



## Home dissolution - what happens after separating?

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### Abstract

Building a home and creating a family are mutually and strongly interconnected processes. So what happens with the home when people are separated or divorced? In this paper we will address this question both from a quantitative and a qualitative approach. Based on an extensive database with socio-economic background data of 42,000 separated Danish couples in 2002, we follow the housing career of both partners, to see how the housing situation of different types of people was affected by the separation. In the qualitative approach, ten interviews with separated couples shed light on the emotions and practical problems of dissolving a home. How to decide who should stay, who should move and how was it to stay alone in or to leave the matrimonial home?

### Introduction

Separation entails new housing needs and relocation. Separation means that some have to find new housing that meets the needs of the new situation and that others will stay alone in the matrimonial home. For both parties the income is smaller and for those who move there still needs to be room for the children and typically they also want to stay in the neighbourhood. Especially in regions with large population growth and a huge demand for dwellings, it can be a problem to find suitable housing solutions. Also for those who stay in the matrimonial home, however, there might be economic, emotional or practical difficulties. Thus, there are plenty of problems related to housing and separations, though the amount of research in the field is rather limited.

Studies on housing and separation have primarily focused on migration and demography arguing that the relevance of this subject is to understand the impact that separation may have on the housing market, along with the question whether the market offers sufficient housing opportunities for separated people (McCarthy and Simpson 1991, Holmans 2000, Dieleman and Schouw 1989). Furthermore some of these studies also focus on the question of moving down the ladder of housing careers with regard to type of tenure resulting from separation (Symon 1990, Feijten 2005). A study of the

emotional aspects of housing and separation focuses on how the housing situation can either reduce or produce stress before, during or after the separation (Anthony 1997).

In the following we will first describe the methods of the study. Then we will develop the theoretical background and what hypothesis and research questions it raises. In the main part of the paper, results from the qualitative and the quantitative analysis are presented in three different headlines. The first of these sections concerns the non-permanent housing situation often following separations, the next concerns the question of who should stay or who should move out of the matrimonial home, and finally a section that looks at the facts and feelings related to the new housing situation following a divorce.

## Methods

The study reported here contains two parts: a quantitative and a qualitative study.

The quantitative study was based on register analysis of all couples who moved apart in year 2002 in Denmark. The study was thus based on physical moves rather than legal divorce, meaning that we looked at the time of separation for those who were actually married and that we also included all couples who were not legally married. In the database a couple was defined as two people of different sex living together, with an age difference of less than 15 years and not being relatives (e.g. sisters or brothers). Extensive registration of both people and buildings in Denmark makes it possible to establish databases like this. As researchers we are allowed to use the Danish personal data net (the Danish CPR register containing information on income, education, age etc. on every person living in Denmark) and the national building data net (the Danish BBR register containing information on size, type, ownership etc. of all buildings in Denmark). The database contains socio-economic information on 42,000 couples who moved apart in year 2002, their housing situation in year 2002 and in year 2003 respectively, and furthermore it is registered if they moved again in 2004. SPSS was used for statistical analysis. Doing research on register data, one has to keep in mind some of the limitations of this kind of data. In this study it was primarily the fact that people did not necessarily live at the address where they were registered which could make our results uncertain.

The qualitative part of the study includes ten in-depth interviews, with five women and five men. In one case both partners in a separation were interviewed and in another case both partners of a newly formed couple, who had both just been separated, were interviewed. Thus the qualitative material deals with nine separations and furthermore includes both partners of one newly formed couple. Informants for the interviews were primarily found by asking our own acquaintance if they knew of newly separated couples. The selection of informants aimed at variation in socio-economic status of the interviewed as well as variation in their housing situation both before and after divorce. Moreover, all separations included children. It is interesting to note that it was much easier to get in contact with women than with men and this supports the idea that women in general are more willing to talk about their problems and share their experiences with their divorce. In the interviews we have an overrepresentation of those who decided to

become separated rather than of those where their partners had made the decision, which is probably because it is easier to talk about the separation if you have asked for it yourself. Interviews lasted approximately two hours, they were recorded electronically and afterwards thematically referred and partly transcribed.

