

LIVING APART TOGETHER OVER LONG DISTANCES – TIME-SPACE PATTERNS AND CONSEQUENCES OF A LATE-MODERN LIVING ARRANGEMENT

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With 5 tables

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Summary: In this paper people *living apart together* at a greater distance with his/her partner (long distance LATs) are investigated, using empirical evidence from Germany. Previous research did not differentiate between couples that live apart over a long distance or in close proximity. In official statistics and surveys across Europe and North America, the spatiality of LAT unions is not captured either. The present results, which are based on a random sample survey of people who recently moved to selected metropolises, reveal that distance matters in this respect: Long distance LAT unions are not only associated with specific formation and motivation contexts, but also with distinctive socio-structural characteristics compared to couples in separate households close-by. Long distance LATs are young, spatially mobile, and highly skilled, and most frequently the living arrangement is due to labour market constraints. LATs are altogether a small population segment in late-modern societies, however, they are concentrated in metropolitan regions and cities, which points to the need of contemporary population, housing and urban studies to pay attention beyond the household to the level of living arrangements in order to understand how societal change shapes urban landscapes and which role it plays in transforming urban space. To be more precise, considering long distance LATs contributes, for instance, to our understanding of the relocation/residential behaviour of highly qualified couples, tenure choice behaviour, and preferences for specific dwelling features.

Zusammenfassung: Der Beitrag widmet sich Personen, die mit ihrem Partner/ihrer Partnerin in getrennten Haushalten über große Distanzen zusammenleben. In der bisherigen Forschung über so genannte *living apart together* Partnerschaften (LATs) wird keine Unterscheidung von LATs nach der Entfernung der Wohnungen/Wohnorte der Partner unternommen. Die empirischen Ergebnisse des Beitrags, die im Wesentlichen auf einer zufallsgesteuerten Befragung von Zugezogenen in ausgewählten deutschen Großstädten beruhen, zeigen, dass *geography matters*: Fernbeziehungen und kleinräumige LAT-Beziehungen unterscheiden sich in Bezug auf Entstehungsbedingungen, Motivationen für die Lebensform und Sozialstruktur. Fernbeziehungen sind eine junge, räumlich mobile Lebensform von überwiegend Hochqualifizierten, die entscheidend durch arbeitsmarktbezogene Zwangsrestriktionen verursacht wird. LATs sind insgesamt betrachtet ein kleines Bevölkerungssegment in spätmodernen Gesellschaften. Ihre Konzentration in Metropolräumen macht jedoch deutlich, dass sich die Bevölkerungs-, Wohn- und Stadtforschung über die Haushaltsebene hinaus mit mobilen Lebensformen auseinandersetzen muss, um die gegenwärtigen Auswirkungen des gesellschaftlichen Wandels in Stadtregionen zu fassen. Es wird gezeigt, dass in wohnungsmarktgeographischen Kontexten die Berücksichtigung von Fernbeziehungen – die zumeist als Einpersonenhaushalte in Statistiken und herkömmlichen Befragungen erfasst werden – unter anderem für unser Verständnis des Wohnstandortverhaltens von hoch qualifizierten Paaren sowie von Trends der Wohneigentumsbildung und der wohnungsbezogenen Ausstattungspräferenzen von Bedeutung ist.

Keywords: LAT, multilocational living, commuting, housing, residential location, highly skilled workforce

1 Introduction

Within a wide range of socio-demographic processes, the diversity of living arrangements and household structures has risen during the last decades. The multifaceted residential ramifications of these dynamics are exemplified by a body of literature on gentrification and high-quality living of single and cohabiting young professionals in inner city areas of post-industrial cities, re-urbanisation, and cohousing. One striking component of recent so-

cial developments that has attracted surprisingly little attention of human geographers, however, is the emergence of multilocational living arrangements of couples in separate households, i.e. without a common residence. In the literature the kind of living arrangement is usually labelled as *living apart together* partnerships (LAT). Since LATs appear in statistics predominantly as one-person-households, current urban transformation processes in post-industrial cities that are associated with the growing number of small households and urban life styles of young ur-

ban professionals and members of the ‘creative class’ (see, for example, BLOTEVOGEL et al. 2008; LÜTZELER 2008; HAASE 2008) might be linked with the increase of this living arrangement. At the same time, LAT relationships reveal the limited application of the conventional definition of household as an investigation unit for social transformation (HARDILL 2002) and point to the need of contemporary population, housing and urban studies to pay attention beyond the household to the level of living arrangements.

