

Dwelling arrangements and meaning issues of dwelling in a multilocational way of life for job reasons

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Abstract:

Job-induced commuting between two residences has attracted increasing interest from both academia and the public in the last couple of years. However, housing issues in a multilocational way of life are barely addressed in research to date. In this paper commuters' dwelling experiences, housing preferences and non-preferences at both residences are investigated from the perspective of the individual. Data presented in this paper are based on quantitative and qualitative methods. To sum up the main results, the multiple dwelling arrangements of commuters at the job-used secondary residence do not comply with the prevailing picture of a "minimalist" kind of dwelling in most empirical studies to date. Particular dwelling profiles of commuters at their secondary residence are derived from factor analysis and cluster analysis. Concerning objective dwelling conditions and subjective dwelling preferences a distinction between five types of dwelling of commuters becomes apparent: (1) a first group who can realise their preferences for higher amenity values, (2) commuters with very small and simple dwellings and overall low dwelling needs, (3) commuters with sizeable, high standard secondary dwellings and overall high dwelling preferences, (4) commuters who cannot fulfil their dwelling preferences at the secondary residence, and (5) there are commuters with lower dwelling preferences than the actual dwelling conditions offer. Corresponding to the wide range of dwelling arrangements, the meanings which are attached to the dwelling in a multilocational way of life differ significantly among commuters. The job-used secondary residence is perceived as a working base, place of experience or second home and in some cases even any hierarchy concerning the meanings of the dwelling and the activities that take place in the dwelling disappear. Dwelling situation, housing preferences and dwelling experiences at the job-used secondary residence are influenced by life stage, family status, partnership situation, employment situation, gender, and lifestyle.

Keywords: residential multilocality, secondary residence, commuter, dwelling features, residential environment, housing preferences, home

1. Introduction

The rising spatio-temporal flexibility of the labour market and societal change altogether have led to more complex decisions concerning geographical mobility to be made by households in late-modernity. As a consequence, residing in multiple localities for job reasons has gained in importance in late modern societies over the last years. Recent research on this topic has paid much attention on stresses and strains and socio-psychological effects of a multilocal way of life on partnership and family while the investigation of housing issues, plays a minor role only. Van der Klis and Karsten's (2005) study about dual residences of commuters in a cohabiting partnership in the Netherlands is - as far as I know - the sole exception in this respect.

The emergence of multilocal household organisations in which individuals commute regularly between their main residence and a job-used secondary residence mirrors the more fluid conception of 'household' in late-modern societies compared to the more conventional association of 'household' with only one locus of residence (Hardill 2002, pp. 7, 16). Since official statistics and other surveys are strongly attached to the conventional unilocal definition of household, representative data about the distribution, characteristics and housing situation of commuters with a job-used secondary residence barely exist. The tendency towards multilocal household structures at the same time supports the geographically elastic concept of home that has been pointed out in recent research about the meaning of home (Massey, 1992; McHugh and Mings, 1996; Reinders and van der Land, 2008; Mallett, 2004, Fog Olwig, 1999).

The residences serve different functions in a spatially fluid household organisation: on the one hand there is the residence from which the commuter reaches his/her workplace and on the other hand there is the main residence which constitutes the commuter's communal residence with the partner, children or parents/one parent and which is therefore an essential locus for the commuter in terms of social interaction and social integration. Based on the notion that the meaning of a dwelling is connected to people's goals and intentions (Coolen, 2006, p. 189) the different functional relations to the residences in a job-motivated multilocal household organisation thereby reveal different meanings associated with the dwelling at the main and secondary residence. Literature to date has acknowledged that people attach different meanings to the same residential environment or dwelling feature (Zwarts and Coolen, 2006) and that meanings of dwelling or home may alter (Kenyon, 1999). In the light of people's diverse dwelling experience and understanding of home the phenomenon of residing in multiple localities for job reasons raises further question about the

effects a mobile lifestyle has on dwelling and the concept of home. How is the dwelling situation of commuters at their secondary residence? How do commuters' dwelling conditions vary between both residences? What housing preferences do commuters have at either residence? How are commuters related to their dwellings? What does "home" mean in a multilocational way of life? These are the main questions raised in the present paper. For this purpose, commuters' dwelling experiences and housing preferences and non-preferences at both residences are investigated from the perspective of the individual. In contrast to previous studies on residential multilocality the present research explores commuters regardless of their household composition and partnership situation, i.e. not only commuters in a cohabiting partnership but commuters of all household types, with or without a partner/spouse are considered. Taking multilocational dwelling arrangements in different personal circumstances into account, this paper seeks to provide insights into diverse dwelling experiences in job-induced multilocational household organisations and may thereby contribute to a better understanding of the variety of meanings related to dwelling and home.

The following section gives a brief review of previous research on housing issues regarding multilocational living arrangements (section 2). Section 3 provides information about how the data were collected and briefly describes the sample. Empirical results are presented in section 4; closing with main conclusions and a discussion in section 5.

