.6	10663	60.8

Household income								
lowest quartile	29637	25.0	23336	24.3	6301	27.7	4781	27.2
middle-low quartile	29694	25.0	23469	24.4	6225	27.3	4733	27.0
middle-high quartile	29709	25.0	24563	25.6	5146	22.6	4077	23.2
highest quartile	29713	25.0	24622	25.7	5091	22.4	3961	22.6
Educational level								
up to lower secondary	52693	44.4	44002	45.8	8691	38.2	7159	40.8
higher secondary or medium vocational	34924	29.4	27759	28.9	7165	31.5	5378	30.6
higher vocational	22185	18.7	17519	18.3	4666	20.5	3424	19.5
university	8297	7.0	6243	6.5	2054	9.0	1432	8.2
other	654	0.6	467	0.5	187	0.8	159	0.9
Location								
Randstad	49450	41.6	38754	40.4	10696	47.0	8347	47.6
intermediate zone	37414	31.5	30777	32.1	6637	29.2	5080	28.9
national periphery	31889	26.9	26459	27.6	5430	23.9	4125	23.5
Continuous variables	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Age	48.1	16.1	49.6	15.9	41.6	15.3	43.0	15.6

For childbirth we used information about the birth of the first, second, and third child of the respondent. We constructed a dichotomous variable indicating whether or not the respondent experienced childbirth in the two years following the interview.

Transitions in labour market status were measured using information about the main source of personal income and information about the identification number of the company. Eight categories were distinguished: stable employed, change of employer, transition to unemployment, transition to employment, stable benefit received, pensioner, inactive person, and other. People who were employed both at the beginning and end of the observation year (in these cases, the largest proportion of personal income originates from work as an employee or as a self-employed person) and who did not change employers, were classified as “stable employed”. Those who changed employers in the observation year or the preceding year (defined as a change in the identification number of the place of employment) were classified as “change of employer”. This last category also includes short-lasting transitions to unemployment: those who lost their job but found a new job within the same observation year. “Transition to unemployment” represents a transition from being employed to unemployment (in which the largest proportion of personal income originates from unemployment benefits or social security payments) in the observation year or last year, and vice versa for “transition to employment”. The largest proportion of personal income of “stable benefit receivers” originates from benefits related to unemployment, disability, or social security. The category

“other” consists, among others, of people receiving student grants, and people who became inactive without receiving a benefit, such as women who quitted their jobs after the birth of a child. Changes during the observation year were given priority.

Household income was measured in quartiles, based on the household income of all respondents in our selection. In accordance with the standard definition of Statistics Netherlands, migrant status was based on the country of birth of the individual's parents. Those with both parents born in the Netherlands are considered to be native Dutch. Those who have at least one parent born abroad are considered to be of immigrant origin. Note that this implies that some who immigrated are thus not considered to be of immigrant origin, whereas “immigrants” also include second-generation immigrants. Countries of origin situated in Europe (excluding Turkey), North America, Oceania, Japan, or Indonesia lead to a “Western immigrant” status, whereas countries of origin situated in Africa, South America or Latin America, or in Asia lead to a “non-Western immigrant” status (Aalders, 2001). The geographic location was categorised into the Randstad (the most densely populated region in the Netherlands), the surrounding intermediate zone, and the periphery of the Netherlands [Figure 4.1; for more information about the classification, see De Groot et al. (2011)]. For those with an intention to move, the geographic location represents the search location. Those without an initial intention to move were assigned to the region in which their current place of residence was located. Because most people move only short distances (Clark & Dieleman, 1996), this is also the most likely search location if they do decide to change residence.

4.3.3 Method

We start with a descriptive analysis in which the connection between life events and mobility behaviour was investigated for people without and for people with an initial intention to move. For this second group, we also describe the extent to which union formation and union dissolution were (un)anticipated at the moment of interview.

Next, we perform multivariate analyses of mobility behaviour. We employ logistic regression models of person years; the models estimate the effect of life events and other independent variables on the annual probability of moving, given that one has not yet moved. We estimate separate logistic regression models for all respondents, for those without intentions to move, and for those with intentions to move. Among this third group, an additional logistic regression model is estimated in which people who intended to move for union formation, union dissolution, or job change are excluded. We test whether the

logistic regression coefficients in the models for those without and those with an intention to move are significantly different by running a Chow test [also known as a “seemingly unrelated estimation” (Chow, 1960; Weesie, 1999)]. In the discussion of the results, we focus mainly on the differences between people without an initial intention to move and those whose initial intention to move did not stem from a household or job change.

