

Susanne Röß

Recurring Job Mobility

Subjective Motives and Impacts of Job-related Spatial Mobility

Job Mobilities Working Paper No. 2011-01



a working paper series
in the research project

Job Mobilities and Family Lives in Europe

Modern Mobile Living and its Relation to Quality of Life

funded by the European Commission

www.jobmob-and-famlives.eu

1. Mobility as a characteristic feature of modernity

Mobility has risen to a value per se in every modern part of the world, but the mobility trend is accompanied by the people's wish for settledness. Through the disorganisation of predetermined family structures and professional lives as well as normal biographies, individuals are obliged to create their existence by themselves. Merely proposals exist for which actors compete against each other (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1994: 12f.). Through mobility processes, which originate from individuals entry into the market, divergent biographies are constructed (Beck 1994: 47).

Quantitative as well as qualitative improvement of the infrastructure accelerates the transport of people, goods, and services (Urry 2000: 14f.). An enlarged base for spatial mobility is created by these new possibilities for the movements. Daily long-distance commuting is one form of ongoing spatial mobility which is practiced by more and more people from different parts and professions in Germany (Haas and Hamann 2008). The large distance between place of residence and work may be due to high individual demands in the private and professional domain and thus personal requirements are arranged around job-related obligations. 'Commuters suffer extreme stress' claims a heading of an article from the BBC that deals with the outcome of daily commuting (Zimnowodzki 2004). Negative physical and psychological impacts are associated with the continuing trend of increasing recurring mobility. The ambivalence of the phenomenon mobility is evident in the consequences of daily long-distance commuting, which affects both the mobile persons and their individual periphery. In this article, the following questions are posed:

- What is the motivation, driving long-distance commuters in Germany to spend more than an hour daily in order to get to work and to take the concomitant consequences? To what extent do people experience autonomy when thus deciding? Who is involved in deciding?
- What are the biographic experiences with mobility and how do they correlate with the individual's behaviour? To what extent is the potential to be mobile influenced by the motility capital of a person?
- What is the retrospective assessment of the situation?

The questions shall be answered through semi-structured interviews with twenty interviewees. The qualitative evaluation and interpretation of these interviews is completed by an operationalisation of the motility capital of each person and an analysis of potential coherency between causes or impacts and the motility capital.

2. Quantitative and qualitative extent of recurring job mobility in Germany

Commuting has been described as a functional equivalent of the residential mobility in the analysis of the Eurofound in 2005 (Eurofound 2006: 60). Seventeen percent of all Europeans have not changed their place of residence after moving out from the parental home. This residential stability is primarily due to a satisfaction with the current situation as well as to family factors. The acceptance of job-related residential mobility within the German population lags behind that of everyday recurring movements; however, weekly shuttling is the most rejected category of mobility (Schneider et al. 2008: 119). Comparing Germany to other European countries with regard to everyday travel times to the job, Germany is in the midfield, with about fourteen percent of employed persons who daily travel longer than sixty minutes back and forth. The highest percentage of people, about sixty percent, takes between sixteen and sixty minutes to get to work and back (Eurofound 2006: 61).

The largest part of mobile employees in Germany is based locally on the one hand, while on the other nevertheless daily in movement. The wish for settledness concerning the residential sphere in combination with increasing job-related mobility requirements promotes the strategy of using recurring mobility as a compatibility mechanism. Merely thirty-one percent of these daily long-distance commuters describe the everyday journey as an interim solution, and biggest part of the commuters does not plan any changes for the future (Schneider et al. 2008: 114). The reluctance to alter the residential situation increases with growing age of the people. The German Ageing Survey¹ illustrates that people between fifty-five and sixty-nine years of age have lived on average for twenty-five years in their flat, and even longer in the same place of residence (Motel et al. 2000: 158ff.).

Since the 1970s Germany has been affected by an increasing structural unemployment. Since 1974 the number of the unemployed has been clearly above the annual average job vacancies (Statistisches Bundesamt 2008: 118f.). Due to this difficult situation on the job market, mobility as a resource becomes more and more important in order to escape potential unemployment. Thereby considerable regional discrepancies between East and West Germany persist. There are differences as well between urban centres and rural regions concerning the infrastructure. Germany provides the most extended highway network in the EU and more than every second inhabitant is owner of a private car. The huge developments which took place in the transport infrastructure during the last century have markedly changed the chances of daily overcoming long distances. Nowadays, distances of more than one hundred kilometres one-way to work may be covered daily, thanks to intercity express connections and the ongoing improvement of the road system (Statistisches Bundesamt 2006b: 20ff.).

¹The German Centre of Gerontology is an institute for scientific research and documentation in the fields of social and behavioural ageing research. The cited Aging Survey includes people between the age of 40 and 85 years.

The federal state system of Germany has produced differences in the field of education and public administration, as well as with regard to certain occupational types, due to the autonomy of each federal state. Relocations from one federal state to another therefore pose significant difficulties. Building a house in Germany is tremendously expensive and therefore generally marks a once-in-a-lifetime effort. Hence, people are forced to define a lifelong, lasting place of residence (Statistisches Bundesamt 2008: 224). Long-distance commuters are represented under homeowners in a higher-than-average frequency (Schneider et al. 2002b: 74). The bureaucratic inconveniences as well as the high costs connected with relocation, constitute positive parameters for the increasing number of commuters. Moreover, German long-distance commuters will receive financial support in terms of governmental subsidies, called ‘Pendlerpauschale’, which again promotes recurrent mobility.

Basically, the German population shares the view that spatial job-related mobility constitutes a ‘necessary evil’, caused by the conditions of the labour market. Therewith explicit limits concerning the willingness of the employees to spatial mobility become visible (FiO 2000b: 4f.). A mere fourteen percent of the unemployed would accept by no means a career change; in contrast sixty-three percent indicate that they would change in no case their place of residence. Rather, they will accept a major distance to the place of work as a compromise (Brixy and Christensen 2002: 1). The restraint in considerations in matters of relocation reflects a mobility culture of the Germans which is marked by strong local connections. Dialects and divergent habits lead to a regional identification of the people which expresses itself in fears concerning social integration in another place of residence (Schneider et al. 2008: 108).

In summary, governmental subsidisation of travels to the workplace, specific regulations by federal states, the relatively high costs of relocation, the population’s explicit refusal to easily move house, difficult situation on the job market all encourage the circular movement trend.

3. Existing research in motives and impacts of long-distance commuting

Daily long-distance commuting has been a scarcely investigated phenomenon of our society. In particular, the subjective correlation of this development and its resultant burden for the family sphere of the mobile person have only quite recently been recognised as a central topic.

Investigating the choice and permanence of the sites of residence and job, Kalter argues that commuting as opposed to relocating is not a transitional state of temporary restriction. In fact, this way of resolving the conflicts between social and occupational concerns may be observed in particular with regard to big households, the trend being reinforced by a partner’s occupation (Kalter 1994: 470ff., cf. Van Ommeren 1997: 415). Thus, a stable partnership and children in particular may be

considered the crucial factor when opting for long-distance commuting and discarding alternatives in mobility. In the case of partners who both have a career, the conflict between residence and workplace is even more patent. In general, the residence will serve as the steady point with the site of the job varying (Van Ommeren 1997: 416). The quality of living conditions and a strong residential attachment, which translate into social and familial connections motivating long-distance commuting, are indicative of the plurality of motives. The commuter's dilemma is best described by his or her attachment to the residential area and regional ingrainment, along with insufficient opportunities of finding a suitable job (Ott and Gerlinger 1992: 154ff.). Schneider and colleagues analyse the specific basic constellation of different expressions of occupational mobility, showing that the compatibility of vocational aspirations of both partners along with their local attachment and integration into a social network are conducive to daily long-distance commuting. Compared with other kinds of mobility, private arguments rather dominate decisions, with the desire for recurrent close contacts as particular concerns of partners. This ideal will limit the number of alternatives to be selected and often leads to a feeling of constraint. When calculating the advantages and disadvantages of mobility, long-distance commuters count among the losers (2002b).

Comparing time spent on daily commuting with contentment, Stutzer and Frey conclude that commuting means stress, which is not worth it. In particular, commuting has a negative impact on the well-being of the commuter himself as well as on his or her partner. The authors fail to appropriately explain this “commuting paradox” (2004: 23) by applying equalisation models from market theory. There is neither remuneration nor quality of job to compensate for costs experienced, which otherwise might encourage to positively assess the situation.²

The strains of travels weigh heavily on subjects who frequently have to switch the means of transport. Moreover, the duration of travels will increase the stresses subjectively experienced, the former apparently being more relevant than the actual distance covered (Rapp 2003: 42ff.). Further studies agree on the duration of travels being the major stress factor (cf. Costa et al. 1988: 373; Stadler et al. 2000: 61f.). Subjects who read or study while travelling and therefore do not lose time according to their point of view, will experience less impact of inconvenience (Rapp 2003: 45). Subjects operating a car will experience a significant increase of stress when running into a traffic jam or even apprehending a delay. The choice of means of transport appears to be strongly dependent on the commuter's attitude and is not just defined by the logistics of connections (Blickle 2005: 70ff.)

