MIGRATION
LETTERS

Are you mobile, too? The role played by social networks in the intention to move abroad among youth in Europe

Andreas Herz[¥], Laura Díaz-Chorne[±], Celia Díaz-Catalán[§], Alice Altissimo[°], Sahizer Samuk[∝]

Abstract

Young people are mobile across Europe and transnational mobility is seen as a differentiating factor enabling them to gain personal and professional experience. While relationships are seen as important for mobility, the relevance of personal networks to young people´s thoughts of moving abroad has not received adequate attention. Specifically, different types of relationships with (non-)mobile others to whom young people are connected have not yet been studied as one origin of their thoughts of moving abroad. Grounded in quantitative data from the European H2020 project MOVE (n=5,499) we show that in addition to different aspects of unequal mobility opportunities (young people's and parents' socio-demographic status, prior mobility experience, country of residence, occupation) the constitution of young people's network has a bearing on their mobility prospects. Our results show that young people´s thoughts of moving abroad differ between European countries, decrease with age, increase among students, and increase when respondents and significant others in their networks (parents, partners, friends, other relatives) have prior experience of mobility.

Keywords: Social networks; mobility; transnationality; youth; Europe.

Introduction

Youth mobility is gaining precedence over many other youth policies in Europe. Several studies have placed the focus of research on the ever-increasing importance of Europe as a migration region after World War II (Brücker et al., 2002; Zaiceva & Zimmermann, 2008). This importance has been further underlined by the development of the European Union, which has facilitated mobility and made it one of its main goals; it is also one of the EU's policies that is most valued by its citizens (Eurobarometer, 2018). At the same time, the EU is not devoid of geographical, regional and socioeconomic inequalities (Amelina & Vasilache, 2014; Bilecen & Van Mol, 2017). As a result, critical events such as economic crises, high unemployment and/or socio-economic inequality between countries also bring about youth mobility. Moreover, inequalities are also produced by

[¥] Corresponding author: Andreas Herz, Universität Hildesheim, Institut für Sozial- und Organisationspädagogik, Universitätsplatz 1, 31141 Hildesheim, Germany. E-mail: andreas.herz@uni-hildesheim.de.

[±] Laura Díaz-Chorne, Researcher at the Professional Association of Political Sciences and Sociology, Ferraz, 100. 28008 Madrid. Spain. E-mail: laura.diaz@colpolsoc.org.

[§] Celia Díaz-Catalán, PhD in Sociology, Researcher in Professional Association of Political Sciences and Sociology, c/ Ferraz, 100. 28008 Madrid. Spain. E-mail: celia.diaz@colpolsoc.org.

[°] Alice Altissimo, Researcher at the University of Hildesheim, Institute of Social Pedagogy and Organization Studies, Universitätsplatz 1, 31141 Hildesheim (DE), Germany. E-mail: Alice.Altissimo@uni-hildesheim.de.

[∝] Dr. Sahizer Samuk Carignani, Post-doctoral researcher at the Department of Geography and Spatial Planning, University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg. E-mail: sahsamuk@gmail.com.

youth mobility; it is understood as a factor that helps improve young people's job profiles in an increasingly competitive labour market (Jones, 2017).

Research considers social networks important as a factor behind people going abroad. However, research on how social networks influence mobility has mainly focused on the role of prior migrants, without considering that any mobility that occurs in their network may lead young people to think of mobility as an option. In this paper, we will identify further aspects to the relevance of relationships, as well as considering other dimensions to young people´s unequal access to mobility, such as their and their parents' socioeconomic status, prior mobility experience, occupation or country of residence. To this end, we will study the importance of relationships regarding young people's intentions of mobility and thus regarding the normalisation of the mobility discourse in young people's imagined futures. We work on future expectations, as they are a means by which a young person "defines a set of values and reveals a tension to find her own place in the world" and are a constitutive part of youth agency (Cuzzocrea & Mandich, 2016: 1).

