Abstract: This paper presents an innovative residential location decision support system (RLDSS) that aims at informing private households about characteristics and individual suitability of urban neighbourhoods on a small-scale level. The included internet functions to find a suitable neighbourhood that fits their individual location preferences at best, to forecast their individual travel costs, to eliminate their information deficits, and to fulfil typical cognition gaps are discussed in detail. The cities of Schwerin and Wilhelmshaven are Case studies of this German research projects.

The overall project goal is to contribute sustainability in urban regions by reducing land consumption as well as to content private households with their residential location decisions in a long run. In contrast to classical planning strategies this approach focuses explicitly on the demand and it could be effective within the existing settlement stock. During the project period the actual effects of the RLDSS on relocation decisions in both cities are evaluated. Therefore, the tool is accompanied by a number of analytical modules that improve our understanding of the reasons for suburbanisation and intra-regional migration to peripheral locations as well as of the decision structures preceding migration. Apart from the RLDSS implemented, final products are comprehensive guidelines with information about transferability to other urban regions.

Keywords: Residential Mobility, Information and Communication, Decision Support System, Sustainable Regional Development

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite the stagnating housing markets in many urban regions of Central Europe, spatial development is still characterised by the suburbanisation of private households and their choice for non-integrated residential locations. This causes a number of problems, e.g. extensive land consumption, increasing traffic volume, and high infrastructure costs. At the same time, the results of German and international population surveys show that location decisions might be influenced by better information on the negative individual effects of suburbanisation (car dependency, travel costs, insufficient local shopping and service facilities etc.) (cf. Scheiner, 2006). This paper outlines the findings of a German research project, which aims at answering the following research question: Does comprehensive and independent information affect residential location decisions of private households in favour of
integrated and less land-consuming locations?

The project is a joint research effort of the Department of Transport Planning and the Institute for Spatial Planning at the Technical University of Dortmund, the BIP Berlin and the plan-werkStadt from Bremen. It is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) within the scope of the programme “Research for the Reduction of Land Consumption and for Sustainable Land Management” (REFINA), which is a programme that supports projects for the development and testing of innovative concepts for managing and controlling urban development. The project started on October 2006 and will run until March 2010.

The following cities have been chosen as case studies: Schwerin, the capital of the East German federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, and Wilhelmshaven in Northern Germany. Schwerin with approximately 96,000 inhabitants and Wilhelmshaven with approximately 82,000 inhabitants were selected for their land use patterns and according to some pragmatic criteria. However, both model cities have a notable supply of intra-urban dwellings and sites but show strong suburbanisation tendencies at the same time. They cover jointly all important real estate market segments. Having two case studies facilitates a much better evaluation of spatial transferability of the project results as well as a better evaluation of the importance of local peculiarities.

![Figure 1 Flyer of the Wohnstandortinfo Wilhelmshaven](image)

The core of the project is the development of two innovative tools for residential location information which complement each other. The first tool is an internet-based residential location decision support system (RLDSS). The second tool is an individual, personal residential location consultancy service for house-hunters and flat-hunters (cf. Bauer et al., 2007a). Both tools aim at informing households that are planning to move about the features of various urban neighbourhoods on a small-scale level, e.g. shopping and leisure facilities, schools, public transport, housing prices, or the social composition in the neighbourhood, so that they can find the neighbourhood that best suits their location preferences.
Both tools are prepared and in conjunction with a number of analytical modules that help understand the reasons for suburbanisation and intra-regional migration to peripheral locations as well as the decision structures preceding migration. Housing and location requirements and preferences, experiences after relocation, and motives of return migrants into the cities are analysed for different population groups and processed for the conceptual design of the RLDSS and the consultancy services. Furthermore, the findings are integrated into a marketing strategy that accompanies the process of implementation of these new and unknown tools in the cities used as case studies.

In February 2008 both tools, the RLDSS and the personal consultancy service, have been inaugurated under the brand name “Wohnstandortinfo”, which means Residential Location Information. The Wohnstandortinfos are independently managed by the city administrations of Schwerin and Wilhelmshaven. While the RLDSS as an internet tool is accessible from everywhere, the personal consultancy offices are situated close to the central station in both cities. Their services are practised by well trained employees.

