

The Wheres and Hows of Residential Choice

Anne Griffond-Boitier, Sophie Mariani-Rousset,
Pierre Frankhauser, Jérôme Valentin,
Victor Alexandre, and Bernadette Nicot

1. Introduction

A wide variety of choices and decisions are open to individuals when looking for a place to live: a flat or a house, renting or buying depending on one's resources and plans; living in a city centre to enjoy its buzz, or in a certain district to have a school close by, or on the outskirts in a more village-like setting; and in this last case, how far from urban centres and major access routes? What ultimately are individuals' preferences? All these questions presuppose looking at how they perceive and evaluate the urban environment so as to better grasp what it is that leads to residential satisfaction. However, it is not the evaluation or satisfaction in itself that is of interest to us here but instead the way in which these factors influence individual decisions.

We consider the way individuals apprehend the city, travel through it, interact with the material and social environment, and impart meaning to it; how individuals make mental representations of space that help them to better take the measure of places and set up criteria for evaluating their urban and residential environment. It is on these bases that they forge their decisions. This chapter attempts to specify the context in which decisions about residential and daily mobility are made.

On the collective scale, urban societies manage and organize all forms of mobility. They offer partial answers, constrain or adapt to individuals' coming and going, and even anticipate their aspirations. What planning strategies are put in place, how is social demand accounted for, how do planning strategies

ultimately influence individuals' spatial practices and decisions about mobility? This chapter endeavours to answer these questions too.

Highlighting all the factors that have a part in the context of choice and decision-making about mobility is the subject of an introductory part to the chapter.

2. The decision-making context

For a proper understanding of the context of the choice and decision-making process concerning residential and daily mobility, we have drawn figure 1.¹

The individual is considered within a social, psycho-social, economic, cultural, and geographical space (at the bottom of the figure). These various portions of space overlap because it is often difficult to draw sharp boundaries around each of them. The areas of overlap relate, for example, to the way in which individuals identify with their own residential space, the way they enhance or on the contrary devalue their social image by their dwelling place, by the type and cost of their housing. Another example is the way they perceive both the inside and outside of their residential environment: geographically or materially, allowance is made both for the inside of the housing (its size, decoration, etc.) and the outside (the architecture of the built environment, and the façades in the neighbourhood); socially and economically, individuals are sensitive to the cost of their own housing, but also to neighbourhood relations and the ease of access to service or work; psycho-socially, individuals may think they own a nice house in what is judged an unsafe part of town, in which case there is dissonance between the internal and external enjoyment, which may lead to a change of place. Lastly, the cultural reference frame provides an understanding of why the desire to own a home corresponds not just to a need to have a piece of land but depends more broadly on the social and political history of the country where one lives. Simultaneous consideration of all these dimensions enables us to apprehend the complexity of individual references, perceptions, and representations that emerge from them. In the diagram, this set of factors is continued by a halo, chosen to represent the atmosphere of places and the "scope of possibilities". The first term concerns everything to do with the residential environment and beyond the urban environment, whether the social

1 This diagram was produced in the context of the ANR ECDESUP project by a working group including V. Alexandre (Psychology Laboratory, University of Franche-Comté), D. Ansel (Psychology Laboratory, University of Franche-Comté), A.-C. Bronner (ERL LIVE, University of Strasbourg), A. Chauvin-Vileno (Laseldi, University of Franche-Comté), C. Enaud (ERL LIVE, University of Strasbourg), P. Frankhauser (UMR ThéMA, University of Franche-Comté), H. Houot (UMR ThéMA, University of Franche-Comté), A. Griffond-Boitier (UMR ThéMA, University of Franche-Comté), S. Mariani-Rousset (Laseldi, University of Franche-Comté), T. Ramadier (ERL LIVE, University of Strasbourg), C. Tannier (UMR ThéMA, University of Franche-Comté), and J. Valentin (UMR ThéMA, University of Franche-Comté).

environment or the landscape. This may be, for instance, lighting or the auditory setting, the climate, what the house fronts look like, the social atmosphere in a part of town, or contacts with the neighbourhood, and so on. The second term is deliberately vague and refers to spatial attributes: the urban offer that takes the form of different types of housing (to let or for sale, houses or flats, etc.) and infrastructure (transport, services, shops, leisure, etc.). The urban offer and the use made of it vary broadly with time (days of the week and times of day) and perceptions and feelings (stimulus or mood); the “range of possibilities” can also be used to contemplate these features. Lastly, “life cycle” is there as a reminder that wants, choices, and decisions vary with age, family situation, and social and material conditions that further widen the “range of possibilities”. It should be emphasized that in some instances individuals are confronted with an absence of choice because their financial resources are so limited. Absence of choice then appears as an additional option because it forces individuals to apply for social housing.

All of these factors influence the choice and decision-making process which here corresponds to a block split into three phases:

- the first is an evaluation involving all cognitive aspects, representations and perceptions, and individual affects;
- the second is a more active phase and concerns preferences, choices, and decisions proper;
- the third is the action/realization phase of moving home, for example, and settling down in a residential location.

Territory stands alone at the output of the process of choice and decision-making and covers multiple dimensions. It is the constructed, collective space that integrates the ideas of planning policy, management and appropriation of locations, public and private spaces, sharing and boundaries, rivalry, competition or complementarity, etc. Between the “choice and decision process” block and territory, a halo is used to represent the spatial practices of individuals played out there, depending on the type of practices contemplated, in the process block (with action/realization) or in the territory.

Finally, the background to the figure is formed on one side by space as it is experienced by individuals and on the other by territory, which is more material and relates to the collective scale. Interactions between these two extremes are constant: collective construction constrains individual choices and vice-versa new aspirations overturn urban models. The diagram can therefore be used to understand that the choice and decision process is at the junction between individual and collective scales.

The plan used throughout this chapter takes up the various steps in the diagram: the living environment—or reference space—as it is apprehended by individuals is the subject of Part One which deals with the interactions between individuals and the environment, emotions towards the urban world,

or movement strategies; second, the various types of choices, individual preferences, and evaluation criteria are recalled and discussed to show what makes decisions so complex when it comes to residential choice and daily mobility. Lastly, emphasis falls on the way the territory is constructed, the way it proposes answers through urban models, utopias that take the wishes of populations into account more or less sustainably. Even when renewed and often criticized, these models eventually fit into our collective references and feed back into our choices and decisions about residential and daily mobility.

