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MULTILOKALNOST V EVROPI



MULTI-LOCAL LIVING IN EUROPE





## Introduction: The (In)visibility of Multi-locality in Theory and Practice

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This article maps out multi-locality as an interdisciplinary field of study and presents the state of current research on multi-locality in Slovenia, including a brief discussion of the author's own research. In this context, the author also addresses the issue of the visibility of multi-locality, both in the realm of theory as well as in the sphere of practice.

• **Keywords:** multi-locality, second homes, transnationalism, Slovenia, mobility

Avtorica v članku oriše multilokalnost kot interdisciplinarno raziskovalno področje in predstavi stanje trenutnih raziskav o multilokalnosti v Sloveniji, vključno s kratko razpravo o lastnih raziskavah. V tem kontekstu obravnava tudi vprašanja o vidnosti multilokalnosti – tako na področju teorije kakor tudi v raziskovalni praksi.

• **Ključne besede:** multilokalnost, sekundarna bivališča, transnacionalizem, Slovenija, mobilnost

### Introduction

Although mobility and migration have long been topics of research, the emergence of the “new mobilities paradigm” (Sheller, Urry, 2006) and the “mobility turn” in the social sciences and humanities (Faist, 2013; Sheller, 2017) have strongly contributed to current understandings about the extent to which mobility shapes today's world. In addition, increasing attention to diverse mobilities, mobile actors, and practices on numerous, interlocking scales has done much to call attention to how sedentarism has often been at the center of theories of culture and everyday life. This does not imply that researchers previously ignored mobile practices and actors, given the flourishing lines of inquiry dedicated to diverse forms of mobility (migration and tourism) both past and present.

Mimi Sheller and John Urry engage with this very issue when they posit that “all the world seems to be on the move” (Sheller, Urry, 2006: 207), arguing that mobility and movement are central to the world we live in and not the domain only of some. This sort of statement begs the question of whether this image of the “world on the move” is the result of a recalibrated analytical focus or of a qualitative shift in current everyday practices. In other words: are researchers finally “seeing” the significance of mobility and taking it into account in their research, or are people actually more mobile? A realistic answer – and one informed by current knowledge about paradigm shifts in communities of knowledge (Kuhn, 1970) – is that the emergence of a new paradigm

is the result of a complex interplay of evolving research sensibilities with changes in the field of practice and the everyday: the field site of ethnologists and anthropologists.

One of the results of the interplay between a broadened research awareness and shifting trends shaping everyday life is an expanding body of research dedicated to varied – and previously unexplored – mobile practices. This article and the other contributions to this thematic block aim to contribute to this body of research by examining multi-local actors whose rhythms and trajectories of mobility and residence have made them increasingly more visible to researchers. Their specific mobile practices result from the fact that they live in – and move between – more than one residence. Multi-local actors form a heterogeneous group; among them are second home owners, persons whose family members live across multiple households, and others that live in multiple homes due to their employment or own lands (often agricultural) across national borders. Their motivations, rhythms of residence, and living arrangements can vary widely. However, one unifying feature is that their everyday lives, which are distributed across – and link together – multiple residences, hinge on trajectories and rhythms of mobility. These trajectories of movement serve as evidence of their practices, which are otherwise less visible, primarily due to their intermittent physical presence at their residences.

This analytical discussion, focused on multi-local living and multi-local actors, is framed in terms of visibility and invisibility. It begins by mapping out in broad strokes the development of multi-locality as a field of study and the state of existing research on multi-locality in Slovenia, in which I also include my own experiences in studying multi-locality. The discussion also touches on the impact that the visibility and invisibility of multi-local actors – both in the realm of theory as well as the sphere of practice – has on research, an issue that all the authors of this thematic block address in diverse ways. Finally, it posits possible ways that studies of multi-locality can contribute to broader discussions within anthropology and ethnology.

### **The emergence of multi-locality as an object of research**

As an analytical term, multi-locality has evolved within the context of numerous disciplines and varied lines of inquiry, resulting in it acquiring numerous connotations and lacking a single overarching theory (Weiske et al., 2015). In effect, the concept of multi-locality has roots in anthropology. According to Peter Weichhart (2015) and others, multi-locality first appeared in research literature in the early 1970s. The anthropologists Melvin and Carol Ember used the term in their analyses of settlement patterns in traditional societies, which were primarily defined by kinship ties (matrilocal, patrilocal, etc.). They coined the term multi-local to refer to a pattern that did not accord with established options but identified an emergent pattern of “co-occurrence of any two or more fairly frequent patterns of consanguineal residence” (Ember, Ember, 1972: 382).

They argued that the use of two or more residences developed as a livelihood strategy in some societies in the face of certain challenges such as depopulation. Thus, Melvin and Carol Ember coined the term to refer to a practice that fell outside the norm: a practice that they considered an adaptation to changing circumstances.

Whereas the focus of Ember and Ember's analysis was on the number and location of residences, numerous studies that followed employed the concept of multi-locality in relation to trajectories of mobility that did not fall under conventional categories in migration studies, which traditionally centered on the (often cross-border) movement of people resulting in a definitive, often permanent, change of residence. In particular, geographers used the concept of bi-locality or multi-locality to build on the concept of circular migration within migration studies. Their aim was to capture distinctive forms of migration that did not conclude with a definitive shift in residence to a different place but involved a pattern of continual, circular movement between or among numerous places (see, e.g., Chapman, 1979; Watts, Prothero, 1981). In this fashion, the term multi-locality was employed by select migration specialists to identify and examine a set of practices that could not be accounted for by conceptual categories.

Initial research on multi-locality was piecemeal and distributed across varied lines of inquiry, each with its own analytical questions and priorities. The development of research on multi-locality was also informed by the culturally and historically specific manifestations of multi-local living that researchers encountered worldwide, resulting in numerous, albeit overlapping, approaches and insights. What researchers did have in common was the issue of trying to identify and examine social actors whose practices transcend established analytical oppositions between mobility and sedentariness, between being here or there – in order to understand how people live both here *and* there, beyond the strictly local (Duchêne-Lacroix et al., 2016). To this end, multi-locality in certain studies took on additional connotations, linked to either multi-sitedness (Kingsolver, 1996) or multi-vocality (Rodman, 1992).

Interest in and research on multi-locality significantly expanded in the face of increased attention to broad-based changes linked to diverse, overlapping processes of globalization that encourage new forms of transnational mobility and connection (Glick Schiller et al., 1995; Vertovec, 2009; Salazar, 2011; Gregorič Bon, Repič, 2016). This resulted in multi-locality's transformation from a concept meant to identify exceptions or deviations from the norm to one referring to an increasing prevalent set of practices. More recent research on multi-locality has aimed at mapping out multi-locality conceptually (Nadler, 2009; Weichhart, 2015; Schmidt-Kallert, 2016) and developing a typology of multi-local practices (Duchêne-Lacroix, 2014). The range of multi-local practices is quite broad, including job-related multi-locality (Jordan, 2008; Schneider, Meil, 2008; Thieme, 2008; Reuschke, 2012; Garde, 2021), non-cohabitating or "Living Apart Together" couples and post-separation families (Schier et al., 2015; Schier, 2016; Merla, Nobels, 2019), and second homes (Bonnin, Villanova, 1999;

Bendix, Löfgren, 2007; Rolshoven, 2007). Studies focused on developing typologies of multi-local practices also analyzed overlapping lines of inquiry into diverse forms of multi-locality, be they established practices of the past (Duchêne-Lacroix, Mäder, 2013) or practices that are analyzed within other conceptual frameworks (e.g., for second homes, see Bendix, Löfgren, 2007).

The distinctive characteristics of anthropological and ethnological research are both methodological and conceptual. Anthropological and ethnological studies that examine multi-locality are based on qualitative methods and ethnographic research, an approach that is to some degree shared with researchers of other disciplines that employ qualitative methods – primarily sociologists and geographers, as is apparent in the contributions to this thematic block. Furthermore, the lines of inquiry pursued by anthropologists and ethnologists center on their approach to multi-locality as *vita activa* (Rolshoven, 2006)<sup>1</sup> or everyday life in numerous places, examining how social actors develop strategies allowing them to “organize their everyday lives between living, working and having time off, as well as shift between moving and staying put” (Rolshoven, 2007: 19). The study of everyday lives across multiple homes serves as a lens for examining broader issues. In the case of research on second homes, for example, ethnological explorations of multi-locality strive to engage broader questions, such as understandings of home and belonging (Bendix, Löfgren, 2007).

### Research on multi-local practices in Slovenia

Studies in Slovenia that center on multi-local practices *as* multi-local are exceedingly rare, due in large part to a range of factors, most of which are theoretical or analytical in nature; others stem from Slovenia’s specific historical and cultural circumstances. The most relevant issues, however, are linked to the ways that research on mobility/migration and settlement patterns has developed within Slovenia, which in turn influenced the conceptual frameworks in terms of which multi-local patterns of living were identified and examined.

In the case of migration and mobility studies, a flourishing interdisciplinary field of research with roots that extend to the early twentieth century, researchers focused primarily on tracking existing patterns of migration of Slovenes. This was historically heavily informed by emigration, but it also involved, albeit in a much smaller proportion, daily migration, cross-border migration, and return migration, as well as more contemporary transnational migration patterns (Repič, 2006; Gregorič Bon, Repič, 2016; Lukšič Hacin, 2018). These patterns also included seasonal migration, which

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<sup>1</sup> Johanna Rolshoven’s use of the term *vita activa* is based on Hannah Arendt’s definition of the term as composed of three fundamental human activities: labor, work, and action (Arendt, 1958).

involved seasonal rhythms of mobility and residence (Drnovšek, 2005) that were multi-local in nature.

An example of a study of seasonal mobility patterns is that of Katalin Munda Hirnök (2004), which centers on the border communities along the Slovenian-Hungarian border. This is a region that has been particularly susceptible to outmigration due to its historically sparse population and the relatively poor quality of the land, which has resulted in a decrease in agriculture as a viable source of livelihood for its residents. Munda Hirnök conducted research among Porabje (Rába Valley) Slovenes on the practice of seasonal migration as a livelihood strategy, a practice that allows them to remain in their home villages instead of emigrating to industrialized centers or towns. With the aid of biographical narratives, Munda Hirnök analyzed the life stories of villagers and compiled a social history of seasonal migration for the area, shedding light on how seasonal migration became an established livelihood strategy that involved cross-border mobility and intermittent absences from home. The study involved mapping out which social actors decide to engage in seasonal migration, their experiences as seasonal migrants (where they go and for how long), how seasonal migration operates as a system (from the point of view of the migrants), and how seasonal migration affects daily life (see also Munda Hirnök, Medvešek, 2016).

In addition to studies focused on cross-border seasonal migration, some research has analyzed traditional subsistence strategies typical for the Alps that have been based on a form of seasonal multi-locality: alpine transhumance and traditional cheese production. Numerous Slovenian villages have maintained the traditional system of access to particular mountain pastures in the Alps, where villagers take their herds to pasture in the summer months and also manufacture milk products, particularly cheese. Ethnologists have focused on these practices primarily as a form of heritage – one that has, due to various reasons, been increasingly abandoned (Ledinek Lozej, 2002, 2013), which in turn has spurred changes in the alpine cultural landscape (see also, e.g., Minnich, 1998). Certain researchers, such as the anthropologist Jaka Repič (2014), have also focused on these traditional livelihood strategies as mobile and multi-local practices, shedding light on the routes and seasonal dwelling practices in the highland pastures.

In addition to a limited number of studies on migratory patterns that can be described as multi-local, research on second homes in Slovenia has received comparatively more attention – albeit through the lens of diverse conceptual approaches and frameworks. The earliest research on second homes extends back to the socialist era, the period during which owning second, vacation, or weekend homes became more prevalent. Before then, vacation homes were the domain of the wealthy or upper class, who would have had a home or villa at a popular tourist destination. The first vacation homes were built in the late nineteenth century in alpine tourist destinations such as Bled or Bohinj (Jeršič, 1968).

The first researchers that focused on the increasingly prevalent practice of second home ownership were geographers, who documented shifts in settlement practices in various regions across Slovenia – not only in the Slovenian Alps, but also at popular seaside tourist destinations. Matjaž Jeršič's study on second homes (1968) was the first systematic analysis of second or vacation homes in Slovenia, a line of inquiry further developed by numerous geographers that contributed to expanding knowledge of the evolving practice of second home ownership during socialism (e.g., Gosar, 1987b; Koderman, 2014) as well as within a broader Yugoslav context over time (Opačič, Koderman, 2018). Work in this vein has helped map out the evolving second home landscape in Slovenia, tracking the effects of increasing numbers of second homes on the spatial development of settlements, villages, and towns through different historical periods. In particular, I highlight the research conducted in protected areas in the Slovenian Alps, in Triglav National Park (Gosar, 1987a, 1989; Koderman, Salmič, 2013; Koderman, 2017), in which researchers examined the effects of second home developments on cultural landscapes and on tourism development.