According to most sociological and psychological publications *living apart together* is interpreted as a non-traditional partnership model and the late-modern lifestyle *per se* in connection with the rising individualisation of society (see, for example, TROST 1998). While societal modernisation processes and current structural circumstances (e.g. housing market conditions, legislation) facilitate alternative lifestyles, recent research noted (SCHNEIDER et al. 2002), however, that there are labour market constraints faced by couples that inhibit permanent unilocal living arrangements. The ongoing flexibilisation of the labour market speaks in favour of the importance of external forces for complex living arrangements that might induce, in turn, multiple implications in terms of urban housing demand and supply, urban consumption, regional and cross-border transport systems, demographic development (childbearing, postponement of marriage), and so on. It can be assumed that LAT relationships that are attributed to external restrictions involve commuting over long distance whereas the ‘autonomy-determined’ type of living arrangement is much more related to short commutes. In accordance with the predominantly socio-psychological view on LATs that neglects the spatial and temporal dimensions of the context of social action, however, a distinction between couples which live apart over long distance or in close proximity is not applied. Most often the term ‘long distance relationship’ and LAT are used synonymously (e.g. SCHMITZ-KÖSTER 1990; SCHNEIDER et al. 2002).

Due to the missing geographic perspective on LATs, there is virtually no data about long distance LAT partnerships to date (but only about LATs as a whole). How important are long distance LAT relationships in late-modern societies? What are individual, social and spatial consequences of this late-modern living arrangement? This paper attempts to diminish this research gap by investigating features, formation contexts, and mobility and housing patterns of long distance LAT partnerships. While attention will be focused on long distance LAT partnerships, the appearance of couples living apart is also

considered in a wider context. Comparison analyses of LATs with long versus short commutes between the partners’ residences will provide insights into specific characteristics of long distance LATs and will answer the question whether a differentiation of LAT relationships on the basis of commuting distance is useful for population and urban research. Thus, first, an overview of the extent and characteristics of LAT unions in Western countries in general will be given from which some conclusions can be drawn regarding the relevance of long distance LAT unions for Germany. Subsequently, empirical evidences on long distance LAT partnerships will be provided using a standardised field investigation in German cities. The paper concludes by summarising main results and by drawing out perspectives for future investigation.

2 Living apart together in Western countries

Official statistics and random sample surveys capture – if at all – LAT partnerships as a whole without providing data about the spatialities of the couples. In the case of Germany, for instance, official statistics only cover social relations within the household and thus ignore partnerships beyond households. Other large German secondary datasets (Socio-economic Panel, General Social Survey) provide information about (unmarried) people who do not share a residence with his/her partner, however, the distance between the partners’ residences (time or length) is not captured, so the partners could live, for example, in the same street or in different countries. That is why table 1 does not provide insights into long distance LAT unions in Europe and North America, but relates to all individuals who do not share residence with their partners regardless of commuting distance. It has also to be noted that the percentage shares of people in LAT unions are not directly comparable between the countries as the survey’s population is different. For instance, due to the overrepresentation of young age cohorts among LATs, differences in the population/sample composition by age will significantly affect the proportion of LATs in the sample.

Surprisingly, no larger survey could be found for the US, perhaps because the discussion about LATs has merely been initiated there (cf. ASENDORPF 2008, 8; LEVIN 2004, 228). For Eastern and Central European countries, only older data that cover social transformation processes insufficiently for a small population segment (women aged 20–39) could be found in PINNELLI et al. (2001) and are therefore not reported.

Tab. 1: Percentage share of LAT unions in selected countries

Country	Proportion (year)	Population	Source
Germany	6.3% (2006)	18 years and older	ALLBUS (own calculation)
	8.0% (2000, 2007)	18–61 years (2000); unmarried, 18 years and older (2007)	Family Survey 2000 (SCHNEIDER and RUCKDESCHEL 2003), GSOEP 2007 (unweighted data, own calculation)
	10.9% (2006)	unmarried, 18 years and older	GSOEP (weighted data, ASENDORPF 2008)
Sweden	6% (1993)	unmarried, 18–74 years	omnibus sample survey by LEVIN (2004), conducted by an opinion research institute, ca. 1,000 interviews in 1993 and 2,100 interviews in 1998
	12% (1998)		
	14% (2001)		
Norway	8% (2002)	18–74 years	Norwegian Bureau of Statistics (1,000 respondents), cited in LEVIN 2004
Great Britain	15% (2002/03)	unmarried, 16–59 years, without people who were either child of household reference person or full-time students	Office for National Statistics, omnibus survey sample (5,544 interviews) (HASKEY 2005)
France	9% (1987, 1994)	20–49 years	Omnibus survey sample (5,138 interviews in 1994) conducted by l'Institut national d'études démographiques (Ined), cited in VILLENEUVE-GOKALP 1997
Canada	8% (2001)	20 years and older	General Social Survey (MILAN and PETERS 2003)