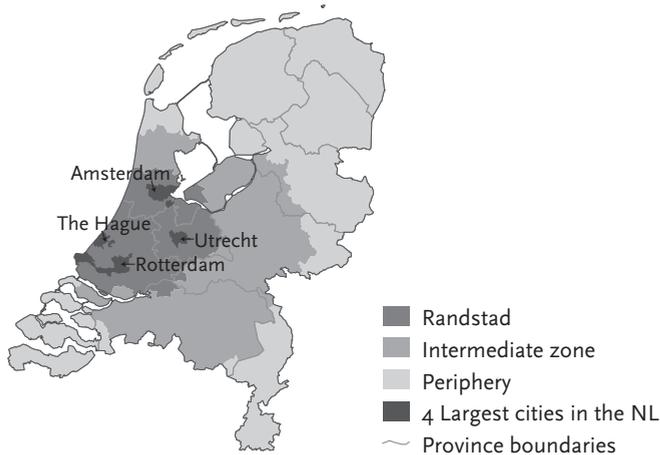


Figure 4.1 Macro-zoning of regions in the Netherlands into Randstad, intermediate zone, and national periphery, 2002

4.4 Results

4.4.1 Descriptive analysis

Of all people with a stated intention to move in 2002, about 33 per cent in fact moved to a different address within two years. As expected, they relocated more often than people without a stated intention to move (6 per cent).

Table 4.2 gives an indication of the extent to which life events in the household and occupational career were accompanied by a move in the same year, or (depending on the hypothesised effect) in the year before or the year after. In particular, the formation and dissolution of unions are strongly connected with mobility behaviour. Among those initially intending to move who entered a co-residential union, about 65 per cent moved in the same year. An additional analysis (not presented) shows that the event of union formation was often unanticipated: of those who started living together, only 35 per cent reported intending to move for union formation. For people not intending to move at the time of the survey, the incidence of moves among those who experi-

Table 4.2 Frequencies of life events and the accompanying percentage of moves among people with/without an initial intention to move, and the share of moves made by people without an initial intention to move by life event, 2002–2005

	No intention to move		Intention to move		Share of unforeseen moves (%)
	Occurrence of event (N)	% moved	Occurrence of event (N)	% moved	
Changes in the household career					
union formation	968	41	709	65	47
union dissolution	709	63	393	74	61
transition to widowhood	323	4	62	21	52
childbirth	2744	8	944	35	38
Changes in the occupational career					
job change	5539	9	1929	36	42
transition to unemployment	569	10	280	28	43
transition to employment	348	8	164	22	44
N (all respondents)	48597	6	12478	33	43

enced union formation is rather low; a considerable portion of this group might have intended to form a union with the expectation that their partner would move in with them.

Of those with an initial intention to move who experienced union dissolution, about 74 per cent moved in the same year or in the following year. An additional analysis indicates that the break up of the union was often unanticipated at the moment of interview. Of those intending to move and experiencing union dissolution, less than 5 per cent reported union dissolution as the main reason for their intention to move. Among people without an intention to move, union dissolution was accompanied by a move in 63 per cent of cases. An additional analysis shows that union dissolution is an important reason why people move despite an initial intention to stay in the current home: about 14 per cent of those moving without an initial intention to do so experienced a union dissolution. Interestingly, more than 60 per cent of the moves for union dissolution are made by people without an initial intention to move (Table 4.2). Conversely, moves made in connection with other life events can mainly be attributed to people with an initial intention to move.

Life events in the household and labour market careers which do not imply a move were coupled with moves to a lesser extent. Such life events were accompanied by a move to a lesser extent among those initially intending to stay in the current home than among those who intended to change residence.

4.4.2 Multivariate results

The impact of life events on the probability of moving

The logistic regression models estimating the probability of moving for people with and without an initial intention to move are presented in Table 4.3. Strikingly, the explanatory model provides a better explanation of the mobility behaviour of those who had initially intended to stay in the current home than it does for those initially intending to move: the overall explanatory power of the model (indicated by the Nagelkerke R^2) is considerably lower in the model for this second group.

The logistic regression model for those without an initial intention to move reveals that, in particular, changes in partnership status trigger individuals to move. Union formation increases the probability of moving both for people without an initial intention to move and for people who intended to move for other reasons than household change; the Chow test reveals, however, that the effect is significantly stronger for those without an initial intention to move.