This paper will first concentrate on the RLDSS framework giving special consideration to its scope, requirements and provided features. It will then provide an overview of preliminary effects and finally take into consideration future prospects.

2. INFORMATION SHORTCOMINGS AND COGNITION GAPS

From 2006 to 2007 surveys and standardised interviews were conducted in the cities of Schwerin and Wilhelmshaven in scientific preparation for the conceptual planning of the tools. The goal was to get a detailed understanding of the residential location demands of different population groups, their specific motives for migration and their experiences after relocation respectively (cf. Scheiner and Kasper, 2005; Bauer et al., 2007b). At the same time literature analysis and secondary analysis of data collected from previous research projects (cf. Rudinger et al., 2004; Beckmann et al., 2006) were carried out to assess the accuracy of the collected data and to be able to elaborate city-specific features and universal, transferable conclusions. This comparative study provides an informative basis for the development of communication and marketing strategies for the two residential location information tools (cf. Bauer et al., 2007b).

It shows that not every private household that moves into suburbia is aware of the consequences - Some might have preferred to stay in the city. In addition to the equipment and the costs of a house or flat also location plays an important role in the search and decision process: Is a neighbourhood as green, quiet and peaceful as I imagine it? Are there sufficiently shopping possibilities, doctors, schools, and cultural and leisure time opportunities? How far is the next bus stop? How long does it take to commute or travel to other important places? Is a more expensive real property in the centre potentially more cost-efficient and less depreciated in value than in suburbia? Almost all of these questions are not easily answered, especially if the city is unknown, several household members formulate their requirements for a residential location, or long term decisions are made such as the purchase of real estate property.

Altogether, private households attempt to make their residential location decisions as rationally as possible. This opens up chances for a purpose and goal-oriented active
communication of cities. But information about the characteristics of residential environments is usually either not available or inadequate. In most cases follow-up costs are not transparent in advance of relocation (Scheiner, 2008a). Furthermore, our study results show that next to these information shortcomings obvious cognition gaps can be appeared in the context of residential location choices (Bauer et al., 2007b). Private households frequently fail to check the qualities of neighbourhoods correctly and in detail respectively. The most striking example is that the bus stop opposite the front door is perceived indeed, but trip frequencies, operating times and journeytimes are not taken into consideration. However, many important aspects such as mobility costs, accessibility rates, loss in value of real property, local supply and services, changing needs in different phases of life etc. become aware not until after relocation (Bauer et al., 2005). This leads to dissatisfaction with the household’s decision and hinders simultaneously a sustainable spatial and transport-related development.

On the basis of the hypothesis that through a qualified, independent information and consultation the residential location choices of private households can be influenced onto more convenient and integrated sites, the RLDSS has been implemented in the two cities Schwerin and Wilhelmshaven.

3. SYSTEM FUNCTIONS

To fulfill the identified cognition gaps and information shortcomings the RLDSS includes a broad range of useful system features:

- Individual neighbourhood finder
- Neighbourhood portraits with statistics, photos und street directory
- Interactive web maps of public and private facilities
- Individual travel costs calculator
- Contact list of local real estate agents and businesses
- Online listings of houses and flats for sale or for rent
- Contact page for individual consultancy service
- Further useful information materials for download

The website itself has a fixed and homogeneous composition. A horizontal header with the logo forms the top part of the page. All functions can be viewed by clicking on illustrated buttons that are arranged on the right side, whereas the content of each feature is displayed on the left side of the frame.

3.1 Individual Neighbourhood Finder

With the individual neighbourhood finder private households can search for a suitable living location according to their personal preferences in few steps. Up to 30 possible criteria (cf. Table 1) can be considered of which at least three must be chosen by the searchers. Rental price, shopping facilities or accessibility to a specific place of work can be defined as criteria as well as for instance primary schools, leisure or cultural facilities and car-parking supply. The selection of the criteria based on the findings from previous research (cf. Beckmann et al., 2006; cf. Scheiner, 2008b).
Table 1: Topics and Criteria of the Individual Neighbourhood Finder

