

The effect of social mobility on the odds and destination of relocation: moving within or out of the Brussels-Capital Region (*Lena Imeraj, Didier Willaert & Sylvie Gadeyne*)

Introduction

The last two decennia, large European capitals, including the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR), again achieve (modest) economic successes (Van Hamme et al., 2011). Yet, despite being the richest region of Belgium, social indicators lag behind as a result of which not all residents in the BCR are equally able to take advantage of this expanded wealth (BISA, 2011). Cassiers & Kesteloot (2012: 1921) put that '*urban and societal transformation under contemporary capitalism has led to an increase of spatial segregation between different social groups in cities*'. Recent reports from the Brussels-Capital Health and Social Observatory confirm the enlarging social inequalities in the BCR, resulting in a distinct pattern of socioeconomic segregation, reinforced by selective migration. These trends affirm the exigency to consider the link between internal migration patterns and social mobility.

Previous studies clearly have shown how migration processes are influenced by the obtained educational level (i.a. Kodrzycki, 2001; Venhorst et al., 2011; Zorlu, 2009), amongst other demographic or contextual features (like age, nationality of origin, family situation, housing features, neighbourhood characteristics (i.a. Bolt & van Kempen, 2010; Das & de Feijter, 2009; Kronenberg & Caree, 2010; Newman & Wyly, 2006; Öst, 2012; Scanlon & Devine, 2001; Whisler et al., 2008; Zorlu & Mulder, 2008). Young high-educated people are the most mobile, especially in urban contexts (De Corte et al., 2003; Kodrzycki, 2001, Simpson & Finney, 2009). Due to the financial selectivity of (internal) migration, residential mobility towards better and higher status neighbourhoods (often suburbanization) results in '*spatial inertia*', which implicates the reproduction of social inequalities, despite internal migration (BISA, 2011, 28).

Scherger & Savage (2010) conclude that children of less privileged class background reach lower educational levels, thus restricting the probability of upward social mobility. The attained educational level and the subsequent position taken in the occupational class structure, involve a certain socioeconomic situation (Lampard, 2007). Both individual characteristics affect the financial means at one's disposal and hence the opportunity to relocate toward more valued neighbourhoods. In this paper we exclusively focus on intergenerational educational mobility, as a component of intergenerational social mobility, measured as the up- or downward movement on the educational qualification scale.

In view of the recent rejuvenation and the increasing ethnic and cultural diversity of the Brussels population, the social polarization and the socioeconomic segregation, it is fundamental to focus simultaneously on both residential and social mobility and their interrelatedness in order to assess the possible impacts on further polarization and changing composition of the population in different neighbourhoods. In order to do this, we look at the probability of moving to another municipality as well as the destination of this relocation, both taking into account the observed social mobility and controlling for some individual and structural covariates.

Methods

Data

This study draws on the data from Belgian censuses in 1991 (1/03/1991) and 2001 (1/10/2001), individually linked to the National Population Register (situation on 1/1/2006) by Statistics Belgium. The database is exhaustive, anonymous and comprises a very rich set of variables on the individual level (education, origin, employment status, housing, household position, residential location etc.) and allows a detailed breakdown of different characteristics. It also allows us to link information on individuals living in the same household (in order to compare the educational level of parent and child) and to ascertain

residential moving patterns of each individual. Consequently the strength of these data lies in the fact that it is possible to reveal the association between residential mobility and social mobility. This paper only considers 18- to 31-year-old inhabitants of the BCR in 2001, living with their parents in 1991 and present in both censuses. Deceased individuals and international emigrants, as well as those who are still in fulltime education in 2001 are excluded from the analysis. From the 102,247 inhabitants of the BCR in 2001 80,954 were still living in the BCR in 2006 (79.2%), although 27,829 of them moved within the capital region (27.2%). Almost equally 10% from the 2001 starting population moved to Flanders and the Walloon Region by 2006. The 53,125 persons who did not move (place of residence in 2001 vs. 2006) include a subset of 3,614 respondents who did move at least once between 2002 and 2005. This analysis thus says nothing about the time nor the duration of relocation.

Variables

Residential internal mobility between 2001 and 2006 – Internal movements are identified by comparing the municipality of residence in 2001 (confined to inhabitants of the BCR) and 2006. Due to this restriction, those who moved houses within the same municipalities are not considered as mobile. Moreover, internal movements within the observation period are not considered. 49,122 respondents (48%) reside in another municipality in 2006. Women seem slightly more mobile, as are 23- to 28-year-old (age in 2001). Respondents with a Belgian origin are overrepresented within the group of movers (67.3%).

Direction of mobility between 2001 and 2006 – The distinction is made between four movements within the BCR (within inner/outer city, from inner to outer city or vice-versa) and two out of the BCR (to the suburbs or to other Belgian municipalities). 57% of the movers (N=49,122) moved within the BCR, 31% moved to the suburbs and 12% relocated to another Belgian municipality.

Intergenerational social mobility (in terms of education) – The highest educational level attained by both child and parent is compared. This comparison results in a distinction between categories representing social immobility (if the child's level of education is similar to that of the parents), social upward mobility (the child reached a higher education) and social downward mobility (the child's level of education is lower). Worth mentioning is the fact that educational attainment and consequently social mobility are not equally distributed within our study population, nor is the geographical pattern random (*Figure 1*).

Controlled for:

On the individual level: *Person category* (distinguishes 4 groups based on the status on the job market); *Nationality of origin* (6 categories based on the country of origin (Belgium, Turkey, Morocco, Southern Europe, Northern and Western European countries and a group of remaining countries of origin); *Household position in 2001* (child within a household, single, in a relationship without children, in a relationship with children, single parent and other household positions); *Gender*; *Age in 2001 and Square(Age)*.

