

Multi-local Living Arrangements – Terminology Issues¹

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1. Introduction and Problem Statement

Multi-locality is a phenomenon that has been present throughout the history of mankind. This paper focuses on a specific form of this phenomenon: on *residential multi-locality*. Generally speaking, multi-locality is characterised by the fact that individuals, social groups, or economic subjects pursue their basic and/or their economic interests concurrently or alternately at several places. Many (though not all) of these forms of multi-locality are based on the trivial fact that human beings have material bodies and, therefore, are elements of the physical and material world. As a result of corporeality, they occupy a place in the physical world. Their material bodies cannot be present at two different places at the same time. Human beings, however, have the ability to change locations and be mobile. In their day-to-day living they can move their bodies from one place to another, and thus they expand their action potentials.

Over the last decades, the options for spatial movements and of changing locations have grown enormously and may be utilised in a variety of ways: “All the world seems to be on the move” (SHELLER and URRY 2006, p. 207). This has been enhanced, on the one hand, by the rapid development of transport and communication technologies, combined with a steady decline in costs, and, on the other hand, by the process of globalisation, which has sharply reduced former barriers of mobility. Even though there are still restrictions to mobility, money, goods, information, a large number of people can move across the globe with hardly any restraints.

The vast possibilities of telecommunication and the breaking down of transnational economic restrictions and barriers have allowed economic subjects to make use of locations for businesses at most diverse places in the world. What is more, decision makers and key actors need not be physically present: The management of external locations may be conducted via telecommunication or by representatives and authorised persons. Now-

¹) This text was originally intended for a special issue of “Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie” (Journal of Economic and Social Geography), conceptualised by members of the “Network Multi-locality”. However, the contributions prepared for this issue considerably exceeded the given word count. As I had submitted a second manuscript on various theoretical aspects of multi-locality and I did not want to endanger the entire project because of excessive length, I decided to withdraw my paper on terminological issues and have it published in this edited volume.

adays, global sourcing and the utilisation of regional differences in costs (above all, those in wages) are parts of the standard repertoire of any business management.

Social interactions within a family, for instance, can also be maintained over longer periods of time by staying in touch with one another via telecommunication and/or through the transfer of financial and other remittances. There is no need for the actors living apart to see each other regularly or keep face-to-face contact. Even long distances hardly pose any obstacle to uphold structures of power and influence.

To my knowledge, we have not yet arrived at a standardised and generally accepted terminology on the topic of multi-locality. The following considerations may be regarded as an attempt to develop a terminological system for the subfield of residential multi-locality. This has proved to be a challenge, indeed, as it is a highly complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. Multi-local practices display a wide range of options for implementation with smooth transitions. The description of this phenomenon usually requires a larger number of attribute dimensions. The characteristics of the individual attributes are generally marked by a continuous course, which does not allow ideal-type classifications with well-defined boundaries. Apart from clearly defined main types, we may count on being confronted with numerous intermediate forms.

In spite of that, we need to employ a precise terminology to cover the full scope of the phenomenon. However, I do not intend to propose a binding terminological convention. It is rather an attempt to discuss the most relevant dimensions that seem to be essential for describing and defining residential multi-locality, and to refer to the combinations of the dimensions empirically observed. We may assume that in many cases, these combinations need to be interpreted in terms of fuzzy logic, which means that a specific phenomenon empirically observed may correspond slightly, considerably, or highly with a specific form of residential multi-locality.

In a first step, it seems important to explore the differences between residential multi-locality and other forms of multi-locality.

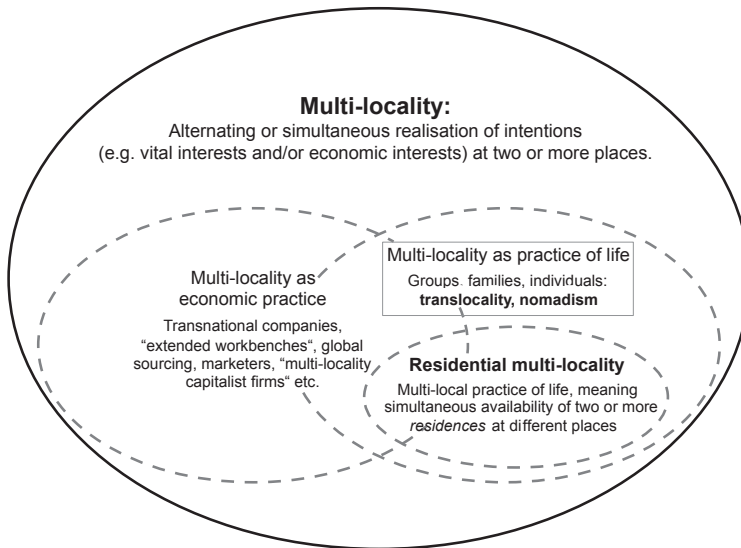
2. Residential Multi-locality: A Specific Form of Multi-locality

Generally speaking, multi-locality may be considered a common socio-economic practice performed by individual or collective actors to carry out their intentions and achieve specific goals (e.g. improving personal living conditions or raising profits; see Figure 1) because goods, resources, and utilisation potentials are unequally distributed across the world. The process of globalisation has not reduced these inequalities but has rather intensified spatial disparities. Most actions in everyday life and in economic practice are performed in specific places, and these places are characterised by a particular and content-restricted range of available resources and utilisation potentials. Therefore, it may be considered a sound strategy to utilise the diverse potentials of different locations in order

to achieve an added value against utilisation in only one place. Moreover, infrastructure facilities, cultural offers, leisure and entertainment options, as well as amenities display a similar unequal spatial distribution. A multi-local strategy facilitates making use of the advantages of several locations.

