

PERSISTENCE PREFERRED – ON FUTURE RESIDENTIAL (IM)MOBILITY AMONG THE GENERATION 50PLUS

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With 2 figures and 1 table

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Summary: The current academic discussion on residential mobility among the elderly mainly deals with two contradictory processes: Either it is assumed that future generations will behave as this generation does with respect to their conceptions of life and their choice of residence and a significant number will leave the cities upon retirement in order to settle in suburbia. Or a fundamental trend reversal is expected towards reurbanization and urban revival for all age groups and thus the generation 50plus also. For an investigation in the Munich metropolitan area, whose results are discussed here, it was at first assumed that the seniors of the generation 50plus would clearly behave differently than today's elderly, i.e. would be characterized by different lifestyles that would perhaps also be realized in other (residential) locations. The evaluation of the empirical data showed that those surveyed in the Munich metropolitan area are neither planning to leave the city in large numbers nor are large numbers of former suburbanites planning on moving to the cities. Thus, after retirement, persistence with respect to staying in their principal residences combined with temporary stays in their second residence arrangements – if available – is planned. The city of Munich will most likely not experience a renaissance among the generation 50plus, since there was no “crisis of the city”. Indeed, Munich remains an attractive location for those surveyed – as long as they can afford to live in the city. The main challenges for urban housing market policies will be to provide “affordable” housing in the city.

Zusammenfassung: In der aktuellen wissenschaftlichen Diskussion zur Wohnmobilität von Älteren werden zwei konträre Prozesse behandelt: Entweder wird davon ausgegangen, dass sich zukünftig Ältere bzgl. ihrer Lebenskonzepte und deren Verortung analog zu den jetzigen Älteren verhalten werden und in einem nennenswerten Umfang im Ruhestand die Kernstädte verlassen, um sich im suburbanen Raum niederzulassen, oder es wird eine fundamentale Trendwende im Sinne einer Reurbanisierung und eine Renaissance der Städte für alle Altersgruppen und damit auch für die Generation 50plus erwartet. Für eine Untersuchung in der Großstadtregion München, deren Ergebnisse in diesem Beitrag diskutiert werden, wurde zunächst prinzipiell davon ausgegangen, dass sich die Generation 50plus als Seniorengeneration von der heute älteren Generation deutlich unterscheiden wird, d. h. andere Lebensstile ausprägt, die vermutlich auch an anderen (Wohn-)Standorten realisiert werden. Die Auswertung der empirischen Daten ergab, dass die Befragten in der Großstadtregion München weder in größerem Ausmaß planen, die Stadt im Alter zu verlassen, noch zieht es die ehemaligen Suburbaniten in großer Zahl in die Städte. Für die Zeit im Ruhestand ist somit eine Persistenz bzgl. des Hauptwohnsitzes kombiniert mit temporären Aufenthalten am Zweitwohnsitz – falls vorhanden – geplant. Die Stadt München erlebt voraussichtlich bezüglich der Generation 50plus keine „Renaissance“, da es in dieser Generation auch keine „Krise der Stadt“ gab, sondern sie ist unverändert ein attraktiver Standort für die Befragten – sofern sie sich das städtische Wohnen leisten können. Die Herausforderungen der städtischen Wohnungspolitik liegen in der Bereitstellung „leistbaren“ Wohnraums in der Stadt.

Keywords: Demographic change, generation 50plus, emigration, reurbanization, suburbanization, Munich metropolitan area

1 Residential preferences of the generation 50plus in light of demographic change: research question and approach

1.1 Introduction

So far, little is known about the lifestyles of the future elderly generation and what expectations those seniors might have regarding residence and living arrangements. Previous work on de-

mographic change in Germany in general and in a number of major German cities mostly has focused on changes in the size of cohorts. In current academic debate on the residential mobility of the elderly, two opposing processes are addressed: either it is assumed that in terms of lifestyle and choice of residence the future elderly will display the same behaviour as current senior citizens and leave the central cities after retirement for the suburban regions or a fundamental reversal of trend is

expected toward reurbanization and urban revival involving all age groups and hence also the generation 50plus.

We expect the generation 50plus (the cohorts 1945 to 1954) as seniors to be clearly different from today's elderly since, due to having experienced expanded education opportunities, emancipation, and participation, they have different expectations and abilities. This is the first post-war generation, who, as young adults, initiated and experienced numerous changes during the period of social transition and general value change in the late 1960s. They belong to the group to have been first affected by individualization and to have benefited from the early stages of the expansion of education opportunities (cf. *inter alia*, BECK 1986; INGLEHART 1998; NOELLE-NEUMANN and PIEL 1983; SCHÄFERS 1995). This has had a sustained effect most notably on women of this age group since they are not only considerably better educated compared to their mothers, but also because these women, due to own employment, will have greater financial resources at their disposal in retirement than today's female retirees. On the other hand, this generation to a much greater extent than the previous generation has been subject to temporary employment, unemployment, forms of pseudo self-employment, which have resulted in discontinuous work histories and will affect the level and security of expected retirement benefits.