In addition, comparative geographic research has also focused on the effects of second homes within the context of interlocking migration processes, including outmigration and amenity migration. Researchers examining alpine settlements in the border region between Slovenia and Austria (Steinicke et al., 2012) analyzed the effects that amenity migration processes have had on alpine settlements that have otherwise suffered significant demographic changes, due particularly to outmigration. Barbara Lampič and Irena Mrak (2012) carried out a study on persons that purchased second homes in the Pomurje (Mura Valley) region, near Slovenia's borders with Hungary and Slovenia. Their work focused on the period after Slovenia's accession to the European Union, which heralded a new era for second home ownership. The Mura Valley is a peripheral rural region marked by a strong history of both seasonal migration as well as outmigration. Lampič and Mrak studied those that split their time between their primary and secondary countries of residence. Their work focuses on foreign owners, be they amenity migrants that made a definitive move to Slovenia or those that split their time between their primary and secondary countries of residence. In their study, Lampič and Mrak employed qualitative methods (such as interviews) as well as statistical data analysis to provide a more complete picture of the experiences of foreign home owners and their impact on the local communities they moved into (from their own point of view). This dimension of their study renders their work more in line with that of ethnologists and anthropologists, whose fieldwork also seeks to convey both emic and etic perspectives.

Despite these overlaps, there is a crucial difference between the work of geographers and that of ethnologists and anthropologists. While geographers have conducted considerable research on second homes over the last decades, ethnologists and anthropologists have mostly examined second home owners if and when they became relevant to the

questions they examine in the field. My own first experiences with multi-local actors followed this very pattern, when I was conducting research on tourism development (as well as the politics of heritage management and preservation) in Bohinj (Bajuk Senčar, 2005, 2014b), a municipality that has one of the highest percentages of second homes in Slovenia. In trying to include the broadest possible range of social actors and stakeholders among my interlocutors, I came across a group of persons that comprise an ambivalent category from the perspective of tourism: they are neither tourists nor residents. Although their inconstant presence renders them less “visible” in local daily life, their presence and role in the social landscape of the Alps has strengthened markedly over the years, which manifests itself in local tourism development in diverse ways.

The distinctiveness of ethnological and anthropological research on owners of second homes in Slovenia thus far is that they are addressed within the context of micro-studies in the field that are primarily place-based. In this manner, these studies explore the potential role that the increasing, yet intermittent, presence of owners of second homes has on everyday life in the communities where they have their second homes.

The work of the ethnologist Matej Vranješ (2005, 2017), for example, has focused on what he termed the ambivalent relationship between local actors and owners of second homes in Tolmin and how it manifests itself through their differing understandings and uses of the local landscape. Tolmin is located in the western region of Slovenia’s Alps, an area that has suffered a long-term trend of outmigration. In his fine-grained ethnographic research with members of the community, Vranješ found that owners of second homes are welcomed by locals, who may sell them part of their land to make ends meet or to prevent their land from falling into disrepair, especially if there is no one in the family to maintain it. This not only extends to existing buildings (family homes, etc.) but also to land that is normally maintained and cultivated for farming or husbandry. If land is not properly maintained, the forest encroaches on it, transforming a cultivated cultural landscape into a “wild” one. Locals would bemoan such changes as forms of degradation, as the spread of what they term a “green desert” – a sign of the area’s (and the community’s) decline. The sale of property or land to people as second homes did not necessarily imply that those properties would be maintained in accordance with local standards because owners of second homes, who do not necessarily share a history with or have ties to the local community, do not necessarily experience the local landscape in the same way as locals. In addition, their motivations for purchasing a second home and maintaining a lifestyle that allows them a hiatus from their (often urban) daily life could often be understood in terms of an escape to nature that they understand and experience in their own ways. They do not necessarily share locals’ concern with the “green desert.” On their contrary, the current state of the natural landscape could tie in quite nicely with their desire for a natural escape and for privacy. The often divergent experiences and expectations of the local landscape frequently operate as a source of tension, if not misunderstandings, between locals and owners of second homes.

Research on manifestations of multi-locality in Slovenia is thus comprised of varied lines of inquiry that examine social actors or social practices that can be considered multi-local but are normally not studied through the lens of multi-locality. For example, multi-locality in terms of seasonal migration is viewed as an established livelihood or subsistence strategy that is viewed as an alternative to emigration. Second home ownership is viewed as a practice that became prevalent in the postwar period, and the bulk of research that has been conducted by geographers has involved examining second home ownership primarily from the perspective of the settlements and communities in which second homes are located – albeit in spatial terms. Ethnological and anthropological research on second home owners and second home ownership, which is less common, has primarily resulted from encounters with second home ownership in the field and its significance for the communities that researchers study. However, few ethnological and anthropological studies in Slovenia center on second home owners themselves and their multi-local ways of life (Vranješ, 2017), which may be an indirect result not only of the issues that ethnologists and anthropologists examine in the field but the theoretical and analytical concepts that they employ.

However, given the increasing prevalence of diverse forms of multi-locality, examining them *as* multi-local can offer crucial insights. To illustrate this point, I briefly discuss my own experiences with studying multi-local actors when conducting field research among the first generation of Slovene EU officials, or Eurocrats. They include persons that, once Slovenia became a member state of the European Union, decided on a career working in – or in conjunction with – the EU institutions located in Brussels (Bajuk Senčar, 2014a; see also Bajuk Senčar, Turk, 2011). The main issues that I explored during my fieldwork among EU officials were integration and mobility. My aim was to understand my interlocutors' experiences of integration into the culture and operation of the EU institutions in their own terms, as well as how they experienced and negotiated the various dimensions of their identity (national, professional, and European). One of the main challenges that I faced was unpacking the concept of integration itself, which is structured in terms of a normative binary opposition between alterity and identity (Sayad, 2004). Although the concept of integration infuses virtually all levels of EU discourse and practice, the case of Slovene EU officials is a specific case. This is in large part because their move to a city in a different country also implied a move into the network of EU institutions, which is a world unto itself – referred to as the “Brussels Bubble” or “field of Eurocacy” (Georgakakis, Powell, 2013) – that transcends the physical boundaries of the EU district in Brussels. Thus, my fieldwork, which centered on examining my interlocutors' experiences in Brussels in the context of their move to Brussels, involved mapping out and understanding both their physical and professional mobilities.

During my research, I soon realized that the stories of my interlocutors did not fit into integration's binary logic of alterity and identity. Their narratives were full of stories about experiences of “living long distance”: about living in Brussels and



working in the institutions but maintaining links with “home” in numerous ways. While I worked with concepts such as transnationality (Glick Schiller et al., 1995; Vertovec, 2009; Salazar, 2011) and simultaneity (e.g., Levitt, Glick Schiller, 2004), I realized that numerous persons that I encountered habitually moved back and forth between in Brussels and Slovenia. For some, being multi-local served as a transitional phase between living in Slovenia and making a definite shift to Brussels because settling in, making friends, and feeling at home took time. For others, it helped them maintain professional contacts and develop their expertise in case they wished to leave the EU institutions and to move back to Slovenia. Another group of interlocutors continually moved back and forth between Brussels and Slovenia because their partner or family maintained a home base in Slovenia. These diverse patterns of multi-local living as well as professional practice informed their notions of identity and belonging in varied ways. The following excerpt from one of my interviews with a mid-level Eurocrat depicts one of the possible configurations between mobility, home, and identity:

*Living in Brussels is just fine. I do not have any problems with it. I settled in quite quickly and, if someone asks me where home is, yes, home is literally where my suitcases are. It is a very relative concept for me. When I go home tonight, after work I go home to Ixelles, where I live. Of course, when I go to Ljubljana I go home to our apartment there. On the weekends, we live at our home at Bled. That is where home is for me. I do not subscribe to the concept of home that poets and writers celebrate in their work. For me it is everywhere where my suitcases are.*

Making my interlocutors’ multi-local practices part of my ethnographic research was crucial to understanding their sense of self as Slovene EU officials because their daily lives and experiences simply were not geographically or socially – or even professionally – limited to their lives in Brussels. They did not live either in Brussels or Slovenia, but in both places. Multi-local ways of living create habitual rhythms of mobility and residences across numerous locations that create what Cédric Duchêne-Lacroix (2010) describes as an archipelago. Mapping out and examining these archipelagos should also delimit our lines of inquiry, both conceptually and in terms of defining our ethnographic field.

### **Visibility and invisibility of multi-local actors and practices**

Despite the increasing prevalence of multi-local practices, there are numerous challenges that researchers face when conducting research on multi-locality, many of which are discussed by the authors of the articles in this thematic block. As in the case of

migration and mobility studies, research on multi-locality is inherently interdisciplinary, as is apparent from the brief overview of existing studies discussed in this article. On the one hand, studies conducted at diverse scales or with the aid of varied approaches provide a broader picture because findings and insights can complement each other. Yet, on the other hand, varied approaches and methods do not necessarily contribute to building up a shared and coherent conceptual framework. In addition, numerous studies of multi-local practices are examined through other, broader lines of inquiry, which may result in multi-local practices not being analyzed on their own terms or in their entirety. This in turn also affects the visibility of multi-locality beyond the research sphere.

Many of the contributors to this thematic block address the challenges to researching multi-locality, one of them being the invisibility of multi-local actors and practices, which results from the fact that mono-local residency is still the norm. This manner of thinking manifests itself, for example, in the ways that residency is regulated and recorded on the part of the state, which in turn represents a problem for researchers that work with state statistics in their studies. As Lena Greinke and Barbara Jaczewska show in their analyses, many countries do not allow for the possibility that people may be registered at more than one residence, and declarations of residency do not accurately reflect residential multi-locality in the field, thus rendering multi-local actors less visible.

Another issue centers around the fact that certain forms of multi-locality may be more visible than others: the relative locations of the homes between which people move may be a significant factor, with homes separated by national borders being more marked than those are not. The lack of visibility of multi-local actors became apparent in Slovenia during the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In Slovenia, as elsewhere, the state implemented quarantine measures limiting people's mobility to within municipal borders with rare exceptions (Odlok, 2020). Many Slovenian citizens contested such measures on principle, questioning the authority of the state in limiting trajectories of mobility that had never been regulated to such a degree before. For others, these measures were problematic because their everyday lives and livelihoods depended on their motility (e.g., Flamm, Kaufman, 2006), on their being able to move between certain locations. Debates unfolding in the public sphere centered on the meanings accorded to different forms of mobility – defined in terms of degrees of necessity – and the criteria that justified cross-border mobility (across municipal or state borders) under pandemic conditions. The state itself defined certain cases of so-called necessary mobility in the lockdown ordinances and their subsequent annexes. They included travel to and from a place of employment or source of livelihood, travel to care for vulnerable family members, and travel to carry out basic/necessary errands that are not available locally (including, e.g., access to medical services/pharmacies). In this manner, the regulation of exceptions highlighted trajectories of mobility linked to the fulfillment of habitual yet necessary tasks. During the lockdown, it become

apparent that, for a surprising number of persons, elementary dimensions of everyday life – being at home, maintaining one’s livelihood, caring for family, or pursuing university studies – involved moving between and staying at more than one residence. This was an unquestioned dimension of their lives that came to the fore if these activities involved crossing otherwise permeable borders.

The articles in this thematic block contribute to expanding the understanding of multi-local practices in Europe through a range of topics, social actors, approaches, and sites of research. In this manner, they reflect the breadth of the interdisciplinary field of study that has been discussed in this article, as they are based on studies carried out in diverse disciplines and employing quantitative and qualitative research. In addition, the authors present analyses conducted in countries of central and eastern Europe, which have been underrepresented in the current body of research on multi-locality.

Tanya Matanova’s article provides an analysis of multi-local actors that are based in Bulgaria’s capital city of Sofia but have second homes, predominantly in the nearby countryside. Matanova provides an overview of second home ownership in Bulgaria that has roots in the communist period but has become a more widespread phenomenon in recent years, also as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to providing insights into her interlocutors’ specific patterns of multi-local living, Matanova’s ethnological study of multi-local residents of Sofia focuses on central issues linked to everyday life across numerous households: notions of home, belonging, and territorial identification.

The article by Yelis Erolova and Vanya Ivanova, while also focusing on Bulgaria, provides an interesting counterpoint because it examines a different set of multi-local actors and their roles in maintaining two religious sites in rural northeast Bulgaria: the muslim sanctuary of Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke and the Church of St. Dimitar. Their historical and ethnological analysis provides an in-depth perspective on the history and heritage of each site and is structured as an analysis of the religious sites as polysemic landscapes. They examine the relationship between multi-local actors and the religious site, depicting the different roles that multi-local actors play at each site, contributing to their preservation, commercialization, or revitalization.

