Detlev Lück,
Ruth Limmer, and
Wolfgang Bonß

Theoretical Approaches to Job Mobility

State-of-the-Art of Mobility Research, Chapter 2

Job Mobilities Working Paper No. 2006-01, Chapter 2

Detlev Lück, Ruth Limmer, and Wolfgang Bonß

II. Theoretical Approaches to Job Mobility

Aside from literature presenting *empirical* research (as it is presented in the next chapters), there is, in all countries, literature presenting *theoretical approaches* to job-related mobility. Whereas the discussion of empirical findings turns out to take place mainly in national scientific forums and therefore will be summarized in national reports, the theoretical discussion is a rather European or *international debate*. Theories may be country-specific in a sense that they are influenced by specific national traditions; but they are usually not limited to a specific nation regarding their claim and their ability to explain mobility. Therefore theoretical publications are, much more than empirical ones, *internationally* noted, discussed and reacted to. And therefore this debate shall be presented in an own chapter, summarizing the theoretical approaches from all nine countries, and beyond.

There are very few theories that focus *only* or *mainly* on spatial mobility. (Among these, the concept of motility can be introduced as the most important approach. It will be summarized in section 2.3.) Even theories focussing *explicitly* on spatial mobility, as one issue among others, are not easy to find. However there are many theoretical approaches, dealing either with social change in general or with behaviour in general, that are used for explaining spatial mobility. This variety shall be presented in the following sections, at least in their basic outlines.

Views on mobility can be constructed from all sorts of theoretical perspectives, on the macro and micro level. On the *macro level* one can state that either the change of economies and labour markets (post-industrialisation, flexibilisation) induces mobility (of certain kinds). One can open the perspective to interactions of economies with other structural changes, such as communication and transportation technologies, increasing economic interactions between distant places (modernisation, globalisation). Or one can issue changes in the social relationships and cultural identities, allowing more mobility (of certain kinds) or making it desirable (reflexive modernisation, fluidity).

Other approaches take *micro perspectives* or link the micro and macro level. These again, can issue structural barriers or incentives (rational choice), cultural patterns like attitudes and identities ("mobility culture" and life style approaches), or they can combine these arguments, on the macro and on the micro level, into a more holistic perspective

(motility). The concept of quality of life and stress theories need to be mentioned, especially, regarding the *consequences* of job mobility for the private sphere. However, also quality of life may have an impact on mobility.

Linked to one or more theoretical perspectives, there is a number of important *theoretical concepts*, so to say: sets of established and empirically supported hypotheses, that either explain job-related mobility or its consequences or both. Among these, the most important might be gender, generation and position in the life course, family background, social networks, and socio-economic status. It seems that for almost all of them the causal relation to mobility is rather reciprocal than one-sided (Schneider, Limmer, & Ruckdeschel, 2002a, 2002b; Vignal, 2005a, 2005b, see also chapter 4). Especially the biography of couples and family in its interdependency with mobility experiences reveals a promising perspective.

1. Macro level perspectives

Macro theories have been interested mainly in explaining change of social structures, change of social relationships, or change of social mobility. Spatial mobility and its change come in often, but mostly as explaining variables among others or as boundary conditions. Mobility may be considered a driving mechanism behind the emergence of social relationships over long distances, within bigger groups of people, which again leads to qualitatively different social relationships. This is true for theories of modernisation, detecting a change from *Vergemeinschaftung* to *Vergesellschaftung* (Tönnies, 1887; similarly Durkheim, 1999), as well as for some theories of globalisation. A second driving mechanism usually is seen in new communication technologies, with communication being interpretable as virtual mobility. Similarly, these theories may take spatial mobility as a side-effect of the change of economic production, from agricultural to industrial society, or from industrial to knowledge-based, post-industrial society, with consequences for social relationships within these societies (Simmel, 1992, p. 791). Or, spatial mobility has been seen as a pre-condition for social upward mobility, and therefore has been predicted to characterize a modern society, open for social mobility.

In the last decades spatial mobility has played a minor role in the theoretical debate in sociology. Concepts like globalisation, cosmopolitisation ("Kosmopolitisierung"), debounda-risation ("Entgrenzung"), transnationalisation, hybridisation, and reflexive modernisation, for a long time, have been discussed only with reference to migration. Since very recently, these concepts are being systematically re-linked to spatial mobility in general (Pries, 2000;

Verstraete & Cresswell 2002; Ahmed et al., 2003; Sheller, 2003). Mobility and its acceleration are more and more perceived as central aspects of social change and keys to the understanding of modern societies (Sennett, 1998; Bauman, 2000; Urry, 2000b, 2003b; Kaufmann, 2002; Thrift, 2004; Rammler, 2001; Canzler & Schmidt, 2003). The core thesis in this macro theoretical debate is this: current social change in Western societies can be summarised as a process of comprehensive mobilisation. Some authors even already want to have detected a "mobility turn" in social theories and the birth of an interdisciplinary "new mobilities paradigm" (Urry, 2004). It is discussable whether we really have a "mobility turn" in social theories. However, there certainly is a new interest in mobility, especially in the linkage of mobility and modernity.

1.1. Theories of modernisation

Mobility is not at all a new phenomenon. But since the beginning of sociology, prominent authors have claimed that only in the (occidental) modernity, mobility has become something like a core principle for the organisation and structuring of societies (comparable to principles like individuality, rationality, equality, and globality). Increasing mobility is considered a major *cause* for as well as a *consequence* of the emergence of modern societies.

Karl Marx, for instance, saw the most important attribute of modern societies in its dynamic. For him, modern societies are affected by permanent change, and the people living in them, unlike people in more ancient societies, are highly mobile: socially as well as geographically. However, Marx, like for many authors, considered social change, social mobility, and spatial mobility as too related to always clearly distinguish between them. He emphasized the breaking down and speeding up as central elements of capitalism. He noted an "uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation" (Marx & Engels, 1848, p. 29). With "Bewegung" being translatable as well as "agitation" or as "motion," this diagnosis can be read as defining not only ongoing fast social change, but also mobility as a core principle of modernity. For good reason, Marx saw the railway as the icon of capitalism.

A more clearly outlined causality can be found in the theory of modernisation according to Émile Durkheim (1999). The changes that characterise modernisation, with social relationships becoming more formal, functional, and emotionally distant, for Durkheim, are driven by the increase in "moral density." That means: people interact with more other people more frequently. Durkheim notes three basic causes for this trend: (a) Whereas

agricultural societies (as well as hunters and nomads) needed to limit the proportion of people to geographical space to a certain ratio that allowed it to feed itself, the industrial society allowed demographic changes leading to an increase in the density of the population. (b) The higher number of people within a given nation moved even closer together in the process of urbanisation. (c) Communication and transportation technologies bridge the still existing spatial gaps (Durkheim, 1999, p. 314). In short, Durkheim assumes that spatial mobility increases due to technological progress. And the increasing spatial mobility (in addition to an increasing density of population) is assumed to bring people closer together, with the consequence of social relationships changing.

A similar, slightly more complex picture is drawn by Georg Simmel. Also he notes that, in modern times, people get in touch with more other people, described as widening of "social circles," with consequences for the quality of social relationships in society (Simmel, 1995, 53, 1992, pp. 456). And, like Durkheim, also Simmel considers spatial mobility a cause among others, including growth of population (idem) and urbanisation (Simmel, 1903, pp. 185), or the establishment of widely accepted currencies (Simmel, 2000, pp. 220). Geographical distances and barriers limit social interactions. Therefore *bridging* distances and *overcoming* geographical barriers allows new social interactions. This makes social relationships more "modern" in two ways. First, Simmel assumes that social interactions over long distances are limited in their contents, and therefore remain focussed on one single issue (like a specific professional relation), instead of including every aspect of the interacting people's lives. Second, mobility indirectly forces *all* social interactions to be less personal, by allowing people to interact with *more* people at the same time (Simmel, 1995, pp. 221, 1992, pp. 698).

However, in Simmel's theory, the role of spatial mobility is more limited and more ambiguous than in Durkheim's theory. For one, Simmel assumes that the increasing mobility in modern society requires a fix point of reference, even more so than in pre-modern times. Whereas occasionally, slowly moving pre-modern tribes could be nomads and wander without returning to a specific place, the fast moving people in modern societies need to be mobile around cities with a fixed infra-structure, in order not to break apart (Simmel, 1992, p. 698). For two, modernisation is not necessarily seen as a steady increase of *people's* mobility. Simmel assumes that mobility of goods or (virtual) money through space can bridge the physical gap between people as well and in this way can substitute human spatial mobility (Simmel, 1900, p. 700).

Not necessarily mobility, but *ability* to be mobile (socially as well as in space), is also a *consequence* in Simmel's (1992, p. 791) like in other theories of modernisation. In pre-modern societies mobility has certainly happened (Hradil, 2002, p. 369), but it was not a positive, guiding value with relevance for individual decision-making or for the functioning and structuring of societies. The aim of being on the move was to return to the place of origin. In pre-modern societies, the notion of stability and immobility dominated the construction of social situations and contexts. The most important concepts for social integration were local belonging and the (unchangeable) social status.

