



Active, passive and hybrid multilocal living practices - towards a classification

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Abstract

The accelerated pace of life, increased mobility and the individualisation of society have yielded a variety of postmodern living and housing environments. The proliferation of multilocal living practices can be understood as part of this change. Research on multilocality often focuses exclusively on those who reside in several places. The sedentary members of the same household, who remain at the primary residence and whose lives are significantly influenced by the rhythmic absence of the mobile members, are largely overlooked. Furthermore, the quantitative estimates of the extent of multilocal practices, based on official data, are currently insufficient. The aim of this study is to classify multilocal lifestyles to capture the diversity and complexity of these living practices, thereby expanding scholarly understanding of multilocality in its numerical entirety. To achieve this, a representative survey using a largely standardized questionnaire was conducted in two major city regions in Germany in the spring of 2023. The data from the study identified specific types of multilocality: active, passive, and hybrid multilocals, each exhibiting distinct characteristics. The integration of these multilocality types into the structure of multilocal households enables a classification that provides a framework for understanding how such households are organized and how they manage their mobility and residential practices. It is argued that all members of a multilocal household are significantly influenced by practises of multilocality, leading to a constant negotiation of their everyday lives.

Keywords Residential mobility · Housing practices · Multilocality · Types · Households · Members

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1 Introduction

Trends towards the individualisation and pluralisation of lifestyles, the subjectification and dissolution of boundaries in the world of work, new information and communication technologies, and growing mobility requirements constitute aspects of a currently accelerated social change that also strongly influence housing practices (Hilti, 2020). Findings from phenomenological studies indicate that the characteristic features of typical housing (permanent and in one geographical location) are increasingly being expanded to include new forms (Hannemann, 2014). Temporary housing forms are a result of people's demand for self-designed and self-responsible lifestyles and signal a change towards postmodern living and housing environments. Temporary housing means here the temporary use of one place of residence, but it also implies multilocal forms of housing characterised by the alternating use of two or more places where overnight stays are regularly made.

Multilocal housing arrangements have been the subject of research for decades (e.g., Li & Xu, 2023; Wood et al., 2015; Nadler, 2014; McIntyre, 2006). Researchers have questioned the traditional understanding of permanent housing in one fixed location and instead emphasised the diversity and dynamics of today's housing arrangements. The literature considering multilocal practices focuses primarily on the reasons for multilocal living arrangements (Hilti, 2013), the organisation of mobilities between locations (Benz, 2014), the social and economic consequences (Greinke & Hilti, 2020), the effects on social relationships (Schier, 2016), or the development of identities and emotional belonging (Nowicka, 2007) and is based almost exclusively on qualitative data. The effects of multilocal living arrangements reach far beyond the physical dimension and are still insufficiently recorded in terms of quantity. This is why the need for further studies that take account of today's multilocal lifestyles is greater than ever.

This study deviates from the literature's common focus on the mobile individual, who features prominently in the most studies on multilocality. The aim of this study is to identify and quantify different types of multilocality. Subsequently, these types could be classified into specific multilocal households that follow different characteristics. So far, there are hardly any studies that have examined the family- or other household members as closely as the multilocals themselves. This study intentions to close this research gap.

In the conceptual exploration of the topic that follows, I will first outline the state of the art concerning multilocal living arrangements. Then, I will focus on research which specifically observes multilocal households and the interconnectedness of their members. Following this, I will outline the study design and the analysis methodology which enables the classification. It is evident that multilocal living arrangements of a single household member are associated with effects on all household members, and therefore, different types of multilocality in one household develop. In addition, the diverse mobilities of these members engender specific kinds of multilocal households, which will be also classified.

2 Multilocality, household members and belonging – conceptual background

2.1 Multilocal housing practices

The development and spread of multilocal living arrangements can be understood as part of the current social transformation, which is marked by high mobility and the individualisation of society. In a German study from 2011, the proportion of multilocal households was found to be 6.3% in suburban areas and up to 25.4% in some well-connected urban neighbourhoods (Dittrich-Wesbuer & Kramer, 2014). In this study, an attempt was made to estimate the quantity of the phenomenon of multilocality on the basis of large questionnaire studies for Germany. The extrapolations from the microcensus data showed that in 2009 at least 818,000 people had multiple dwellings, i.e. around 1.2 per cent of adults in Germany. Considering the changes that have shaped society since then until today, it is likely that the actual figures are significantly higher and that multilocal living practices are extensive.

However, registration data are currently insufficient to quantify the extent of practised multilocality, sometimes called *residential multilocality*, which refers specifically to conducting the practices and tasks of daily routines in several geographic locations (Danielczyk et al., 2021). The essential characteristics of multilocal housing practices are “the interplay between mobility and stability, characterised by temporary emplacement and recurrent movement of persons, objects, ideas, and affects between residences” (Li & Xu, 2023, p. 2).

The reasons people practise a multilocal lifestyle vary, ranging from work-related motivations to partnership and family reasons (Gorman-Murray & Bissell, 2018) to leisure-related secondary residences (e.g., traveling abroad or to an allotment garden site). So far, the broad spectrum of multilocality has been addressed in many research studies, most of which are qualitative (Koroma et al., 2014; Weichhart, 2015). These studies primarily focus on family-oriented or ethnographic aspects and are conducted almost exclusively in urban areas. The approaches are based on various interdisciplinary fields of research, such as migration or transnational perspectives (Greinke & Lange, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also led to a reconfiguration of working and housing arrangements that aim to create more resilient communities (Agarwal et al., 2024). The forced shift of work processes to a digital system ended some multilocal arrangements while triggering others. In Scandinavia, increased mobility between urban and rural areas has been observed, indicating an increase in multilocal arrangements (Randall et al., 2022; Willberg et al., 2021). Moreover, being multilocal is no longer limited to highly qualified and well-paid people (e.g., from the management sector); the phenomenon has also spread to “employees of organizations from both the private and public sectors and from different age groups and varied industries (for example, business and information and communication, marketing and communication, research, and education)” (Di Marino, 2022, p. 128). All these developments indicate that the group affected by multilocal lifestyles is not only becoming more heterogeneous but is also expanding quantitatively.