Lena Greinke’s work centers on a distinctive group of multi-local actors that, although quite numerous, has not been at the forefront of research on multi-locality: university students. Her quantitative analysis is based on an online survey conducted in 2020 with students from the Faculty of Architecture and Landscape Sciences at Leibniz University Hanover. Greinke’s analysis focuses on patterns of multi-locality among her respondents and the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on their multi-local living practices. In addition, she assesses the current and potential impacts of student multi-locality on urban spatial policy and planning.

The thematic block concludes with Barbara Jaczewska’s study of multi-local actors based in Poland’s Mazovia Province, where there have been few studies of multi-locality.

Her research, which portrays multi-locality as a spatial practice developed in relation to an evolving set of circumstances, combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches. With the aid of semi-structured interviews and an online survey, she analyzes her survey respondents' multi-local living arrangements, her interlocutors' motives for becoming multi-local, and their experiences with multi-local living.

These articles offer insights on a number of issues linked to multi-local living. One issue is the significance of the distinctive histories of second home ownership with roots in socialism among central and eastern European countries. Another issue concerns the role of recent events on multi-local practices – specifically, the role and legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic on various groups of multi-local actors. Finally, the authors also address issues that transcend studies of multi-locality: understandings of home and belonging, territoriality, landscape, mobility, and spatial planning. In this manner, these studies also portray how research on multi-locality can contribute to broader, interdisciplinary discussions on a range of issues central to the changes shaping our world today.

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### **Uvod: (ne)vidnost multilokalnosti v teoriji in praksi**

Avtorica v kontekstu vse večjega zavedanja raziskovalcev o pomenu mobilnosti kot značilnosti sodobnega vsakdanjega življenja oriše multilokalnost kot interdisciplinarno raziskovalno področje. Zaradi rastoče ozaveščenosti in številnih širših procesov, kot sta fleksibilizacija dela in globalizacija, vse več ljudi postaja multilokalnih, kar pomeni, da živijo v več kot enem kraju in se gibljejo med njimi. Struktura analitične razprave je dvojna, teoretična in metodološka: na eni strani oriše razvijajoče se področje raziskovanja multilokalnosti, na drugi pa obravnava izzive raziskav multilokalnosti in multilokalnih akterjev na terenu.

Multilokalnost predstavlja kot interdisciplinarno raziskovalno področje, ki se je razvilo v številnih disciplinah in različnih raziskovalnih usmeritvah, zaradi česar ima koncept številne konotacije in nima enotne krovne teorije. Avtorica koreninam multilokalnosti sledi od prvih rab izraza v antropologiji, nato pa so ga prevzeli geografi in drugi strokovnjaki s področja migracij, da bi z njim označili značilne oblike mobilnosti in gibanja, ki ne sodijo v konvencionalne migracijske vzorce in analitične kategorije. Slednje vključujejo dokončne (in pogosto enosmerne) spremembe prebivališča. Poznejše raziskave temeljijo na konceptih, kakršna sta transnacionalizem in sočasnost/simultanost.

V nadaljevanju je predstavljeno stanje raziskav multilokalnih praks v Sloveniji, kjer se multilokalnost kot koncept redko uporablja, vendar so multilokalne prakse in akterji predmet preučevanja v sorodnih raziskovalnih smereh, zlasti na področju migracij in v raziskavah mobilnosti ter v raziskavah, ki se dotikajo sekundarnih bivališč oz. vikendov. Predstavitev trenutnih raziskav o multilokalnih praksah v Sloveniji vključuje raziskave iz številnih ved, vendar podrobneje obravnava tiste, ki so bile opravljene v etnologiji in antropologiji. Avtorica članek sklene z razpravo o izzivih raziskovanja multilokalnosti, ki jih povezuje z vidnostjo in nevidnostjo multilokalnih akterjev in praks, tako na področju teorije kot raziskovalne prakse.



## Home(s), Mobility Patterns, and Identifications of Multi-local Sofia Residents

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This study focuses on Bulgarians who, due to factors such as work flexibilization and the COVID-19 pandemic, live in two (or more) places, exploring how their lifestyle notions and cultural interests shape the way they manage their social worlds and everyday lives. The aim of the research is to identify the respondents' characteristic patterns of dwelling, perceptions of home(s), and the relationship between these and their local and other territorial identifications.

▪ **Keywords:** notions of home, multi-locality, local identification, European identity, social ties, Bulgaria

Raziskava obravnava Bolgare, ki zaradi dejavnikov, kot sta fleksibilizacija dela in pandemija covid-19, živijo v dveh (ali več) krajih, ter razkriva, kako njihov življenjski slog in kulturni interesi oblikujejo upravljanje njihovih družbenih svetov in vsakdanjega življenja. Analiza opredeljuje značilne vzorce bivanja sogovornikov, njihovo dožemanje doma (domov) ter razmerje med njimi in njihovimi lokalnimi in drugimi teritorialnimi identifikacijami.

▪ **Ključne besede:** pomen doma, multilokalnost, lokalna identifikacija, evropska identiteta, družbene vezi, Bolgarija

### Introduction

Intensive rural-urban migration began in Bulgaria during the Socialist period (1944–1989), when villages near cities were populated with people who commuted to work in industry or other urban professional spheres. Urban-rural migration also occurred during those years and became particularly intensive in the 1970s and 1980s, when many urbanized villagers (often those of retirement age) built country houses (in Bulgarian: *vila*) to preserve their contact with nature or grow their own vegetables and fruits. They would spend weekends and holidays in these country houses, i.e., their second homes in their villages of origin or other houses near their urban homes (see Bokova, 2009: 11; Krasteva-Blagoeva, 2009: 25–26).

Later, from 2000 onwards, there was again a growing number of Bulgarians migrating or moving to villages (see website of National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria<sup>1</sup>). This trend was largely influenced by the containment measures imposed in Bulgaria due to the COVID-19 pandemic that began in the spring of 2020 (Pileva, Markov, 2021: 547; Gavrilov, 2022: 143). Many people bought properties in villages in order to spend

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nsi.bg/en> (accessed 15.2.2023).

weekends, holidays, and times of crisis there. Others resettled for the lockdown periods in their previously acquired country homes, commuting to the city for shopping, health services, work, etc.

The focus of this study is on Bulgarians who usually live in two (or more) places in accordance with their lifestyle notions and cultural interests. It explores respondents' perceptions of their primary and secondary homes, their movement patterns (including mobility restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic), the ways they maintain their social ties when living multi-locally, and their self-identification in local, European, or other territorial terms.

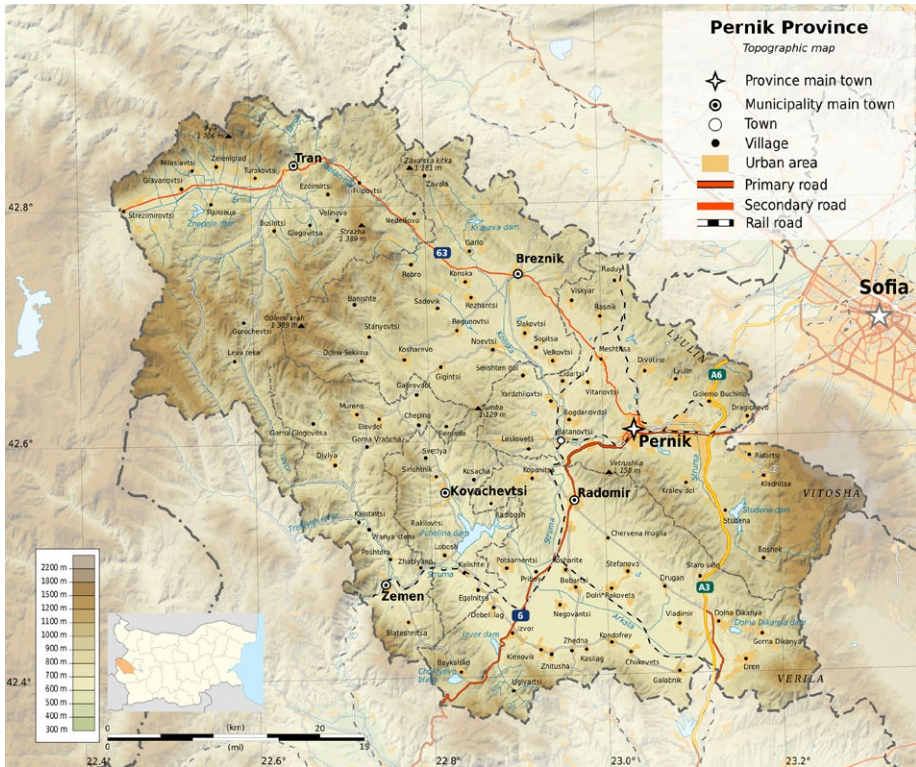
The following study is an attempt to fill some of the research gaps in Bulgarian studies on the topic. The conception and meaning of house and home are rarely the focus of humanities and social science research in Bulgaria (Azarova, 2012; Bachvarova, 2012; Daynov, 2012; Popova, 2012, etc.). Studies on second homes and multiple dwellings are likewise not a very common subject (see Bokova, 2009; Krasteva-Blagoeva, 2009, 2012; Periklieva, 2022; Pileva, 2022; Pileva et al., 2023). By contrast, international literature on the home goes back a long way, offering important insights from various countries in the world regarding the origin and nature of second homes, their development, meaning, the patterns of living in and movement to them, the experience sought by their owners and others, etc. (see Wolfe, 1966; Coppock, 1977; Godbey, Bevins, 1987; Perkins, Thorns, 2001, 2006; Williams, McIntyre, 2001; Leonard et al., 2004; Müller, 2007; Duchêne-Lacroix, Maeder, 2013; Samanani, Lenhard, 2023; etc.).

### **Methodology and theoretical framework**

The empirical data was gathered between February and March 2023. Semi-structured interviews with 10 multi-locals were conducted during this period. Most of the in-person interviews took place in one of the respondents' homes. Other respondents were interviewed online via Zoom meetings or responded to the researcher's questions asynchronously in a Viber chat. The collected data were reviewed through content analysis and enriched with quantitative information acquired from the framework of National Censuses or other national representative surveys. In all, two men and eight women of Bulgarian ethnic origin in the age range of 38–65 years were interviewed. Two of the respondents are of retirement age, so they do not have to commute to work. The others are of working age and have jobs in the capital. Two respondents are divorced and eight are married. All of them have children (of kindergarten, school, or student age), and two of them also have grandchildren who travel with them or visit their parents' homes.<sup>2</sup> The respondents

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<sup>2</sup> In the cases of the divorced respondents, the secondary homes, visited also by their children and grandchildren, are not property of their ex-husbands.



Map 1: Topographic map of the Pernik Province, Bulgaria. Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bulgaria\\_Pernik\\_Province\\_topographic\\_map.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bulgaria_Pernik_Province_topographic_map.svg) (author: Ikonart, created: 29.8.2014; license: CC BY-SA 4.0)

of working age that have their workplace in Sofia could be categorized as belonging to the urban middle class. Recently, even more so after the COVID-19 pandemic, second homes – particularly the purchase of second homes – became economically unattainable for them and other average people due to increasing prices of housing and building materials compared to wages. People very often prefer to renovate their grandparents' countryside properties and use them as a country house. Thus, all interviewees, except for two respondents, have inherited their second homes; as a result, they did not have to spend much money on construction but just on refurbishing their houses. Their primary homes are in Sofia, and their second residences – except in the case of one family and a person who is now single (divorced) – are situated in villages or small cities in the region of Pernik (Zemen, Vranja Stena, Gabrov Dol, Odranitsa).<sup>3</sup> The Pernik province is situated southwest of the Sofia province. Both regions are part of Western Bulgaria.

Houses as physical structures are essential for human existence, providing protection and security. The notion of home “emphasizes the subjective sense of being rooted

<sup>3</sup> The village of Odranitsa is not marked on the map.

within the world” (Samanani, Lenhard, 2023: 2). Homes are “spatial anchor points of the life world” (Weichhart, 2009: 5) to which people can return and where they can carry on domestic activities free and undisturbed by the public climate. They are “key places of experience and identity” (Shurmer-Smith, Hannam, 1994: 32) where people can interact with family, friends, and relatives. They are also places – relatives’ and other people’s homes – where social and territorial attachments are developed as a consequence of regular visits.<sup>4</sup> In those cases, as well as among families possessing, visiting, or residing in two or more places, we observe a multi-local way of life in which the single places become “islands of an archipelago” (Duchêne-Lacroix, 2011).