Modern societies, in contrast, are "mobile" in several senses: They are mobile in terms of allowing and being affected by social change. They are mobile in terms of allowing and being affected by social (economic and cultural) mobility. And they are also mobile in terms of allowing and being affected by *spatial mobility*. In theories of modernisation, these three dimensions are thought as closely interrelated and therefore are often addressed together under the term "mobility" as a summarising category. In the "first modernity," the ideal of a mouldable society and of human beings as self-responsible subjects on their way to perfection were melted together with the imagination of physical, i.e. spatial mobility as the "engine behind" this project, as the instrument for putting it into reality. Another reason for this linkage is the assumption that interaction requires physical presence: You must have been there to understand what's happening. This idea is also described as the "tourist gaze" (Urry, 1990). And third, modernity allows mobility that norms of pre-modern societies did not allow: People are no longer (or less) bound to small social or geographical spaces. Therefore a theory of modernisation would expect a significant increase of mobility and, even more so, an increase in acceptance or even aspiration of mobility. There should be a linkage that Rammler (1999, 2001) called an "elective affinity" ("Wahlverwandtschaft") of mobility and modernity.

1.2. Post-industrialisation, knowledge-based society, and globalisation

Modernisation was used as a concept for summarising the universal patterns of social change of occidental societies in industrial times. However, since these theories were published much further social change has happened, and at some point, authors noted patterns that did not quite fit into the same categories anymore. Therefore, in the late 20th century, new concepts were formulated.

This change of societies in the late 20th century has been described by many concepts. Among the most popular ones are the transition *from industrial to post-industrial societies*

(Fourastié, 1954; Touraine, 1969; Bell, 1973; Deutschmann, 2002) and the concept of *globalisation* (Featherstone, 1990, 1995; Reich, 1991; Sklair, 1991; Sassen, 1991; Robertson, 1992; Held, 1995; Waters, 1995; Albrow, 1996, 1998; Castells, 1996; Hirst & Thompson, 1996; Altvater & Mahnkopf, 1996, 2003; Beck, 1997; Bauman, 1998; Martin & Schumann, 1996; Beisheim et al., 1998; Zürn, 1998; Hübner & Petschow, 2001; Dürrschmidt, 2002; Müller, 2002; Kemper, 2003; Glyn, 2004; Thurow, 2004; Badura, 2005; Banse, 2005). Looking at numbers of publications, it seems obvious that the latter has replaced the first as the most established concept.

Post-industrialisation notes the shift of economic activities, away from industrial production of goods towards the third sector. At the same time, the efficiency of industrial (and agricultural) production is rapidly increased by introducing complex, computer-based, automated technology, turning factories (and farms) into high-tech work places that require much more skilled workers than the factories in the early 20th century did. Since the third sector has been defined as the "service sector," however, many newly created jobs that are classified as third sector jobs are rather about processing complex information and providing knowledge, the post-industrial society has been called the *knowledge-based society*, which may be a more precise label.

Post-industrialisation is a concept that describes economic change. Its relevance for society lies in the fact that jobs in the third sector require differently skilled employees, different resources and different infra-structures. For instance, the increasing necessity of highly skilled workers gave education a higher value and made educational expansion happen. In terms of mobility it is important to notice that third sector jobs are less bound to a specific place of production, as industrial jobs are. They require less infra-structure, less physical resources and can be organised much more flexibly. Therefore they also can move or be mobile more easily. This makes it likely that, with the change from industrial to post-industrial societies, mobility should be increasing even more.

Concepts of *globalisation* come in very different variations. Their origin lies in economic descriptions, noting the expansion of international trade and of international capital flows, and an increase of interdependencies of national economies. Social sciences have corrected the pure economic view by including complementary processes into the concept: these are the increase of interdependencies of national policies, of cultures, of ecological problems etc. Anthony Giddens defines globalisation as the "intensification of world-wide

social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and visa versa" (Giddens, 1990, p. 85). It is the element of rising *interdependencies*, of *reciprocal causal impacts between distant places* that can be seen as the core element of the globalisation concept.

With this core understanding, some globalisation concepts may additionally describe related processes, such as the shift towards a knowledge-based economy (Reich, 1991; Castells, 1996). In other words: the concept of post-industrialism has partly been implemented into globalisation theories.

Globalisation concepts like to emphasize that globalisation is more than a process towards a "borderless world" (Ohmae, 1991). Borders may just be *re-organised* in a way that borders between nation states, or continents become less relevant whereas those between local regions or social groups might become more important. However, most authors will agree that *geographical distance* becomes less important. Malcolm Waters, for example, defines globalisation as "social process, in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding" (Waters, 1995, p. 3). This concept is naturally highly relevant for framing mobility research since the fact that constraints of geography recede is directly linked to spatial mobility.

The reasons for this decrease partly are borrowed from modernisation theories or concepts of post-industrialisation: Third sector work is more mobile by being more independent from infra-structure and resources, compared to industrial work. Technological progress makes world-wide travel faster and more affordable for more people. This way the ability to become mobile as well as the factual mobility rise. In other words: Spatial mobility is assumed to be increasing, for the simple reason that technological innovations are making more mobility possible. Other events may also lead to an increase of interdependencies, such as the growth of economies outside of the "western world." The fall of the iron curtain is assumed to foster both, the (opportunity of) world-wide mobility as well as the growth of Eastern European and Asian markets.

What are the consequences of globalisation for the character of societies? Authors like Robert Reich (1991) or Manuel Castells (1996) assume that interdependencies in society are becoming more ambiguous, less stable, and affected by faster change. Castells (1996) describes globalised societies as "network societies," that can hardly be controlled by national policies anymore, and therefore are becoming more dependent on social networks. The

declining relevance of national policies and of national contexts has also been described by Martin Albrow (1998) and by Ulrich Beck (1997). The strong linkage of society and nation state that had been established in industrial societies in the 19th and early 20th century is weakened again. However, as a reaction to rising uncertainty through globalisation, also a *re-strengthening* of nation states – or of regional or local spaces – has been proclaimed. The term of "glocalisation" (Robertson, 1995) has been introduced in this context. There are two further questions authors are disagreeing so far: Does globalisation lead to a more homogenous world society or to a more heterogeneous world of diverse societies? And: Is globalisation a break in the development towards modernity (Albrow, 1996; Bauman, 1998) or is it a continuation or intensification of this process (Altvater & Mahnkopf, 1996, 2003).

1.3. Flexibalisation and precarious occupation

Another concept that emphasizes economic aspects of social change in the late 20th century is the concept of *flexibalisation*. In this aspect, it is related to the notification of the post-industrial society. However, instead of the shift among economic sectors, it is focussing on the *types of occupations* societies establish. This way, it may not be based on primary causes of social change, like the concept of post-industrialisation is, but it certainly is based on phenomena that have a more direct impact on other aspects of social life. The same concept is framed in a more critical way, using the terms *precarisation* ("Prekarisierung") or increase of precarious occupations and economic household situations.

In the 1960s there was a firmly established and largely realised ideal for "normal" employment careers that included a full-time position, an unlimited time contract, a steady work place and relatively steady work hours (Mückenberger, 1985, 1989). During the last two decades, fewer and fewer occupations fulfil this ideal. The forms of occupations are varying stronger and they are becoming more flexible. We especially see more part-time work and more insecurity, due to occupation in series of short time limited contracts or as formally self-employed work. Work hours are becoming more flexible and dependent on the companies' capacities. Protection of employed work, as far as it existed in the 1960s, is cut back. As a consequence, multiple employments are inclining. In short, one can state that occupations are becoming more diverse and more variable, shifting responsibilities, risks and uncertainties from the employer to the employees. What used to be dependent employee appears more and more as a self-employed worker, offering nothing but his own man-power on a flexible, volatile labour market (Voß & Pongratz, 1998).

This development has been called *flexibilisation*, giving it a neutral or even positive connotation, because the flexibility allows the economy to react fast to changing demands, in order to maximize its efficiency. It has been described as increase in *precarious occupations*, emphasizing the loss of economic security for the employed people.

At the same time that occupations are drastically changing, the normative *ideal* of secure and steady full-time employment, at least in Central and Southern Europe, has remained surprisingly stable. This may, at first, seem paradox or anachronistic. However, since other societal structures, norms, and institutions are still taking a certain level of economic security for granted, there are good reasons why societies persist in considering flexible work deviant. The socially accepted standard of living and level of consumption, the established norms regarding women as caregivers with men as single earners providing the household income alone, the lack of public childcare allowing both parents to be full-time employed, social security and pension systems are examples for institutionalised solutions that depend on the ability of employees, especially of male breadwinners, to provide a decent and steady income. In Germany, it takes about 40 years of full-time employment to earn the entitlement for a decent pension in old age. Structures like these *are* changing, for example with many European countries introducing additional private pensions to bridge the opening financial gap. However, these changes take time. And until new comprehensive patterns have been institutionalised, for securing the economic grounds of households over the entire life-course, the normative ideal of reliable full-time employment will persist and the flexibilisation will appear as precariousness to private households.