2. Literature review of residing in multiple locations for job reasons from a housing point of view

The prevailing view in the literature to date on job-motivated multilocational household organisations has been that of 'living in dual worlds', which is expressed by the bipolarity of dwelling experiences and activity spaces. In earlier case study surveys in German speaking areas, home ownership and the importance of building the own family house or of inheriting the parents' house are pointed out as an important trigger for running a secondary residence near the workplace (Hackl, 1992; Junker, 1992; Vielhaber, 1987). The case studies focus on the commuting from structurally weak regions to labour market centres like Munich, Nuremberg, and Vienna. The commuters are predominantly low-qualified male workers who are employed in the building and construction industry. The living interests of almost all respondents are deeply rooted in their main locality due to emotional and social bonds to the spouse, the children, the house, the parents, siblings, friends and the wider community in the village. Home ownership is regarded as a means of social status but at the same time functions as a financial burden that leads to the commuting in order to make a better living (Junker,

1992, pp. 118-120). In contrast, most of the samples live at the job-used secondary residence in mass lodgings provided by the employer, in mobile homes or caravans. This provisional way of residing was mainly decided on with the intention to keep the costs of living as low as possible since the main reason for commuting was to heighten the living standards at the main residence, i.e. to earn enough money to maintain or build the house and to avoid that the wife needs to work to improve the family income (Hackl, 1992, p. 91). The dual dwelling situation is accompanied by a self-intended distinction between the secondary residence conceived as working place opposed to the private realm and place of privacy at the town of origin (Junker, 1992, p. 128; Hackl, 1992, p. 120) which is reflected in varying activity space at both residences. The activity spaces are highly bounded by the near residential environment at the job-used secondary residence being used to run some necessary errands while other out-of-house activities are rare. A great part of the workers in the study by Vielhaber (1987, p. 183) do not leave the neighbourhood for weeks.

Though societal change and economic restructuring are hardly depicted in the mentioned case studies pictures of dwelling experiences depicted of the late-modernity by recent case studies on commuters who are employed pre-dominantly in higher occupational positions in the service sector do not seem to have changed a lot. For instance, Axtner, Birman and Wiegner (2006, p. 77) point out in their study on residential multilocality of university professors throughout Germany the ‘minimalist’ kind of dwelling at the job-used secondary residence. A similar “hand-to-mouth existence” is suggested by Green, Hogarth and Shackleton (1999, p. 48) for some non-randomly selected commuters in a cohabiting partnership working in London. Since the working week lifestyle and weekday time patterns in the samples are overwhelmingly dominated by work, i.e. commuters are working long hours and staying at the workplace until late in the evening, the activities in the dwelling near the workplace are narrowed to some existential functions and instrumental aspects a dwelling usually has: being a place to eat in the evening, to call the partner and to sleep (ibid., p. 28-29). The highly work-oriented lifestyles of commuters at their secondary residences in order to have the weekend off is also pointed out in other case studies (Gräbe and Ott, 2003; Schneider, Limmer and Ruckdeschel 2002; Bonnet, Collet and Maurines, 2006). One may therefore assume that commuters perceive their job-used secondary residences as a merely physical unit in the sense of having a roof over their head but as a non-place in terms of a locus of activities and social relations, a place of identity and well-being – components that are (amongst others) discussed in the literature with regards to the concept of home (e.g. Rapoport 1995; Després, 1991; Mallett, 2004; Sixsmith, 1986; Easthope, 2004).

In contrast, empirical findings of van der Klis and Karsten (2005, p. 11) for commuters in cohabiting partnerships in the Netherlands reveal a broader range regarding the use of and meanings attached to the job-used secondary residence. According to their assessment of the meaning of home using a distinction between physical aspects of the dwelling, activities and social interactions related both to the dwelling and the location for some respondents studied (total sample of 30 commuters) the job-used secondary residence is a “purely functional residence” that goes along with a low level of activities and social networks. On the contrary, there are others who perceive and use the secondary residence like “a full home”, though van der Klis and Karsten (ibid.) suggest that the secondary residence cannot be equated to the “anchor” function of the communal residence. In recent work in cultural analysis one encounters more arguments against the sharp physical and psychological divide between the main and secondary residence. Taking into account various types of residential multilocality including multilocalists other than job-motivated commuters with two households, Rolshoven (2007, p. 19) argues that the bipolarity of a main and a secondary residence in late-modernity is increasingly blurring. She distinguishes “double nesters” who reproduce their main residence in their secondary residence and “contrasters” who have a high dwelling standard at the main residence in contrast to the sparse dwelling at the secondary residence.