People who experienced union dissolution are estimated to be 16 times (exp 2.790) more likely to move in the year of union dissolution than are stable singles. This outcome is not surprising, as moves are instrumental to these household events. The probability of moving is also significantly higher in the year after the union dissolution. Union dissolution also causes an extra stimulus to move among those who had already intended to move for reasons other than household change. However, the Chow test indicates that the event has a less strong immediate effect on the likelihood of moving for those who had initially intended to move than for those who had not.

Our hypothesis that becoming widowed is likely to trigger moves among those without an initial intention to move is not supported: the sign for becoming a widow(er) is negative and lacks significance. Becoming a widow(er) has a positive (but not significant) effect on the probability of moving for those initially intending to move for other reasons than household change, although a negative effect is found for all people with an intention to move. The impact of becoming widowed on subsequent mobility behaviour is perhaps limited because the income decline might be offset by, for instance, a widow(er) pension.

An interesting finding is that stable couples were less likely to move than are stable singles if they had intended to stay, whereas they were more likely to move if they initially intended to change residence. Although stable couples are less likely to move than are stable singles (see column 1 in Table 4.3), our results suggest that this does not hold for those with an initial intention to move.

Table 4.3 Logistic regression model of moving, with standard errors shown in parentheses

	All person-years	No intention to move	Intention to move	Intention to move (no event anticipated)
Transition in partnership status (ref: stable single)				
stable couple or family	-0.315*** (0.037)	-0.690*** (0.057)	0.115**,+ (0.051)	0.166***,+ (0.059)
this year union formation	2.571*** (0.058)	2.722*** (0.079)	2.343***,+ (0.087)	2.153***,+ (0.120)
this year union dissolution	2.382*** (0.062)	2.790*** (0.080)	1.835***,+ (0.098)	1.748***,+ (0.118)
last year union dissolution	0.655*** (0.160)	0.773*** (0.229)	0.567** (0.229)	0.199 (0.294)
this year or last year widowhood	0.042 (0.201)	-0.110 (0.276)	-0.017 (0.306)	0.101 (0.310)
unknown	0.703*** (0.128)	0.816*** (0.186)	0.558*** (0.176)	0.316 (0.233)
Transition in labour market status (ref: stable employed)				
job change	0.232*** (0.039)	0.326*** (0.060)	0.112**,+ (0.054)	0.087+ (0.063)
transition to unemployment	0.156 (0.104)	0.385** (0.158)	-0.167+ (0.138)	-0.144+ (0.160)
transition to employment	-0.249* (0.146)	-0.167 (0.221)	-0.340* (0.196)	-0.361 (0.242)
pensioner	-0.060 (0.076)	-0.203* (0.106)	-0.082 (0.118)	-0.051 (0.127)
stable benefit receiver	0.083 (0.053)	0.072 (0.081)	-0.035 (0.072)	-0.056 (0.081)
stable inactive	-0.031 (0.067)	0.153 (0.099)	-0.137+ (0.095)	-0.177*,+ (0.107)
other	0.148*** (0.046)	0.304*** (0.069)	-0.021+ (0.063)	-0.039+ (0.074)
Childbirth (ref: no birth)	0.801*** (0.100)	0.433** (0.206)	0.726*** (0.121)	0.731*** (0.142)
Crowding (ref: crowded)				
neutral	-0.132*** (0.042)	-0.070 (0.066)	-0.050 (0.056)	-0.042 (0.063)
spacious	-0.257*** (0.040)	-0.156** (0.064)	-0.204*** (0.055)	-0.165*** (0.062)
Interaction childbirth * crowding				
childbirth, neutral	-0.580*** (0.122)	-0.265 (0.235)	-0.498*** (0.153)	-0.469** (0.185)
childbirth, spacious	-0.804*** (0.121)	-0.351 (0.229)	-0.711*** (0.155)	-0.651*** (0.192)
Age	-0.146*** (0.005)	-0.153*** (0.007)	-0.111***,+ (0.008)	-0.112***,+ (0.009)
Age ²	0.001*** (0.000)	0.001*** (0.000)	0.001***,+ (0.000)	0.001***,+ (0.000)