With no doubt, this has *consequences* for private social life, and for the structures of society. For the far developed "western" societies, following effects have been considered as potential consequences of the precarious economic situation of households: stress, quality loss of partnerships, postponing of family plans, low fertility, loss of social integration and social networks, a loss of quality of life, and increase of dual earner couples. Some of these potential consequences have, in fact, been empirically noted, e.g. the low fertility in Central and Southern Europe or the increase of dual earner couples in most European societies. However, to what degree these are caused by flexibilisation is left open for speculation since potential alternative explanations cannot be excluded. Spatial mobility comes in as an intervening variable: It certainly can be considered an additional potential consequence of flexibilisation since becoming mobile is one way of being flexible and trying to maintain a steady income. At the same time, spatial mobility is likely to cause or intensify many of the other potential

consequences, mentioned above.

It also must be said that many of the potential consequences were not yet empirically confirmed, at least not in a convincing way for several societies as a whole. A reason could be that the uncertainties do not affect societies as a whole, but rather specific groups within societies who are already marginalised. This is likely to be the case for young cohorts, entering the labour market (Mills, Blossfeld, & Klijzing, 2006), and for women (Hofmeister & Blossfeld, 2006). Men in their mid ages, still have full-time employments to a relatively high degree. On the other hand, especially highly skilled people, especially women with high educational levels, are affected by flexible work (Sacher, 1998, p. 173). It is discussed whether this indicates that flexible jobs are partly wanted, e.g. by women trying to combine a supplement household income with a role as a primary caregiver, (idem) or whether the combination of employment and care-giving work is just a consequences of young, educated women being pushed towards the edge of the labour market (Hofmeister & Blossfeld, 2006). The correlation of precariousness and educational level also indicates that flexibilisation is mostly introduced in the "new" third sector jobs of the post-industrial society.

1.4. Theories of reflexive modernisation, individualisation and fluidity

Usually, the beginning of *reflexive modernisation* or *individualisation* (being the major component of reflexive modernisation) is historically connected to at least one of the two processes: the transition from industrial to post-industrial societies or the concept of globalisation. So, it is not a different phase or process that is described, but rather a different interpretation of the same or of a similar empirical phenomenon. However, it tries to integrate concepts like post-industrialisation, globalisation, and flexibilisation. And it tries to lift them on a higher level of abstraction in order to get to a more universal theory to describe social change in the late 20th century.

Reflexive modernisation basically describes a radicalisation of modernity (Beck, Bonß, Lau, & 2003). The core principles of modernity, so the theory says, could only be successfully introduced, because they, at first, remained embedded and weakened by pre-modern structures: The industrial society has introduced social mobility and social change based on a rational maximisation of efficiency. However, mobility and change were mainly limited to the *organisation* of labour and took certain needs of private life, certain ascribed gender and class differences within the division of labour and certain geographical spaces of labour for granted. The principles of modernity then have been applied to their own scope,

with the consequence of claiming to be applied universally and to overcome *any* legitimation through tradition. This way the social change due to modernisation has been accelerated. The claim to maintain a residence in a traditional, familiar place and to keep investing in traditional, familiar social ties, now, is considered problematic because it restraints productivity. The trend towards being socially and geographically highly mobile, that Karl Marx has described already more than 150 years ago, is now expected to come true by theories of reflexive modernisation.

According to the expectations, in the 21st century, the needs for mobility are inclining, even beyond what was noted for the (early) modernisation, especially the mobility related to economic and labour market demands. As the flexibilisation concept describes, people are expected to sell their manpower as self-responsible, quasi self-employed entrepreneurs on liberal labour markets. And as such, they are expected to be flexible and mobile: professionally, socially, and geographically. Whereas life-courses in *pre-modern* societies, and even in advanced *industrial* societies, have been rather certain and predictable, but less open for individual accomplishment, life-courses in *late modern* or post-industrial societies are becoming more open and more uncertain. However, this openness is not only an aspect of freedom, but also of restraint, with people experiencing pressure to become mobile. Mobility does not guarantee employment, a decent income, or social integration. It is not a *sufficient* precondition for economic and social success. But it has become a *necessary* pre-condition.

In analogy with the changing responsibilities of employees on the labour market, the theory of reflexive modernisation predicts a comprehensive change of role models. The final step towards reflexive modernity corresponds with the model of the "flexible man," described by Richard Sennett (1998). His main character is to not know about traditions or unquestionable values, to not strike roots, but to always be ready to go. He is willing to be socially and geographically mobile in order to sell his man-power. Sennett is interpreting the social changes connected with this trend as "erosion," as a crisis bearing the danger of anomy. Other authors (like Manuel Castells or Ulrich Beck) have a more optimistic view, assuming that the change may lead to new forms of social relations. These relations are not defined by tradition, but need to be actively created.

Life-courses in general are not following clearly pre-defined patterns anymore. Men will not necessarily marry at a certain age and then turn into full-time breadwinners until retirement; women will not necessarily have a family, interrupt their job career and turn into

full-time housewives until the children move out. Life-course tracks have become uncertain. However, this uncertainty can be experienced not only as a threat but also as freedom of choice.

The tendency towards more mobility, flexibility, and change does not only affect individuals. Structures are affected too, maybe even more so. More capital is moved faster around the globe. With this, there are increasing demands for labour to be mobile and for social structures to be flexible. Within the economy there is rising acceptance for the principle of "creative destruction" ("schöpferischen Zerstörung"), as described by Peter Schumpeter. Within politics there is a call for more readiness for reforms. Tendencies like these have been described as "liquid modernity" (Bauman, 2003) or as "reflexive modernisation" (Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994).

Looking for empirical confirmation in history, three steps of development have been distinguished (Bonß & Kesselring, 1999, p. 47):

(1) The first period where a modern perspective on mobility can be found is the 18th century. Here, mobility was mainly an issue among the new bourgeois elite. Mobility was associated with the transition from absolutism to civil society and, as such, strongly positively evaluated and even normatively demanded. Changing one's geographical position and, with doing so, the social or cultural context was considered an opportunity for collecting new insights and intellectual perspectives. Based on this view, among bourgeois elites a culture of travel developed (Bausinger, Beyrer, & Korff, 1999).

(2) In the 19th and early 20th century, mobility became an issue for wider parts of society. Mobility and ability to become mobile was established as a social value, being strongly associated with social mobility on the one hand, and with technological success and ruling nature on the other hand. Also acceleration of speed became an important goal. However, the factual mobility did not increase as much as its evaluation. Also, mobility was mainly thought only within national borders.

(3) Reflexive modernisation can be considered a third step: The claim for mobility becomes international and global. It is considered important not only from an economic perspective anymore, but also in other contexts.

The analysis of current changes that we can summarise as reflexive modernisation is

still going on. A number of recent trends have been noted that are implemented into the theory, in more or less convincing ways. These debates are interesting since they may lead to the expectation of new forms of mobility and of ability to become mobile. The accents of the reflexive modernity debate have changed at least in three ways in recent years:

(1) There is an emergence of *virtual mobility*: New communication technologies allow us to transport huge amounts of digital data from one place on earth to another. This gives "communication" a new quality in a way that not only face-to-face *conversation*, but also physical presence is simulated, including the visual impression of places and the option to interactively collect information that fits very specifically one's interests. Combined with the trend towards third sector job that are mainly about processing information, often all resources that a work place needs can be sent through cables around the world at the speed of light. This way, employees may work on projects for far-away customers and purposes, with far-away colleagues and resources, without being corporeally on the move. This is a new phenomenon that, at least in its social consequences, is more than just a new way of communicating. And it is discussable in what way *virtual mobility* is a better term. On the one hand, it *substitutes* for mobility and creates physical *immobility*. On the other hand, it simulates travel around the world at a speed that hardly can be accelerated any further and therefore shows a lot of the characteristics of spatial mobility to a higher degree than mobility itself does. This may lead to the interpretation that e-mail and internet are a new level of acceleration of mobility.

(2) The intense *linkage between social and geographical mobility* as it has been assumed by theories of modernity and early theories of reflexive modernity is breaking up. The compulsion to be mobile does seem to increase. However, the readiness for geographical mobility is not any longer a prerequisite or a guarantee for social upward mobility, rather a means to avoid social downward mobility.

(3) It is questioned in what way the role of *mobility* needs to be re-put into perspective. Whereas during the "first modernity" social and geographical mobility were conceived as a doable but mainly *not yet realized* path towards a better life, mobility now to some degree is experienced as a reality. However this experience makes persisting boundaries for mobility as well as downsides visible, including the insecurity concerning social descents. So, the vision of unlimited mobility of autonomous subjects through time and space is unmasked as illusionary. "We have never been mobile" is Latour's conclusion about

modernity (1995). At least, mobility today rather appears as an ambiguous phenomenon. On the one hand, it continues to be a thought of as a positive guiding value for the organisation of modern societies. On the other hand, institutional settings actually change in ways that make mobility more difficult and less necessary. For instance, people do not have to travel corporeally to be mobile.

At this point, the role of mobility in and for society becomes unclear. Some theories of reflexive modernisation (e.g. Sennett, 1998; Urry, 2000b) still expect a very significant increase in mobility that will introduce us to the "flexible man" (Sennett, 1998). John Urry (2000b) even postulates that sociology needs to change its main focus: it needs to study forms of mobility, instead of structures. *Fluidity*, he argues, is the main characteristic for societies in the 21st century. Fluidity means an increase of movement of people, goods, and information – being virtually, imaginatively, or physically on the move. This prediction, however, is not well supported by empirical data.