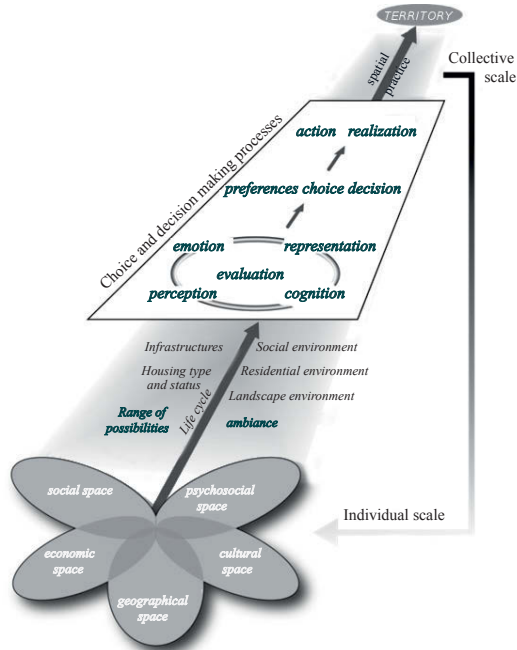


Figure 1—The decision-making context

3. Living environment and references

Our multidisciplinary approach enables us to dig deeper into certain ideas: space as individuals experience and feel it; the way individuals react with their environment; their affective relationship with the living environment, and the meaning they ascribe to it. Besides, observing individuals' travel strategies and the way distances travelled around the city are measured provides insight into how spatial practices condition individuals' mental representations

(cf. chapter 3). This also enables us to consider how the individual scale articulates with the city scale.

3.1 The importance of space as a lived experience

Living in an urban setting presupposes the necessary “competence” to adapt to the input of stimuli and information that the city churns out continuously. The term “competence” is also to be understood as the capacity to act based on one’s knowledge, experiences, or representations (knowledge, know-how, relational skills). As Chomsky (1971) put it when speaking of linguistic *competence* (and *performance*),² there is an urban competence (a “basic grammar”) necessary for understanding and using the city that enables us to make sense of what we are travelling through.

Interactions between individuals and their environment

Environmental psychology studies the interrelations between individuals and their physical and social environments in space and time (Moser et al. 2003). It looks at the effects produced on individual behaviour and conduct but also at the way individuals perceive and modify their environment. It looks especially at urban space as it is experienced and the way in which individuals set out their living environment and implement strategies to solve everyday problems. Ittelson (1973) defines the environment relative to the individual. The city surrounds, envelops, and protects people but it may also “swallow them up”, submerge, and frighten them or make them anxious. What city-dwellers perceive and feel pushes them to project themselves into the image they have of the city. Conversely, the city shapes urbanites’ identity and gives meaning to their behaviour. In perceiving and interpreting the information that comes to them, urbanites gradually transform their living environment. The environment is therefore experienced through action; it has a symbolic, aesthetic and sensory value—all the environmental stimuli (smell, sight, sound) are involved at once. Lewin (1967) shows there is strong interdependence between people and their environment and speaks of the structuring role of space. Individuals create their markers, anchor points, symbolic places related to their emotional connection to the city... In turn, the city shows itself to be a structured, organized space made up of landmarks that facilitate first contacts and everyday life: institutional places or major infrastructure (town halls, theatres, swimming pools, etc.), places where one can walk about (streets, back alleys, parks, etc.), sociability nodes (meeting places, squares, cafés, etc.), and so on (see chapters 3 and 4).

2 Chomsky argues that linguistic competence is common to all speakers of the same language and enables them to interpret meaningful sentences, ambiguous sentences, etc. (see chapter 8).

In the 1950s when investigating urban sociology, Chombart de Lauwe (1965) raised the problem of urban density and its effects on behaviour. He put his finger on *crowding*, that is, the feeling of being packed in or stifling felt in an urban setting. Based on social housing studies in the Paris region, he showed that crowding can cause illness. Growing densities heighten the complexity of social interactions. In some circumstances, this may make individuals uneasy, resulting in territorial tensions related to the sharing of space. In addition, the rapid growth of major agglomerations has made the relationship between residents and urban space a fragile one. Urban space is becoming more complex and ever less readable and in large part quite simply unknown and so “threatening”.³ The need to make allowance for the human dimension in the environment—its planning, the protection and dignity of human beings—is a factor that environmental psychology was to defend extensively. Environmental psychology developed therefore in view of social demand. Garden cities and the work of Le Corbusier correspond to these precepts. They propose social housing that is “pleasant to live in”, designed with interactions between individuals and space in mind (La Cité radieuse in Marseille or Firminy Vert near Saint-Etienne).

Urban identity and the meaning of the city

Urban space has an identity born of the appropriation of space by individuals and that is deciphered through their representations of it. Lynch (1976) considers that identity emanates from psychology and primarily concerns the individual. However, it is possible to transpose it and to speak of urban identity if one considers an urban community as a social actor; it is the representations of social groups that then make it meaningful. In this way, the attitudes and behaviour of human groups in space model the individual and personify the city (Moles et al. 1982).

Choay (1972) considers the city as a “non verbal system of signifying elements”. The city appears as a space produced by individuals and criss-crossed by dynamics, representations, images, and actions.⁴ Lynch (1976) was one of the first to want to make the city visible to all by updating the social and symbolic function of urban forms and public spaces. In the continuity of that, urban sociolinguistics became attached to the construction of meaning among individuals, groups, and spaces. It highlights the fact that individual and collective processes combine in producing significations and signifiers associated with space. In this way, “identity in the city is supposedly a process of construction of an intimate bond between the individual, the collective, and the urban environment through everyday usages and practices, perceptions, and the interplay of projection in space” (Bautès and Guiu 2010). Lewin and Faucheux (1967)

3 One need only notice how many cities boast that they are on a “human scale”.

4 This definition refers to the semiology of space.

being very much interested in group phenomena looked into the question of the identity of city-dwellers, their dependence on the environment, and their dissolution within the group.

Meaning is not easily constructed among individuals, groups, and urban spaces. Practices and experiences in the city are odd and depend on personal histories and social conditions (cf. chapter 3). As the city is made up of an assembly of neighbourhoods with different aspects and functions—collective housing or detached housing estates, historical centre, business districts, commercial sectors, derelict areas, etc.—some zones will be experienced differently depending on whether they are perceived realistically or represented as hostile or on the contrary welcoming, depending on people's personal backgrounds. Space can cause anxiety (because of excessive densities, poor lighting of certain places, the run-down appearance of buildings, or clusters of "suspicious" looking individuals), without engendering crime for all that. Representations of violence guide how people feel about places and lead to a difference between *good* and *bad* neighbourhoods in a city. This quite plainly involves rules inculcated by social circles and family origins and that lead, for example, to it being normal to live in a place (with an unattractive climate) or type of place (detached house). Inner space (personal mental space, interiorized social space, mental representations, and knowledge of space) and outer space (geographical space available to individuals) constantly interact in perceptive experiences, adjustment of behaviour, and activities engaged in. This induces varying capacities to appropriate space: some places may represent putting down roots, a psychological anchor point (Feldman 1990); and leaving them may cause serious disorder (depression, nostalgia). Other places, on the contrary, may elicit a feeling of strangeness, of not belonging, or even of rejection.⁵

What people are sensitive to is therefore important in shaping the city's identity. Different experiences, especially childhood experiences, may be decisive (Prochansky et al. 1983). Certain choices of residence can be explained by the influences of the extended family and a geographical identity heritage: the place "one is from" (Bonvalet et al. 2001). Mental maps, for that matter, attest to the diversity of affective and emotional relations to places.