² Stutzer and Frey use data from the GSOEP of 1985 to 1998 for comparison of the individual feeling of well-being with commuting time and further demographic factors.

4. Precarious reconcilability of occupation, family or partnership, and mobility

According to Beck's prophecy, we are doomed to what he calls the 'vollmobile Single-Gesellschaft' (totally mobile society of singles), provided that the demands of the labour market will be thoroughly enforced (Beck 1996: 199). However, even in the future, mobile singles will not constitute the majority of the labour force, since the dominant part of Germans prefers to live as a couple and have a family. Therefore, non-spousal subjects experience markedly less contentment with life than do those, who lead a life in some kind of partnership (Statistisches Bundesamt 2008: 48). According to the 'Familienmonitor' of Allensbach Institute, forty-three of respondents consider the facilitation of reconcilability of occupation and family to be a major political challenge (Köcher 2009: 4).

Due to a continuous increment in the female labour force participation rate³ during past years, having risen close to forty-five percent and therewith approaching the fifty-seven percent mark of males, reconcilability has become even more precarious (Statistisches Bundesamt 2008: 113). Frequently, residential types of mobility will collide with the aspirations of the counterpart and therefore will be ruled out as an option. Consequently, circular types of mobility as a means of coping with problems of reconcilability steadily become more relevant. A high level of education also adds to the willingness to travel more than an hour, probably in consequence of higher expectations with regard to an appropriate occupation and quality of living environment (Vermeulen 2003: 37, cf. also Buch 2006: 259f.). Daily commuting therefore arises from a context, which relates to work-specific as well as geographical and familial aspects. Long-distance commuting as an option may result from the dilemma of partners' different work places or compromising between place of work and place of residence (cf. Ott and Gerlinger 1992; Schneider et al. 2002a; Kalter 1994). Depending on the familial situation, the decision taken is less a truly personal matter and should be seen as linked to partnership arrangements and the presence of children (Limmer and Schneider 2008: 24).

Interestingly, almost eighty percent of the mobile population pertains to a stable partnership, with more than seventy percent of both partners holding a job (Schneider et al. 2008: 118). Job-related mobility as well as long-distance commuting continues to be a male domain. Women will encounter role conflicts far more often than men because of the additional strains of mobility. The traditional and well established pattern requiring women to more strongly support their partners by taking on homework and the task of family organization remains unaltered (Peuckert 2008: 247ff., Schneider et al. 2002b: 136ff.). Women frequently remain in the background, thus enabling the man to fully

³ As defined by ILO-statistics of the labour market, any subject aged fifteen years and more is considered economically active if, during a reference period, he or she had performed some sort of paid work or been self-employed or executing any assistive tasks (Statistisches Bundesamt 2008: 110).

commit his capacities to the job. Closer scrutiny of labour participation of mothers reveals that the traditional Male-Breadwinner model has been modified through part-time employment of women, yet in no ways been replaced. Even though in the sense of participation in education and economic activities, there has been a continuous modification of women's roles up to now, it is primarily the presence of children that makes women with a college education, too, cling to the stereotypical female role prospect. All too often this conflict is resolved by opting for childlessness (Peuckert 2008: 236ff.). The percentage of childless women from the mobile population is markedly above that of childless men (Schneider et al. 2008: 129). Apparently the compatibility of family and spatial mobility is still a much bigger problem for women than for men. Parenthood is crucial to opting against relocation in order to avoid children's disruption from their familiar environment and to be able to take advantage of a certain type of support potential offered by relatives. Parents' reasons for daily long-distance commuting almost exclusively relates to familial matters (Schneider et al. 2002b: 147ff.). While households integrating more than two generations have become a marginal phenomenon, a considerable number of parents dwell within reach of their adult children and therefore may lend support. Intergenerational transfer aids like care of grandchildren or maintenance of elders are linked to close neighbourhoods (Kohli et al. 2000: 176ff.).

Permanent stresses will not only negatively affect the psychological and physical health of commuters, but include the familial environment as well. The existence of children i.e. a certain period of life of a particular subject therefore has a special bearing on personal motives (cf. Wagner 1989; Schneider et al. 2002a; Green and Canny 2003).

5. The theoretical scope of decision making

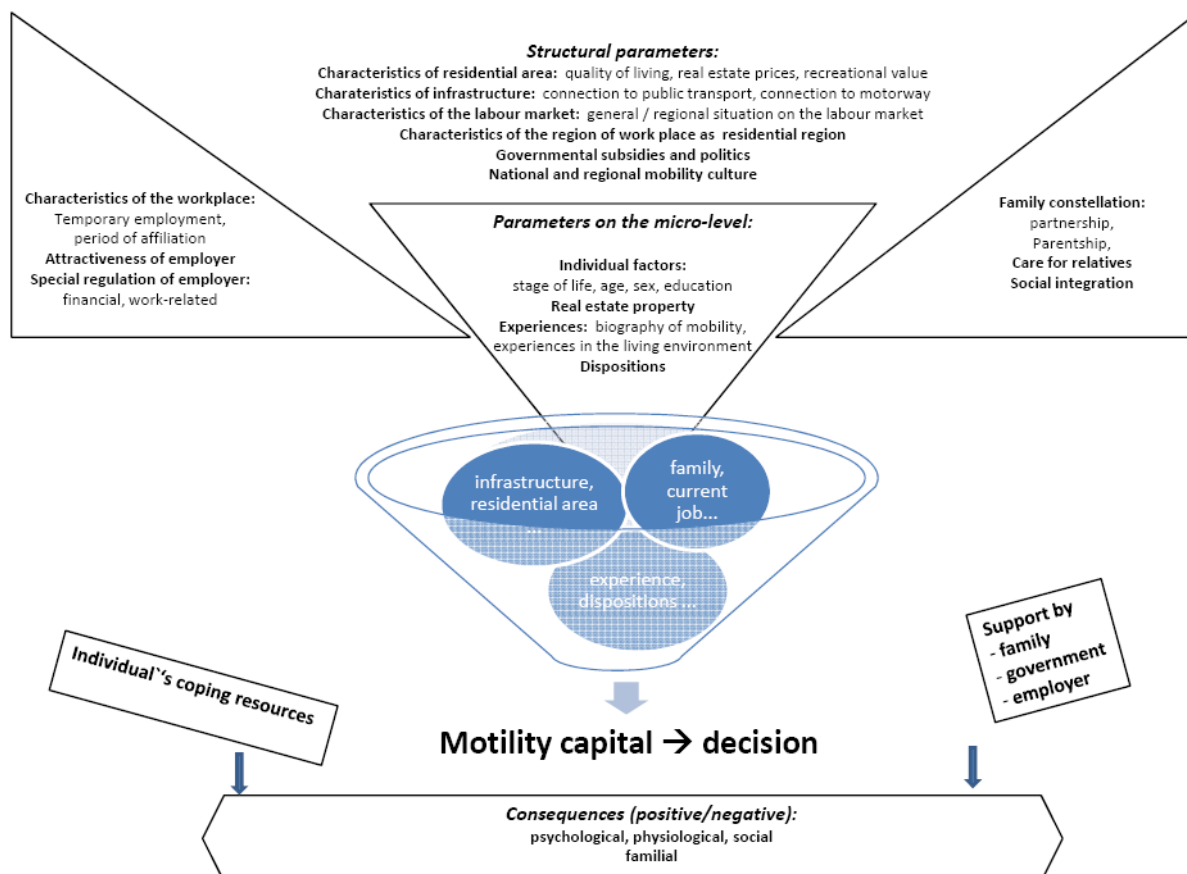
The SEU model⁴ from Rational-choice Theory will serve to provide the theory of action, explaining decisions of long-distance commuters. This will be flanked by Schütz's description of life environment ('Lebenswelt') (cf. Esser 1991, 1999, 2001, Schütz 1971, 1972, 2003, Schütz and Luckmann 1975). Agents assess a situation by means of specific subjective expectations. Therefore this particular interpretation has a peculiar relevance for the action. The SEU Theory assumes that there is an individual evaluation of the utility in line with the anticipation made for an action. Through the cognition of the situation by means of selected information, specific options are distinguished. The institutional context, the apperception and retrospection, as well as theories of everyday of the agents have to be considered for the explanation of these subjective expectations (Esser 1991: 54). The assessment of the outcome of long-distance commuting is codetermined by elements such as

⁴ SEU is short for Subjective Expected Utility, meaning a theory of decision making based on the expected subjective benefit.

infrastructure and the labour market as well as individual elements such as mobility experiences and attitude.