2. Linked micro-macro level perspectives

Macro level theories are helpful to understand cross-national differences and long-term societal change. However, they are usually unable to explain variance *within* societies, which is unsatisfying for research with micro level data. And in the case of mobility, a further disadvantage is that they do not make it easy to differentiate between different forms of mobility.

This differentiation and the explanation of within country variance can be achieved more easily with theories of action that focus the micro level. Some theories may appear as pure micro level models. But most models link their predictions regarding individual behaviour on the micro level to influences that may lie on the micro or macro level. Three main approaches are presented here: *Rational choice theories* start out by assuming that individuals make rational decisions, following their individual interests and reflecting structural incentives and barriers. Complementary there are approaches, framed as *cultural or life style theories*. These assume that individual behaviour (like choosing whether to become mobile or not) reflects immaterial normative concepts: established cultural concepts in society that are followed unconsciously, expectations from significant others, social values and norms, or personal habits, attitudes, values and life styles. The concept of *motility* could be considered a synthesis between the two.

2.1. Rational choice approaches

Rational choice theories have in common that they assume that individuals follow own subjective interests with their behaviour. Most models assume that people are making conscious rational decisions regarding their behaviour, taking into account the circumstances they act in. With picking one out of many options how to act, they are trying to maximize the ratio of benefits and costs. Coming from economics, the early rational choice theories would consider only monetary benefits and costs as relevant. Also, it was assumed that actors were free in their decisions and fully informed about the benefits and costs of all their options. These assumptions have the advantage of making the decision process and its outcome calculable and predictable. Adopting rational choice theory to *non*-economic social issues, however, made these assumptions appear rather unrealistic and has lead to more complex and more realistic variations.

Instead of assuming that actors are free in their decision, newer "RC" models assume that they are limited by *constraints* (Simon, 1957, 1991). These constraints can be of multiple kinds: for example lack of physical strength, lack of resources, or lack of knowledge. For a decision whether to become occupationally mobile, constraints could be not having a driver's license, living far from a train station, or not knowing about an alternative job in the neighbourhood. So, the assumption of constraints also implies that actors may not be fully informed about all options they have and about the benefits and costs coming with them. Simon (1957, 1982, 1991) therefore speaks of *bounded rationality* that leads to the choice of behaviour.

Bounded rationality is *likely* to lead to behaviour that comes with relatively high utility and relatively low costs. However, there is no guarantee for that. And it is certainly not guaranteed that the *best* of all possible ratios of benefits and costs is achieved. Therefore the goal of behaviour under bounded rationality is not maximising, but *satisficing* (idem), meaning achieving at least a specific, defined minimum level of utility. An employee, for example, might not go for the best paid job or the shortest of all commutes, but rather for a job that pays at least X Euro a month, that allows him to spend at least four nights per week at home etc.

Applying RC to non-economic issues brings up another argument why it is an illusion to predict behaviour based on the maximisation of utility. This reason is that the height of benefits and costs are subjective and therefore, for a social scientist as an external observer,

often indefinable. Whether it is more "valuable" enjoying time with one's family during the week or, instead, having a well paid, prestigious job depends not only on the actor's specific situation, but also on the actor's individual preferences. These benefits are not measurable in any "currency" or objective quantifiable unit, and even less so in the *same* currency where their values would be comparable. To weight up between the two, is something every individual has to do for her- or him-self. Therefore, a variation of RC theory has been introduced, known as the *SEU* model. It assumes that it is the *subjectively expected* utility that explains an actor's behaviour (Savage, 1954), not an objectively measurable utility.

An RC model that tries to correct the major critiques quite well has been introduced by Siegwart Lindenberg (1985). Pulling together the classical economic theory, based on "homo economicus" (Smith, 1776; Spranger, 1914) as an ideal actor, with "homo sociologicus" (Dahrendorf, 1958) being the ideal actor of sociological role theory, he designed the *RREEMM* model, assuming a *resourceful, restricted, expecting, evaluating, maximizing man* as an ideal actor. Unlike RREEMM's ancestor "homo economicus," this actor is *restricted* in his options (by constraints), and not fully informed. He can only *expect* certain benefits and costs that depend on his subjective *evaluations*. On the other side, he can be resourceful in creating new options and compromises that did not appear at first.

The argument of bounded rationality has gone further. New RC models assume that, in some situations, the lack of information or time for decision-making can be severe enough or the achievable advantage in terms of utility, in comparison, low enough, that reflecting consciously on costs and benefits does not happen at all (not even according to subjective preferences). A paradox situation can appear: The most *rational* way of deciding for a specific behaviour may be *not* to decide *rationally*. For example, choosing an ice cream flavour in an ice cream bar in a foreign country (without understanding of the language or translation available) is likely to happen intuitively or instinctively. Finding a dictionary or somebody to translate would be more "costly" than choosing a not so much preferred flavour. So, in this situation, it is rational not to be rational about the decision. Therefore, Hartmut Esser (1993b, 1996, 2000, 2001) in his *frame selection model* would expect an actor to go through a two-step decision process: In a first step he will *define the situation*, meaning he will note the circumstances of the situation and pick a basic pattern how to react to it: a *frame* of action. If the situation calls for the *reflecting-calculating mode (rc)*, meaning a conscious reflection of (subjective) benefits and costs, the actor, in a second step, will make a rational decision in a strict sense. If it does not, he will, in the second step, go on *automatic-spontaneous mode (as)*,

instead, and make an instinctive decision.

In the context of occupational mobility, it may not be necessary to include an automatic-spontaneous mode into a rational choice model. It is possible that employees get into a long-distance commuting situation without much conscious reflection, since the importance of staying employed is a strong frame that might not be questioned as long as it "only" implies a long commute. However, deciding between unemployment and *relocation*, or between daily long-distance commute and *weekly commute* will probably always need to be considered a *high cost* situation. So, it is worth trying to get enough information for making a well reflected rational choice. And mostly, the relevant information will be accessible in the available time. Also there are few alternatives to a consciously reflected decision. Most people can not draw on biographical experiences or cultural patterns when they are facing a decision regarding becoming mobile. There are no well proven, established ways how it is *usually* done to balance between labour market demands and the demands of family and friendship networks.

For this reason, rational choice models that were applied to mobility issues remained rather strict in their assumptions (Sjaastad, 1962; Wolpert, 1965; Kalter, 1997, 1998). These authors explain migration mainly by assuming that people migrate if they expect the long-term utility to be higher in a new place. The differences between the models are marked by secondary questions: Are only monetary or also social benefits and costs relevant for the decision? Does the current place of residence gat a "bonus" for avoiding mobility costs? And on which level are decisions made: individual, partnership, or family?

The latter question is a more crucial one. A theory may lead to very different predictions, depending on whether it assumes individuals to be maximising (or satisficing) their individual utility or whether it assumes families to be maximising the family's utility. In the context of family decisions, it seems hard to believe individuals would make decisions independently from their family members. Since family members, at some point, have to come to a *common* decision (or break up) pure individual rationality should only be found within the family internal debate towards a common decision. Here, it could be framed by negotiation theory or game theory. However, the outcome of the decision whether a family should relocate or migrate or a family member should take a job that requires long-distance commuting should rather be framed as partnership or family decision. An in between solution is formulated by Gary S. Becker (1981) who applies economic theory on family decisions. He

almost gives up the core assumption of rational choice theory by claiming that individuals can be *altruistic*. However, he assumes altruism only for parents in the sense that they consider the utility of their children in the same way as their own.

Individual as well as family decisions are made on the micro level. How does the macro level come in? James Samuel Coleman (1990) has explained the interrelation in a scheme, known as the micro-macro graph. A condition on the macro level may be part of the potential costs and benefits that many individuals are reflecting, while making a rational decision in favour of their utility. Therefore the macro condition influences these individuals' decisions. And with *many* individuals tending to decide in a specific way, a new macro phenomenon may emerge. For instance, a general tax break for costs for long-distance commuting, as it exists in Germany, may make employees in Germany more likely to accept a job that requires long commutes. So, the consequence might be a high ratio of long-distance commuters in Germany. This is a macro phenomenon that again may affect individual choices (for example by jamming highways).

As Esser notes, the micro-macro graph, in a more abstract form, describes the interrelation of macro and micro level according to *any* theory of action (Esser, 1993a). According to any theory of action, all or at least many individuals will, in some way, react to macro level conditions. So, according to any theory of action, one macro level condition is likely to cause another macro level effect.

2.2. "Mobility culture," life style perspective, and role theory

The development of rational choice theories is characterised by weakening the formally strict assumptions and by including more and more non-rational or non-utility oriented elements. This indicates that there are ways in which people act that are *not* captured by the assumptions of maximising utility and making conscious rational decisions. The range of *alternative* ways of acting is probably large. However, these alternative ways of acting are also rather difficult to formalise. Therefore alternative theories of action, beyond rational choice, are not very well developed.

One way to summarise this range of alternative ways of acting is the concept of *culture*. For this reason, in debates on mobility research, it has been claimed that "*mobility culture*" should be introduced as an explaining concept (e.g. Bericat, 1994). The term "mobility culture," so far, is only arbitrary. It has not yet been defined or elaborated as a

theoretical approach. However, we can understand it as those aspects of culture that affect decisions and behaviour in the context of spatial mobility. So, mobility culture is deductible from culture, as a broader concept.

