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Workplace mobility, living arrangements and housing demand in contemporary Germany

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Abstract

Given the changing labour market conditions, regional differences of unemployment and the growing female economic activity rate, it might be expected that geographical mobility has increased substantially in Germany over the last decade. However, judging by representative household surveys, a surprisingly diminutive amount of households have moved for job-related reasons in the last years. In fact, to describe the true scope of workplace mobility and its impact on housing, other forms of geographical mobility also have to be considered. In this paper a more comprehensive approach to the investigation of geographical mobility - one that takes into account both migrants and more complex living arrangements - is presented. In an on-going study the department of women and housing research (FWR) examines contemporary patterns of job-related geographical mobility of individuals and households in Germany by supplementing the general distinction between migration and daily commuting with job-induced commuting between at least two locations. This paper discusses first the contextual and theoretical background that suggest us to consider a more comprehensive approach to geographical mobility patterns. Following that part, the methodology of the project is presented.

Introduction

The working sphere of the post-industrial regime has changed profoundly due to structural economic effects which have severely determined the labour market in Germany. This change was accompanied by a substantial shift in society characterised particularly by an ongoing process of individualisation, pluralisation and changing gender roles. Apart from a new level of unemployment which eventually reached the feared number of 5 millions of unemployed people in January 2005, the structural shift in the national labour market also encompasses a change in prevailing employment conditions, a growing female labour-force participation in West-Germany and increasing spatial flexibility demands.

Since the 1960s unlimited full-time employment has been common in West-Germany mostly among employed men. Generally, the (male) professional career was rather straight forward without facing discontinuity in employment except for only short periods of unemployment and some changes of profession. The overall job mobility rate was low, workplace mobility was particularly a means of highly skilled male workers for the promotion of their professional career. As the male breadwinner model was widespread and politically supported the female economic activity rate decreased substantially being subject to the marital status and childbearing. In contrast, unlimited full-time employment was working standard for both men and women in the former GDR.

Since the 1990s the general labour market conditions have been changing considerably in both parts of Germany, while the effects were undoubtedly more substantial in the East than in the Western part. Apart from the growing unemployment, job insecurity has resulted from the increasing labour flexibilisation in terms of the duration of employment contracts, working hours and work organisation for both men and women. The overall number of dependent employees has decreased remarkably by over one million between the years 2001 and 2004;

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1 In this paper I use a distinction between job mobility and workplace mobility according to the definition of VAN HAM, MULDER, HOOIMEIJER (2001:921). VAN HAM, MULDER, HOOIMEIJER define job mobility as general accepting a job by the unemployed or by those already in employment. Workplace mobility exists if a job at a greater distance is accepted.
at the same time short term employment and fixed term employment contracts have a growing stake in employment. As a consequence, the standardisation of occupational biographies in post-industrial times has been replaced by a diversity of occupational careers which may include periods of unemployment, short-term employment and successions of internships even for university graduates.

The changing labour market conditions have been accompanied by a rise of the female labour-force participation in West-Germany. The growth is especially high for women in their middle ages (35-55 years), about nine in ten of whom tend to pursue gainful employment in 2004 compared to only three in four women in 1992 (HOLST, SCHUPP 2004:503). Not surprisingly, in East Germany the eagerness of women to full-time gainful employment is still on a high level. Taking women aged between 25 and 49 years in East Germany (including East Berlin), about 92 per cent were in the labour force in 2004 and thus nearly all women in their middle ages aimed at participating in gainful employment (FEDERAL STATISTICAL OFFICE 2004:99). Though the recent study on gender-based outer migration patterns of the Land Saxony-Anhalt in East-Germany by DIENEL confirms that women report less often on job-related factors as their reasons for realised interregional migration than men the empirical results, however, reveal a strong female eagerness to move in order to find a job after having been unemployed or for job advancement for those in employment. Potential migrants were predominantly female in this sample (see DIENEL 2004 p. 100-166). These findings indicate that there is reason to expect an upward effect of the overall growing female eagerness to gainful employment on workplace mobility and spatial flexibility of females in Germany.