Based on phenomenological considerations the concept of the meaningful structured social world of Schütz is important to give mobility experiences of the childhood and the own professional career space in the decision process. Through the experiences of the past, agents develop a special stock of know-how which illustrates sedimentations of this situational knowledge. The interpretations are indexed on specified biographic knowledge and the relevance systems that are produced by such knowledge (Eberle 2000: 25ff.). So the attitude about and also the realisation of varying forms of mobility apply to subjective available relevance structures which come into existence in the context of the life environment ('Lebenswelt'). The individual uses his or her stock of knowledge to choose a course of action. Both models depict a marked orientation towards the agent, trying to base explanation of action on the micro level while allowing space for structural influences.

Fig. 1 Parameters and consequences of daily commuting



Kaufmann imports the term 'motility' from biology – where it is used to describe the adaptability of organisms – into mobility research, in order to put the agent centre stage of considerations. According to his definition, motility means the

‘capacity of a person to be mobile , or more precisely, 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’ (Kaufmann 2002: 37)

Each agent therefore disposes of a special motility capital, which is composed of variables of context and opportunities of access, individual capacities and competences, as well as subjective assessment and utilisation of these opportunities. The dimension of access reflects the opportunities provided by transport and service as well as personal facilities and general conditions like timetables and fees. Kaufmann’s design of the capacity of a subject includes the dimension of physical mobility, driving and linguistic capabilities or organisational skills. The interpretation and sequential implementation of opportunities is determined by habits, values and subjective perception. The phase of life, gender, and familial situation may influence this subjective assessment no less than the economic, social, and cultural capital. There is a diversity of logics of action as well as certain subjectively perceived or objectively existing restrictions that are concealed by the difference between capital and implementation (Kaufmann 2002: 35ff.). The theoretical concept of motility therefore centers on the relevant linkage of potential of mobility and effective behaviour. Optional actions do not necessarily and automatically coincide with actually recognised alternatives of action.

The concept of motility can be instrumental in explaining the tendency of agents to be more or less mobile or to choose a particular type of mobility. The familial constellation and the composition of the household in particular will determine the subjective assessment of opportunities and thereby the decisions and actions of an individual (Kaufmann and Widmer 2006: 114f.). Conclusions from the analysis point to the fact that the different types of mobility cover up the fact that practices are driven by divergent logics of action. Therefore, the agents are not aware of existing alternatives. Discrepancies between the type of mobility practiced and motility (i.e., the subject’s resources) may therefore lead to discontent and problems arising more frequently (Kaufmann et al. 2009).

I will use the concept of motility to show possible correlations between the individual motility capital and the subjective assessment of the situation before and after the decision to commute daily. To what extent does the motility capital of a person affect strategies used to handle mobility requirements?

6. Methods

The qualitative procedure chosen for conducting this study is directed by the importance of subjective assessment processes in decision making as well as by the amount of strain experienced. Evaluation of twenty guided interviews follows the method of qualitative content analysis by Mayring (2003). By evolving the categories of the guideline according to the current status of research, it is

intended to focus on the subject matter while allowing for profound personal presentations of experience. Structuring of the material was achieved by matching paraphrases with dimensions of predetermined categories and expressions (Mayring 2003). Interviews shed a light on the extent of reflection on long-distance commuting and on recognition of the decision, while considering the subjective perception of autonomy as playing an essential part (Schneider et al. 2002b: 96ff.). The motility capital of interview partners has been operationalised by means of targeted questions concerning the dimensions of context and individual access, capacities, and preparedness for mobility. It was deliberated to what extent high or low motility capital exerts an influence on the motives for the impact of daily commuting.

Definitions within the scope of considerations of daily long-distance commuters clearly vary. On the one hand, groups may be constructed according to distance, and on the other hand according to time. In this investigation, people who move daily between their place of residence and place of work are called daily commuters (Statistisches Bundesamt 1991: 11). According to Limmer and Schneider, long-distance commuters include all employees who spend at least sixty minutes three days a week to bridge the distance between place of residence and place of work (Limmer and Schneider, 2008: 32ff.). The long-distance commuter exercises the empirically most widespread type of recurring mobility.

Eight percent of all full-time employees aged between twenty-five and fifty-four years need sixty minutes or more one-way to their place of work. Time spent travelling is preferred to distance for a variable of definition, since differences in infrastructure and means of transport may result in extensive variation of travelling time needed to cover equal distances. The sample comprising of twenty economically active long-distance commuters (no relation to gender) had been determined by a snowball system and therefore may not claim to be representative (Diekmann 2005: 346). The sampling period ranged from end of June to end of August of 2009. The chosen method of selecting interview partners results in a greater than average percentage of females, who agreed to participate in an interview and to share their experience with long-distance commuting.

Distribution according to age groups shows the largest group of eight subjects to be between thirty-one and forty years of age. The majority of interview partners has completed university education (n=13), while only three subjects have completed 'Hauptschule' (lowest level - compulsory), four subjects graduated from 'Realschule' (middle level) or achieved 'Fachabitur' (access to university). All respondents hold a position as white collar employees. Their occupational status shows a slight predominance of lower and medium positions compared to four respondents

exercising a managerial function. With the exception of one subject, all maintain a stable relationship and share a household with their partner. The divergent subject (female) is the youngest respondent, aged twenty-three years. This result compares to German representative data showing that eighty percent of all long- distance commuters maintain a stable relationship (Schneider et al. 2008: 114). Members of the study group spend between sixty and 130 minutes travelling one way from place of residence to work place, with the majority travelling approximately seventy-five minutes. The arithmetic mean of all travelling times totals eighty-three minutes.

Table 1 Composition of sample

<u>Gender</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
<i>Male</i>	9	45
<i>Female</i>	11	55
<u>Age</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
<i>20-30 years</i>	5	25
<i>31-40 years</i>	8	40
<i>41-50 years</i>	4	20
<i>Senior to 50 years</i>	3	15
<u>Educational level</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
<i>„Hauptschule“</i>	3	15
<i>„Realschule/Fachabitur“</i>	4	20
<i>„Abitur/Hochschulabschluss“</i>	13	65
<u>Status of employment</u> ⁵	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
<i>Low</i>	6	30
<i>medium</i>	10	50
<i>High</i>	4	20

Taking account of previous studies, sampling had been based on two dichotomous traits, which are of special relevance to circular mobility. The first of this is the familial situation (i.e, the presence of children) assuming that this trait exerts a specific influence on decision making and furthermore on the perception of stress. Two out of three long-distance commuters have children,

⁵ The status of employment is operationalised partly by the interviewees themselves. They had to classify themselves in either a managerial employee or an ordinary one in their company. Subsequently, the ordinary ones were sub-divided by the editor in ‘low’ and ‘middle’ relating to their professional description.

indicating interdependence of this recurrent type of mobility and family life (Schneider et al. 2008: 114). The second trait is the diachronic continuance of commuting, which is expected to cause differences with regard to consequences of mobility (Schneider et al. 2002a: 340ff.; Ott and Gerlinger 1992: 168f.).

7. The context of long-distance commuting development

The members of the study group may have job-related reasons on the one hand and private reasons on the other as subjective motives for long-distance commuting. Following, this complex composed of different reasons will be described in correlation with life environment experiences of the mobile individuals.

7.1 Motives and baseline

Causes of long-distance commuting, as described in this study, may be attributed to two categories. On the one hand, job-related reasons are conducive to accepting daily recurrent mobility, while on the other hand, relocation for private reasons triggers long-distance commuting. Again, job-related motives may be allocated to three subcategories. In the first place, subjects name transfer to a different location of the enterprise or its sale resulting in a geographically new work place. An active and deliberate change of job for the sake of professional advancement and upgrading with respect to qualification or remuneration are characteristic of the second subcategory. Aside from this, career entry or exit from joblessness with no job alternatives handy may bring about long-distance commuting.

While seventeen subjects said that a job-related incident catalysed daily long distance commuting, three related relocation for private reasons as being instrumental. Schneider and colleagues (2002b: 89) mention the same priority of job-related causes for long-distance commuting. The three cases of relocation were driven by the wish to share a house with a partner. In those cases the place of residence had been predetermined by the partner's occupation.

'Had *⁶ stayed in * in the long run, I would have changed my job. For him, it meant occupational advancement. By chance *. ... had been a purely occupational decision, which happened to help the entire family.' (21, 294⁷, *female, aged 34 years*)

In the case of two more subjects, one is a female who moves in order to share house with her partner who is self-employed and tied to a geographically determined region, thus ruling out any alternative ways of sharing a home. In the second case, a couple, after leaving the parental home, had chosen the place of residence with regard to the male partner's work place. Just the proximity to the train station

⁶ *is put in place of names of subjects and cities, thus maintaining anonymity.

