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Literature on Job Mobility in the Netherlands

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X. Literature on Job Mobility in the Netherlands

1. General overview

Most Dutch studies about mobility are based on geographical approaches, economic approaches, or are policy oriented.

The geographical approaches study mobility in relation to the particular spatial structure and planning in the Netherlands (see research conducted by Maarten Van Ham, Pieter Hooimeijer, Frans Dieleman, Tim Schwanen). These studies sometimes make use of GIS to visualise people's moving behaviour (see also Martin Dijst's theory on action spaces as the area containing activity places that people reach subject to a set of temporal and spatial conditions).

Economic approaches about how mobile individuals maximise their utility have been elaborated with theories on two-earner households, where people try to maximise household utility (see research by Jos van Ommeren, Piet Rietveld, and Peter Nijkamp) as well as gender-oriented research (see Rouwendal)

Policy oriented research (as for example conducted by the Dutch planning offices) consists of a large five-yearly research on time-use (TijdsBestedingsOnderzoek (TBO)) and a yearly research on mobility (Mobiliteitonderzoek Nederland (MON), formerly called Onderzoek Verplaatsings Gedrag (OVG)). MON distributes questionnaires to Dutch households to measure the mobility of the Dutch population. The results are presented mainly as quantitative data.

In general, Dutch mobility research can be said to focus more on the relation between mobility and planning, jobs, and the environment (how to change the modal split) and less on families and social capital.

2. Job Mobility and Motility (incl. infrastructure)

2.1. Demands of high mobility of modern life

Some information on the tensions and problems can be found in section 3.2 on family functioning.

2.2. Mobility potential or motility: the access to transport infrastructure

The impact of infrastructure and services on mobility practices is an important issue in the Netherlands with its high population density. The Netherlands has a strong urban planning and design tradition, and there are several studies that evaluate the impact of spatial planning policies on mobility of individuals. A study by Schwanen et al (2004b) focuses on the consequences of the Netherlands national physical planning policy for an individual's travel behaviour. Their analysis provides a summary of spatial planning policies after World War II. They find that spatial planning policy influenced travel behaviour in the Netherlands, but only to a limited extent and not always as intended (Schwanen et al 2004b, 596). Spatial planning has been most effective in keeping the high shares of cycling and walking in large and medium cities, in particular for shopping (Schwanen et al 2004b 596). Compared to other European countries, car-use for shopping in the Netherlands is much lower. A second conclusion is that in terms of travel time, spatial policy seems to have been less successful. The building of new towns and the development of greenfield neighbourhoods close to cities appear not to have led to a reduction in commuting times.

A recent theoretical contribution to the debate about network cities is offered by Bertolini and Dijst (2003). They work from the idea that cities are open systems of connected open sub-systems. They have introduced the concept of mobility environments, which they define as 'the whole of the external conditions that may have an influence on the presence of people in a given location'. These conditions include both features of the transportation services available there, and features of the activity place in itself, and they include institutional arrangements. Bertolini and Dijst see accessibility as an important quality of mobility environments and describe an accessible mobility environment as one where 'many different people can come, but also one where many different people can do many different things' (Bertolini and Dijst 2003, 31). Accessibility, they argue, is now more important than proximity.

Meurs and Haaijer (2001) have investigated to what extent the spatial structure and planning of the residential environment provide an explanation for travel patterns and what urban planning and traffic management aspects play a significant role in this. They see mobility as influenced by three factors:

a) *Lifestyles*. Personal characteristics and characteristics of the household to which someone belongs

b) *Spatial characteristics* classified according to area, home, and environmental characteristics, spatial planning and traffic management situation

c) *Accessibility* in terms of travel time, cost, quality and comfort of various means of transport which can be used to reach any given destination from the point of origin (Muconsult)

Their analysis shows that the characteristics of the spatial environment have a demonstrable relationship with mobility and mode of transport. This effect is most apparent in journeys made for shopping and social or recreational purposes, and almost absent for commuting. Commuter traffic appears to be determined almost entirely by personal characteristics (Meurs and Haaijer 2001, 445).

2.3. Mobility potential or motility: a resource

Van Ham (2002) has shown that having good geographical access to suitable employment from the residence positively influences individual labour market outcomes and leads to a greater probability of being in paid employment and better jobs for those in employment. Lack of motility can therefore be estimated to have an effect on job career (see 3, also for gender differences).