(Source: author's compilation)

According to the General Social Survey (ALLBUS¹⁾, 6.3% of all adult persons in Germany were living as LAT in 2006 and one of nine adult persons in a stable partnership entertains a LAT relationship respectively. That corresponds to approx. 4.3 million adults living in LAT relationships at that time (cf. FEDERAL STATISTICAL OFFICE 2009, 42). The percentage of LATs was slightly higher in the Family Survey of the German Youth Institute in 2000 as well as in the Socio-economic Panel (GSOEP) in 2006. Reasons for this difference might relate to sample composition (age cohorts, education level) (cf. SCHNEIDER and RUCKDESCHEL 2003, 250). For example, the percentage of 20- to 29-year-olds is higher in the GSOEP (16.7% in 2007) than it is in the ALLBUS 2006 (14.8%).

According to the findings of SCHLEMMER (1995, 379) who observed that in the Family Survey 1994 the vast majority of LATs lived close to the partner's residence and only roughly 10–20% lived apart over long distances of 60 minutes and more, it might tentatively be estimated that at present the number of persons in long distance LAT relationships in Germany amounts to at least 430,000 to a maximum

of 1.1 million persons (if the higher percentage of LAT unions in datasets other than the ALLBUS is taken into account).

Across Western countries the proportion of LATs is highest in surveys in Sweden and Great Britain. The proportion in Norway, Canada and France is similar to German survey results. However, the 'going steady phase' might be overrepresented in the UK sample due to incorporating non-adult people. Moreover, explanations for the steep rise of the number of LATs in Sweden between 1993 and 2001 are not provided by LEVIN (2004). With regard to the sample size, it seems as if this may (partly) result from sample composition effects. To compare, the proportion of LATs unions did not rise in France between 1987 and 1994 at all, and ASENDORPF (2008, 12) reports an increase of LAT couples between 1992–2006 of less than 0.1% per year for Germany. However, Sweden has one of the highest percentage shares of one-person-households in Western Europe and North America (BUZAR et al. 2005, 418–419) so that a higher proportion of LATs compared to Germany seems logical.

Taken together, present surveys and case studies report similar characteristics of individuals in LAT unions and of people's motives for the living arrangement: LAT arrangements are most common for young, never married adults aged less than 30

¹⁾ The General Social Survey is conducted by the Institute for the Social Sciences (GESIS). GESIS is not responsible for the findings presented in this paper.

who often live with their parent(s). Furthermore, there are middle aged LATs who have experience with other living arrangements and who are often divorced. The smallest LAT group is in its 'troisième âge', retired and often widowed.

In the case of Germany, LATs involve almost only unmarried people.

Three types of reasons for living apart with the partner in separate residences are outlined: Firstly, there are LATs for whom external restrictions (education, labour market) are the major reason and, thus, the living arrangement is not a deliberate choice of the couples. In contrast, *living apart together* is, secondly, a voluntary decision in order to retain independence as for people in their middle ages or for elderly people after divorce or widowhood. Caring for children and elderly people plays a key role for a third group. Here, the living arrangement is attributed to a mixture of free choice and constraints.

Living apart together is a temporary living arrangement rather than a permanent way of life. In Germany, LAT partnerships are, compared to marriage and cohabitation, the most unstable partnership arrangements (ASENDORPF 2008, 26). VILLENEUVE-GOKALP (1997, 1063–1064) found that in France the duration of LAT relationships lasts for one to one and a half years.

3 Empirical evidence on long distance LAT partnerships in Germany

3.1 Data and methodological notes

The empirical findings stem from a random sample survey that focused on the investigation of job-related mobility. The random sample was drawn from official registers of selected German cities: Munich, Stuttgart, Dusseldorf and Berlin. In light of the main object of the study, the target population are people aged 25 to 59 who moved to the study areas within the last five years. The data were collected in 2006 through a standardised questionnaire. Of those respondents who reported living in separate residences with his/her partner, the postal code of both the respondent's and the partner's residence was recorded. With the help of the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR) the geographic distance in kilometres based on street matrices could then be determined.