⁷ Verbal remarks have received an interview number as well as a line number, which designates the onset of citation.

takes account of the female partner's occupational situation, since it takes her no more than five minutes to take public transport. In each instance of relocation in favour of the partner, it is the female partner who enters commuting. All three of them reject the possibility of looking for a new job, arguing for security and quality of their jobs.

Five subjects mention job-related geographical transfer or change of work place due to takeover of their company. In these cases, it is mainly for security reasons that subjects refuse to seek an occupational reorientation. The remaining long-distance commuters who relate occupational matters as motivating their mobility had actively looked for a new job. Lack of job alternatives or the need for job entry helps to prevent joblessness. Half of the participants matched the change of job with improved income or occupational advancement. They either accept long-distance commuting or reflect little on this topic. The selected "frame of reference" is chosen unconsciously or the subject has no other positively evaluated options available which would match the situation (Esser 2001: 259ff.). Chances of finding a corresponding job are often few in the case of individuals living in rural areas or small settlements.

'Well, I decided to do this commuting, since in * I can do a job, which I wouldn't get in * or around here.' (1, 391, *female, aged 40 years*)

For most of the participants, long-distance commuting had been a deliberate option. Only three subjects had accepted long-distance commuting as a consequence of transfer without reflecting on the matter. Consequently, they envisage no alternative to long distance commuting and feel heteronomous because of their jobs. The residential area of these individuals is definitely rural, offering no occupational chances. Moreover they feel strongly attached to the place, since they had grown up there. Half of the participants may be termed autonomous agents. Some of them could have taken a different option at the time when the decision was made, but they deliberately chose this work place. Participants also identify relocation in favour of reconciliation of job, partnership, and family as a token of autonomous action. One person recognised relocation as a viable alternative, which might have been realised in case of a totally negative rating of time and effort of commuting. During the decision making process, participants had weighed alternative occupational options against other forms of mobility. Quite evidently, considerations concerning job options and chances for further qualification predominate. In the case of two participants, accepting at least temporary joblessness would have meant the only alternative to the current practice of long distance commuting. Since both subjects had experienced joblessness before, and since they had passed the age of forty when long-distance commuting started, the subjectively perceived advantages of having a safe job clearly prevailed. Furthermore, both subjects had to comply with financial obligations at the time, linked to residential property and family.

‘Should we accept the golden handshake or should we proceed to * with them? I had the problem that I had become practically jobless with *AG due to a transfer. Therefore I took to thinking: what should I do next? Then I decided to commute. It’s been my choice.’ (9, 137, *male, aged 55 years*)

A minority of subjects raised the option of weekly commuting as a viable alternative. One subject had left the site of her work place and moved in with her partner. By terminating the remote relationship, she changed weekly commuting for daily long-distance commuting to get to work. That is, she preferred daily to weekly long-distance commuting in order to realise the partnership concept of daily experienced closeness.

‘Weekends only, honestly I believe, that’s no relationship if you meet on weekends only.’ (26, 236, *female, aged 28 years*)

Two more subjects, having also talked about weekend commuting, agree on this. They consider this option only in case of too large a daily distance. Subjectively, this limit is set at 90 to 120 minutes one way. Mainly, familial commitments and the desire to remain socially integrated are the reasons given against relocation. Individuals who are parents at the time of deciding about relocation can neither ignore the possibility of childcare delivered by relatives nor the advantage of safeguarding a familiar and positive environment for their children. Participants attribute high relevance to the social network, in particular as they have concerns about coping with familial and occupational requirements. These results clearly reflect the negative attitude of Germans with respect to relocation. People would rather accept a change of occupation and long travelling times as an alternative.

By putting together all components of the reasoning, a certain pattern appears. One of the resulting schemes comprises female subjects whose decisions rather refer to the private environment than to occupational matters. In particular, living together with their partner or the partners’ economic activity rank high in determining the action of these women, while their own occupational orientation ranks rather low to medium. In effect, the cause of commuting stems either from the wish to adjust the place of residence to the partner and his occupational situation, or it is driven by the wish to maintain at least the place of residence should there be a change of her own job place. One further complex of female motives is delineated by the idea of reconciling very high occupational expectations with no less familial or partnership orientation. These women hold fulltime managerial positions and they have children; by long-distance commuting, they are capable of linking those two poles. Their partners work full-time as well. Child caring has been organised by service of external providers and family relations, respectively. In the case of four subjects, commuting mediates between a medium to high occupational orientation and an environment they feel strongly engrained. They have been raised in the area of their current domicile, pointing out its importance in making them feel comfortable.

‘Also it is my rootedness in * or in * in particular. Even though I haven’t lived there from earliest childhood onward, but I’ve been raised there and I’ve returned to this area and I simply feel so much attached to the zone as well as to its people and so on.’ (4, 211, *male, aged 45 years*)

The preferential structure of the participants points to equally high priorities with regard to place of residence and of work, which are linked by long-distance commuting. All female partners work part time, though, even if there are no children. One of the male participants says that he and his wife had agreed on a ‘deal’, meaning that during the week the female partner is in charge of all household activities, thus compensating for the additional stress of commuting time to be endured by the male partner.

Another formula depicts a geographical attachment as dominant in refusing to move a household. Occupational orientation of these subjects is rather low to medium while orientation to family and partnership is very high. Four out of the six respective individuals are beyond the age of forty-five years. This period of life is marked by stronger geographical attachment and familial commitment, which for the most part are linked to residential property. Therefore, security with respect to occupation ranks high in decision making. In most cases, there are children cohabitating who are maintained according to the established model of maintenance. The female partners either execute the part of housewives or do hourly work. The two younger members of this group have been raised in the area of their current place of residence and would not even think of moving, even if there were not families to consider. Self-perception of all subjects is rather that of being under remote control with regard to long-distance commuting. Residential property serves to intensify the existing attachment to a certain place, even though this is not an exclusive effect, but rather affirming the local rootedness. Subjects include differently assessed situational conditions into their option to commute. Local attachment, familial support or notions of an ideal partnership rank high with participants, being pivotal in choosing long-distance commuting and linked perspectives as an alternative. Since private bonds – be it through partnership, children, support received, or local rootedness – rate high with potential long-distance commuters, they tip the balance to the effect that daily travelling appears to benefit them most (Esser 1999: 251ff.).

7.2 Mobility as a factor in life experience of long-distance commuters

Generally speaking, members of the study group have not undertaken much interregional relocation. The majority has not experienced moving house from the area. Six out of twenty interview partners still live within the area of provenance. In case of relocations during childhood, they mostly carry negative connotations. In particular, the change of school environment was mentioned as having been a strain.

‘I had been four years at this school and then my parents moved again...again and again needing to acquaint oneself with new environments, new classes, new schoolfellows. Well, at times it meant stress to me.’ (11, 16, *female, aged 23 years*)

If parents had practiced long-distance commuting as a daily recurrent form of mobility, travelling is considered to be common. Normally, such experience, which is transferred by parents’ primary socialisation, is most meaningful to an individual and his or her formation of attitudes happening in the course of identification with the significant others (Berger and Luckmann 2004: 139ff.). Due to their expectation of closeness in partnership, almost all respondents disapprove of weekly commuting as a viable type of mobility. In particular, this holds true for families. Experiences gained in this respect are limited to short periods of time prior to starting a family. Frequent travelling on company business as a type of job-related mobility is accepted more easily. Certain profiles of occupational activities encompass travelling to various places including staying overnight. In these cases, positive connotations prevail as long as travels are limited to once or twice a month, bringing about some diversification of occupational everyday life. When exceeding this rate, even business trips are perceived as generating stress.

In the case of nine respondents, long-distance commuting had started right with their job entry. Two out of the nine had temporarily interrupted this type of mobility, but are back to travelling at least one hour per day in between place of residence and work. The majority of these individuals had completed university education, demonstrating that this condition in particular makes extended distances acceptable for the sake of holding an appropriate job. Studies conducted on the in- and outflow of commuters demonstrate commuting as an increasing trend with highly qualified individuals (Haas and Hamann 2008).

‘I would have done that, no matter if it had been – like I said – in* or in *. Because independent of the place, I just wanted to find a job, which would give me what I expect from an occupation.’ (4, 324, *female, aged 28 years*)

Subjects who had started commuting during the second half of their lives or after starting a family tend to be more prone to external determination by transfers or loss of the job. It is the familiar and self-evident, mainly derived from social relationships, that constitutes our genuine life environment. In order to assess a situation, people draw on a set of knowledge to the effect that their action is directed by experience and the genuine life environment (Schütz 2003: 327ff.). On one hand, the perception of the individual situation as being normal is shaped by the rural residential area, and on the other hand by family experience with long distances to bridge in order to get to work. Residing in rural areas frequently gives rise to extended travel distances. People growing up within such environment will accept this as common and everyday life.