While the concept of multilocality is becoming more common among a wide range of people, including those from different sectors and age groups, it is important to recognize that sustaining this lifestyle often requires significant financial resources. Owning and maintaining multiple residences can be financially burdensome, making it a lifestyle option primarily for those who are wealthy enough to afford it. This economic requirement is evident

in studies that demonstrate a link between owning a second home and an increase in local economic activity (Miletić et al., 2018). Moreover, there is a correlation between individual wealth and owning multiple properties in metropolitan areas (Chen & Wang, 2023).

However, it is worth noting that multilocal living is also seen in low-wage industries such as construction, agriculture, tourism, transport and logistics, and caregiving. Workers in these sectors frequently move between job sites. Unfortunately, these individuals are often overlooked in studies because they are not officially registered at the places where they work temporarily. Understanding these economic influences is crucial for accurately interpreting the numbers and projecting future trends in the context of multilocal living.

2.2 Members of multilocal households in scientific research

Changes in housing practices and patterns and their effects have become key topics of geographical research. In particular, phenomena like temporary forms of housing, multilocality and fluctuation are shaping spatial spheres and raising important questions about spatial and mobility planning in cities and regions. This article centres on different types of multilocal living arrangements. Multilocal residential activities relate to other people in the context of housing and to the practice of cohabitation in a community. According to Schmidt (2012, p. 11), social interactions and practices in the residential context are spatially and temporally localisable and embedded in material and networked environments. These structures are particularly complex in multilocal households.

When examining multilocal living arrangements, it is important to understand that these practices occur within a household community and affect all its members. According to a comprehensive study conducted by the OECD (2021), a household is primarily a living unit where individuals reside together in a shared dwelling, such as an apartment or house. Additionally, households also function as economic units, either requiring or providing various services. This economic activity is often intertwined with the division of labor within the household, highlighting the roles and responsibilities assigned to paid and unpaid work, particularly in relation to gender roles. Furthermore, households are also considered as potential consumers of domestic services, shedding light on the socio-economic factors that influence the demand for such services.

A study by Weiske et al. (2009) regards multilocal households as relevant subjects of investigation and describes the main differences between these socio-spatial arrangements using a typology. However, this typology is based primarily on qualitative interviews with mobile and immobile individuals from the same household. The study identifies six types of multilocal households, which differ primarily on the basis of the socio-demographic characteristics of the members and relate specifically to the actions of the mobile person at the different locations of their daily routines. The effects of the multilocal housing arrangement on the sedentary members remain largely unexplored in this study.

Scientific analyses of multilocality often refer to the new mobilities paradigm developed by Sheller and Urry (2006). This concept associates the multilocal way of life with an increase in mobility processes of all kinds. According to Kellerman (2006), the multilocal lifestyle is anchored in the relationality of mobility; that is, someone or something only moves at the expense of the immobility of others. Immobile people in fixed dwellings can, therefore, be described as necessary, supportive, and spatially stable constants that render the absences of the mobiles possible (Kramer, 2015; Urry, 2003). In her study, McNeil-

Walsh (2023) examines the visits of multilocal members of transnational families and links these to the *geographies of visiting*. The visits are related to the family members and the physical space in which they take place. Also, Miah and King (2021) argued that regular visits back home bring stability and security to family life. The knowledge and prospect of these visits facilitate coping with the separation that characterises everyday life. These findings are highly relevant when considering the effects on the various members of multilocal households, which are also often families.

In family constellations where parents live separately, mostly the children are mobile and regularly move between the parents' separate households. In Germany, over 8% of all underage children therefore can be categorised as multilocal (Schier, 2013, p. 191). The parents' everyday lives are also massively determined by the children's regular changes of location, even though they themselves do not practise a multilocal lifestyle.

Studies on transnational labour migration indicate that the physical absence of a family member forces the family to reorganise its strategies, structures and relationships (Hoang & Yeoh, 2011). The effects of one person's periodic absence on the various members of a household are mainly addressed in studies that analyse transnational mobilities. Hence, there is a lack of approaches that consider smaller-scale arrangements (with regard to both time and distance) in this respect. Moreover, these studies have a strong focus on family members as a social group in a household that is affected by the rhythmic absence of one or more member(s). But it is evident, that also friendships and other relationships "shape our sensibilities towards space and our potential actions in space" (Cronin, 2015, p. 682).

Studies conducted in various cultural contexts consistently demonstrate the significant impact of family ties on decisions related to residential mobility (Coulter et al., 2016; Mulder, 2007). He (2023) further emphasizes this point by revealing that in China, younger adults often desire independence while still prioritizing proximity to their families, whereas older adults prioritize living close to their parents. These findings underscore the ongoing influence of family networks on choices regarding residential locations. Similar trends in familial influence on residential mobility have been observed in various regions and cultures, such as the Netherlands, Sweden, southern European countries, and Japan (e.g., Hirayama & Ronald, 2007, Michielin et al., 2008, Pettersson & Malmberg, 2009).

Studies have identified various practices that people use to compensate for spatial separation and thus contribute to the continuity of the home within the organisation of everyday life and local social relationships. These include intensive farewells, ritualised telephone calls or detailed face-to-face conversations upon the person's return (Hilti, 2013; Schier, 2016). The structure and organisation of multilocal households with the roles of their members and the interconnected locations of residence can be highly complex. This paper aims to differentiate these complex structures more clearly. When researching multilocal living arrangements, it is necessary to consider those who play an important role in the relationality of multilocal practices due to their immobility and stability in the common residence.