Out of the net sample size (2,007 respondents, response rate: 21.5%) 349 respondents reported living currently as LAT. That corresponds to 17% of all

respondents of the net sample. Thus, the proportion of LATs among the interviewed in-movers is considerably higher than the percentage share in surveys for whole Germany (see above). This is attributed to the fact that one-person-households – and thereof LATs – are concentrated in cities. In order to differentiate long distance LAT relationships from couples living apart in close proximity, a threshold of 50 km is applied. Judged on this basis, 173 respondents live in a long distance LAT relationship and 158 respondents have short commutes of less than 50 km. In contrast to the findings of SCHLEMMER (1995) based on the Family Survey (see above), the amount of long distance LATs is higher in the sample than those of LATs with short commutes, most likely because only people who recently moved to the study areas were targeted.

Reasons for living as LAT close to the partner's residence were not captured in the context of this survey. In order to compare personal motives for long versus short distance LAT partnerships, the empirical findings will therefore be supplemented by a second dataset that stems from a recent random sample survey (in 2008) in the agglomerations of Frankfurt, Hamburg and Dresden. In this survey, residents aged 30–50 were asked about their migration biography ('migration biography sample'). Here, the number of long and short distance LATs is 134 and 169 respectively (net sample size 3,012 respondents). All other analyses are based on the dataset mentioned first ('in-movers sample').

Since the data about long distance LATs stem from a larger sample of in-movers, firstly, communalities and differences of long versus short distance LATs can be investigated and, secondly, specialities of long distance LATs can be worked out more generally by comparison analyses with in-movers who do not live as LAT. For comparison analyses multivariate methods, mainly logistic regressions and partial correlations, are applied. Socio-structural features of long distance LATs will first be analysed in comparison to in-movers who do not live in a long distance LAT union (section 3.2). Characteristics of long versus short distance LATs will then be examined in section 3.3.

3.2 Who lives as long distance LAT?

All in all, *living apart together* at a greater distance is a living arrangement of young adults in a pre-family stage. One part is studying or taking part in vocational training (19%) and lives apart from his/her partner at a greater distance mostly because of its qualification or due to occupational reasons of the

partner. If non-economically active people are not considered, long distance LATs are still remarkably young compared to other in-movers in the selected metropolises: Half of the women are 29 years and younger, men have a higher mean age of 31.5 years, only some are born before 1966. Due to the young age, entering the labour market played a prominent role for their move to the metropolises. Only then, other job-related or personal/family-related reasons are mentioned as main motive for moving. Thus, a considerable part of long distance LATs is experiencing the first stage of his/her professional career.

The overwhelming majority is not married. Although *living apart together* is infrequently linked to marriage, it can be noticed, however, that if married respondents live as LAT, they rather do so at a greater distance but almost never in close proximity. One-person-households are predominant for the living arrangement; only female long distance LATs are single parents to a noteworthy extent (about one in nine economically active women).

In the in-movers sample, educational qualification is generally high since long distance movers who constitute the main part of the sample have higher qualifications than intraregional movers or non-movers, as is known from numerous migration studies (see, for example, VAN HAM et al. 2001). However, the proportion of high professional positions is exceptionally high among male long distance LATs, three quarters of whom reported working in high professional positions. A good half of the female long distance LATs are also members of highly-employed city dwellers. Moreover, a considerable part of long distance LATs live in a partnership in which both partners work in high occupational positions and thus pursue professional jobs that usually require an academic degree. Considering economically active long distance LATs, such a professional arrangement which can be labelled as dual career couples (see RUSCONI and SOLGA 2007, *inter alia*) applies to every third women and almost half of the men; the percentage again being considerably high for men.

The importance of professional jobs is reflected in those branches in which people in long distance LAT unions work in. While for men the high proportion of those working in information technology is noticeable among in-movers (18%, $p \leq 0.05$), female long distance LATs more frequently work in research and sciences or as professional consultants as compared to other female in-movers ($p \leq 0.05$). The latter fields, which are the working domains of altogether one quarter of female long distance LATs

relate to a higher-than-average extent of interregional mobility in the sample in terms of the number of interregional moves during the past ten years (including international migration that was not captured separately in the questionnaire). Accordingly, women in long distance LAT partnerships moved residence between regions (and countries) in the past much more frequently than other women in the sample did. Despite their average young age, a quarter moved at least three times. Interestingly, their interregional moves show a much stronger correlation with high occupational positions than can be observed for other female in-movers ($r = 0.35$ versus $r = 0.18$, $p \leq 0.01$). This suggests that interregional moves for professional jobs are frequently connected with long distance LAT relationships among women.