‘My parents have always commuted. Yes, distances were long. My father has frequently been on business trips, quite often I didn’t see him Monday to Friday. That’s the way it was...– didn’t know anything different.’ (13, 14 *female, aged 33 years*)

Eight of the respondents consider their daily travels of at least one hour going one way as normal. Half of this group lives in a rural area and four of them mention that during their childhood their parents had been long-distance commuters as well. The self-perception of leading a normal life is reinforced by the fact that many members from the circle of friends or the partner commute as well. Apparently, there is a connection between the attitude towards relocation and childhood experience. The majority of respondents link up interregional relocation with nothing but negative aspects. They mention the woes of separation or homesickness as well as loss of their social environment. Unpleasant emotions and refusal are clearly articulated.

‘In a certain way again, it’s leaving behind the social environment, leaving behind friends, build up something new. In my way of seeing things, relocation also means the loss of home, put in quotation marks. ... There’s nothing positive to relocation, as I see it.’ (12, 591, *female, aged 43 years*)

Generally speaking, and in the case of a stable relationship, the decision in favour of mobility involves both partners. Thirteen of our respondents mention mutual decision making with their partners. Additional individuals are introduced as counsellors or with the intention of sharing information. The part of children in decision making about mobility is a passive one. While they play a great part when relocation is considered, they normally do not actively influence the process – depending on their age, of course. I encountered one case of a familial decision, as it was termed, with the daughter being fifteen years old at the time. With one exception, the rest of the children involved are toddlers or students in primary school, which excludes them from taking an active part in discussion.

As seen by the majority of respondents, daily long-distance commuting constitutes a permanent arrangement. Thirteen individuals do not plan any change with respect to place of residence, workplace or daily travelling taking place in the near future. Acquisition of residential property within the familiar residential area exerts a stabilising effect, making long-distance commuting a likely option in the long run. If subjects envisage putting an end to the daily long-distance commuting, dissatisfaction with the job plays a relevant part, aside from the stress of travelling, as mentioned above. A pregnant respondent mentions that after childbirth, long-distance commuting will fail to be sustainable. As an alternative, she contemplates part-time home work or looking for a job in the vicinity, which is likely to entail qualitative cut backs.

‘Well, once having my baby, I just wouldn’t commute any more.’ (1, 554, *female, aged 40 years*)

Both subjects who consider occupational reorientation declare having transgressed their personal limit with regard to commuting time. Five subjects cannot determine maximal commuting time, conceding the lack of appropriate alternatives. If a subject believes daily covering of a distance to be feasible, the

reduction of leisure time is rather accepted than considering change of the residential environment. The majority of subjects identify their current commuting time as the maximum acceptable span of time. The limit is set according to a subjectively fitting lap of time, thus avoiding any cognitive dissonances. This in turn sheds light on the subjectivity of evaluation with regard to the selection performed (Esser 1999: 340).

8. Childless individuals versus long-distance commuting parents

The mothers and fathers among our respondents are distinguished from individuals who as yet remain childless by the strength of linking children or the family with their reasoning of the chosen or externally determined mobility behaviour. They mention avoiding a change of school for their children as well as separation from friends and, most importantly, from the larger family circle.

*'In fact we had to make up our mind if we dared to go ahead and to construct a completely new social environment, when at those times our now grown up daughter was born and we had to decide whether we wanted to show her off to our relatives during weekends if at all. Or we would say: no, we'd rather take advantage of our stable environment, get support from our relatives and therefore stay in * and I take to commuting.'* (22, 321, *male, aged 38 years*)

Nine out of ten respondents with children mention this kind of family attachment beyond the confines of the established core family, while only two of the childless consider family attachment a reason for not moving house. One mother mentions just her children as a reason for daily commuting. Prior to starting their family, this couple with a high occupational orientation had held jobs at two different work places and performed weekly commuting.

As regards individuals with children, daily long-distance commuting frequently is related to external determination by occupational concerns like avoiding joblessness or transfer to another site of the company. Gender is an important aspect, since for men children are rather conducive to commuting in the long run, whereas one female subject mentions terminating circular mobility due to pregnancy. None of the fathers considers changing daily bridging of long distances prior to retiring from economic activity. Long-distance commuting becomes a long-term solution for problems posed by different geographical environments of work and residence. Without exception, all male individuals with children can count on support granted from their spouse, who either is without a job or does hourly work. Long-distance commuting will reinforce the established division of tasks. All male partners of long-distance commuting mothers work full-time. Female partners of mobile men often postpone their own vocational development in favour of homework and thereby disburden their partners (Limmer 2005: 109f.).

9. The motility capital of long-distance commuters

The motility capital of long-distance commuters included in this study is operationalised using evaluation and comparison of various interview questions with regard to access, capacities, and preparedness of the agents (Kaufmann et al. 2009)⁸. In total, ten indicators are used to determine the motility capital. Connection to the nearest motorway, to a regional train station or a metro station and station providing interregional public transport is compared to distance covered per minute driving a car. Availability of a car and Internet access within the residential environment serve as measures of personal access. Capacities are detailed using the indicator of subjective assessment of capability of orientation and ideas connected with relocation. The basic preparedness to commute weekly or to relocate to sites within a country or abroad mark the final indicators. According to these, the members of the study group are ranked for low, medium, and high motility capital.

It follows that the motility capital of three individuals from the sample is low, whereas it is high in six and medium in eleven subjects. Two of the six individuals showing high motility capital are rather aspire individual development to happen within their relationship, while the rest of respondents maintain a partnership or marriage in conformity with the closeness model. In those cases the decision to commute daily is rather based on job-related reasons than on private causes.

Half of the respondents think rather negatively about relocation and display limited preparedness to commute weekly or to move house. These subjects show definite local rootedness and either a low or medium motility capital. Ten out of the total number of respondents are poorly connected to infrastructure. Owning a private car gives them a chance to compensate. Kaufmann and colleagues, too, mention recourse to individual transport as alternative to an unfavourable contextual access (Kaufmann et al. 2009). No more than three individuals with good transport connection do not own a car; however, they do have recourse to their partner's car. These interviews show that a high motility capital corresponds with completed university education. With the exception of one woman, all have relocated at least once and relate positively to moving house. In comparison, subjects with low motility capital have completed 'Haupt- or Realschule' (lower educational level). Out of six individuals from the group perceiving little stress from long-distance commuting, three have high motility capital. High motility as a resource may help to shape mobility in a way that lessens the perception of strain.

⁸ Operationalisation is effected in conformity of a draft by Kaufmann, Viry, and Widmer, prepared within the scope of the European research project 'Job Mobilities and Family Lives in Europe', with amendments made by the author of this paper.

Table 2 The Motility capital

Subj.	Contextual Access			Individual Access		Capacities		Preparedness			Motility
	Connection/Minutes			Inter-net	private car	orientation	attitude on relocation	weekend commuting	relo-cation	reloca-tion abroad	
	motor-way	regional train station	inter-regional train station								
1	15	10	20	yes	yes	good	negative	no	no	perhaps	medium
3	15	5	30	yes	yes	medium	negative	no	no	no	low
4	10	5	30	no	yes	good	positive	yes	no	perhaps	medium
5	30	20	20	no	yes	good	negative	no	no	no	low
7	10	5	15	yes	no	medium	negative	no	no	yes	medium
8	10	5	5	yes	yes	medium	positive	no	yes	yes	high
9	5	10	30	yes	yes	good	negative	no	no	no	medium
11	10	10	10	yes	yes	good	positive	no	yes	no	high
12	15	5	30	yes	yes	medium	negative	no	no	perhaps	medium
13	5	10	30	yes	yes	good	positive	no	yes	yes	high
14	10	10	10	yes	no	good	positive	yes	yes	yes	high
17	15	5	15	yes	yes	good	positive	no	no	yes	high
18	20	5	35	yes	yes	good	ambivalent	no	no	perhaps	medium
19	15	15	30	yes	yes	medium	negative	yes	no	no	low
20	15	5	15	yes	yes	good	ambivalent	no	no	no	medium
21	10	5	10	yes	yes	good	positive	yes	yes	yes	high
22	10	5	10	yes	no	good	negative	no	no	yes	medium
23	25	10	25	yes	yes	good	ambivalent	yes	no	yes	medium
24	10	5	35	yes	yes	good	negative	no	no	perhaps	medium
26	25	10	25	yes	yes	good	positive	no	yes	no	medium

‘I’ve decided to put the positive aspects of commuting on top. In the end, it’s a mental affair, I think. have time to chat. In the morning, there is time to read, read the papers. ... actually, one is obliged to take time for oneself.’
(14, 736, female, aged 28 years)

Commuting time is considered as potential leisure time. These ‘me’-periods serve to get into the mood for work or calling it a day. Thus, the individual attitude towards commuting clearly influences the perception of strain.