3 Materials and methods

3.1 Research design

This article is based on work executed as part of a research project on the temporalities of housing and working and their effects on everyday practices. The data collection process took place in the German urban regions of Frankfurt am Main and Leipzig in spring 2023. The survey was distributed to residents selected through a three-part stratified random sample drawn via the residents' registration offices. This included individuals registered with sole residence, two residences, and secondary residence statuses. The standardised questionnaire was developed based on the Tailored Design Method by Dillman et al. (2015) and sent by mail, with the option of online access via QR code or link. The questionnaire was available in several languages (German, English, Turkish).

The use of the registration form as a survey method resulted in a disproportionate distribution of the addresses, which yielded an unequal selection probability of individual survey units (by stratum) within the sample. Consequently, there are potential deviations of the estimated values from the respective influencing variables in the population. A design weighting was carried out to correctly estimate the relevant population size. As the survey data is also to be used to make general statements about the underlying population, it is essential to assign standardised design weights to the target individuals (Sand & Kunz, 2020).

3.2 Sample description

A total of 1,589 people took part in the survey, which corresponds to a response rate of around 16%. At 14%, the suburban areas in the near vicinity of the metropolises had a slightly lower response rate than the major cities themselves (18%). In contrast, there was no difference in the number of participants between the city regions of Frankfurt and Leipzig. Males and females were equally distributed in the sample. This study restricted itself to the gender binary, as the percentage of non-binary people in the sample is low (>0.4%), making it difficult to calculate percentage values. The distribution of age groups in the sample reflects the real distribution in the study area (1.2 million people) very well. In the age groups up to 45 years, the percentage of women was around 3% higher than that of men. In the older age groups, the proportion of men exceeded that of women, most notably in the 55–64 age group, to which 19% of women and 26% of men belonged. Overall, 65% of respondents in our sample were employed, 19% were retirees, 10% were students and 7% were classified as others (e.g., homemakers¹, trainees, unemployed). In the research region, just over half of the sample (57%) lived in the city and 43% lived in suburban areas.

It is worth noting that the proportion of highly educated individuals in our sample (51%) is significantly higher than the national average in Germany (approximately 24%; Bocksch, 2021). Furthermore, despite an English-language option being provided for the survey, more than 97% of the participants were German-speaking, which is typical for such surveys, as the response rate from non-German-speaking individuals tends to be low (Kleiner et al., 2015).

¹ A homemaker is defined as a person who manages the household by overseeing tasks such as cleaning, cooking, caring for children, and handling other domestic responsibilities, usually without holding a job outside the home (Merriam-Webster thesaurus n.d.).

3.3 Data analysis and classification

The quantitative data analysis was performed for different question types on the survey. This article focuses specifically on multilocal living arrangements, which were specifically addressed in the questions. As previously described, population registration data cannot adequately capture the phenomenon of multilocality, and therefore, specific questions must be asked about such lifestyles. In the present study, the following question (Q1) was included: “In addition to your place of residence, are there other places (other postcodes) where you regularly stay overnight?” with two possible answers (yes/no). This article also focuses on people whose life is influenced by the absence of multilocal people within the same household. The questionnaire therefore asked the following (Q2): “Is there anyone in your household (apart from you) who regularly spends the night in other places?” There are also two possible answers here (yes/no).

Although a variety of approaches exist for classifications, there is still “no one objectively correct way to classify a set of entities” (Mai, 2010, p. 627). When classifying, it is particularly important that the classes and relationships between the classes are based on comprehensible explanations. The purpose of this classification is to contribute to an explanation-based classification theory and practice, which was already required by Mai (2010). The classification of the multilocality types is based on an enumerative classification scheme, as the four types list all possible combinations of the response options of the two questions being used (Batley, 2014).

The different types of membership in a multilocal household were surveyed using the two described questions. The combination of answer options leads to the classification of the multilocality types (Fig. 1):

- **Active multilocal:** Has an additional place of residence, but is the only one in the household who has a multilocal lifestyle (Q1: yes – Q2: no).
- **Passive multilocal:** Has no additional place of residence, but has someone or several

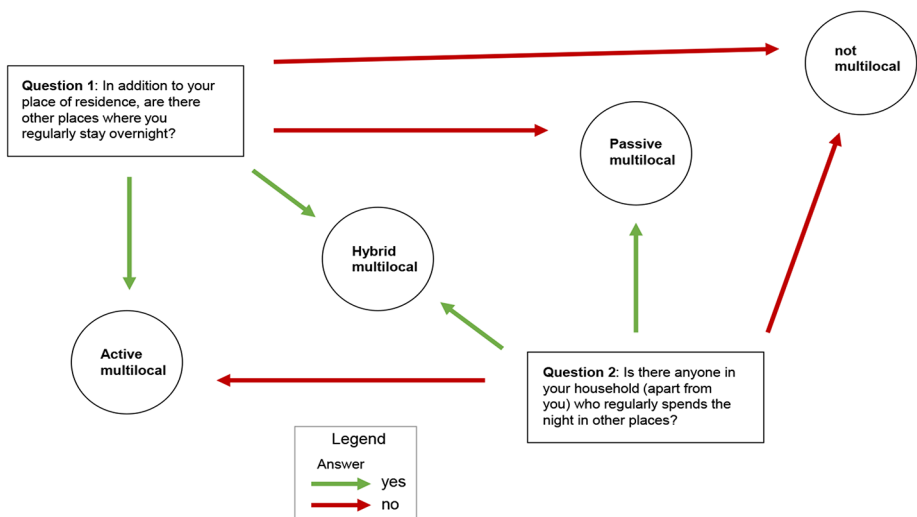


Fig. 1 Classifying multilocality types with two questions of the survey

people in the household who live multilocal (Q1: no – Q2: yes).

- **Hybrid multilocal:** Has an additional place of residence and other household members live multilocal too (Q1: yes – Q2: yes).
- **Not multilocal:** Has no additional place of residence and no one in the household has a multilocal lifestyle (Q1: no – Q2: no).