3. Methodological approach and sample description

In order to investigate dwelling experiences and issues of the meaning of a dwelling in a job-motivated multilocal household organisation this paper combines quantitative and qualitative methods. Firstly, a random sample of people with a secondary residence is drawn from official registers of inhabitants kept by municipalities throughout Germany. Since a central register does not exist in Germany, some municipalities needed to be selected. Moreover, the register of residence does not give any information about why people are registered at a secondary residence. To ensure that enough people with a job-related secondary residence are represented in the random sample, only large cities with metropolitan status were chosen: Munich (Bavaria), Stuttgart (Baden-Wuerttemberg), Dusseldorf (North Rhine-Westphalia) and the federal capital Berlin.

The random sample includes people who - at the time of the drawing of the sample - were aged 25 to 59, and who moved to the study areas during the last five years and registered a secondary residence there. In Stuttgart it was not possible to divide recent movers into main and secondary residences, so that a random sample of people had to be taken there of those

who either had a main *or* a secondary residence. Eventually, a total of 1,700 people who moved and who have a secondary residence in Munich, Dusseldorf and Berlin were contacted.

The questionnaire was sent out by mail at the beginning of the year 2006. The net random sample amount of people with a secondary residence is 483. Out of these about half as many ($n = 226$) could be classified as commuters who commute between two accommodations for work (“commuters”). In brief, significantly more men than women have a job-related secondary residence (61 %). Female commuters are younger than their male counterparts: The median age of women with a job-related secondary residence is 31 years compared to 36 for their male counterparts. Men more often than women commute in a partnership with children (31 % vs. 12 %). About 44 % of the female commuters live in a single household; this household composition applies only for almost one third of the men (for further socio-structural characteristics of the sample see Reuschke 2009).

The standardised postal questionnaire captures a set of objective dwelling conditions in terms of living space, type of dwelling, housing tenure, and whether or not certain dwelling elements and residential environment features are given for both the main residence and the job-used secondary residence. For all selected features of dwelling and its residential environment (see table 1 and table 3) the subjective importance were measured by means of a four-item scale for either residence: very unimportant, rather important, rather important, and very important.

Secondly, in order to shed more light on the commuters' relationships with both residences and the meaning attached to the dwellings extended semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted in 2009, i.e. three years after the first interview. The sampling was purposely designed to ensure that commuters with different dwelling conditions and housing preferences in terms of dwelling and its residential environment at their job-used secondary residence are represented in the telephone sample. A total of 20 commuters were interviewed, nine of whom had already quitted commuting at the time of the extended telephone interview. Another eight respondents are still living in the same secondary residence as three years ago. Three respondents keep commuting but the multilocal dwelling arrangement had changed in such a way that two of them had switched the workplace to another city and thus the location of the secondary residence and one woman has moved to another apartment near the same workplace and has also moved her main residence. Altogether, seven respondents have multiple multilocal dwelling experience, thus, the interview questions concerned former and the present multilocal dwelling arrangement.

The extended interviews focus on how commuters perceive their dwellings and its residential environment, why certain dwelling features are important and not important at either residence, and what home means in a multilocational household organisation. Whereas the first quantitative research phase provides information about particular types of dwelling of commuters at their job-used secondary residence and about which dwelling elements and residential environment features commuters prefer/not prefer, the second phase explores why commuters prefer certain features, how they use the dwelling and its residential environment, and consequently, the meanings related to the dwellings. According to Rapoport's (1982, p. 23; 1988, p. 235) distinction of the meanings of the built environment, both symbolic meanings (i.e. latent functions) and manifest functions that are everyday and instrumental meanings of the residences are addressed (see also Coolen, 2006; Zwarts and Coolen, 2006).

4. Empirical results

4.1. Dwelling conditions of commuters at the secondary residence compared to the main residence

The vast majority of respondents live in rental accommodations at their job-used secondary residence, which is mainly located in one of the study areas, only 9 % live there in a privately owned accommodation. The housing tenure at the main residence, which does not lie in a large city in over half of the sample, shows a completely different picture: 58 % men and 54 % women live there in their own property which is actually often the property of the parents/one parent in the case of younger commuters and therefore more female commuters than men (see sample description in section 3). Accordingly, the dwelling type differs significantly between the two residences on average: The highest proportion of 46 % lives in a residential building with more than eight flats at the job-used secondary residence whereas a single-family house constitutes the main house of 55 % men and 48 % women. According to the differences in housing tenure the median living space consumption at the secondary residence – 40 sq. m for male commuters and 45 sq. m for female commuters – is not only significantly lower than the median living space per person at the main residence (50 sq. m and 47 sq. m respectively) but is also considerably lower than the median space consumption for single-person households who have moved in the last two years in Germany, which is 54 sq. m (Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning, 2007, p. 173). As a result, a remarkable portion of 61 % of the respondents considers their housing conditions at the secondary residence worse than at the main residence.