Urban emotions

The urban setting exposes us to numerous stimuli that cannot leave us indifferent. The sounds, smells, appearances of places procure us particular emotions that influence the way we apprehend our surroundings (Amphoux et al. 2004). These circumstances of feelings are to be taken into consideration. The senses are sometimes solicited to the extreme and studied in original ways. How do

5 Authier et al. (2010) discuss these many ties that are made and sometimes broken between persons and places from a social angle.

urbanites perceive the ambience around them? What effect does pollution or stimulation produce, whether it involves sight, smell, sound (Thibaud et al. 2007), etc. or the absence thereof? The work bears on snippets of sound, trips made live or blindfold (cf. chapter 8). The particular atmosphere of spaces is also related to the time of day; this is true of the night when rhythms speed up and awaken fear of the shadows and artificial lights, and so on. Observing these atmospheres and the impressions they make on us provides insight into the way we appreciate the places where we live and the spaces we frequent on a daily basis. This is measured especially through the emotions felt (cf. chapter 4).

What we call “emotions” are the affective and physiological reactions that are strong enough to be set apart from mere feelings (less intense affective reactions). Behavioural psychology counts four fundamental emotions (fear, anger, joy or pleasure, and sadness or sorrow) that may come in a wealth of nuances. These reactions are often short-lived. In our context, we are interested in emotions the city-dweller feels when travelling through urban space. The duration of these emotions and their intensity probably vary with the individual’s position (stationary or moving) and mode of locomotion where applicable: on foot, by car, train, bike, wheel chair, etc. Their sum total, associated with a degree of regularity in paths taken or in the use of a living space, probably eventually produces a general or partial “urban impression” on the scale of the district, neighbourhood, or place of accommodation: impressions of order or disorder, upkeep or lack of it, cleanliness or dirtiness, wealth or poverty, safety or insecurity (cf. chapter 3).

Social psychology and more specifically what after Moles and Rohmer (1972) one might call social micro-psychology, show the importance of these small emotions, these minor facts, the brief moments of pleasure (a sunset on a façade), irritation (graffiti in a stairway), fear (slipping on dog excrement), precisely because they are small but frequent and because consequently they contribute, through their repetition—perhaps more than the major, intense but rare emotions (car crash, gas explosion)—to the quality of urban life and everyday well-being.

What are the triggering factors of these emotions? Because they are reactions, emotions cannot be treated separately from the context that prompts them. The triggering factors are therefore related to the environment. For example, the presence of individuals that public opinion tends to stigmatize (the homeless, disabled, etc.) may shock whereas others may amuse or even spark enthusiasm (artists, etc.). These triggering factors of social origin are quite varied: institutional (police), acquaintances one runs into with varying degrees of pleasure (family, neighbours, workmates, etc.), or on the contrary the absence of familiar faces may lead to a feeling of anonymity and isolation, even in the midst of the crowd. Other triggering factors may be material: monuments, squares, parks and gardens, shop windows, urban lighting, noises and smells, vibrations, or

climatic factors (temperature, humidity, ventilation), and so on. Each of them causes positive or negative aesthetic and hedonistic emotions. People find it pleasant or unpleasant, for example, to look at a façade, sit at a café terrace, walk down the street to the baker's. But things go further. The same monument that inspires no particular sympathy elicits a form of pity if it is damaged or destroyed. The reason is that a special attention, related to the feeling of belonging, of collective ownership, is associated with the upkeep of urban spaces and consequently any damage, whether deliberate or not (broken windows, graffiti, burnt-out bins) have emotional effects on passers-by. In addition, we tend to associate attributes that refer to the social context with the urban atmosphere. Thus the appearance of a building, a façade, or a street may prompt us to presume that the inhabitants are rather well-to-do or less well-heeled.

Each of these emotional reactions gradually imprints "urban impressions" on each individual that probably play an important role in their overall appreciation of their place of residence. On a macroscopic scale, the amalgamation of these sensations is reflected by attraction or repulsion for places, conditioned by representations and nourished by our collective references (cf. chapters 3 and 4). The image of places conveyed in this way (good or bad) is reflected directly by the differences in land prices which may be completely independent of the amenities they provide.

3.2 Mobility

The possibilities of travel on a daily basis and accessibility to places are fundamental factors in the choice and appreciation of one's place of residence. This is why it is worth identifying individuals' movement strategies and the way the importance of these movements can be measured.

Movement strategies

Social psychology has studied the way in which individuals choose their routes around urban space depending on strategies (avoidance, speed, protection, etc.) and specific behaviour taking account of the estimated time from one point to another or the quality of the site passed through. As Lynch (1976) showed, our choice of trajectories derives from the environment, but on walking along the streets and passing other urbanites (in a neighbourhood or on the main thoroughfare), we necessarily enter into a communicational field, which we open and close as we wish. That depends on the people passed, places to avoid, places that are difficult to get to (narrow pavement leaving room for just a pushchair or always cluttered with parked cars), and so on. This may account for detours, longer but safer routes, appreciations due to an ornamental detail, stimuli triggered by shop windows, etc. Interactions in everyday life (Goffman 1974) also require knowledge of the place, local practices, attitudes, and the environmental

structure, in addition to the use of language. Living on a large high-rise estate or in the city centre leads to different relations and interactions.

To move around urban space, people have to avoid each other. For Fischer (1965) "the passer-by's sphere seems to be governed by the same principle as the driver's, namely the principle of non-collision". All our senses influence our behaviour: whether walking or driving, our trips demand great watchfulness so that we do not bump into others. Goffman (1974) highlights the avoidance process: it enables one to avoid unwanted encounters in which a danger might arise. Besides, it makes other passers-by think we are not paying attention to them: we do not look them in the eye, we do not seek to put them at ease or make them uncomfortable. We therefore acquire a "façade", a particular attitude towards strangers, to keep them at a distance, morally and physically. According to Goffman (1974), "public order" is supposedly based on the phobia of contact. Promiscuity in public places increases the risk of aggression and intrusion. Goffman looked into the various procedures and strategies by which individuals establish and maintain interaction with others. These are techniques for protecting oneself while being able to live in contact with others. Goffman speaks of the look-out system used by each pedestrian: "visual scanning" according to the direction of passers-by, identification of the speed of movement, distance before crossing without collision. The "look" on the passer-by's face is also a "warning signal" for the pedestrian to give way, to move away quickly, or to force their way through. The type of interaction chosen (or not) among urbanites and the type of itinerary used indicates a choice of suitable distance and, ultimately, a way of perceiving the city and living there.⁶