A socio-demographic description of the multilocality types is intended to a better understanding of the characteristic features. Questions relating to gender, age, legal status, household and location were used for the socio-demographic categorisation of the multilocality types. The analysis was conducted using descriptive statistical methods. The non-standardised Chi² test (χ^2) was used to test the correlation of the nominal variables. Since this test is only of limited use for comparability, Cramér's-V was used to assess the strength of the correlation of variables (Duller, 2019).

Based on the multilocality types, a classification of multilocality households is subsequently conducted. For this purpose, the answers to an open-end question are used, which was specifically intended for people who answered “yes” to the second question (Q2). It was asked the following: “Why do(es) the other person(s) in your household regularly spend the night in other places and what impact does this have on you and your everyday life?” An inductive approach was used to create a classification from the answers. A classification needs to clarify why certain attributes are used before others (Bryant, 2000, p. 61). The answers selection for the classification was based on the informative value and relevance of the statement. The classification of multi-local households is linked to a faceted classification scheme, as the answers are summarized as semantic categories and assigned to a household type with the appropriate designation (Batley, 2014).

Despite the fact that the question is part of a standardized questionnaire, the answers are open-ended and only individual participants' answers are considered for the classification. Therefore, qualitative data analysis techniques are used for the evaluation. The answers were analysed by scanning the text modules systematically and rule-based in terms of their content. The applied analysis techniques are based on the method of qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2014). With the help of the open question, a classification of multilocal households could thereby be applied.

The purpose of this study is not to directly compare different types of multilocal households, but rather to show that a standardized instrument can effectively classify household types based on the roles of specific household members in multilocal living arrangements. Previous studies have identified various forms of multilocality (e.g., Greinke, 2023; Schier et al., 2015; Stadler, 2021), but they often lack a standardized element and do not focus on the roles of different household members. This methodology highlights the complexity and variability within multilocal households, demonstrating that standardization can provide valuable insights without necessarily making direct comparisons between fundamentally different household types.

4 Results

4.1 Types of multilocality: active, passive and hybrid persons

This article closely examined the various members in multilocal households and their multilocality types. To do this, it was necessary to describe the different roles that members of such a household can assume. It became apparent that it is not only the actively multilocal persons who play a role in the consideration of multilocal living realities but also those whose lives are characterised by the presence and absence of others. In the sample, 30% of participants stated that they have another place where they regularly spend the night. The fact that 84% of these individuals limited themselves to one reason describing their multilocal living arrangement shows that the functions of the locations of multilocal living can be clearly distinguished from one another. In the sample, also 16% stated that they live in a multilocal household in which someone other than themselves has other places where regular overnight stays take place.

Based on the survey of the multilocality type, it is possible for a person to describe themselves as multilocal and also live in a household with other multilocal people (Fig. 1). This hybrid type applies to 10% of the sample. As a result, the following distribution of multilocality types emerges across the entire sample: 20% actively multilocal, 6% passively multilocal and 10% hybrid multilocal. In essence, 36% of all respondents live in a household affected by multilocality (Fig. 2). In the examined cities, 37% of households are multilocal; in suburban areas, this figure is 33%.

The socio-demographic description of the multilocality types (Table 1) contributes to a better understanding of the characteristic features. The evaluations are compared with the figures for non-multilocal households and the total sample. The results of the Chi² test and Cramér's-V show that all socio-demographic variables are significantly related to the variable of multilocality type. The statistical correlation for all variables is weak ($V < 0.3$) according to Duller (2019), but it is nevertheless significant.

In terms of gender distribution, the first thing that stands out is the high proportion of women among passively multilocal people (68%). These figures indicate that the organisation of households today still frequently follows traditional gender roles. While men tend to pursue professional responsibilities and make multilocal arrangements, when necessary, women often remain in the family household and are responsible for childcare and domestic tasks. These findings align with Walsham (2023), who has shown that gender dynamics in translocal households significantly impact the well-being and professional prospects of individuals, particularly women. The study emphasizes that women often encounter difficulties when it comes to balancing their professional obligations with caregiving responsibilities, thereby impeding their career progression. Moreover, it is noted that multilocal living arrangements are widespread and varied, and they have profound implications for household organization and gender roles. It highlights those decisions about where to live and changes in housing needs are influenced by the increasing mobility and diversity of society. This often leads to the perpetuation of traditional gender roles within households (Danielczyk et al., 2021).

Broader research on the gender care gap (Risman, 2018) explores the influence of gender roles and expectations on caregiving duties in multilocal, post-separation families. This research further supports the notion that women frequently shoulder an unequal burden of

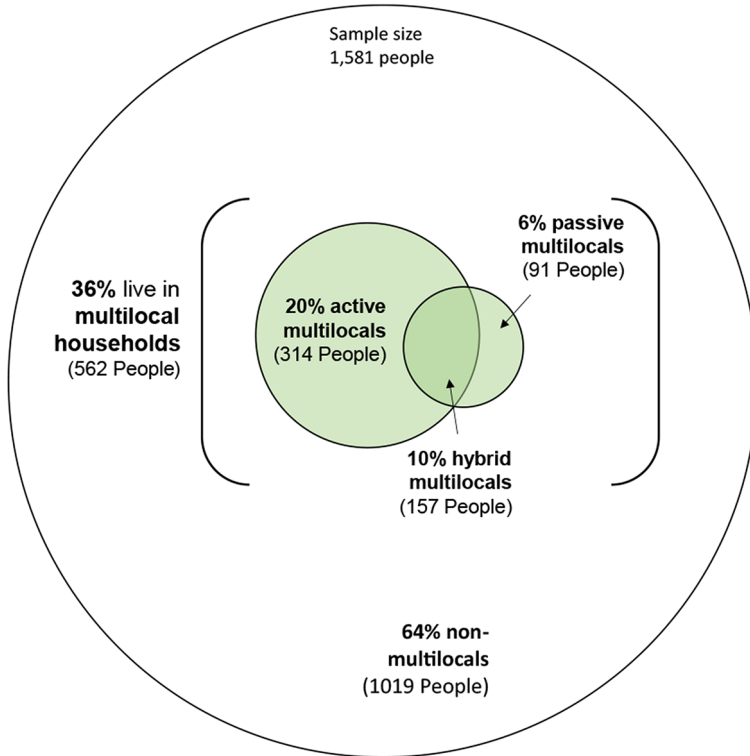


Fig. 2 Distribution of multilocality types across the entire sample. *Note* 8 missing values in statistical calculation of multilocality type (Total Responses 1,589)