High motility capital corresponds almost always with the perception that the decision regarding which mode of mobility to practice was autonomic. The spectrum of potential possibilities
Job Mobilities Working Paper No. 2011-01

seems to be upgraded through a higher motility capital. Transformation of motility into mobility depends on individual disposition on the one hand and the life environment experience. On the other hand, the familial constellation will determine the logic of action. Motility capital causes an increment of personal potential on the labour market (Kaufmann 2004). In case of low motility capital, the complex of motives related with long-distance commuting should rather be attributed to local attachment and occupational requirements, which demand geographical changes. In contrast, high motility capital corresponds to spatial flexibility. In such relationship, motives for long-distance commuting rather present a compromise between the two work places of individuals with medium to high vocational orientation.

10. Impacts of circular occupational mobility

Positive aspects named among the effects of commuting, refer to individual arrangement of travel times, possible reconcilability of wishes and claims with respect to quality of living and occupation. Negative aspects refer to physical and psychological conditions, restrictions in time and financial matters. Thirteen individuals identify the daily long-distance commuting mainly as time lost or given away. Pressure of time, which may generate stress, is mentioned by most respondents. Commuting puts strain on all respondents and frequently is identified as a ‘must’, which they would rather avoid.

‘Time. It’s really all about time. The time off that’s lacking since I’m just on the road. Well, more time to oneself, that would mean a bit of quality of life, that’s for sure.’ (1, 430, *female, aged 40 years*)

Respondents view the issue of time with a negative accent, meaning loss. They mention leisure time or life time being lost as well as lack of time to spend with the family, the partner, or to pursue social or sports activities. Due to time of life given away, most respondents say they lead a different everyday life during working days. They unanimously describe this conflict of time, mainly terming it lack of time off. Eight out of a total of ten individuals with children emphasise that time left for the family is curtailed by long travelling periods. One subject refers to dead times when talking about travelling time. Physical rest periods become restricted to a daily minimum because of constantly being on the move. More than half of respondents relate a different behaviour with respect to time during the week. For one thing, leisure time and sports activities must be dropped, while most of the tasks and activities need to be postponed until the weekends. Respondents also point out that conflicts arise due to consultation hours or opening hours of child care institutions.

In contrast, taking advantage of the travelling time as being reserved to oneself is addressed as a positive aspect. In a way, travelling time is considered timeout or ‘me’ time, which is used for relaxing and powering off. In this respect, the means of transport are crucial, since six out of ten

subjects using means of public transport talk about relaxing during travel. In contrast, just two out of ten drivers of a private car mention powering off during the time laps in between the occupational and familial environment. Those who drive themselves frequently emphasise the aspect of being independent of schedules, which they achieve by operating the chosen means of transport. Most Long-distance commuters perceive time during weekends or in the evening as reserved to the relation or the family. Drivers who have organised a car pool make use of the co-ride for relaxing or communicating with fellow riders. Four subjects travelling by train and one self-rider appreciate the passage from work to home because it offers a sufficient break between work and private life. However, it is emphasised that a smaller distance and time fraction of thirty minutes for example would be sufficient.

Respondents frequently mention the possible reconcilability as a positive aspect of long-distance commuting. Living jointly with the partner or with children while holding a relatively safe or demanding job with an employer who is rated positively are described as relevant effects of long-distance commuting. One respondent (female) who had spent several years maintaining a remote relationship, identifies a regular relation by daily shared routines.

‘...allowing for this means, too, that I can live with my husband. It’s precious if you don’t just somehow meet during weekends or perhaps once in a while during the week but that you share life following common routines ... that we may have a real relationship.’ (14, 729, *female, aged 28 years*)

Three individuals with children attribute special importance to the social network combined with holding the preferred job. Three more subjects perceive the quality of living as being the crucial advantage of daily commuting.

Almost all respondents mention psychological strain resulting from daily long-distance commuting. Stress is mainly generated through unpredictable events. Those who drive their car suffer from heavy traffic or congested roads, construction sites, or adverse weather. The driving behaviour of others also has nerve-wracking effects. Influences as described above will create nervousness and strain leading to a bad temper and the experience of stress.

‘I notice, if I have poor luck and the roads are congested, that makes me nervous. It makes me feel itchy. That’s doing something to me. There’s precious time vanishing – that makes me think: you could have started work already – something like that. I reckon, something is happening within my body.’ (5, 509, *female, aged 55 years*)

For those who take the train, delays and irregularities of the timetable become stressful because delays often result in missed connections. Overcrowded trains and aggressiveness of fellow travellers looking for a seat are perceived as unpleasant. One female subject gives a drastic description of how she feels: ‘it’s like being hauled in a cattle truck.’ Having to change the means of transport is a potential stressor because of difficult connections and the need to find a seat again. The permanent perception of time pressure during working days, resulting from long-distance commuting, is a further stressor.

The strains described above outweigh the advantages of long-distance commuting mentioned before. However, individual assessment of advantages must be very good, since daily long-distance commuting is most often rated as the appropriate solution for divergent aspirations. The individual attitude towards daily trips is crucial with respect to subjective perception of strain.

Long-distance commuting often does not just affect the mobile person but the close environment as well. Partners and children no less than family and friends are aware of generally protracted absences and the commonly raised level of stress on the side of the commuter. Eight of the respondents refer to the temporal constraints by the job during working days and the restriction of social contacts that stretch beyond inner family circles. These individuals seldom put themselves into contact with friends and acquaintances on working days, reserving the remaining short laps of time for their partners and children, if present.

‘But maybe the stress factor is unpleasant to my family. Next morning, you have to be fit. There’s no way of the children fussing around a great deal. That is, the time pressure is transferred to my children. That’s unpleasant, for sure.’ (21, 534, *female, aged 34 years*)

11. Gender as an indicator of behavioural patterns

Male and female long-distance commuters under investigation of this study vary considerably with respect to the causes of long-distance commuting on the one hand and with respect to the effects of mobility as well. Seven subjects postpone all homework to the weekend. In these cases, six respondents are female with the partner working full-time as well. In contrast, division of tasks due to long-distance commuting carries rather a male connotation. One respondent overtly spells out that there is a deliberate deal between him and his partner.

‘That is, I admit, during the week my wife manages all of it. But like I mentioned, that’s been the deal. I’m coping with these 180km per day, while her homework load is somewhat heavier.’ (22, 338, *male, aged 38 years*)

Respondents also mention the reduced time to look after their children’s homework. In the case of five individuals, the established way of dividing tasks according to gender models had started independently of long-distance commuting prior to having children. Afterwards, the female partners postponed their economic activity in favour of family business. One subject has turned to part-time work and doing full-time home work after having her children. Long-distance commuting, in the case of mobile men and more so with children, tends to produce the traditional pattern of dividing home tasks. As this study reveals, established ways of dividing tasks are clearly more common to men than women. Two female subjects take on all home tasks during the weekend, even though commuting daily and holding a full-time job. Therefore, these women have to cope with a threefold workload. Apparently, an even distribution of home tasks is mainly realised by young and childless women

doing long-distance commuting. These cases include enlisting paid services in order to reduce efforts. Provided working women have the means to do so, they enlist services of employees of a lesser social status. (Beck-Gernsheim 1995: 168).

Among respondents, the potential of support differs according to gender. All female partners of the long-distance commuters included in the study work part-time or are without a job, thus being able to do all or the major part of home tasks. Neither do the partners of two childless men hold a full-time job. In contrast, all men work full-time, with the exception of one man who has retired already. The three female long-distance commuters with children relate the need for complicated arrangements in order to ensure child care. Organisation of child care again is realised by women, while the long-distance commuting men are free to leave this to their wives. Consequently, the impacts on female partners of long-distance commuting men are heavier with respect to support services than they are on their male partners.

‘Being a man I believe, reconcilability poses no problem. That’s more difficult on the side of women. If you accept the established role model, child caring is a woman’s job, okay? That would make long-distance commuting hard to do.’ (12, 149 *female, aged 43 years*)

The three female subjects with children clearly admit that theirs is a precarious arrangement, with the established division of home tasks exerting its influence thereupon. One woman, working part-time and executing the established type of home task division, plainly describes the irreconcilability of the three components. Partners who practice equal distribution of home tasks admit that coping with the divergent demands of job and family is exhausting; however, they point to the fact that it is feasible to manage children, job, and long distances.

‘In case of extended business trips, there’s always the circle of family and friends who would take care of the children, if need arises. If I have to stay away for a stretch of time, I would rather ask a close person to take care of the children. If my husband has to travel, then I stay with the children. That’s OK with me.’ (21, 170, *female, aged 34 years*)

The male respondents mainly give personal reasons as a motive for mobility, like being strongly engrained, rather than familial needs prompting daily long-distance commuting. Reconcilability of the vocational activity of two individuals as well as the chance to share home with the partner appear to be the main motives of women for taking up daily travels.