Measuring journeys

In appraising and representing to oneself the sum and length of trips around the city, the main tool used in the social sciences is distance. It is a multiform concept that it is interesting to look at in detail. Distances travelled around the city are seldom measured using actual distances, which are not very explicit, but more often given in travel time, which is subjective. The individual who is unfamiliar with a city will consider the distance between two locations as much further than someone who is used to the district (we speak of cognitive distance). Traffic jams, imposed waiting times, and evening travel will also contribute to an overestimation of the true distance covered. Fuzzy mathematics can be used in processing these different forms of imprecision in calculating distances travelled or, more specifically, in the representations we have of them. Such methods have been employed, for example, in showing the forms of imprecision related to the mental representation of the world's various regions (Didelon et al. 2011)

6 Maurice Merleau-Ponty identified this idea of space as a lived experience and as perceived in 1976.

and could be useful in representing the imprecise contours of the “residential environment” —subjective space— which individuals take account of in evaluating their residential space.⁷ The dimensions of time and transport cost (travel costs) that were once directly related to geographical distance are also very variable because of the diversification and improvement of means of transport through technical advances. A rail or air fare does not depend solely on the distance travelled but also on the supply of and demand for tickets at the time of purchase. Transport networks, the multiplication of activity centres, and so on, are all factors that “distort” the landscape and by the same token the journey cost.

The actual distance between two points remains useful for measuring physical accessibility to places or barrier effects. Various metrics are associated with urban space. Straight-line measures allow for travel in right angle patterns within urban space and provide a better account of a journey around the city than an estimation “as the crow flies”. The “as the crow flies” measurement uses Euclidean metrics (the geometrical representation of a straight line joining two points or the minimum distance between two points) which is well suited for representing subsets of reduced dimension in the city. It is useful for example for determining the optimal localization of an urban amenity or for studying the commercial structure of channels of communication. But overall the most appropriate distances for the urban setting are functional distances (distances measured in monetary units, generalized costs, or time units) which are often the only ones relevant for quantifying intra-urban travel.⁸ It is equally interesting to evaluate curbs on travel. Because the cost of distance, that is, the cost of access to transport, may be dissuasive indeed for some sections of the population. Petrol prices are currently extending this real-world fact not just to public transport but also to individual transport.

So the contemporary city is in theory the mecca of mobility where all travel, whether material or immaterial, constitutes flows. And the larger or more active the city, the more numerous and unceasing those flows are. But access to mobility is not shared equally all round (cf. chapter 3). It cannot be ruled out that this mobility does not engender more movement than social ties. Ascher (2004) reports that individuals frequent increasingly diverse physical and human environments; they take part in a host of separate social fields, in the family, at work, in the neighbourhood, and so on. But individuals do not all have the same capacities to construct social spaces of several dimensions or to move easily from one social field to another. Big cities impose such multiple belonging, though.

7 An approach of this kind was used to model the evaluation of accessibility to varies types of amenity from a residential location (Tannier et al. 2010).

8 The connection between distance and accessibility is discussed in chapter 3.

Thus the individual's living environment can be understood with varying degrees of simplicity, it offers varying levels of opportunities, of choices, and non-choices. It is to these aspects of evaluation of the residential environment and criteria of choice that we now turn.

4. Types of choice, evaluation, and preference

How does one choose to live in the city centre or to settle in the countryside, to live in a flat or a house, to have easy access to a high-speed railway station while remaining close to schools, shops or a park or garden, etc.? The choice of residential location often involves complex gymnastics! All the varied possibilities presuppose negotiations within the household and then quite fundamental choices because they ultimately determine the life style to be led. Constraints whether financial, occupational (proximity to workplace or likelihood of finding work), or family-related (partner's place of work, children or elderly relatives to look after, recomposed families, out-of-school activities, etc.) obviously have a strong bearing on the final decisions. A large number of analyses based on surveys has made it possible to explore the factors that determine residential choice. The most important ones include place of work and the household's budgetary constraints. Beyond these elementary material constraints, other factors come into play and may be associated with three groups:

- the type and size of accommodation and its level of comfort;
- the quality of the residential environment;
- accessibility to places the household members wish to frequent.

The content the household associates with these factors is not a constant over time and the hierarchy of priorities may differ widely within the household. It depends largely on the family context and previous experiences.

The process of choosing a residential location necessarily involves an evaluation phase to decide *in fine* on what spaces are preferred, what is to be avoided, or what is a matter of indifference. In attempting to better adjust the residential space to city-dwellers' tastes, ever more studies have been conducted to understand what procures satisfaction or not and how the processes that lead to satisfaction or dissatisfaction are strung together and can lead to moving home.⁹ Beyond the elementary constraints that determine residential mobility and that are familiar enough (financial resources, change of employment, arrival of a child), some factors are judged positively or negatively with varying degrees of intensity. Ties of complementarity, compensation, or substitution are woven among them, which it is important to identify and which provide deeper knowledge of the rationales of residential and everyday mobility.

9 For an in-depth presentation of residential satisfaction, see Aragonès et al. (2002).

4.1 Life cycle and choice of location

The preferences highlighted for choosing a residential location are not fixed; they change throughout the life cycle. Individuals make choices when they leave their parents' home and then adjust their choices gradually to their past experience or rectify them to be more in tune with their wishes and constraints. Experience gained in the various places they live in also enables them to progressively refine their choices.

The literature on residential modes (Aragonès et al. 2002) underscores the spatio-temporal dimension of residential choice and its economic implications.

Cities have more young people and single-person households, which have relatively high preferences for rental dwellings... Generally, multifamily housing is a city phenomenon; rural areas have an almost exclusively single-family housing stock. Rental housing is also strongly over-represented in central cities, whereas suburbs and rural regions have a predominantly owner-occupied housing stock. These differences, of course, reflect variations in the availability and the price of land between cities and suburban and rural regions.

The reasons for moving house have been the subject of much research. Aragonès et al. (2002) in *Residential Environments, Choice, Satisfaction, and Behavior* review these aspects on the basis of sizeable international literature. All the stages in the life cycle appear to be periods of potential change: leaving the parents' home, sharing with a partner or otherwise, joining the labour market or changing jobs, having children, getting divorced, children leaving home, retiring, or simply growing old, and so on. All these situations may entail changes in geographical location or in accommodation size, type (owner/tenant, collective/individual), comfort, or environment (urban centre, suburb, outer suburb, countryside). Factors that prompt people to move out are quite well identified. However, factors that act as incentives for people to stay or to move in to a place, that make them hesitate to leave, or the time needed for deciding to move are less well known.

Once the decision to move has been made, the residential choice is based foremost on the choice of geographical location. As Dieleman and Mulder (in Aragonès et al. 2002) suggest, it is a compromise between the choice of a site and the interest for a situation or the position of a location. The site relates to the observable characteristics of the place: its physical aspects (landscape, climate, but also how clean it is, how green it is, traffic density, etc.), its social aspects (the social make-up of the neighbourhood, security, etc.) and its economic aspects (cost of the location, social and landscaped environment). Situation refers to the position of the place relative to other places that matter for the individuals: place of work, schools, cultural and sports facilities, services and shops, etc. The whole of this everyday living space must be within reasonable reach of the chosen residential location. And that holds for all the members of the household,

each having their own specific living space and everyday activity space. Therein lies one of the challenges of choosing a single residential location.

