

# **Considering, planning and realizing migration: The influence of life-course events and perceived opportunities on leaving the city in early adulthood**

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## **1. Introduction**

In migration research the idea is now common that migration is a process rather than just an event. Any kind of voluntary migration, whether it means leaving a city, a region or a country, starts with considering moving or having a desire to move. A period follows in which the potential migrant searches for housing or possibly for a job, and in which individual or external circumstances may facilitate or constrain the realization of the move. After a given period of time we might or might not observe the act of moving.

Research that considers both migration intentions or expectations and subsequent actual migration show relatively great discrepancies between intentions or expectations to move and the realization of the move (Rossi 1955; Duncan and Newman 1976; Mc Hugh 1984; Landale and Guest 1985; Sly and Wrigley 1986; Fuller 1986; Gardner et al. 1986; Simmons 1986; De Jong et al. 1986; Kalter 1997; Lu 1998; Kan 1999; Fang 2006; De Groot et al. 2007). But the magnitude of the discrepancies found differs markedly between the studies. Part of this variation in findings might be due to differences in the definition and measurement of intentions, desires or expectations to move. Thus, there is room for improvement of the analytical framework of research into the process leading to migration.

In this paper, therefore, we apply an analytical framework in which the migration process is observed in a more precise way than in most previous work. We split the migration process into a phase of decision-making, in which we distinguish between considering moving and planning to move, and another phase of realizing the move (compare Kalter 1997). This allows us to investigate more closely than previous studies which determinants play a part in which phase of the migration process.

There is a considerable body of literature stating that migration is often linked to certain events in the life course, for example enrolling in higher education, starting in a new job or starting to live with a partner (e.g. Wagner 1989; Mulder 1993). Such life-course events can be seen as short periods of time in which important life goals people are striving for become salient. Whether people actually migrate in connection with a certain life-course event will

depend on whether the opportunities to achieve the life goal are perceived to be better elsewhere than at the current place of residence.

To analyze how life-course events and perceived opportunities are associated with migration it is helpful to concentrate on a particular phase in the life course. Many life-course events, and therefore also a major share of migration processes, are concentrated in the life-course phase of early adulthood. The aim of this paper is to show which part both life-course events and perceived opportunities play in the process of leaving the city for young adults in Germany.

The data were derived from a survey in two middle-sized cities in Germany (Magdeburg and Freiburg) and were gathered via a two-wave-design in 2006 and 2007. From this survey, we selected respondents aged 18 to 29 years without children. We refer to migration as moving beyond the city boundary; in most cases over a long distance.<sup>1</sup> Considering versus not considering and planning versus only considering leaving the city were analysed via generalized ordered logistic regression. Realizing the decision to migrate was analysed via binomial logistic regression of moving compared with staying. Using the same predictors in each model, it is shown in which phase in the migration process perceived opportunities and life-course events exert their influence.

## **2. Theory, previous research and hypotheses**

### **2.1 Migration decision-making**

A common starting point for the explanation of migration as the outcome of individual, rational decision-making is based on the pioneering work of Sjaastad (1962), who first thought of migration as an investment in the productivity of one's own human resources. Like other investments, migration has costs and also renders returns. The costs can be monetary or non-monetary, for example the cost of finding a new home, the opportunity costs of time spent searching for a new place of residence and organizing the move, or the psychological costs caused by the interruption of local ties with family or friends. The returns are achieved through enhancing of the productivity of one's own resources, or through experiencing some other benefit of the move.

It is obvious, however, that making a rational decision is only possible if the individual perceives that there are different possible ways to act. This cannot be taken for granted, because many people never think about migration (Speare 1971). So, considering migration

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<sup>1</sup> 48 percent of the respondents mentioned a possible destination of the move. Of these, 86 percent mentioned a place more than 50 kilometres away.

can be seen as the first step in a migration process. Furthermore, people's rationality is bound (Simon 1956) to their individual perception and interpretation of the situation and the chances to act (Esser 1999). Following this point of view, Wolpert (1965; 1966) proposed to see the decision to move as the outcome of mental stress due to the mismatch between peoples' goals and the opportunities they perceive at the place of residence compared with alternative places. Combining these approaches, De Jong and Fawcett (1981) view migration as a process starting with the intention to move, which is a result of the perception that realizing important goals might be better possible elsewhere than at the actual place of residence. Migration is then the result of (1) the strength of the intentions to move, (2) the indirect influences of background individual and contextual factors, and (3) the effects of facilitators and constraints that become salient during the migration process.

Migration research often assumes a straightforward relationship between the intentions to move and the actual behavior (Lu 1999). But the wish or intention to move, or the degree of dissatisfaction with the current housing situation, are in the end no good predictors of moving, because the discrepancy between moving intentions and even expectations on the one hand and moving behavior on the other hand is relatively great (Rossi 1955; Duncan and Newman 1976; Mc Hugh 1984; Landale and Guest 1985; Sly and Wrigley 1986; Fuller 1986; Gardner et al. 1986; Simmons 1986; De Jong et al. 1986; Kalter 1997; Lu 1998; Kan 1999; Fang 2006; De Groot et al. 2007). Following Kalter (1997)<sup>2</sup> and making use of work on decision-making processes by Ajzen (1985; 1991), we propose to see migration as a process starting with considering to move away, then going on to planning the move and finally to realizing it. Distinguishing between considering and planning is useful because research in psychology has shown that a decision is something quite different from a wish (Heckhausen 1989; Gollwitzer 1996; Heise 1998; Heckhausen 2002). People are likely to consider lots of aspects and drop thoughts again without necessarily developing the intention for a particular behavior if they are in a pre-decisional phase. But if people have decided to pursue a goal, they will stick to that goal closely and will not drop it again so easily. For the decision to pursue an important goal in the life course, the picture of "crossing the Rubicon" has been drawn, to illustrate that going back again will be expensive, for instance in form of a loss of invested time or money, and in form of a loss of self-respect or other psychological damage. So, for planning a move both the benefit of the move and the certainty of realizing it should be more important than for considering a move. We regard people as being in a pre-decisional phase if