‘I admit, I’ve been trying to comply with my partner. At the time, he had lived in * already and we looked for a flat, then, which suits his trip to the company, since he had got a job, and that’s OK with me, too.’ (7, 81, *female, aged 26 years*)

Long-distance commuting, as seen by men, means a long-term valid solution. They will accept this type of mobility as a permanent arrangement, which also combines with children.

women with a family. The child becomes a ‘handicap’, because it keeps her from complying with career patterns set out with men in mind (Gottwald and Wimbauer 2009: 112ff.). As pointed out by Bielby and Bielby with regard to the population willing to relocate, women’s mobility patterns are rather directed to fit their partners’ vocational activities (1992: 22f.). The male partners invest less with respect to this type of compensation.

12. Conclusion and prospects

Long-distance commuters constitute a scarcely-studied fraction of the population adhering to mobile ways of living. However, it appears to be worth focussing on this type of mobility, because in Germany circular mobility dominates, being widely spread as a strategy to achieve reconcilability (Ruppenthal and Lück 2009: 3). The basic settledness of modern times is replaced by partial nomadism, which appears to conform rather to the concept of politics and organisations than to individuals. The right to unlimited mobility should be differentiated precisely from a need to become mobile for existential reasons.

This study of long-distance commuting individuals reveals that, from the point of view of respondents, there are no mobility alternatives to the chosen type of spatial mobility. The daily circular movements have been painstakingly fitted into living conditions, providing a suitable solution to the different demands of the respective individual. Motives vary between subjects; however, they may be attributed into the categories of aspiring vocational advancement and geographical changes of the work place, which need to be complied with. The private side implies various forms of familial demands, support services, and local rootedness. According to the interviews conducted, the message to be derived from the title of this study, ‘recurring job mobility’ needs to be extended into encompassing the private lives of subjects.

Reasons for practicing circular mobility always encompass vocational wishes and demands on one side and private matters or requirements on the other. This composition of motives stemming from various domains arises from the answers of all subjects. Family or the partner rank high among the members of the study group, with long-distance commuting functioning as an expression of this focus. The high percentage of subjects mentioning that the decision was taken with respect to the relationship highlights this familial priority setting.

‘Nowadays, you have to be mobile’, one respondent declares, ‘if you wish to hold your stand on the labour market’. This subject articulated what others clearly felt about expectations of employees and the public. Thus, on the one hand mobility is perceived as pressure exerted on

individuals, while on the other hand it presents a chance for reconciling divergent wishes. From this it follows that long-distance commuting is an ambivalent phenomenon. The majority of the respondents' long-distance commuting originated from deliberate wishes with regard to vocational change while maintaining attachment to the family's place of residence. With growing age and initiation of a family, geographical connections are reinforced. The probability of opting in favour of relocation is further lowered because of attachment to residential property. Many respondents cling to what is termed 'as-long-as-it-works'-mentality. The safety provided by the current place of residence and social contacts of long standing is accounted high priority by long-distance commuters and questioned only in case of an existential problem.

Therefore, long-distance commuters may count for rational deciders, balancing, however, just a limited number of opportunities, due to subjective assessment of abstract alternatives. Vocational and familial ideals come into this process. Individual experiences with mobility evidently shape the mobility behaviour. This arises from the fact that many subjects from the study group had not experienced relocations during their childhood. This turns mobility into a potential kind of social inequality, since there are different ways of complying with demands regarding mobility. Long-distance commuting, frequently carrying negative implications with regard to the individual and the family, means an alternative, which many people had learnt in early life and which consequently is adapted to his or her behavioural repertory. A high motility capital will increase the chances of perceiving less strain with the travelling. However, this still does not answer the question of how an optimal operationalisation of the concept might be achieved.

The criterion called 'diachronic continuation of commuting', which was used on the sample, offers few clues for determining certain behavioural patterns and correlations present among respondents. The trait 'children', however, is relevant with regard to motives, on one hand, while on the other hand showing remarkable links in particular if combined with 'gender' as a trait. Even within mobile types of living, male and female preconceived roles will result in divergent consequences.

Daily circular mobility, the relevance of which is demonstrated by the high number of long-distance commuters in Germany, should be more thoroughly considered by politics and companies. The potential psychological and physical impact on those individuals should trigger supportive activities. This will require further investigation of a great many mobile individuals in order to arrive at sound and representative statements with regard to their needs. The qualitative investigation into twenty childless or family subjects, here presented, may serve as an initial guide into the matter. The

expansion of opportunities to embark on home-based work, which should be attributed with a positive connotation, might offer a clue to employers who have a mind to raise motivation of their employees and to introduce preventive health measures. The family and the female partners of long-distance commuters in particular should be seen as a most robust resource of support. Implicit and frequently not contemplated consequences of this complex modern trend give evidence of reinforcement of the established model of dividing tasks. The results from our interviews indicate that current intentions to intensify the expansion of child care institutions may constitute the base of creating future uninterrupted female biographies of economic activity in spite of having a family. At the same time, the negative attitude, specific to Germany, towards female economic activity and small children must be addressed.

Investigation specifically directed to business might be another clue for future research projects. The fear of long-distance commuters about addressing their wishes and requirements within the company indicates an enormous potential in this respect. Support measures tailored to the specificity of the company offers a chance of motivating employees and might constitute an advantage in the future labour market. A question remains as to whether in our society there is the necessity of continuous increment of individual mobility, called for by the economy, and to the extent to which people will be able to make use of this ‘uprooting’ (Beck 2007: 67). Perhaps these modern nomads will make their homes everywhere, or perhaps they will be at home nowhere.

References

- Beck, Ulrich** (1996[1986]): *Risikogesellschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag
- Beck, Ulrich** (1994): *Jenseits von Stand und Klasse*. In: Ulrich Beck/Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (Hg.): *Risikante Freiheiten. Individualisierung in modernen Gesellschaften*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, S.43-59
- Beck, Ulrich** (Hg.) (2007): *Leben in der Weltrisikogesellschaft*. In: *Generation Global. Ein Crashkurs*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, S.57-73
- Beck, Ulrich/Beck-Gernsheim, Elisabeth** (Hg.) (1994): *Individualisierung in modernen Gesellschaften – Perspektiven und Kontroversen einer subjektorientierten Soziologie*. In: *Risikante Freiheiten. Individualisierung in modernen Gesellschaften*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, S.10-39
- Beck-Gernsheim, Elisabeth** (1995): *Mobilitätsleistungen und Mobilitätsbarrieren von Frauen. Perspektiven der Arbeitsmarktentwicklung im neuen Europa*. In: *Berliner Journal für Soziologie*, 5, S.163-172
- Berger, Peter L./Luckmann, Thomas** (2004[1980]): *Die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion der Job Mobilities* Working Paper No. 2011-01

- Wirklichkeit. Eine Theorie der Wissenssoziologie. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag
- Bielby**, William T./Bielby, Denise D. (1992): I Will Follow Him: Family Ties and Gender Role Beliefs, and Reluctance to Relocate for a Better Job. In: The American Journal of Sociology, 97, 5, S. 1241-1267
- Blickle**, Wolfgang C.G. (2005): Darstellung und Analyse besonderer Belastungseffekte bei Berufspendlern. Göttingen: Universität Ulm, Psychosomatische Medizin und Psychotherapie [Diss.]
- Brixy**, Udo/Christensen, Björn (2002): Flexibilität. Wie viel würden Arbeitslose für einen Arbeitsplatz in Kauf nehmen? In: IAB Kurzbericht, 25. Nürnberg: Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung der Bundesanstalt für Arbeit
- Buch**, Tanja (2006): Regionale Mobilität auf dem deutschen Arbeitsmarkt. Eine theoretische und empirische Analyse regionaler Mismatcharbeitslosigkeit in Zeiten der Hartz-Reformen. Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovacz
- Bundesministerium der Justiz** (2000): Gesetz über Teilzeitarbeit und befristete Arbeitsverträge (TzBfG). <http://bundesrecht.juris.de/bundesrecht/tzbfsg/gesamt.pdf> (05.10.09)
- Costa**, Giovanni/Pickup, Laurie/Di Martino, Vittorio (1988): A review. Commuting – a further stress factor for working people: evidence from the European Community. In: International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health, 60, S. 371-376, 377-385
- Diekmann**, Andreas (2005 [1995]): Empirische Sozialforschung. Grundlagen, Methoden, Anwendungen. Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag
- Eberle**, Thomas S. (2000): Lebensweltanalyse und Handlungstheorie. Beiträge zur Verstehenden Soziologie. Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft mbH
- Esser**, Hartmut (1991): Alltagshandeln und Verstehen. Zum Verhältnis von erklärender und verstehender Soziologie am Beispiel von Alfred Schütz und „Rational Choice“. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr
- Esser**, Hartmut (1999[1993]): Soziologie. Spezielle Grundlagen. Band 1: Situationslogik und Handeln. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag
- Esser**, Hartmut (2001[1993]): Soziologie. Spezielle Grundlagen. Band 6: Sinn und Kultur. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag
- European** Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) (2006): Mobility in Europe. Analysis of the 2005 Eurobarometer survey on geographical and labour market mobility. Dublin
- Finanztip**, Infozentrum für Geld und Recht (2009): Pendlerpauschale – Fahrt zur Arbeit. www.finanztip.de/recht/steuerrecht/entfernungspauschale.htm (04.09.09)
- Forschungsinstitut** für Ordnungspolitik (FiO) (Hrsg.) (2000b): Individualisierte Sicherheit in einer

flexibilisierten Arbeitswelt, FiO-Brief, 3, S.1-7

Gottwald, Markus/Wimbauer, Christine (2009): Die Traumpaare und der Traum vom „doppelten Harmonisierungsversprechen“ des Doppelkarriere-Paares. In: Leviathan, 37, S.95-116