The Bulgarian word for home, *dom*, is of Indo-European origin and has similar meanings in other languages. Depending on the historical time and the Bulgarian context, it can refer to a fireside, “house, shelter, accommodation, home, building, household, kin, homeland” (Daynov, 2012). In English, home can also mean “bricks and mortar, kinship, tradition, contentment, regional loyalty, duty, community, nationalism, return, aspiration” (Shurmer-Smith, Hannam, 1994: 30). Home is a space for the co-existence of family members and relatives who may belong to one, two or three generations, who have the right to possess it and the responsibility to manage it in accordance with their modern preferences and social rights (Popova, 2012).

Historically, until the beginning of the Socialist regime, for most Bulgarians, home meant a dwelling in a village (Nonchev, 2021).<sup>5</sup> These homes were often built by the owner or with the help of relatives and friends. They were places where people felt safe, comfortable, and able to express their individual identities. In the 1950s, however, more than half of the rural population was forced to move to cities and to live there in sheds, hostels, communal apartments, and apartment buildings. This led to a blurring of the idea of home as a house constructed by kinfolk or a neighborhood community (Daynov, 2012). In response, in the 1970s and even as late as the 1990s, some Bulgarians began to build country houses (ibid.) in extra-urban areas or in villages close to cities. Others returned to villages in the 1990s in order to establish private individual farms (Shishmanova, 2014: 93) after the passage of the Ownership and Use of Farmland Act of 1991, a phenomenon described as the “so-called ‘optimistic mythology’”<sup>6</sup> (Kozhuharova-Zhivkova, 1996: 19–21; Periklieva, 2022: 91).

<sup>4</sup> Attachment to a place is a multidimensional concept related to the individual, “a strong, long-lasting affective and identity bond that people develop in relation to a specific place” (Bernardo, Palma-Oliveira, 2013 in Sarman, Czarniecki, 2020: 211). It includes “bonds between people and place based on affection (emotion, feeling), cognition (thought, knowledge, belief), and practice (action, behaviour)” (Gustafson, 2006: 19).

<sup>5</sup> Statistical data show that in 1920, 80 % of the Bulgarian population lived in villages. A century later, in 2021, there were 1,838,441 such dwellers or 27 % of a total Bulgarian population of 6,838,937. [https://infostat.nsi.bg/infostat/pages/reports/result.jsf?x\\_2=1868](https://infostat.nsi.bg/infostat/pages/reports/result.jsf?x_2=1868) (accessed 15.2.2023)

<sup>6</sup> Here, “optimistic mythology” is defined as the assumed massive urban-rural migration in Bulgaria of people who, after the abolition of state-cooperative ownership in agriculture, chose to return to live in the village. Even in the 1990s there had been evidence of an increasing urban-rural migration, shortly after which most people returned to the city in search of a better and easier sustenance (see Kozhuharova-Zhivkova, 1996: 48–49).

The owners of second homes can be divided into two groups regarding the cultivation of gardens. The first group includes (the above-mentioned) first – or second – generation rural-urban migrants who used to live in villages before the collectivization of agriculture and intensified industrialization in the 1950s (Kalinova, Baeva, 2002: 105). They are now renovating or building new homes on their inherited or acquired land. These individuals are typically of pre-retirement or retirement age and miss life in the village. They may cultivate farmland to reconnect with nature or earn money from agricultural production. The second group – to which most of the respondents belong – has increased in the last 10-13 years.<sup>7</sup> It includes people who grew up in the city and had some (or no) experience of living in a village (most often during their childhood), who now prefer living in a natural eco-friendly environment and have chosen to build or renovate a home in a rural area. These individuals are typically working-age people (young families without children or with small children): IT specialists, designers, authors, translators, online teachers, owners of small family businesses, or other people who can work from home. They may be interested in an eco-friendly lifestyle or simply enjoy the beauty and calmness of nature. Regardless of the group they belong to, these individuals try to create a comfortable life in both their primary and secondary homes. Significant in this regard for the developing of a sense of home are also material objects – especially kitchen and other furniture, domestic appliances, knickknacks, etc. – that are often present and used in both homes. Thus, in some cases, the second home may become not just a secondary or additional dwelling but a summer version of the primary home.

Following the definition of other researchers, the ‘home’ is seen in the present study as a set of everyday practices and daily routines with social interaction (Samanani, Lenhard, 2023: 9). Homes are “the major site of family social relations and kinship interaction, a place to carry out the everyday routines of family life” (Werner, 1988; Goldscheider, Waite, 1991; Winstanley, 2001), as a place where interpersonal relationships are developed and maintained. In this regard, a ‘primary’ home is “the house or apartment in which household members reside for much of the time in the course of their daily lives, largely dictated by employment and family commitments” (Perkins, Thorns, 2006: 67). The ‘second home’ is a property (such as a house, cottage, cabin, or condominium) that is located in a rural or extra-urban setting and is used more or less sporadically by a household for recreation or other activities which may sometimes include work and employment (Coppock, 1977: 3; Perkins, Thorns, 2006: 68; Lewicka, 2011). In this context, multi-local living is defined as “the practice of living in several habitual places at least once a year” (Duchêne-Lacroix, 2014).

The sense of belonging through identification plays an important role in how a person perceives a property as a home. According to Weichhart (1990), humans have a natural need to identify themselves in a spatial way, and this identification provides

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<sup>7</sup> See Mitev, 2019; Slavova, 2019: 41.

continuity and safety. As territorial beings (Soja, 1971: 19–20), people need to feel connected to a place and often refer to houses, gardens, and neighborhoods as ‘home’. However, these places are not perceived as fixed constructions but as constantly changing mental states, reflecting the experiences of everyday life of the people who live there. Ina-Maria Greverus refers to people’s natural need to live in a space and to identify with a given territory. She argues that this is how humans construct their “human territoriality” (Greverus, 1972).

People construct their territorial identity on the basis of interpersonal relations, a sense of belonging to and social acceptance by the local community, and the adoption of cultural norms and behavior patterns. These community cultural practices, which are shared perceptions of how people routinely behave in a culture (Frese, 2015: 1327), construct a kind of open system designed by the experiences and the everyday life of people (Roemhild, 1998: 17). This system plays a central role in maintaining and strengthening personal self-images. People identify culturally and socially at different levels. Celebrations of holidays provide opportunities for social identifications in the framework of the family or the neighborhood and are (more or less) local in character. Regional identification is observed when people use a specific regional dialect to communicate or observe regional holiday traditions (rituals, cuisine, etc.). Regarding national identity – in cases, for example, of international sporting events – people compete as representatives of their nation and are carriers of national identity. Due to the ability to feel connected with others on the local, regional, national, and international (European, cosmopolitan) levels, people construct (and deconstruct) identifications at different levels through their feelings of belonging to local communities, nation-states, etc., leading in some cases to a multi-level territorial identification (see Berg, 2017: 23–24).<sup>8</sup>

In the context of multi-local living, people may identify with more than one place, more than one home, regardless of the distance between them. Lawler (1992) indicates two possibilities regarding the strength of identification with different places. The first possibility is that identification will be “strongest towards the lowest, or closest, level – for example, one’s home town, gradually weakening with distance” (Berg, 2017: 25). The second possibility is that the strength of identification depends on which levels “possess the resources and power to provide for a citizen’s wellbeing. Thus, individuals are expected to feel most strongly attached to a higher level, such as a state, if it is responsible for their wellbeing” (Berg, 2017: 25). The sociologist Heiner Treinen points out the emotional aspect of place-relatedness (*Ortsbezogenheit*), arguing that this feeling is determined by and closely connected with the established social relationships in that local community (relatives, friends, acquaintances) (Treinen, 1965: 69).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> In this regard, it is possible for a person to feel unattached, to feel that they belong to a local community, a state, to the European community, or to have a feeling of belonging to all levels equally.

<sup>9</sup> Despite an abundance of relevant literature on the topic within the fields of ethnology and anthropology, the concepts of the above cited geographical authors are chosen as they best express the author’s perspective.



Social networks provide channels for the dissemination of messages, ideas, resources, knowledge, and information (Crossley et al., 2015: 3). In the time of modern high technology, personal (but also group) social networks with whom one communicates include persons contacted face-to-face in everyday life (at home, at work, in the place of residence), by telephone, or, increasingly, via online interaction channels such as Facebook, Viber, Google, and WhatsApp. The respondents' social networks are relevant to the purpose of this research insofar as they can influence one's perceptions of home, sense of belonging, and attachment to a given place.

### **Home(s), patterns of movement, identification(s)**

Most of the respondents in this study define home in social terms, as a place where family members can balance their lives and feel togetherness:

*I can't easily say where my home is. I love Sofia because I grew up there, went to school, have worked and lived there for many years. Now I live here. I think I feel at home in both places; but, when I settle down in one place, I soon miss the other and feel like I should go back there again. Currently, though, I think I feel at ease here because my ailing daughter feels very well here, and that makes me content, too. (Matanova, 2023h)*

*My hometown of Breznik is my home because I grew up there, my parents are there, and the house where I lived during childhood is there. It's one thing to live somewhere where you could be asked to leave at any moment. When I'm in Breznik, I feel like I'm home. In Sofia, I feel lonelier because I don't have any relatives there. They're far away, and I can't react immediately in an emergency situation. (Matanova, 2023c)*

*I experience it as a home because my closest people are there. (Matanova, 2023d)*

*My home is where my family is. (Matanova, 2023f)*

*I think of it as my husband's parents' house. We have the second floor of the house there. In Sofia, I definitely don't have a place to identify with as we don't own property there. (Matanova, 2023b, female)*

One respondent's definition of home as a place where she could be herself corresponds to the statement that "remoteness and immersion in nature promotes a sense

of escape from these modern systems and restores feelings of self-reliance and control over one's own schedule" (Williams, Patten, 2006: 37): *"My home is the house in Vranja Stena, where I can relax and 'recharge my batteries' so that I can go back to Sofia, where at times I feel totally exhausted"* (Matanova, 2023e).

The definition of a home as primary or secondary is sometimes determined by the respondents' social engagements, responsibilities, and plans:

*We try to spend more time in Viden village so that we can be close to my mother and father. [...] We feel good there, and that is where we feel most at ease. We relax there.* (Matanova, 2023b, male)

*It's a very difficult question. We've decided to live primarily in Sofia during the next ten years until our children graduate from school.* (Matanova, 2023g)

*Now that I am retired, my primary home is in the village. In previous years, I had to go back to Sofia at the beginning of the school year. I had a lot of work as an associate professor at the university and had to stay in Sofia. After my professional commitments were reduced, I started spending more time in the village and only drove to Sofia on the days when I had lectures.* (Matanova, 2023a)

In other cases, the most relevant feature for the personal definition of home is the feeling of comfort:

*My home in Viden is the 'mothership'. We feel best there, even though my parents live on the first floor and sometimes it's more difficult.* (Matanova, 2023b, male)

*When I return to the house in Gabrov Dol, I do many more things because it's calmer there and more isolated. [...] And when people come over it's a holiday, wonderful. In Sofia it's more stressful, and in the village it's a pleasure.* (Matanova, 2023a)

*The house in Odranitsa village is my second home, a hundred percent. I like to decorate, and I like that I can design the apartment one way, and the village house another way, so that I appreciate both. In Odranitsa, my challenge is to make the old look cool.* (Matanova, 2023g)

According to Perkins and Thorns (2006), some people very clearly distinguish between their primary and second homes. They spend a great deal of time in their primary



home and prefer, when possible, to go to their isolated second home for the weekend or for longer periods in the summer: *“My place is here in the village of Vranya Stena, not in Sofia. My home is the house in the hills of the village. I think that is because there are no people there and it is very quiet”* (Matanova, 2023e).

The evident motive in this case is the feeling of ‘mental cleansing’ provided by an escape to the alternative place (Williams, Patten, 2006: 36), the notion of a simpler life, somehow different from life in the primary home. Thus, rural life can be seen as a response to the disadvantages of urban living, as a search for a site where “life is lived differently”, or as an “escape from modern life ... to seek refuge in nature” (Williams, Kaltenborn, 1999: 222; Sarman, Czarnecki, 2020: 209).

Others prefer that their second home should have many of the comforts of their primary home<sup>10</sup> and, if possible, be located in a more urban-like setting: i.e., a place where many people have second homes. Examples of the third type of preference – people who use their homes to combine recreation with work and have a television set and internet there – can be found in the answers of some respondents: *“We have a house in a village with good internet coverage and all the basic facilities we need for normal living there. We use it as a country house – as a place for rest through work therapy”* (Matanova, 2023g). *“I associate my second home with rest. I work, but physically. I do some house work, garden work”* (Matanova, 2023d).

Multi-local living gives the opportunity “to feel ‘at home’ in more than one place” (Quinn, 2004). Primary and second homes can complement and reinforce one another (McIntyre et al., 2006), as shown by the respondents in this study. They integrate their life-worlds in both homes through family traditions, shared experiences, and meanings linked to both places. This enriches their lives by giving them opportunities to visit two locations (like islands in an archipelago). This is probably due to the fact that second homes provide “aspects or dimensions of lifestyle that are not offered in the primary home or ‘ordinary’ life” (Bjerke et al., 2006: 88).