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential Environment</th>
<th>Facilities and Opportunities</th>
<th>Traffic and Accessibility</th>
<th>Frequent Destinations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rental price level</td>
<td>Shopping facilities</td>
<td>Pedestrian accessibility</td>
<td>Pedestrian accessibility to address 1..4*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban design quality</td>
<td>Primary health care</td>
<td>to town centre</td>
<td>Public transport accessibility to address 1..4*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air quality and quietness</td>
<td>Day nurseries/Kindergartens</td>
<td>Public transport accessibility to town centre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Primary Schools</td>
<td>Pedestrian accessibility to central station</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks and open space</td>
<td>Secondary Schools</td>
<td>Walking distance to public transport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to watersides</td>
<td>Leisure or culture facilities</td>
<td>Car-parking supply</td>
<td>Car accessibility to the Autobahn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sport facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Playgrounds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior citizen facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pedestrian accessibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to address 1..4*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Users can set up to four single addresses

The criteria can be weighted by sliding controls on a coloured rating scale from unimportant to very important (cf. Figure 2). After weighting them the neighbourhoods that best fulfil the criteria are indicated in a result list in order of priority (cf. Figure 3). Hence, this method is exactly the opposite of the usual way of choosing a neighbourhood, where households search, more or less successfully, for the characteristics of previously determined neighbourhoods.

Figure 2 Individual Weighting of the Criteria for Finding a Suitable Neighbourhood

If desired all weightings can be easily modified and recomputed. A map of the city with the indication of each neighbourhood is located next to the ranking list. Neighbourhoods are highlighted on the map by passing the mouse over their names and the names of the neighbourhoods are displayed by moving the mouse on the map. Below the listed neighbourhoods more information about the characteristics of the
neighbourhoods can be viewed by opening the portraits. Last but not least customers can view a list of houses and flats for sale or for rent in a particular neighbourhood.

Results from the Individual Neighbourhood Finder in Schwerin
The following districts represent the most suitable neighbourhoods for you:

1st rank: Altstadt
Neighbourhood portrait:
The Altstadt (old town) is characterised by some amazing Tudor style buildings and histiorism. The special pride of the quarter... [more]
Up-to-date real estate offers at ImmobilienScout24: Flats for rent | Flats for sale

2nd rank: Schelfstadt
Neighbourhood portrait:
Schelfstadt impresses with the largest coherent ensemble of historical buildings in Schwerin. Refurbished timber... [more]
Up-to-date real estate offers at ImmobilienScout24: Flats for rent | Flats for sale

3rd rank: Feldstadt
Neighbourhood portrait:
This district offers its residents a large stock of bars and restaurants. The local supply of affordable and healthy food... [more]
Up-to-date real estate offers at ImmobilienScout24: Flats for rent | Flats for sale

If you like, you can edit your choices: Modify criteria

Figure 3 Result Page of the Individual Neighbourhood Finder

The Individual Neighbourhood Finder requires, as a basis for the multicriterial approach, a classification of all neighbourhoods of the case study area, which does not exist for all criteria in such level of detail so far. For this purpose a comprehensive rating with standardised evaluation forms for every single criterion was discussed and done by specialists of the municipal administration and expelled domain experts at the beginning. They took into account auxiliary official data sources, conclusions of expert reports and own results of disaggregated GIS and accessibility analysis tools that were developed within the framework of the research project (cf. Schwarze, 2009). As spatial input data address coordinates, multimodal transportation network data and boundary data were used. On which spatial scale a neighbourhood is represented in a city finally depends on each city’s decision.

3.2 Neighbourhood Portraits

The neighbourhood portraits can give private households an idea of what a neighbourhood looks like and what it is composed of, especially to those who are from out-of-town. On the overview page an interactive map that is used for orientation shows where all the neighbourhoods are located in the city. Below the overview map the neighbourhoods are listed in accordance to their administrative division (cf. Figure 4). As your mouse pointer passes over the map the respective name of the neighbourhood will be indicated below it. By clicking onto the corresponding map area or the list the neighbourhood portraits will appear.

All neighbourhood portraits are displayed in the same way (cf. Figure 5). In the upper section there is a characterising quotation about the neighbourhood from a resident on the left side and a typical photo that represents the residential area on the right.
Figures 4 and 5: Overview and exemplary portraits of Schwerin, Germany.