3. Family functioning, family structure, family development

3.1. Family structures

The link between family structures and mobility has been done by economists and geographers. Rouwendal and Rietveld (1994) have studied the commuting distances of households in the Housing Demand Survey (WBO) of the Netherlands. They find that one-person households have shorter commuting distance than heads of households of larger households. An explanation put forward is that these households can more easily adapt their housing situation to their work location. However, the authors find meagre evidence in favour of the hypothesis that households with both the head and the partner employed have larger commuting distances (Rouwendal & Rietveld 1994).

Van Ommeren and Nijkamp have made an analysis of spatial moving behaviour of

dual earner households, based on search theory¹. Dual earner households share a dwelling, but have different workplaces (Van Ommeren & Nijkamp 1998). They find that unemployed workers who have employed spouses set higher reservation wages and are therefore less likely to accept longer-distance job offers than those without employed spouses. Thus, unemployed workers with employed spouses may be much more selective with respect to jobs that are far from the current residence than those households that are sole wage earners.

Van Ham and Mulder investigate the links between geographical access to child-care facilities and labour force participation of mothers. They argue that, for many mothers with preschool-age children, access to employment opportunities is partly determined by geographical access to childcare facilities. In the case of the Netherlands geographical access to childcare is even more relevant than spatial variation in the costs of care. Because the Dutch government regulates the childcare market, there is only little spatial variation in the financial barriers to institutionalised childcare. The spatial differences in availability of institutionalised childcare facilities however are big. This leads Van Ham and Mulder to conclude that mothers living at different locations have different geographical access to childcare facilities. Single mothers are expected to have a lower probability to be in paid employment than married or cohabiting mothers. Single mothers have no partner within the household to share responsibilities, and this restricts their freedom to be active on the labour market. In addition, they have only one potential income and might consider buying care too expensive. Furthermore, the social security system in the Netherlands is relatively generous so there is no financial necessity to be involved in paid employment (Van Ham and Mulder 2005).

3.2. Family functioning

Studies about the division of domestic and professional labour focus on earner type (see Keuzenkamp & Hooghiemstra, 2000) rather than household type. In the Netherlands, the labour force participation of women has increased over the past decades. The dominant earner model of two-income families is the ‘one and a half’ earner model, in which the male partner works full-time and the female partner part-time (Keuzenkamp & Hooghiemstra 2000). This model of combining work and care may cause stress. A study by Van der Lippe, Jager and Kops focuses in particular on the influence of the work and household situation on

¹ Search theory has its basis in labour economics. Van Ommeren and Nijkamp describe search theory as follows: Search theory aims to explain the behaviour of individuals who search for jobs or residences in order to improve their current situation.

'combination pressure' of men and women. Based on data gathered in 2001, they find that both men and women perceive combination pressure, but the reasons why differ between them. For men, working overtime in the evening produces combination pressure. For women, working overtime in the weekend means more combination pressure. The presence of a spouse working long hours produces more combination pressure for men but not for women. For women the presence of small children is more important (Van der Lippe et al 2003). They also find that men continue to do a greater part of paid employment and women a greater part of unpaid labour. A study by Dijst on travel patterns and use of space by two-earner households and the gender-related differences in two Dutch municipalities shows how the increase in women's labour market participation will lead to an increase in the number of miles travelled by private car. Dijst finds that compared to part-timers, full-timers participate less in action spaces on the local level but more in action spaces on higher spatial levels. Since more women than men work part-time, he therefore expects an increase in the use of the private car during commuting hours but also in the evenings and weekends to participate in leisure activities (Dijst 1999).

Keuzenkamp and Hooghiemstra (2000) find what they call a typically Dutch family ideology. There exists an emphasis on freedom of choice: women may work but they do not have to. But in addition to this freedom of choice, a strongly developed family ideology prescribes that if there are children, the family must be given priority. Keuzenkamp and Hooghiemstra find that men in particular support that view. Wel and Knijn conclude from research among 1,285 women with young children, that cultural factors rather than economic motives or institutional obstacles offer the most important explanation for whether they work or not. They argue that a 'culture of care dominates more among women with lower than higher education levels, which clarifies the more limited labour participation of lower educated mothers' (Wel & Knijn 2006, 633).

Literature on household strategies for combining paid employment with care of family and household shows that household tasks are more and more contracted out, especially in households with double earners (Van der Lippe, Tjstens & De Ruijter 2004; Keuzenkamp & Hooghiemstra 2000). A strategy of families with children to limit mobility to a minimum is to combine mobility to the workplace with taking children to/from childcare facilities, and shopping (Harms 2005).

