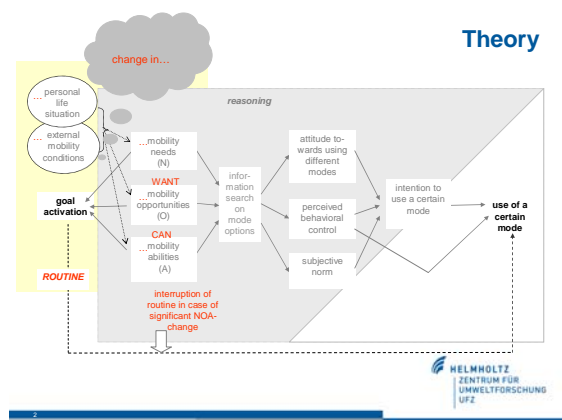


From University to working life: Impact on travel mode choice

Background

Under stable context conditions, daily travel mode choices are often made in a non-reflected, routine mode. Significant context changes, however, may weaken such routines and initiate new conscious reflection: A person's mobility needs, opportunities and/or abilities may have changed such that new behavioural options have to be sought. One of such important context changes may be the transition from studying at the university to starting a first job. Here, factors like new time constraints, normative requirements or higher financial resources may initiate behaviour change.



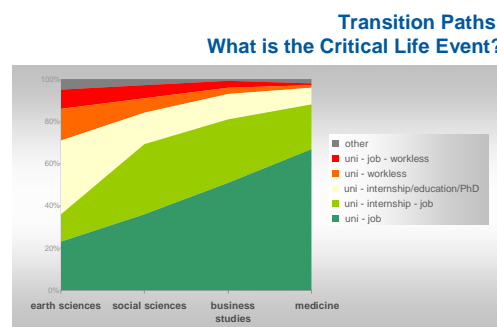
Methodology

We distributed a quantitative mail questionnaire to 1800 university graduates of different disciplines having studied at the University of Leipzig and having left the university within the last three years before filling out our questionnaire. Based on job income, actual unemployment rates of university graduates and possibly varying subjective norms, four groups of respondents from different disciplines had been chosen for comparison: a) medicine (high

income, low unemployment rate), b) business studies (high income, low unemployment rate), c) geosciences/earth sciences (including biology; medium income, medium unemployment rate) and social sciences (including philosophy; low income, high unemployment rate). Addresses had been made available by the university administration's examination office. The sample consisted of 450 randomly chosen addresses per discipline; 150 of each year of graduation.

Preliminary results

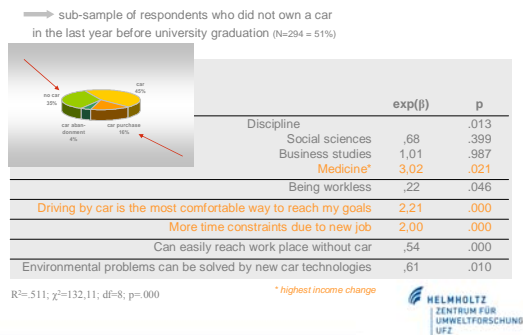
First, leaving university and starting a job cannot be considered a single "critical life event". Instead, different transition paths are conceivable.



Second, a pre-post analysis revealed a strong overall travel behaviour change into a more automobile-dominated direction after having left the university. Car ownership rate increases by 12%, car use on the way to the daily main activity (formerly university, now job) increases by 28%. Most decisive changes happen at the moment a person starts a new job.

Third, in this phase car purchase is due to a significant increase in income, more time constraints, a bad accessibility of the workplace by public transport and the need for comfort (logistic regression analysis).

Who Buys a Car in this Phase?



Preliminary conclusions

The transition from university to working life is not always a critical life event, but often a longer critical life phase. Needs, opportunities and abilities may change in short intervals until the moment the first well-paid full-time job is reached. Thus, most decisive changes in mobility behaviour do not happen when a person is leaving university, but when he/she is starting his/her first job. From an interventionist perspective, this could mean that the attractiveness of environmentally more friendly mobility alternatives at work places (like job tickets, private car-sharing opportunities at work place, promotion of cycling to work) should be enhanced, and that especially new workers should be tackled by those measures.

Presentation on conferences

Harms, S. & M. Lanzendorf, 2007. From university to working life: Impact of a critical life event on travel mode choice. Paper presented at 7th Biannual Conference on Environmental Psychology, Bayreuth, September 9-12, 2007.

Harms, S. & M. Lanzendorf, 2007. From university to working life: Effects of an important biographic change on travel mode choice. Paper presented at the European Transport Conference, Noordwijkerhout, October 17-19, 2007.

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