Economy provides a number of examples for such a strategy: for instance, transnational companies, “extended workbenches” (relating to the outsourcing of production sites to Third World countries or transitional countries), multi-locality capitalist firms, franchising, marketers, or branching. This strategy supports cutting costs, market expansion, and the utilisation of resources that would not be available through a practice restricted to a single location. It has traditionally been employed in the agricultural sector, take transhumance or alpine pasturing, for instance. Generally speaking, multi-locality may be regarded as a specific business-driven practice, that helps achieve profit or improve operating results.²

Figure 1: Forms of multi-locality



Source: Own illustration.

Regarded from a purely economic perspective, the practice of multi-locality represents a specific form of *arbitrage*. Arbitrage refers to the exploitation of price differences that exist for specific goods in different partial markets or places. Thus, to put it very generally and in terms of arbitrage, multi-locality represents an option to benefit from the spatial utilisation differentials.

²⁾ Of course, the social practice of multi-locality can be applied to a lot of other sectors, such as the dissemination of information and knowledge (via the media, the Internet) or knowledge acquisition (e.g. through a university semester abroad). In any case it is the goal – however defined – to profit or benefit from the concurrent or alternate use of different locations.

Another good reason in favour of multi-local practices is that each place (defined as a particular section on the earth's surface) always displays specific and, thus, *limited* attributes, exploitation potentials, or resources. Therefore, diverse places may have utilisation potentials that complement each other or, in other words, what is missing in one place may be available in another one and vice versa. On principal, any actor's multi-local everyday practice provides the opportunity to combine the different utilisation potentials of these places. Thus, the diverse places may be interpreted as "complementors" (BRANDENBURGER and NALEBUFF 1996). Regarded from their users' intentionality, they *complement* each other and, as a whole, enable goal achievement, which would not be possible by using the potentials of only one place.

In order to implement everyday practices, multi-local forms of coping with life create advantages for individuals and groups (see Figure 1) which are similar to those for economic activities (see TRAGER 2005). Complementing utilisation options in two or more places are combined in order to create an added value for pursuing intended basic interests. "Utility" is used in a very wide sense here and is certainly not restricted to monetary aspects. The term rather refers to all those attributes and acquisition opportunities of the places concerned which are relevant to fulfilling the actors' needs and life goals.

On principal, we can identify three forms of achieving such an everyday practice that, ideally speaking, may be termed "*nomadism*", "*translocality*" ("translocal multi-locality"), and "*residential multi-locality*".

When distinguishing between these three phenomena, we have to keep in mind that (as in many other research areas) the specific perspective applied contributes essentially to the constitution of the object (see PETZOLD 2010, p. 249). In all three cases, human individuals, families, life partnerships, and other forms of social groups use two or more places (occasionally quite distant from one another) as locations for their activities and draw advantage of some kind from this combination, which is subjectively or group-specifically conceived as favourable. These terms, however, refer to highly different options to perform this social practice. What is more, it is difficult to precisely distinguish them from one another.

In most cases, differentiation between nomadism and the other two forms is not too great a problem. Nomadism refers to a traditional mobile economic and social system mostly based on livestock breeding. Usually depending on a seasonal rhythm, nomads travel in family units together with their livestock, household goods, and portable dwellings, quickly to be put up and taken down. They often move between pastures over great distances. Nomadic hunter-gatherers are considered a special form. However, problems arise when differentiating semi-nomadism from transhumance. The semi-nomad way of life also includes agricultural activities and permanent dwellings; only parts of the families move with the herds and return to the permanent settlements at regular intervals, which is similar to the transhumant lifestyle. Both semi-nomadism and transhumance (including alpine pastoralism) may also be regarded as residential multi-locality.

"Translocality", on the other hand, refers to the *system of social relations* evolving between the everyday activities of the actors concerned and the inhabitants of diverse places. The physical presence of the interaction partners at the places involved is not required. In-

teractions frequently occur via modern means of communication and through remittances. “Residential multi-locality”, on the other hand, refers to those multi-local practices when one or several persons (usually a family unit or a partnership) concurrently *maintain two or several residences in different places*, use them alternately and are physically present for a specific period of time. Thus, residential multi-locality may be described as “*vita activa at multiple localities*”. According to ROLSHOVEN (2006, p. 181), active everyday life as a whole is distributed over various places whose (smaller or larger) diversity of functions is used at longer or shorter intervals.

Apart from the (rather rare) ideal types, it is not possible to draw an exact boundary between translocality and residential multi-locality because there are various overlaps and each of these forms always includes elements of the other (see below).

3. A Brief History of the Term

The term “multi-locality” first appeared in ethnological and anthropological publications and was discussed in the context of traditional social living arrangements for post-marital residence. EMBER and EMBER (1972, p. 382) conceive multi-locality as “the co-occurrence of any two or more fairly frequent patterns of consanguineal residence”. Another definition is employed in ethnology in order to express the differences in meaning of specific places for different ethnic groups and cultures (RODMAN 1992; see DIRKSMEIER 2010, p. 61).

Translocality “[...] is a term that increasingly occurs in articles, but is seldom elaborated in more detail. It seems almost taken for granted that the reader knows what is meant by it, although the use of the term as well as its context varies enormously” (VERNE 2012, p. 15). Following VERNE, we may distinguish at least three different usages or meanings of the term. This variety of meaning, however, is not only based on the fact that the term refers to a highly complex and multi-faceted phenomenon but also to its use in diverse disciplines, each of them defining it in a different way.