3.3. Family life cycle

Harms (2005) found that households that consist of families with children are most often 'on the move'. It appears however that in sum their travel distance is lower and they spent less time travelling than other households. Harms also sees a systematic decrease in mobility when people get older (Harms 2005). This finding is confirmed by a study by Tackén, although he also finds that the types of trips of the active group of elderly people are comparable in duration and distance with the trips made by other age groups (Tackén 1998). Both Harms and Tackén explain the lower mobility rate of elderly people by referring to the worsening state of health, and their lower income. Harms adds to this that older people less often have a driving license and own a car. Harms and Tackén expect the next generation of older people to be more mobile, because these people will have more income, more cars, and more driving licenses (Tackén 1998, Harms 2005).

4. Job market

4.1. Social mobility and spatial mobility

Research by Van Ham (2001a) investigates whether workplace mobility (accepting a job a long distance away from the residence (Van Ham et al 2001c) has an effect on occupational achievement. He finds that workers who accept a job over a longer distance make more career advancement after a job change than workers who accept jobs closer to home. Van Ham et al (2001c) have also revealed that women show less workplace mobility than men. For women with a partner, workplace mobility has no effect on career advancement, because they are often 'tied movers'. Some women accept a job over a larger distance because the household as a whole migrates for the sake of the career of the male spouse. Van Ham concludes that for women workplace mobility is only instrumental in career advancement when jobs are accepted over a long distance for their own careers (Van Ham 2001a).

In a different article Van Ham et al (2001c) go into more details about the determinants of workplace mobility: what people are spatially more flexible? They find that the following factors influence workplace mobility:

- age: as people get older, their workplace mobility decreases rapidly
- education: high education increases workplace mobility
- presence of children: presence of children reduces workplace mobility for women, but not for men.

-marriage decreases workplace mobility for women, but not for men

-employment status: unemployed men show more workplace mobility than employed men.

For women there is no effect from previous labour status.

Two further factors that influence workplace mobility are the characteristics of the job and the present commuting distance. Van Ham et al conclude that

Our findings show the importance of the residential location in avoiding costly workplace mobility. Workplace mobility serves as a mechanism to overcome poor local access to suitable jobs. This statement implies that, for people who want to avoid mobility costs in terms of commuting and migration, those locations with the highest locational quality in terms of job access are the most favourable. These locations can be found at the edge of the larger cities, in between the major concentrations of employment. This is especially important for working women with partners and mothers, because they are more spatially constrained than men and are therefore more dependent on local job opportunities. These locations will also be superior for the unemployed, some of which may remain outside employment because of their spatial inflexibility'. (Van Ham et al 2001c: 938).

4.2. Spatial mobility choices according to opportunities and requirements of the job market

Research has found that dual earner households have a lower propensity to migrate than couples or families with a single breadwinner (Mulder 1993, Mulder and Hooimeijer 1999) but may accept a longer commute (Van Ham 2001a).

Economic analysis of residential mobility, workplace mobility and commuting has been conducted by Van Ommeren. In a 2000 article together with Rietveld and Nijkamp he investigates the relationship between residential and workplace relocation behaviour. They assume that 'individuals maximise utility by moving through different labour market and housing market states, while taking into consideration that moving from one state to another is costly' (Van Ommeren et al 2000, 213). One particularly interesting finding is that, when compared to employed people, non-employed people will accept fewer job offers and search less intensively in the labour market when residential moving costs are higher (Van Ommeren et al 2001, 231). These moving costs are higher in particular when housing policies (e.g. the housing subsidies in the Netherlands) discourage people to change residence. An earlier study by these three authors on two-earner households (see 2.1) indicated that on average, two earner households will move less than single wage earners.

Schwanen et al (2001) distinguish four different types of urban systems in the Netherlands. The effects of the relocation of jobs and residences to suburban locations appear mixed. For some urban regions, they find less commuting distances, but for other locations they find longer commuting distances.

Rouwendaal (1999) in his study of spatial job search and commuting distances for Dutch women confirms that female workers have a shorter average commute than male workers. The Dutch married and cohabiting women in his sample have a stronger reluctance to accept jobs with long commutes when they are older or have children.