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<sup>2</sup> In the original German publication the expressions used are "Wanderungsgedanke", "Wanderungsplan" and "tatsächliche Wanderung" (Kalter 1997: 67).

they consider the move, and as having decided to move if they have plans to do so. Therefore, considering leaving the city is expected to have a positive but only weak relationship with realizing the move, while planning should be a good predictor of realizing it.

The realization of the move does not follow mechanically from migration decision-making, however. Following De Jong and Fawcett (1981), socio-demographic variables, social ties and unexpected events can act as "constraints" or "facilitators" for putting migration plans into action. Migration then is supposed to be a "generative process" (Goldthorpe 2001) within which the intermediate steps – considering and planning – contribute to the causation of the outcome of realizing the move. Consequently, migration may be analyzed as a chain process in which some background or context variables explain intermediate variables, which themselves explain the primary responses (Cox and Wermuth 2001). However, one should bear in mind that feedback effects and shortcuts of this process are possible at each step.

## **2.2 A Life-course framework of migration**

*Explaining considering and planning migration.* When trying to explain considering and planning migration as a response to a discrepancy between one's goals and perceived opportunities at the place of residence, the life-course approach is useful. Because the life course is framed by institutions (Mayer and Schoepflin 1989) both the goals people strive for and the life-course events they experience are to some extent typical for certain phases. For example, while physical wellbeing and social approval are goals all people may strive for in the end (Lindenberg 1996), young people are more likely to emphasize their career, because it is often seen as a precondition for having a good income and a family (Liefbroer and Corijn 1999), whereas middle-aged people who already have a good job may emphasize good conditions for family life. It is therefore obvious that the kinds of perceived opportunities that matter to migration differ substantially over the life course. Opportunities for higher education, for instance, are highly relevant in the early adulthood, while having a garden and much living space is especially relevant for parents who have small children. As one of the first, Rossi (1955) showed that young people tend to prefer apartments in the city centre close to their work places, whereas they often move to the suburbs where housing is more spacious when the family grows. We expect that perceiving better opportunities elsewhere may trigger considering migration. Perceiving such opportunities may also be a precondition for making concrete plans for leaving the city, but it should not have an additional influence on proceeding from considering to planning migration. We consider perceived opportunities in

the following areas of life: career, standard of living, partnership and family, pursuing own interests or hobbies, and health. These life domains are all associated with life-course events typical for the transition to adulthood, apart from health, which we like to consider because of its great importance to well-being.

Corresponding with these life domains, the life-course events that have been found to influence moving in early adulthood are leaving the parental home, starting vocational training or university, beginning a (first) job, and union formation in the form of cohabitation or marriage (Wagner 1989; Mulder 1993). Pursuing one's own interests might be particularly important in early adulthood because gaining independence from the parents and living one's own life are important motives for leaving the parental home (Da Vanzo and Kobrin 1982). The empirical findings about the impact of leaving the parental home on migration differ according to the interlinked events in the life course. If it is for starting university education, leaving home frequently leads young people over the city boundaries, while moving together with a partner does so less frequently (Wagner 1989; Mulder 1993; Kley and Huinink 2006). Correspondingly, enrolment in post-secondary education has been found to be frequently connected with long-distance moves of young adults, especially those under 25 years of age. Respondents between 25 and 30 years old reported work and marriage or cohabitation as the most important motives for long-distance moves (Mulder 1993: 105 ff). Living in a spacious dwelling or a child-friendly environment is an important motive for leaving the city for families with children or for couples anticipating to have children. Accordingly, housing-related motives were found to gain increasing importance for respondents aged over 30 years (Mulder 1993: 111 f; Mulder and Hooimeijer 1999: 174). Taking these findings into account we expect that beginning vocational training or university and beginning a job are important triggers for migration decision-making in young adulthood. Whether starting to live with a partner, marriage and the birth of a first child also enhance the likelihood of moving over the city boundaries in early adulthood we would like to see as a more open question. Anticipating life-course events may trigger considering migration by scattering peoples' daily routines and therefore opening their minds for a broader view of possible actions. But in line with the findings about decision-making outlined above we expect the trigger-effect of these events to be greater on making concrete plans. This should especially be the case if a certain opportunity to realize an event is only present for a short period of time. For example, if a person successfully applies for a new job, beginning this job is restricted to a certain date or to a short period of time.

There are many findings about the importance of social ties in migration which we want to take into account additionally. Referring to the findings on joint-decision making of partners (Mincer 1978; Bielby and Bielby 1978; Kalter 1998) we expect that the partner's wish or necessity to move has the effect that respondents are more likely to consider and plan to leave the city. On the other hand, ties at the place of residence are constraints for migration (Da Vanzo 1981). If the partner does not want to move, if all or most friends and relatives live at the place of residence, if a person feels strong ties with the city, then the decision to leave the city is constrained. So we expect living together with a partner, feeling strong ties with the city and having all or most friends or relatives at the place of residence to hamper migration decision-making.