Districts of Schwerin

Schwerin, the capital of the state Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, is subdivided into 26 districts. The uniqueness of each district is guaranteed by an amazing diversity of Schwerin. The appealing districts offer excellent living conditions for all different preferences. Opportunities are various: idyllic homes in a green surrounding, refurbished old buildings in the inner city, or modern residential buildings at the waterfront - any demand will be satisfied by an adequate supply in Schwerin. To get more information, simply click on its name in the list below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schwerin-Mitte</th>
<th>Schwerin-West</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Altstadt</td>
<td>Weststadt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feldstadt</td>
<td>Lankow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schwerin-Nord</th>
<th>Schwerin-Ost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Werdervorstadt</td>
<td>Zippendorf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medewege</td>
<td>Neu Zippendorf</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schwerin-Süd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ostorf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gartenstadt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gönne</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ostorf

"Ostorf is a place of recreation and stress relief. Out of my window I can see the Lake Schwerin and on my way to work I enjoy the palace garden, which I pass every morning and every evening." (Katharina Lawrenz, 26 Jahre)

The district of Ostorf is surrounded by three lakes, inviting to long and recreational walks along the waterfront. Also the cycling- and footpath from the palace garden, along the "Franzosensweg" and the Lake Schwerin, to the outdoor swimming pool Zippendorfer Strand, is a popular destination of the inhabitants of Schwerin. The zoo attracts its young and old visitors through colourful events and attractions. There are many villas located in the district, anyhow it is characterised by an insufficient local supply and offers the opportunity for new developments. [more]

Statistical data of the year 2009
show >>

Images
show >>

Street index
show >>
side. Underneath, a detailed and informative text follows about its location, history, settlement, building and population structure, infrastructure, transport connections and other special features. Below these textual descriptions statistical information about size, population, facilities, and so on is given, whereas photos impressions provide a visual impression of the residential environment. To complete the explanations to each neighbourhood a street name index is included. Due to its accuracy local governmental data is mainly used.

3.3 Interactive Web Maps

In the RLDSS framework a geographic information system (GIS) is embedded that provides interactive web maps. Private households can gain a deeper insight into residential environments from an aerial viewpoint. In the area around every location, local establishments such as kindergartens, schools, doctors’ practices and restaurants, or even cultural and sports facilities, can be displayed in the map view to give a quick overview of the existing infrastructure. Due to its complex functionality the interactive web maps appear in a separate browser window (cf. Figure 6). As a point of entry the user can set the initial map extent to a preselected neighbourhood in which he is interested. Or he can use search functions to explore certain street, addresses or surrounding areas.

Figure 6 Display of Object Information on the Interactive Web Map
Numerous public and private facilities, land use plans, and other spatial data can be easily displayed on up-to-date digital topographic maps or aerial photographs in the interactive web map. The included GIS tool set facilitates switching on or off spatial layers, zooming, panning, scaling, measuring distances, and so on. Additional information ranging from contact data and opening hours to external links to detailed timetable data at public transport stops can be retrieved as a supplement by the user.

### 3.4 Individual Travel Costs Calculator

A strong interrelation exists between the housing and the mobility costs of households (cf. ULI, 2009). But the pre-estimation of the mobility costs to be expected after relocation is still very difficult and vague. Private households are often surprised about how much costs can increase (cf. Bauer et al., 2007b). Suitable tools for the exposure of such cognition gaps are individual travel costs calculators (cf. Krüger, 2008). The RLDSS’s individual travel costs calculator estimates the households’ probable commuting cost for different transport modes and facilitates comparisons between various residential locations. Private Households can figure out how much they can save.

![Figure 7 Dynamic Input Mask for Individual Travel Costs Calculation](image)

All input fields of the dynamic input mask are labelled with a short text and visualised with a pictogram (cf. Figure 7). After choosing a residential location the interested
household has to specify the number of people, the number of monthly tickets and the type-specific number of cars. The last step consists of specific entries about mobility behaviour for each household member. The result of the individual travel cost calculation is displayed on a separate page (cf. Figure 8) that shows the estimated annual travel costs split into different transportation means. A bar graph illustrates these specific costs in detail. Below it further explanations can be found about the model background and predictability.