Culture is a rather well established concept, but one with many deviating definitions (see Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). Most definitions try to capture culture by listing elements it consists of. Which elements exactly these are is being discussed. However, there is a common understanding according to which the elements of culture share a few criteria that probably mark the outlines of this concept relatively well: (1) Elements of culture are non-material, addressable maybe as knowledge, beliefs, habits and frames, or social constructs. (2) This knowledge enables individuals to interact with others, by reducing the infinity of ways to act to a small number of established, appropriate options. (3) In order to so, cultural knowledge must be shared by, more or less, all members of a group or society. The distinction of people who share and people who do not share cultural knowledge is one of the core criteria that identify a group or society. (4) In order to maintain this common knowledge in a group or in society, each new member or generation is made familiar with it in a process of socialisation. (5) However, with the exchange of members and generations and the permanent re-production of culture by new members and generations, the common knowledge and beliefs may gradually change. Tylor (1974) offers the following definition: "Culture [...] is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." A more straight forward definition might be: Culture is the *knowledge* and the *beliefs* that are shared by the members of a group or society, and that one member of this group or society *expects* another member to share when they interact with each other.

Keeping in mind this *function* culture has for enabling humans to interact in society, it is not difficult to identify examples for knowledge that qualifies as cultural. Sharing a language, for example, is a necessary pre-condition for many forms of interaction. Similarly, it is of major importance to know about appropriate forms of greeting, about the meaning of red and green traffic lights, to know how to get cash from a cash machine, or how operate a public phone or an elevator, when being exposed to public life. Some of this knowledge is about knowing *facts* (e.g. a hot burner will burn you if you touch it); some is about *beliefs* that are thought to be true (e.g. you might be reborn as an animal if you behave sinful). But mostly cultural knowledge means knowing about *social values* and *social constructs* in the group or society one lives in (e.g. the importance of respecting authority, the gender and age

appropriate ways of dressing in public, the rules of politeness, the value and usage of money etc.). Also aspects of *mobility culture* seem clearly detectable. In order to become mobile it is important to know about traffic signs and speed limits, to know about train schedules and how to research them, to know how much luggage is allowed on an airplane etc.

These examples mainly describe cultural knowledge characterising *national societies* or even bigger units, such as the modern "western world" of post-industrialised countries. As such, they will only be able to explain *cross-national* or *cross-cultural differences*. Freisl, for example, explains differences in the mobility of Europeans and US Americans by basic social values. In the United States, he sees stronger values of freedom and equality which have promoted mobility. In contrast, he considers European values to have a stronger emphasis on property ownership and education. This has, on the one hand, enforced emotional ties to one's hometown and, on the other hand, fostered a hierarchical understanding of authority, both hindering mobility (Freisl, 1994). Such comparisons can also be made within Europe. For example Spain, compared to Northern and Central European societies, is considered to have a rather immobility oriented culture, given that the split shift doubles commuting time and relocation is hindered by a very high share of homeowners in a very rigid housing market (De Miguel & De Miguel, 2002).

It is not necessarily only the *content* of culture that fosters or hinders mobility. Also the *size of geographical spaces that share the same culture* can be an explanation. For example, Freisl also considers the different education systems in the various German states and the language barriers within Europe as obstacles for mobility that the United States does not have (Freisl, 1994).

Below the national level, there are several kinds of social groups that each are characterized by sub-cultures. Such groups can be populations of a specific region, town or quarter, ethnic minorities, religious denominations, social classes and strata, milieus and life style groups, generations, colleagues in a work place, students in a specific university, peers, etc. Ronald Inglehart (1977, 1989) has, for example, shown that newly born generations tend to be more "post-materialistic" than earlier born generations. The same is true for highly educated in comparison to less educated social groups. Given that each individual is member of a national society and of many social groups at the same time, given that cultural knowledge diffuses from one social group to another using the common members as bridges, given that culture is permanently changing, and given that many cultural elements are not

shared by *all*, but only by *many* members of a group, it is impossible to clearly identify what is part of which culture or sub-culture at a given moment. There may be a clearly identifiable *core* culture, but the borders of cultures and sub-cultures will always be blurred.

For designing a theory of action, explaining *micro level differences*, it is important to consider not only cultures of national societies, but also sub-cultures of social groups. Unique for an individual is, by definition, no single culture or sub-culture. It is only the specific *combination* of cultures and sub-cultures the individual shares – due to membership in a specific set of social groups.

With culture being a macro phenomenon, sub-culture being a meso phenomenon, and a specific combination of cultures and sub-cultures being a micro phenomenon, the *micro-macro link* for a cultural theory of action is obvious. The influence of the macro level on individuals happens through socialisation. The influence of individuals on the macro level happens through variation that new generations create re-producing culture. Ronald Inglehart describes a value change (1977), and a cultural shift (1989) that moves from materialism to "postmaterialism" or from modernization to postmodernization (Inglehart, 1997) and thus links the macro theories of reflexive modernisation to micro level analysis on culture. Whereas Inglehart shows that these core values shape people's behaviour in many ways, he does not look at their effect on mobility decisions. It is possible that post-materialism makes people *less* likely to become mobile for job reasons, given that they consider a secure income not as important, but emphasize more social values. It is also possible that post-materialism makes people *more* likely to become mobile, given that they put higher value on self-fulfilment.

Values can certainly be considered one element of culture. The assumption that values are guiding behaviour is already part of their definition: A value is "a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means and ends of action" (Kluckhohn, 1951). Values have been explicitly named as one influence for behaviour (among others) by Max Weber (1980) describing the ideal type of value-rational action. And also Talcott Parsons (Parsons & Shils, 1951) included them, in his general theory of action, as one component among others, describing action as a social system and values as a cultural sub-system.

Values and *attitudes*, being more situation specific conceptions of the desirable, are also core explaining variables behind the concept of *life styles*. Life styles are sets of

preferences and patterns of behaviour regarding clothing style, furnishing and arranging one's apartment, consumption, especially consumption of media, and ways of spending leisure time (Toffler, 1980). Since these private spheres of life are hardly restricted by external influences they are good indicators for the pure individual character. So, it is assumed that they express individual taste and habits, individual world views, values, and attitudes. Other areas of behaviour might be less good expressions since they may be affected by circumstances as well. But nevertheless life style theory assumes that basically all areas of behaviour are, to some degree, affected by life styles as well. These can be arranging partnerships, family planning, preferred kind of jobs, voting, etc. For many societies, researchers have empirically identified life style groups, using large sets of indicators and cluster analysis. They have come to various classifications (Mitchell, 1983; Plummer, 1974; Schulze, 1993), showing that the borders of life styles are fuzzy and ambiguous to draw. However, according to more or less each classification, the core assumptions could be confirmed that there *are* sets of correlating forms of self-expressions, and they *do* affect behaviour in many ways. It also has been shown that life styles are structured by socio-demographic variables, especially by generation and education. This again goes well with Inglehart's findings, showing the same influence for values.

It is not true that culture can only explain variation in behaviour inasmuch as the cultural knowledge varies. Cultural beliefs may apply only for specific situations. Then, even if all members of society share the same cultural patterns, only people who find themselves in this particular situation will behave accordingly. This is demonstrated by *role theory*. Role theory assumes that people take on *social positions* in society. Social positions are positions in a field of social relationships (Dahrendorf, 1958). For example the intercept point of the relations teacher – students, teacher – parents, and teacher – school director marks the role of a teacher. The expectations that these groups of people, students, parents, director, have regarding the position of the teacher and the person who fills it defines the *role* of he teacher. According to role theory, people are defined by the set of roles they hold. Human behaviour is shaped by the *expectations* that people are exposed to. If we consider the expectations of society as a whole also as relevant, then we consider *social norms* to be an explanation for human behaviour.

How can expectations and social norms explain micro level differences in behaviour? Whereas cross-national macro level differences may be explained by the existence of different norms in different societies, micro level differences within a society must either be explained

by individual perception (or priorities) regarding the importance of social expectations or by differences in the situation. If it is a social norm to take care of one's parents in old age, if they need support, then this will not keep everybody from relocating, but only those whose parents need support. If it is a social norm that wives should support their husband's careers then this will affect married women with their husbands who are confronted with a job-related mobility demand. People are reacting to a situation, similarly as they would do according to rational choice theory. The only difference is that the motivation for the reaction is not maximising utility, but following expectations and social norms, avoiding exclusion and other negative sanctions for deviant behaviour.

The difference between acting according to *values or attitudes* and acting according to *social norms and expectations* cannot be told from a *macro* level perspective. In both cases a specific culture fosters a specific pattern of behaviour. On the *micro* level, however, they are very different. Whereas following norms means following *other* people's world view, maybe renouncing own beliefs, acting according to values means following *own* beliefs, and maybe offending other people's world view. The first one avoids social conflicts; the second one avoids psychological conflicts.

There is at least a third mechanism how acting based on culture can work. Between the own belief and the social definition of how to do "it" right, there are patterns that are followed *unconsciously*. We may call such a pattern a *model* or a *"leitbild."* Sometimes people do not reflect how things should be done. They do not have an attitude of their own, and they are not aware of anybody else's expectation. They just know that there has been a specific way of doing "it" that worked out. And since there is no need of inventing a second way, people follow the example, without even reflecting whether this might be a desirable or an undesirable behaviour. This type of acting is also often assumed in role theory. It also is implied in the theory of *doing gender*, as an explanation how women and men take on gender specific ways to behave, based on the examples they see growing up in a gendered society (West & Zimmerman, 1987; West & Fenstermaker, 1995). The broader theoretical framework consists of symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology (Goffman, 1959, 1977; Garfinkel, 1984).