4.2 Renting or owning

Getting on the property ladder is seen as an important step in individuals' life trajectories. It can be thought of as responding to a triple objective: it is a way to own a piece of land—"a place of one's own"—of satisfying a collective ideal—one ought to buy property—and a way to optimize one's financial resources (for example, anticipating a decline in income upon retirement). Duncan et al. (1981) speak of the symbolic importance of being a home-owner, which asserts itself more with age. It is in particular the symbol of economic independence.

To take France as an example, nearly 60 per cent of households own their own homes (Table 1). This figure is far higher than the number of tenants but is still far from the European average which reflects large divergences among countries.

In some cases (Germany, Switzerland, etc.), home ownership is very limited or even unlikely because land is so expensive. Accordingly, in Germany, most people rent. The countries of Southern Europe stand apart because of their very high levels of home ownership (Allen et al. 2004). The history of the particular countries and their political orientations explain these differences. After the Second World War, the various European states stepped in to promote new house building to replace the stock lost during wartime. They also played an active part in controlling rentals so as to ensure decent housing and low rents for the poorer sections of the population (Aragonès et al. 2002). In western Europe, states subsidized the building of council housing that now account for 15 to 40 per cent of the total housing stock (Feddes et al. 1997). The Netherlands, for example, has a very large stock of public-sector housing (55 per cent in some cities). By contrast, in the USA there is just a little public housing in east-coast cities and none at all on the west coast. Southern European countries have adopted a somewhat peculiar system of subsidies to promote home-ownership among low-income groups who, elsewhere in Europe, live in rented council housing. Hence their social housing policy has favoured home-ownership, which explains the large number of owner-occupiers in these countries.

These nuances are to be ascribed to indirect state intervention on the housing market through taxation or tax breaks. In the USA, for example, the high percentage of home-owners (60–70 per cent) is related to the tax deductions for mortgages. In Germany, the same system has favoured the construction of housing for let, which explains the size of the stock today. This same logic can be found in the Netherlands with the introduction of a rent-control policy which long made it preferable to rent, even if the trend has reversed today. It can be understood from these examples that home-ownership is not just about wanting

to “own a piece of land”, but that the social, political, and cultural history of the country one lives in is an equally important factor.

Owner-occupiers (%)	
Romania	96
Spain	83
Greece	73
Italy	72
United Kingdom	71
France	58 (54 in 1999)
The Netherlands	56
Austria	52
Germany	46
EU (27) average	65

Table 1—Home ownership in 2007

Beyond these considerations, it is interesting to observe that the number of owners in France rises significantly (70 per cent) if multi-residence is counted, which is much more common than is thought. This cuts across all social categories, including notably many manual workers, expatriate provincials, and migrant workers (Bonnin et al. 1999). The succession of waves of migration, the need to be mobile for work, and the increase in weekly or seasonal migration have uprooted large fringes of population who develop ties with new places but who also wish to maintain ties with their place of origin. The family home becomes something that is invested heavily in and reverses the priorities in terms of residence or attachment that people develop to the places where they live. The analysis of multiple places of residence refers to the notion of individuals with multiple attachments (Ascher 2004), caught up in a complex interplay in which social networks and networks of practices proliferate, as has been emphasized above.

4.3 Detached house or collective dwelling: the question of density

Surveys in France by various institutes (National Institute for Statistic and Economic Studies, Research Centre for the Study and Observation of Living Conditions, City Observatory) provide a good glimpse of the preferences of the French and what their living environment is really like. They remind us in particular that in France nearly 60 per cent of inhabitants live in detached housing and some 40 per cent in collective housing, although with marked disparities from one living space to another: the larger the city, the more limited detached housing is. That said, detached housing is not confined to the countryside,

many periurbanites have adopted it and it is now the most sought-after form of housing. In this, the behaviour of the French is moving closer to that of North Americans.

In France, it is observed that the more removed an individual's living environment is from the house of their dreams, the greater their dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction is therefore a concern for Parisians and their residential environment (Ortalda et al. 2000) and more widely for the inhabitants of large collective housing estates (Observatoire de la Ville 2007). These surveys highlight the desire to live in an isolated house with a garden. Even a detached house on a residential estate or in the heart of the city is not wholly satisfactory because the environment is perceived as too dense. It is the countryside that people want (Observatoire de la Ville 2007), or at a push, the outskirts of the city. Generally, one observes therefore a desire for privacy, to live in a cocoon with a garden, light, and access to nature, which are all features typically associated with detached housing. There are also desires to have urban and neighbourhood services and social relations that are more characteristic of a dense urban fabric. So the much sought after isolated house must be surrounded by schools, shops, and neighbours! All told, the surveys reveal highly contradictory feelings. The isolated house is attractive because it is calm and private, but is repellent too because it is isolated and therefore lonely; in contrast, the detached house on a housing estate or in the city is appreciated because it is convivial. Density, then, is a factor of appreciation of the social atmosphere of the place, whereas it depreciates the residential environment. As early as the nineteenth century, Howard's garden city highlighted these contradictory desires; the natural element is ubiquitous there and reinforces the impression of a town in the countryside. These utopias have probably contributed to gradually shaping current tastes; workers' allotments, which are still found in cities, are probably a legacy of this.

The rejection of collective housing is the corollary of these major trends. It concerns especially the big estates as we have already emphasized, but also the tallest tower blocks or even the collective housing in city centres which are all deemed faceless and unsafe and which are often associated with high densities (Observatoire de la Ville 2007). The rejection of this type of housing and the fears related to it, whether real or just urban myths, refer back to the concept of "crowding" mentioned earlier (cf. chapter 1 and 3.1 above).

The perception of density arises therefore from subjective experience, which is intimately related to the cultural conditions in which the individual lives. It also depends on architectural forms. In France, vertical densities engender negative representations that come in the shape of nuisances affecting quality of life (solitude, fatigue, stress, pollution, incivilities, etc.). Nowadays, in collective housing, individual accountability is being dissolved, which is why the trend is to build a community with both rental and privately-owned accommodation, with an aim to develop social control and joint-construction of the cleanliness

of the place. "One observes therefore a paradoxical desire for privacy and communal living which calls into question urban densities more than it condemns them" (Observatoire de la Ville 2007). These observations raise questions about the form of the built environment as much as the types of land use, the place of pedestrians, routes, means of escape, or the desire for solitude, as much as for sociability and conviviality.