For these reasons, they will be different from today's seniors and can be expected to develop different lifestyles (cf. KRAMER and PFAFFENBACH 2007), which will likely lead them to favour different (residential) locations. Against this background, this article will address the question as to what locations we can expect those to be. Current debate leads us to expect a trend toward decreasing suburbanization and increasing reurbanization. However, there may be other factors in play, apart from those two processes, that so far have escaped scholarly attention. Since retirement for this age group is an event in the foreseeable future that can be imagined and reflected upon, we have decided to focus on this age group in a prospective perspective.

From an urban and social geography perspective, this is a relevant question particularly because future seniors' choices of residential location are likely to have an impact on spatial structures (e.g. the housing market, infrastructure). The demands and expectations of this age group will pose a great challenge to city structures simply for the large numbers this generation represents.

1.2 Research question

In this article, the following research question is at the centre of attention: What conceptions of life do members of the generation 50plus envision for retirement? Where and how do they intend to make them happen?¹⁾

In this context, conceptions of life as they affect housing and living arrangements are of particular interest since this area relates to a basic human need and is at the same time of great significance from the perspective of geography and planning. Furthermore, in order to adequately take the diversity in conceptions of life into account as they relate to housing and living arrangements, we will explore the relation between conceptions of life and the spatial context (living arrangements, neighbourhood etc.), on the one hand, and individual characteristics (social status, economic status, etc.) and residential histories, on the other. We will not, however, be able to consider conceptions of life in terms of the related leisure activities.

1.3 Methodical approach

The utmost diversity in conceptions of life can be expected in large urban settings, which provide the most conducive environment for their realization. For this reason, our study focuses on a large German city. The Munich metropolitan area was selected because a particularly large cohort of the "different" future elderly lives in the region, as a consequence of labour migration in the 1970s and 1980s. The new development can thus be expected to take shape in a more pronounced manner here than in other German cities.

Five Munich districts (Alt-Bogenhausen, Isarvorstadt, Schwabing-West, Obergiesing, and Allach-/Untermenzing-West) and two municipalities in the Munich suburban region (Dachau and Vaterstetten) were selected as the areas for this study. The city districts were to feature different structures to represent and allow analysis of an as broad as possible range of potential sites of action. At the same time, the city districts were to be as homogeneous as possible in terms of social, spatial, and, above all, built structure. The two suburban municipalities also display

¹⁾ The problem with inquiring about future intentions is of course that one cannot expect all of these plans to actually be realized precisely as planned today. Nevertheless, such statements allow to draw conclusions about dispositions for future action (cf. BOERNER and SCHRAMM 1998).

structural differences: Dachau is a medium-sized town with a pronounced urban atmosphere, where a diversity of urban opportunities is complemented by the simplicity of living in a small town (especially compared to Munich), whereas Vaterstetten largely resembles a bedroom community whose residents are strongly oriented toward Munich in many areas. The two extremes well represent the structural range of municipalities in the Munich suburban region.

We have based our empirical approach on a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative interviews were the first step in the research process. Five interviews were conducted in each area under study. The guided interviews addressed conceptions of life, stereotypes of the elderly, and images of Munich among the research sample. The interviewees were determined by a random sample drawn from the local residents' registry and contacted by phone. At 31%, the share of academics in the sample is probably slightly above the average for Munich in this age group²⁾.

The standardized survey sought to record current living arrangements, their assessment, and plans for the near future, as well as current and planned future leisure and vacation activities, the employment, financial, and health situation, and also views on aging. A random sample of addresses of residents in the respective age group from the local residents' registry provided the basis for the survey. Total response after one follow-up contact was 25% in Munich, 44% in Dachau, and 54% in Vaterstetten. In sum, 34% of the persons contacted returned the completed questionnaire (total number of questionnaires analysed: 543). The share of academics in the quantitative sample is 30%; as expected, academics are probably also slightly overrepresented in this case too.

1.4 Theoretical background

From a theoretical, conceptional perspective, people engaged in action are at the center of attention. Various components are significant to the constitution of action. WERLEN (1997, 1998, 2007, 593) identifies socio-cultural, subjective, and physical-material components. They can be viewed as

²⁾ Since education status is not statistically recorded, we can only give a rough estimate of how our sample compares with the population under study. Moreover, persons with flexible time budgets (e.g. the self-employed) and those showing interest in our research were more likely to participate in the qualitative interviews.

constraints in the line of HÄGERSTRAND (1975) and as structures, as in GIDDENS' structuration theory (1984). According to the constraint approach that emphasizes the key role of macrostructures, the subjective components are not the only factors that determine action, as structuration theory suggests, which is more focused on so-called microstructures; rather temporal, spatial, and social context are conditions that also affect individual discretion (cf. MEUSBURGER 1999, 96ff.).