The objective dwelling conditions at both residences can be described in greater detail by selected features of the dwelling. Concerning the presence of single fixed elements of the dwelling (see table 1) the complementary dwelling conditions differ more for home owners and therefore for commuters in multi-person households. Consequently, the differences are generally greater for men than for women, greatest for men in a couple or family household and least distinct for women in single-person households. For instance, about one third of men in a couple or family household reports having bright rooms (36 %), a balcony/terrace (38 %), a separate kitchen (33 %), and a comfortable bathroom (39 %) at the main residence but not at the secondary residence. The spread is even higher for a spacious room (47 %) and a workroom (56 %). In comparison, for female commuters in single-person households the distinction between the two dwellings is mainly due to living space features (spacious room, a further room) whereas the average dwelling situation does not differ significantly between the two residences with regard to bright rooms and a comfortable bathroom.

When all selected fixed dwelling elements are analysed as to whether they are given/not given at the job-used secondary residence, a distinction of three types of dwelling can be derived from cluster analysis (n = 206):

- A first group of commuters (n = 79) live in very small and simple dwellings at the secondary residence. The median dwelling size is 34 sq. m; the dwelling therefore does not possess a spacious room, a further room, a separate lavatory, and rarely have a balcony/terrace. A garage/parking space does not belong to the dwelling either. Almost half of these commuters have a separate kitchen and bright rooms, only one third has a comfortable bathroom.
- In a second group are commuters who have a small dwelling with higher amenity values (n = 81). With a median size of 43 sq. m the dwellings are quite small, but possess a balcony/terrace, bright rooms and a separate kitchen. A garage/parking space often belongs to the dwelling as well. Living space related features as a workroom/guestroom, separate lavatory and a spacious room are barely given.
- A third group of commuters (n = 46) live in sizeable, high standard dwellings at their job-used secondary residence. The median size is 69 sq. m and almost all dwellings have a separate kitchen, a balcony/terrace and bright rooms. Most of the dwellings possess a workroom, a separate lavatory and a spacious room. The sanitary accessories are on a high level.

The commuting arrangement has a prominent effect on the dwelling characteristics, i.e. weekly commuters significantly more often live in very small and simple dwellings at the

secondary residence. Since men – after controlling for age, distance between the residences and partnership status (having a partner or not having a partner) – more often commute on a weekly basis than women do, more men than women and therefore significantly older commuters live in this type of dwelling (see sample description in section 3). In contrast, commuters who travel to the main residence every two weeks or less and therefore more women than men and younger commuters live in sizeable dwelling with a high quality near the workplace.

4.2. Housing preferences at the secondary residence

In this section housing preferences in terms of fixed elements of the dwelling and residential neighbourhood features are considered. Comparative analyses of dwelling preferences yield an overall lower grade at the job-used secondary residence compared to the main residence, hence not only the objective dwelling conditions are lower on average at the job-used secondary residence than they are at the main residence but commuters are also less demanding at their secondary residence with regard to dwelling standards. That explains, in turn, why commuters report a relatively high level of housing satisfaction for their job-used secondary residence although their average dwelling conditions are considerably lower there compared to the main residence. In total, about three of five commuters are rather satisfied with their housing situation at the secondary residence and more than every fourth commuter is even very satisfied.

The greatest distinction in dwelling preferences between the two residences emerges again for men in couple or family households which correspond to their high rate of owner-occupied housing at the main residence. Among them, all selected dwelling features are of significantly less importance at the job-used secondary residence than they are at the main residence. For instance, not fewer than half of these men rank a balcony/terrace, spacious room, separate kitchen, workroom/guest room higher in importance at the main residence compared to the secondary residence. In contrast, women in a couple or family household do not differ on average in their evaluation of a separate kitchen, a workroom, bright rooms or a comfortable bathroom between the two locations. The differences in dwelling preferences are again least distinct for women in single-person households for whom only a spacious room and a further room (workroom/guest room) are of less subjective importance at the secondary residence compared to the main residence.

As can be seen in table 1, a factor analysis of subjective preferences for the selected fixed elements of the dwelling reveals that dwelling preferences at the job-used secondary residence can be best described by two ‘underlying’ dimensions (factors): the first being preferences for

living space and dwelling layout and the second factor covers amenity values of a dwelling. When these two dimensions of dwelling preferences are employed in a hierarchical agglomerative cluster analysis, commuters' dwelling preferences can be classified, as can be seen in table 2, into three groups: one group with low preferences with regard to both factors and thus with overall low dwelling needs, a second group of commuters with higher preferences for amenity values of the dwelling but who do not attach much importance to living space and dwelling layout, and a third group for which both sets of preferences are important and thus has overall high dwelling preferences.