Applying an ego-centred network approach allows us a more nuanced perspective on (non-)mobile young people's networks with regard to the composition of networks of people with mobility experience and/or the composition of networks with significant others living in another country and their relevance for thoughts about moving in future. We first depict the theoretical background, focusing on mobile and transnational networks. Secondly, we describe the project, data and methods, and thirdly we present findings on factors leading young people in Europe to think to different extents about moving abroad in the future. We conclude with a discussion of our results and prospective research on youth mobility.

Determinants of thoughts about moving abroad: macro, individual, family and networks

While the body of literature on factors leading to an unequal distribution of mobility is vast, studying the aspects sparking thoughts of becoming mobile among a "general" youth population in Europe has only recently attracted academic attention (Williams et al., 2018). So far, studies focusing on thoughts about moving abroad in Europe mostly consider ethnic groups or student samples (e.g. see Van Mol & Timmerman, 2014). Our theoretical reasoning and analysis expand this and address a youth population of students and workers. Transnational studies have shown that people have both local and transnational relationships in their networks and that they are in contact with people of their (current) country of residence while also staying in touch with relatives and friends in other countries (Herz, 2015). These studies revealed that people with prior migration experience tend to have a higher proportion of transnational relationships compared to people with no migration background (Dahinden, 2005, 2009; Herz et al., 2014). Nevertheless, there has so far been insufficient research into the role in future mobility played by previously mobile contacts who no longer live in another country. Conceptually, our focus enhances the perspective on how social networks are relevant to young people considering becoming mobile in future. Therefore, the term "mobility" is used rather than "migration", as a more inclusive and dynamic term to cover all types of geographical movements (Amelina & Vasilache, 2014; Sirkeci, 2009). As such, not only the mobility of others who currently live in another country is hypothesised to be relevant for young people's thoughts of mobility, but also any kind of past mobility experience in young people´s networks.

To embed this focus on networks in the literature on aspects of unequal considerations[1] about becoming mobile, we differentiate between four levels in our conceptualization and subsequent analysis: (1) macro-structures, (2) individual, (3) family/household, and (4) social networks (Cohen & Sirkeci, 2011; King et al., 2016; Van Mol & Timmerman, 2014).

(1) On the macro-level, research focuses predominantly on economic inequalities. Even within the EU, there are differences in access to social benefits, as well as economic and labour-market differences between countries, which represent structures of young people's actions (Bilecen & Van Mol, 2017). Nation states are considered as categorical boundary-making, rather than as an essentialist category (Faist, 2014). Accordingly, we consider residence of young people in a specific country in Europe to examine macro-inequalities in youth mobility to contrast socio-economic, migration and EU membership context. Williams et al. (2018) compare intentions to move among a non-student sample between nine EU countries. Overall, 17% of their respondents consider themselves likely to move to another country or have even made precise plans to migrate within a year; 30% have such plans within 5 years.

(2) On an individual level, socio-economic and socio-demographic aspects shape mobility considerations. The chance of becoming mobile in the future decreases with age (Epstein & Gang, 2006; Van Mol, 2016), while the evidence on the influence of gender is mixed (Epstein & Gang, 2006; Van Mol, 2016; Williams et al., 2018). The likelihood of moving is higher amongst young people with the highest educational level and with increasing length of formal education (Epstein & Gang, 2006; Van Mol, 2016). Individuals' prior mobility experience also has a positive effect on thoughts of moving abroad in the future (Epstein & Gang, 2006; Van Mol, 2016; Williams et al., 2018). Comparisons between student and non-student samples are scarce; however, young people enrolled in higher education are seen to express stronger intentions of becoming mobile in future (Williams et al., 2018).

(3) Family aspects are relevant to understand thoughts of mobility: young people benefit from the socio-economic status of their parents, from human and cultural capital, social status and networks, in addition to economic and material resources transmitted by their parents (Erola et al., 2016). Parents support children, providing them with information and contacts, encouraging their mobility projects and reducing the risks linked to an international move. Other relatives such as siblings also play a role in the normalisation of such a major milestone as a move and its integration into these young peoples' imagined futures. The family's mobility background is therefore part of this resource. Prior research shows selectivity of mobility, e.g. for Erasmus students (Lörz et al., 2016), where people of higher social strata are more likely to become mobile.