Furthermore, research shows that highly educated persons and those with migration experience are more likely to migrate (Speare et al. 1975). The greater probability of highly educated persons is explained by a greater dispersion of relatively scarce job opportunities and by the greater incentive to strive for an adequate job due to high investments in education (Sjaastad 1962, Speare 1971, Bogue 1977). Speare et al. (1975) argue that persons who have lived in other towns are more aware of real alternatives. They might furthermore have learned to manage realizing a move, to make new friends etcetera, so that they feel more confident and therefore anticipate less psychological costs of migration (Massey and Espinosa 1997). We therefore expect having migration experience and being highly educated to have a positive effect on considering and planning migration.

*Explaining realizing migration.* For realizing the move resources have been found to be especially important, for example income (Moore 1986; Lu 1998). Early adulthood, however, may be a life-course phase in which financial resources are often scarce and the standard of living is relatively low, so that whether someone has an own income might be more important than the amount of income. In previous research an impact of having an own income on leaving the parental home in the United States was reported for young adults, but the amount of income mattered less (Mulder and Clark, 2000). For West Germany, it was found that income had no effect on leaving home, or even a negative effect among women if leaving home was for living with a partner (Mulder et al., 2002). The modest effect of individual income is possibly due to financial help from the parents. As Mulder and Clark (2000) have shown for the United States, parental income particularly enhances the likelihood that young adults leave home to live without a partner at a long distance from their parents.

Liaw and Frey (1998) have shown that, especially for those who lack financial and/or educational resources, destination choice is strongly influenced by social ties. In the life-course phase of young adulthood, having social ties at the place of destination might therefore be a particularly important resource. Friends or relatives may offer a place to sleep for the first nights or help finding housing or a job. So, we expect that financial resources and social ties have an influence on realizing the move, but we do not expect perceived opportunities and life-course events to play a part in this phase of the migration process.

### **3. Data, Variables and Method**

#### **3.1 Data**

The data were gathered in two German cities, Magdeburg and Freiburg, by carrying out computer assisted telephone interviews with about 2.900 respondents aged 18 to 50. The field period of the main survey was from April to July 2006. This survey is denoted the first wave. In this first wave, there were three different strata in the sample. First, the respondents were asked how long they already lived in town. Those who moved to the city in the last twelve months were not asked further questions about migration intentions and are therefore not in our selection of respondents. Those who had lived in the city for at least twelve months were asked whether they had recently considered moving. Within this category of respondents, two different strata were formed by over-sampling respondents who had recently considered moving away. These respondents were asked whether they were also planning to do so. After the first wave, the respondents were contacted for follow up every four months. If a respondent had moved away, a second interview (the 'mover-interview') was carried out and the respondent was no longer contacted. Those respondents who had not (yet) moved one year after the first wave were interviewed again at that time, from April to July 2007. For convenience we will denote the information gathered in the second interview as the 'second wave', regardless whether an interview took place four months, eight months or twelve months after the main interview. Respondents who did not move out of town within this year are denoted as "stayers", and those who moved away as "movers".

For analysis we pooled the data of both cities. Apart from different economic conditions due to their location in East- (Magdeburg) versus West-Germany (Freiburg) the two cities are quite similar. They both have about 200,000 inhabitants, both have universities, and are not near another important city within reasonable commuting distance. The less favorable economic conditions in Magdeburg lead more people in that city to perceive opportunities as better elsewhere than in Freiburg and might lead them to consider or plan moving more

frequently. Therefore, the information whether a respondent lives in Magdeburg or in Freiburg is considered in the analysis.

**Table 1: Distribution of groups and respondents not reached in second wave**  
(age 18-29, no children)

Not considering, considering, and planning to leave the city (first wave)	Not realizing (stayers) versus realizing move (movers) (second wave; percent weighted)			
	Stayers	Movers	Not reached	Total
Neither considering nor planning	241 68.5%	9 2.6%	101 28.9%	351 100%
Considering but not planning	241 62.2%	20 5.1%	127 32.7%	388 100%
Planning	55 24.5%	87 38.2%	85 37.3%	227 100%
Total	537 58.7%	116 9.7%	313 31.6%	966 100%

We selected respondents aged 18 to 29 without children to represent those in the phase of early adulthood (N=966 in the first wave, see Table 1). Using weighted data to correct for the over-sampling of respondents who considered moving away, we find that 51.6 percent (n=351) of the respondents in early adulthood neither considered nor planned moving away in the first wave, 30.6 percent (n=388) considered but did not plan moving away and 17.8 percent (n=227) planned moving away. The proportions of considerers and planners are quite high, mainly for two reasons. Firstly, the data were gathered in two cities that have a relatively high migration outflow. Secondly, the early adulthood is the phase in the life course in which the proportions of movers are greatest (see Section 2.2).

Follow-up failed for 313 respondents, so there are 653 respondents in the second wave. Panel attrition was least amongst those who did not consider moving away, medium amongst those who considered and highest amongst those who planned to move away. So, movers are probably under-represented amongst respondents interviewed in the second wave and stayers are over-represented. Compared to a reference study with a quite similar design, in which face-to-face interviews were conducted (Kalter 1997: 193 f), the differences between the categories are not that great. Nevertheless we have to take this feature of the data into account in designing the analysis and interpreting the results (see 3.3).