Table 1: Dimensions of dwelling preferences

Dwelling features*	Factor 1	Factor 2
work room	0.779	0.153
guest room	0.760	-0.166
separate lavatory	0.726	0.175
spacious room	0.555	0.338
balcony/terrace	0.360	0.676
bright rooms	0.218	0.649
comfortable bathroom	0.088	0.638
garage/parking space	-0.039	0.571
separate kitchen	0.444	0.233

Factor 1: living space / dwelling layout

Factor 2: amenity values

rotated factor matrix (Varimax)

n = 158, listwise deletion as missing at random (MAR) could not be assumed

* binary variables: important/not important

explained total variance = 47.4 %

extraction method: principal components analysis

Source: own calculations

Table 2: Clusters of dwelling preferences

Dimensions of preferences	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3
Factor 1	-0.0452	-0.6980	1.3256
Factor 2	-1.5010	0.4311	0.3963
n	37	83	37

Cluster 1: overall low dwelling needs

Cluster 2: preference for higher amenity values of the dwelling

Cluster 3: overall high dwelling needs

Two-stage cluster analysis with factor values:

1) exclusion of one outlier by means of single linkage cluster analysis, 2) Ward's algorithm and squared Euclidean distance

Source: own calculations

Commuters' subjective importance towards residential environment measured by a battery of six features (see table 3) do not vary to such an extent between the two residences as it is noticeable with regard to the dwelling. Both men and women attach significantly more value to open space amenities, a quiet residential environment, and a good atmosphere in the neighbourhood at the main residence than at the job-used secondary residence. The subjective importance of shops, leisure and cultural facilities, and gastronomy, however, do not differ significantly between the two locations for male commuters. Apart from leisure and cultural facilities the same is true for female commuters. Accordingly, results of a factor analysis, which are presented in table 3, reveal that preferences for residential environment features at the secondary residences can be distinguished by infrastructural preferences, i.e. preferences for urban environment amenities, and preferences for open space amenities, quietness and a

good neighbourhood atmosphere, i.e. non-urban environment preferences. Urban environment preferences gain in importance at the secondary residence to some extent as the percentage of male commuters for whom close-by commercial stores and gastronomy are very important is higher at the secondary residence (though not significantly) than it is at the main residence (commercial stores: 42 % vs. 33 %, gastronomy: 20 % vs. 11 %). The same can be noticed for female commuters who evaluate gastronomy slightly more often very important at the secondary residence than at the main residence (23 % vs. 20 %). One may therefore assume that some male and female commuters go out for dinner more often at the job-used secondary residence than they usually would do at the main residence.

Table 3: Dimensions of residential environment preferences

Residential environment features*	Factor 1	Factor 2
leisure/cultural facilities	0.786	0.198
gastronomy	0.730	0.105
commercial stores	0.597	-0.033
open space amenities	0.296	0.739
quietness	-0.250	0.728
good neighbourhood atmosphere	0.186	0.623

Factor 1: urban features
 Factor 2: non-urban features

n = 185, listwise deletion due to MAR violation
 * binary variables: important/not important
 explained total variance = 53.5 %
 extraction method: principal components analysis,
 rotated factor matrix (Varimax)
 Source: own calculations

Table 4: Clusters of preferences for residential environment features

Dimensions of preferences	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3
Factor 1:	-1.0229	0.6328	0.6517
Factor 2:	0.1459	0.4400	-1.8842
n	71	88	26

Cluster 1: urban features are less important
 Cluster 2: both urban and non-urban features are important
 Cluster 3: non-urban features are less important

Ward's algorithm and squared Euclidean distance were employed for factor values.

Source: own calculations

According to the deduced 'underlying' dimensions of residential environment preferences, three preference groups can be distinguished by clustering methods (as can be seen in table 4): For the first group of commuters infrastructural facilities are not important in the neighbourhood at the secondary residence. A second group shows high preferences for both urban and non-urban environment features, and a third – and at the same time the smallest – group of commuters appreciate infrastructural features while evaluating non-urban environment features as not important at the secondary residence. The classification reveals that non-urban environment features are important for a significant amount of commuters at the secondary residence though these features are generally higher in importance at the main residence. In fact, about half of the female commuters evaluate open space amenities and a quiet residential environment at the job-used secondary residence as very important. For male

commuters a quiet neighbourhood is as important as close-by shops, that is to say, 42 % value these features as very important.

In general, the importance commuters attach to residential environment features at the job-used secondary residence is correlated with the commuting arrangement, as has been noticed for objective dwelling conditions as well: For commuters who travel on a weekly basis between the two locations residential environment features are generally less important than they are for commuters who travel every two weeks or less to the main residence.

4.3. A classification of commuters regarding housing at the secondary residence

Combining the above classifications of commuters regarding objective dwelling conditions, dwelling preferences and preferences for residential environment features a diverse housing pattern for the job-used secondary residence emerges, which is presented in figure 1. Taken together, there are three groups of commuters who realise their preferences at the secondary residence, while others are not able to satisfy their dwelling needs opposed to another smaller group of commuters with higher dwelling conditions than preferred. In the following the dwelling types are presented in greater detail.