unpaid care work. In Germany, the gender care gap stands at an average of 50%, reaching its peak in the 30–40 age group, where women undertake twice as much care work as men of the same age (Schäper et al., 2023). The proportion of people under 45 is over 50% among actively multilocal people and, to an even greater extent, among hybrid multilocals. This confirms the assumption that multilocal living arrangements are particularly common at a young age, perhaps due to the pursuit of education or the professional establishment phase (Hilti, 2020; Greinke, 2023). The proportion of people age 65 and more is low among both, active (15%) and passive (13%) multilocals compared to non-multilocals (28%), which may be related to the exit from the labour market at this age. The average retirement age in Germany in 2022 was 64.4 years (DRV, 2023). Among hybrid multilocals, the proportion is slightly higher (18%) and constitutes the highest proportion of people age 65 and more among the multilocality types. Reasons that could lead to a multilocal lifestyle at this phase of life include caring for parents, helping to look after grandchildren or regularly spending time e.g., in the allotment garden vacation apartment abroad.

These assumptions are confirmed by the distribution of participants' legal status. Compared to non-multilocals (4%) and the distribution across the entire sample (7%), a disproportionately high number of students are among the active (11%) and hybrid (14%) multilocals. Kramer (2020) describes students as typically multilocal, often living in shared flats where several members lead a multilocal lifestyle. Among passively multilocal people,

Table 1 Socio-demographic description of multilocality types in the sample

Variable	Characteristics	Active multilocal	Passive multilocal	Hybrid multilocal	Non-multilocal	Total sample
<i>Socio-demographic</i>						
Gender ($\chi^2=9.595$; $p=0.022$; $V=0.079$; $p=0.022$)	Female	52%	68%	57%	53%	54%
	Male	48%	32%	43%	47%	46%
Age ($\chi^2=62.487$; $p=0.000$; $V=0.115$; $p=0.000$)	65+	15%	13%	18%	28%	23%
	45–64	34%	50%	25%	34%	34%
	30–44	29%	20%	32%	26%	27%
	18–30	22%	17%	25%	12%	16%
Legal status ($\chi^2=75.688$; $p=0.000$; $V=0.127$; $p=0.000$)	Student	11%	9%	14%	4%	7%
	Employee	68%	60%	65%	59%	61%
	Retiree	16%	15%	13%	30%	25%
	Other	5%	15%	8%	7%	7%
Household ($\chi^2=174.731$; $p=0.001$, $V=0.193$; $p=0.001$)	Alone	34%	0%	0%	22%	21%
	Partner/Spouse	36%	24%	54%	42%	41%
	Family members	24%	62%	32%	33%	33%
	Other	6%	14%	14%	3%	5%
<i>Spatial factor</i>						
Regional type ($\chi^2=24.09$; $p=0.001$, $V=0.088$; $p=0.001$)	Urban	45%	36%	53%	37%	40%
	Edge of town	16%	11%	11%	18%	17%
	Suburban	39%	53%	36%	45%	43%
Total cases^{a, b}		20% (314)	6% (91)	10% (157)	64% (1,019)	100% (1,589)

Note

^a Line per cent^b 8 missing values in statistical calculation of variable multilocality types

15% belong to the “Others” category, which also includes homemakers. This could explain the disproportionately high share of this category among the passives compared to the non-multilocals (3%) or the total sample (5%).

In the composition of multilocal households with members of all types, it is evident that actively multilocal people live alone more often (34%) compared to non-multilocal people (22%). This finding is also related to the fact that this lifestyle is commonly practised before the so-called family phase. Passive multilocals, conversely, live with their family members in most cases (62%). This finding reinforces the earlier discussion on traditional gender roles and legal status within multilocal households, supporting the argument that household compositions significantly shape these gendered roles and responsibilities. Compared to non-multilocals (42%), hybrid multilocals live predominantly in two-person households with their partner or spouse (54%). It is evident that the hybrid form predominates in small households, as it is associated with the high mobility of all household members.

Spatial distribution is a factor that also classifies the phenomenon of multilocal households. It is evident that both the active multilocals (45%) and, to an even greater extent, the

hybrid multilocals (53%) live in urban areas more often than the non-multilocals (37%). Conversely, passive multilocals are significantly more likely to live in suburban areas (53%; non-multilocals, 45%). In summary, active multilocals are typically younger and tend to live in the city, often alone or with their partner. The hybrid multilocals also tend to be younger and live in the city, often in small households with a partner or in shared flats (as students). In contrast, passive multilocals are mostly female; 50% are between 45 and 65 years old; and they often reside in suburban areas. With the help of these characteristics, the structures of multilocal households, which are discussed below, can be better understood.

4.2 Classification of multilocal households

In Germany, private households are defined as people living alone and running a household, as well as communities of people living together and forming an economic unit (DESTATIS, 2023). Social change has fundamentally transformed the shape and function of households, which are no longer directly linked to family structures alone. Households are ascribed a compensatory role (Berger & Schultz, 1997), which serves to mitigate material as well as social and psychological challenges and risks. This compensatory role plays a particularly important role in multilocal households, as everyday life often tends to be marked by irregularities.