### Background, theory and hypothesis

Research questions and interest in this study have emerged from three different perspectives, including the question of changed gender roles and family life, the question of housing and mobility and the question of home and identity. In the following, theories from each of these three angles will be introduced and formulated into research questions for the study of housing and separation.

The first angle concerns the changes of the family in late-modernity, which is closely linked to women's liberation, and the subsequent economic independence from their husbands together with changed sexual morality and new methods of contraception (Beck 1997, Castells 1997). This means that the lifelong marriage is no longer the only option for economic and social security or for emotional intimacy. What we witness is, however, not only a crisis of marriage and the traditional nuclear family, because at the same time the dream of the one and only and the lifelong relationship is as strong as ever (Gundelach 2002). Beck describes that the more traditions crumble, the greater are the expectations to our relationship, because this is our last defence against loneliness (Beck 1997, p.186). Marriage and nuclear family life is therefore not in a crisis but in transition. In a life course there will be a changed weighting between the family and the individual. There will be divorce and remarriage together with other types of co-habitation before, after and on the side of the marriage, as living alone has become a reality for a still greater part of the Danish population (Danish Building Research Institute and Institute for Local Government Studies 2001). And for those actually living together in a family there will be other types of post-modern family structure than the traditional patriarchal one (Dencik 1996). Thus, there is a changed moral foundation for the family. Beck describes it as the 'negotiated family' where you enter into an alliance with the purpose of exchanging emotionality. It is however an alliance that can always be cancelled. The only relation left that cannot be cancelled or exchanged is the relation to the child. The whole staging of childhood and the bitter fights over children during divorce also bear witness to the growing importance of children. The questions that arise from this first angle concerning housing and divorce are about the relation between men and women in the dissolution of their marriage: who are the winners and who are the losers with regard to housing situations and how are they distributed on social groups? The general hypothesis will be that men do well with regard to the housing situation, whereas women do better with regard to the children, which is also supported by the literature (McCarthy and Simpson 1991). There may however be a social distribution of this, with the hypothesis that men are the extreme gender, with well-off men as the real winners and socially marginalised men as the real losers.

The second angle deals with the question of moving and the international literature has been summarised in this quote '...residential moves should be regarded as actions that are only made if the benefits of a new residence exceed the cost of moving' (Feijten 2005). In the literature it is furthermore

often emphasised that the housing market contains a social hierarchy with the owner-occupied housing at the top and rental housing at the bottom (Gurney 1999a and b); consequently the preferred move will be socially upward from rental to owner occupancy. A situation like for instance a divorce may however be an event that forces people to move in spite of costs and benefits and in the other direction from owner to rental housing (Feijtn 2005). In this project it is examined what directions in moves related to divorce are most often seen and it is also examined how people actually feel about these moves, e.g. if they perceive it as a socially downwards move. Another housing problem caused by separating relates to the immediate problem of finding a new residence. The literature points to this problem together with the associated problem of non-permanent housing solutions (McCarthy and Simpson 1991, Anthony 1997). In the present study we deal with this question with a quantitative approach as well as from the individual perspective of how people feel about living in non-permanent housing and having to move many times.

The third angle relates to housing and identity and how the matrimonial home is a symbol of the former partnership. Generally within housing studies there are several studies focusing on questions of the symbols and the constitution of the home (Després 1991, Saunders and Williams 1988; Saunders 1989). Furthermore the Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad has worked on everyday life and culture in a Scandinavian context and has also focused on the meaning of the home. Gullestad sees everyday life, as where we tie together activities across all the sectors that we have to engage in (Gullestad 1989). She points towards two dimensions of everyday life, one including the practical organisation of activities and one including experiences and knowledge and she emphasises that in both dimensions the home is central to the way humans seek to create meaning and coherence in a fragmented life. Thus our homes are not only important for the daily organising of our lives, but also for fundamental aspects of how we experience and perceive the world. This approach has been used in a project focusing on how work on renovating and decorating homes can be seen as an effort that is as much about maintaining family relations and identity as it is about maintaining the house itself (Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielsen 2004). Therefore another important question is how relations to the home change when after separation the home changes into an individual project, both for those who stay in the matrimonial home and for those who move out. What feelings are associated with the matrimonial home, and how do they relate to the former partner and what happens if a new partner moves into this home? Are decorating and furnishing a new home influenced by the style in the former matrimonial home either by following in the same line or by a break?