One variant of meaning is employed in migration studies relating to “transnationalism”. BASCH et al. (1994) propose to view transnational migrants under a new perspective by paying particular attention to the development of social relations across national borders. These relations evolve through the transmigrants’ everyday lives and foster the emergence of independent “social fields”. This perspective emphasises the question to what extent transmigrants are localised despite their transborder activities and are also embedded in their respective local environments. The term “translocality” addresses the polarity of transnationalism and situatedness and makes the “dynamics between localized life worlds in faraway sites” (MA 2002, p. 133) a subject (see BRICKELL and DATTA 2011; SMITH 2001, 2005).

Another conception of the term relates to the dialectic of the global and the local and highlights the connections of various localities as independent patterns of relations be-

tween these two poles (VERNE 2012, pp. 17–18). Used this way, “translocality” refers to a relationship between several places that is not conceived as global yet goes beyond the individual place.

A third usage explicitly combines movement and situatedness (VERNE 2012, p. 18). Following APPADURAI (1996, p. 192), the term “translocality” addresses the ways “in which ties of marriage, work, business, and leisure weave together various circulating populations with kinds of locals to create neighbourhoods”. Under this perspective, the term refers to the polarity and interplay of movement and stability. Translocality is understood as “the outcome of concrete movements of people, goods, ideas and symbols” and thus enables a relational and dynamic view of the world (FREITAG and VON OPPEN 2010, p. 5). Regarded from this angle, places play the roles of interfaces and intermediaries in networks.

STEINBRINK (2009; LOHNERT and STEINBRINK 2005) has introduced yet another aspect of the term. He proposes to complement the conventional geographical perspective of migration studies (which regard space as a container) by a translocal one. A “household” is conceptualised as a “household-housekeeping” community acknowledged as such in a specific socio-cultural context, and its members coordinate the organisation of activities relating to consumption, reproduction, and utilisation of resources over longer periods of time (STEINBRINK 2009, p. 48). If household members defined in such a way live apart in different places and continue to *hold house* across a distance, this is referred to as translocal household (LOHNERT and STEINBRINK 2005, p. 97). “Translocal communities” are explained in a similar way: “A translocal community relates to a group of (translocal) households, whose members live in diverse locations, which are connected through functional interdependencies, which have a tendency to be stronger than those interdependencies which connect them” (ibid., p. 98).

As illustrated, “translocality” is a term used in manifold ways. However, all these variations have in common that different places are linked through social networks and/or data transfer as well as through the movement of goods and people between these places. Translocality is conceived as an attribute of both the locations and the human actors. Another common feature is the concept of interpreting the diverse locations or places apart from one another as a socio-spatial entity. Moreover, focus is put on the interdependencies and interrelationships.

To the author’s knowledge, the term “residential multi-locality” has been jointly developed in the course of discussions among the “Multi-locality Network”, which has been organising workshops regularly since 2006. This term has been used by its members in various publications,³ but in the meantime has also been applied by other authors (e.g. DIRKSMEIER 2010). It serves to delimit its scope from other practices of multi-locality (see HILTI 2009, p. 79) and refers to its key characteristic, the *concurrent* availability of two or more residences in different places and their alternating use.

³) Confer the homepage of this group: <http://www.uni-muenster.de/Geographie/Multilokalitaet/multilokalitaet/home.html>. The reflections presented in this paper refer to the discussions held among the entire “Multi-locality Network”. Some of the proposals have actually been developed by the group and represent the results of joint considerations.

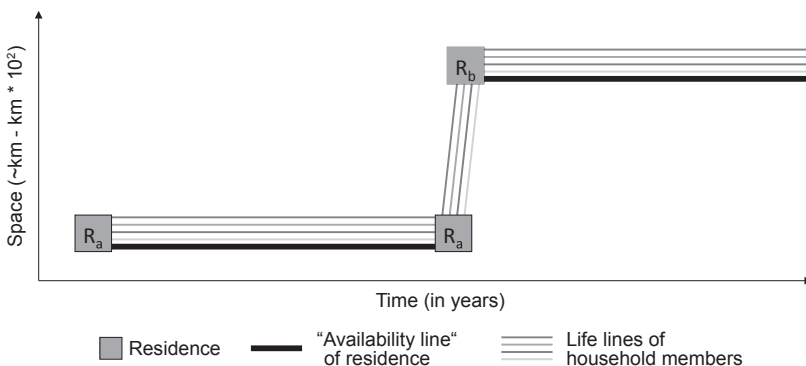
4. Residential Multi-locality as Independent Form of Mobility Between Migration and Circulation

A brief description of my personal practice of residential multi-locality (see WEICHHART and RUMPOLT, this volume) aims to illustrate that this phenomenon needs to be clearly distinguished from other constellations of everyday life which also involve multi-locality. This relates, on the one hand, to specific forms of migration and, on the other hand, to the spatio-temporal structure of human activity spaces.

Migration studies refer to some special types of change of residence that are more or less similar to residential multi-locality. Yet even the “simplest” example of migration differs quite markedly from residential multi-locality: This is the case when a household (single-person households included) or several people living together (see below) abandon their present home and move to a new place of residence, which makes giving up the former residence the essential criterion. The migrant or migrants have only one home. Subcategories of this type are “total displacement” and “partial displacement” (ROSEMAN 1971; see WEICHHART 2009, Figures 4 and 5). Long-distance or interregional moves usually involve the total displacement of the activity spaces at the former residential location. At the new one, a totally new activity space evolves, which is characterised by the pattern of the new locations of interaction. In the case of “partial displacement” (intra-regional migration), on the other hand, parts of the formerly existing activity spaces are retained.

Moves and other types of mobility may be generalised in space-time diagrams (inspired by HÄGERSTRAND’s time geography).⁴ In order to illustrate the differences between various forms of mobility and distinguish them from residential multi-locality, such diagrams are employed in the following considerations to display the life lines of the people involved and the “lines of availability” of residences.