4.3. Localisation of jobs within each country, spatial distribution of various kinds of jobs

There are several studies from geography and urban studies focusing on the polynucleated urban structure of the Randstad area. Van Ham (2005) addresses the question to what extent does spatial variation in job access within the Netherlands' polynucleated urban structure influence job-related migration (Van Ham 2005). He finds that it is not the cities but the suburban residential locations in between the cities in the Randstad that show the highest level of job access. Higher level job access is shown to decrease the probability of job related migration. The results also show that, compared with people living outside the Randstad, people living in the major cities in the Randstad and in between these major cities have the lowest probability of changing residence for a job (Van Ham 2005). Another study by Van Ham, Hooimeijer, and Mulder (2001b) shows that urban form has a tremendous effect on job access. The authors evaluate job access of residential locations at varying level of commuting tolerance and for various types of employment. By means of a GIS analysis they are able to make maps which show that in the Randstad the suburban locations in between major employment centres provide the best job access for households with highly skilled workers. For poorly skilled workers with limited commuting tolerance the city centre is the best place to live (Van Ham et al 2001b).

5. Social integration, social capital

5.1. Social capital and mobility types

No studies on social capital and mobility types could be found. For social capital in general Steyaert (2003) sees a trend of decreasing social capital in the Netherlands. Data from

the TBO (TijdsBestedingsOnderzoek)² help Steyaert conclude that the time that people spend on social contacts at home is decreasing for both one-person households and households that consist of two or more people. Social contacts at home consist of talking with housemates or giving attention to children. Talking to housemates in particular has declined, probably due to a decrease in family size, but also due to individualisation of time spent at home. Social contact at home with others consists of activities such as receiving visitors, visiting other people and telephoning. Only telephoning shows an increase (Steyaert 2003).

5.2. Social support, social networks and social capital

Liefbroer and Mulder (2004) show that Dutch people find family solidarity important, but that most of them do not think that children have specific obligations towards their parents. A minority of people thinks children should take care of their ill parents, visit their parents weekly, and that elderly parents should be welcome to live in their childrens' household.

Dykstra has done research about family ties in the Netherlands. She argues how ties between family members are now more voluntary and based on mutual affection, and have less to do with an idea of obligations or task-awareness (Dykstra 2004). She says that this change however does not influence the amount of support given to family members: 'family members engage in strong efforts to support and assist those in need' (Dykstra 2004, 4).

5.3. Spatial distribution of personal networks

The Netherlands Kinship Panel Studies (NKPS) has researched the geographical distance among family members in the Netherlands (see Mulder and Kalmijn 2004). The results show that distance among parents, children, siblings, and parents-in-law who live outside their own household is 30-40 kilometres on average (Mulder and Kalmijn 2004, 78). For high educated people this distance is considerably larger. Mulder and Kalmijn also find that parents and children less often live in the same place of residence as compared to a few decades ago, but the researchers argue that this trend is not spectacular.

De Boer et al study the geographical aspects of informal care-giving. Based on data by the NKPS, they conclude that distance to network members is an important factor in

² Since 1975 every five years the Social and Cultural Planning Office of the Netherlands (SCP) carries out a research on time use called Tijdbestedingsonderzoek (TBO). This TBO measures movements in travel time only. The Time use research is based on five-yearly diary annotations of activities during a full week in October.

providing informal care. The chance that people give care is biggest when the distance between the potential care provider and receiver is 5 kilometres maximum, for a distance between 5-40 kilometres this chance strongly decreases, and from 40 kilometres onwards the chance is constant. These results apply to support given to family-members and friends alike. Furthermore, the authors find that children most often receive support, while parents-in law receive the least support (De Boer et al 2005, 78).

6. Quality of life

6.1. Subjective well-being, health related issues and spatial mobility

The Living Condition Index (LCI) of the Netherlands, produced by the SCP, explicitly refers to mobility as a factor for measuring living condition. People with cars have a higher score on living conditions than those without, because having a car gives many people a sense of freedom, of being able to come and go as they please. This is presumed to have a favourable effect on their living conditions. In 1997 it has been decided to include possession of a public transport season ticket alongside car ownership, because having a public transport card can give a similar sense of freedom (Boelhouwer 2002).

A research by Steg and Kalfs (2000) shows that Dutch people more and more feel they are short of time (Beckers 1995 in Steg and Kalfs). A reason for this is that on average they now spend more time on compulsory activities and they have less time for leisure activities. In their leisure time, people do more and visit more places that are also at a larger distance.

Peters (1998) in Harms (2005) talks about freedom of movement: people want to decide for themselves about where, when, and how they move.