Multi-local living in the North: leading to a decrease of civic commitment?

Nicola Hilti
ETH Wohnforum – ETH CASE
(Centre for Research on Architecture, Society & the Built Environment)
ETH Zurich

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"Homesick man from Munich looking for a room"
“Looking for occasional flatmate”
Leben in der HafenCity: ein neues Gefühl von Stadt

In der HafenCity entstehen intensive Formen innerstädtischen Zusammenlebens: Unterschiedlichste Nutzer und Nutzungen treffen aufeinander und prägen gemeinsam einen ebenso urbanen wie pulsierenden Stadtteil, in dem trotzdem Raum für private Nachbarschaften bleibt.

Schon wegen ihrer zentralen Lage bietet die HafenCity eine historisch einmalige Chance, indem sie die Fläche der Hamburger Innenstadt um 40 % vergrößert. Allerdings stellt der neue Stadtteil viel mehr dar als nur eine räumliche Innenstadt-Verweiterung. Er wird zum Außengipfel für die Entwicklung einer neuen Urbantät, in der innovative Formen des innerstädtischen Zusammenlebens konzipiert und realisiert werden. Insofern präsentiert sich die HafenCity als Modell für die europäische Stadt des 21. Jahrhunderts.


“Parenting by webcam”
"Partner working away – I’m bored already"
Overview

- Introduction and definition
- Three conceptual premises
- Some facts and figures
- Four types of possible interrelations of multi-local living and civic commitment
- Conclusions
Multi-local living is ...

- ... a way of organizing everyday life in and between different homes.
- ... a socio-spatial strategy to locate oneself in and between different homes.
- ... a structural framework of everyday life.
Between movement and mooring
Between presence and absence
Overall context of here, there and in-between
„Multi-local living arrangements in Switzerland“

- **Project:** „Multi-local living arrangements in Switzerland – exploring mobility in the interplay between material, social and biographical conditions“ (2012 – 2014)
- **Funding:** Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF, basic research)
- **Partners:** Margrit Hugentobler and Nicola Hilti (ETH Zurich), Cédric Duchêne-Lacroix (University of Basel), Helmut Schad (Hochschule Luzern)
- **Main methods:** online survey (screening of 3246 respondents, 905 multi-locals between 15 and 74 years) and photo interviews
Study goals

- Description of the extent of the phenomenon, sociodemographic data and socio-spatial form of organisations
- Exploration of motives, practices of everyday life and subjective meanings
- Further development of theoretical and methodological concepts to enhance the understanding of multi-local living

- Differentiated description of the phenomenon
- Contribution to the discussion in scientific community and transfer into practice
Experience in multi-local living

- Currently multi-local: 28%
- Several times multi-local in the past: 7%
- One time multi-local in the past: 13%
- Not multi-local: 52%

n = 3246
Numbers of places of residence

- Two places of residence: 69%
- Three places of residence: 22%
- Four places of residence: 7%
- Five or more places of residence: 2%

n = 905
Characteristics of multi-locals

- Highly dependent on financial assets and income
- High percentage among: young people (15-29 years) and older people (60-69 years), unmarried partners or those living in a non registered partnership, students, apprentices, business owners, and retirees
- Other features of highly mobile groups: frequent business and air travel, internet use several times daily, frequent traveller train tickets, owners of several private cars as well as more frequently people without cars
- 16% of the additional residences abroad
Types of residences

% per residence, multiple answers were possible
n=889 (1), 897 (2), 279 (3)
Connections between the residents’ biographies and their home

- Most important residence
- Second most important residence
- Third most important residence

Yes
No

n = 900 (1), 900 (2), 283 (3)
Meaning of home (Heimat)

n = 905
Multiple answers were possible
Favoured future living situation

- 24% prefer to live in only one place.
- 7% would like to give up the current multi-local situation, but would live in more than one place again some time in the future.
- 7% would like to maintain the current living situation.
- 62% would like to continue living multi-locally, but would reduce the number of places of residence.

n = 912
Favoured place of burial

Have you ever given a thought to this question?

If yes: favoured place of burial?

- Most important place
- Second most important place
- Third most important place
- Another place

n = 944
Important family members nearby?

n = 901 (1), 891 (2), 279 (3)
Important friends nearby?

Most important residence: Yes 80, No 20
Second most important residence: Yes 50, No 50
Third most important residence: Yes 40, No 60

n = 901 (1), 893 (2), 280 (3)
Local support as needed?

n = 899 (1), 866 (2), 274 (3)
Four types of interrelations

- Doubling civic activities
- Starting/adding new civic activities
- Transferring civic activities
- Giving up or avoiding civic activities
Doubling civic activities

“double nesters”

employee (37), teacher (48), child (2)
- flat in Lucerne
- flat in Chur
Starting/adding new activities

- political consultant (63)
  - house in Zurich
  - chalet in Grisons

multi-functional home
Transferring civic activities

away from the family
forest manager (40)
- house in FL
- flat share in Zurich
Giving up or avoiding civic activities

around the world with music producer, 29
- parent’s house FL
- flat in L.A.
- hotel rooms ...
Conclusions

- Multi-faceted interrelations between multi-local living and civic commitment
- Civic potential of multi-locals underestimated?
- New forms of identification with places and civic commitment (no “placeless living”)
- But: also depending on other factors like personal orientation, values, life phase and situation (Petzold)
- Rigid structures vs. mobile life realities

- Need for more flexible structures to include temporarily present residents who are willing to engage in local communities
“I’m not here”
Dr. Nicola Hilti
hilti@arch.ethz.ch
ETH Zürich
ETH Wohnforum - ETH CASE
www.wohnforum.arch.ethz.ch