3.3 Long versus short distance LATs – Are there differences?

By means of binary logistic regressions, differences between long versus short distance LATs in terms of the social profile, employment situation and migration behaviour will be examined now. In table 2 the odds ratios are displayed for separate regression models for men and women. Due to the small sample size, the odds ratios signify a clear higher/smaller chance in some cases, yet the regression coefficients are not significant.

Altogether, the findings disclose that the geographic distance between the residences matters. LATs are young city dwellers, whereas long distance LATs tend to be even younger than LATs with short commutes. The higher concentration of long distance LATs in the youngest birth cohorts relate to the finding that couples with separate residences close-by, particularly among men, do not appear predominantly in a pre-family stage – as the findings reveal for long distance LAT unions – but also in a post-marital stage (the odds ratio for the marital status is not significant, yet clearly smaller than 1 for men). Students/trainees excluded, every fourth man who lives close to the partner is divorced or separated from his wife compared to ten per cent among male long distance LATs. Correspondingly, starting a professional career played a less important role for their move to the metropolises.

According to previous studies, in general LATs are a non-high-income group (SCHNEIDER et al. 2002, 136; SCHNEIDER et al. 1998, 57; SCHLEMMER 1995, 375–378). Yet, results of the present study reveal that among economically active people, male

Tab. 2: Comparison of long distance LATs (Group 1) and LATs with short commutes (Group 0), odds ratios

	(all)		Men				Women		
	(all) B	(all) B	(EA) B	(EA) B	(EA) B	(EM) B	(all) B	(EA) B	(EA) B
age (years)	0,959	-	-	0,961	0,965	0,931	-	0,986	0,959
age groups ¹ (reference: 1980-76)									
1975 - 1971	-	1,266	-	-	-	-	0,523	-	-
1970 - 1966	-	0,374	-	-	-	-	0,497	-	-
1965 - 1961	-	0,892	-	-	-	-	0,480	-	-
1960 - 1956	-	0,213	-	-	-	-	0,958	-	-
child in household (yes)	-	-	-	1,663	-	2,541	-	-	1,820
divorced (yes)	-	-	0,520	-	-	-	-	-	-
employed (yes)	2,623	2,716	-	-	-	-	1,085	-	-
university degree (yes)	-	-	-	2,319	-	-	-	-	2,217
high job position (yes)	-	-	-	-	2,642	-	-	-	-
migration motive: job entry	-	-	2,809	-	-	-	-	-	-
number interreg. moves (last 10 years)	-	-	1,004	-	0,971	-	-	1,223	-
household net income (stand.)	-	-	-	-	-	1,951	-	-	-
n	151	151	113	116	115	104	180	141	139
Chi Square (df)	7.6(2)	13.2(7)	9.2(3)	7.5(3)	8.4(3)	7.9(3)	7.2(7)	5.4(2)	7.2(3)
-2 Log-Likelihood	201,6	196,1	147,5	154,6	150,7	134,8	241,2	189,2	185,9

¹⁾ Birth cohorts 1955–1951/1950–1946 are not significant, EA = only economically active people, EM = only employed (incl. self employed) people, Shaded: $p = 0.05$, dashed: $p = 0.1$

(Source: author's calculation)

long distance LATs are employed in highly skilled and well-paid jobs. Two-thirds have a monthly household net income of at least 2000 €. Hence, their income significantly exceeds that of male short distance LATs. Besides the higher qualification level of male long distance LATs, unemployment among male short distance LATs is relevant in this respect. Moreover, concerning the couple's occupational arrangement, the results indicate that male long distance LATs more frequently have partners in high occupational positions. Thus, dual career couple arrangements in which both partners pursue professional careers applies considerably more often to them (46%) than to male short distance LATs, (only) 20% of whom live with their partners as dual career couples ($p \leq 0.01$, data not shown in the regression tables).

For women, differences with regard to occupational status, income and couple's occupational arrangement are less pronounced although in a long distance relationship they also more often possess a university degree than in short distance living arrangements. Yet, the higher educational qualification is neither reflected in the occupational status nor in the net household income. This may be due to effects of occupational gender segregation in the vertical dimension. However, as in the case of men, it is again the employment situation on the level of the partnership that characterises long distance LAT women in comparison to other female LATs. In fact, they considerably more often have partners who are employed in highly-qualified positions (64% versus 50% among economically active women, $p \leq 0.05$). As a result, the percentage of dual career couples is

slightly (though not significantly) higher among them (35% versus 25%, resp.). Furthermore, comparison analyses confirm the former finding that female long distance LATs are highly mobile city dwellers.