Figure 2: Migration



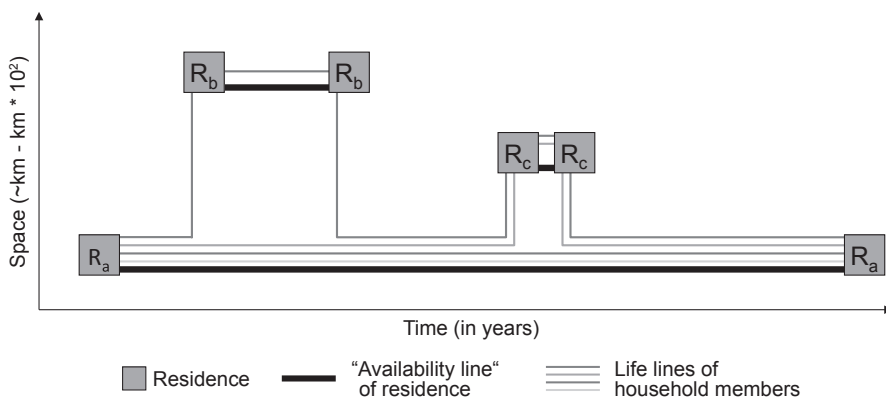
Source: Own illustration.

⁴) See MALMBERG (1997, Figure 2.1), who also employs this kind of simple diagrams to solve terminological problems. In the following diagrams, HÄGERSTRAND’s diagrams have been adapted for technical reasons by swapping the space and time axes.

A number of terms are applied to instances when, after some time, migrants return to their place (or country) of origin: return migration, circular migration, temporary migration, or cyclical migration. “Circular migration is a form of mobility that most closely ties migrants to their countries of origin, and allows them to build bridges between it and other (usually more developed) countries, thereby creating opportunity for the migrant’s country of origin to make the most of its comparative advantages” (MPI 2007, p. 3). APPAVE and CHOLEWINSKI (2008, p. 492) define circular migration as “fluid movement of people between countries, including temporary or long-term movement which may be beneficial to all involved, if occurring voluntarily and linked to the labour needs of countries of origin and destination”.

Both definitions illustrate that nowadays “circular migration” is generally not used as a purely descriptive term but includes a distinct policy component (as, for instance, in EU migration policy; see European Migration Network 2011; FASSMANN 2008). In this context, priority is given to the “triple win” hypothesis, which says that “these forms of migration can have a positive outcome for the migrant, for the employer and for the country of origin” (European Migration Network 2011, p. 11). Return migration is regarded as “the movement of a person returning to his/her country of origin or habitual residence usually after at least one year in another country. The return may or may not be voluntary” (APPAVE and CHOLEWINSKI 2008, p. 498; see also CASSARINO 2004). Of course, these types of migration do not necessarily involve crossing national borders (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Circular migration



Source: Own illustration.

I do not intend to discuss the subtle differences in the definitions of these terms in detail here. What does seem relevant though is to differentiate these cyclical forms of migration from residential multi-locality. In this context, it is those blurred boundaries and fuzziness that become evident, as explicitly pointed out in the introduction. As some dimensions of these forms of migration are quite similar to residential multi-locality, an exact distinction is not possible. In many cases, migrants not only have a residence in their host country but also a family home in their country of origin, involving frequent

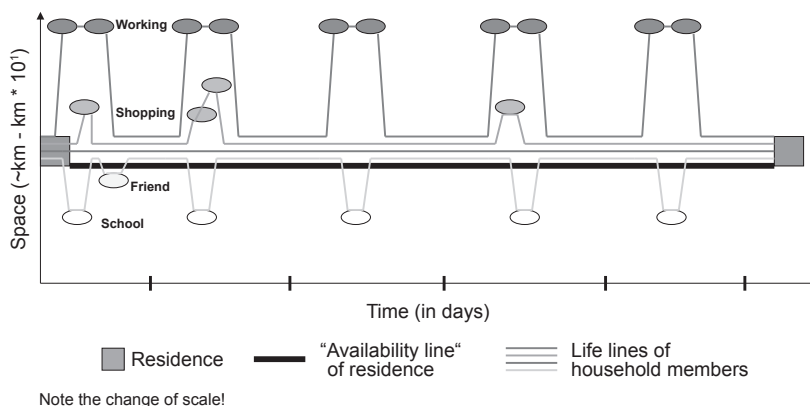
and regular exchanges of visits. Thus, the criterion of “vita activa” in several places is fulfilled at least in part.

In contrast, the distinction between residential multi-locality and diverse forms of multi-local *mobility* in terms of circadian multi-locality is absolutely unambiguous. This distinction is highly relevant because current everyday life, scrutinised on a lower scale of observation, is generally characterised by utilising *diverse* locations in some way or other and this form of multi-locality needs to be clearly distinguished from the variant of residential multi-locality.

In former agricultural societies, the sedentary part of the population usually displayed quite limited activity spaces, which rarely reached beyond the boundaries of their local communities. The locations of daily activities were geographically concentrated and longer distances were hardly ever covered. These days, however, most people’s daily lives are marked by circadian activities extending far beyond the hometown. Most people’s workplaces are not located at their place of residence; therefore, these daily commuters are forced to cover longer distances between residence and workplace. Leisure activities, social contacts and consumption sites – they all may be scattered over considerable distances.