In West-Germany spatial flexibility used to be a necessary prerequisite for the search for work and job advancement only for the (mostly male) highly educated due to the spatial dispersion of jobs requiring a high level of education. In contrast, job and workplace mobility did not play a part in the former GDR at all due to the overall immobility of the society caused by the political system. In recent years, national labour market flexibilisation has contributed to higher spatial mobility demands for the broader population: women and men with a lower educational level, unemployed, career returnees as well as women and men starting a career. This trend is supported by the current federal labour market policy by requiring on the one hand a higher spatial flexibility of the unemployed and offering financial aides for geographical mobility for the unemployed on the other hand. Considering the regional unemployment rates the substantial spatial mismatch of labour supply and demand becomes obvious: at a total unemployment rate of 12 per cent in march 2006, the difference of regional unemployment rates measured on the basis of the Länder amounts to 14.5 percentage points with the lowest unemployment rate in the high-tech region Baden-Württemberg in the south-west and the highest rate in the rural region Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania in the north-east, 7.1 per cent and 21.6 per cent respectively.

**Migration patterns in contemporary Germany and problem definition**

Based on the outlined determinants of the national labour market it might be expected that workplace mobility has increased substantially in Germany over the last decade. However, taking the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), a representative annual household panel

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2 in employment or registered as unemployed
3 Länder are the regional bodies of the Federal Republic compared to States in the USA or Provinces in the Netherlands.
survey of private households, workplace mobility is surprisingly low. According to the wave in 2003, around 10 % of all households did not live in their dwelling a year before. Of those only 12.8 % reported on occupational reasons. In other words, workplace mobility applied only to 1.4 % of all households in 2003 in Germany. The finding that these households consisted mostly of one person and two persons are in line with the migration studies showing that families are less spatially mobile. Taking migration between the Länder based on official migration statistics as a means of interregional migration which is considered in migration literature particularly as workplace mobility again not more than 1.4 % of all households slightly more than one million households respectively moved to another region. Moreover, the percentage of interregional migration has not changed compared to the years before. With regard to these findings, economists usually argue that the migration level in Germany is too low to overcome the spatial mismatch on the national labour market from an international perspective. In connection with that argument, politicians and labour market experts complain about the reluctance of the unemployed to move.

Yet, on closer examination it becomes obvious that the existing migration data-set do not represent the real scope of geographical mobility. In official statistics, for instance, only migration in terms of a change of the main residence is counted and thus keeping the main residence while working abroad or having a secondary residence for job reasons are not incorporated in official migration statistics. The migration level therefore may be considered to be underestimated. This also has to be stated for the mentioned household panel survey as migration effects panel mortality considerably. Besides, secondary residences for job reasons are not regularly collected in the waves and the questionnaires assume that spouses live together and thereby imply a traditional partnership model which cannot be applied to “new” living arrangements.

While the migration level has remained constant in Germany over the last years secondary residences for job reasons defined as weekly commuting in the German Microcensus, a representative annual sample of one percentage of all households in which a commuting survey is included every four years, has gained in importance (see FEDERAL STATISTICAL OFFICE 2005). For the Federal Republic 357,000 employed with a secondary residence for job reasons were registered in 2004\(^4\). This corresponds to an increase of 12 % compared to the year 1996. Thus, the ratio of moves between the Länder in 2003 (see above) to secondary residences for job reasons in 2004 is about three to one. Not surprisingly, secondary residences for job reasons are primarily located in the economically stronger regions in the south-west\(^5\). Given the greater reluctance of women to workplace mobility, the proportion of female weekly commuters of around 40 % may be considered as relatively high. Weekly commuting therefore is by no means a male migration phenomenon. Moreover, the so-called weekly commuting seems to be a living arrangement for the young employed: 55 % were 35 years or younger. Regarding education and professional qualification, weekly commuting seems to be comparable to common migration patterns: slightly more than half of the dependent employees with a secondary residence for job reasons classified themselves as highly skilled workers (54%). Notwithstanding, 26.4% had a middle or low level of professional qualification, which shows that the phenomenon is not restricted to the highly skilled.

\(^4\) including trainees
\(^5\) 24% in Bavaria, 15% in Baden-Württemberg, 13% in North Rhine-Westphalia
Based on the above data, it seems reasonable to assume that people meet rising spatial flexibility demands not only by means of “classical” moves of the household as a whole but also by means of other forms of geographical mobility that presumably contribute to more complex migration patterns in Germany.