(4) The consideration of social networks as a relevant determinant for people's mobility has gained more academic interest since the 1980's. MacDonald and MacDonald (1964) coined the concept of "chain migration" to refer to the aspects by which new migrants make use of relationships with previous migrants to learn about opportunities in the host country and to receive instrumental support for the journey, initial accommodation and employment (Castles & Miller, 1993; Massey et al., 1993; Massey & Espana, 1987). Friends', family members', relatives' and even unknown fellow countrymen's mobility can enable them to settle in a new country where they have to adapt and understand the social and historical intricacies of a society as well as its political and economic functioning. Peers who have moved previously and explored a particular country and its legal and institutional frameworks can become the facilitators for those who are considering a move

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[1] Though we specifically study thoughts about going abroad, prior research shows evidence of a strong relationship between intentions of moving and actually moving abroad (e.g. van Dalen & Henkens, 2008).

(Boyd, 1989; Epstein & Gang, 2006; Faist, 1997; Haug & Pointner, 2007; MacDonald & MacDonald, 1964; Massey & Espana, 1987). Moreover, these networks can have an alleviating effect when family members follow them and live in a country for the first time. When it comes to looking for jobs, looking for connections, getting acquainted with urban surroundings, and integrating into the society, these networks are crucial. Networks and social ties have a very relevant role to play in long-term mobilities or permanent settlement in another country, and their impact is also important – albeit to a smaller extent – for short-term or circular movements (Cho et al., 2011).

As discussed earlier, our conceptualization of mobility goes beyond that. We regard moving to another country not only as a causal effect in the chain of migration in family relations, where a prospective migrant will move to the country of a prior migrant with whom he/she is connected. Mobility is seen as a feature of relationships among young people, composed both of people who moved to another country and still live there and also of people that have been to another country even for a short-term stay. All such relationships may lead people to take mobility into consideration or reject the option, thereby supporting or accelerating their decision-making process. In these cases, the option of mobility is debated independently of the particular places or countries one could move to. Rather, we assume that the circumstance of mobility occurring in a young person's network, meaning that if an important contact has been or is abroad, leads that young person to think of mobility as an option. In this sense we see past research supporting our conceptualization of mobility as a socially embedded phenomenon: Epstein and Gang (2006) show by the example of migration from Hungary that intentions to move abroad increase if respondents' friends have worked abroad and returned and – to a lower extent – if their friends or family are currently abroad. Van Mol and Timmerman (2014) study intra-European student mobility and show that a sibling's participation in an international exchange has a minor influence on mobility, whereas having friends from abroad living in the respondent´s country of residence increases the latter's likelihood of moving abroad. Additionally, having friends participating in an international exchange increases mobility. Among students from Northern Ireland, Cairns and Smyth (2011) identified that mobility intentions are higher if respondents have siblings or friends who live in another country. Thus, we hypothesize that it is not only a relationship with prior migrants living in another country to which they have a transnational link which leads young people to consider a move to another country. It is also the relationship to mobile persons who do not necessarily live in another country that inspires non-mobiles to become mobile and previously mobiles to engage in mobility anew. Additionally, while prior research, if at all, only differentiates between broad relationship types such as "family" and/or "friends", we hypothesize that the mobility of personal contacts of different types has an influence on thoughts of mobility (partners, parents, friends, other relatives).

Project, data and descriptive analysis

To analyse the importance of the composition of (non-)mobile young people's networks regarding their thoughts of becoming mobile in the future bearing in mind socio-demographic, socio-economic and mobility related dimensions, we use data from the EU project "MOVE: Mapping mobility – pathways, institutions and structural effects of youth mobility in Europe" (MOVE-SD1-2017)[2]. This project studied mobility in the EU for employment, higher education, vocational training, voluntary work, entrepreneurship and school exchanges. The data was collected via an online panel (n=5,499) carried out by GfK with the aim of studying mobile and non-mobile

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[2] MOVE has voluntarily opted to be part of the Open Data Pilot of H2020. The dataset will be available at the Gesis data archive upon completion of the project.

young people (18-29 years old) with a proportional sample based on the gender and age-group distribution in the six consortium countries' populations. The selection of countries (Luxembourg, Germany, Norway, Spain, Hungary and Romania) represents a range of contrasting contexts regarding socio-economics, migration and EU membership. The field-work was conducted in six weeks from November 2016 to January 2017.