4.4 The form of the built environment

On housing estates, if the detached house is so successful it is because it gives the impression of better controlling the distance with the other and guarding one's autonomy (Jaillet et al. 2005). "It is not a matter of avoiding any relations, on the contrary, but simply of mastering their nature, frequency and timing" (Rougé 2010). We find here the factors referred to in chapter 1 about the construction of the individual and their relationship with others in space. This requirement to safeguard one's autonomy is true first of all within the family group; this is why it is helpful to have lots of "nooks and crannies" that divide up the domestic space even inside the house. The individualization of spaces and their use is a fundamental aspect that the house favours even more than the flat in the city. And that is equally true of relations with the neighbours. "On housing estates, the garden acts as a buffer...: however small it may be, it makes it possible to keep the neighbours at bay, to choose whether to ignore them or on the contrary to see them" (Rougé 2010). This possibility of controlling one's distance with others is thought to be the necessary condition for enjoying "good relations" both within the family and with the immediate entourage. In neighbourhood relations, neighbours are not *a priori* friends. At most, one does favours for them, but one only befriends them if there is something in common. One must "put up with" close neighbours, however, insofar as, while being accessible, they are not too close. The entire challenge is in finding this middle ground. "The social peace and quiet produced by the neighbours abiding by this code of good conduct makes it possible to distinguish the world from the detached house and is what makes it so valuable." (Rougé 2010)

This is probably one of the things that condemns the big collective housing estates, if one keeps at least to purely physical criteria to explain tensions in these urban spaces. One of the precepts of the Athens Charter, providing for the construction of social housing estates, was to free up the centre of the housing units that formed the large estate.

Arranging the built environment vertically and around the perimeter would open up a true heart and free the ground for recreational facilities and green spaces. This should have the effect of a massive return to the ground, promoting social mixing among the inhabitants. Promising as the idea was, the reality is quite different. The lay-out of the building, rather than clearing a

public space, that is supposedly inviting and welcoming, leads to an impression of being surrounded, promoting the formation of a closed area. (Koci 2008)

Thus this type of built environment, rather than “creating distance” between individuals so as to “dose” relations with others, creates a public space always open to onlookers and denying the individual’s need for privacy.

The other difficulty Koci (2008) points out is the face-to-face character of the built environment. Indeed, the position of windows also contributes to this loss of control over privacy (cf. chapter 1), while the “feeling of home is based on conditions that shelter the individual from the gaze of others while allowing visual access to the outside” (Koci 2008). Like reflections in a series of mirrors, the face-to-face inevitably refers the inhabitants back to their own condition. And it is on the big estates that the least-favoured social situations are encountered. These act, then, like a downward spiral in which individuals are caught up. Back in 1965, the German psychoanalyst Mitscherlich emphasized the negative impact of excessive urban hygienism that went to extremes to impose structure and uniformity on the inhabitants’ living space. Little scope is given to children living in such districts to develop their imagination and their creativity. The functionalism that separates residential locations from purchasing places and in the end convivial places reinforces the inhabitants’ feelings of isolation and they see themselves “shut up” in what is ultimately a hostile environment. Thus, the inhabitants fail to identify with their place of residence, which entails a danger of degradation and causes social segregation through exacerbated periurbanization (Mitscherlich 1965).

4.5 The social and residential environment

Several commentators have posited the hypothesis that there is a system of relations between the structure of the residential environment, the way it is perceived by inhabitants and their degree of satisfaction. A study of the social housing in a Spanish city (Amerigo et al. 1990) underscores that residential satisfaction (declared by survey) is based on subjective rather than objective criteria. Psychosocial factors (desire for better interaction with neighbours or difficulties with attachment to place) are evoked first, more than objective factors about improved living standards or safety however obvious they might seem in these places, but which are only mentioned secondarily by the populations. Adriaanse (2007) reaches a similar conclusion as to the significance of social climate in residential satisfaction, which is more important than the attributes of the housing or the reputation of the district. It would be interesting to better understand what the ingredients of a satisfactory social climate are: are they related to the existence of many local networks or a close-knit community or similarities among neighbours (Galster et al. 1981)? In work on the outskirts of Barcelona, Pol et al. (2002) show the level of satisfaction and quality of life

perceived by populations are quite independent of objective living conditions and seem to be related to the emergence of a positive social identity over time. It can be concluded from this that to promote sustainable residential satisfaction, collective identity must be reinforced by the promotion of actions that enhance social cohesion.

In this research into social cohesion, Van Ham and Feijten (2008) explore Schelling's hypotheses about the search for social or ethnic proximity among neighbours. They report that a rise in the number of people of foreign extraction in a district entails an increased desire to leave the district. This is also the case for people who are of foreign origin themselves. Moreover, it may be thought that these results underestimate the real situation, at least for people who see no options for leaving the district. Dissonance theory¹⁰ holds that people only express the desire to leave a district if they can (materially) contemplate moving out. Individuals tend to reduce the cognitive dissonance in which they find themselves. This highlights the lack of choice some individuals are faced with and how difficult it is to appraise the way in which they evaluate their environment: Aragonès et al. (2002) show that the importance of the choice made initially does not necessarily affect the level of satisfaction engendered some time after settling into a place.

This analysis raises questions about the willingness to intensify social mixing in many European countries (Atkinson et al. 2001), as mixing seems to be effective only if the housing market is very competitive and people are unable to achieve their preferences. Otherwise, the study shows that the levels of segregation might well increase.

In many other domains, the influence of the residential framework on individual behaviour is undeniable. Martinez et al. (2002) compare the perception of the district with problems of parenting and the development of young children and underscore how the characteristics of the district influence "parental skills". There is a great deal of literature on the effects of the district in which people lived or grew up and the repercussions for their upbringing and career prospects (see Ellen et al. 1997 for a review). Likewise, it is known that residential environment has a weak but constant impact on the residents' state of health, their well-being, and the quality of life related to their health. On the basis of a survey of eight European cities, Braubach (2007) managed to show that exposure to noise and the feeling of insecurity are the main difficulties. These factors are associated with low residential satisfaction, disturbed sleep, and even depressive behaviour. The proximity of playgrounds may also induce sleep disorders in the nearest inhabitants, but their absence paradoxically contributes to reducing residential satisfaction. Many studies have been made of these factors (Drukker et al. 2003, Ellaway et al. 2001). Brown (2003) thinks that the main challenge is to establish ties between health specialists, who observe the consequences of

10 This theory of psychology is explained in chapter 7.

urban nuisances and acquire knowledge about what environmental well-being might be, and those involved in planning (engineers, architects, town planners, etc.), who have not always taken these factors on board, for the good reason that the concept of well-being is eminently complex. From this perspective, it is obviously important to have control over the cognitive representations of urban space (Hanson 2009), the way in which the different types and levels of information are recorded with distances from places of residence or places frequented, so as to better identify to what parameters individuals are sensitive or not and up to what distances.