### 3.2 Variables

Whether people consider or plan leaving the city was measured using the following questions (translated from German): "Have you recently thought about moving away from *Magdeburg/Freiburg* to live somewhere else?", and, for those who answered affirmatively to



this question: "Do you plan to move away from *Magdeburg/Freiburg* within the next twelve months?" This information and the information used for the independent variables were all gathered in the first wave. The information about whether a respondent stayed or moved within a year after the first interview comes from the follow-up. Movers are respondents who left the city within one year after the first interview, stayers are those who did not. Part of the stayers is a small group of respondents who changed residence within town (4.6 percent). As predictors we used three categories of variables:

(1) Variables measuring demographic and household characteristics that are likely to affect migration behavior in early adulthood: sex, age, living in the parental household, enrolment and level of education, whether living together with a partner, and place of residence. The place of residence was coded '0' for Magdeburg and '1' for Freiburg. Age ranged from 18 to 29 owing to our respondent selection, and was introduced as a standardized continuous variable. Enrolment and level of education is a combined variable with three possible outcomes: "In school or tertiary education" comprises all young people which are currently enrolled in either branch of the educational system, for instance in college, at university or in vocational training. "School and (at least some) training completed" represents the lower and middle level of education and serves as the reference category. "Studies completed" represents all highly educated respondents with a college or university degree. The question about income referred to the personal monthly income from work or public assistance benefits, after deductions. If the respondents did not answer the open question, they were asked to assign themselves to an income-scale in steps by 500 Euros. We distinguish between respondents without an own income or an income below 500 Euros on the one hand, and respondents with an income of at least 500 Euros on the other.<sup>3</sup> Seven percent of the investigated group did not report on their income. In order not to lose these cases, a dummy variable for income missing is included in the analyses but not reported in the tables. Living together with a partner includes married and cohabiting couples. The partner's wish or necessity to leave the city is also included, regardless whether this partner lived in the same household. Both variables were coded as dummy variables.

(2) Variables measuring the respondents' ties to other persons or to the city of residence: Migration experience, the strength of ties with the city, having all or most friends in town, having all or most relatives in town. Migration experience was measured as whether a person had lived in different towns or not. The strength of ties with the city was measured on a

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<sup>3</sup> The distribution of income derived from the open question, that was answered by 78 percent of the respondents, was the following: 25 percent reported an income up to 500 Euros, 50 percent up to 650, and 75 percent up 1000 Euros, with a range from 0 to 4000 Euros.

seven-point-scale and was standardized for the estimations. All other variables were coded as dummy variables.

(3) life-course events anticipated by the respondent to take place within the following six months: beginning tertiary education, completing it, beginning a (new) job, and starting to live with a partner.<sup>4</sup> Tertiary education includes both vocational training and studies at a college or university. All life-course events were coded as dummy variables: anticipating the event(s) to take place versus not anticipating so.

(3) Perceived opportunities in town compared to other places with regard to career prospects; maintaining one's partnership or, for those without a partner, finding a partner; family life, pursuing own interests or hobbies, and health. All were coded as dummy-variables: perceiving opportunities as better elsewhere versus not perceiving that.

### 3.3 Method

The method used is logistic regression, because this method is adequate for modeling categorical dependent variables including continuous and categorical variables as predictors. In the first model (Table 3) we estimate the likelihood of considering leaving the city versus not considering leaving, and the likelihood of planning to leave the city versus only considering leaving via a generalized ordered logistic regression (Williams 2006). This method is suitable for ordinal dependent variables and therefore meets the assumptions that migration decision-making is a process in that considering migration follows not considering it, and planning follows considering the move. As in ordinal logistic regression, the distances between the categories do not need to be the same. The main advantage of generalized ordered logistic regression over ordinal logistic regression is that one does not have to make the assumption that the influence of a predictor is the same for each stage (proportional-odds or parallel-lines assumption). This relaxation of the proportional-odds assumption is important, because we want to test the hypothesis that the influence of perceived opportunities may be equal or even greater on considering than on planning migration, while the influence of life-course events may be greater on planning than on considering.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Marriage and the birth of a first child are not considered because these did not have an effect on considering, planning or realizing to leave the city in the group under study. Leaving the parental home is not included as a predictor for migration because it often goes together with beginning tertiary education or starting to live with a partner.

<sup>5</sup> The generalized ordered logistic regression tool written for STATA (Williams 2006) of which we made use also offers a routine that uses an iterative process to identify the partial proportional-odds model that best fits the data. In this process the proportional-odds assumption is tested for each variable with a desired significance level. This routine has been used to report for which predictors the proportional-odds assumption has to be rejected with a significance level of 5 percent (see Table 3).

The realization of the move (Table 4) is analyzed via a binomial logistic regression model of moving versus staying, including all respondents reached in the second wave, while considering and planning moving in the first wave are included as predictors. By using the same predictors as for estimating considering and planning the move it is shown whether perceived opportunities and life-course events lose their significance for realizing the move as expected.

To correct for the stratification of the sample, frequency weights were applied in the descriptive statistics (Table 2) and probability weights were applied in the logistic regression models (Tables 3 and 4). Although correcting for sample selection bias is not necessary to track down causal effects in a well specified model, it is recommended when sampling weights are a function of the dependent variable (Winship and Radbill 1994). This is the case in the first model (Table 3), where not considering, considering and planning to move are the outcome variables, and respondents considering or planning a move have been oversampled. Winship and Radbill (1994) show that in these situations correction for sample selection bias provides consistent estimates of the true regression slopes. That weighting induces heteroskedasticity in the error terms is taken into account by our statistical program which provides heteroskedastic consistent (robust) standard errors.