In the following, we present the descriptive analysis and results of the multiple logistic regression analysis. The mean age of respondents is 23.8 years (see Table 1), while 53% of the respondents are female. The thoughts to become mobile in the future were measured with the question "How likely or unlikely do you consider that in the future you will move to another country" on a 5-point Likert scale with the answer categories 1 "very unlikely" to 5 "very likely". Descriptive analysis shows a mean of 2.78 with a standard deviation of 1.42. For the logistic regression (next section), this variable was binarised: levels 1, 2 and 3 (unlikely to be mobile in the future and indecisive) were recoded as "0" and levels 4 and 5 (likely to be mobile in the future) as "1". Of the respondents, 33.43% express an intention to go abroad in the future, whereas 66.57% consider it unlikely or are indecisive. These intentions differ between country contexts: the most thoughts of becoming mobile in future are found among respondents from Spain (43.4%), followed by Romania (42.6%). Young respondents from Norway (32.3%) and Hungary (30.9%) are grouped in the middle, with young people currently living in Luxembourg (26.6%) and Germany (22.8%) expressing the fewest thoughts of moving.

Table 1: Descriptive analysis

	Min	Max	Mean	SD	n
thoughts of moving to another country in future	1	5	2.78	1.42	5,346
thoughts of moving to another country in future (binarised)	0	1	0.33	0.47	5,346
age	18	29	23.81	3.35	5,499
respondent been abroad	0	1	0.38	0.48	5,499
respondent currently studying	0	1	0.39	0.49	5,499
(grand)parents / legal guardians moved to live in a different country	0	1	0.29	0.45	5,266
proportion of alters who have been abroad	0	1	0.34	0.35	4,867
proportion of alters who have been abroad and are partner	0	1	0.08	0.18	4,854
proportion of alters who have been abroad and are parent	0	1	0.10	0.21	4,854
proportion of alters who have been abroad and are friend	0	1	0.08	0.19	4,854
proportion of alters who have been abroad and are other relative	0	1	0.04	0.13	4,854
proportion of alters who have been abroad and are other than relatives or friends	0	1	0.00	0.04	4,854
proportion of alters living in another country	0	1	0.05	0.16	5,008

38% of the respondents have been abroad before and are counted as previously mobile. The operationalisation for prior mobility was: "Have you ever been to another country for longer than 2 weeks[3] for a reason different than tourism or visiting relatives?" To address the question whether thoughts of mobility might result from inequality in socio-economic status, we use respondents' education and their parents' education as described in the literature (Björklund & Salvanes, 2011; Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2012; Erola et al., 2016). The education of both the young respondents and their parents was operationalised at nine levels following the International Standard of Classification (ISCED) (Navarrete et al., 2017) and recoded into four categories during analysis. Of

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[3] This time limit was set to include all types of mobilities studied in the project such as VET or voluntary mobility that have legally set short durations in some countries. The average length of stay in the sample is 8.7 months.

the youth respondents, 35.9% have early child, primary or lower secondary education. 10.8% have upper secondary education. About 39.5% have post-secondary non-tertiary, short-cycle tertiary and 13.7% have a BA or higher. The highest educational level of the parents has been used as a proxy of the family's socio-economic status, where we considered the highest level of education of the parents/legal guardian. The highest educational level of 20.5% of the respondent's parents is early child, primary or lower secondary education. 29.4% of the parents have upper secondary education. About 17.9% have a post-secondary non-tertiary, short-cycle tertiary education and 28.7% have a BA or higher. Asked about their current occupation, about 39% of the respondents are "studying" while 13.2% are unemployed or temporarily not working, 4.8% are freelance/ self-employed and 49.5% employed. 13.5% of the respondents live in Luxembourg at the time of data collection, 17.5% in Germany, 17.8% in Hungary, about 16% in Norway, 17.8% in Romania and 17.6% in Spain.