3.4 Personal motives, formation contexts and prospects

As has been indicated by the relevance of professional jobs, moves for career entry, and the occurrence of dual career couples, to a great extent long distance LAT relationships of economically active people are determined by external labour market-related circumstances. Asked for the main reason for the living arrangement, three of five respondents name personal occupational reasons; another two-thirds report occupational reasons of the partner (multiple answers possible). Personal, partnership-related reasons such as keeping a self-determined lifestyle only play minor roles. This especially applies to male respondents who seldom report reasons other than occupational of the couple for their living arrangements (13%). To some extent, women name personal/family-related circumstances as primary motives more often than men, for instance, children, parents or local attachment of the partner (27%).

Aside from socio-structural differences, personal motives for the living arrangement vary – as expected – considerably by distance. Table 3 shows that it is mostly occupational reasons that relate to long distance LAT partnerships, whereas LATs who live close to the partner's residence mainly do so because they do not know the partner well enough or since they do not want to share residence. Taken as a whole, a minority reports external factors for separate residences close-by (no appropriate/inexpensive flat can be found,

occupation, unemployment benefit II). Personal/partnership-related factors, by contrast, are of minor importance for long distance LAT partnerships.

With regard to labour market effects on couples' living arrangements, a major constraint for women arises from fixed-term employment. Among long distance LATs, almost every third woman has a fixed-term contract, compared to one-fifth among all women in the in-movers sample and female LATs with short commutes respectively. In accordance with general gender trends in fix-term employment in Germany (GIESECKE and GROSS 2006), male long distance LATs are less frequently fixed-term employed workers (12%) than their female counterparts. It can therefore be assumed that the increase in fixed-term jobs for people entering the labour market (BUKODI et al. 2008) results in the fact that especially young women tend to 'put off' co-residence with the partner during their life course. Urban consequences of this trend become apparent by the large role that women who live alone play in gentrification processes in post-industrial cities (e.g. HAMNETT and WHITELEGG 2007; LEES 2000).

Long distance LAT couples have always been living in different towns to a great extent, thus the couples made acquaintance when both partners had already been working/studying in different towns at greater distances (see Tab. 4). Only a minority had already shared residence with the (same) partner before and now live as long distance LATs due to working requirements of at least one partner. In a considerable amount of cases it is the geographic mobility of *both* partners, particularly in starting their careers, which causes a long distance LAT relationship to evolve after having finished their university degree/vocational training and having lived together in one household or in separate residences close-by.

Tab. 3: Motives for LAT among economically active people aged 30–50 by distance (in rounded percentage)

Reasons for living arrangement (multiple answers possible)	Long distance LATs	LATs with short commutes
My occupation	64	4
Partner's occupation	63	4
We do not know each other very well.	10	39
We do not want to share residence.	12	36
My children/partner's children	13	14
Partner's education	5	–
Local housing market	–	6
Other reasons	5	11
n	130	158

Dataset: migration biography sample
(Source: author's calculation)

Tab. 4: Formation context and duration of long distance LAT relationships

Formation context	Rounded percentage share		LAT Duration in yrs., Median (SD)	
	all	economically active people	all	economically active people
We have always been living in different towns.	50	50	1.0 (1.7)	1.0 (1.8)
We had been living in the same town in separate households.	35	33	2.0 (2.4)	2.0 (2.6)
We had shared residence before.	16	17	1.5 (3.3)	2.0 (3.4)

Dataset: in-movers sample, n = 173 (all), n = 136 (economically active respondents)
(Source: author's calculation)

With regard to the duration of the living arrangement, the findings confirm the overall short-time LAT episodes found in previous studies in France and Germany. Especially couples, which have always been living in different towns, do so over a relatively short time span (see Tab. 4). In this respect, it has to be taken into account that the target population of the survey comprises only people who had moved to the study areas within the last five years (see section 4.1). Long-lasting LAT relationships might therefore be underrepresented in the sample. However, the vast majority cannot imagine practicing such a multilocational way of life over a longer period of time and evaluates the long distance relationship as a temporary living arrangement (61%). Asked for their future plans, half of the respondents wish to terminate the long distance relationship in the near future most frequently by having one partner move to the city where the other partner currently lives (here, it is significantly more often the female partner who will move). In some cases both partners are planning to move to another place, which might be interpreted as a 'place of compromise' in order to solve the couple's co-location problem since neither partner could not find an appropriate occupation near the other partner's residence.