![Figure 8 Result Page of the Individual Travel Costs Calculator](image)

### Results of the Individual Travel Cost Calculation

Your estimated annual travel costs for your place of residence in the district Mueß are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transportation Mode</th>
<th>Cost (€/year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Car</td>
<td>4,727.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public transport</td>
<td>456.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total costs</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,183.68</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your travel costs will increase by 280.70€ per year when you choose Mueß as place of residence instead of Feldstadt.

The listed costs have to be interpreted as roughly estimated standard values. The travel costs for travelling by car depend on assumptions of the ADAC (German Auto Club). Please consider possible price increases, e.g. concerning fuel costs. Furthermore, it must be considered that only work and educational trips are taken into account. Usually travel costs of residential locations within the green field site are higher than of residential locations within the city. The differences will increase when shopping and leisure trips are also considered.

If you require a more detailed calculation of your individual travel costs, please contact our helpful staff at the personal residential location consultancy service office.

If you like, you can calculate your individual travel costs for another residential location:

Modify calculation

### 3.5 More Features

The RLDSS offers some more features which can also be important for house-hunters or flat-hunters. In both cities a voluntary database was established which contains most local real estate agents, property companies, financial institutions, and so on. The listing (cf. Figure 9) enables interested households to contact them directly.

A stand-alone search feature for finding the neighbourhoods that suit the seekers' personal preferences in the best way is not sufficient. Furthermore, customers want to know what houses or flats are actually offered at that location. The development of an approach for the listing of currently available houses or flats for sale or for rent was not realised because the data maintenance would be too extensive and expensive. Hence the decision for this project was to sign a cooperation treaty with...
ImmobilienScout24 GmbH, the largest internet real estate marketplace in Germany. Henceforward adjusted property search tools of ImmobilienScout24 are fully integrated in the RLDSS website for free use. This includes searching for houses or flats within both a recommend neighbourhood and a defined radius around a location. Listed objects are described in an exposé with detailed information, descriptive photos, and sometimes even a floor plan.

**Figure 9** Listing of Local Real Estate Businesses

**Personal Consultancy Service Office in Schwerin**

The Residential Location Consultancy Office of the City of Schwerin is the central and independent information and counselling centre for residential locations in Schwerin.

Our office is located on the first floor of the town hall, room number 1061.

**Address:**
Wohnstandortinfo im Stadthaus
Am Parkhof 2 - 6
19055 Schwerin

**Opening hours:**
Mon. and Tue.: 8-12am
Thu.: 13-16pm

Please make an appointment.

**Contact:**
Phone: (0385) 545-2566
Fax: (0385) 545-2519
E-mail: buero@wohnstandort.info

**Persons in charge:**
Dr. Günter Reinkober
Head of Wohnstandortinfo
Room: 1061
Phone: (0385) 545-2561
Fax: (0385) 545-2519
E-mail: GReinkober@schwerin.de

Anke Neetzow
Wohnstandortinfo
Room: 1061
Phone: (0385) 545-2566
Fax: (0385) 545-2519
E-mail: Anneetzow@schwerin.de

People thinking about moving to Schwerin, new inhabitants, or long-time residents are invited to a non-binding personal dialogue at our office, where they can gain information on Schwerin or get advice on upcoming residential location decisions.

The Wohnstandortinfo offers information and advice, which is impartial and independent of private interests. The consultation offer is free of charge. Please make an appointment.

**Figure 10** Contact Side of the Residential Location Consultancy Service Office
Since complex and comprehensive decisions are normally reluctantly done only on the computer, the complementary residential location consultancy offices are established in central location of the two cities Schwerin und Wilhelmshaven. Trained employees advise and inform in a personal conversation, during a telephone call or by answering enquiries by E-Mail. Visitors of the RLDSS website can obtain all necessary contact information including a brief description about the modalities and opening times (cf. Figure 10). Photos of the contacts underline the character of the personal consultation.

Further useful information material is also offered for download. Rent indices, property market reports, developer prospectuses, image brochures, land use plans, and so on can improve knowledge about the city and its residential location areas.

4. SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE

From a technical perspective the RLDSS is a comprehensive web server system with various functional modules and an integrated content and data management. It is solely based on open source products for keeping operating costs low. Clients can use the RLDSS with any usual internet browser. No external plugins or viewers are necessary.