For example, one respondent said:

*I would say that a man could have more [than one] homes, in the town and in the village.* (Matanova, 2023g)

Another respondent shared:

*I feel rather enriched that I have a place where I can disappear, where I can hide myself from the majority of people and be with those who are my dearest ones.* (Matanova, 2023e)

<sup>10</sup> In fact, as other researchers point out, “almost everything associated with the primary home today can be found in the second home” (Sarman, Czarnecki, 2020: 210).

Other respondents said they combine their lives in both homes. They live predominantly in one place but also spend time in the other. This allows them to stay connected with their family and friends in both places:

*I rather combine them. I live predominantly in Sofia and stay in Breznik for shorter periods. But I don't feel divided. [...] I have my family and friends there, but I also have my friends and fellow students here. (Matanova, 2023c)*

*In Sofia I have the feeling of a working environment. I experience my second home as a rest from professional strains. In other words, each of the places gives me a special feeling. (Matanova, 2023d)*

*Certainly, I feel enriched living in two places. It's somewhat a question of character and inner structure of life. I don't live badly in Sofia, but my heart is there, in the village. I find it difficult to always travel from one place to the other, because I waste a lot of time driving. (Matanova, 2023a)*

These examples confirm the observations of other researchers that relationships between residents and their homes are “significantly influenced by the circumstances of the individuals and households involved” (Perkins, Thorns, 2006: 68).

Second homes provide a place for family togetherness and regular gatherings. Individual family members' activities are not so segmented and spatially dispersed as life in the main location of residence. This helps them to preserve festive traditions and to thereby transmit cultural knowledge and cultural knowing, especially when people of several generations celebrate together. Thus, following Bourdieu (see Atkinson, 2016), houses are “important sites for learning embodied habits and internalising specific values” (Samanani, Lenhard, 2023: 9). Sometimes such collective celebrations help these people to “forge a shared commitment to a place in what for many is otherwise experienced as rootless modern life” (Williams, Patten, 2006: 40).

*I go there to spend holidays with my relatives. I was there for Christmas and New Year's Eve. I go there for Easter. [...] When possible we travel also for the town holiday as well. (Matanova, 2023d)*

*I like the folk traditions. I visit different events connected with the local culture and traditions: exhibitions, town holidays, events with traditional singing and dances. I go there because I feel connected culturally with the region. (Matanova, 2023c)*

Multi-local living can provide a sense of continuity of identity as well as a sense of place through cultural and territorial identification with an emotional home. This is evident in the case of the respondent who inherited a house from his grandfather and, wishing to preserve family memories, promised not to sell it: *“Before Grandpa passed away, he said to me, man-to-man, ‘If you can’t come, sell it so it doesn’t fall into ruin’. He had invested his whole life in it, and I promised him that I would take care of it and maintain it for as long as I could”* (Matanova, 2023f). Since his grandfather’s death, he (together with his family) has spent weekends, holidays, and vacations there and has maintained and upgraded the property with necessary modern utilities (internet, additional small upgrades, etc.).

If we refer to the mobility patterns of the interviewed multi-locals, they include commuting between the places where they live. They are determined by their individual and family needs and not by their economic income, as none of the respondents mentioned that they had difficulties in commuting because of low income or lack of money.

Multi-local people often belong to the group of in-betweeners who, regardless of their individual specificities, have in common “the maintenance of multi-layered, evolving and sustainable connection over time with the urban environment” (Pileva et al., 2023) and the rural setting. In the present study, all the respondents are not everyday commuters, meaning that most of them live predominantly in one of the places and (by using their own vehicles) drive to the other for shopping, healthcare, work, etc. In contrast to the retired respondents, who prefer to spend more time at one of their places, the working-age multi-local interviewees commute more often between the places.

*In Gabrov Dol there is a shop but only for durable goods. I drive to Breznik 12 km away to shop once a week.* (Matanova, 2023c)

*The biggest problem is that you can’t buy any food in the village because there’s no shop there. And you have to bring everything with you. So, not only is it stressful to pack up your clothes and bring them back, but you also have to clean the apartment and the fridge. And then, three days later, before you leave you have to clean another house and another fridge.* (Matanova, 2023g)

The drive time between the two homes can vary depending on the location. In some cases, it can be as short as 15 minutes, but in others it can be as long as 90 minutes, or even longer in winter conditions. This can be difficult, especially for families with small children, as there are often no educational institutions in rural areas: *“The biggest problem is the school. We can work at a distance but there’s no school for the children here. The nearest one is 30 km away. In winter it is hard to drive so far every day, having in mind the roads in this region in Bulgaria”* (Matanova, 2023f).

Multi-locality requires the well-planned organization of more than one household and good management of each household member's duties. It can also be a matter of self-organization and control, as one respondent noted:

*In general, I get nervous about the chaos of not knowing where you live, always being with your suitcases and this switching of realities. They are two different realities. I get tired of travelling. In Sofia my job requires me to look decent and like a businesswoman. And in the village, I am very different. The problem is that I actually like both but I'd prefer the transition to be smoother. (Matanova, 2023g)*

All family respondents mentioned that they help each other with raising the children, but not in traditional male and female roles. For example, one respondent said:

*As I often say, that place has saved my marriage because it has made me realize that the rural life teaches us what in the past was considered a woman's and a man's role, which generally incites me to rebel, because men can also wash the dishes, given that we both work during the week. However, when we are in the village, I am very thankful that I am not the one to chop wood or weld with a gas torch. I want to wash dishes and cook. (Matanova, 2023g)*

Respondents also share that they see the capital city as a place for recreation. They are glad to be able to visit cultural events in Sofia: *"Regarding culture, when I lived predominantly in my now second home, I often came to Sofia to visit an exhibition, a concert, a children's entertainment center, etc."* (Matanova, 2023c). However, with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, many things changed. Urban entertainments continued in a virtual setting (in the form of online concerts, literary evenings, virtual cinema rooms, etc.), and many people moved to their second homes for the early months of the pandemic. A respondent shared: *"I escaped from Sofia the first day, when crossing points were set up"* (Matanova, 2023a).

Schools continued functioning in online form, through virtual lessons. This aggravated the fulfilment of the daily tasks of mothers who, besides being housewives, also had to help their children with schooling. On the other hand, living in their rural homes, they were able to go outside in the yard or for a walk in nature. They only drove to Sofia for work, to obtain documents, or for other tasks:

*The beginning of the pandemic found us here, and we lived for three months with our best man [marriage witness] here. And we lived very well. It's then that we realized what it's like to live outside the city not*

*just for the weekends. Of course there were difficulties, we worked from a home office. We saw life from a different point of view and we all decided that we wouldn't return to live in Sofia. Unfortunately, we still live there predominantly. When the measures changed, the children had to go back to school and we moved back to Sofia again. (Matanova, 2023f)*

Another respondent shared:

*We planned to go to our second home and, accidentally, we took our cat with us and had to stay there for two months. For many the pandemic was a time of fear, but for us it was a great time. We were all together, among relatives. We kept our mother far from the virus and went shopping for her, and we were with her during that difficult period.<sup>11</sup> [...] For me, it was an unexpected two-month vacation. (Matanova, 2023d)*

During the COVID-19 pandemic, second homes and holiday homes became primary homes, alternative workplaces, and a means of escape from the difficulties of urban living under the pandemic restrictions (Gallent, 2020). However, one respondent shared that she had continued to be a commuter even then:

*It was always the same: Sofia – Zemen, Zemen – Sofia. [...] The first two-three months [the national lockdown period], I would drive very often between the places as I had to work there and as my mother has an illness for which she had to have constant medical examinations there. And she insisted on living in Zemen because the apartment makes her feel like she's in a match box. I got permission from the doctor so that I could drive her for chemotherapies to Sofia and back to Zemen. (Matanova, 2023e)*

In other words, especially in a crisis, multi-local dwellers organize their lifestyle in a way that enables them to make the most of both locations by combining work commitments with raising children. They use all the benefits and amenities of the urban environment and enjoy the tranquility and freedom provided by the rural space.

Multi-local people's social networks include relatives, friends, neighbors, acquaintances in all their residential locations. Owing to modern technology and the means for fast communication, interaction with people happens not only face-to-face but also online. All respondents, regardless of their age and current place of residence, manage to communicate with members of their social networks by using mobile devices and

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<sup>11</sup> The father of the respondent had died shortly before the beginning of the pandemic.

online platforms enabling them, even during the pandemic and the imposed social distancing, to stay in contact with relatives, colleagues, classmates living elsewhere:

*When I'm at the primary home, I call my classmates and friends who live in the secondary place and vice versa; when I'm there, I call the others who live in Sofia. (Matanova, 2023d)*

*I stay in contact with my friends at the other place. Telephones are made to connect people. For example, our neighbours here, when they depart from Sofia, call and ask us if we need anything as we have no shops here in the village. (Matanova, 2023h)*

*During the pandemic I used group video-chats to talk with friends in Sofia. (Matanova, 2023c)*

All the multi-locals mention there is at least one other person like them in their network:

*Yes, I have a friend living in two places. We talk a lot because our current way of life is similar. We both have similar location problems – now you are here, then you are there. We call each other and she often visits me, because she has a jeep and can drive on the worse but shorter road between hers and my village. (Matanova, 2023a)*

*Yes, definitely. We share the experience. In the summer we very often visit friends at their second residences, or we get together at home. (Matanova, 2023h)*

*We don't have many friends who are multi-locals. Actually, we know only each other's families. (Matanova, 2023b, female)*

Collaboration between neighbours is typically very important in Bulgarian society. Men used to help one another build houses, provide wood for the winter, and even distill *rakiya* (the traditional Bulgarian brandy). Nowadays, in urban and rural settings alike, it is common to have impromptu visits between neighbors for a cup of coffee during the day or a glass of *rakiya* or a bottle of beer in the evening. Neighbors often keep an eye on each other's houses while owners are away, and, in some cases, they even look after their neighbors' animals:

*When we leave for Sofia, our cats go to our neighbors' cats in the yard. When our neighbors call us, the first thing they say is "First, you should*

*know that all your cats are alive.” This weekend we’re going there because one of the cats, named Shotko, was run over by a car and now its leg is injured. (Matanova, 2023g)*

Interactions between local and multi-local people take place at the store (if there is one) and at village or town fairs:

*Every first Saturday of September they have a village fair, with organized music in the centre and visits to the houses. Every house gathers all the kinfolk living in Sofia, in Pernik or other places. And my neighbors invite me and my family to celebrate with them. (Matanova, 2023a)*

*Our family is part of the group of fair organizers. Now the fair takes place in the clearing in front of the monastery. Other locals help us too. In 2021 it was the best event of the year organized there: the weather was good, an orchestra played music, the food was tasty, the children played in the open air. (Matanova, 2023g)*

The notion of dwelling is an inextricably bound triad of home, place, and identity. Through the experience of dwelling, a person develops over time a rooted sense of place and identity, a feeling of being “at home” and “in place” (McIntyre et al., 2006: 313–314). Hence, multi-locals can feel that they belong locally to more than one place. However, the place of living determines to a great extent their local identification (with the place) only if they have spent a longer period of time there, if it is their place of birth or a place connected with childhood memories:

*I don’t feel like I belong regionally to Sofia, neither to Kazanlak where we have our second home. I feel like a Sofia dweller, as I’ve spent my first 18 years here. (Matanova, 2023b, female)*

*When I came in 1991 it was a great stress for me that I might be robbed. But after that I got accustomed, and now I feel very well here. (Matanova, 2023d)*

*Even after six years spent in Sofia I don’t feel like a Sofia dweller at all but rather that I am residing for a short time there. I hope that I’ll return to Breznik one day. (Matanova, 2023c)*

The following cited respondent feels she belongs to her native town, and she sees her local identity as a component of her regional identity:

*I was born and grew up in Breznik in Graovo district. Now I feel I am of Graovo origin. It is a kind of rootedness that you cannot change. I like the dialect, the traditions, the rural gatherings of the kind there were in past times, the regional traditional costumes. (Matanova, 2023c)*

Many of the respondents were born and grew up in Sofia, but in their answers they often share that they are Sofia dwellers in a cultural aspect or by their birthplace:

*I'm a Sofia citizen since I was born [there]. In this sense, I would say that from quite a cultural perspective, since I can't escape from that, because it's a question of mentality, inner culture. I feel well there. And I like interacting with the people there. (Matanova, 2023a)*

Some of them prefer not to identify with the capital city:

