

# Challenges and opportunities of multi-local post-separation family life for parents in Germany

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Methods and the Example of Post-Separation Families“  
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# Structure

- Introduction
- Challenges for the Ex-Partners
- (Gendered) opportunities of multi-local post-separation family
- Summary

# Sample and method

11 Post-separation families = 22 interviews with separated mothers and fathers


- ➔ Separated for two years or more
- ➔ Joint custody -> 10 separated parents
- ➔ Distance between the parents
- ➔ -> in walking distance (4), less than 10 km (3), 100 km or more (5)
- Primary residence (8)/ shared residence (3)
- ➔ High educational level

# Doing post-separation family

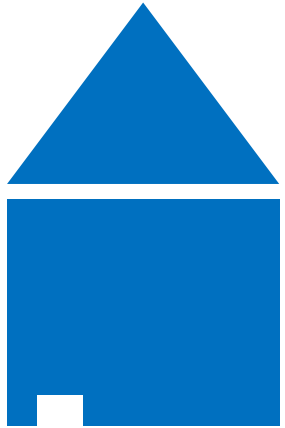
## Separation ≠ dissolution of the family

 Development of new practices in order to do family under multi-local conditions

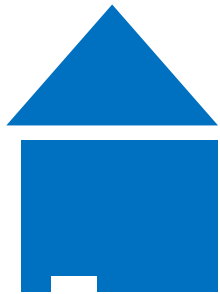
## Legal framework in Germany

 Child law reform 1998: joint custody after divorce

# Two basic and legal living arrangements

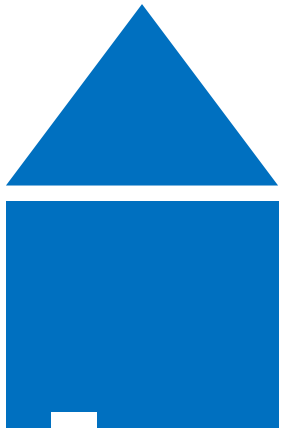


Mothers



Fathers

Shared Residence =  
Symmetrical living arrangement




Mothers



Fathers

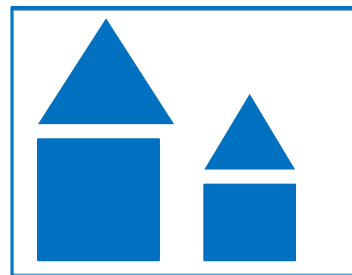
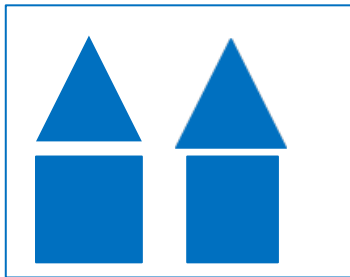
(Female) Primary Residence =  
Asymmetrical living arrangement

# Influencing factors

- **Post-separation parenting-concept:**  
Competitive vs. cooperative
  - **New partners**
  - **Living arrangement:**  
Symmetrical and asymmetrical
-  **Daily life management**

# Challenges of multi-local post-separation family life

Symmetrical - Shared  
Residence



Asymmetrical - Primary  
Residence

**Maintaining  
intimacy**

**Promote a  
feeling of  
home**

**Coordination**

**Emotion  
work**

# Maintaining intimacy

## Situations of maintaining intimacy

 During spatial absence

 In times of co-presence

## Practices:

- Using communication media
- Creating themes to talk about
- Sharing important moments with the child



# Promoting a feeling of „home“

## Relevant aspects

- ➔ Change/ stability of familiar surrounding
- ➔ Income

## Practices:

- Providing the child with a room of his own in each household
- Involving the child in home arrangements

# Coordinating the childrens life

## Levels of coordination:

- Spatio-temporal
- Socio-emotional
- Financial

## Practices:

- Exchanging information
- Long-term planning
- Consulting

# Doing emotion work

## Moments of emotion work

### 1. Saying good-bye, absence and welcome

#### Practices:

- Shifting the focus of attention
- Surrounding oneself with things of the child

### 2. Handling contact with the ex-partners

#### Practices:



- Organizing the situation of transition
- Bringing forward the good-bye

# (Gendered) opportunities

## ➔ Potentials for increased gender equality

- **Involved fathering**
  - taking over responsibility for the practical tasks of everyday life
  - Intensifying their emotional bond with the child
- **Gaining time scopes for the mothers**
  - Increasing time to invest in their career
  - Increasing leisure time

# Summary

- Parents in post-separation families face certain challenges and develop practices in order to meet them  subjectively it becomes normality
- The symmetrical and asymmetrical living arrangement influences the daily life management
- Mothers and fathers can realize certain opportunities  possibility of increasing gender equality

**Thank you very much for  
your attention!**

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