HÄGERSTRAND's constraints do not exist on their own but are reproduced in action. Actors shape the contexts of action, and those contexts in turn are the constraints they face in everyday life. Hence, this understanding of context and constraints is not deterministic rather probabilistic in the sense of WEICHHART (2003, 2008) as an "action setting".

GIDDENS also proposes an interrelation between action and structure and calls it "duality" (GIDDENS 1984). Structures are significant for action because they affect action and the scope of action. Yet, structures not only constrain action but also enable action by providing orientation. On the other hand, structures do not exist on their own but are created, that is produced and reproduced, by actors. Structures are thus the outcome of past action and at the same time the conditions of current and future action (cf. GIDDENS 1984).

GIDDENS defines structures as rules and resources. In this study, the actors' financial situation (as a resource and microstructure) and the structure of the housing market (as a macrostructure) have emerged as significant factors influencing choice of residential location in retirement and intentions of migrating.

2 Future residential preferences of the generation 50plus

Spatial mobility varies considerably depending on age (WAGNER 1989; BUCHER and HEINS 2001). It reaches its peak between age 20 to 30 and then falls sharply. Between age 65 to 75 mobility again slightly increases. Recent studies (EICHENER 2001; HEINZE et al. 1997), drawing on the German Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP), have even estimated a substantial increase in the mobility specifically of rental households in the third stage of life. In contrast, FRIEDRICH (2008) has determined a drop in the migration rate for persons aged 65 and above since the mid-1990s (data source: the German Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning's ongoing spatial monitor [Laufende Raumbewachung des BBR]).

Of course, significant life events, such as marriage, birth of children, or children leaving the parental home, provide reasons for mobility (BUCHER and HEINS 2001, 120ff.; FLÖTHMANN 1997), which nonetheless require taking regional differences into account. For instance, biographically oriented migration studies show that, on the whole, change of residence is more closely related to changes in family history than to work history. For the generation 50plus, this could indicate that children leaving home, separating from one's partner, entering a new relationship, decease of the spouse, or other changes in private life are a more significant reason for moving than retirement. A look at the main patterns of and motives for migration reveals that two thirds of the elderly move within a distance of 50 km (approx. 30 miles) and migration is frequently oriented by networks of relatives even where this may not mean moving to directly live with relatives (FRIEDRICH 2001a, 125).

In the following, we will discuss four trends in the generation 50plus' residential preferences. In each chapter, we will draw on current literature and data and compare conclusions from these sources with the results from our study of the Munich metropolitan area. In a first step, our project asked whether the respondents could imagine changing their housing situation and living arrangements once they or their partner have retired. Fifty-eight percent of the sample responded positively to this very

vague question. While two thirds of the respondents from Munich said that they could imagine change, this value dropped to barely 50% in Vaterstetten and Dachau (cf. Tab. 1). As expected, this vague idea of change is negatively correlated with ownership of one's own home (-0,29***), the relation being weaker in Munich (-0,26***) and most pronounced in Vaterstetten (-0,39***). The underlying motives of residential relocation will have a great influence on structural developments both in the target regions and in the regions of origin.

2.1 Leaving the city and moving to the suburbs

The residential preferences associated with suburbanization are generally viewed as linked to specific socio-demographic factors. In the past decades, especially young families with children on a good income have left the central cities mostly for their own home in the suburban region. Only in recent years have other types of households that deviate from this traditional pattern increasingly contributed to suburbanization in the German agglomerations. For instance, in Eastern Germany's large urban regions, households of all ages and sizes have moved to the suburbs (HERFERT and SCHULZ 2002), where they often live in rental housing. In the meantime, this trend has been observed in Western Germany as

Table 1: Intentions of migrating in the Munich metropolitan area

	Munich (262)	Dachau + Vaterstetten (273)	Total (535)
Change of residence conceivable in principle	62% (161)	55% (151)	58% (312)
Specific plans of changing residence exist	13% (35)	7% (20)	10% (55)
Location of planned new residence (if mentioned)			
... in another part of current municipality of residence	3% (7)	2% (6)	2%(13)
... in Munich (if currently residing outside of Munich)		<1% (2)	
... in another suburban community in the Munich area	3% (8)	2% (6)	3% (14)
... in another German city	2% (4)	<1% (1)	1% (5)
... abroad	5% (12)	3% (7)	4% (19)

Note: Percentages of respondents by current place of residence do not add up to 100% since not all respondents gave information on their new place of residence.