Figure 1: Typology of commuters’ housing situation at the secondary residence by objective dwelling conditions and subjective housing preferences

objective dwelling conditions	subjective dwelling preferences & preferences for the residential environment		
very small & simple (79)	overall low dwelling preferences (22) & urban features less important (11) non-urban features less important (6) urban/non-urban features important (3) [number of extended interviews: 7]	preference for higher amenity values / overall high dwelling needs (40) & urban features less important (19) urban/non-urban features important (18) non-urban features less important (2) [number of extended interviews: 2]	
small & higher amenity values (81)	preference for higher amenity values (44) & urban/non-urban features important (22) urban features less important (16) non-urban features less important (5) [number of extended interviews: 5]	overall high dwelling preferences (11) & urban/non-urban features important (8) infrastructure less important (1) non-urban features less important (1) [number of extended interviews: 1]	overall low dwelling preferences (7) & urban/non-urban features important (3) urban features less important (2) non-urban features less important (1) [number of extended interviews: 1]
sizeable & high dwelling standard (46)	overall high dwelling preferences (17) & urban/non-urban features important (10) urban features less important (5) non-urban features less important (1) [number of extended interviews: 2]	preference for higher amenity values / overall low dwelling preferences (19) & urban/non-urban features important (8) urban features less important (6) non-urban features less important (1) [number of extended interviews: 2]	

Dwelling preferences equal objective dwelling conditions.

Dwelling preferences are not fulfilled.

Dwelling preferences are lower as the actual dwelling conditions.

Number of cases in brackets. Due to missing values the numbers in lines/columns may fall below the total sum.

Preferences for higher amenity values are realised

The greatest amount of the sample falls into the group of commuters who have small dwellings and who appreciate the higher amenity values of the dwelling but do not set great value on living space related features. In the majority of cases urban and non-urban features of the residential environment are equally important. Male commuters mostly live in a cohabiting partnership without children and women often live with their partners in separate households. The time period these men and women commute between the two residences is above average: four years compared to three years in the total postal sample (median), and half of them had already anticipated a longer period of multilocational living when starting the commuting. Thus, some searched for an apartment with higher amenity values as they expected a long lasting residing near the workplace as in the case of one male commuter who has been living in a multilocational household organisation for six years. As the local branch of the company he works for was closed in 2003 his job was relocated to the headquarters in Munich. For a transitional period of two months he stayed in a hotel but as his relocation was for an unlimited period he quickly searched for an apartment so that he would feel like coming home in the evening. "I would get sick in a hotel. One never really comes home then". The apartment should not be too small, that is smaller than 30 sq. m, as he and his wife want to spend weekends also at the secondary residence together enjoying the nice city and its surroundings. Bright rooms are very important for his feeling of well-being and he also evaluates a separate kitchen as very important for having the dishes in one room hidden by a door. Thus, one does not have to clean up every day and can close the door while cooking although he only rarely cooks for himself during weekdays and prefers having dinner in a tavern where he enjoys the cosy atmosphere. Although he commutes the long distance of about 560 km by plane, living close to the airport which is situated on the northern edge of the city was completely unimportant. Because he attaches much importance to open space amenities he was deliberately searching for a dwelling in the attractive southern edge of Munich where he can practice outdoor sports several times a week and from where he can drive with his car easily to one of the near-by lakes. Because he took his car over to Munich, having an underground garage is also very important to him at the secondary residence.

In three other cases feeling homelike and comfortable was highlighted most regarding the dwelling choice. A comfortable bathroom, a clean separated kitchen, a "real" bedroom and a balcony are crucial dwelling features in this respect. "Without a balcony I would have felt like trapped. If you do not have a dwelling on ground level where you can step outside I need at least a balcony to get some fresh air". A balcony is also important for inviting guests,

colleagues or friends from the primary residence who have moved or who are also commuting to the same city. Buying several big house plants at the very beginning of residing at the secondary residence was a further means to furnish the dwelling homelike. “That gives one a completely different feeling.” In order to feel comfortable the residential environment plays an important role for the commuters of the telephone sample. The city and the region at the secondary residence is a place of experience that is discovered alone during weekdays and/or with the partner at some weekends.

Very small and simple dwellings and overall low dwelling needs

Another group of commuters match their overall low dwelling needs at the job-used secondary residence with a very small and simple dwelling. This applies significantly more often (but not only) to weekly commuters who are either married male commuters in a family household or unmarried men and women with short-term contracts.

As married men predominantly live with their family in an own-occupied single-family house their multilocational housing situation pictures a “contrasting” multilocational dwelling arrangement. Their low dwelling needs at the secondary residence coincide with overall high dwelling preferences at the family home. The dwelling is described as functional and the furnishings as being convenient and optimised with regard to the main purpose of the secondary residence as a place of paid work and storage of clothes in an extreme manner of mobile life combining a multilocational household organisation with varimobile work as software consultant.