Nowadays, people’s daily activities are no longer confined to a local “stage” but have widely expanded on a regional level. Considered under this aspect, daily routines that start from one permanent residence may also be regarded as multi-local or polytopic (STOCK 2009, p. 107). In order to distinguish this form from other types of mobility, German population geographers employ the term “circulation”, which designates spatial movement *without* a change of residence (BÄHR 2010, p. 240; BÄHR et al. 1992, p. 11). This includes, for instance, moves between home and work or educational institutions or leaving home for reasons of consumption and leisure activities. The critical point is that all these forms of location-based use occur in a circadian rhythm. This implies that the actors usually return to their homes within 24 hours and do not need any additional accommodations (Figure 4), which provides a clear distinction from residential multi-locality.

Figure 4: Circulation: circadian moves from home



Source: Own illustration.

Moreover, it is evident that circadian circulation,⁵ regarded as a daily form of mobility, affects our understanding of places (see below).

5. Residential Multi-locality, Translocality, and the Rhythm of Change

As mentioned above, it is most difficult to draw the line between residential multi-locality and translocality, and the differences are rather in the eye of the beholder. On principal, the linkages across places, generated by the actors' daily activities, as well as the effectiveness of social networks even over long distances apply to both phenomena. In most cases, residential multi-locality displays all those attributes and consequences which are also characteristic of translocality. The only significant difference between them is that in the case of multi-locality, multiple homes need to be available to the actor or actors over some period of time. Moreover, in order to meet the defining criterion of "vita activa", actors performing residential multi-locality as a lifestyle need to switch residence at intervals not too long and be *physically* present.

To my knowledge, no suggestions have been made in literature to precisely define both time-related criteria. In order to speak of residential multi-locality, over which period of time do multiple homes need to be available at a time? This question can only be answered pragmatically and in the context of the respective research project and its objectives. Even though, under formal aspects, the onetime rental of a holiday home (or even of a hotel room) in addition to the principle residence meets the criteria of definition, this is hardly ever regarded as residential multi-locality. Unfortunately, I am unable to provide a reasonable and well-grounded proposal for differentiation.

We are faced with similar difficulties when it comes to producing a suitable distinction for the second time-related criterion. What is the adequate frequency of shuttling between the available residences over time to fulfil this criterion? Weekly commuting is usually regarded as the lower limit. On the other hand, a one-day and overnight stay at another residence in several-week intervals would also be in line with the description of the phenomenon. The same problem applies to the upper limit of commuting rhythms. Consistent factual criteria for drawing a boundary do not exist. The examples given by THIEME (e.g. 2008), where women work in Moscow for several years, send remittances to safeguard their children's livelihoods back home in Kyrgyzstan, yet cannot visit them, may rather be considered to be cases of translocal relations. On the other hand, the criteria of residential multi-locality are given in the case of Russian Vakhoviki (long-distance commuters working in the extractive industries), who work in a rhythm of several weeks in the Russian north, return to their family residences in the south for some weeks and follow this practice over several years (see EILMSTEINER-SAXINGER 2011). The issue of

⁵) In order to distinguish this form from other usages of the term "circulation", I suggest referring to it as "circadian circulation".

distinguishing between multi-locality and translocality is also dealt with in the discussion of households (see below).

6. Residence and Housing

Giving a precise definition of “residence” under the terms of residential multi-locality seems to be quite challenging. In order to cover the full scope of variations empirically to be found, our “Multi-locality Network” has agreed on the neutral German term “Behausung”, which comprises any case for regularly recurring overnight stays within a building or any other physical structure which a person is entitled to use or has a claim on. The spectrum ranges from a sofa bed regularly used at somebody else’s home to a rented furnished flat, a caravan, or a luxuriously appointed property.

Moreover, it is not easy to find an English equivalent to the German term “Wohnung”. Its meaning may be best expressed by using “housing”, which encloses the micro-location where a person lives. “Housing refers to physical structures and buildings meant for people to live in.” However: “These buildings and structures have personal, social and cultural meanings attached to them (among other things, different views of home)” (HAUGE 2009, p. 30). As a result, literature always refers to the fundamental difference between housing (residence) and home (domicile): “Home is where people are settled psychologically, socially, culturally and physically” (HAUGE 2009, p. 28; see BENJAMIN et al. 1995). “The relationship between home and housing therefore cannot be taken for granted” (ibid.; see also DUNCAN 1981).

The U.S. Census Bureau (2010), too, makes a precise distinction. “Residence” is defined as: “The act or fact of living in a given place for some time; the place where one actually lives as distinguished from a domicile. Residence usually just means bodily presence as an inhabitant in a given place, while domicile usually requires bodily presence and an intention to make the place one’s home. A person thus may have more than one residence at a time but only one domicile.” Laws on resident registration in European countries make a similar differentiation and distinguish between primary (principal) residence and second residence (second home). In Austria the relevant stipulation states that that dwelling shall be regarded as a person’s primary residence where the person has settled with the obvious intention, indicated by the circumstances, to make it the centre of his or her lifeworld; if, in consideration of a person’s professional, economic, and social ties, this condition applies to several residences, that one shall be identified as primary residence to which the person predominantly has a close relationship (see Austrian Registration Act – Österreichisches Meldegesetz, section 1.7).⁶ Therefore, according to Austrian official statistics, a person can only have *one* primary residence and that is the place where she or he has the right to vote.