Source: own survey; percentages refer to share of respondents by current place of residence (absolute numbers in parentheses)

well. Since the 1980s, the older generations seem to have been participating more strongly in suburbanization than in the decades before.

Considering age-specific migration nationwide, it stands out that Germany's central cities currently display an overall negative migration balance among the population 65 and above while the suburban districts are winners in this age group (also see BUCHER and HEINS 2001, 123f.). This pattern is evidenced in numerous large urban regions, particularly in Frankfurt, Hamburg, Stuttgart, and Munich. The observed rate at which elderly have been leaving the cities so far has even fueled concerns that existing urban social infrastructure geared toward the needs of the elderly might be insufficiently utilized in the future (FRIEDRICH 2001a, 125). Munich heads the list with the highest losses to migration in both the age group 50 to 65 (2007: -7.7%) and 65 (2007: -10.1%) and above (BUNDESAMT FÜR BAUWESEN UND RAUMORDNUNG 2003, 2005, 2007). The motive for suburban migration most frequently mentioned is the better value for money when buying a suburban home (REFERAT FÜR STADTPLANUNG UND BAUORDNUNG MÜNCHEN 2002). Particularly in the age group above 75, Munich evidences high migration losses mostly on economic grounds (lack of affordable retirement homes and care facilities; REFERAT FÜR STADTPLANUNG UND BAUORDNUNG MÜNCHEN 2004).

In our qualitative interviews, many of the interviewees said that they would look for smaller and, especially, for less expensive housing after retirement, preferably in the same neighbourhood or on the outskirts of the city but not in the greater suburban region.

In this study, the analysis of suburbanization trends included only the Munich respondents ($n=262$), 62% of whom claimed that they generally could imagine moving after retirement. Thirteen percent of the Munich respondents already had concrete plans to that effect. Fifteen percent stated that they could imagine moving to a suburban community in the Munich area or to another German city, five percent that they already have concrete plans to do so (three percent plan to move to a suburban community, two percent to another German city). It is noteworthy that among the Munich residents who are planning to live in a nearby suburban community sometime in the future there are just as many currently living in rental arrangements than in their own homes. At this point, it is not clear whether current tenants will acquire their own property when moving or what owners will do with their current homes in

case of relocation (sell or rent). The most frequently mentioned reason the future suburbanites give for a possible or planned change of residence is the wish to live in a more rural environment. The traditional motive driving suburbanization, the better value for money in buying real estate, which was mentioned in the migration study for Munich, also is a factor for the generation 50plus since the second ranking reason offered for plans of moving is the wish for more affordable housing in the future. However, it must be noted that the respondents of the generation 50plus are substantially less inclined to participate in suburbanization than are current seniors as reported in the migration study for Munich.

2.2 Back to the city: reurbanization and trends of moving to the city

Following the analysis of suburbanization trends, we will now shift our focus to the opposing process of reurbanization, which is currently a subject of intense debate in the press and scholarly literature under the heading of "urban renaissance" (e.g. BRÜHL et al. 2005; GEBERT et al. 2008; HERFERT 2002; KUHN 2007, GEPPERT and GORNIG 2006; HAASE et al. 2006), although current migration data does not yet indicate any large-scale influx of senior citizens (BUNDESAMT FÜR BAUWESEN UND RAUMORDNUNG 2007).

In a host of articles recently published on reurbanization, the phenomenon is approached from a qualitative perspective and identified as a "turn toward living and working in the city" and a "new appreciation of living downtown" (KUHN 2007, 125, authors' translation). Although such assessments draw on research about motives for migration, an oft-cited Difu³ study (BRÜHL et al. 2005), for instance, only surveyed persons who had actually moved to the city. Precisely this group can of course be expected to take a positive stance on living in the city. If it were true that "the suburban model of life is actually being questioned" (KUHN 2007, 126, authors' translation), we could also expect an increasing number of suburbanites to (again) be more receptive to the idea of living in the city.

Quantitative approaches to the phenomenon show differences as well. GANS (2002, 160) defines reurbanization as "a stage of urban development where the central city experiences a more favourable population development than the suburban region"

³ Difu (Deutsches Institut für Urbanistik) German Institute of Urban Affairs

(authors' translation). According to this definition, reurbanization would also pertain to a situation involving a simultaneous population decline both in the central city and the suburban region in which the decrease in population numbers is lower in the city compared to the surrounding region. In this way, it would be possible for reurbanization to take place in shrinking cities. Moreover, a comparatively favourable demographic development could also be the result of natural population growth or migration from other cities, rural areas, or from abroad.