In the following these research questions will be discussed and answered from the qualitative and the quantitative material respectively. We will approach the question of housing and separation in three headlines following more or less the timeline of the separation: First, we look at the immediate non-permanent housing situation, when the decision to separate is made. Then, we explore the situation of deciding who should stay and who should move from the matrimonial home. Finally we explore the facts and feelings of the new housing situation, both for those who stayed and for those who established a new home.

### When it is said – on moving out and temporary addresses

Several of the interviewed emphasise that when the decision is taken, and when it is pronounced by one or both that separation is wanted, it is impossible to stay together. One woman explained that her husband became very angry and wounded when she told him that she wanted a divorce and that she had been seeing another man. He gave her a couple of hours to pack some clothes and leave the home. In her case she and the two children moved to her parents, who had plenty of room for them, and the two month's stay there was a good breathing space for her and the children. *'It was nice to come home and be cosseted'* however she also explains that it is difficult as a grown-up to return to your parents' home. On the question of how it would have been if she would have had to stay in the house together with her husband, she answers: *'I don't want to imagine how it would have been if we had had to stay together until the house was sold for instance. I don't want to think that thought at all. It would have been dreadful'*.

Another woman, who was also the one wanting a divorce, explained that in the beginning they both moved in and out of their home - one week home with their small son, and one week in a small room at some relatives. *'I didn't find it very nice, in those weeks when I stayed with his uncle and aunt. It was rather un-cool. Luckily it was summer, so I was never there'*. On the question of why they did not just stay together until a more permanent solution was found she answers: *'I think it was me that said that I didn't want that (to stay together), I couldn't stand it. It was very difficult for me to get it communicated to him (that she wanted a divorce)'*.

Some of the interviews with men shed light on a further problem related to the non-permanent housing situation, which is the problem of being able to be together with the children. A man explained that he and his ex-wife only stayed together a few days after the decision was made. *'It was not good. You need peace and quiet, I think. However, it requires then that you can move out and have a solution where you can welcome the children. It was very hard for me, becoming confronted with the fact that I could not offer them anything'*. The non-permanent housing situation for this man included one week in a rented summer cottage, six weeks in a packing case at some friends, four months in a bad and expensive rented apartment, eight months in an okay rented terraced house and finally fourteen months after the divorce he managed to sign the contract on a, for him, suitable owner-occupied detached house.

The story of another man shed light on how debilitating non-permanent housing can be. He explained how he felt in the six months before he managed to find a permanent housing solution. *'The first six months, until I moved in here, I started to get some psychosomatics, like shootings all the way up in the chest here, so I felt everything was about to burst. It was really unpleasant. And you lie there and think: What the hell is this, have I got cancer or what? It was terrifying. And then I was told that it was stress. And immediately, when I moved in here (...), the day after it was completely gone'*.

As we hear from these stories, many divorced realised that bad and non-permanent housing situations could increase an already stressing situation. However, the problem is not only a housing market where it is difficult to find suitable solutions, as the man with most non-permanent addresses explained, the problem is also to be in an emotional vacuum where you are not able to make lasting decisions. Also others explained that right after

separating you need time before making lasting decisions about the housing situation.

This qualitative picture of non-permanent housing can be supplemented by a corresponding statistical overview. While studying non-permanent housing, however, one has to be aware that register information is not totally reliable. If you stay with your parents or other relatives for a shorter period of time, you might not necessarily change your formal address, and if you stay illegally all the year round in a summer cottage, you might make a pro forma address at some of your relatives. In the following analysis our indicator of non-permanent housing is whether there is a new register address again one year after the first move. With this indicator we are probably underestimating rather than overestimating the amount of non-permanent housing.