Due to the characterisation of the multilocality types it is apparent that there are different ways of living a multilocal lifestyle. The systematic representation (Fig. 3) of three classes of multilocal households, that this study's data helps to identify, is intended to illustrate the variation of multilocal lifestyles in one household. In order to describe the categories in more detail, there will be quotes (*italicised*) presented, that were collected with the help of the open response option and then were systematically analysed. The quotes are often short phrases or sentence fragments, as participants frequently respond in bullet points or brief

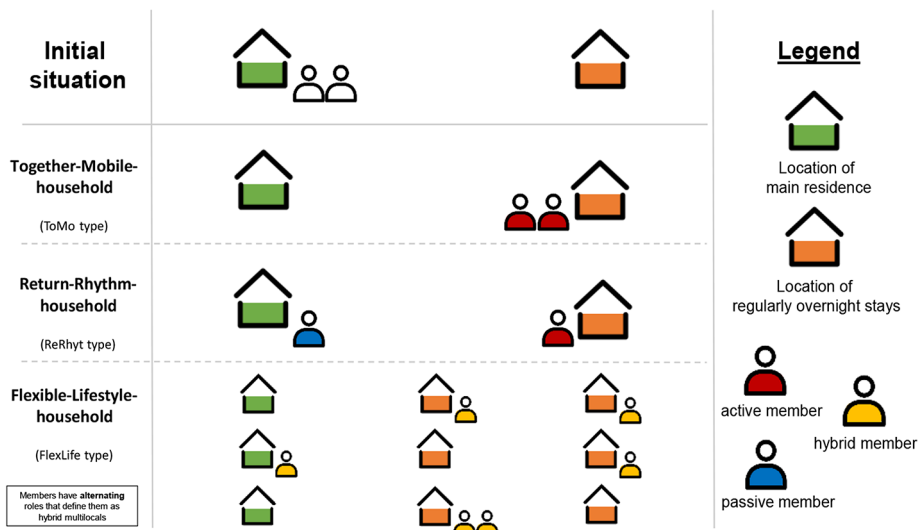


Fig. 3 Systematic classification of the types of multilocal households. *Note* Own illustration based on the evaluation of the open response option to the question “What effects does regularly overnight stays at other places by a household member have on you and your everyday life?”

sentences. There have been translated from German to English but not been shortened and were taken exactly as the participants formulated them. A two-person household is used as an example; however, the household categories can be applied on households with an infinite number of members. The initial situation shows that all members of the household are situated at the main residence and do not practice any forms of multilocality.

4.2.1 The together-mobile household (ToMo)

In the Together-Mobile household (ToMo), there are only active multilocal members, because they regularly inhabit another residential location together. Consequently, there are no passive, sedentary members whose lives are influenced by the regular presence and absence of the active, mobile members. Only in rare cases do people in a ToMo household stay behind at the location of the main residence. However, these people do not have the status of passive members, as there is no consistency in this situation.

One possible circumstance for the ToMo household is the shared use of a vacation home, usually with the family. The quotes indicate that this mutual practice of a leisure-induced multilocal living arrangement is associated with positive effects on the members of the household. This finding aligns with the results of Chen and Wang (2023) study, which suggests that leisure-induced multilocal living can have beneficial effects. According to their research, middle-aged and older individuals who own and utilize second homes for leisure purposes may experience improvements in their quality of life, enhanced social interactions, and increased emotional well-being. The feeling of getting away from everyday life (Q2) is also linked to the regularity of using this second place, as people are familiar with it and have fewer new impressions. When the reason for the multilocal arrangement of the household members was leisure-induced, none of the respondents rated the effects on themselves as negative, 70% rated the effects as positive and 30% did not mention any noticeable effects.

Q1 “Spend time together in the weekend property”

Q2 “(Holiday together) Calming, as the place brings us down – nice to have a distraction from everyday life”

Another circumstance for a ToMo household involves family matters that are managed together by all members of the household. This situation is probably more common in small households e.g., with only two members. The examples show that some families regard caring for a parent as a joint matter. Negative effects, such as a greater planning effort and more stress, are the result, even though all members are affected by this living arrangement together and at the same time (Q3).

Q3 “Taking care of my father: Husband comes with me. Everything has to be planned more thoroughly, stress [and] less free time”

Q4 “Familial reasons: The flat is often empty, because there is no one at home.”

In the ToMo household, the entire household is jointly mobile, with no passive members whose everyday lives are shaped by the presence and absence of others. It is therefore possible to describe some specific effects. Above all, this type is characterised by the alternating emptiness of the places involved in the multilocal housing arrangement, particularly when a second home is used for leisure purposes. As a result, the use of living space is extremely high compared to non-multilocal households, as there must be enough space in both locations to accommodate all members of the household. Paris (2019) examines planning processes in areas with a high number of second homes and concludes that spatial planning must adapt to this evolving landscape of housing consumption by incorporating considerations for hybrid usage, environmental sustainability, zoning regulations, and the designation of specific land-use classes for holiday homes. This approach ensures that the unique demands of multilocal households are met while promoting sustainable development and optimal land use. However, certain multilocal arrangements, such as visiting elderly parents, do not always result in a greater need for space. This is because the current living arrangements often have the capacity to accommodate these visits without any additional requirements.

4.2.2 The return-rhythm household (ReRhyt)

The Return-Rhythm household (ReRhyt) is a multilocal household in which there are active members who regularly move between the locations of their everyday lives as well as immobile, passive members who reside exclusively at the main residence. This type is present if at least one member of the household is sedentary.

The ReRhyt household often results when one or more members are actively living multilocally due to their education or employment. This type is also common among separated parents whose children are actively multilocal between households. This type also occurs when children move out to study but still return frequently to their parents' household. The effects of the rhythmic presence and absence of the active member on the other members of the household are effectively described in the quotes from the sample. The active members of a ReRhyt household require the support of the passive members; they are the spatially stable constant required for the other members' mobility.