Theoretical background

There exists ample literature on migration decisions of households and families with the main focus on whether households depending on their specific household situation and individual’s traits decide to move, stay put or commute over long-distance. In line with this approach, migration and daily commuting tolerance are the sole determinants of an individual’s spatial flexibility and thus a low willingness to move could be compensated by a larger commuting tolerance (see among others VAN HAM, MULDER, HOOIMEIJER 2001). Less attention has been devoted to other forms of mobile living arrangements as alternative living concepts in order to juggle job demands and job promotion on the one hand and home, private life, partnership or family on the other hand.

The appearance of commuting partnerships and families with two (or even more) residential locations has attracted interests of particularly sociological researchers in Europe not until the last couple of years. Therefore it is not surprising that knowledge about the distribution and features of these partnerships and families in Europe is rather limited. Even definitions of such living arrangements differ profoundly. Commuter, shuttle, married single, commuter marriage, two location family, living apart together are only some terms which can be found in the literature to label alternative living arrangements. More important from a housing and geographical point of view, the mentioned terms refer to different types of living arrangements concerning reasons for living in such a complex spatial arrangement, marital status and the status of residences of the partners. On the other side, this observation reveals an existing diversity of commuting arrangements of households.

Sociological researchers pay much attention to couples that do not share their household for individual and partnership reasons. Each of the two partners lives in his or her own household particularly because of one’s individual freedom and personal development but both perceive themselves as a couple. Sociologists regard these non-traditional partnership model in connection with the rising individualisation and modernisation of society that brought about a differentiation of living concepts. In the literature the kind of partnership arrangement that involves commuting between two separate households situated either in one city or in different cities is often labelled as living apart together partnerships (LAT). As we examine effects of labour market and job seeking on living arrangements, partnerships with other than job-related reasons for constituting the living arrangement are not the focus of our analysis.

The existing literature falls short of the assessment of living arrangements of couples which are not freely chosen and therefore are not applied to the concept of individualisation and modernisation. Thus a couple with partners living in different regions might be living apart as both were not able to find a suitable job at the partner’s dwelling place. In such a case, commuting between two households is indirectly induced by the labour market and professional qualification of either partner. However, as noted earlier, such a forced living arrangement with the linked commuting is not regarded as an individual’s spatial flexibility in migration literature.
Job-induced commuting between two residences is not a new phenomenon in Europe. Temporary separation of couples has been common in some professions such as sailors, soldiers or seasonal agricultural workers for hundreds of years. Generally, these workers have not been settled in their own secondary dwelling at the workplace but instead have used temporary shared accommodations and simple lodgings. In the middle of the 18th century it turned out to be the new ideal of family life among the bourgeoises to own a family residence in the countryside while the male breadwinner stayed in town weekdays for earning a living. Later, industrialisation brought about weekly commuting among poor workers and families from the countryside who couldn’t afford to live in town and for whom daily commuting was not practicable because of long distances between residence and workplace. The workers usually lived in mass-lodgings of the factories they worked for or they lived with another poor family and there rented a bed which they generally had to share at least with a family member or another worker workdays and returned home on Sunday. Although data of the commuting patterns of workers in the second half of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century barely exists it is assumed that at that time commuting between two residences has affected broader population groups for the first time (see SCHNEIDER; ROSENKRANZ, LIMMER 1998). As the means of transportation have been improved considerably with the rise of industrialisation, daily commuting as a means of spatial flexibility increased remarkably and thus substituted commuting between two residences. As a consequence, job-induced commuting between two residences lost its importance as type of geographical mobility during industrial times.

Empirical studies on partnerships with two locations have a considerably longer tradition in connection with the research on dual-career couples (DCCs) in the USA and Britain (see WINFIELD 1985, GERSTEL/ GROSS 1984, ANDERSON/ SPRUILL 1993, GREEN/ GREEN ET AL. 1995, 1997, 1999). Since the 1970s a large amount of sociological, psychological and economic literature has been released with respect to couples with either partner having a strong professional career orientation and a high degree of individual commitment to work. The emphasis of the studies has been on identifying difficulties and dilemmas encountered by dual-career households on individual and partnership level such as role overload and time management as well as on assessing strategies of coping with these problems. Though difficulties in job seeking and coping strategies in geographical terms have been addressed from the point of view both individual and couple at least as a minor issue (see RUSCONI 2002 for an overview), the existing literature lacks an examination of commuting DCCs in a broader spatial framework.