Statistics show that 48 % of those who moved from the matrimonial home to a new address one year after again had moved to yet another new address (see Table 1). This number indicates that non-permanent housing is very common after separation. Elaborating on the character of the non-permanent addresses, it is relevant to see the type of household that the separated move to in the first instance. Table 1 show that 10 % of those who left the matrimonial home to begin with moved home to their parents. We also see that this is the most unstable solution as two thirds of these moved again one year after. Approximately half of those who moved out moved to an independent residence living as single, which is the most stable solution, as two thirds of these still had the same address one year after. Moving to a mixed household, meaning for instance moving in with another family or with another single, not forming a couple is also quite common and rather unstable. Moving in with a new partner, forming a new couple was the case for 12 % of those being separated and moving out from the matrimonial residence, and 44 % of these still lived as a new couple one year after.

Figure 1: What type of household did those who left the matrimonial home move into, and how many of these were non-permanent addresses, meaning that they had moved again one year after (n=52,391)

	Type of household, first move in 2002	Per cent of these that moved again in 2003
Single	51%	36%
New couple	12%	44%
Mixed household	27%	59%
Parents	10%	66%
Total	100%	48%

### Who stays – who moves, and why?

When the decision to get be separated is made, at least one of the parties has to find another place to stay. But who stays in the matrimonial house, and who has to settle in a new home? This depends on many different conditions. Of course economy plays an important part - when you are separated there is only one income to pay for the rent and the other regular expenses in each household, and very often one of the two parties (typically the woman) cannot afford to stay alone in the matrimonial house.

When the division of property is discussed, it is of great importance, who brought the different things into the relationship to begin with. This is pointed out in our interviews. Thus we found that in those cases, where one of the

two parties had occupied the house alone before the marriage, this became an important issue (even though the married couple might have lived together in the house for 10 or 20 years), and very often he/she was the one staying in the house after the divorce. *"Each of us took those things out that we brought in"*, one of the divorced men said. Actually, in one of our cases the man had kept the matrimonial house as a separate estate and therefore there was nothing to discuss: The woman had to move.

Who had had the largest income during the marriage? According to our interviews this was often brought up as an issue during the division of property. If one party had earned a great deal more than the other, then it seemed to be obvious to both parties that he/she should also get the best deal in the division of property. And in some of our cases, where the man had done a lot of practical work on the matrimonial house (maintenance, decoration, extensions, etc.), both parties felt that he was more closely attached to the house than the woman was – and that gave him preference in the division of property. By way of example, a woman explained that she had expected her ex-husband would take over the matrimonial home, because he had worked so hard on the house for many years – and also because the man had finished his education a couple of years before her, and therefore he had earned more money during the years of marriage.

Another woman lived together with her ex-husband for eighteen years in a house that they bought from the parents of the husband. The parents had never lived in the house; nevertheless it was never discussed who had to move out – the man stayed. In other cases it was a matter of accidental occurrences when it was decided who stayed and who moved. As an example one of the interviewed men had by accident failed to get his name on the tenancy agreement when they moved into the matrimonial house. Now – seven years later – this was the reason why he was the one who had to find a new place to stay.

According to Danish law the missing name on the tenancy agreement is not necessarily a reason to move out. This indicates that there might have been another reason why the man submitted to the idea of her staying in the matrimonial apartment. The fact is that the man had fallen in love with another woman and he was the one who wanted to get a divorce. Many of our interviews indicated that who the rejected party is and who the one with feelings of guilt is, are conclusive arguments in the division of property. The one who wants to apply for a divorce is often so conscience-stricken that he/she doesn't want to claim a lot during the division of property. By way of example, one man explained: *"I was the one making the decision, so it was quite fair that I was not the one who stayed"*. Another man who left his wife and two children a year ago, further develops the feelings involved by saying: *"The guilt is tough. (...) And you pay a penance. Somehow this is what you do. And it eases a bit when you say: Take the whole shit. Take the furniture – this eases a bit, right? But only briefly..."* he ended up saying with a little smile.