2.3. Motility

Strictly speaking, *motility* is *not* a theory that tries to explain mobility. Instead, it is a concept that claims to *replace* mobility as an interest of social sciences. And it comes with a theoretical model for explaining it. However, motility does not really exchange the dependent variables; it rather claims to be a "reconceptualisation" and a "fine-tuning" of mobility (Kaufmann, 2002, p. 37). Mobility is interpreted as a manifestation of motility. In that sense, motility *can* be understood as a theoretical model that explains mobility.

Motility is the "capacity of a person to be mobile." (idem). The concept of motility is introduced to overcome two obstacles for meaningful research on mobility: (1) Unlike the term "mobility" that is used for very different phenomena (movement of people through space, movement of goods through space, exchange of data, diffusion of culture, change of social status, change of occupational position, etc.), motility is supposed to offer an unambiguous term for a clearly defined phenomenon. (2) Unlike most understandings of mobility, motility is supposed to capture a socially relevant phenomenon. The problem with mobility is seen in the fact that the motion through geographic space, as such, from a social science perspective, might not be too relevant. Motion can happen in very different contexts, with very different intensions, and very different social consequences. Instead, motility refers to an *attribute of the actor* who eventually becomes mobile, and it is not limited to the process of motion itself (Kaufmann, 2002, p. 36).

Vincent Kaufmann offers a more precise definition: "Motility can be defined [...] as the way in which an individual appropriates what is possible in the domain of mobility and puts this potential to use for his or her activities" (2002, p. 37; similarly: 2005, p. 126). It is the aggregation "of *all factors that define a person's capacity to be mobile*, whether this is physical aptitude, aspirations to settle down or be mobile, existing technological transport and telecommunications systems and their accessibility, space-time constraints (location of the workplace), acquired knowledge such as a driver's licence, etc." (2002, p. 38). These factors can be sorted into the categories "access," "skills," and "appropriation."

Access (or "accessibility") summarises the theoretically available *means of transportation and communication* ("options" – existence and density of a railroad network, availability of high speed trains, etc.) and the practical *conditions* under which these means can actually be used (price for a train ticket, schedule of trains running,...). The factors summarised as access will vary strongly between different geographic places and their density

of population (urban versus rural).

Skills (or "competences") summarise the physical abilities (ability to walk, to see, to ride a bike, etc.), the achieved competences (driving licence, knowledge of English language for international travel, etc.) and organisational competences that help to make mobility happen (ability to research cheap flight prices, spontaneity, etc.). Skills depend on socialisation as well as on age and life experience.

Appropriation (or "cognitive appropriation") is an individual's subjective interpretation of access and skills. It refers to the difference whether people consider their skills and access to be sufficient for becoming mobile. And it also refers to the difference whether people consider mobility being worth investing time, money, or energy to achieve necessary skills. Appropriation reflects people's individual preferences, values, attitudes, and habits, as well as their plans for the future (Kaufmann, 2002, p. 38-39).

The three dimensions of motility represent various theoretical approaches that all add to its explanation. In that sense, motility is an approach that integrates others, such as rational choice and "mobility culture." Access is a structural component that will follow a rational choice type logic. Skills may be comparable to the concept of human capital as individual characteristics that affect rational choice behaviour. Appropriation rather represents cultural influences. However, linkages can be made to more specific theoretical concepts (as they shall be described in section 3): Skills depend on age and biography, probably also on gender and the socio-economic background. Appropriation is likely to depend on generation, gender, family background, and social networks. And so on. Motility combines influences on the micro level, such as individual experiences shaping a person's skills, with macro level influences, such as the infrastructure for transportation.

2.4. Stress theory and quality of life

In understanding mobility decisions, quality of life, *expected changes* of quality of life as well as the experience of stress can frame the analysis. Furthermore the concepts of quality of life and stress theory are approaches that can explain *consequences* of job mobility. Both, quality of life and stress theory are very heterogeneous concepts, used in various scientific disciplines. *Quality of life* basically addresses the well being of people. Depending on the specific operationalisation, a number of relevant levels is taken into account. Cummins (1996) has identifies 173 different ways of operationalisation.

One common sense is that stress and burdens lower the quality of life. Therefore, *stress* usually is considered a subordinate concept to quality of life. It is empirically proven that burdens can have negative effects on the psychological and physical well being as well as on the satisfaction with the partnership. So, several levels of quality of life are affected (Bodenmann, 2000; Diener, 1984; Faltermeier, 1994).

Spatial mobility requires that people adjust in many ways. We can distinguish burdens that are directly related to cover geographical distances, such as dense and noisy traffic or the loss of time for commuting, from secondary effects. But not only people who are mobile, also their family members can be affected indirectly in specific ways. And the analysis of these indirect effects can draw on a relatively long history of stress theoretical research. Regarding *long-distance commuting*, there are meanwhile many studies, reporting about intensified stress and loss of health (Blickle, 2005; Häfner, Kordy, & Kächele, 2001; M. Koslowsky, 1997; Novaco, Stokols, & Milanesi, 1990; Ott & Gerlinger, 1992; Rapp, 2003; Schaeffer et al., 1988; Stadler et al., 2000). In these studies, the concept of quality of life is only seldom referred to. Therefore, in the following, a stronger emphasis will be put on stress theories.

The *psychological* research on stress is dominated by the theory of *Lazarus* as a main framework (Becker, Schulz, & Schlotz, 2004; Kaluza, 2003). It understands stress neither as external stimulus nor as internal reaction, but as a relationship ("*transaction*") between individual and environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). If an individual gets the impression not to be able to cope with a situation anymore stress emerges. This implies that stress depends on the subjective evaluation of the requirements of a given situation as well as on the subjective evaluation of the own capabilities to fulfil them.

Based on the transactional model according to Lazarus and on the salutogenic model by Antonovsky (1988), Becker, Schulz, and Schlotz (2004) have developed a *systemic demands-resources model*. This model differentiates attributes of the environment and of the individual in the moment of emerging stress. Furthermore, it claims to explain both, the subjective experience of stress and the effects on health related quality of life. The health constitution is defined by the individual's ability to cope with external and internal requirements, using external and internal resources. If requirements exceed resources over a longer period of time, chronic stress will emerge and diminish the person's health constitution. But also aside from causing chronic stress, excessive requirements have a direct negative effect on quality of life.

Based on social-medical and social-psychological findings, Koslowsky, Kluger, and Reich (1995) present a model which specifically explains the *emergence of commuting stress* and its consequences on the experience and the behaviour of commuters. Also this model builds on the understanding of stress according to Lazarus. However, it focuses on the empirically measurable requirements that are directly related to commuting, such as commuting time, condition of the means of transportation, or condition of traffic. The transaction perspective and the interrelation of subjective evaluation are underemphasised. Just like Becker's systemic demands-resources model, Koslowsky, Kluger, and Reich design an individual centred psychological model without elaborating the role of interaction.

In the context of *sociology of the family*, concepts on stress have been formulated that deal with the emergence of stress and with its compensation in social groups, like the family (Burr et al., 1994; H. McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; M. McCubbin & McCubbin, 1989; Schneewind, 1999). A core problem of most of these theories is that they take families as units without explaining how the experience and compensation of stress by families emerges from the individual perspectives of the family members. Newer models overcome this weakness, for example the *systemic transactional stress-coping model* by Bodenmann (2000). Bodenmann also describes the relationship between individual coping strategies and coping strategies that involve partners and the further social environment, based on the cascade model. He assumes that under stress, in a first stage, only individual coping strategies are used, even if the partner is available. If the stress continues the individual strategies are supported by strategies involving the partner ("dyadic coping"). If they still continue further support is mobilised involving further significant others. This succession is confirmed well by empirical studies, also for job mobiles (Schneider, Limmer & Ruckdeschel 2002a, 2002b). For the strengthening of competences of coping, this means that, in a first step, individual competences should be addressed, and in a second step those of the partnership (Bodenmann, 2000).

Across theoretical models, it is known that the experience of stress varies, depending on the objective situation, the subjective evaluation, and the individual ability of coping. In the following, factors shall be presented whose influence on the experience of stress and the health condition is empirically well confirmed.

Regarding the *objective situation*, it has been shown that factors that are foreseeable and influenceable cause less stress. Also the degree and the continuity of challenges play an

important role. It is considered certain that even major singular "life events," in the long run, have much less impact than continuing burdens or "daily hassles." For example, a car crash on the way to work should cause much less stress than frequently recurring obstructions of traffic or car repairs.

Regarding the *subjective evaluation* and the *individual ability of coping*, it has been shown that the individual character has an important influence. Neuroticism and the subjective conviction of control are considered especially important characteristics. A strong sense of control and a minor tendency to being neurotic help to actively focus on coping with challenges. An active problem oriented coping style is considered favourable: First, it increases the chance that burdens can be diminished. Second, an individual will be enabled to continuously develop further coping strategies.