Research on DCCs is quite a new research field in Germany presumably due to the broad acceptance of the male breadwinner model for some decades in West-Germany, thus, empirical results on this issue barely exist. Interesting findings regarding geographical mobility in gender perspective are provided by a recent study of BEHNKE and MEUSER (2005). Notwithstanding that the study was based on a relatively small sample of 15 academic couples, the results suggest that young academic couples have indeed more options with respect to geographical mobility than older academic couples in which the professional career of the man has clearly determined the dwelling place of both partners. On the other side, however, a profound change of typical gender-based migration patterns has not taken place. Even though young academic females considered a commuting partnership as an alternative to reconcile job promotion and partnership their job seeking strategies were still dependent on migration decisions of the male partner.
The latest as well as the most comprehensive empirical study on interregional migration in Germany, which was conducted by SCHNEIDER, LIMMER and RENKDESCHEL (2002), examined - from a sociological and socio-psychological point of view - direct and indirect effects of job-induced geographical mobility on the living situation of individuals, couples and families by incorporating migration, daily commuting, commuting between two residences, couples with separate households in different cities as well as temporary geographical flexibility in their research design. Though the study focused on specific stresses and strains individuals and couples need to cope with in order to reconcile spatial flexibility demands and partnership or family respectively without investigating housing and spatial characteristics of living arrangements in more detail, the research results provide interesting aspects for further housing and migration research: Commuting between two residences is rather short-termed, individuals in commuting partnerships and LAT arrangements are less often home owners than migrants or daily commuters and commuters report more often on high financial strains of the living arrangement than the other target groups. SCHNEIDER, LIMMER and RENKDESCHEL conclude that commuting partnerships are the losers of the rising spatial mobility demands both on individual and household level. For a comprehensive assessment of the impact of commuting between two separate households or a main and secondary residence respectively on individuals and couples further research from a spatial and housing point of view is necessary.

In this paper I use - in accordance with to SCHNEIDER, LIMMER and RENKDESCHEL - the term mobile living arrangement to refer to both migration and commuting between two locations. To distinguish more spatially complex commuting situations from moves with a change of residence of the household as a whole, I use the term complex living arrangement. I further define two types of complex living arrangements as they have presumably different effects on the housing market. The distinction between commuting partnerships on the one hand and LAT couples on the other hand is based on the dwelling status and the centre of life issues. If the two partners live in a shared household which is perceived by both of them as the main dwelling and common centre of life, and one (or even both of them) has a secondary residence which he or she uses regularly for work or studies, I refer to this living arrangement as commuting partnership. Whether both are married or cohabiting or whether children belong to the household does not play a role. Singles who commute between two accommodations for work or studies are referred to as commuters. I also use the term commuter if I only address the spatially mobile partner in a commuting partnership. The term “weekly commuter” used in official German commuting statistics is not applied as it makes use of time patterns which are not analysed yet. Couples with two separate households, i.e. two residences without a common centre of life no matter whether the couple is married or cohabiting, has children or used to live together in one household, I define as living apart together couple (LAT).

Summarising, the review of the literature and the discussion of other types of geographical mobility different from changes of the main residence and daily commuting lead us to

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6 The study draw on 786 fully structured interviews that were administered over the telephone. 399 interviews were carried out with people who had a partner and to whom at least one of the five types of geographical mobility applied. In 242 cases the partner of those respondents was also interviewed. For comparative reasons 145 interviews with people who had a partner and either have rejected or have never considered geographical mobility were included in the sample. The survey was preceded by 309 in-depth interviews with people who had participated in the telephone interviews.
suggest an extension of the microeconomic model of family migration by considering "new" patterns of geographical mobility.