Therefore, if the rejected party can afford it, he/she very often is the one staying in the matrimonial home – and most of the matrimonial furniture is often left there as well. Considerations concerning the children are another reason why the home is often left untouched. Even separated couples with very small children find it extremely important, that the children can stay in the matrimonial house – and that the framework and the physical setting should not be taken to pieces. One man reflecting on his divorce explained: *"The children have had their first two years of living in the house, and we*

*both agreed that it was a good reason that the one, who stayed in the house, also had the children in the house. It was the only thing they were attached to, right?"* Another couple, where we interviewed both the man and the woman, the children had also been the pivotal point in structuring the broken family and organising the division of property. The couple agreed on the separation, and they both imagined that the children should stay most of the time with their mother. Therefore they agreed that the woman should stay in the familiar setting. When the man had found a temporary house, they told the children about the divorce, and the older daughter surprised them both by saying, that she wanted to spend equal time with them both. Suddenly the woman should no longer necessarily stay in the matrimonial house. Six months later the husband returned from his temporary address and moved back into the house, and the woman bought a new house in the neighbourhood.

Statistic analyses show that in 30 % of the union dissolutions both partners move from the matrimonial home. In the remaining 70 % where one of the partners stays to begin with, analysis shows that one year after 26 % of these had also moved. We have been interested in who of the partners, whether the man or the woman, most often stay in the matrimonial home depending on different socio-economic background variables. To answer this question two logistic models were constructed, one for each gender, where the explaining variables are age, social group, type of housing, size of town, age of children and if there are children on the new address. In the analysis we looked at the divorced as individuals and we only included those couples where one stayed and one moved. The results are shown in Table 2. When reading the table, the per cents for men and women should not be compared directly with each other, as the two columns show separate models for each of the two genders.

For both men and women we see that the lower social group, the higher the chance of moving, though here we must bear in mind that most often the man in a couple is the one belonging to the highest social group. For all other variables, men and women have opposite explaining variables. For women, having children at the former address raises the probability of staying in the matrimonial home, whereas the opposite is the case for men. Also the type and place of residence has a major impact on who stays and who moves. If the matrimonial home is in social housing, the women have a much higher probability of staying, whereas if it is an owner-occupied single family house the man has a much higher probability of staying. In more urban areas women have a higher probability of staying, whereas men have in more rural districts. Taken together this presents a picture where, in the affluent families living in owner-occupied housing, there is a higher chance that the men will be the one staying in the matrimonial home, whereas in the less affluent families in social housing it is more often the women that stay. Furthermore the overall picture is that women (54 %) more often than men (46 %) are the ones that leave the matrimonial home.

Figure 2: Logistic models of probability of moving for respectively women and men, depending of different social factors (n=29,476\*2)

	Woman	Men
	%	%
Age	-2.9	0.6
<b>Social group:</b>		
Employed, highest income group	Reference	Reference
Other	47	92
Early retirement	57	25
Recipient of cash benefit	63	86
Retired	24	119
Unemployed	46	49
Student	52	33
Employed, lowest income group	44	21
Employed, middle income group	28	20
<b>Children at the address before dissolution</b>		
No children	Reference	Reference
Under 7 years of age	-30	95
7 years of age and above	-27	123
<b>Type of housing before dissolution</b>		
Social housing	Reference	Reference
Private renting and co-operatives	57	-33
Owner-occupied apartments	189	-60
Owner-occupied detached housing	395	-71
Others	49	-47
<b>Size of town</b>		
Metropolitan area	Reference	Reference
Town with >100,000 inhabitants	*	-8
Town with 20,000-99,999 inhabitants	*	-8
Town with 1000-19,999 inhabitants	17	-18
Rural districts and villages	73	-47
<b>Children at the new address</b>		
No children at new address	Reference	**
Children at new address	-37	
Constant	33	-12
Nagelkerke R2	0.161	0.13
Correct predicted cases	64 %	64%

\*Figure is not significant and is omitted. \*\*Variable is not significant and is omitted.