*Although I was born in Sofia, I have never felt like a Sofia dweller because of the tendency of many incomers who say 'I'm a native-born citizen of Sofia.' I was born there because my parents lived there as a consequence of urbanization in the previous century. Half of my kin is from Radomir region, the other half from Tran region. (Matanova, 2023e)*

*I am a villager. Even though I was born in Sofia I prefer to be a Sofia citizen who became a villager and not vice versa... Lately, I prefer not to be a Sofia dweller, because Sofia has now nothing in common with the time of my childhood. (Matanova, 2023f)*

*I felt like a Sofia dweller many years ago. I liked Sofia. It was New York in Bulgaria. I was interested in the cultural life of the capital. Now, with two small children, it's impossible. [...] Yes, I am a Sofia dweller because I was born here, but I'm not happy with the city. Actually, for me now, it's just traffic jams and air pollution. (Matanova, 2023g)*

The respondents' European identity was explored through their opinion about the Europeanness of the capital. In their answers they mentioned different aspects:

*In my opinion Sofia is definitely a European city [...]. It gives you everything: high culture, popular culture, everything you need. Hence, living in Sofia gives me the sense of being European. (Matanova, 2023d)*



*I do not know what Europeanness includes. 'European' is a very broad concept. There are the new and the traditional European values... I like being a Bulgarian because – we had better not talk more about that – Bulgaria comes far before Europe. (Matanova, 2023f)*

*It's a European city because there are cultural events – concerts, theatres, bookstores, different clubs and communities for every guild. [...] In comparison to other European capitals, it's a quiet one. We are at the periphery and it rescues us from many bad things which typical European capitals have. From a cultural and historical perspective, Bulgaria has always been a part of Europe, and that is why I feel European. For me it's a great fortune that we are part of the West and part of the East. (Matanova, 2023a)*

The respondents' identification with different levels of identity – local, regional, national, and European – can vary depending on their personal experiences and perspectives. Some respondents said that they felt their European identity most strongly when they were outside of Europe, while others said that they did not feel European at all:

*By European, some people understand a high standard, cleanliness and economic development. For us, though, it is completely, a hundred percent, a culturally European city. And we discover our European identity and belonging to the European tribe out in Africa. When you have been among non-Europeans, you then recognize your European identity very easily. (Matanova, 2023b, male)*

*Having been outside of Europe, you see that you are a product of Europe. (Matanova, 2023b, female)*

*I graduated in European studies and I have always felt European. As a student I was in a brigade in the US and, speaking in all sincerity, I felt European there the most, and was recognized and indicated as European. I think I feel East European. (Matanova, 2023g)*

*I don't feel European because I live in Bulgaria. I don't want to feel European because I don't share the contemporary European moral values, and don't like the contemporary European way of living. (Matanova, 2023e)*

*No, I do not feel European. For me it's just a label that differentiates people and makes them European or Balkan. I feel like a normal person of the Earth. (Matanova, 2023c)*

The latter two quotes suggest that their identities are more closely aligned with their local or national identity than with their European identity – or they do not identify with any particular group or label and instead feel a sense of belonging to the world as a whole.

All the examples show that people's identities are complex and can be influenced by a variety of factors, such as their personal experiences, their education, and their cultural background. It is important to keep this in mind when considering how people move, interact, and identify at different levels with the world around them. Regarding their multi-local way of living and relationship with locally living persons, these could be summarized so that regardless of the category they belong to – the one of the newcomers or the one of descendants of local people – they are all welcome by most of the local inhabitants of these rural places who are glad to have co-dwellers at their places of living whom they could rely on for help when needed.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the research suggests that multi-local people of the region studied are urban or ex-urban dwellers, and their mobility patterns depend on their current life stage, family status, work commitments, and flexibility of employment.

Their sense of home is not fixed to a single location but is influenced by their personal specificities and their social, cultural, or territorial attachment to places. It is not the distance between locations but their individual character that determines their local identification at one or more levels. Furthermore, the power and resources of the place influence the strength and type of their attachment to one or more places. The research confirmed that people's identifications, constructions, and perceptions of home are influenced to a great extent by their current place of residence, the length of stay in a place, and their social relationships. From the author's (etic) point of view, they are carriers of multi-level identities resulting from their multi-local living since most of them expressed a sense of local, regional, and European identity. However, no one described themselves as such a carrier from their own (emic) point of view. Thus, they cannot be explicitly categorized as carriers of a multi-level identity.

The concept of multi-locality makes it possible to see primary and second residences as linked spaces that, together, constitute a home and a continuum of experience (Perkins, Thorns, 2006: 81) in which people's homes are not just physical places but also social and cultural spaces that are constantly evolving. The reality for many multi-local respondents is that their second homes are not simply a retreat from the pressure of modern urban life. Instead, they are often used as a base for work, leisure, and social interaction. Regarding the correlation of home, multi-locality living and local identification, it could be said that they have a "multi-centered lifestyle where work, home and play are separated in time and place, and meanings and identity are structured around

not one but several places, and the associated circulations among them” (McIntyre et al., 2006: 314). In this way, they construct multi-local identities according to their feeling of home based on the perceived convenience and the established social relationships in the local communities.

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### **Dom(ovi), vzorci mobilnosti in identifikacija(e): multilokalni prebivalci Sofije**

Od časa socializma (1944–1989) veliko Bolgarov ob koncih tedna in v poletnih mesecih živi med mesti in vasi. Pogosto so lastniki podeželskih hiš (*vila*) ali drugih sekundarnih bivališč v domačih vaseh (Bokova, 2009; Krasteva-Blagoeva, 2012). V zadnjih letih se je število posameznikov, parov in družin, ki v Bolgariji živijo na več lokacijah, povečalo zaradi številnih dejavnikov, kot so fleksibilizacija dela, izboljšana prometna infrastruktura in pandemija covid-19. Raziskava obravnava Bolgare, ki živijo v dveh ali več krajih (eden od njih je glavno mesto Sofija) in preučuje, kako ti posamezniki upravljajo svoje družbene svetove in vsakdanje življenje. Empirični podatki so bili zbrani s polstrukturiranimi sinhronimi intervjuji na spletu ali v osebni stiku ter asinhronimi pogovori v klepetalnicah. Intervjuji so razkrivali vzorce vsakdanjega življenja in bivanja sogovornikov, njihovo dožemanje doma, njihove lokalne in evropske identifikacije ter načine, kako upravljajo svoje družbene vezi. Raziskava je pokazala, da občutek doma pri sogovornikih ni vezan na eno samo lokacijo, temveč nanj vplivajo

njihove osebne posebnosti ter družbena, kulturna ali teritorialna navezanost na kraje. Te identifikacije in dojemanje doma so v veliki meri odvisne od trenutnega kraja bivanja, dolžine bivanja v tem kraju in družbenih razmerij. Koncept multilokalnosti omogoča, da na primarna in sekundarna bivališča gledamo kot na povezane prostore, ki skupaj tvorijo dom in povezanost izkušenj (Perkins, Thorns, 2006: 81), ko domovi ljudi niso le fizični kraji, temveč tudi družbeni in kulturni prostori, ki se nenehno razvijajo. Razprava osvetljuje koncept doma (domov) za ljudi, ki živijo v več krajih, ter razmerje med multilokalnostjo in teritorialno identifikacijo.



## Multi-local Actors of Change and Two Religious Sites in Northeast Bulgaria: Between Traditions and New Everyday Practices

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The authors analyze the correlations between two rural religious sites – Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke (village of Obrochishte) and the Church of St. Dimitar (village of Gurkovo) in northeast Bulgaria – and the multi-local actors of change that contribute to the transformation of local communities' traditions and the emergence of new everyday practices. The study is based on historical-ethnological research carried out in May 2022 that builds on earlier periodic observations.

▪ **Keywords:** multi-local actors, cultural heritage, Bulgaria, everyday practices, religious sites

Avtorici analizirata povezave med podeželskima verskima središčema – Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke (vas Obročište) in cerkvijo sv. Dimitrija (vas Gurkovo) v severovzhodni Bolgariji – in vlogami multilokalnih akterjev, ki prispevajo k preoblikovanju tradicij lokalnih skupnosti in nastajanju novih vsakdanjih praks. Študija temelji na zgodovinsko-etnološki raziskavi, izvedeni maja 2022, ki gradi na prejšnjih občasnih opazovanjih.

▪ **Ključne besede:** multilokalni akterji, kulturna dediščina, Bolgarija, vsakdanje prakse, verska središča

### Introduction

In May 2022, we observed a festival of local folklore groups at the late medieval Muslim architectural complex of the Dervish sanctuary known as Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke in the village of Obrochishte, revered by Shia Muslims in northeast Bulgaria. The pilgrims who customarily visit the Muslim shrine were not there, but we were surprised to see a multi-national dance company from the village of Gurkovo, cheered on by Bulgarians and Britons, present-day settlers in that village area. Many questions arose in our minds, but most of all “What is going on here?”, “Why are these people here?”, and “What is the cause of this change?” These questions compelled us to take a deeper look and start researching multi-local actors and their connection to changing cultural heritage in both villages in the Balchik region in northeast Bulgaria.

The article focuses on two sacred sites, a Muslim and a Christian one, both having visible and invisible content in which perceptions of different worlds – *ours* vs.

that of *others*, the earthly vs. the otherworldly – intersect. From the time of their construction during the period of Ottoman rule in Bulgarian lands to the present day, the Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke and the Church of St. Dimitar have changed both their ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’ features under the impact of various ‘multi-local actors’. Both religious sites are recognized under the Cultural Heritage Act of Bulgaria as “immovable cultural heritage of local importance.” Our research curiosity was provoked primarily by the fact that out of the 12 such cultural monuments managed by the Balchik Municipality and the Balchik Historical Museum, they are the only two that are protected and are significant for the locals. The preservation or conservation of the Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke and the Church of St. Dimitar is effectuated mainly through the activity of the local residents, who, despite changes in their ethnic and religious composition occurring over time, continue in one way or another to link their daily and festive culture to these religious sites.

The two cultural heritage sites can also be seen through the theoretical concept of ‘landscapes’ considering the fact that, over time, they have expanded their symbolic meanings through the interaction of various local and multi-local actors, the rituals performed at these places, and the stories told about them. Following the explanation of Margaret C. Rodman that “a physical landscape can be multi-local in the sense that it shapes and expresses polysemic meanings of place for different users” (1992: 647), we assume that multi-local people are actors of change who contribute to the construction of new meanings of the religious sites. Thus, we apply a ‘micro approach’ that focuses on “how the landscape can become an ‘inscribed place’ through an interpretative process that transforms the landscape into an ever-evolving ‘substantive property’ based on different narratives and practices” (Bulian, 2021: 113). Nicki Lisa Cole explains micro-level studies as focusing on “smaller groups, patterns and trends, mainly at the community level and in the context of everyday lives and experiences of people” (2019). In our study, the micro approach is applied in two directions: that of the multi-local actors together with their narratives and practices of religious sites as well as that of the establishment of new patterns of everyday life. The structure of the article consists of the research design, followed by a description and analysis of the two case studies, presenting as well the correlations between the religious sites and the multi-local actors.

### **Case studies research design**

The aim of our article is to analyze the interconnection between, on the one hand, the rural religious sites of Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke and the Church of St. Dimitar and, on the other, the multi-local actors contributing to the transformation of local community traditions and the emergence of new everyday practices. In May 2022, we carried out

a historical-ethnological study that builds on earlier periodic observations. In addition to reviewing data from the scientific literature on the history of the two sites, we also examined strategic documents of the local government and national state institutions as well as conducted ten in-depth semi-structured interviews (six with experts, and four with local residents of the two villages). We also carried out observations as well as preparatory and follow-up interviews before and after May 2022 and up to April 2023.

We present the two cases in two different ways: in the first case, we proceed in chronological order from the past to the present, and in the second, from the present to the past. The first case, that of Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke, has been observed by the first author during the last ten years and was visited by both of us during our field trip there in May 2022. That is when the second case drew our attention, being the second cultural monument of local importance preserved and visible in the Balchik region as pointed out above. We began to explore the immovable cultural heritage, particularly the Church of St. Dimitar, and realized how fascinating it was in the perspective of contemporary international migrations, multi-locality, and mobile ways of living – all topics of research that interest both of us. Thus, besides the church as the main focus in the second case, we examine and analyze the multi-local context of the village Gurkovo and its re-composition resulting from the settlement of foreigners there during the last 20 years, who are not the focus of the study.

The analysis of the collected research data not only enabled us to find answers as to how the two religious sites have been preserved and how their meaning has changed, but also revealed the role of new local actors whose experience could be defined as multi-local. Our understanding is that multi-local people are actors of change who influence the construction of new meanings of the religious site, particularly in the first case, and, in the second case, of the religious site itself and the entire multi-local context in the village. In the first case, the multi-local actor lives in-between two places – the home town and the office; in the second case, the first multi-local actor lives in-between the village and a foreign country, and the second actor in-between the village and the nearby town.