In the second model, realizing the move is the outcome variable, and in the correctly specified model (model b in Table 4) the items of stratification, considering and planning the move, are included as predictors. In that case weighting is usually not necessary and not recommended because of a loss in efficiency of the parameters (Hosmer and Lemeshow 1989: 177ff; Winship and Radbill 1994). But, owing to the unequal distribution of missing cases over categories of respondents in the second wave, we have reason for assuming that in this model, too, the weights are a function of the dependent variable. As shown in Table 1, panel attrition yields an over-representation of respondents who did not consider moving over those who considered or planned moving. For this reason, we also applied sampling weights in the second model; the reported standard errors are also robust.

A glance at the distribution of the major independent variables in the second wave (Table A1 in the appendix) shows only minor differences compared with the distribution in the first wave (Table 2). So there is little reason for expecting the sample of the second wave to be seriously biased.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Distribution of respondents' characteristics, evaluations, and expectations

Table 2 shows the distributions of the independent variables. It also shows the distribution of the dependent variable of the first analysis (neither considering nor planning migration; considering migration; planning) over the categories of the independent variables, or, for continuous independent variables, the mean value of the independent variable for the categories of the dependent variable. More than half of the respondents are currently enrolled in school, vocational training or university. Planning to leave the city is more frequent among highly educated people who completed college or university. Altogether, the distribution of those not considering moving, those considering moving and those planning moving according to the socio-demographic variables and variables referring to ties at the place of residence is as expected. For example, among respondents who live together with a partner considering or planning to leave the city is rather rare, whereas respondents whose partners wish to move often consider or plan moving.

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics of independent variables measured in the first wave**

(age 18-29, no children; estimates weighted)

	Total Percentage in sample	Neither considering nor planning Row percentage	Considering to leave the city Row percentage	Planning to leave the city Row percentage
<i>Socio-demographic variables</i>				
Place of residence:				
Magdeburg	48.3	49.2	32.7	18.1
Freiburg	51.7	53.8	28.6	17.6
Sex:				
Female	50.5	48.2	30.8	21.0
Male	49.5	55.0	30.4	14.6
Age (mean)	23.6	23.7	23.5	23.7
Household:				
Parental household	25.6	48.4	34.3	17.3
Own household	74.4	52.7	29.2	18.0
Degree of education:				
In school or tertiary education	54.8	50.7	31.0	18.4
School and some training completed	28.6	57.4	28.1	14.5
Studies completed	16.6	46.4	31.3	22.3
Income (in Euros):				
Less than 500	26.4	45.4	32.7	21.9
At least 500	66.0	53.7	29.8	16.4
<i>missing</i>	7.5	54.7	29.5	15.7
Partner:				
Partner lives in household	20.2	58.3	30.3	11.4
Partner lives in town	19.7	50.0	31.9	18.1
Partner lives elsewhere	16.0	44.2	29.4	26.3

	Total	Neither considering nor planning	Considering to leave the city	Planning to leave the city
No Partner	44.1	51.9	30.5	17.6
Partner wants/has to move	19.9	38.8	36.9	27.3
<i>Ties</i>				
Migration experience	74.2	50.7	29.4	19.9
Ties with city (scale 1 to 7; mean)	5.0	5.2	4.8	4.5
All/most friends here	53.6	56.5	28.2	15.3
All/most relatives here	24.1	60.1	27.0	12.9
<i>Life-course events</i>				
Beginning tertiary education	10.6	36.3	29.8	33.9
Completing tertiary education	14.0	34.8	24.4	40.7
Beginning a job	18.4	32.8	26.2	40.9
Starting to live with a partner	7.4	42.1	22.2	35.7
<i>Perception of own opportunities better elsewhere</i>				
Career prospects	49.4	39.7	34.3	26.0
Standard of living	32.7	36.8	35.4	27.7
Find a partner	8.0	29.8	41.1	29.1
Partnership	11.3	30.1	37.8	32.1
Family life	10.8	28.9	40.9	30.2
Pursue own interests	15.8	30.7	37.9	31.4
Health	8.4	26.3	43.7	30.0
Total (Row percentage)	100	51.6	30.6	17.8
Total (N )	966	351	388	227

Planning to migrate is rather frequent among those anticipating a life-course event in the following six months, like beginning tertiary education. Furthermore, Table 2 indicates a relationship between perceiving opportunities as better elsewhere and considering or planning migration. So, a first glance at the descriptive statistics confirms our expectations.

In both cities, perceiving better opportunities elsewhere, expecting a particular life-course event and other predictors are associated with considering and planning migration in a quite similar way. However, there is one exception: In Magdeburg, planning to leave the city is much stronger associated with feeling weak ties with the city than in Freiburg. As shown elsewhere (Kley 2008), this can be explained to a great extent as a contextual effect of perceived living conditions in the home town. Because this is beyond our scope here, we do not report an interaction between the strength of ties one feels with the city and the place of residence.

#### 4.2 Considering and planning to leave the city

Table 3 shows that the relationship of considering and planning migration with age is negative but not statistically significant in this limited age group. Women are more likely than men to plan leaving the city. Having completed university increases the chance of considering moving compared to having a lower or middle level of education. Compared with young

adults who have no income or a very low one, those with an income of at least 500 Euros are less likely to consider and plan moving. This finding is unexpected.

As expected, living together with a partner deters people from considering and even more from planning migration. The partner's wish or necessity to move enhances the chance both of considering and of planning moving, but has a greater effect on considering. Respondents whose partner does not live in the household but in town have a chance of considering and planning a move that is similar to that of singles. The effect reported for persons whose partner lives elsewhere only applies to those who do not plan moving together with their partner in the following six months. For these respondents, the chance of considering moving is smaller than for singles.