### The new and the old home – facts and feelings

The meaning of the home varies a lot among different people. Consequently the home plays different roles in relation to divorces. Not everyone has invested himself and his personal feelings in the home, and for those who haven't, it is not necessarily coupled with nostalgic feelings to leave the matrimonial home. And even though you might have felt at home and have

been satisfied with the matrimonial home when you lived in it, several of the interviewed residents emphasised that the relatedness to the home dissolved when the family broke up. By way of example, a woman, who moved out of the matrimonial home explained that the feeling of 'home' connected with the matrimonial home disappeared at the same time that her feelings towards her husband dissolved: The matrimonial home was connected to the cracked family-life, and when the marriage broke up, the good feelings in the family-house also cracked up. This woman used to be very happy with her old house, but since the separation she doesn't miss the house, even when she makes short visits to it. Now her new 'den' is where she thrives, she explained.

For a lot of people, moving out of the matrimonial house can cause a lot of problems and worries, even though they might not have associated the house with a strong feeling of home. This was especially stressed by those of the interviewed who moved from an owner-occupied house. In many parts of Denmark prices of owner-occupied houses rises day by day and therefore you can loose a lot of money if you leave the housing market for just a while. This can be quite an alarming experience, as a separation is very often already connected to an economic chaos in advance. By way of example, a man who moved out of an owner-occupied house told us that he had lost 400,000 DKR during the year when he was looking for a new house. That year had felt like a vacuum to him, and he had nervously followed the economic situation on the housing market every day. Therefore it was a great relief when he finally signed the papers and bought a new house. *"To me it was like an economic race. And it really moves rapidly. I felt it strongly. Therefore it was very urgent for me to buy an owner-occupied house."*

Sometimes a nice home can postpone the decision to obtain a divorce. A woman had spent ten years with her ex-husband rebuilding and decorating the matrimonial home, and when she and her husband got separated, she felt very sad that she had to sell the house. *"The house was probably also a reason for me to think twice. Maybe. But then again, it was also because I fell in love with another man. But before I met Henrik (her new boyfriend) it had to do with security. A base. This is my home. I know what I have, but I don't know what I will get – will I end up in a small apartment sleeping on a couch in the living room?"*, she explained.

Some of the interviewed residents had stayed on in the matrimonial home and a new partner moved in. This can be problematic. By way of example, a former husband (a craftsman) had done a lot of rebuilding and extension on the matrimonial home, and in this way he had put his personal touch on the house. Therefore it seemed like the ex-husband was still present in the home after he had moved out. The woman and her new boyfriend had to move bedroom, the woman explained: *"I just couldn't sleep there. I mean – I really didn't feel like it. (...) I mean the bedroom. Yak! We had to paint it. We had to make a total redecoration of that room"*. Her new boyfriend, who now lives in the house, told that small signs of the ex-husband (like the little playhouse in the garden built by the ex-husband or the choice of washing machine) often made him very present in the house. *"I see small signs all over the place, and for many years to come it will be like that. He (the ex-husband) is still present in the walls. And for how long will it go on like this? On one hand I feel that this is my home, but on the other hand I feel like I just felt down from the moon, so to speak. I have landed in another man's life, haven't I? I don't know how long time will pass before..."* The man found it hard to feel at home in the house, and he dreamt of buying a new house

for himself and his new family – and to decorate it all together. He thought that this would also help him in his relations with the two children of the woman. He felt quite sure that also the children looked upon him as a stranger in the matrimonial home.

Some others have bought a new house - a place, where you can start all over again. To some people it feels right to move out of the usual surroundings and this way be forced to develop new routines. And some of the interviewed residents found it vital to have the new home decorated right away. It seems like the home becomes even more important as a basic framework in the chaotic situation after a divorce. One woman said: *"It means a lot – to me it does anyway – that the physical settings are arranged. There was so much chaos in my little head – It is very important to me that here at least there is harmony"*.