4.6 The landscaped environment

The benefit of a house with a garden was made clear by Francis and Hester (1990). And the impact of the proximity of green spaces on land prices has also been emphasized by a number of authors (Earnhart 2001). Some of these analyses make allowance for the physical built environment (Evans 2003, Jackson 2003) and underscore, for example, the effect of public places on sociability (Thompson 2002), the effect of green or open spaces on residential satisfaction, as much as the value of vegetation (Attwell 2000). Other authors point out the significance of access to leisure amenities (Guo et al. 2002) and particularly of their being within walking distance. Barbosa et al. (2007) show there is in reality little equity in access to urban parks depending on social groups, so the measurement of accessibility to leisure parks is not a negligible point. It may be asked, besides, whether owning a house with a large or small garden affects how often people go to green spaces or natural parks. Syme et al. (2001) show that the size of the garden has no real influence on the time spent there, any more than frequenting local parks. Indeed, in Australia households with a small garden display no less satisfaction and there seem to be no substitution phenomena between garden and park. What is observed, instead, is the desire for a certain variety of landscapes.

In the direct residential environment, landscape does play an important part in residential satisfaction and the state of knowledge in this area is increasingly specific. It is known, for instance, that trees are crucial (Kweon et al. 2010), whereas paved structures are viewed somewhat negatively. This suggests that it is important to improve the conception of paved areas especially in commercial zones where it is not enough just to satisfy functional demand for goods and services but where an aesthetically satisfactory environment must be created. Populations particularly enjoy vast islets of trees that are interconnected and that display varied sizes and forms (Lee et al. 2008). Generally, natural features are powerful factors of satisfaction and it is well-known that people perceive not only the amount of vegetation but also its arrangement and the landscape structure (Antrop 2000). Progressive improvement in knowledge of the rules of

how landscape is perceived has positive repercussions on planning and management practices of urban landscapes. It becomes possible to formulate inhabitants' preferences in various domains, making social demand far more readable.

The studies presented show that a host of criteria determine residential satisfaction and are liable to affect decision-making and residential choice. It seems plausible that an individual or family looking for a place to live might take account of the different criteria and choose among them, when making a decision, having regard jointly to the criteria and seeking a compromise for all family members.¹¹ Schwanen et al. (2004) emphasize that households tend to choose residential locations that minimize distance or access time to work, but also to shops (Lerman 1976), and leisure areas (Guo et al. 2002). These authors conclude that densification of districts that fail to correspond to the residents' wishes may entail the departure of some households. Consequently, they see in densification a risk in the medium term of households relocating to less dense areas. Bramley and Power (2009) examine the necessary arbitrage among the social, economic and environmental dimensions of urban space. For them, compact urban forms exacerbate neighbourhood problems and discontent, while improving access to services. Policy must therefore be thought of in terms of compromise between the objectives of social equity (concerning access to services and infrastructures) and community problems.

5. Urban territory

Urban territory is seen as the place where the process of choice and decision-making about residential and everyday mobility goes on. By recalling, first, the attributes and qualities of this space we can achieve an overall, macro-geographic view of it. On this scale, it is interesting to show how the political and social organization of territories takes into account or constrains populations' wants. What is collective thinking about planning strategies? What are the policies introduced that are in turn capable of influencing individuals' evaluation criteria? The example of urban utopias, when they find a legal framework for expression, can be used to discuss these factors.

In analyses of urban territories, the social sciences often emphasize the malfunctions that disrupt the smooth running of social life. But it is agreed even so that many advantages arise from the urban world and the mass of individuals brought together in one place. In the Middle Ages, a large concentration of individuals was required to finance fortification works and shelter the population. Nowadays, political institutions, effective health or educational facilities are only justified and cost-effective when they serve a large enough customer-base. It is also known that such a concentration of individuals is a source

11 This is not *a priori* contradictory with an ordinal ranking of preferences as assumed in economic theory (cf. chapters 9 and 10) only the alternatives ranked then combine several criteria.

of innovation, and sharing of wealth and knowledge. It is also observed that crowds gather more readily where there is already a large population, for many reasons: to applaud an artistic or sporting event, or to share political or religious fervour.

If the effects of mass are of obvious economic worth, the urban advantage also results from the opportunities for meeting and exchanging. Their role is to facilitate communication among economic actors. This gives rise to the study of spatial interactions or the theory of central places. These central places are answers to many needs: nearby daily purchases, occasional longer-distance spending. Big cities promote synergy effects because they bring together many complementary activities. They concentrate rare medical, financial, cultural, or market services, etc. Once, living in the city was a jealously guarded privilege that city-dwellers maintained by controlling the city gates. Networks of towns arose from economic, political, and social exchanges and they became the locus of a relatively wide source of supply of social and cultural innovations that renewed urban values.

The more central places are, the more competition there is for land use, which generates force fields directly reflected by land values. The Chicago school in the 1930s to 1940s emphasized the relations of dominance among venues in urban space. It modelled them in mosaics reflecting phenomena of social, economic, or ethnic segregation. Recent studies internationally have shown the importance of income level for residential choice and so for the reinforcement of social segregation, even if debate continues as to the cause of segregation (Hedman et al. 2011). In western cities, the process of periurbanization which was initially residential, reinforces the culture of togetherness. This emerging city (Dubois-Taine et al. 1997), the supports of which are the detached house, the car, and a “village” environment, extends the parent-cities structured in concentric rings. Periurban zones comply with a logic of sites (mosaics), some of which have a marked landscape quality and others on the contrary are beset by nuisances, like city centres which have their spaces of gentrification and deprivation. Particular problems are associated with them (Rougé 2010): the re-deployment of jobs and services on the outskirts which bolsters multi-polarity and lessens the residents’ dependence on the central agglomeration; a reflection around these practices of mobility in strained economic and energy contexts; potential for socialization that needs to be accompanied by development (soft mobility, densification, public space).

Political organs play an essential part in managing these urban territories which result, ultimately, from actions implemented by governance at all territorial levels (local, but also national and supranational). Cities are places of political and economic power (they have long concentrated religious power, too). The resulting territorial planning promotes the spatial organization of people and activities and takes an interest in social and economic development,

housing, transport, and communication. It is within this whole that the user, and therefore the person seeking a built environment, makes location choices, residential choices and so contributes to orienting urban development. To what extent does this social demand, which is an emanation of individual demand, entail collective reflection on planning strategies which in turn may influence individuals' evaluation criteria? This question, which shall be taken up again in other chapters (e.g. chapters 3 and 4), is only addressed here through an example illustrating the emergence of collective references (terms which are defined in chapter 6). These are urban utopias that urban models have long tried to propose in conjunction with social demand.

While "urban utopias" meet social demand at a time t , "a modern and renovated conception of housing" to quote Le Corbusier for example, they tend also to organize social life in line with an ideal: "The utopian order is that which guarantees against all the excesses of disorder by eliminating individual passions and desires. But the ideal, which is supposed to define a perfectly-ordered city, often justifies a perfectly inhuman city" (Baumont et al. 1996). The fact is that "Utopia often goes along with meticulous regulation of activities that sacrifices the individual to the collective and turns a *geometrical paradise* into a sort of *hell on earth*" (*ibid.*). This type of city remains ideal only for a given time and within a precise frame of reference. In China, for instance, these same high-rise blocks are now where affluent populations live and what is considered a modern form of architecture is collectively enviable. In Eastern Europe, by contrast, since the fall of the Soviet bloc, detached housing estates and denser zones of a postmodern stamp have largely attracted people to the detriment of high-rise blocks which have had to be refurbished or even demolished. Rejection of them is probably also related to their identification with the earlier period. The question of timing is therefore an important one. There is a time gap between the time the estate is designed, meeting the needs and tastes of that moment in a specific historical context, and the long time during which the estate is to serve as a place of residence. Thus, the criticism of functionalism in architecture has long since lost sight of its initial meaning and its reason for being in Europe.