HERFERT (2002) refuses to speak of reurbanization in cases of shrinking cities or natural population growth, limiting the term to migration to the city from the suburban region. In his view, reurbanization refers to a situation in which a city "once again records a migration surplus from the surrounding region and an overall increase in population" (HERFERT 2002, 335, authors' translation). In Leipzig, for instance, reurbanization is the result of declining suburbanization (HERFERT 2002). Population developments are essentially the outcome of shifts in or the petering out of the main migration flows. The city-to-suburb migration balance tends toward zero and there is a suburb-to-city migration surplus. For the time being, the younger parts of the population are for the most part the main drivers of centripetal migration flows and primarily responsible for reurbanization.

However, based on surveys in selected cities, some authors have predicted a reurbanization or the "revival of the cities" for the future generation of seniors as well (RAUTERBERG 2005⁴); GLASZE and GRAZE 2007; GEBERT et al. 2008⁵). Those studies often only include suburbanites who are asked about their intentions of moving to the city or their willingness to do so. For the most part, the data thus re-

corded is not compared with survey data where current city dwellers are asked about their intentions of moving to the suburbs. Consequently, the size of the respective migration flows cannot be compared, as is done in the analyses of population and migration statistics (e.g. HERFERT 2002). In the vicinity of the German city Mainz, only 5% of generation 50plus suburbanites are specifically planning to move to a city. Of those 5%, 70% said that they intend to move to Mainz. GLASZE and GRAZE (2007) interpret as potential the 20% of their respondents who claim to have considered moving to the city.

The analysis of our survey determined that 8% of the respondents from the two suburban towns Dachau and Vaterstetten (n=273) mentioned Munich as a possible future place of residence. However, only two respondents (< 1%) actually had concrete plans to that effect.

Potential future reurbanites are more frequently from Vaterstetten (9% of the respondents) than from Dachau (6% of the respondents) and had moved to these towns in the 1980s and 1990s. Among them are very few who were born in one of those communities. It is noteworthy that there is an above average number of homeowners among the Vaterstetten respondents that can imagine moving to Munich. Further analyses of those potential reurbanites are precluded because of the small case numbers.

In the qualitative interviews in our study of suburban municipalities in the Munich area, a number of interviewees especially from Vaterstetten stated that they could imagine moving to Munich, even downtown, at old age, either because they had already lived in Munich before moving to Vaterstetten or because Vaterstetten had always lacked the desired urban atmosphere. Interviewees from Dachau did not express any such intentions.

2.3 Moving to the "sunny south"

For a few years now, migration of German seniors to southern Europe has also been a research topic in geography. However, quantification has proven difficult, even though the consequences of the process, most notably for the target regions, is quite obvious. Official migration records are of limited use in this respect since residential relocation is only registered in cases where a relocation of permanent residence is indicated; seasonal migration and second residence arrangements are not recorded. Nevertheless, the data shows that Germans exhibit an increased willingness to move abroad at old age, which is also

⁴ RAUTERBERG (2005) assumes that in the future especially former suburbanites will be drawn back to the cities from the "monotony of suburbs" once the children have left home. Most notably, he has the so-called "woopies" (well-off older people) in mind, who are willing to leave their property (based on a study by the Bochum Institut für Wohnungswesen, Immobilienwirtschaft, Stadt- und Regionalentwicklung [InWIS – Institute for Housing Affairs, Real Estate, Urban and Regional Development] according to which one in three Germans older than 50 favor urban life).

⁵ An Internet-based survey of financially well-situated customers of the real estate agency DB Immobilien (PLAMBECK 2006) clearly shows preferences for a retirement residence in a quiet neighbourhood close to the city. Especially those who currently live in the suburbs are considering moving to a more urban setting with better opportunities for participating in urban life.

evidenced by the fact that 185,000 Germans currently collect their retirement benefits while abroad (DEUTSCHE RENTENVERSICHERUNG 2008, cited in FRIEDRICH 2009). Accordingly, the age-specific migration rate of Germans age 50 to below 65 has increased from 0.32‰ in 1980 to 1.42‰ in 2006 and from 0.22‰ to 0.52‰ for Germans age 65 and older (DESTATIS 2008). BREUER (2003, 2004, 2005), BREUER and MÜLLER (2005), FRIEDRICH and KAISER (2001), and BUCK (2005) have studied the situation of seniors living on the Canary Islands, Majorca, and Costa Blanca. The group of elderly German migrants surveyed by BREUER (2003) is comprised of former chief executives, high-ranking civil servants, freelancers, and entrepreneurs – the latter two representing only the smaller part of the group. More than half of the surveyed retirees spend only three to six months a year at their southern sunshine resort and more than 70% maintain a residence in Germany. This suggests that for the most part we are looking at cases of seasonal migration, which, as BREUER (2003, 51) emphasizes and is supported by BUCK (2005), is not just a privilege of an affluent class. In approximately three in four cases, the respondents use their second residence seasonally. Hence, in most of these cases, it would be mistaken to speak of retirement migration in the strict sense. More appropriately, we might speak of a more intense use of a second residence (BREUER 2004, 128). This pattern is apparently motivated by the wish to take advantage of both worlds without having to sacrifice the ability to stay in touch with the family (BREUER 2004, 129; FRIEDRICH 2009; WAHL 2001). In contrast, a very heterogeneous group of permanent residents has elected to completely relocate. It catches the eye that among them there is a higher share of persons of low socio-economic status compared to the group of seasonal users⁶.