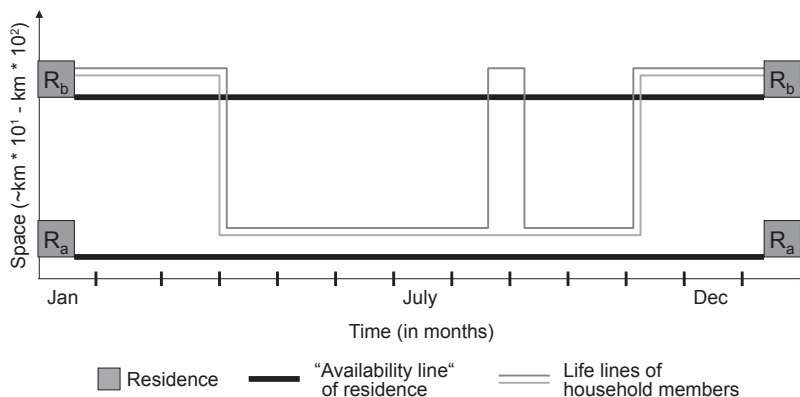
⁶) <http://www.jusline.at/index.php?cpid=ba688068a8c8a95352ed951ddb88783e&lawid=4&pa id=1> (accessed: 30 Sept. 2013).

In the context of residential multi-locality, the differentiation between housing and home and its consequences for the definitions used in the national registration laws raise considerable problems since it is postulated or taken for granted that a person can develop emotional ties to only one place called “home”. This perspective disregards the evidence that people may have two or more “centres of lifeworld”.⁷

As explicitly pointed out in the relevant literature, “housing” plays a key function in coping with life. There is no such thing as “not housing”. The residence is an indispensable consumer good that cannot be substituted (see WEICHHART 1987, 2009). It is an instrument to embed a person in a place, a “pivotal point” (SIMMEL 1992; see DIRKSMEIER 2010, p. 61) or an “anchor point” (COUCLELIS et al. 1987) of existence. This is connected, on the one hand, with the functional significance of housing (e.g. protection, centre of privacy, relevant site of everyday life practices such as personal hygiene and sexuality, container for one’s personal possessions, the centre of family life) and, on the other hand, with its psychic and emotional importance. The residence is conceived as a significant medium to reproduce, present, and communicate ego-identity (see DUNCAN 1981; HAUGE 2009; WEICHHART 1987; WEICHHART and RUMPOLT, this volume). The residence and its immediate vicinity are thus regarded as key reference points of place attachment and place identity (WEICHHART et al. 2006). The significance of the residence for the resident’s ego-identity also results from the fact that – at least under favourable conditions – it may be a place of self-fulfilment (BOESCH 1991).

According to definition, residential multi-locality means that the actors involved are entitled to use and have access to two or more residences in (usually) different places and that this right is effective over some time, at least. All residences are available *at a time* (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Residential multi-locality – the example of a holiday home



Source: Own illustration.

⁷) Concerning problems of data collection methods arising from such a concept, see DITTRICH-WESBUER et al., forthcoming.

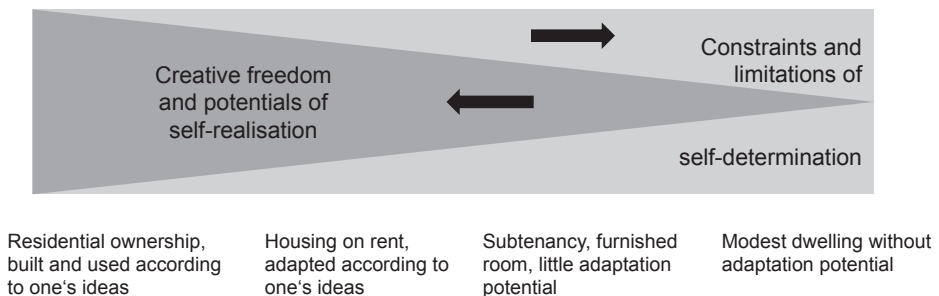
Based on this simultaneous availability, we are faced with the question about the degree of place attachment to the original residence and the original place of residence. On the other hand, we need to explore if any kinds of emotional ties in terms of place identity also emerge for the second (or more) residence and its location. This depends, of course, on the options for appropriation that the residents can practice at their homes. Utilisation deficits and limited options for appropriation at the original residential location may be reasons to decide on multi-local living arrangements. If, for instance, opportunities for preferred leisure activities are lacking, this may result in setting up a holiday home and in multi-local living arrangements.

We may assume that multi-local practices involve considerable feelings of attachment to the original place of residence, which prompt the actor not to give up this location. Without these ties, it would be much more sensible to relocate to a new residence. Their nature can be highly diverse. Apart from functional and economic factors (the partner’s workplace, the children’s education, property), we also have to consider those emotional ties which are related to place identity.

To date, only a few authors (FUHRER and KAISER 1994; PETZOLD 2011) have explored the question whether such an attachment also exists for the second or third residential location. Empirical findings suggest that such acts of identification with the residential location must be regarded as a fundamental element of life and basic dimension of human identity (PETZOLD 2011, pp. 389–392) and may thus also become effective for multiple places of residence.

The attachment to other locations is likely to be connected with the options for appropriation and the opportunities for self-realisation provided to the actor by the place and the residence. The scope for possibilities for appropriation for a given residence may vary considerably depending on the legal title (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Residence-based scope for self-realisation and for appropriation



Source: Adapted from Caroline KRAMER, personal communication.

The possibilities of use and appropriation potentials of residences may be regarded as important instruments of self-realisation and of the presentation of ego-identity, and they may be considered as key factors of the development of place identity. In any case, resi-

dences and their utilisation potentials constitute highly relevant elements of the practice of residential multi-locality. Hence, analyses of this phenomenon should explore all the crucial and culture-specific dimensions of attributes characteristic of the residences in use.

7. Actors, Households, Figurations, and the Impact of Absence

Residential multi-locality may be performed by individuals who move between two or more residences without having any relevant ties involving social relationships, family, or partners. In the overwhelming number of cases, however, this practice applies to actors who live in families or partnerships. In many instances this is even the very reason for deciding on such a way of life since the respective partners want or need to live in different places (for whatever reasons). In order to describe and analyse the phenomenon, it is therefore highly important to explore the structure of social relationships relevant to those affected, and apply a precise terminology.