**Complex living arrangements and the adjustment of the microeconomic model of family migration**

According to MINCER’S economic model of family migration which is endorsed by sociologists alike, a family moves if the sum of all household members' benefits from moving outweighs the sum of all household members' costs. Taking this net benefit model, four different situations of migration decisions of a two-earner household have been identified: (1) Both partners will move if the net benefit of moving is greater or equal to zero for each partner. (2) Both partners will move as the net benefit of moving is greater or equal to zero for the household but only one partner gains from the move. The other partner is referred to as a “tied mover”. (3) The household won’t move with respect to an overall net loss though one partner would have accrue benefits on an individual base and in staying put takes the role of a “tied stayer”. (4) The household will split up if the individual gains are larger for either partner rather than staying together at the same location. Most empirical research shows that women are disproportionately often the tied partner.

Whereas MINCER only considers separation in terms of a divorce of the couple as solution JÜRGES (2004) complements the model by taking couples who commute on a weekly or monthly basis to accommodate partnership and professional career into account. JÜRGES restricts his consideration to dual-career couples and therefore to partnerships with both partners having a high level of education. Drawing on the described contextual background of contemporary migration patterns in Germany an adjustment of the microeconomic model of family migration to “new” patterns of migration by incorporating complex living arrangements as solutions for geographical mobility demands seems to be reasonable. Accordingly, two situations of migration decisions of a two-earner household may supplement the model: If the household won’t move with respect to an overall net loss but one partner would accrue benefits on an individual base and won’t take the role of a tied stayer, a secondary residence at the workplace while maintaining the shared household with the partner and commuting between the two residences would be one solution (solution: commuting partnership). Taking the same situation of migration decision, splitting up the shared household into two separate households while both partners keep perceiving themselves as couple or spouses and commuting between the two households would be another solution (solution: living apart together). As complex living arrangements have been neglected in migration literature, it is needless to say that the proposed extension of the microeconomic model of family migration is of hypothetical nature and lacks empirical assessment.

**Key Issues, questions and hypotheses**

A Compromise on geographical relocation for the search for work and job promotion is a more salient issue among two-earner couples in Germany today than it was at the beginning of the 1990s. Since spatial flexibility demands on the labour market and the female labour force participation keep growing, it can therefore be expected that complex living arrangement decisions are going to matter more frequently in Germany not only as a fact of quantitative terms but also as commuting between two locations affect the population more
broadly. While commuting partnerships and LAT arrangements have been known for the highly selective occupational group of professors in Germany there are reasons for assuming that complex living arrangements are becoming more important among other professional groups and the lower educated. That would result in more complex commuting patterns connecting three types of places: workplaces, dwelling places and centres of life. Women take over an important part regarding the rising complexity of geographical mobility patterns as they do not accept a tied partner role in complex living arrangements by deciding to commute themselves or determining men’s geographical mobility decisions.

The aim of the project is to explore the impact of growing spatial flexibility demands of the German labour market on the living arrangements and housing situation of individuals, partnerships and households. A further objective of the project is to investigate women’s geographical mobility role regarding labour migration and the creation of complex living arrangements. Following the described comprehensive perspective on migration patterns the project design aimed at three target groups: LATs who live with his or her partner in different cities, those with a secondary residence for job reasons and labour migrants.

To accomplish the aims of the project we firstly examine the circumstances under which considerations lead to migration or to the creation of complex living arrangements. In this respect, we analyse if either commuting between two residences and living apart in two separate households are pre-stages for labour migration or complex living arrangements are of long-term nature and thus self-contained solutions for spatial flexibility. We expect that LAT arrangements resulted more often from labour market effects than the sociological literature may suggest (see above). We regard women’s professional careers to be of crucial importance in creating complex living arrangements. Therefore we expect that female respondents report as often on their professional career as a reason for their living arrangement as on occupational reasons of their male partner. The male respondents are also considered to report on occupational reasons of their female partner for their living arrangement decision. Moreover, age and household composition are likely to be significant determinants in complex living arrangement decisions. The literature on migration and residential mobility stresses that people with children are more reluctant to move than households without children as parents are reluctant to have their children change schools. Though we expect that young people without family responsibilities are more likely to live in complex living arrangements, a secondary residence for job reasons may be also a reasonable solution for cohabiting or married working fathers or mothers in order to avoid a move of the children.