In our survey, 19% of the respondents (and even 25% of those from Munich) can imagine moving abroad, although only 4% have concrete plans of doing so. Conceiving of moving abroad, however, does not necessarily mean permanent relocation. As might be expected, plans of moving abroad are correlated with ownership of a vacation apartment or home (0.26***), suggesting that considerations of moving pertain to this second residence. Sixty-one percent of the respondents' second residences are located abroad, mostly in Italy, Spain, and Austria,

⁶ Among the economically weak, there are 40.5% permanent residents as opposed to 26.2% in the entire sample (BREUER 2004, 127).

33% in Bavaria (foothills of the Alps and Bavarian Forest), and the rest in other parts of Germany. Roughly a quarter of the vacation residence owners⁷ surveyed already have plans of moving to the country in question and another 44% of them can imagine doing so. Hence, only a minority of second residence owners from the Munich area intends to stay in Germany after retirement. Apart from relocating their permanent residence, owners of vacation residences also plan to make more intensive use of them. Accordingly, a total of 32% of the surveyed vacation residence owners express intentions of using their second residence after retirement for anywhere between six months a year to all year around. The plans for temporary relocation stated in our survey to a great degree correspond with BREUER's observations (2003, 2004) for the Canary Islands and BUCK's findings (2005). The majority of Munich respondents can be assumed to fall into the category of future higher-income, "comfort-oriented" (BREUER 2004, 127) retirees who migrate seasonally, commonly referred to as "snow birds".

In the qualitative interviews, intentions of moving abroad were also mentioned in the context of cost reduction, suggesting that such intentions are not necessarily an indicator of affluence. "But as far as my job situation is concerned, I am not doing too well. It is indeed possible that my apartment might become too expensive and that life in Munich in general might become too expensive. (...) Munich is one of the most expensive cities, maybe even the most expensive city, not just in terms of housing. I don't want to move to Augsburg, but I might move to the Canary Islands" (unemployed engineer, age 58, Munich/Schwabing). Presumably, this group is more likely to permanently relocate to the country in question.

The empirical results of our study show that approximately 4% of the respondents from Munich entertain concrete plans of moving abroad while more than half of them own a vacation home there. Assuming that at least a part of the respondents who can imagine moving on a seasonal basis will actually do so, we must reckon with some degree of seasonal mobility among the generation 50plus. This leads us to believe that we will increasingly observe more of a "mobility continuum" (in accordance with HALL and MÜLLER 2004) that is not adequately accounted for in terms of the common distinction between migration and tourism.

⁷ Twenty-two percent of the respondents from Munich, 15% from Dachau, and 12% from Vaterstetten own vacation residences (apartments or homes).

2.4 Persistence

From BREUER's "seniors' survey" (2004, 127) and other studies (DEUTSCHES ZENTRUM FÜR ALTERSFRAGEN 1996; FRIEDRICH 1995; SCHNEIDER-SLIWA 2004a, b; ZAUGG et al. 2004) it is known that over 80% of the people older than 55 prefer residential continuity. Whether the predicted changes will actually materialize seems questionable in light of the ongoing decline in domestic migration, especially when considering the observed drop in the domestic migration rate among the group age 65 and above. It seems more likely that future seniors will attempt to keep with their expressed preference for persistence to the extent that their financial and health situation allows them to do so. Moreover, German seniors, in contrast to their US counterparts, are much more regionally focused in their sense of "feeling at home" (FRIEDRICH 1995; HEINZE et al. 1997; BANSE et al. 2008).

The willingness to move strongly depends on factors, such as lifestyle (HERDING 2006), how long a person has lived in a certain place, or home ownership. Instead of moving, it is not uncommon to plan substantial investments in reconstruction, renovation, or new furnishings aimed at improving the current housing situation and maintaining residential continuity (OSWALD et al. 2003, 60f.). According to a LBS⁸⁾ study, a third of its customers belong to this group, another third qualifies as "willing to move" (mostly academics), and the rest want no change at all (LBS 2006).

In our survey for the Munich metropolitan area, whether quantitative or qualitative, assessment of current housing locations was a significant factor in planning for the future. As a central thread running through almost all of the qualitative interviews, most interviewees viewed their current residential community as the ideal residential location with clearly more advantages than disadvantages.