Migrant status (ref: native Dutch)				
Western immigrant	-0.053 (0.049)	-0.070 (0.075)	-0.100 (0.066)	-0.091 (0.076)
non-Western immigrant	0.076 (0.047)	0.309*** (0.071)	-0.221***+ (0.062)	-0.240***+ (0.071)
Female (ref: male)	-0.054** (0.027)	-0.087** (0.040)	0.013 (0.037)	0.040+ (0.043)
Income (ref: lowest quartile)				
middle-low quartile	0.044 (0.039)	0.073 (0.058)	-0.042 (0.054)	-0.025 (0.063)
middle-high quartile	0.218*** (0.044)	0.357*** (0.067)	0.101*+ (0.061)	0.139***+ (0.070)
highest quartile	0.400*** (0.050)	0.578*** (0.074)	0.151***+ (0.069)	0.152*+ (0.079)
Educational level (ref: up to lower secondary)				
higher secondary or medium vocational	0.009 (0.033)	-0.079 (0.049)	0.020 (0.048)	0.034 (0.054)
higher vocational	0.143*** (0.039)	-0.094 (0.060)	0.121***+ (0.054)	0.129***+ (0.062)
university	0.179*** (0.054)	-0.143 (0.087)	0.125***+ (0.072)	0.188***+ (0.084)
unknown	0.073 (0.155)	0.086 (0.231)	0.036 (0.212)	-0.083 (0.243)
Homeowner (ref: renter)	-0.573*** (0.031)	-0.369*** (0.047)	-0.164***+ (0.042)	-0.184***+ (0.049)
Location (ref: national periphery)				
Randstad	-0.101*** (0.033)	-0.107** (0.048)	-0.159*** (0.046)	-0.175*** (0.053)
intermediate zone	-0.124*** (0.035)	-0.158*** (0.052)	-0.116** (0.049)	-0.115** (0.056)
Constant	1.220*** (0.120)	0.667*** (0.179)	0.908*** (0.179)	0.900*** (0.206)
Initial -2 Log Likelihood	27524	13999	10799	8159
Model -2 log Likelihood	23640	11712	9949	7650
Improvement (Chi^2)	3885***; $df = 33$	2287***; $df = 33$	851***; $df = 33$	509***; $df = 33$
Nagelkerke R^2	0.141	0.163	0.079	0.062
N (person-years)	118753	95990	22763	17552

* = $p < .10$, ** = $p < .05$, *** = $p < .01$; + = coefficient differs significantly ($p < .05$) between those with and those without an initial intention to move (result of Chow test)

In line with our hypothesis, the combined main effects and interaction effect show that childbirth act as a trigger for moving for households residing in a crowded home. This holds for those who had intended to stay as well as for those who had intended to move for reasons other than a household change. Among those living in a spacious home, those who had a child are about as likely to move as those who did not.

Job change has a positive impact on the probability of moving, particularly for those who had initially intended to stay in the current home. In line with Kan's (1999) findings, among those with no initial intention to move, job changers were significantly more likely to move than were the stable employed. In contrast with Goetgeluk (1997) and Kan (1999), we find a positive (but not significant) effect of job change on the probability of moving for those who had intended to move for other reasons than job change.

As expected, becoming unemployed prompted moves among those without an initial intention to move, while it had a negative (but nonsignificant) effect on the probability of moving for those who had already intended to move for reasons other than job changes. Becoming unemployed had a positive but nonsignificant effect on the probability of moving if we take all people into account (Table 4.3, column 1). Our results indicate, however, that the direction of this effect depends on whether people had an initial intention to move prior to the transition to unemployment: it is negative for those who were intending to move but positive for those who were not intending to move.

In contrast with our expectation, our multivariate results show negative, and often nonsignificant, effects of finding a job among the unemployed on the probability of moving (irrespective of the initial intention to move or to stay). This could be an indication that it may take some time before the transition out of unemployment triggers people to move, as some such transitions may be transitions to temporary jobs.

Furthermore, among those initially not intending to move, pensioners moved significantly less often than did stable employed people, while being a stable benefit receiver or a stable inactive person had a positive (but not significant) effect on the probability of moving. Among those initially intending to move, stable pensioners, benefit receivers, and inactive persons do not move significantly less often than did stable employed.

Influence of other characteristics

Financial resources play a role in actual mobility behaviour. Having a high income is particularly relevant for those with no initial intention to change residence, as it facilitates "unforeseen" moves. Surprisingly, only among those with an initial intention to move were the highly educated found to be significantly more likely to move than the less educated.