Secondly, the project addresses the question of how mobile living arrangements affect patterns of geographical mobility in terms of space and time. In this connection our analysis focuses on commuting patterns of LATs and commuters both on an individual and partnership level in comparison. More particularly, as commuting is an essential feature of complex living arrangements, commuters and LATs are supposed to evaluate their dwelling location differently than migrants. Transport connection is expected to be more crucial than for migrants, thus distances in spatial and temporal terms to central railway stations, national highways and maybe even to airports probably strongly determine their search for accommodation. In this connection, certain characteristics of the residential area such as social and recreational infrastructure, environmental factors and the population structure presumably become less important in favour of distance considerations.
Whereas migrants are involved in a temporary selective move, commuting between two locations/households is effected by a continuous spatial mobility that may result in specific dwelling needs and preferences. We therefore investigate, thirdly, specific dwelling needs and preferences of the three target groups from a comparative perspective. For secondary residences probably small, convenient (e.g. good dwelling condition, an equipped kitchen) and cheap rented dwellings are in demand. In this case, a mismatch of local supply and demand particularly present in the large cities in economic stronger regions in Germany becomes obvious that may indicate a lack of commuters to fulfil their dwelling needs and would result eventually in dissatisfaction with the housing situation. The housing situation of LATs is also more complex than for migrants as commuting between two separate households requires that one or both accommodations - depending on the commuting arrangement of the partners - are suitable for at least two persons. Maybe an additional guestroom or workroom is needed. That would result in higher costs for housing compared to single migrants. Accordingly, LATs would report on financial disadvantages of the living arrangement. By assessing group specific housing needs and preferences we aim at drawing conclusions about future housing demands in times of on-going labour market flexibilisation. In couple and family households decisions on where and how to live always imply a process of balancing individual needs, demands and conceptions of several people. How people have adjusted their lives to occupational requirements from an individual and partnership point of view and what kind of coping strategies have been adapted depending on the mobile living arrangement are further research questions of our study. As commuting contributes to more complex arrangements of work, home, partnership and private life we assume that commuters and LATs have more difficulties in juggling work and private life. We therefore expect that these target groups have adjusted their work in order to cope with commuting by means of flexible working hours and using possibilities of homework and home office. Reconciling work and private life in satisfying way may be more difficult for those commuters and LATs with inflexible working hours.

**Methods**

The study is based on a quantitative research design in order to provide data about the importance of complex living arrangements in distributional terms and to get detailed information about the housing and living situation of migrants, those who live apart with his or her partner in different cities and commuters with a secondary residence for job reasons in comparative perspective. To yield a representative sample that includes our target groups we draw on official registers of inhabitants kept by municipalities throughout Germany. Four large cities in Germany were chosen for the individual based random sample. The economic well-being of the large cities Duesseldorf (North Rhine-Westphalia), Stuttgart (Baden-Württemberg) and Munich (Bavaria) suggest labour migration to the cities to be an important issue. The Microcensus of the year 2004 also indicates a significant amount of people with a secondary residence for job reasons in these regional capitals in West Germany (see above). Berlin was selected as the functional importance of the city is estimated to attract migrants in specific job fields such as administration, TV and press and the like though the local labour market situation has been declining undeniably over the last years. This specific divided economic situation which is considered to be favourable for only a small part of certain job fields and unfavourable in particular for engineers may have triggered the creation of LAT arrangements on the other side.
Migrants who have been moving to one of these target cities since 2001 and who are registered there with either a main or a secondary residence at the time of sampling were included in the random sample except for Stuttgart. Here the received data of the official register did not allow a sampling by the status of residence. Thus, in the three target cities Duesseldorf, Munich and Berlin commuters between two residences could be addressed directly. Though LATs, in contrast, could not be selected directly by using this method, they were nonetheless integrated in the sample by the selected group of migrants. Since the focus of the study is on labour market effects on geographical mobility patterns, after this selection the sample was restricted to people aged between 25 and 59 years. This age range was chosen to ensure that the respondents had most probably finished fulltime education and are at the same time still in labour force.