Mobility of ancestors and/or legal guardians was operationalised with the question: "Did your parents/legal guardians or grandparents move to live in a different country?" 29% of the respondents have parents or grandparents who moved to a different country. Additionally, to obtain differentiated information on personal networks (e.g. on different roles of important contacts with respective mobility experiences) the questionnaire included an ego-centred network approach to collect information on respondents' personal networks. In social network analysis (SNA), "an ego-centred network consists of a focal actor, termed ego, a set of alters who have ties to ego, and measurements of the ties among these alters" (Wasserman & Faust, 1999: 42). To collect the ego-centred networks in the survey, the respondents (egos) were asked to list the names/initials of reference people (alters). The item was: "Now we would like to know about the people who are most important to you. […] Please name up to four people who currently play an important role in your life. […]". Additionally, the respondent ego was asked to answer questions about whether the named contacts (termed "alters" in SNA) had been abroad for reasons different than tourism for more than 2 weeks, the type of the relationship (friend, spouse/partner, parents, child, other relatives, others, etc.) and the alter's place/country of residence. All network questions were presented in a matrix-format design. Respondents could name up to 4 alters.

The distribution of relationships across respondents is as follows: 6.4% of respondents did not name any alter, about 11% named one or two, 15.7% named three. The majority of respondents, 55.28%, mentioned the maximum of 4 alters[4]. The networks show a high level of variation in their composition. A mean proportion of 0.34 of alters per network has been abroad. However, alters' mobility is spread differently across the different respondents' networks. In 35.5% of the networks there is no mobile alter, while in 11.8% of the networks all network members have been abroad. The proportions of alters per network who are both mobile and categorized as a partner, parent, friend, other relative or other than relatives or friends (others are recoded from "work colleague", "employer", "acquaintance" and "others") vary greatly between networks (see Table 1). The mean proportion of alters currently living in another country per network is 0.05. These contacts are seen

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[4] N=5,499 respondent egos in the data set could – potentially – name four alters each. This would be 21,996 relationships named. As described, not all egos named up to four alters. 6,093 (27.7%) potential ego-alter relationships were not named. A total of 353 respondents did not name any alter. There are several reasons for this. On the one hand, they probably did not want to answer the question, which was in the last section of the questionnaire and respondents might also be prone to skip the network question because they were presented as matrix questions which are also known to decrease respondents' willingness to fill them out. On the other hand, these respondents might not have anyone who fulfils the category of alters as network members "who are most important". Including a dummy for controlling the network size of zero did not show any significant difference in the regression analysis and was dropped due to model parsimony.

as transnational relationships. 78.5% of the networks do not have any transnational alter. The correlation between the proportion of mobile alters (those who have been abroad) and proportion of transnational alters (alters currently living in another country than our respondents) is relatively low, at r=0.25, p<.000). This shows that there is only a small overlap between relationships to mobile and transnational network members.

The highest correlation between explanatory variables lies between a respondent´s age and whether they are studying or not, at rho=-0.46; p < .000 (the older the respondents are, the less likely it is they are studying) and between the respondent´s age and level of education, at rho=0.38; p < .000, which shows that younger respondents had a lower educational level. The correlation between the mobility of parents/legal guardians/grandparents and proportion of alters who are mobile and a parent is third highest, at 0.33. All other correlations are below 0.2. Specifically, there is also a small correlation between the level of education of young people and their parents (rho=0.15).

Regression of young people's thoughts of moving abroad in the future

In this section, we present results for the logistic regression analysis to test the hypothesis for dimensions that affect how likely young Europeans are to consider moving to another country in the future.[5] We present four models. Following our theoretical reasoning in the first we introduce the macro level (countries), in the second individual level aspects, in the third family-related aspects and in the last network aspects as potential explanations for unequal thoughts about becoming mobile in future.