There has been a large international comparative study regarding the conviction of control among managers (Spector, Cooper, & Sanchez, 2001). It has shown strong cross-national differences. Managers in the United States and in Germany, for example, were clearly more confident regarding their abilities to organise their job situation than their Spanish or Polish colleagues. However, the study was not able to clarify whether these differences were due to cultural stereotypes or rather of different structural conditions within the companies in the various countries.

Regarding *challenges related to mobility*, there is evidence from studies by Schneider, Limmer, & Ruckdeschel (2002a, 2002b) and Konopaske, Robie, & Ivancevich (2005) that the individual characteristic "being open for new experiences" or "adventurousness" have influences on evaluation and coping. People who are open for change have an easier time deciding to relocate, and they experience this decision as less stressful than people who try to avoid change. There is consensus in psychological research that people with a large set of coping strategies, especially of active, problem-focused strategies, are able to cope with challenges very efficiently. Studies about the behaviour of long-distance commuters on their way to work emphasize the importance of coping strategies. For example, those long-distance commuters who were consciously trying to make use of their commuting time, for reading, listening to music, or for relaxation, felt healthier than those who were unable to make use of the commuting time.

Studies about major burdens, such as a critical illness, comparing objective circumstances and subjective evaluations, have shown that the two can deviate strongly. The

differences can be interpreted as an effect of coping or adjustment strategies (Herschbach, 2002). Among these strategies is the ability to make use even from negative experiences. Furthermore, comparisons to former biographical events and to situations of other people play an important role. Following this evidence, mobility should be experienced as especially stressful if it is associated with an aggravation of the overall situation over the life course, or if people are making upward comparisons, for example with people who are able to work in their home town. If the mobility is, instead, interpreted as a chance for improvement over the life course, or if it appears to be a problem that affects others as well the burdens of job mobility should be experienced as less stressful.

3. Socio-demographic and socio-economic perspectives

Empirical research does not always go back to theories in order to develop hypotheses or interpret findings. There are a number of *theoretical concepts* that stands in between and can serve as a substitute. Theoretical concepts, in that sense, are either single explaining, dependent, or interacting variables, or they are sets of interrelated explaining, dependent, or interacting variables. One could also refer to them as established (sets of) hypotheses. They may be based on one or more theories. But they describe rather specific causal interrelations than general mechanisms. Here, a number of theoretical concepts are presented that are often used as approaches to mobility research. These are: gender, generation and life course, family background, social networks, and socio-economic status.

3.1. Gender approach

Social sciences have shown that most differences between women and men are not determined by their biology. Especially when it comes to social behaviour and social positions, we are mainly facing differences that are due to gender specific socialisation. In a process of "doing gender," women and men, often unconsciously, copy the existing models they perceive in the society they grow up in, and thus provide an additional example for other women and men (West, & Zimmerman, 1987; West & Fenstermaker, 1995). Gender also works as a gender role, implying that gender appropriate behaviour is rewarded and deviant behaviour sanctioned, mainly by integration into and exclusion from social groups.

In industrialised societies, the social construction of gender has been associated with paid work in the labour market and unpaid work in the private house, as maintenance or care-giving work. The two spheres, often referred to as *production* and *reproduction* work, were only separated through the rise of industrial work. Production work became men's

responsibility, reproduction work women's responsibility. Other gender attributes, such as manly strength and rationality or female kindness and emotion, were associated. The contrast became so accentuated that even sociological theory took the different characters and destinies of women and men for granted (Durkheim, 1999; Parsons, 1949).

In the late 20th century, the change towards post-industrial society has weakened the contrast. The 20th century is a history of women's movements, achieving, at least formally, equal rights, entering universities, entering the labour market, becoming economically independent and socially respected. However, in the social behaviour the contrast has not disappeared. It has only become more subtle, with women studying typically "female" subjects, working in "female" professions, and leaving the prestigious and powerful positions for their male colleagues. Also the male gender role has, so far, hardly changed since men have taken on care-giving and housework responsibilities very slowly.

So far, gender is still likely to affect all spheres of women's and men's lives. Social behaviour may not be determined anymore by gender, but the tendency, as research shows, is still strong. This implies that men are likely to invest more into their job careers and to sacrifice private life, whereas women are likely to take on care-giving responsibilities and follow job demands only inasmuch as these private responsibilities allow them to. This should also be visible in job-related mobility behaviour. In return, also mobility is likely to affect a couple's specific distribution of work and of power, re-structuring gender roles on the micro level.

In fact, striking gender differences are noted in the literature, especially in the context of family functioning, family structure, and family development. Women and men have different strategies to integrate job mobility into their life courses. They have different ways of making mobility-related decisions. They become mobile in different ways. And also, mobility has different consequences for women and men.

Empirical studies have put a special focus on the division of labour in couples. For all countries included in the literature analysis, there are findings that *men's* job mobility leads to a *traditionalisation* of the division of labour. Women take on more unpaid care-giving and housework, after their spouses become mobile, even beyond what the couple had planned (Schneider, Limmer, & Ruckdeschel, 2002a). If, instead, *women* become mobile and the partner works in the same town or region, he takes on more unpaid work, so the distribution becomes more equal. However, the effects are not symmetric. Men become mobile more

often than women do, so women step back from their careers more often than men. Also, mobile women are generally much more involved in housework and care-giving than mobile men. Striking examples are Polish women, working in Western Europe, who even try to organize their household and their families' daily schedules from the distance via phone.

The theoretical framing of these findings exists in outlines. Beck-Gernsheim (1995) focuses on the phenomenon of the traditionalisation of gender roles. She sees a major reason in globalisation and the tendency that labour markets today are expecting perfectly flexible and mobile employees. Individuals, following these expectations, seek to adjust their private life to the mobility demands. In this process women turn into unpaid service crafts, organising the private life of the couple, and releasing their partners from any responsibilities aside from their employment. This way, men and women follow the patterns of gendered life courses of their grandparents that had been thought of as history already decades ago.

But what explains the gender difference? Why are women more likely to step back from their job careers and support their partner's career? Why do women feel more responsible for managing family life when they become mobile than men do? Bonnet, Collet and Maurine (2006a, see also chapter 4) point out that mobility may intensify conflicts within the couple about the distribution of work. Their answer to the question of gender difference is that the relation of power within the couple will decide upon the partner's life courses. The persisting tendency that men hold the stronger position for negotiations within the couple leads to a traditionalisation. Mobility intensifies an inequality that has never fully disappeared and makes it visible again. Bonnet, Collet and Maurine also point out that the negotiation about the couple's priorities is likely to cause conflicts and to stress the partnership.

Challiol (1998, 2002) assumes that, during the negotiation process in the context of mobility, there are rules of reciprocity deciding upon the outcome. Also from a rational choice perspective, there are interpretations offered. These assume that not the *individual* interest, but rather the maximisation of the *couple's* utility is guiding the decision process. This interpretation is supported by Badoe (2002). However, these studies do not define which costs and benefits are actually compared. A study of Pochic (2004) makes it likely that economic long-term interests are *not* crucial for the couple's decision, at least not long-term interests alone. In this study the mobility decisions of managers were studied. The result was that couples did follow the mobility demands towards the man's employment, but they did not follow mobility demands towards the woman's employment, even if he was unemployed.

3.2. Generation, life course perspective and biography

A second variable that tends to explain variance in almost any field of social research is age. However, behind this variable, there are three related concepts: generation, life course and biography.

The concept of *generation* reflects birth cohorts: the combination of a specific age at a specific historical time. The concept is based on the insight that there is a specific phase in the life course with major importance for the development of an own identity, with own world views, habits, and life styles. This phase is referred to as the phase of socialisation or the formative phase, and it is located somewhere between 10 and 20, in late childhood and youth. Not necessarily the year of birth, but rather the historic time that shapes this formative phase shapes a structure of generations (Mannheim, 1978). People growing up during world war II tend to be concerned about pure economic survival issues and are referred to as the war generation. The "baby boomers" grew up in peace and economic prosperity. It is them to develop new life styles, seek self-fulfilment, found green parties, and celebrate Christopher Street Day (Inglehart, 1977, 1989; Strauss & Howe, 1991).

How can the generation affect mobility decisions? It is, for example, imaginable that later born cohorts have weaker ties to their places of origin than earlier born cohorts. It is possible that later born cohorts have healthier and wealthier parents who do not expect the same intensity of support in old age. Also an impact in the reverse direction is likely. If a birth cohort entering the labour market is exposed to significantly more mobility demands than the birth cohorts before, something like a "mobile generation" could emerge: a generation that is characterised by the experience of mobility demands and that reacts to it, for example with weaker ties than generations before. However, these are interrelations that are not yet empirically tested.

The *life course* is defined by age alone, independently from historic time. Based on the number of years since their birth, people face different expectations, deal with different responsibilities, and probably develop different attitudes and life styles. But it is not just a biological process of maturing and aging that determines the life course. Life courses are socially constructed by social institutions (Kohli, 1985; Mayer & Müller, 1989). In western societies, children have caretakers, providing a home, food, all physical and many other needs. Their only major responsibility is attending school. The legal ages of adulthood, be it 16, 18, or 21, and the graduation in school or university marks a new phase. People now are

self-responsible for providing the economic means to make a living, to organise their own daily life in a home of their own, and eventually to care for own children. And then, again, laws and the pension system mark a border to retirement. It is the fact that institutions and laws define age specific rights and duties that creates various stages in the life course. This construction of the life course has become more standardised and institutionalised during the industrialisation (Kohli, 1985; Mayer & Müller, 1989; Leisering, 2003; Mayer, 2004). In the late 20th century, a counter development became visible with tendencies towards de-institutionalisation (Tyrell, 1988; Kohli, 1988).