Initially 2000 respondents (1200 with a registered main residence plus 800 with a registered secondary residence) in each target city were to be included in the sample. The sub-sample for Stuttgart was weighted proportionally to the other sub-samples in order to increase the chance to draw respondents with a secondary residence, hence, 4000 respondents were selected. In contrast, the official registration of Munich was able to provide very detailed information on migration to the city. This allows us to address specifically inhabitants who have changed their status of residence within the last five years from main residence to secondary residence of whom 100 respondents were additionally drawn for the sub-sample. Surprisingly, the proportion of people who have moved to Berlin within the last five years at the time of sampling and who are still registered there with a secondary residence is extremely low compared to Duesseldorf and Munich. This migration pattern applied only to 68 inhabitants. One cause for this finding might be the municipal secondary residence tax ("Zweitwohnungssteuer") which does not exist in the prosperous cities Duesseldorf and Stuttgart and was raised in Munich not until the beginning of 2005. Therefore the sample size of migrants with a main residence in Berlin was increased to 2400. Altogether the sample size of the mail survey amounted to 10,568 respondents.

The fully structured questionnaire contained a general part of questions for all respondents about their migration history and attitudes towards geographical mobility, housing situation with a focal point on the match of housing preferences/ needs and choices, working life and conditions of employment as well as household situation and partner characteristics. In order to estimate the distribution of complex living arrangements and to understand geographical mobility careers comprehensively we then used retrospective questions about previous secondary residences and LAT arrangements. Respondents with a current secondary residence and those living apart from her or his partner in different cities were further asked about reasons for their living arrangement decision, initial conceptions of the respective living arrangement and future plans, commuting patterns as well as perceived advantages and disadvantages of the living arrangement. This procedure also included a comparison of the housing situation at the main and secondary residence for those with a current secondary residence for job reasons.

The response rate of 21.5% or 2011 respondents might be taken as indicator that workplace mobility and difficulties in reconciling spatial flexibility demands and housing in the broadest sense do matter in contemporary Germany. Although we used up-dated official registers of the municipalities, a rate of undeliverable questionnaires of about 10% seems to be remarkable. This fact supports the finding from the migration literature that having migrated previously is a salient factor enhancing the changes of further moves.
Discussion

Though the findings will shed new light on geographical mobility patterns and decision processes from the point of view both individual and household, our project is of course limited by standardised methodology. As a consequence, our analysis does not allow us to investigate the process by which couples negotiate their living arrangement and migration role. The possibility to examine changing housing needs and preferences depending on the household situation or job requirements is also extremely limited by using a fully structured questionnaire. Thus, whether a respondent considers her or his housing situation to be dissatisfying due to his or her job-related spatial mobility demands or those of the partner could not be analysed in the survey. To provide more comprehensive insights into the effects on decision-making processes and the shift in housing needs and preferences in-depth interviews would be an appropriate method.

With regard to the scarce literature on commuting partnerships and LATs from a housing and geographical point of view it would be extremely valuable if our presented research design was adopted to other European countries aiming at a comparison of the quantitative importance, housing situation and commuting patterns of complex living arrangements. Due to a high female labour force participation rate, a development of the labour market which is comparable to that in Germany in the last years, and which is accompanied by a remarkably high concentration of firms in one region it may be reasonable to expect similar job-related geographical patterns in France. A comparison of our forthcoming results with the United Kingdom also would be interesting with respect to the completely different functioning of the housing markets. In Germany the home owner market hampers migration on the one hand due to high land prices, building costs and transaction costs (e.g. notary fees, real estate agent fees, property tax) but an inflexible home owner market might at the same time support the creation of commuting partnerships if both partners avoid selling their dwelling and giving up the shared centre of life by establishing a (rented) secondary residence for job reasons of at least one partner. In contrast, the home owner market in the UK is considered to be rather flexible and thus might foster migration instead of the creation of complex living arrangements. We expect a significant influence of housing markets and housing policy on the creation of complex living arrangements. Whether a municipal secondary residence tax or possibilities to set off secondary residences against tax liability have an effect on migration and living arrangement decisions will be one point of analysis in our project. In this connection an assessment of comparable housing relevant policy instruments in other European countries would be intriguing in order to deduce consequences for future housing policies in Germany.

References