In step one (macro level) we entered countries of current residence into the model, with Germany being the reference category[6]. Respondents living in all of the other five countries of the study report a higher likelihood of thoughts of moving to another country, with non-significant differences only between Germany and Luxembourg. These results reflect the influence of inequalities between countries, in relation to economic indicators such as the level of unemployment or per capita income. This can explain the case of the greater probability of mobility of Spainiards, Romanians and Hungarians and is in line with research on how European countries present different patterns of youth mobility (Hemming et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2018).

In step two (individual level), the respondents' socio-demographic and mobility-related characteristics were added to the regression: age, gender, education, whether the respondent has previous mobility experience and whether the respondent is currently studying or not. Except gender, all predictors have a significant impact on how likely they are to consider moving abroad in future: age (the older the respondent is, the less likely they are to consider moving to another country in future), education (compared to young people with tertiary education, all others report a lower likelihood of moving abroad in future, no significant differences to "upper secondary"), prior mobility (if the respondent was mobile before, s/he expresses a higher likelihood of becoming mobile again in the future) and current occupation (if the respondent is currently studying, s/he expresses a higher likelihood of becoming mobile in future). These results are in line with previous research.

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[5] In the four models presented, we entered predictors blockwise (listwise exclusion of cases). As presented in the descriptive analysis, the dependent variable on "thoughts of moving to another country in future" was binarised. For the education variables and the country, we applied dummy coding.

[6] Germany has been chosen as a reference because respondents currently living there showed the lowest level of thoughts about moving in the future (see descriptive analysis).

Table 2: Results of the logistic regression analysis on youth thoughts of moving in future

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
(Intercept)	-1.22***	-0.06	-0.33	-0.62
	(0.08)	(0.31)	(0.33)	(0.36)
Macro				
Country (reference: Germany)				
Luxembourg	0.21	0.06	0.05	-0.03
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.13)
Hungary	0.42***	0.50***	0.53***	0.51***
	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.12)
Norway	0.48***	0.50***	0.54***	0.53***
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.13)
Romania	0.92***	0.91***	0.94***	0.94***
	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Spain	0.95***	0.92***	0.93***	1.01***
	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.12)
Individual				
Gender (reference: female)		-0.03	-0.00	-0.02
		(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Age		-0.06***	-0.05***	-0.05***
		(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
education of respondent (ref: tertiary education)				
early childhood/primary/lower secondary		-0.37**	-0.33*	-0.23
		(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.14)
upper secondary		-0.11	-0.07	-0.04
		(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.09)
post-secondary non tertiary/short-cycle tertiary		-0.24*	-0.21*	-0.21
		(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.11)
respondent has been abroad before		0.66***	0.62***	0.52***
		(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)
currently studying		0.29***	0.31***	0.27***
		(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.08)
Family				
education of parents (ref: tertiary education)				
nursery/primary/lower secondary			-0.11	-0.01
			(0.10)	(0.10)
upper secondary			-0.04	0.01
			(0.08)	(0.09)
post-secondary non tertiary/short-cycle tertiary			-0.14	-0.12
			(0.09)	(0.10)
parents/grandparents/ legal guardians moved to live in different country			0.41***	0.31***
			(0.07)	(0.08)
Network				
proportion of alters who have been abroad and are partner				0.61***
				(0.18)
proportion of alters who have been abroad and are parent				0.41*
				(0.17)

Table 3: *Continued.*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
proportion of alters who have been abroad and are friend				0.93***
				(0.18)
proportion of alters who have been abroad and are other relative				0.71**
				(0.26)
proportion of alters who have been abroad and are other (work colleagues, etc.)				1.03
				(0.70)
proportion of alters living in another country				1.33***
				(0.22)
AIC	6680.79	6498.93	6062.28	5357.74
BIC	6720.30	6584.53	6173.02	5505.08
Log likelihood	-3334.40	-3236.47	-3014.14	-2655.87
Deviance	6668.79	6472.93	6028.28	5311.74
N	5,346	5,346	4,983	4,474
Chi2	143.72	339.58	362.63	435.89
DF	5	12	16	22
Sig	0	0	0	0
McFadden's R2	0.021	0.049	0.056	0.075
***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$				

In step three (family), we added the highest educational level of respondent´s parents as a proxy for their family's socio-economic status and whether the (grand-)parents/ legal guardians have lived in another country. With macro and individual-level characteristics controlled for, the mobility of the parents has a significant positive effect. Respondents are more likely to consider moving in the future if one or more of their parents/ grandparents have also moved before. Compared to respondents with parents with tertiary education, all other respondents are less likely to be mobile in future; however, these are all non-significant effects.