“It is important to have a shower cabin, a refrigerator, and that my computer and printer stand on a stable surface. I am pragmatic and do not put a vase of flowers there.”

But only in one of the four extended interviews with married male commuters the secondary residence is indeed a place without some more regularly social activities in the evening and a completely “non-place” for the partner. The residential environment is regularly used for sport activities, therefore a bike was taken to the secondary residence and the location of the rented apartment near to a suitable jogging route being even as important as the accessibility of main roads in one case. Being invited for a barbecue by the landlady and other tenants or utilising “our second dwelling” for weekend trips with the partner are perceived as “positive side effects” of the “working base”.

Since short-term employment is often correlated with low income (e.g. research assistants, artistic occupations) some opt (“voluntarily”) for simple dwelling conditions at the job-used secondary residence. The provisional way of dwelling is also chosen due to the employment situation in which a certain length of employment and therefore the period of

residence is more or less definite though this may lead in the case of a series of short-term contracts to long-lasting periods of multilocational living. Furnished apartments are thus of primary interest for two women:

“It was not up for debate for me to completely furnish a new dwelling. I do not want to give up my primary residence and I can work in my home office one or two days a week. That is why it was merely important to have a reasonable bed and a writing desk in the room, maybe a separate bathroom and that I am allowed to use the kitchen.”

Short-term contracts often correlate with a career start and therefore with a phase of life and a specific lifestyle in a pre-family stage in which the dwelling itself is of less importance compared to the residential environment. Thus, for one young man having his first job, a short-term and part-time employment at a university, dwelling features were less important because he had undertaken a lot outside the dwelling. Both urban and non-urban residential environment were important to him at the secondary residence. Contrary to the main residence in Berlin where he lived in a cohabiting partnership, having a balcony, for instance, was unimportant because he was living near a river at the secondary residence where he used to spend a lot of time with colleagues. Having a full social life at the secondary residence the multilocational dwelling arrangement was perceived as having two homes. “Sometimes I did not like to go home to Berlin at weekends.” In fact, the partner took her turns to commute every two weeks.

Sizeable, high standard dwellings and overall high dwelling preferences

In contrast to simple dwelling conditions at the secondary residence there is a small group of commuters with sizeable, high standard dwellings and overall high dwelling preferences. Accordingly, both urban and non-urban features of the neighbourhood are important in most of the cases. These commuters tend to have comparable high housing standards and preferences at both residences. On the one hand, these multilocational dwelling arrangements are associated with a kind of job-induced commuting between two residences that have been neglected in the literature on this topic to date, that is to say, a type of commuting that does not correspond to the “typical” model of one (mostly the male) partner commutes between his/her job-used secondary residence and the communal couple/family household. For instance, a male respondent began commuting when he met his wife in a town further away. Both keep working in their jobs and take turns to commute. According to the alternating commuting arrangement they “duplicated” their housing conditions by keeping his owner-occupied apartment and buying a shared single-family house at her place.

On the other hand, high standard dwelling at the job-used secondary residence refers to complementary lifestyles that offer the combination of urban-rural or metropolitan-smaller town preferences as in the case of one free-lance journalist who moved to the metropolis Stuttgart for her career advancement four years ago. She commutes the approx. 100 km to her family house in a village with 200 inhabitants on a weekly basis. In her description of the multilocational dwelling arrangement no hierarchy exists concerning the meanings attached to the dwellings and activities that take place in the dwellings. “Both residences provide an attraction. I want to give up none. That is a perfect supplementation.” She needs the countryside and her walking-tours and at the same time she enjoys the cultural and leisure activities in Stuttgart, like museums, cinemas, coffee bars, fitness centres. In the case of another female commuter, having different leisure opportunities lead to a complementary lifestyle in which “place-specific” leisure activities at the main residence like playing volleyball with friends she knows from school (“which is completely different from playing in a new team with colleagues or so”) were complemented with new hobbies like skiing, which she could not practice at the primary residence.

Dwelling preferences are not fulfilled at the secondary residence

Beside these groups of commuters who are able to realise their preferences at the job-used secondary residence there is another significant group who cannot fulfil their dwelling needs. Mostly, these commuters wish to live in dwellings with higher amenity values, but actually live in very small and simple secondary residences that lack higher amenity values. There are financial concerns and structural effects of the local housing market that restricted commuters’ dwelling choices profoundly. Especially in tight housing markets with a high rent level such as Munich the dwelling choice must be reduced, for example, to some essential requirements like the accessibility to public transport and the distance to work while other preferences for particular dwelling features had to be neglected like a greater living space, a comfortable bathroom and a balcony. “One had to choose the best out of a small supply.”