Ties are very important for migration decision-making in early adulthood. The stronger a person feels ties with the city, the less likely she or he is to consider or plan leaving it. Interestingly, having all or most friends in town does not deter respondents significantly from considering or planning migration. Having all or most relatives in the city, however, does so. Having migration experience enhances planning to leave the city significantly but does not encourage young adults to consider migration.

**Table 3: Generalized Ordered Logistic Regression of considering and planning to leave the city in early adulthood (age 18-29, no children)**

	Not considering →		Considering →	
	Considering Coeff.	Std.Err	Planning Coeff.	Std.Err.
<i>Socio-demographic variables</i>				
Lives in Freiburg (reference: Magdeburg)	0.126	0.168	0.073	0.194
Female	0.196	0.158	0.391***	0.185
Age	-0.098	0.114	-0.119	0.133
Age squared	0.108	0.080	-0.172*	0.094
Lives in parental household	-0.096	0.271	-0.228	0.320
Degree of education: (reference: school and at least some training completed)				
In school or tertiary education	0.265	0.210	0.277	0.243
Studies completed	0.678***	0.261	0.872***	0.295
Income at least 500 € (ref.: less than 500 €) <sup>1)</sup>	-0.361***	0.219	-0.574***	0.237
Partner: (reference: no partner)				
Partner lives in household	-0.440***	0.235	-0.992***	0.309
Partner lives in town	0.018	0.225	-0.128	0.270
Partner lives elsewhere	-0.486*	0.272	-0.209	0.341
Partner wants/has to move	0.876***	0.242	0.581**	0.287
<i>Ties</i>				
Migration experience	-0.052	0.215	0.649**	0.264
Ties with city	-0.185**	0.092	-0.221**	0.096
All/most friends here	-0.270	0.169	0.064	0.198
All/most relatives here	-0.364*	0.203	-0.479*	0.253
<i>Life-course events</i>				

	<b>Not considering</b> →		<b>Considering</b> →	
	<b>Considering</b>		<b>Planning</b>	
	Coeff.	Std.Err	Coeff.	Std.Err.
Beginning tertiary education	<i>0.914***</i>	0.292	<i>1.666***</i>	0.297
Completing tertiary education	0.355	0.277	0.546*	0.279
Beginning a job	<i>0.145</i>	0.367	<i>1.024**</i>	0.418
Starting to live with a partner	<i>-1.290***</i>	0.502	<i>-0.240</i>	0.518
Starting to live with a partner x partner lives elsewhere	1.039	0.700	0.353	0.707
<i>Perception of own opportunities better elsewhere</i>				
Career prospects	<i>0.583***</i>	0.191	<i>0.785***</i>	0.250
Career prospects x beginning a job	<i>1.168**</i>	0.470	0.682	0.487
Standard of living	<i>0.360*</i>	0.200	0.266	0.215
Partnership	<i>0.811***</i>	0.232	<i>0.471**</i>	0.236
Family life	<i>0.557*</i>	0.329	-0.060	0.362
Family life x Partner wants/has to move	0.112	0.785	1.004	0.618
Pursue own interests	<i>0.658***</i>	0.248	<i>0.485*</i>	0.257
Pursue own interests x beginning tert. educ.	0.137	0.753	0.916	0.619
Health	<i>0.736**</i>	0.338	0.298	0.324
Constant	<i>-1.080***</i>	0.380	<i>-3.427***</i>	0.468
Number of cases	916			
Degrees of freedom	62			
LR Chi <sup>2</sup>	298.40			
Model significance	0.000			
McFadden's R <sup>2</sup>	0.188			

\* p<0.10, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01 Parameters in italic: Proportional-odds assumption rejected at p<0.05

1) Respondents who did not report on their income considered but coefficient not displayed

There are several effects of anticipating life-course events on considering and planning migration. For young adults who expect beginning tertiary education the odds of considering to leave the city is 2.5 times the odds among those not having this expectation (the odds ratio is  $\exp[0.914]=2.49$ ), while the odds of planning to leave the city are even higher ( $\exp[1.666]=5.29$ ). For young adults who anticipate starting to live with a partner the odds are 0.3 times the odds of those who do not. This effect is only found for young adults whose partners live in town. If the partner lives elsewhere, expecting to start living together has no significant effect on considering (odds ratio =  $\exp[-1.290+1.039]=0.78$ ) or planning to leave the city (odds ratio = 1.12). Completing tertiary education increases the odds of considering and planning only modestly by factors of 1.4 and 1.7, while expecting beginning a (new) job has much greater effects. To expect the beginning of a job is estimated to increase the odds for planning versus considering migration by a factor of 2.8. The effect on considering versus not considering is not statistically significant.

Perceiving a lack of opportunities at the place of residence is strongly associated with considering migration. All coefficients of the variables measuring the perception that opportunities in different spheres of life are probably better elsewhere are positive and

significant. There are interactions, though, with the living conditions and life-course events young adults are facing. For young adults who perceive that the opportunities for a career may be better elsewhere, the odds of considering versus not considering migration are 1.8 times higher, while the odds are 5.8 times higher if the beginning of a new job is also anticipated. For those who do not anticipate beginning a new job, the perception of better career opportunities at a possible destination roughly doubles the odds of planning migration versus only considering it, but for young adults who will start in a new job the odds are 4.3 times higher, even though the interaction effect is not statistically significant. The effect of expecting a better standard of living elsewhere on considering migration is smaller than the effect of opportunities for career but still significant, whereas it is not significant for planning.