The division of the functions of places in the multilocal living arrangement, as described by Di Masso et al. (2019), is also applicable to the everyday lives of the passive members. However, in their case there is no separation of the functions of spatially separate places but rather a temporal separation of the functions of the same place, namely the location of the main residence. As expressed in Q5, during the week, everyday life at the location of the main residence is determined by work, housekeeping and care work (executed alone) and at the weekend by shared leisure activities. This separation of everyday life and the associated temporal separation of the functions of this location is associated with a high level of cognitive and emotional work (Q9), which is facilitated by the prospect of the return of active members (Miah & King, 2021).

Passive members also develop specific connections during the phases of presence and absence of their household members, like it is described for active multilocals (Gorman-Murray & Bissell, 2018), but theirs involve the main residence: while all members of the household are present, there is an opportunity to strengthen cohesion and interpersonal connections among members. The phases of absence can mean personal freedom for the passive

members (Q6), or they may be associated with greater burdens due to a lack of support, perhaps with regard to domestic work or childcare (Q7). As Kramer (2015) describes, the transition from presence to absence requires special social and emotional organisation, which must be provided by all the actors involved in the multilocal arrangement (Q8).

Q5 “[...] Division of everyday life into work phases (during the week) and leisure phase (weekend), organisation of both households”

Q6 “Time alone, but also difficulties due to coping with everyday life alone”

Q7 “Difficult alone with the baby”

Q8 “The distance shows us our bond and we have a lot to talk about. This makes us use the time we spend together all the more intensively.”

Q9 “Children live with father [and] me in alternating model; [...] I miss them both and work more overtime in this period”

The far-reaching consequences on passive multilocals are evident from the questionnaire responses. Overall, 31% of passive multilocals rated the effects of the mobile lifestyle of their household members as negative, and only 6% rated them as positive, while 62% did not mention any evaluative effects. The ReRhyt household also involves a higher level of housing use per capita than non-multilocal households. However, this type is characterised by the fact that the other places (e.g. the second home at the place of work or the shared flat in the university city) are only used by individual people and, therefore, tend to have less floor space. Otherwise, when children move between their parents’ residences, it is essential that both parents have enough space to accommodate them, including their respective partners or other household members.

4.2.3 The flexible-lifestyle household (FlexLife)

In a Flexible-Lifestyle household, all members are hybrid multilocals. It is therefore possible that even with two people in a multilocal household, there are three spatially separate places where the everyday life of these people occur. As the number of people in such a household increase, so does the potential number of different residences that are used.

There are many circumstances that comprise this type, such as living in a shared flat. This type is associated with low consistency and a lack of everyday routines due to the flexible presence and absence of flatmates (Q11). Based on the OECD’s (2021) definition of a household, shared flats can also be classified as households. These are living arrangements where individuals co-reside and jointly manage household duties and expenses. As previously delineated, hybrid multilocals are comparatively young and, therefore, less restricted by external factors in their mobility between the places involved in their lifestyle. Compared to passive multilocals, hybrid multilocals are much more likely to rate the effects of the flexible lifestyle of their household members as positive (22%). These households often consist of few members, as the probability increases with the number of household members

that one member is not hybrid multilocal and the household is then classified as a ReRhyt household.

These observations align with the results of He's (2023) study, which suggests that younger adults often move within the county to establish independent households while staying close to their parents' house due to strong family ties. This finding resonates with the characteristics of hybrid multilocals who prioritize flexibility and recognize the positive effects of their multilocal lifestyle choice. Moreover, the idea that these households typically have few members reflects the trend of transitioning from intergenerational living arrangements to smaller, potentially more adaptable household structures among these individuals.

In our sample, 52% of hybrid multilocals lived in two-person households (Table 1). The FlexLife household is associated with an enormous organisational effort for all members (Q10). The lack of opportunity to develop a jointly organised daily routine (Q12) and the constant packing of suitcases (Q13) are emblematic of the effects of this household structure. The space used for housing increases with the number of household members.

Q10 "Organisation [and coordination] is required: days with on-site appointments in the office, packing suitcases, preparing each household for absence"

Q11 "Shared flatmates who also travel to their home to visit family, everyday life is less constant/routine as a shared flat is more of a dynamic concept"

Q12 "We don't have an everyday life!"

Q13 "There is almost always a suitcase half packed"

It can be assumed that in FlexLife households, members have a deep understanding of each other because all members live a similar lifestyle. In the data, 61% of actively multilocal people perceived their multilocal living arrangement as something they only want to do for a certain period of time. This opinion was shared by only 46% of people classified as hybrid multilocal. This suggests that the multilocal living arrangement is likely to be regarded as *normal* by members of the FlexLife household. Hybrid multilocals tend to practice the multilocal lifestyle on a permanent basis and, therefore, regard it as routine.

5 Discussion

In recent years, research on multilocal living has significantly declined compared to its peak approximately 10 years ago, even though this lifestyle remains prevalent. The aim of this study is to classify multilocalities in order to capture the diversity and complexity of multilocal living practices. It is important to note that the goal is not to directly compare these practices, but rather to recognize different types of multilocalities as distinct living situations. For instance, there is a distinction in perceiving the effects between leisure stays in a second home and stays in another location for work or education purposes. This classification is intended to document the variety of multilocal household structures, regardless of whether they fit into traditional household concepts. This nuanced approach emphasizes the importance and necessity of a standardized classification system, as it facilitates

a comprehensive understanding of the roles and dynamics within these multifaceted living arrangements.

In our sample, over 30% of households, both in urban and suburban areas, are multilocal. This indicates a substantial number of individuals whose lives are influenced by multilocality. When considering particularly the multilocal persons in the sample, 56% can be described as active, 16% as passive and 28% as hybrid multilocal. The reasons for multilocal living arrangements are diverse and are influenced by individual, work- or family-related and social factors (Gorman-Murray & Bissell, 2018). Gender differences and the presence of negative effects on the everyday lives of passive members raise questions about social support and the distribution of responsibilities in multilocal households. Based on the data, it appears that acceptance and routine increase regarding the multilocal lifestyle, as all members have similar experiences with multilocality.