How can the life course affect mobility decisions? It is likely that young adults, at the beginning of their job career, are more mobile than elder adults. Young adults are more likely to be single, not to have a family, not to have invested into homeownership. In short: They tend to have viewer ties. Therefore they are more likely to follow occupational mobility demands. Also a reverse influence is imaginable: If job mobility, for example, keeps young adults from having a family until a higher age, this would mean postponing the classical phase of adulthood to a higher age and expanding the phase of "post-adolescence."

The biography is limited but not defined by age. It is the individually experienced and subjectively perceived own life course. In the strict sense, the biography is a subjective construction of the own past, based on social expectations to be goal-oriented, planned, steady, successful etc. The biography is part of the identity. And especially the objective experiences shape the character and later behaviour (Kohli, 1978).

How can the biography affect mobility decisions? It is shown in research in Germany that prior mobility experiences increase the likelihood to become mobile again. The experience may reduce fears and teach skills how to compensate for the difficulties that are involved with becoming mobile.

3.3. Family background, social networks, and socio-economic position

Other concepts are less elaborate in their theoretical foundation. Therefore they shall only be sketched in their main outlines.

Family background

A first aspect of the family background, certainly, is the *family form*. Having a partner makes mobility more problematic than being single, because a second individual, with own career plans and social networks, is affected and the partnership may suffer from separation. Having children makes mobility even more problematic. Also they are integrated in friendship networks and a school class. And for them, it may even be harder to cope with relocation or with losing time with a parent. In return, mobility may, for the exact same reasons, hinder mobile people from investing into a partnership or from planning a family. In the literature, also the thesis can be found that mobility promotes a job career, and by doing so, makes family foundation more likely. However, empirical studies rather support the assumption that mobility introduces additional burdens that hinder family foundation.

Important are furthermore *family structures*. In a male breadwinner relationship with a male fulltime employee and a housewife, job mobility can be integrated easier into the living arrangement than in a dual earner couple. These interrelations are already described in the section on gender.

Finally, *family relations* and *family ideologies* play an important role. Close relations and an ideology that promotes the importance of time spent together, certainly hinders mobility. In Spain, the Mediterranean family system also includes close ties to relatives outside the household who are met and visited on weekends. Here, the family ideology prevents relocation and fosters commuting, instead. On the other hand, weak ties can be translated into little time spend together and into spreading out geographically. Also the reverse effect, with mobility reducing the intensity of family relations, is imaginable.

Social networks

What is true for family ties is basically the same for all social networks. Strong ties hinder mobility. Mobility may weaken ties. Grosetti (2006) confirms such a relation for France. Not necessarily a biography with few moves, but a long time spent in the current place of residence makes it likely that people are well integrated and have a big social network. It also is shown that only strong ties tend to endure spatial distance, whereas weak ties tend to break.

On the other hand, there is the hypothesis that through occupational spatial mobility

the social networks of mobile persons increase. This relationship could be explained by an increased number of contacts with unknown persons. However, this effect is not empirically confirmed.

Empirical research indicates that the causal relationships are more complex. Probably there is a set of various factors, interacting with each other: the form of mobility, the job itself, the extent of perceived external control and/or autonomy and the personal ability to maintain the network.

Socio-economic position

For a long time, it has been assumed that occupational mobility would lead to social upward mobility. This may have been true in the middle of the 20th century. However, current research tends to disprove it. Occupational mobility is mainly rather a means to prevent downward mobility.

This is found, for example, in Poland. Most households, with a household member becoming mobile, can only secure a low social position. As an exception, only *well educated emigrants* achieve an improvement of socio-economic status. In cross-national comparison, Spain is an exception. Here a correlation of spatial mobility and social upward mobility is found. Two reasons are offered: Emigrating means breaking with a series of traditional social commitments, giving the emigrant greater freedom of time and resources. In addition, emigration involves a significant psychological cost, which implies the selection of the most capable (De Miguel, 1965).

An effect in reverse direction is rather related to education than to income. Highly educated people are more likely to be in professions with mobility demands. Therefore they are more strongly affected by job mobility. In Spain, the educational level stands out as an explaining variable, fostering daily commuting (De Miguel & De Miguel, 2002; Bancaja Report, 2005). However, in terms of relocation, in Spain, the effect is u-shaped: academics and those with less than Compulsory Secondary Education are more mobile than the "medium level" educated (Occupational Labour Observatory, 2005).

4. Conclusions

There is a wide range of theoretical approaches that can be used to study job mobility. As for any research topic, there is no "*true*" approach, and not necessarily one *best* approach.

Different research interests may call for different theories. And also within the study of mobility, single questions may need to be framed in a different theoretical way.

However, the project "Job Mobilities and Family Lives in Europe" needs a specific theoretical background that allows to develop hypotheses and to guide the design of research instruments and the interpretation of findings. And with its defined set of research questions, it is possible to choose such a specific theoretical approach.

Given that the project chooses to study job mobility in a very *broad* way, to capture preferably *all* forms of job mobility in several countries and to provide an *overview* over the main reciprocal interdependencies that link mobility decisions with the family situation and other social aspects, it is clear that also the theoretical perspective needs to be *broad*. Since very different sorts of mechanisms are to be detected, the theoretical background needs to *consider* a wide range of different mechanisms. Therefore the research interests of "Job Mobilities and Family Lives in Europe" call for a broad theoretical background, integrating several single approaches.

The project also chooses to collect *individual data*, comparing differences on *macro level* (cross-country comparison) as well as on the *micro level*. This calls for a *theory of action*. As a relatively broad approach for explaining individual behaviour, the concept of *subjectively expected utility (SEU)* is very useful. It assumes that the individual advantage people are seeking are not objectively given; instead, they reflect the subjective *preferences* regarding the highest benefit as well as the subjective *perceptions* regarding the expectable outcomes of available options. By doing so, the SEU approach integrates structural and cultural components.

As an even broader perspective, also the concept of *motility*, is of major interest. It is less specific in describing the mechanisms that lead to an individual action. But it is more elaborated in identifying the range of influences on individual behaviour. Therefore it is a good supplement to the SEU approach: Whereas SEU describes the mechanisms of individual decision-making, motility provides a basic list of the conditions that individuals consider while making decisions. Also the motility concept is able to integrate the perspectives of rational choice models and of cultural approaches by considering structural influences (as access or skills) as well as cultural ones (as appropriation). Additionally, influences of (expected) stress or of (expected loss of) quality of life on mobility can be included. The concept of motility also integrates macro and micro level influences, which is crucial in a

project that claims to study individual behaviour (micro level) and, at the same time, to compare countries (macro level).

Although, as Kaufmann (2002) argues, motility might be a sociologically more relevant category than mobility, it is not the interest of the project to study *only* motility as the final dependent variable. This would also seem strategically unwise with motility being almost impossible to fully empirically capture. But motility certainly can serve as an intermediate variable; and its conceptualisation can help to identify potential influences on mobility. These influences can be part of the human capital (skills), structural barriers and incentives (access), the individual attitudes and perceptions (appropriation), as well as sub-cultures and cultures (macro influences on the formation of appropriation). In this way, motility will be the core of the theoretical model used in "Job Mobilities and Family Lives in Europe."

The theoretical concepts of *gender, life course, generation, biography, family background, social networks, and socio-economic status* can help to further supplement, to limit and to structure the identification of potential influences on mobility. On principle, one has to assume that the universe of influences on mobility decisions is infinite or, at least, unmanageably huge. The concept of motility reduces this complexity by drawing attention to specific aspects, such as the available means of transportation and the conditions to which they are available. Concepts like gender or generation do the same. They point out specific influences that have proven to be relevant in other contexts and that are likely to be relevant also for job mobility. These aspects can and should be used, in addition to the motility concept, to identify potential influences on mobility decisions. At the same time, they serve as theoretical framework for detecting consequences of mobility decisions, since they mainly describe reciprocal interdependencies. The same is true for theories of stress and of quality of life.

Macro theories, like *reflexive modernisation, individualisation, flexibilisation, globalisation, post-industrialisation or the shift towards a knowledge-based society*, may also be integrated into the theoretical framework, supplementing the macro influences on individual SEU-based behaviour. These approaches describe changes and characteristics of societies in the 21st century that are of major relevance for understanding the social interaction of the people within them. Mostly macro theories describe *structural* characteristics, such as transportation technology, economies and labour markets. In the terminology of the motility

concept, these can be implemented into the theoretical model as part of the "access." Partly macro theories also describe *cultural* changes and characteristics, such as the (rising) importance of individualisation and self-fulfilment (individualisation, reflexive modernisation, postmodernisation). Similarly to "mobility culture," these can be implemented as macro influences on the formation of "appropriation." Macro theories may, just like the concepts of gender, life course, etc., supplement the influences formulated in the motility concept by drawing attention to further structural and cultural conditions that are of major relevance for our societies.