Because the effects of the perceived impacts of migration on the opportunities to find a partner for singles, and for the opportunities to live happily with the partner for persons who have a partnership are quite similar, these variables have been combined. Perceiving better opportunities elsewhere for a partnership doubles the odds of considering migration compared to the reference group, while the effect on planning versus considering is smaller. The effects of perceiving better opportunities elsewhere for pursuing own interests and hobbies and for health are both positive and quite similar. But interestingly, the effect of perceiving opportunities for pursuing own interests as better elsewhere is much greater for those young adults who anticipate the beginning of tertiary education. For them the odds of planning to leave the city versus only considering are estimated to be four times higher than for young adults not planning to start a university or college education.

Perceiving better opportunities for family life elsewhere increases the odds of considering migration only moderate by a factor of 1.7, and has no effect on planning a move over the city boundaries. This is true for young adults who do not have a partner who wants to leave the city. For young adults whose partner wishes or has to move, perceiving better opportunities for family life elsewhere increases the odds of considering migration by 1.9, and the odds for planning it by 2.6.

The results support our hypothesis that perceiving better opportunities elsewhere is a precondition for considering migration, whereas anticipating important events in the life-course triggers planning migration. Our expectation that career prospects and pursuing own interests may be most important for the young adults' considerations about leaving the city does not hold for all respondents. Career prospects are the most important factor for considering migration only for those who expect beginning a job, and the opportunities for pursuing own interests are the most important factor for planning migration for those who



expect beginning tertiary education. So, apparently, the opportunities for pursuing own interests and hobbies are especially important for the young adults' decisions about where to study. For young adults who are not facing a life-course event or the partner's wish to leave the city, all areas of life are roughly equally important for considering leaving the city.

### 4.3 Realizing the move

The previous phases of the migration process, especially planning a move, were expected to have positive effects on actually leaving the city. As model (b) in Table 4 shows, this expectation is supported by the results. While considering moving away is a positive but not significant predictor of realizing a move, planning a move is estimated to increase the odds of actually moving by a factor of 39. The extraordinary height of this effect is a sign of endogeneity (Gujarati 2003); realizing a move is causally dependent on having planned it before. This is found after controlling for all other variables in the model. The descriptive results indicate that the percentage movers among those planning is actually almost fifteen times higher than the percentage among those neither planning nor considering (38.2 versus 2.6 percent; see Table 1). The difference between planning and not considering is much greater than the difference between considering and not considering.

**Table 4: Binomial Logistic Regression of realizing versus not realizing leaving the city in early adulthood (age 18-29, no children)**

	Model (a)		Model (b)	
	Coeff.	Std.Err	Coeff.	Std.Err.
Considered moving			0.588	0.457
Planned to move			3.663***	0.434
<i>Socio-demographic variables</i>				
Lives in Freiburg (ref. Magdeburg)	0.045	0.272	-0.073	0.344
Female	0.328	0.244	0.166	0.285
Age	-0.132	0.171	-0.074	0.217
Age squared	-0.148	0.113	-0.130	0.144
Lives in parental household	0.917	0.572	1.684***	0.640
Degree of education: (School and at least some training completed)				
In school or tertiary education	0.278	0.354	-0.006	0.417
Studies completed	0.637*	0.381	-0.132	0.483
Income at least 500 € (ref.: less than 500 €) <sup>1)</sup>	0.804*	0.450	1.500***	0.447
Income at least 500 € x Lives in parental household	-0.405	0.661	-1.076	0.717
Partner: (reference: no partner)				
Partner lives in household	-0.668	0.412	-0.349	0.516
Partner lives in town	-0.339	0.374	-0.440	0.401
Partner lives elsewhere	-0.109	0.427	-0.221	0.554
Partner wants/has to move	0.471	0.347	0.272	0.392

	<b>Model (a)</b>		<b>Model (b)</b>	
	Coeff.	Std.Err	Coeff.	Std.Err.
<i>Ties</i>				
Migration experience	0.842**	0.361	1.037**	0.453
Ties with city	0.051	0.128	0.146	0.161
All/most friends here	-0.486*	0.281	-0.658*	0.348
All/most relatives here	0.284	0.328	0.636*	0.386
<i>Life-course events</i>				
Beginning tertiary education	1.461***	0.351	0.464	0.410
Completing tertiary education	0.646*	0.339	0.253	0.381
Beginning a job	1.011***	0.327	0.273	0.428
Starting to live with a partner	0.203	0.433	0.266	0.445
<i>Perception of own opportunities better elsewhere</i>				
Career prospects	0.453	0.289	-0.051	0.358
Standard of living	0.220	0.301	-0.077	0.375
Partnership	0.421	0.330	0.122	0.392
Family life	0.325	0.373	0.192	0.382
Pursue own interests	0.220	0.293	-0.388	0.337
Health	0.563	0.400	0.692	0.520
Constant	-4.531***	0.694	-5.326***	0.777
Number of cases	622		622	
Degrees of freedom	28		30	
LR Chi <sup>2</sup>	92.34		178.46	
Model significance	0.000		0.000	
McFadden's R <sup>2</sup>	0.165		0.378	

\* p<0.10, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01

1) Respondents who did not report on their income considered but coefficient not displayed

According to model (b), resources are highly relevant for realizing a move across the city boundaries, as expected. For young adults with an own income of at least 500 Euros the odds of realizing a move is estimated to be 4.5 times greater than for those without or with less income. This effect only applies to those who are no longer living in the parental household. For young persons who live with their parents having an own income of at least 500 Euros does not significantly affect realizing the move. Living in the parental household in itself increases the odds of moving by 5.4. We interpret this effect as an indicator of the fact that many young persons leave the parental home for enrolment at a university elsewhere, before starting to earn an income.