The interplay between mobility and stability, as noted by Li and Xu (2023), highlights the inefficiency of space utilisation in connection with different types of multilocal households. The classification of multilocal households reveals that individuals in ToMo and FlexLife households consume a substantial amount of living space per capita. This observation raises critical sustainability concerns, particularly in terms of land use efficiency and environmental impact. Moreover, the lack of sufficient registration data on multilocal living (Danielzyk et al., 2021) complicates efforts to fully understand the scale of this issue and its broader implications. To address these issues, it is crucial to have a nuanced understanding of how different lifestyles contribute to resource consumption patterns and what implications they have for future environmental sustainability efforts. Such considerations should be integrated into future planning to ensure that the environmental impact of various living arrangements is effectively managed and mitigated. A potential solution could involve developing housing concepts near huge employers tailored to the needs of their multilocal employees. This might include creating compact or shared housing solutions that are affordable. Compact and practical dwellings could be attractive to multilocal households, providing sufficient space when everyone is present and avoiding excess space when someone is away. Further research could, therefore, address questions related to the sustainable use of living space as a resource in the context of multilocal housing arrangements.

Deeper insights into multilocal households and their members are essential for planning transportation infrastructure, particularly public transit, as the movement patterns of these households often span multiple locations. Social interactions and practices within residential contexts are not only localized in space and time but are also deeply embedded in material and networked environments (Schmidt, 2012). This implies that the timing and locations of people's interactions or daily activities are closely connected to the physical spaces they occupy and the networks—such as transportation systems—they depend on. Areas with a significant population of active or hybrid multilocal individuals could benefit from more flexible transportation options (e.g., sharing services), higher-frequency local and long-distance transit connections, or mobility support services. Recent studies have shown that proximity to transportation infrastructure, such as public bike stations and bus rapid transit stations, can have a negative impact on housing prices (Soltani et al., 2024). It is important to understand these dynamics in order to develop infrastructure that meets the specific needs of multilocal households, ensure that transportation planning eases, rather than worsens, their financial burdens.

Adapting social infrastructure in the vicinity of multilocal households, especially to meet the needs of passive multilocal individuals, could involve creating meeting places or community centres, that foster both familial and non-familial relationships. Cronin (2015) highlights, friendships and other social connections shape how people experience and interact with their surroundings, influencing their actions within those spaces. Therefore, addressing the needs of multilocal individuals requires the development of spaces that accommodate broader social networks beyond just family units. The fact that passive multilocals are significantly more often women shows how traditional gender roles are reproduced in multilocal lifestyles. Specific offerings for children, such as playgroups or mother-child classes in regions with multilocal households, foster the development of a social neighbourhood. These opportunities for networking contribute to a deeper sense of connection to the living place through social interactions, compensating for family members' absences.

It can be said, that information about multilocal households is crucial for demographic planning. Understanding household structures and the behavioural patterns of their members influences the planning of educational institutions, healthcare services, and other public facilities. Overall, research on multilocality can enhance urban and regional planning to better accommodate changing lifestyles and the needs of the population, facilitating a forward-looking design of cities and regions that meets the challenges of an increasingly mobile society.

Nevertheless, a critical examination of the study is essential for appropriately interpreting the results. Notably, the study was confined to just two city regions in Germany. To enhance the robustness of the findings, it is imperative to include additional study locations. Additionally, a substantial increase in the sample size is a possibility to enhance the statistical analysis and variety of the statements of passive multilocal people regarding their household situation. Despite the utilization of design weighting, which aimed to approximate the total population, there remains a bias within the sample. It is challenging to entirely mitigate such bias, given that individuals with a German background and higher education levels are more inclined to participate in such studies compared to those e.g., facing language barriers or possessing lower educational attainment. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that, overall, our dataset is well-suited for addressing pertinent inquiries and can yield meaningful insights into the complexity and diversity of multilocal living practices.

6 Conclusion

In this article on the effects of multilocal living practices, the research focus is not only on the mobile individuals whose everyday life centres on more than one residence. Instead, this study examines the members of a multilocal household, as they are collectively affected by the impacts of multilocality. For this purpose, a representative survey using a largely standardised questionnaire was conducted in two large urban regions in Germany in the spring of 2023.

Through the sample it is possible to identify types of multilocality and use these types to create a second classification of multilocal households. Four multilocality types were defined in this study through a Classification: Active multilocals typically move regularly between several residential locations around which their daily life is organised. Passive multilocals are in turn the sedentary members whose life is influenced by the mobilities

of the active members of the same household. Hybrid multilocals reside in a household in which other members have more than one place of residence too and therefore contribute to a highly flexible household structure. The fourth class are the non-multilocals.

Based on these multilocality types, it is evident that multilocal households are highly diverse in their organisation, and this complexity can be better understood through the use of a second classification based on the multilocality types. Three types of multilocal households were defined in this study. The ToMo household describes a circumstance in which all members actively engage in a multilocal lifestyle by simultaneously using more than one residence. This can occur for reasons related to leisure activities or familial obligations. These households report positive effects, such as relaxation and distraction from everyday life, due to the regular use of the second residence. The ReRhyt household describes households with passive members whose daily routines, social relationships, and personal involvement are significantly influenced by the presence and absence of actively multilocal household members. Reasons for such a household can include professional obligations or specific family situations. The FlexLife household describes households where the members are hybrid multilocals, and their lifestyle is characterised by high levels of flexibility and mobility. This type is particularly common in students shared flats or small households. Here, the effects are diverse and strongly depend on the individual situations of the household members. In general, research on multilocality can improve urban and regional planning to better respond to the changing lifestyles and needs of the population. This enables the future-oriented design of cities and regions to cope with the challenges of an increasingly mobile society.

This work aimed to expand the scholarly understanding of the specific members of a multilocal household. To encompass the entirety of multilocal practices, further research on this topic should specifically focus on passive multilocal individuals and refrain from defining this group as non-multilocal. This can help scholars better understand the extensive social, economic and psychological implications of the multilocal lifestyle in its entirety.

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