In many empirical studies on this topic, the household is considered to be the basic unit of analysis. However, in the relevant literature, this term is definitely not precisely defined. What is worse, we may distinguish at least three different concepts of “private household”, which may also occur as mixed forms (see PETZOLD 2007; WEICHHART 2010). Among these, the “household dwelling concept” is the dominating one in official statistics.⁸ Due to the endeavours to harmonise social statistics within the European Statistical System (ESS), it was particularly recommended and has been implemented in most EU member states. In contrast, the “household-housekeeping concept” emphasises the joint management of household affairs and regards the household as an economic unit. The third variation employs a social science approach that, apart from economic interactions, focuses on social relationships, mutual support, and network ties.⁹

Without doubt, the household constitutes a “social basic unit” (see WEISKE et al. 2009, p. 67), which is particularly expressed in the household-housekeeping concept and in the concept of translocal households. A household is conceived as a social group that comprises all activities of everyday life. With this in mind, the household represents a needs-based community that produces and consumes goods and services to safeguard its members’ livelihoods. That way, principles of solidarity and subsidiarity become effective by caring for those household members who are (still) unable to contribute to the household income (*ibid.*; see also RICHARZ 1998). Such a community based on needs and mutual support may be organised on single-location, multi-local, or translocal levels, the latter contradicting the household dwelling concept.

⁸) Statistics Austria, for instance, uses the following definition: All people living together at the same primary residence constitute a private household (household dwelling concept; see Statistics Austria 2005).

⁹) This variation underlies STEINBRINK’s definition of a translocal household (2010).

On the other hand, we may distinguish forms of shared housing which are not tied to the principles of the household-housekeeping concept. In order to avoid such terminological fuzziness resulting from intermediate forms, KROMPHOLTZ (this volume) suggests using “Residenzgemeinschaft” (“residential community”) as umbrella term. This would include new forms of private shared housing that do not conform to the “standard” household concepts. There has been some critique from social scientists on this term because the element “community” may be understood as a reference to primary group-like interaction structures, which was certainly not the author’s intention.

Such considerations draw our attention to the general issue of interrelationships and interactions relevant to actors practicing multi-local living. As sociologist ELIAS (e.g. 1978) has pointed out over and over again, scientists tend to perceive relationships as “things” or entities via hypostases. With his concept of process sociology or figurational sociology he aims to overcome this way of thinking. A specific number of individuals who, in terms of the household-housekeeping concept, may be described as a jointly acting group can be conceived as an independent unit, namely as a “household”. The group is characterised by economic cooperation based on needs and mutual support. Without doubt, this is a primary group displaying all the relevant attributes of a social group. However, some of the forms of living together described by KROMPHOLTZ *cannot* be characterised as social groups. They reveal neither common aims and values nor a sense of togetherness, nor mutual solidarity and loyalty. In spite of that, we note relations and dependencies between the individuals concerned.

In order to characterise such patterns of relationships, the concept of figuration seems to be useful. According to TREIBEL (2008, p. 23), *figurations* are webs of relationships and interdependencies between people; these may be families, tribes, neighbourhoods, university boards, citizens’ initiatives, residents of a block of flats, or a football game. The figuration is based on the fact that its members are permanently interrelated and dependent on each other, even though they need not be aware of that. The figurations formed by the actors (ELIAS refers to them as “players”) are just as “concrete” as the actors themselves. “With figuration we mean the changing pattern created by the players as a whole – not only by their intellects but by their whole selves, the totality of their dealings in relationship with each other” (ELIAS 1978, p. 130). To put it in a nutshell, the term “figuration” draws our attention to the interdependencies between people.

By applying the concept of figuration, a lot is gained for the analysis of residential multi-locality. It is not only suitable for including all those forms of shared housing, which are addressed by KROMPHOLTZ (this volume) and cannot be described as “households”, but also directs research interest towards the manifold chains of interdependencies which generally evolve from practices of multi-local living. Children of separated parents may serve as a perfect example: They move between their biological parents living apart at regular intervals and, thereby, perform residential multi-locality (see SCHIER et al., forthcoming). In these cases we are talking about two *different* households which comprise some members – the children of the separated parents – participating in both primary groups. The entire figuration, which consists of separated parents and new partners, their biological children and those of former partnerships, certainly does *not* represent a consistent primary group. They are two separate households with different goals and differ-

ent life orientations. Nevertheless, the former partners in both households, now living separately, keeping no contact in terms of a primary group relationship and often hardly talking to each other, are linked to each other through a figurative chain of interdependencies and contribute to coordinating and implementing the residential multi-locality of their biological children.

Moreover, the perspective of figurational sociology helps draw attention to some other significant aspects of residential multi-locality. It is a specific trait of this everyday life practice that some members of the group involved are *absent* at times. This may apply to individuals who leave the other members of the household's primary residence for a specific period of time. It may also happen that all members of the primary group occasionally move to another residence and use it jointly (see WEICHHART, forthcoming, or the example given in Figure 5).

Thus, it seems to make sense to distinguish between *active* and *passive* actors of residential multi-locality.¹⁰ From the viewpoint of figuration sociology, this indicates a marked difference: On the one hand, active actors create specific complex interrelationships at the respective other place of residence while, on the other hand, they leave a footprint in terms of substantial interdependencies at the location of the primary residence in spite of their temporary absence. Depending on the positions and roles attached to the actors, new figurations emerge at the second or third residential location, resulting from the interactions between those people who constitute the role set relevant there. (A role set comprises all those interaction partners an individual, occupying specific positions, regularly deals with.) The temporary absence at the respective other location results in "gaps of interdependencies", so to speak, which makes all those interactions impossible which require the physical co-presence of the partners.