The school and the social network of the children are crucial to most people when the new home is selected. In many of our interviews we were told how important it is that the new home is situated closely to the daily life of the children. A man, who had had difficulty in finding a new home in the local settings after the divorce and was therefore living for a year at a distance of 10 kilometres to the two kids, told us how tough it had been to move out of the neighbourhood. He felt very strongly that he had been at a distance to all the things that mattered to his children. When we interviewed this man, he had just bought a new house and returned to the old neighbourhood where the kids were still living with their mother, and he was very proud when he told us about an experience he had the week before: *Last week when I went on bicycle to school in the morning with my youngest daughter – it was an emotional satisfaction. In that moment I became really, really, really happy. In quite another way that you normally feel happy. It meant a lot to me."*

It is also important that the new home have some qualities to offer the children – a nice garden, animals in the neighbourhood, sufficient space for them. Some of the men, who had left the matrimonial home, voiced another reason why it was of great importance to find and create a good home: This was necessary if they wanted to apply to the authorities for improved right of access to the children. Thus we found some examples that showed that separated adults feel like they are sitting for a kind of an examination when they settle in a new home. A separated woman, who used to live in an owner-occupied house with her ex-husband, left the house and looked for an apartment for rent for herself and her children. She might have been able to get an apartment in a social housing estate, but she was only looking for private rental housing. As a single woman, she was very careful not to end up like all the other 'single mothers'. For this woman, life as a single mother was connected with low status and a lot of prejudice. Therefore, for her the status connected with a nice and well-decorated home had become even more important than it used to be. By way of example, she told us that the first thing she did, when she moved in the new house, was to buy a lot of flowers for her windows. This way the neighbours and the other people living in the neighbourhood could see that it was decent people who had moved in. And at the same time she showed her ex-husband, her ex-family by marriage and her own family that she could take care of herself – which they seemed to doubt.

In these stories we hear about emotional aspects of both the old and the new home, and we also hear considerations about type and locality of the new home. Statistics cannot provide knowledge about emotions. However, it

can supplement the qualitative stories on the question of both the type of housing and the geography of the former and the new residence. In Figure 1 we see that private renting is the sector that takes most of the moves related to separation (about 40 %), which is interesting as this sector only makes up about 20 % of the overall housing in Denmark. Furthermore we see that there is a strong correlation between the type of housing before and after moving. Coming from social housing makes it much more likely to move to social housing, which can be explained by the rules of the social housing sector which favours residents from within the sector. Correspondingly moving to owner occupied detached housing is more likely if coming from this type of housing, which can be explained by the fact that the payment needed to buy a house is easier to raise if one has owned a house before.

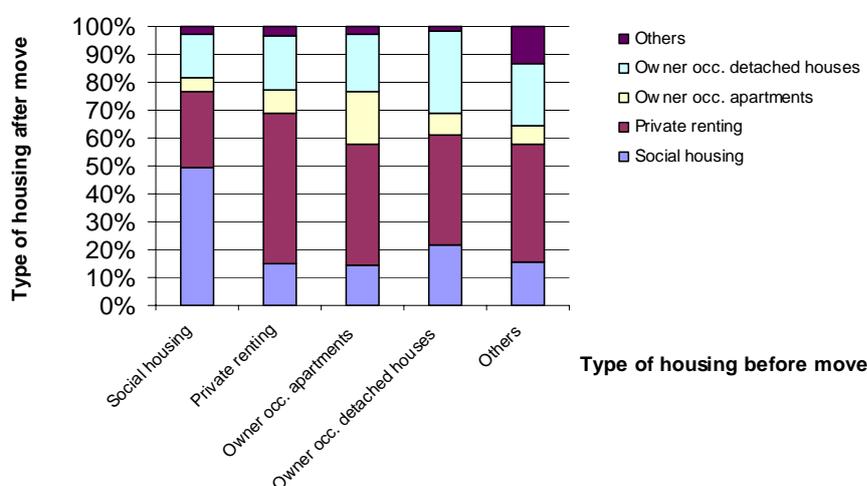


Figure 1: New type of housing compared with type of housing before move, for those who moved and had not moved again one year after. The category private renting includes 16 % flats under a multi-ownership scheme (n= 28,317)

Figure 2 shows how geography of the new residence is strongly linked to the former address. A majority of the moves were within the same municipality, and less than 15 % moved to another region of the country, especially for couples with children most movements were within same parish, indicating that it was very close to the former address.