In the questionnaire survey, more than 80% responded positively when asked to judge the quality of public transportation, available green and open spaces, shopping opportunities, safety, and medical care (cf. Fig. 1)⁹⁾. Satisfaction with the local housing supply and tranquility of the residential area was clearly highest in Dachau while respondents in Vaterstetten praised the large number of facilities for the elderly, thus clearly ac-

knowledging the City of Vaterstetten's efforts to that effect. In Munich, public transportation, cultural life, and green and open spaces are most appreciated. In assessing their residential environments, the respondents also critically reflect the benefits and drawbacks of their place of residence. Yet, the emerging picture is that they evidently live in the districts that best match their preferences.

Asked about possibly moving, 42% ruled out that a change of residence was even an option. Another 37% said that they could imagine moving in principle, but they could just as well imagine staying. Particularly the small number of respondents who actually have concrete plans of moving after retirement supports the persistence thesis. In the qualitative interviews, most interviewees stated that they not only preferred to continue living in Munich in the future but also in their current district and most preferably even in their current home (also FRIEDRICH 2001a, 2001b, 2002): "But I would never move away from here, because of the tremendous quality of living offered here, because Kaiserstraße is not a main road, the bedroom is out to the back, it is so quiet here. (...) Giving up living in Munich – no, my husband would have to leave alone" (draftswoman, unemployed, age 59, Munich/Schwabing). Especially, among the residents of the downtown districts very few are considering moving to the outskirts of the city or a suburban community. Residents of the outlying city districts or suburban communities wish to remain where they currently live because they either live in their own home or they enjoy the quiet and green neighbourhood, they also have a tightly knit local network of family and friends, and their current situation perfectly matches their preferences. In the view of the interviewees, a possible loss of income is the only factor that may require them to move. In this case, the favored strategy that was mentioned is to look for a smaller and thus less expensive apartment in the same district.

The extraordinarily high level of satisfaction with the current place of residence, the large degree of identification with their home and surrounding neighbourhood lead us to expect great persistence in the residential behaviour of future seniors.

3 Conclusion: persistence rather than reversal of trend

1. In contrast to the negative migration balance currently observed among today's seniors in central cities (BUCHER and HEINS 2001; REFERAT FÜR STADTPLANUNG UND BAUORDNUNG MÜNCHEN 2002), a contemporary trend in almost

⁸⁾ LBS (Landesbausparkasse) one of the largest German home loan banks.

⁹⁾ These results largely correspond to the findings of the survey of Munich citizens conducted by the Munich city administration (REFERAT FÜR STADTPLANUNG UND BAUORDNUNG MÜNCHEN).

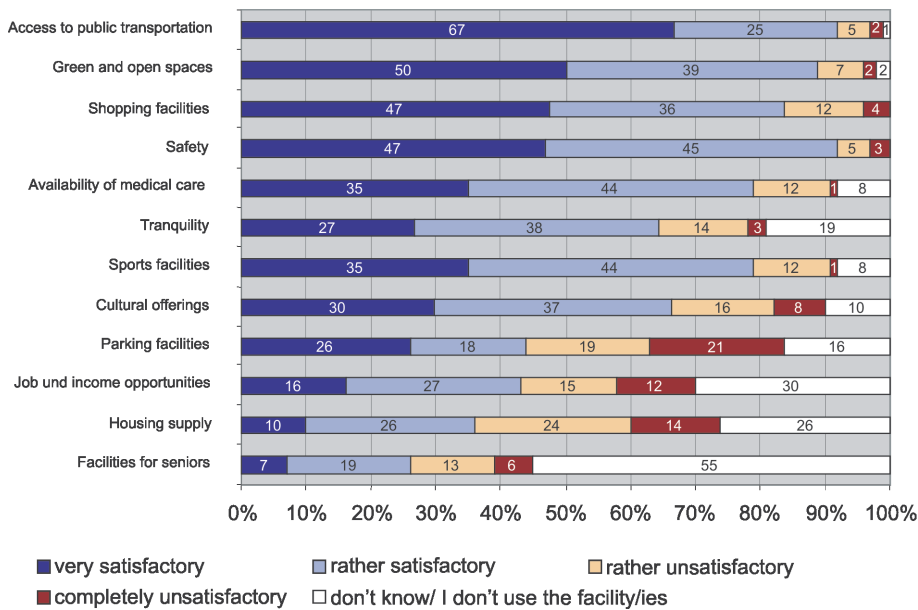


Fig. 1: Satisfaction with features of the neighbourhood in Munich

all of Germany’s major cities, the generation of seniors to come in Munich cannot be expected to continue flocking to the suburbs. Neither can we expect an increase in residential relocation from suburban communities to the city. In principle, preferences that had once guided choice of residence do not seem to change to the extent that a desire for a completely different environment might arise after retirement or at old age. Moreover, the need to accommodate and get used to a new location, neighbourhood, and social environment are other factors that must be taken into consideration (cf. Fig. 2).