In our cases, multi-local actors are defined as people that regularly move for job and/or family-related reasons between habitual places of living (homes) and professional settings (offices, etc.) – or they are bearers of special mobility between different settings. We thus share the understanding of Johanna Rolshoven that multi-local persons “experiment with cultural techniques in which movement is a determining factor, and which allows them to organize their everyday lives between living, working and having time off, as well as shift between moving and staying put” (2007: 19).

In this article, we discuss the historical data, the development of the two sites, and the impact of multi-local people on them. Based on the presented and analyzed material, we expect to add new dimensions to conceptualizing multi-local actors, their relations, and their impact on people’s perceptions of local cultural heritage (Greinke, Lange, 2022: 67–81).

## Case 1: Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke and the multi-local actor

The village of Obrochishte is located between the cities of Varna and Balchik, both on the Black Sea coast. Since the 1940s, the population of the village has fluctuated between 1,200 and 2,600 people; it totaled approximately 2,300 in 2022.<sup>1</sup> Our survey has shown that the ethnic composition of the population includes Orthodox Bulgarians, Turkish-speaking Muslims, Romanian-speaking Orthodox, and Evangelical Roma.

Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke<sup>2</sup> is located at the exit of the village in the direction of the nearby sea resort Albena. The complex consists of an *imaret* (inn), believed to have been part of a Muslim monastery, and a *türbe* (tomb), which the Shia Muslims in north-eastern Bulgaria believe to be the burial place of one of their greatest religious leaders, Ak Yazılı Baba. His memory is associated with beliefs in his ability to perform miracles during his lifetime and after his death. Since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the *tekke* (a dervish and Sufi place of worship in the Ottoman Empire) has changed in function and significance under the impact of the settlement of new people, national and local politics, and contemporary multi-local people whose professions are linked to this complex.

The management of the tekke went through several complex stages. Until 2014, it was under the direct authority of the Balchik Historical Museum, whose director had a vision for its development as a tourist site. Until then, just one curator had been appointed in the tekke – a female local resident. According to our earlier observations and conversations with her, she maintains traditional legends and allows the performance of various cultural and religious practices by locals and Shia Muslim visitors. Between 2014 and 2021, the tekke was managed directly by the Balchik Municipality, which was then implementing a project related to the restoration of the tekke. The Balchik History Museum had no involvement in its management during that period. Apart from the physical changes to the architecture of the monument, a new employee – a man from the town of Balchik – was appointed as a curator at that time. He was

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<sup>1</sup> There are almost no studies on the characteristics of the population of Obrochishte or the influence of its people on the site's significance (Erolova, 2017: 137–144). According to the publicly available data of the National Statistical Institute, the population of the village as registered in the 2011 census was 2,263. Of these, 1,921 people answered the question (not obligatory) as to their self-identification. Of those who answered, 1,255 (65.3%) identified as Bulgarians, 539 (28.1%) as Roma, 95 (4.9%) as Turks, and the rest as “others”. There are no official data about the religious composition of the village; the ethnographic observations of the first author are discussed further on in this article.

<sup>2</sup> Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke has attracted strong interest on the part of Bulgarian and Turkish researchers, historians, art historians, folklorists, theologians, etc. (Eyice, 1967: 558; Margos, 1972; Mikov, 2001: 187–196, 2005: 58–60; Koçak, 2003: 223–234; Cebecioğlu, 2009; and others), due to the variegated range of beliefs associated with the Muslim saint Ak Yazılı Baba. Like other such Muslim architectural complexes in Bulgaria (Radionova, 1994: 70; Melikoff, 1999: 14–20; Gramatikova, 2001: 212–227; Yankova, 2007: 59–84; and others), this site is associated with a number of superstitions that are central to the traditional worldview not only of Shia Muslims, but also of Sunni Muslims and Orthodox Christians. These superstitions bring to mind the vivid words of Bulgarian ethnographer A. Goev, that traditional culture “teems with magic” (1992: 6).

instrumental in changing the mythology of the sacred site, and his role is examined further in the article. In practice, he was the manager of the site. We had a brief conversation with him in 2018.

In 2021 and 2022, the Balchik Municipality again entrusted the direct management of the tekke to the Balchik Historical Museum. Both curators (female and male) were dismissed from their positions, and two new employees, both local residents, were appointed in their place and were formally performing their duties. The director of the History Museum, who is a woman, currently determines the way the monument functions and its accessibility. We had a number of interviews and meetings with her, and she identified the main issue of preserving and socialization of the site to be its financial provision. In this context, several layers emerged in our micro-study that are key to the development of the tekke as a historical, cultural, and tourist site. Scientific knowledge about the tekke serves as a foundation that offers various opportunities for scholarly discussions in the fields of religion, late medieval architecture, and tourism. Moreover, traditional Muslim and Orthodox Christian legends maintain the sacredness of the site for both communities. Finally, contemporary local policies that turn the tekke into a tourist site find expression in restoration changes. Passing through complex stages of management between the Historical Museum and the Balchik Municipality, we observed during our 2020 field trip the continued influence of one of the officials on changing the functions of the sacred site and thus the composition of its visitors.

### ***Historical and demographic data***

It has been proven that Ak Yazılı (Ibrahim) Baba was a real person who lived in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He was the spiritual leader of the Bektashi order and successor to Othman Baba, who had arrived with the first Ottoman troops and died in 1478/9 (Melikoff, 1999: 11–18; Gramatikova, 2002: 71–102; Alexiev, 2005: 144; Mikov, 2005: 61). Evidence of the life of Ak Yazılı Baba can be found in the 16<sup>th</sup>-century literary works of the Bektashi. Prominent in these sources are the writings of the leader's followers: the Hurufi poets Muhyeddin Abdal and Muhammad Yemini. In their works, they praise Ak Yazılı Baba as the successor to Othman Baba, calling him *kutb* (trans. in most studies as “pole”, in the sense of cosmos, star, highest spiritual standing, bearer of providence), and describing him as “Ibrahim Sani”, i.e., as “second Ibrahim” or “second Abraham” (Koçak, 2003: 223–234).

The sanctuary founded by Ak Yazılı Baba attracted a number of dervishes (travelling Muslim monks) and became a sort of center of one of the branches of the Bektashi order. After the death of Ak Yazılı Baba, the settlement of Tekkeyedzhik was founded (Mutafova, 2013: 207–208). Historical sources confirm the tekke was built in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of the Ottoman ruler Suleiman (1522–1560). In the middle of the same century, it was registered as a religious and social-economic center in the Ottoman tax registers (*tahrir defters*) (Dimitrov, 1994: 90–91).

According to descriptions made by the Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi, who visited the European provinces of the empire in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the *türbe* of Ak Yazılı Baba was built by his follower Gazi Mihaloglu Arslan Bey (Gadzhanov, 1909: 671–672; Koz, 2006: 454). Evliya Çelebi gives information about the tekke and provides a partial picture of life there (Gadzhanov, 1909: 671), comparing its wealth to that of the tekke of Imams Ali and Hussein in Baghdad.

The *imaret* was a seven-walled building with a built-in chimney and roof, where the dervishes could receive temporary shelter and food – and perform their rituals (Melik-off, 1999: 19). The roof structure was probably destroyed during the Russian-Ottoman War of 1768–1774 (Margos, 1972). The *türbe* has an atrium, and both its rooms have roof structures in the form of hemispherical cubes. In the middle, there is a sarcophagus placed in an east-west direction. On the ceiling of the building (including the vestibule), there is a colorful painted decoration consisting of geometric and stylized vegetal ornaments in Baroque style, probably dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries according to Lyubomir Mikov (1998: 520–523).

Over the centuries, the village around the tekke grew in size. The village and the whole geographical area of Southern Dobrudzha formed part of the Romanian state from 1919 to 1940, after which they once again fell within the borders of Bulgaria. The village was renamed from Tekkeyedzhik to Obrochishte in 1942.

During Bulgaria's Communist period (1945–1989), state measures for the preservation of the Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke as a site of Muslim cultural heritage were inconsistent and most likely followed the state's contradictory policy towards its Muslim population (Eminov, 1997). Improvements were made to the infrastructure of the complex in the second half of the 1950s, evidence of which is the inscription “1957” upon the arch spanning the central entrance of the complex as well as the existing arbor. Archaeological excavations were carried out two years after this date. In 1972, Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke, along with other monuments of immovable cultural heritage in the Balchik area and other Muslim architectural sites, was officially given the status of “monument of local cultural importance”.

### ***Legends related to the tekke and its transformation into a bi-ritual sacred place***

After the Bulgarian state gained independence from the Ottoman Empire, the importance of the tekke as a sacred place for Muslims gradually changed. The Czech historian and Bulgarian politician Konstantin Ireček (at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) as well as the Bulgarian geographer and ethnographer Vasil Kanchov (in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century) suggested there had once been a Christian monastery at this location that had been converted by the dervishes into a Muslim monastery (Kanchov, 1901: 11; Ireček, 1974: 897). There are no scholarly arguments supporting this hypothesis. The suggestion was most probably influenced by the existence of a special cult of St. Athanasius the Great of Alexandria (c. 293/297 – 2 May 373) among the Bulgarian

population that moved to the settlement in the 1870s, coming from the village of Vaysal in Eastern Thrace. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the cult of Ak Yazılı Baba underwent a transformation, and the tekke became a bi-ritual sanctuary. According to the Bulgarian researcher Diana Radionova, “Christians began to use the prayer house in the settlement, despite its being Muslim, and imposed the cult of the Christian saint, who had been worshipped many years in their homes” (1994: 70–72). The cult was later adopted by the Orthodox Roma Rudars (the so-called “cradle-makers”), who settled in the village in the period 1919–1940, during which time Southern Dobrudzha was still part of the Romanian state (Erolova, 2010: 109–110). At first glance, there seems to be a contradiction in simultaneously worshipping a Muslim and a Christian saint; however, the inhabitants of the village and surrounding area managed to unite their veneration for the two through a number of legends, beliefs, and rituals.

Current legends among the local population portrayed the two saints as possessing similar miraculous powers: to build impressive edifices, to heal, to come back from heaven and appear as living people, to be lords of animals, and to ‘watch over’ justice. According to some legends, Ak Yazılı Baba is able to appear in dreams or in visions to the righteous and the purest in spirit, and St. Athanasius walks around during the night, having been herding cattle if his shoes and the hem of his *yamurluk* (coat) are seen to be wet. People have sometimes heard the voices of both saints (Radionova, 1994: 65; Alexiev, 2005: 114). Both are believed to punish those who do not believe in their powers. Muslims in the nearby village of Lyahovo consider the land of the tekke to be sacred. Many years ago, a man decided to make a *chiflik* (farm) on this land, but setting out to plow the soil and demolish the existing buildings, he angered Ak Yazılı Baba. When the farmer’s livestock began dying and he himself became lame, he fled, terrified (Radionova, 1994: 65). Similarly, there is a legend about a woman who did not believe in the healing powers of St. Athanasius and, pretending that her hand was ill, stuck it in the hole of his grave but afterward could not withdraw it. Several villagers tried to pull her hand out but were powerless to do so, and the woman died after a few days (Alexiev, 2005: 115). This story is still told today. The recorded accounts related to Ak Yazılı Baba and St. Athanasius (Erolova, 2017: 137–144) are too numerous to be listed here. Importantly, in popular belief the two saints figure as friends. In some narratives, it is said that after the death of one, the other built a stone tomb for the deceased (in some accounts, Ak Yazılı Baba is the one who outlives his friend and in others, St. Athanasius). In any case, the builder of the tomb brought the stones from a great distance overnight. According to one belief, Ak Yazılı Baba bathed in the spring located in the park of the tekke. It is also said that St. Athanasius died there next to a large stone, and water began to flow from the stone (Irechek, 1974: 897; Alexiev, 2005: 115). Since the two saints were equally known for their healing powers, the water of this spring is considered to have curative virtues.

The tekke in Obrochishte is known among the whole Shia community in Bulgaria as a place of worship – mainly for people in northeast Bulgaria. Although most Muslims primarily visit the nearby Demir Baba Tekke located near the village of Sveshtari in the Razgrad region, some prefer to perform the *kurban* ritual (animal sacrifice) at the tekke of Ak Yazılı Baba. The most frequent occasion for such visits is the holiday Nevruz, 21 March, which marks the beginning of spring and the new year. This is an important holiday for them, as it is believed to be the date of Ali's birth as well as that of his wedding to Fatma, the daughter of Prophet Muhammad. Worshippers spend the night there and leave gifts (towels, socks, etc.) upon the saint's sarcophagus (Georgieva, 1991: 74). In present times, the tradition of spending the night in the shrine is not actively practiced, and leaving gifts is seldom done.