However, the boundary between active and passive residential multi-locality cannot be accurately drawn because persons, although being predominantly passively multi-local, also visit the other residence(s) more or less frequently. In any case, passively multi-local people are considerably affected by the everyday practice of residential multi-locality. The regular temporary absence of a significant interaction partner usually has a serious impact on daily routines as well as on the people's psychic constitution.

Regular absence is usually not discussed as a characteristic feature of primary groups like households. Only a few authors exploring residential multi-locality deal with this topic systematically (see DIRKSMEIER 2010 or DUCHÊNE-LACROIX 2009). Applying the perspective of figurational sociology to this issue may also contribute to gain deeper insight into the extensive effects of multi-local living practices. We need to consider that apart from passively multi-local people, all the other figurations in which actively multi-local actors are involved are more or less affected by the alternation between presence and absence. The impact of temporary absence becomes particularly evident in large-scale material structures (e.g. unoccupied holiday homes).

¹⁰) The terms "actively multi-local" and "passively multi-local" have been used by the "Multi-local Network" for some time (see SCHIER et al., forthcoming, endnote 1). They are an "invention" of our collective considerations, so to speak.

8. Places, Spaces, the “In-Between”, and Remittances

Even the term “place”, apparently so unproblematic, causes some terminological difficulties when applied in the context of residential multi-locality. In this paper, the term “place” is consistently employed to indicate the spatial component of this way of life. Since the beginnings of humanist and behavioural geography (see AGNEW 2011; TUAN 1979), this term has been used to denote the “subjective space” which is present, experienced, interpreted, emotionally tinted, and appropriated in the individual’s mind. It goes without saying that the places relevant to an individual’s everyday life may also be described as “objectified” (intersubjectively comparable) locations, which are characterised by specific positions and attributes. The size and extent of a place depends on the scale of analysis.

As regards residential multi-locality, I propose to define a place as that part of the earth’s surface which, viewed from the location of the residence, is located within the space-time prism of circadian availability. This concept of place is, of course, a relative one, focusing on the respective actor, and its extent depends on the actor’s mobility potentials. It corresponds to the concept of *action space* of behavioural geography. In contrast, “activity space” refers to the set of those locations which are actually used by the actor in daily life: “An individual’s activity space is defined as the subset of all urban locations with which the individual has direct contact as the result of day-to-day activities” (HORTON and REYNOLDS 1971, p. 37).

From an “objective” point of view, places may be seen as spatially differentiated frameworks of utilisation and action potentials. They consist of locations that provide specific options for utilisation (e.g. housing, shops, schools, sports facilities, theatres, jobs). It has been suggested terming this entire framework of opportunities for utilisation and appropriation as assets which a place offers (“Standortofferten”; WEICHHART 2009). The actual utilisation of these assets depends on the actors, their specific life goals, and the resulting subjective appraisals. Assets available at a place are conceived as objectifiable attributes of a place which exist independently of the actors. By way of subjective or household-specific evaluation, some of them are converted and transformed into subjective place utility (WOLPERT 1965). The practice of residential multi-locality makes it possible to combine the subjective place utility of two or more places. Assets that enhance place attachment (e.g. an attractive work place or property) are called “critical assets”.

Apart from two or more places that are defined as action spaces through the residences available to the actors, there is still another “spatial entity” to be considered, which emerges with residential multi-locality through the regular practice of “spatial crossing” (HILTI 2009, p. 79). The “between spaces” are generated by actively multi-local persons bodily moving from one place to the other, and they are part of the actors’ lifeworld. These space-time corridors provide the opportunity for ritualised action patterns and the emergence of independent social figurations. It has been proposed to refer to these “space-bridging distances” as transition spaces (WEICHHART 2009, p. 8).

It is not only the bodies of actively multi-local actors which are moved between the available places of residence but also objects, goods and food, ideas, social and cultural practices, as well as money. In literature, these transfers are explicitly dealt with and analysed only in case of transnational movements across national borders, which applies, above all, to remittances. In studies on diaspora, bifocality, and cross-border multi-locality (see FLORES 2009; PAGE 2010), cultural remittances are discussed, which refers to the exchange of ideas, values, and social practices across lifeworlds far apart. In the author's opinion, it would make sense to generalise the term "remittances" and apply it to all types of transfer processes that take place between the different residential locations in the course of practices relating to residential multi-locality. In this case it is irrelevant whether national borders are crossed or not (see KING and SKELDON 2010).

9. Conclusion

Residential multi-locality is a multi-faceted phenomenon; among its empirically ascertainable forms, only those which are conceived as "typical" variants can be terminologically defined – more or less precisely. The overwhelming number of instances, however, constitutes transitional or in-between forms that cannot be clearly distinguished from other forms of mobility and, hence, defy exact terminology. Therefore, I have tried to point out at least the various dimensions of attributes which are necessary for the comprehensive description of this complex phenomenon.

It is not only the conditions for its development which make residential multi-locality an offspring product of second modernity (see WEICHHART, forthcoming); it is also connected with the *terminological crisis* of current social development (BECK and LAU 2004). The as-well-as approach to the terminology of this complex phenomenon corresponds with the content-related oscillation between diverse poles of life.

The practice of residential multi-locality as a whole and its manifold impacts are difficult to grasp and describe. The emotive, social, and functional processes which are implemented within the framework of such a way of life are highly complex and entwined; hence, terminology reflects them only in a very reductionist way. For both the actively and passively multi-local actors, this practice may be experienced as a gestalt-like whole, which we might label with the multi-faceted term "lifescape" (JORDAN 2008, following APPADURAI 1990).

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