Each function needs special data that is stored in the systems’ content repository (cf. Figure 11). The data range from simple textual information, e.g. for the website content or the neighbourhood portraits, to address coordinates and finally to complex data structures such as small scale distance cost matrices which have to be processed by extra developed GIS tools before being stored. Hence the need is given for a close cooperation between the service provider and the municipality partner. For this purpose, the project partners developed a user and data guideline.

![Figure 11 System Architecture of the RLDSS](image)
Either the local authorities or the public land surveying offices feed initially almost all needed data into the system and updates it regularly. They can administratively manage data updates with a ftp client or internet browser. In order to manage and update data efficiently the RLDSS can be directly coupled to already existing data bases with external interfaces, e.g. using WMS for using territorial data of public land surveying offices.

5. PRESENT EXPERIENCES AND PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

Both tools, the RLDSS and the residential location consultancy service, are fully implemented now in the two cities of Schwerin and Wilhelmshaven. Since February 2008 the tools have been in operation with very good resonance in the press and public. The RLDSS can be viewed on the URLs http://www.schwerin.wohnstandort.info and http://www.wilhelmshaven.wohnstandort.info, respectively. The ever-increasing number of visitors to the sites of Wilhelmshaven and Schwerin increased within one year from around 50 visitors each day to 150 visitors in May 2009. Considering the size of the case study cities and the fact, that approximately only 3,000 households move into the cities per annum, this amount is quite remarkable.

To ensure the success of these new and unaccustomed tools, an extensive marketing strategy based on a matrix of migration direction, location preferences and population group was launched from the beginning of the project. The primary target group are private households that are willing to relocate, especially employees and students who come from outside for the first time. However, in many cases also local real estate businesses and credit institutes make use of the RLDSS for their own work and consultations.

The suggested approach focuses on the demand and the individual concerns of house-hunters and flat-hunters. It is effective within the existing settlement stock and abandons therefore the established measures to reduce land consumption that are more structurally or economically oriented. Both these strategies tended to fail in the past due to the seemingly opposing concerns of private households, investors and local authorities. The developed tool cause little costs, and provide an interface between the structural concepts of classical planning and the private households' acting. They could supplement spatial concepts and help to make more effective use of such concepts.

The surveys and standardised interviews previously carried out in both cities let indeed presume that with a correspondingly qualified and target-group-specific information and communication residential location decisions of private households tend to more integrated sites (cf. Bauer et al., 2007b). Whether this assumption can be confirmed or not, it will only be shown by the planned evaluation of the tools which is an integral part of the project. For evaluation purposes households' specific preferences and changes over time are electronically recorded if they have given their consent. Six month after using the RLDSS or seeking the residential location consultancy office the households will be recontacted for a final survey. Prior to the end of funding period which runs until March 2010, the effects of the proven tools will be well analysed and understood:

- Who uses the RLDSS?
- Who seeks professional personal advice?
- What are residential location preferences by what types of households?
• How does a residential location decision progress?
• How far can residential location decisions of private households be influenced by transparent information and professional consultation?

The full results of the evaluation and the guidelines derived from it will be published in the final report of the project. Although the current sample is still quite small and tentative, first tendencies are perceptible. All in all, the information and professional support given to the customers are well accepted. There is a very high level of satisfaction with the addressed contents und the way of communication. Several users pointed out, that they found a lot of helpful information, especially regarding price levels, commuting costs and times, and about the characteristics and social environment of a neighbourhood. Up to now around forty percent of the households that have relocated after using the RLDSS have moved to a neighbourhood that was directly recommended by the RLDSS. However, as to what extent the new tools would contribute to behaviour changes, it is still unclear until the final evaluation will be finished. It is also currently unclear, whether complete transparency of location characteristics supports or limits unwanted segregation processes.

Regardless of efficacy of the tools, the two local authorities of Schwerin and Wilhelmshaven are already receiving useful information about the needs and interests of private households and other parties in the property market. Moreover, private households have the possibility of a higher contentment with their residential location decisions in the model cities.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Born in 1975, Dipl.-Ing. Björn Schwarze studied spatial planning at the universities of Dortmund and Vienna. Since 2002 he has been working as research associate at the Institute of Spatial Planning at the Dortmund University of Technology in the Departments of Transport Planning and Systems Theory and Systems Engineering. His research focuses on the interactions between spatial development and transportation, accessibility indicators and the integration of information systems into planning processes.