On the structural level: *Ethnic composition of the neighbourhood in 2001* (computed as a ratio 'non-BE residents vs. BE residents' in 2001); *Median taxable income per municipality* (proxy for income per capita per municipality).

Analysis

First, the impact of social mobility on the probability of relocation is depicted through binary logistic multilevel regression, controlled for both individual and structural characteristics. Second, differences in the direction of internal migration and hence in destination after relocation are discussed through multinomial logistic regression, again considering multiple levels.

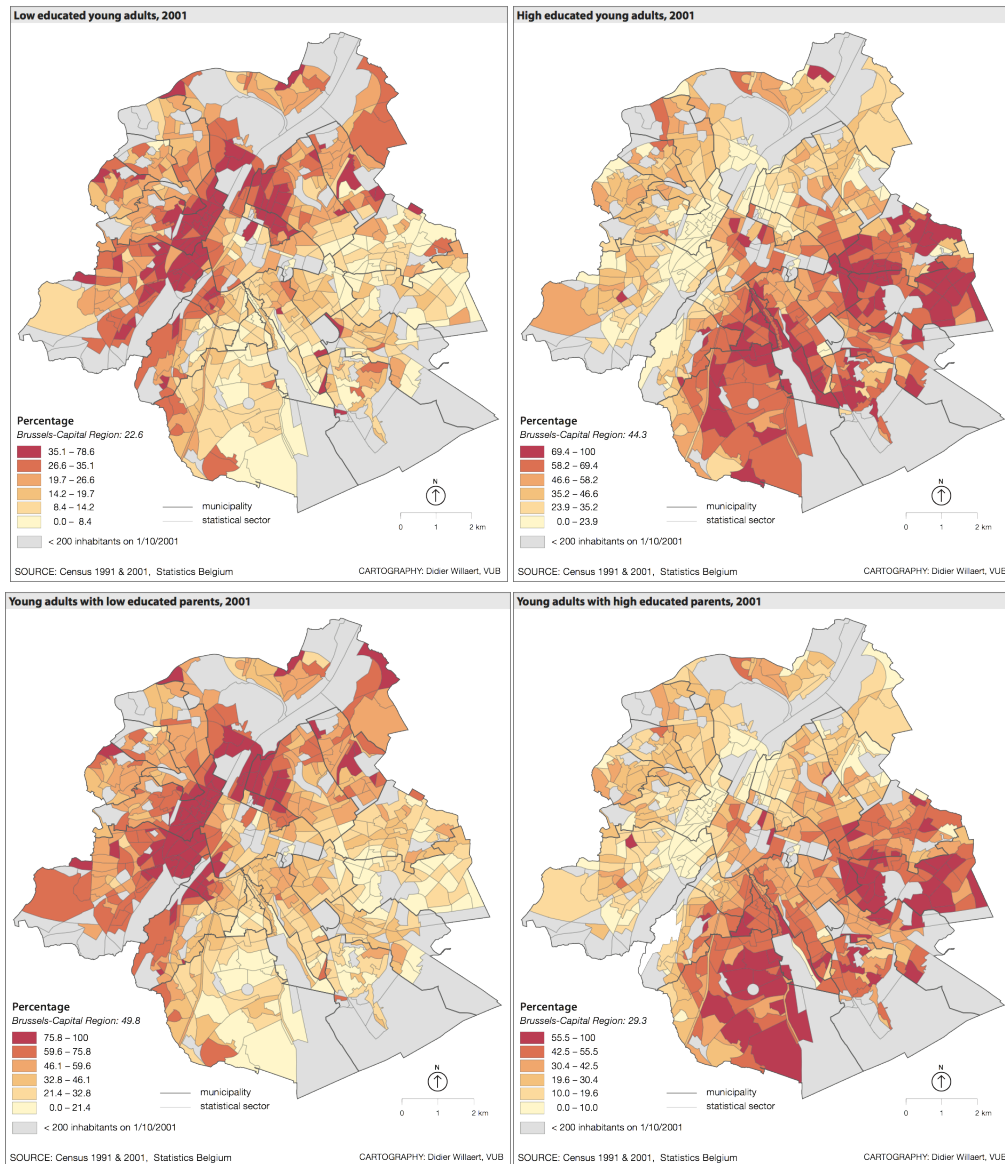


Figure 1. Geographical distribution of low and high educated young adults, 2001.

Preliminary results and conclusions

Residential internal mobility between 2001 and 2006

Preliminary results indicate a significant positive correlation between whether or not one moves and his/her achieved educational level. We observe a clear gradient in the odds on relocation: the higher one is educated, the more likely he/she is to have moved. In terms of social mobility the relationship is less transparent. Our final single level model (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .179$) indicates that respondents who experienced no or a downward movement on the social scale, are more likely to have moved than those who attained a higher degree than their parents. These results are rather contra intuitive and possibly biased due to the strong association between education, ethnicity of origin and neighbourhood of residence. This will further be probed into through multilevel analyses in order to reveal underlying nuances. In addition, this research aims to look at whether or not the effect of social mobility on residential mobility is similar for the different groups of educational levels.

Direction of mobility between 2001 and 2006

The direction of the migratory movement is significantly correlated with educational achievement and social mobility. High-educated respondents tend to move more often out of the BCR. Multinomial logistic

regression depicts several effects within each distinguished direction-category, even after individual characteristics are taken into account. Nevertheless, the origin-destination matrix seems strongly subject to the nationality of origin and therefore needs further in depth analyses. Only by unravelling the intertwined mechanism of residential and social mobility, the impact on neighbourhood composition can be understood.

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