2. An increase in seasonal mobility is a far more likely trend, especially among the owners of vacation residences. This financially well-situated group of people can be expected to keep their current home in the city or nearby and spend part of the year somewhere else. This will not lead to a greater availability of housing in their hometowns rather to temporary vacancies in the course of travelling back and forth between first and second residence.

3. Financial considerations play a major role in intentions of migrating as well as preferences for persistence. In most cases, moving to the suburban region, to another German city, or to another country is considered for cost reasons. The future financial situation is the factor most likely to raise concerns among the respondents as to their ability to maintain their current residence. Own financial resources and cost developments in urban and suburban housing markets thus act as major constraints.

4. The respondents’ greatest concern is the drop in income in the wake of retirement. Especially those with lower incomes and the self-employed who have not been able to make adequate provisions for retirement express fear of the future in that regard. In total, 35% of the respondents uttered discontent with housing costs, while, at 39%, dissatisfaction was highest in the city of Munich. Peak values (45% discontented respondents) were recorded in the traditional workers’ district Obergiesing with a presumably higher share of low-income households, which are more affected by high rents. A 52-year old administrative worker puts the limited discretion for future choices of residence he expects to have in the following words: “A person will be lucky to be able to scrape together the money to pay the rent” (52-year old administrative worker, Munich/Obergiesing). Yet even in the gentrified districts, such as Schwabing and Isarvorstadt, rents are also felt to be too high, and respondents describe friends moving away for financial reasons: “It has come to the point that people say, “I can’t pay the rent anymore”, and “I am going to move to Berlin”. Unfortunately, a number of friends of mine have done so, but I wouldn’t do that” (59-year old self-employed carpenter, Munich/Schwabing).

The respondents from the Munich metropolitan area are neither planning to leave the city at old age to any significant extent, nor are large numbers of previous suburbanites attracted to the cities. In all probability, Munich will not experience a revival

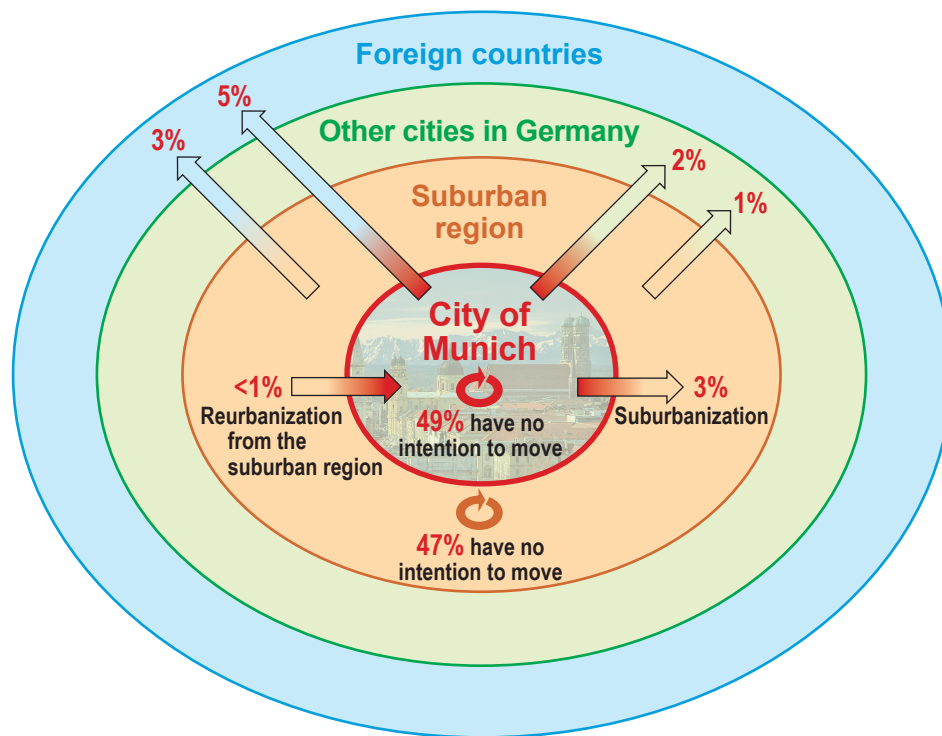


Fig. 2: Intentions of migrating in the Munich metropolitan area (only if specific plans exist)

among the generation 50plus, just as there was no “crisis of the city” in this cohort. Rather, Munich will remain an attractive location for the respondents, to the extent that they can afford living in the city. The main challenge for an urban housing market policy will be the provision of affordable housing within the city.

Therefore, if future seniors maintain their residence in the city to a greater degree than previous generations, this will both alter the age structure of the metropolitan population and further increase pressure on the housing market.

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