Green, Anne/ Canny, Angela (2003): Geographic Mobility. Family Impacts. Bristol: The Policy Press

Haas, Anette/Hamann, Silke (2008): Pendeln – ein zunehmender Trend, vor allem bei Hochqualifizierten. Ost-West-Vergleich. In: IAB Kurzbericht 6. Nürnberg: Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung der Bundesanstalt für Arbeit

Kalter, Frank (1994): Wohnortwechsel in Deutschland. Ein Beitrag zur Migrationstheorie und empirischen Anwedungen von Rational-Choice-Modellen. Opladen: Leske+Budrich

Kaufmann, Vincent (2002): Rethinking Mobility. Contemporary sociology. Aldershot: Ashgate

Kaufmann, Vincent/Widmer, Eric D. (2006): Mobility and family dynamics: Current issues and research agendas. In: Zeitschrift für Familienforschung. Beiträge zu Haushalt, Verwandtschaft und Lebenslauf, 1, S.111-129

Kaufmann, Vincent/Viry, Gil/Widmer, Eric D. (2009): Motility. Chapter 13. In: Norbert F. Schneider/Gerardo Meil (Hg.): Mobile Living Across Europe II. Causes and Consequences of Job-Related-Spatial Mobility in Cross-National Comparison. Opladen: Barbara Budrich Publishers

Köcher, Renate (2009): Familienmonitor 2009. Allensbach: Insitut für Demoskopie (IfD), http://www.ifd-allensbach.de/pdf/Familienmonitor_2009.pdf (22.07.09)

Kohli, Martin/Kühnemund, Harald/Motel, Andreas/Szydlik, Marc (2000): Generationenbeziehungen. In: Martin Kohli/Harald Künemund (Hg.): Die zweite Lebenshälfte. Gesellschaftliche Lage und Partizipation im Spiegel des Alters-Survey. Opladen: Leske+Budrich, S.176-211

Limmer,Ruth (2005): Berufsmobilität in Deutschland. In: Zeitschrift für Familienforschung 17, 2, S.96-113

Limmer, Ruth/Schneider, Norbert F. (2008): Studying Job-Related Spatial Mobility in Europe. In: Norbert F. Schneider/Gerardo Meil (Hg.): Mobile Living Across Europe I. Relevance and Diversity of Job-Related Spatial Mobility in Six European Countries. Opladen: Barbara Budrich, S.13-46

Mayring, Philipp (2003[1983]): Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Grundlagen und Techniken. Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Verlag

Motel, Andreas/Künemund, Harald/Bode, Christina (2000): Wohnen und Wohnumfeld. In: Martin Kohli/Harald Künemund (Hg.): Die zweite Lebenshälfte. Gesellschaftliche Lage und Partizipation im Spiegel des Alters-Survey. Opladen: Leske+Budrich, S.124-175

Ott, Erich/Gerlinger, Thomas (1992): Die Pendlergesellschaft. Zur Problematik der fortschreitenden Trennung von Wohn- und Arbeitsort. Köln: Bund-Verlag

Peuckert, Rüdiger (2008[2004]): Familienformen im sozialen Wandel. Wiesbaden: Verlag für

Sozialwissenschaften

Rapp, Heidrun (2003): Die Auswirkungen des täglichen Pendelns auf den psychischen und körperlichen Gesundheitszustand. Altötting: Universität Ulm, Psychosomatische Medizin und Psychotherapie [Diss.]

Ruppenthal, Silvia/Lück, Detlev (2009): Jeder fünfte Erwerbstätige ist aus beruflichen Gründen mobil, Berufsbedingte räumliche Mobilität im Vergleich. In: Informationsdienst Soziale Indikatoren (ISI) 42, gesis Publikation, S.1-5

Schneider, Norbert F./Limmer, Ruth/Ruckdeschel, Kerstin (2002a): Berufsmobilität und Lebensform. Sind berufliche Mobilitätserfordernisse in Zeiten der Globalisierung noch mit Familie vereinbar? Schriftenreihe des Bundesministeriums für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend. Band 208. Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer

Schneider, Norbert F./Limmer, Ruth/Ruckdeschel, Kerstin (2002b): Mobil, flexibel, gebunden. Familie und Beruf in der mobilen Gesellschaft. Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag

Schneider, Norbert F./Ruppenthal, Silvia/Lück, Detlef/Rüger, Heiko/Dauber, Andrea (2008): Germany – A Country of Locally Attached but Highly Mobile People. In: Norbert F. Schneider/ Gerardo Meil(Hg.): Mobile Living Across Europe I. Relevance and Diversity of Job-Related Spatial Mobility in Six European Countries. Opladen/Farmington Hills: Barbara Budrich Publishers, S.105-148

Schütz, Alfred (1971): Gesammelte Aufsätze I. Das Problem der sozialen Wirklichkeit. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff

Schütz, Alfred (1972): Gesammelte Aufsätze II. Studien zur soziologischen Theorie. Arvid Brodersen (Hg.) Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff

Schütz, Alfred/Luckmann, Thomas (1975): Strukturen der Lebenswelt. In: Heinz Maus/Friedrich Fürstenberg/Frank Benseker (Hg.): Soziologische Texte 82. Neuwied/Darmstadt: Luchterhand

Schütz, Alfred (2003): Theorie der Lebenswelt I. Die pragmatische Schichtung der Lebenswelt. In: Martin Endreß/Ilja Srubar (Hg.): Alfred Schütz Werkausgabe, Band V.1, Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft mbH

Stadler, Peter/Fastenmeier, Wolfgang/Gstalter, Herbert/Lau, Jochen (2000): Beeinträchtigt der Berufsverkehr das Wohlbefinden und die Gesundheit von Berufstätigen? Eine empirische Studie zu Belastungsfolgen durch den Berufsverkehr. In: Zeitschrift für Verkehrssicherheit, 46, S.56-65

Statistisches Bundesamt (DESTATIS) (1991[1987]): Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit. Volkszählung vom 25. Mai 1987. Fachserie 1, Heft 9, Pendler, Teil 1: Ausgewählte Strukturdaten. Wiesbaden: Metzler-Poeschel

Statistisches Bundesamt (DESTATIS) (2006b): Im Blickpunkt. Verkehr in Deutschland 2006.

Wiesbaden. <https://www-ec.destatis.de/csp/shop/sfg/bpm.html.cms.cBroker> (22.09.09)

Statistisches Bundesamt (DESTATIS)/Gesellschaft Sozialwissenschaftlicher Infrastruktureinrichtungen (GESIS-ZUMA)/Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB) (2008): Datenreport 2008. Ein Sozialbericht für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (bpb). Bonn. <https://www-ec.destatis.de/csp/shop/sfg/bpm.html.cms.cBroker> (02.06.09)

Stutzer, Alois/Frey, Bruno (2004): Stress That Doesn't Pay: The Commuting Paradox. Working Paper No. 151. University of Zurich. Institute for Empirical Research in Economics. <http://www.iew.uzh.ch/wp/iewwp151.pdf> (17.06.09)

United Nations (UN) (1948): The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 13. <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml#a13> (07.08.09)

Urry, John (2000): Sociology beyond Societies. Mobility for the twenty-first century. London/New York: Routledge

Van Ommeren, Jos/Rietveld, Piet/Nijkamp, Peter (1997): Commuting: In Search of Jobs and Residences. In: Journal of Urban Economics, 42, S.402-421

Vermeulen, Wouter (2003): A model for Dutch Commuting. cpb report . Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis. http://www.cpb.nl/nl/pub/cpbreeksen/cpbreport/2003_1/s2_3.pdf (18.09.09)

Wagner, Michael (1989): Räumliche Mobilität im Lebensverlauf. Eine empirische Untersuchung sozialer Bedingungen der Migration. Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke Verlag

Zimnowodzki, Yasmin, BBC News (30.11.2004): Commuters 'suffer extreme stress' http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/uk_news/4052861.stm (17.09.09)