3.5 Mobility patterns

In the context of the present survey, long distance LAT relationships are a large city phenomenon as in two thirds of the cases both partners live in a city with 100,000 inhabitants and more (the respondents surveyed in this study live in Munich, Stuttgart, Dusseldorf or Berlin). The emergence of long distance LAT relationships is embedded in the ongoing trend towards a globalisation of society and economy which is reflected in the fact that in every fifth couple one partner lives abroad. The promotion of studying

abroad within the European Union together with expatriate work in internationally operating companies will be of great importance in this respect.

Long distance LAT means indeed living apart at great distances: A quarter of the respondents commute 555 km and more; half of them commute, after all, up to 272 km (extreme values are excluded). In the overwhelming majority both partners take turns to commute (see Tab. 5). Due to the importance of alternating commuting arrangements, most frequently the respondents commute every two weeks to the partner's residence. Infrequent commutes are attributed to the distance between the residences, i.e. the greater the distance, the less frequently respondents commute.

Regardless of weekly or biweekly commuting patterns, most frequently the respondents commute to their partners on Friday evening and return Sundays. If the partner lives abroad, which involves considerable distances in most of the cases, almost all respondents take turns commuting with their partner. Most of them, then, commute once a month and less and stay at the partner's residence for a week and longer.

In sum, assuming that the partner mostly commutes Fridays and Sundays – as the respondents do – the commuting patterns of long distance LAT partnerships are characterised by alternating, biweekly commutes that are mainly concentrated at the beginning and the end of the weekend.

3.6 Residential location and housing situation

In terms of housing, living as long distance LAT means living in rental dwellings. Asked for the intention of acquiring proprietary in the next couple of years, a good half of long distance LATs answered "no" or "not certain yet". Here, it is mostly the need/wish of keeping flexibility in geographic

Tab. 5: Commuting arrangement and periodicity, rounded column and row percentage

Commuting arrangement	Share (%)	Commuting periodicity (%)			
		Weekly	Biweekly	Less often	Total
Alternating	77	23	44	33	100
Only the respondent commutes	14	70	22	9	101
Only the partner commutes	9	–	–	–	–
Total	101	30	41	29	101

Dataset: in-movers sample, n = 168
(Source: author's calculation)

terms that speaks against homeownership for them. So, becoming a homeowner is associated with being unable to accept a job at greater distance easily. LATs who live close to the partner's residence are also renters and – to a large extent – do not intend to become homeowners in the near future. However, the reasons why renting is preferred to buying are different: For them, it is not geographic mobility but rather financial concerns why homeownership is not considered ($p \leq 0.01$). The different arguments that have been put forward against homeownership relate to distinct characteristics of LATs by distance, that is to say, short distance LATs cannot afford to run into debt (even more) after divorce on the one hand and the professionals in financial, business and creative services among long distance LATs face labour market requirements for interregional/international moves on the other. For long distance LATs, the pragmatic view that pursuing two professional careers requires a high degree of spatial flexibility might also be important in this respect.

It could be assumed that particularly for young renters who recently moved to the selected cities, sharing a flat plays a role to a certain extent. This assumption applies to long distance LATs who study/take part in vocational trainings, a good half of whom probably share a flat in order to have inexpensive accommodation or for lifestyle reasons. Economically active long distance LATs, however, seldom live in shared flats (9%). The same is true for economically active LATs who live close to the partner's residence. Economically active single in-movers, by contrast, tend to share a flat more frequently (17%, $p \leq 0.1$). Therefore, it can be assumed that, regardless of commuting distance, sharing a flat is less feasible for LATs since most of the couples temporarily live together by turns.

A large body of residential mobility studies provide empirical evidence of the impact that both age and household composition have on residential behaviour (e.g. ROSSI 1980; MULDER and WAGNER 1998; WAGNER 1989). That is, young and small households

are concentrated in inner city areas since their locational behaviour is strongly determined by geographic distance and the accessibility of urban infrastructure, the workplace, and the like. In contrast, the older and the larger the household, the more the choice of residential location is determined by features of the residential environment, particularly open space amenities, which is why these households prefer residential areas in city's outskirts or in suburbs (MULDER and HOOIJMEIER 1999). Accordingly, it is not surprising that long distance LATs most frequently live in the inner city (51%) and seldom live on the edge of the city (15%). The high importance of inner city housing corresponds to their preferences for neighbourhoods with good infrastructural facilities in terms of retail stores, gastronomy, and leisure facilities. However, they are not different from other single in-movers and short distance LATs in this respect. There are no distinct housing characteristics with regard to living space per person, dwelling layout and preferences for specific dwelling layout features (spacious room, separate work/guest room, separate lavatory), and work trip distance either. Thus, the median living space of economically active long distance LATs in one-person households (52 sq. m, SD = 18.8) resembles that of mobile one-person households that has moved during the last two years in Germany, which was 54 sq. m in 2005 (FEDERAL OFFICE FOR BUILDING AND REGIONAL PLANNING 2007, 173).