Among these commuters women in a cohabiting partnership where both partners are in highly qualified positions are outstanding. They regard the multilocational way of life as a temporary arrangement and wish to abandon the job-used secondary residence. Actually, all of the three women of the telephone sample have been giving up commuting since the first interview. Two of them did not initially expect such a long period of multilocational household organisation (five years and six and a half year respectively) and therefore had not adapted the dwelling standards to the higher dwelling needs. Another woman wanted to try for a start whether a multilocational household organisation would work out better since the

exhausting daily long-distance commuting between the main residence and the workplace had to be given up due to severe health problems. She improved her dwelling situation a year after beginning the commuting by dissolving the communal residence and moving to a bigger apartment at the workplace.

The small living space of the secondary residence influenced the dwelling experiences substantially. On the one hand, the feeling of being home was associated with the great living space of the communal dwelling. The living space at the secondary residence was perceived as too small for living together with the partner or to furnish the dwelling “nicely”, thus, commuting to the main residence was preferred and the women did not want to spend the weekend in the small apartment with the partner together. On the other hand, the small apartment facilitated a lot of out-of-house activities at the weekend when the partner commuted to the secondary residence, although it was not perceived as a “flight out of the dwelling” since the cultural facilities and the attractive surroundings provided plentiful opportunities for leisure activities which the respondent and her husband enjoyed a lot.

Lower dwelling preferences than the actual dwelling conditions offer

Last but not least there are some commuters whose actual dwelling conditions exceed their needs. Mostly, they do not attach high importance to living space and dwelling layout features. Housing markets that are characterised by a low demand such as in Berlin are one logic explanation for this observation (“There are so many nice furnished rented apartments in Berlin.”). Given the small number of commuters of this type of dwelling no specific socio-demographic characteristics could be derived from the postal sample. However, the extended interviews reveal changes of the commuting and dwelling situation in this regard that resulted in altering dwelling preferences at the secondary residence. For example, one respondent used to share both the main and the secondary residence with her husband. Both are working in Stuttgart and commute on their days off to their apartment in their “home town” where they grew up and where all the family and friends live. The rented apartment in Stuttgart is furnished like a “complete” dwelling. But since her husband started an advanced training in another town where he lives on weekdays and from where he commutes directly to the main residence at the weekend, she uses the secondary residence virtually alone. At the time when both were living in Stuttgart together and when their shift work matched pretty well she perceived the dwelling “as a normal dwelling” though it was never “home”. Now she mainly uses the dwelling in Stuttgart only for sleeping and tries to commute to the main residence as often as her shift work allows it. The big apartment (80 sq. m) therefore tends to be

“unprofitable”. That is why they are thinking of renting a small and simple accommodation (“room”) instead.

5. Conclusion and discussion

In the context of the present research, comparison analyses of present dwelling features and housing needs between both residences support the blurring of the bipolarity of dwelling arrangements and meanings of dwelling in a multilocational way of life for job reasons in late-modern societies. The multiple dwelling arrangements of commuters at the secondary residence do not comply with the prevailing picture of a “minimalist” and undemanding kind of dwelling in most empirical studies to date. Within a wider range of multilocational dwelling arrangements a striking distinction between “contrasting vs. duplicate” dwelling arrangements surfaces: Commuters with a very small and simple rented accommodation at the job-related secondary residence and corresponding overall low dwelling needs who live in owner-occupied single-family houses at the main residence on the one hand, and commuters with a sizeable job-related secondary residence of high quality and corresponding overall high dwelling preferences who tend to have comparable high housing standards and preferences at both residences on the other. Moreover, ‘in-betweeners’ appear who have contrasting practices regarding the importance of living space related dwelling features and doubling arrangements with respect to leisure and convenience features of the dwelling are intertwined.

In sum, a similarly diverse pattern can be extracted from the meanings which are attached to the dwelling in a multilocational way of life. For some, the job-used secondary residence is a “working base”, whereas others perceive the city and the region at the secondary residence as a place of experience, which they “discover” predominantly with working colleagues on weekdays and occasionally with the partner during weekends. In this regard, the out-of-house activities have an important influence on the choice of dwelling location. For some commuters a sharp distinction between the meanings of the two residences becomes evident since the main residence is described as home and the secondary residence as being much less than a second centre of his/her life, only serving the purpose of having a roof over his/her head near the workplace. For others, however, a multilocational dwelling arrangement is like having one “real” home and a second home or even any hierarchy concerning the meanings of the dwelling and the activities that take place in the dwelling might disappear. In contrast, experiencing several moves plus multiple multilocational dwelling arrangements might lead to the feeling of being “unanchored” and not having any home at all. To conclude,

multilocational dwelling experiences are strongly influenced by life stage, family status, partnership situation, employment situation (short-term employment), gender, and lifestyle.

It might be suggested that a substantial part of commuters search at the job-used secondary residence for a small rented apartment of about 40 sq. m, with good amenity and convenience features such as a balcony/terrace, comfortable bathroom, and a separate kitchen. In metropolises job-induced commuting between two residences will thus increase housing demand for small apartments in the inner city and other inner city areas.

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