Our results reveal that the probability of moving is higher among renters than among homeowners and that, as hypothesised, the probability of moving is lower in the Randstad and the intermediate zone than in the national periphery.

In addition, compared with native Dutch, people with a non-Western background were less likely to move if they had an initial intention to move but, perversely, they are more likely to move if they initially had no intention to do so. Crowder (2001) found a similar result for blacks in the United States, and suggested that this might indicate that the mobility behaviour of nonwhites is less determined by their own intentions to move and is more subject to external forces.

4.5 Conclusion and discussion

In this paper we have addressed the impact of life events on the discrepancy between stated intentions to move or to stay in the current home and actual mobility behaviour. We have argued that unanticipated life events occurring after someone had reported whether he or she intended to move or not may change the initial mobility intention in three ways. As expected, union formation, union dissolution, childbirth, job change, and becoming unemployed tended to trigger moves among people who initially had no intention to change residence. An interesting finding is that the majority of the move following union dissolution can be attributed to people who initially had no intention to move. The formation and dissolution of co-residential unions, as well as childbirth, tend to trigger moves among those who already intended to move for reasons other than household or job change. This suggests that some life events increase the urgency level of previously reported intentions to move, resulting in an extra stimulus to move within a short period of time. Our hypothesis that some life events are likely to result in postponement or cancellation of the initial intention to move was not entirely confirmed. No significant effects were found of becoming unemployed or becoming widowed on the probability of moving among those initially intending to move, although the sign of the effect of becoming unemployed was in the expected direction.

It was found that the effect of becoming unemployed on the probability of moving is significantly different for people with and without an initial intention to move: whereas a negative effect was found for those already intending to move, a positive effect was found for those who had intended to stay in the current home. We also found evidence that the extent to which people behave according to their initial intention strongly depends on background characteristics. Stable couples act more in accordance with their stated intentions than do stable singles. A high income facilitates the realisation of intentions to move as well as “unforeseen” moves; so it seems that those with a higher income have more opportunities to move within a short period of time after the formation of an intention to move.

We see this as an indication that the extent to which those with a lower income realise their mobility intention is partly shaped by external factors. Lower income households often rely on the social rental sector, and are thus subjected to allocation rules and waiting lists for rental dwellings. The finding that the less affluent are less likely to realise their intention to move suggests that constraints on their moving behaviour contribute to the persistence of the spatial concentration of lower income households. Furthermore, even after income differences have been accounted for, non-Western immigrants were found to be less likely to realise their intention to move, whereas they were more likely to move than natives when they had no initial intention to change residence. This finding suggests that the mobility behaviour of non-Western immigrants is indeed more dependent on external forces than is that of natives (cf. Crowder, 2001).

Further research is needed in order to understand why non-Western immigrants act less in accordance to their initial mobility intentions than do the native Dutch. Further research is also needed to find out to what extent changes in housing market opportunities and economic circumstances hamper or stimulate the realisation of initial intentions to move, as not only (changes in) individual characteristics, but also changes at the macro level, may result in a discrepancy between stated mobility intentions and actual mobility behaviour.

There are a few limitations to our study that should be addressed. One drawback is that we are not completely certain whether life events were indeed unanticipated at the moment of interview. This especially holds for those without an initial intention to move, because the HDS contains no information about expected household changes for those who did not report an intention to move. Furthermore, we do not have information about the precise date of the events. Consequently, the results may be biased, as a connection between the event and the move might be absent if in fact people moved a few months before the event. Unfortunately, it was not possible to ameliorate this deficiency. Moreover, we did not have information about transitions in the occupational career of partners of the respondents. Unanticipated changes in the labour market career of the partner may, of course, also affect the initial mobility intention stated by the respondent; this is likely to hold particularly for those respondents whose partner is the main breadwinner in the household.

Despite the limitations, this paper contributes to our knowledge of how life events may hamper or stimulate people to change residence conditional on prior stated intentions to move or to stay. Life events do indeed play a role in the discrepancy between mobility intentions and actual mobility behaviour. Moreover, the impact of certain life events (as well as other characteristics) on

subsequent mobility behaviour is not necessarily the same for people who intended to move and for those who did not; they may differ between people who are in various stages of the mobility decision-making process. Our results confirm that it is worthwhile to take initial intentions to move or to stay into account to gain insight into the factors that influence actual mobility behaviour.

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