In step four (network), we added the network variables: proportion of alters who have been abroad for different types of relationships (partner, parent, friend, other relative, other than relative or friend) and proportion of alters currently living in another country. Consistent with our theoretical consideration, all network variables show a positive influence (with only the "others" in the network who have been abroad having a non-significant influence). That means the higher the proportion of alters who have been abroad, the higher is the likelihood of thoughts of moving to another country. Also, if the proportion of alters who currently live in another country is higher in the respondents' network, they will more probably consider moving abroad. This clearly shows the importance of self and other´s prior mobility on young people´s thoughts of going abroad in future. The influence of a respondent´s education loses its statistical significance in step four.

In sum, all four models show an adequate fit, with 2.1% of the total variance explained in the first step and 7.5% in the final model (McFadden's R2).

Conclusion and discussion

Prior research on youth mobility has mostly studied student samples and rarely considered the importance of personal networks when it comes to understanding inequalities in access to geographical mobility. Additionally to individual, family and macro-level aspects, our research shows for the "general" European youth population that youth mobility is embedded in young

people´s networks. We see that while age decreases their thoughts of moving in the future and their occupation (i.e. studying) increases them, socio-demographic dimensions such as gender, educational level and parents' status do not affect such thoughts. The level of education of both respondents and their parents shows selectivity (people of a more educated background express a higher likelihood of moving in future); however, this influence is not significant according to our analysis. Moreover, the mobility experience of both young people and their parents / legal guardians or grandparents increases respondents' thoughts of moving to another country in the future. Prior moves by young people and others with whom they are connected via different types of relationships are concatenated with subsequent moves. Thus, young people with a higher proportion of confidants with experience of mobility or living abroad express a higher likelihood of going abroad in the future. By differentiating between the importance of relationships with a network analytical approach, we were able to show that the mobility experiences of friends, their partner or other relatives increase a respondent's likelihood of considering going abroad. Additionally, we showed that it is affected not only by those network members who currently live in another country but also a respondent's relationship to those who have been abroad. Thus, having a relationship with a person with a mobility trajectory or a person living abroad is a "ticket to move", with everything this entails in a scenario where mobility has become a differentiating factor contributing to the acquisition of skills and abilities that are highly requested in a competitive labour market.

Our results show that intentions to move abroad in future are unequally distributed amongst young people due to prior mobilities of self and others to whom they are connected. This reveals the *social* inequality of mobility (meaning inequality due to social contact with previously and current mobile others or a lack thereof), going beyond inequalities stemming from young people's socio-demographic and socio-economic situation. This in turn raises the question of how young people who are not in contact with prior mobiles or people from abroad might get the possibility to develop such contacts, since these shape young people's intentions to go abroad. For example, how can mobility programmes address young people with no contacts with prior mobility experience in their personal network and offer them opportunities to go abroad?

This paper initiated a differentiated discussion on different types of relationships with (non-)mobile confidants as a relevant explanation for youth mobility. However, we cannot yet explain the social process which is "behind" this correlation; i.e., do young people learn from their significant others about the potential to go abroad or are they put under pressure to go abroad, because significant others were and are also abroad? Additionally, issues that should be further explored to understand mobility intentions as a network phenomenon include the impact of the quality of the relationships between young people and their significant others, confidants' age, gender and education and how this shapes mobility prospects. Also, aspects such as the length of stay, the country of residence, the countries the young people become mobile to and from, and the types of mobility could be linked to their own and others' thoughts of becoming mobile or not.

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