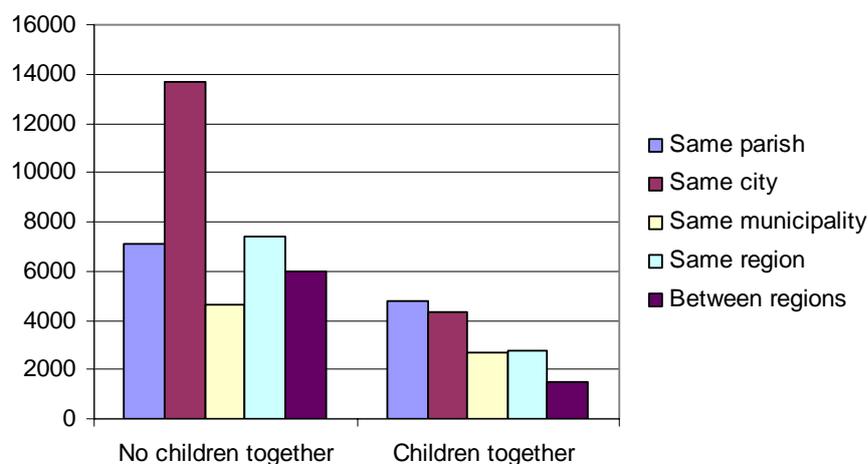


Figure 2: Movements related to separation distributed on geographical distance for separated couples with and without children (n= 54,890)

### Discussions and conclusions

On one hand separation and divorce is very normal; close to 40 % of all marriages in Denmark end in separation and divorce, on the other hand all the interviewed told about the crisis and emotional difficulties of separation. Getting separated is not only about being separated from a former partner, it is a total change of everyday life and identity. For some of the separated, the matrimonial home had played a big role in forming their identity, and for those it may be difficult to dissolve or leave the home. For others the physical setting of the marriage had been of less importance, and in the chaotic situation of the divorce the emotional relation to the house seemed rather limited compared with other problems.

Where the old home could be of less importance for some of the separated, for all of them the new home was very important, as the basis of forming a new identity and a new everyday life. This was especially seen in relation to the non-permanent housing situation which some of the interviewed had experienced, and which some of them had felt to be very frustrating, particularly in relation to their children. Non-permanent housing follows from the situation where immediate housing is needed and where the housing market is hard-pressed. The non-permanent housing situation, however, is not only an expression of how difficult it is to find suitable housing. It is also the cause of being in a personal crisis where it is difficult to take lasting decisions or the cause of being in an economic vacuum waiting to get money from the dissolution of the marriage.

In this critical situation many separated are forced to accept less attractive or expensive housing, often based on subletting. Somewhat surprisingly the statistics also indicated that private renting is the part of the housing sector that takes most of the divorced, which is 40 %, even though this sector only stands for about 20 % of the overall share of the Danish housing market. The social housing sector as well as the owner-occupied sector is primarily a solution for those who already in the matrimonial home had access to either of these sectors, whereas the private renting sector seems to be the market for everybody.

In the international literature the question of moving down the ladder of social status in the housing market, meaning moving out of owner occupancy is often raised. Our statistics also confirm the tendency of moving from owner occupancy to rented housing; however our interviews differentiate the feelings related to change of type of housing. Staying in owner-occupied housing is considered very important by some, though primarily for reasons of economy, as the Danish prices are rising very fast at the moment and most house owners have in the last many years experienced big gains on their house. For some of the interviewed, the social housing or the rental sectors, however, represent a good solution for their needs as divorced. One woman though, did emphasise the fear of the social stigmatising as a divorced lonely woman in the social housing sector, and found the private sector as a better alternative.

Many of the interviewed expressed relief as they, at the time of the interview, were at a stage when they had passed the most critical and unstable part of the dissolution of the marriage. Most of them have found a housing situation that gave them a feeling of home and security in everyday life. However it is noteworthy that thinking of the future most of them dream of being a couple again and live in a 'real family house'.

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