We also expected ties to be especially important for realizing a move, because they could facilitate or constrain migration. Migration experience increases the odds of realizing migration by a factor of 2.8, while having all or most friends at the place of residence leads the odds of leaving the city to be roughly divided in half. The concentration of friendship networks at the place of residence might be interpreted as an indicator of a lack of social ties

at the place of destination.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, having all relatives at the place of residence shows the opposite effect. Having family ties at the place of residence obviously does not deter young adults from leaving the city.

None of the other predictors have significant effects. Apparently, the main influence of the considered demographic variables, perceived opportunities, and life-course events is exerted in the phase of considering or planning to leave the city, but not in the phase of realizing the move. Comparisons of the likelihood ratio of the full model above with more parsimonious nested models (Table 5) confirm that most of the explanatory power concerning leaving the city comes from considering and planning the move. The value of LR-Chi<sup>2</sup> drops significantly if these two predictors are excluded from the model. Variables referring to ties provide an additional explanation of realizing the move, but the value of LR-Chi<sup>2</sup> is much lower than for considering and planning a move. Leaving out either of the other groups of variables has no significant effect on the fit of the model.

**Table 5: Likelihood-ratio tests of alternative models of realizing to leave the city, compared with model (b) in Table 4**

	Chi <sup>2</sup> (df)	LR Chi <sup>2</sup> difference to full model (df)	Prob. > Chi <sup>2</sup> of difference
Full model	189.02 (30)		
Without considering and planning	82.07 (28)	106.95 (2)	0.000
Without demographic variables	175.81 (16)	13.21 (14)	0.510
Without ties	177.27 (26)	11.75 (4)	0.019
Without life-course events	186.98 (26)	2.04 (4)	0.728
Without perception of opportunities	185.88 (24)	3.14 (6)	0.791

These findings provide strong evidence for the interpretation of migration as a chain-process (Cox and Wermuth 2001), in which different determinants affect the different phases. Model (a) in Table 4 illustrates that the effects of life-course events and perceived opportunities on realizing migration are positive and often significant if the preliminary steps of considering and planning migration are not taken into account.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper we have analyzed migration from the city of young adults as a process starting with considering and planning the move and ending in realizing it. The results show that considering leaving the city is mainly driven by perceiving opportunities in important areas of

<sup>6</sup> This idea is supported by the finding that 12 percent of the respondents who said they had all or most friends at the place of residence reported about having friends or relatives at the destination, whereas 22 percent of the respondents with broader friendship networks reported about social ties at the destination.

life as better elsewhere. There is also evidence that the importance for considering migration of perceived opportunities in a particular life domain increases when life-course events are anticipated in that life domain. For instance, perceived career prospects are particularly important for respondents expecting to begin a (new) job, and opportunities for pursuing own interests are particularly important for respondents expecting to start tertiary education. Other important factors for considering migration are the wish or necessity of the partner to move and the strength of ties with the city and with family or friends living in the city.

For planning to leave the city, life-course events are especially important. The strongest predictors of the decision to leave the city and to go on planning migration in early adulthood are the anticipation of beginning tertiary education and beginning a job. We have argued that those events that are closely related to the availability of relatively scarce opportunities should be more likely to trigger the decision to migrate because they are only available at a certain place and for a certain time. Having a job offer in another city, for example, goes with time pressure to decide whether to accept this offer or not. Having a partner who supports the wish to migrate and having own migration experience additionally trigger the decision to migrate, while living together with a partner is a deterrent for proceeding to migration plans.

Realizing the move could be explained as a result of the earlier phases considering and planning migration, while resources, migration experience and social ties were found to have additional effects on actually moving. Overall the results show that most explanatory power in analysing the migration process is concentrated in the earlier phases of decision-making. This supports a conceptualization of migration as a process starting with considering migration, going on with making plans and finally leading to migration behaviour.

Our results were obtained using an only moderate-sized sample for two specific German cities and for a specific stage in the life course. Nevertheless, we think the findings have notable implications for future migration research. First of all, our results indicate that, in the first phase of migration decision-making, perceived opportunities to realize personal goals play a decisive role in considering migration. That the percentage actually moving twelve months later was found to be much greater among those who planned moving than among those who only considered it, does not lessen the importance of these perceptions. Only for those who perceive opportunities as better elsewhere migration is a thinkable alternative, and only those will keep an eye on educational opportunities, job offers, or the housing market outside town. The actual arrival and acceptance of an opportunity elsewhere then triggers the decision to move, which can be observed as planning migration. Realizing the move is, in the end, mainly influenced by one's own resources and support from friends and relatives.

## Acknowledgements

Stefanie Kley's research was made possible by research funding through the German Research Foundation and a grant from the German Academic Exchange Service.

## Appendix

**Table A1: Percentage of key variables in the second wave**

(age 18-29, no children; estimates weighted)

	Total
<i>Socio-demographic variables</i>	
Place of residence:	
Magdeburg	47.1
Freiburg	52.9
Sex:	
Female	51.1
Male	48.9
Age (mean)	23.8
Household:	
Parental household	25.4
Own household	74.6
Degree of education:	
In school or tertiary education	53.9
School and training completed	27.0
Studies completed	19.1
Income (in Euros):	
Less than 500	24.3
At least 500	70.0
missing	5.7
Partner:	
Partner lives in household	20.8
Partner lives in town	19.0
Partner lives elsewhere	16.3
No Partner	43.8
Partner wants/has to move	19.9
<i>Ties</i>	
Migration experience	74.8
Ties with city (scale 1 to 7; mean)	5.0
All/most friends here	52.9
All/most relatives here	23.4
Total (N)	653

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