As a result, the housing demand of long distance LATs is similar to that of 'normal' city dwellers in one-person-households in many respects. The broad similarities in housing conditions and preferences are mainly attributed to the prevalence of alternating non-weekly commuting patterns (see Tab. 5) that affect dwelling/accessibility preferences to a lesser extent than weekly and/or non-alternating commuting patterns do, as can be observed with regard to living space consumption and the importance of the accessibility of high speed networks (highways, long distance railway lines). Considering economically ac-

tive long distance LATs, men have a smaller living space per person if the partner does not take turns commuting (median 39 sq. m, $p \leq 0.01$). Since no differences in housing satisfaction by commuting arrangement is apparent, a small living space might be evaluated as sufficient due to the fact that less time is spent in the dwelling. Moreover, weekly commuters among women show stronger preferences for residential locations with good accessibility to motorways (controlled for age, household type, net household income, $p \leq 0.01$), probably because they tend to commute to the partner by car.

Yet, it is alternating commuting that reveals a special relevance of amenity and convenience features of the dwelling in comparison group analyses. In particular, long distance LATs in which both partners take turns commuting attach much importance to a separate kitchen, a balcony/terrace, and bright rooms. To summarise, it might be suggested that a substantial part of long distance LATs search for small rented dwellings with good amenities and convenience features in inner city areas. In large labour market centres such as Munich, further constraints in this housing market segment are to be expected.

4 Discussion and Perspectives

A distinction between LATs on the basis of commuting distance proved to be important for population and urban studies, since the different time-space patterns are not only related to specific formation and motivation contexts of the living arrangement, but also to distinct socio-structural characteristics. Against the backdrop of the debate about the impacts of creativity, innovation and human capital on urban competitiveness and economic development of cities in general, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at long distance LATs, since such living arrangements are relevant among young, spatially mobile, highly skilled workers – people who are often considered as the central motor to create the kind of ‘new’ urbanity that attracts international investors and businesses (e.g. FLORIDA 2002; MARKUSEN 2006; RANTISI 2006; BLOTEVOGEL et al. 2008).

Although LATs make up only a small population segment in late-modern societies, their concentration in metropolitan regions and cities can be considered high. Given the prevalence of alternating commuting patterns, long distance LAT unions contribute to the intertwining of cities; the use of high speed connections on weekends is one consequence thereof.

LAT arrangements result more often from labour market effects than previous literature suggests. The worldwide trend towards more flexible labour markets that affects particularly youth employment trajectories together with the emergence of transnational careers (HARDILL 2004; KREUTZER and ROTH 2006) will increase job-related constraints on the decisions made by (young) couples regarding their living arrangements and relocation behaviour. Long distance LAT relationships are not of a long-term nature and are thus self-contained solutions for spatial flexibility. Couples are searching for a common place of residence that enables both partners to pursue a professional career. Therefore it can be assumed that the concentration of highly qualified couples is growing in large cities and metropolitan agglomerations – a spatial trend that can be observed in several post-industrial societies (COSTA and KAHN 2000; JAUHIANINEN 2005; GREEN 1995). In this respect, those cities and regions will be of special relevance that provide a wide range of workplaces in order to offer highly skilled jobs for men and women alike. Hence, in the context of the competition of cities and regions, not only the percentage of highly qualified jobs has to be taken into account (e.g. FROMHOLD-EISEBITH and SCHRATTENECKER 2006), but also the diversification level of highly skilled jobs and the extent of horizontal occupational segregation.

The performance of housing markets cannot be understood without considering social transformation processes. In addition to the conventional approach of modelling housing demand and tenure choice by means of household developments, the recognition of living arrangements and their spatialities contribute, for instance, to our understanding of tenure choice behaviour, the postponement of owner-occupation, particularly of young professionals, locational behaviour and the importance of accessibilities as well as preferences for specific dwelling features. Official statistics and surveys that sufficiently detect societal changes by recognising partnerships beyond the household in the context of their spatio-temporal structures are an essential precondition in this respect.

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