Urban utopias have forever responded to new needs, corrected malfunctions, or even outpaced social demand. One example is the role ascribed to green spaces and landscape in the history of the European city. Because of the interest western society has taken in nature ever since the Renaissance, various urban models integrate "natural" spaces in town planning. Le Nôtre's landscape architecture is a fine example. Incipient naturalism inspired Ledoux and, in the city of Chaux, the built environment and nature interpenetrate. The upheavals of the Industrial Revolution were to strengthen this trend. The failure of the "liberal city" in Britain due to catastrophic hygiene prompted a rethink (Benevolo 1995). Many concepts highlighted green spaces: working-class estates required back gardens, the New Harmony utopia showed an industrial city in the midst

of the fields, Howard's garden city brought green to the fore in the city and assigned recreational functions to its hinterland. Le Corbusier's leitmotiv "sun, space, greenery for all homes" picked up on these wants. In parallel, the idea of the house surrounded by a garden in working-class estates persisted and prepared the way for periurbanization.

Whenever they inspire a legal framework, utopias condition and constrain residential choice by highlighting the "collective interest". This was the case, for instance, of urban planning regulations after the liberal city was seen to be a failure. A current example would be the recommendation to make periurban areas denser so as to cut the length of journeys and reduce the consumption of space. There is, then, a danger that attempts will be made to circumvent or oppose regulations. Some commentators observe that densification policies have failed because they are rejected by the populations in question (Garcia et al. 2003, Gordon et al. 1997). This ultimately comes down to functionalism, but also, in the model of the ecological city, ecological arguments that are often perceived as necessary (and rational) but constraining even so. This model, which was developed very early on in Germany (Vauban district of Freiburg) is the forerunner of an ideological movement for the preservation of the environment. While it evolves with new technologies which allow improved energy saving and better value for money for materials, it tends also to amplify the social segregation phenomena in urban settings. Despite that, it certainly imbues individual choices about housing and has a feedback effect on entrepreneurs' choices.

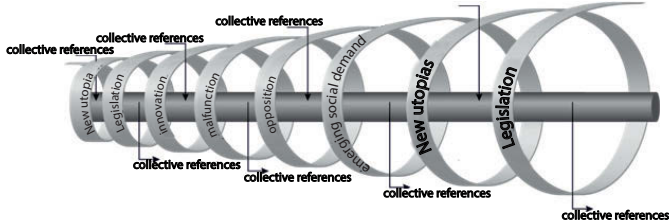


Figure 2—The connection between social demand, urban wutopias and collective references

In another style, the model of the emerging city is very close to social demand (even if, as seen, social demand is sometimes confused). It rests upon the idea that most individuals wish to live in a detached house and therefore promote this demand. But the nuances engendered are many: unlimited extension of urbanized areas, increased pollution, or even social isolation. The work of local governance is therefore to bring individuals to have more collective awareness of urban organization. The "New Urbanism" seeks to reconcile social demand and environmental requirements. For one thing, the size of urban

villages remains modest, "on a human scale" and makes it possible to require a locally dense built environment. For another thing, what is often referred to as transport-orientated development (TOD) provides for good pedestrian access to local services and shops and to efficient public transport stops, whereas the use of cars is penalized somewhat. What is often postmodern architecture is inspired by the traditional European city, which is perceived as more "reassuring" than the all-concrete modern architecture. New urban utopias therefore emerge in close connection with the renewal of social demand. But planners and architects are divided between the desire to meet the wants of the population and the need to take account of material and environmental realities or economic, legal, and political constraints, otherwise termed the "collective interest". With these adjustments, the new models and new planning strategies are progressively integrated into our collective references, to the point of influencing our residential choices. This cyclic operation is suggested by figure 2: the establishment of urban models (or utopias) presupposes legislation and brings about innovation; with use, malfunctions arise which generally entail contestation that calls the model into question thus forcing it to evolve. New social demand emerges correcting the errors of the past, then new utopias that provide innovations in their turn, presuppose legislation and sooner or later produce malfunctions, and so on. In this way urban territories are renewed and sustained. Our collective references are nourished by these advances and ultimately affect our capacities to evaluate the environment and our choices in terms of residential and everyday mobility.

6. Conclusion

Despite the plethora of studies that try to better ring-fence individuals' behaviour, choices, or satisfaction in terms of housing and residential environment, it is difficult to simply synthesize such behaviour because it involves complex factors and arbitrage operations that are difficult to decipher and investigate. Individuals' expectations reveal significant paradoxes that show that urban space is a place of wants and of contradictory fears.

A great many hypotheses have now been confirmed contributing to a better understanding of residential satisfaction, and the use and perception of dwelling places. Three limiting features appear recurrently.

The exercise asked of the individuals' interviewed (when the analysis involved a field survey) is difficult because they are confronted with their own residential background which relates closely to their history, their personal construction, and their private lives. Thus the analysis cannot abstract away this interleaving of housing and inhabitant, and survey results must be interpreted while bearing in mind the bias induced.

Whenever a location is occupied by several individuals (a household), the choice of living place is the outcome of a negotiation within the family involving compromise. Each member of the household differently involved in everyday life will not have the same weight in the decision, nor even the same opinion about the advantages and disadvantages of a location and type of housing. That clearly complicates the collecting of opinions and makes them more complex to analyse.

Residential environment and living environment underlie spatial and social scales that are often specific to each individual. Consideration must be made of the housing itself (inside and outside), the direct neighbours (and which, when living in a block of flats?), the neighbourhood which supposedly implies more distant neighbours, the district or city? All these are imprecise ideas with fuzzy boundaries and they vary from one individual to another.

Despite these recurring difficulties, we begin from what is already a well-supplied basis for analysis to better grasp the decision-making process about residential and everyday mobility. The state-of-the-art we have reviewed here, even though partial, provides a panorama of advances on these issues, methodological curbs, and points still to be explored. Most of the studies presented remain partial. To the best of our knowledge, only a few analyses (Bramley et al. 2009, Doi et al. 2008, Pol et al. 2002) adopt a more comprehensive approach by integrating different dimensions of urban space (accessibility, urban forms and density, quality of life, social interaction or identities) in the perspective of “liveable and sustainable” urban development. Our multidisciplinary approach is a follow-up to those analyses.

Mit Controlling zum Projekterfolg
Partnerschaftliche Strategien für Controller und
Manager

Noé, M.

2017, XIV, 267 S. 59 Abb., Softcover

ISBN: 978-3-658-14798-3