With the spread of the Christian cult of St. Athanasius, the Obrochishte village feast came to be held on 2 May, the day on which the Orthodox Church commemorates the saint's death. According to people from the local community, *kurbans* were conducted in his honor in the recent past on two days of the year at the *imaret* of the tekke. Bulgarians would gather there on 18 January, the so-called Winter Athanas, and have a *kurban* with pork meat. The Romanian-speaking Orthodox Roma would do *kurban* with other kinds of meat – often goat – on 5 July, the so-called Summer Athanas. Thus, the cult of St. Athanasius the Great, who lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, is mixed with that of St. Athanasius of Athens, who lived in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. When visiting the tekke, Orthodox Christians light candles before the icon of St. Athanasius, which is located in one of the chambers of the *türbe*. Believers continue lighting candles to present day. The *kurbans* offered by the local population in honor of St. Athanasius were intended to bring health and prosperity, which has led to his veneration as a healer saint and protector of domestic livestock (Erolova, 2017: 79).

Since the 1990s, the spread of evangelism among the Roma population (Slavkova, 2007: 205–247) has reached the inhabitants of Obrochishte. Roma evangelists here have stopped their followers from worshipping at the bi-ritual shrine and performing *kurban*.

Although the hypothesis that St. Athanasius was buried in the *türbe* remains unproven (Radionova, 1994: 70), the tekke is today also associated with the worship of this Christian saint. We may see this as complementing or expanding the cult of the Muslim spiritual leader. The legends and beliefs, which are associated with this leader and form part of the folkloric heritage of Shia Muslims in Bulgaria, have thus been supplemented by more recent ones of the Christian saint. This combined worship is an important element of the local cultural identity of the population as a whole in Obrochishte. Carrying out *kurban* is a tradition that can be interpreted as an element of local identity and culture (Kovalcsik, 2007: 109–136), but it is not observed any more. However, Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke remains recognized and respected by locals, according to our field materials (Erolova, 2017: 80). This bi-ritual shrine is not the only



one in Bulgaria; shrines of this kind have been discovered and researched in different parts of Bulgaria (Yankova, 2007: 59–84). To a large extent, the continued belief in the legendary accounts of Ak Yazılı Baba and St. Athanasius can also be explained following Mircea Eliade, according to whom “myths are true because they are sacred, because they tell of sacred beings and events” (1961 [1952]: 59). Thus, the preservation of the myths of either or both saints contributes to the sacred character of the place in which they are believed to be buried and where they are said to still exercise their supernatural powers today.

***The modern transformation of Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke from a place of pilgrimage to a tourist destination***

The village of Obrochishte is located within the municipality of Balchik, and management of the village – including its immovable cultural heritage – falls under the authority of the municipal institutions. Since 2016, with the changes made to the Cultural Heritage Act, the management of the tekke has been transferred from the state level to the municipal level (from the Bulgarian Ministry of Culture to the Balchik Municipality). The Balchik Historical Museum is a municipal institution that takes part in the management of the tekke, as well as the second cultural monument in this municipality. For the local authorities, however, Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke is primarily a cultural monument that has the potential to become a tourist attraction more than a pilgrimage site. In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there was a tendency to advertise the site under the name St. Athanasius Monastery. At that time, the management of the complex was under the direction of the Historical Museum – Balchik.

Between 2005 and 2013, the International Festival of Religious Singing St. Athanasius was held at the *imaret* each year, in the middle of May. National and foreign choirs from Serbia, Romania, Croatia, Ukraine, and Moldova took part in the festival. Some editions of the festival were included in the cultural development plan of the Balchik Municipality, which provided financial support for the event. Some of our earlier observations in Obrochishte showed that, despite the international format of the festival, it failed to attract the local community or tourists. Due to a lack of public interest in the new musical event, local authorities decided to discontinue it in 2014.

In parallel with the efforts of the municipal institutions, particularly of the Historical Museum, to make the tekke a tourist site, new pseudo-historical hypotheses are voiced. For a while, the notion spread that king Władysław III Warnienszyk Jagiello (1424–1444) was buried in the *türbe*. He was King of Poland (1434–1444) and Hungary (1440–1444), Supreme Prince of Lithuania (1434–1440), and a significant figure in Bulgarian history that perished near Varna in 1444 during a crusade against the Ottoman Empire (Dnesplus.bg, 9.11.2013). However, this idea was promoted by a local film director and is not based on scholarly discussion – nor is it accepted by the municipal authorities, museum experts, or the local residents.

Between 2014 and 2016, Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke was one of the sites included in the project of the municipality titled ‘Improvement of tourist attractions and related infrastructures on the territory of the Municipality of Balchik’.<sup>3</sup> The main objective of the project was the conservation, restoration, and exhibition of immovable cultural property – as well as the presentation of the region’s rich cultural and historical heritage of local and national importance. Numerous changes were implemented under the project. They include the construction of a new administrative building between the *türbe* and the *imaret*; the introduction of admission fees and fees for taking photos or shooting videos; the appointment of two curators; plastering the stone flooring with cement and repainting the frescoes; building a roof on the *imaret*; plastering its stone floor with cement; whitewashing the chimney and walls; and painting the windows on the inside of the building. We will not dwell here on all the restoration works, but it should be noted that the lack of expertise in effectuating them has had a number of negative consequences (we observed cracks in the walls, leaks, etc., when visiting in 2019 and 2022). Paid access to the tekke discourages Muslim visitors and pilgrims who were used to going there for free. Upon arriving on buses, when they learn they must pay to enter the *türbe* or the *imaret*, or to take pictures, they forgo the visit.

The architectural complex was under the direct management of the Balchik Municipality from 2014 to 2021, but was once again under the authority of the Historical Museum of Balchik from 2021 onwards. The two curators, appointed under both administrations, are from Balchik and the village of Obrochishte. Only one of the curators has an education corresponding to his position, and we turn to focus on his activities and their importance for the preservation and the popularization of the sacred site.

### ***The influence of the multi-local actor: The curator***

During earlier fieldwork at the Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke in 2019, we were interested to see the ‘new’ look of the complex after the restoration works and were disappointed by the results. We talked to one of the curators there, whom we shall discuss in more detail, considering his multifaceted and multi-local experience. Born in Balchik, he received higher education at the National Sports Academy in Sofia and spent years building a career in sports in Balchik and Sofia. He later switched professions and obtained a Doctor of Education and Science degree in Archaeology in 2014 from Konstantin Preslavsky University in Shumen. He was then immediately appointed as a curator at the Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke complex.

The curator lives in Balchik and travels daily (15 km) to his workplace, the tekke in the village of Obrochishte; from 2014 to 2021, this was the most stable trajectory of his daily life. How has this curator influenced the functioning of the tekke as a

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<sup>3</sup> Approved under the grant scheme of the Operational Programme Development of Regions 2007-2013 BG161PO001/3.1-03/2010 ‘Support for the development of natural, cultural and historical attractions.’

tourist destination and pilgrimage site? During our meeting, he gave a convincing tour presentation, which is also available in a number of media publications (for example, see Dobrudja.bg, 17.9.2021). The highlight of his talk was his argument that there had previously been, consecutively speaking, a Thracian sanctuary, a Greek and Roman Hellenistic temple, and a Byzantine monastery where the tekke now stands. He said he aimed to show the ‘antiquity’ of the site. He made no reference to St. Athanasius or king Wladyslaw III Warnenszyk Jagiello as historical figures connected with the tomb, but believed that the sarcophagus in the *türbe* contained the remains of Ak Yazılı Baba, basing this opinion on the description given by the Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi. In this newer narrative, the Muslim saint figures primarily with his healing powers. In fact, miraculous healing was a leading feature associated with the tekke at the time the curator was appointed to work there; the site was referred to as the House of the Healer of Healers. Access to the spring water from the tap was no longer free, and the price of a 500 ml bottle of water was 1 BGN.

In addition, there was a change in some practices that were related to new myths. A glass jar is placed next to the sarcophagus. During one of the field trips in Obrochishte, the curator explained to us that a visitor must circle the sarcophagus three times, make a wish, and leave money in the jar in order for the wish to come true. The gifts placed on the sarcophagus were periodically removed. The pragmatic approach to managing the tekke was not just about the paid admission, the paid use of spring water, or the glass wishing jar. A yoga instructor from Varna conducted her sessions at the *imaret* as well, which further represented a change in the character of a site held sacred by Shia Muslims.

Much can be said regarding the influence of the curator, which at first glance seems rather negative. One cannot help but note that his aim was, nevertheless, to turn the tekke into a cultural and tourist destination tied to new healing practices. He contributed to the promotion of the Muslim complex as a sanctuary with healing powers through a number of media publications. In an interview with a regional online media outlet, the curator said: “It is the largest mausoleum on the Balkan Peninsula dedicated to a healer. Opening its door, you open the door to health and happiness” (Pronewsdobrich.bg, 9.12.2019).

In fact, in order to develop a tourist destination, it is important to maintain a mythology about it that will attract visitors. Although the curator is not ‘bringing back’ Muslim pilgrims, his approach is nevertheless successful, as he manages in raising public interest in the healing properties of the spring water and attracting visitors from different parts of the country. During our last visit in May 2022, when the curator was no longer an employee of the complex and access to the spring water was free, we witnessed elderly families coming to wet themselves with the ‘healing’ water and fill their bottles with it. They had no interest in the *türbe* or *imaret*, but they left satisfied.

This narrative suggests that if we look at the curator not as an expert but as a leader who is used to holding positions of authority, we will remark on his determination and vision in managing the late medieval complex. Appointed by the municipality, the curator, using his expertise, knowledge, and a specific approach, has changed the meaning of the site from a place of pilgrimage to a destination for health tourism, resulting in a commercialization of the site. Regarding the curator's multi-local way of living, his personal presence has had no direct economic, political, or social effect on the village or town between which he travels daily. However, it has had some effect on increasing the number of tourists visiting the place. Hence, though in a different context, the statement that "tourist areas could both benefit and lose out from multi-locality" (Greinke, Lange, 2022: 67–81) seems relevant to the activity of this multi-local curator.

### **Case 2: Gurkovo and its multi-local people**

The village of Gurkovo<sup>4</sup> is at a distance of 9 km from the town of Balchik. The population of the village is about 500 inhabitants, most of whom are ethnic Bulgarians. Local respondents mention that several Roma families live in the village. They work abroad most of the time, returning to the village mainly in the summer, on the occasion of important events such as weddings (which go on for weeks) – and then go back to Belgium or other countries in Western Europe. Some of the local residents (as is typical for the whole region) are descendants of Bulgarians from North Dobrudzha who resettled here after the Treaty of Craiova (August 21, 1940), when South Dobrudzha was returned to Bulgaria.

There are no scientific historical studies devoted to the village of Gurkovo and its inhabitants. Information available on the website of the Municipality of Balchik<sup>5</sup> tells the story of the place since the time of Ottoman rule, when the name of the village was Gyaur Koyusu, which, as one of our respondents explained, means "the village of non-believers." According to the stories of other locals, this Turkish name means "the well of the Christians" and testifies to the presence of a Christian (Bulgarian) population in this place three or four centuries ago. There is a legend about how the village was founded: the Turkish military commander Skenderbeg was awarded land

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<sup>4</sup> There are no scientific studies available on the Church of St. Dimitar in the village of Gurkovo; its history is being recollected mainly through the devoted work of the current clerk of the church, who inherited this job from her mother and does her best to preserve all the relics in the church and the stories she has heard from old people in the village – the most important fact being that the church was built in the 1830s and is the oldest in the region. During the last seven years, local historian Tzonka Sivkova has done extensive research on all the churches in Balchik and the region, including the one in Gurkovo, and is about to publish a book on the topic; as of yet it is not ready.

<sup>5</sup> URL: <https://balchik.bg/bg/infopage/158-%D1%81%D0%B3%D1%83%D1%80%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BE> (accessed 6.12.2023).

by the Sultan. Within the age-old forests that once covered the fertile Dobrudzha plain, he chose a meadow 3 km away from the present-day borders of the village (that area is still called Skenderli today). In the years 1828 and 1829, Bulgarians returning from Bessarabia and Wallachia settled in the locality of that *chiflik*. There is some information about the village's first teacher, who taught school there in 1830 – the year when, as one respondent revealed, the construction of the village church began. The village was renamed Gurkovo around 1900 in honor of the Russian general Gurko. In 1930, 30 families of colonists from the Macedonian mountains, fleeing repression against Bulgarians in Macedonia, settled in Gurkovo. After Southern Dobrudzha was returned to Bulgaria, families from Northern Dobrudzha settled here. In 1952 the neighboring village Polyana was joined to Gurkovo. During the time of communism, the settlement Makedonka ceased to exist as a village due to a decree on closure of villages with declining functions, and its inhabitants moved to Gurkovo.

After the start of democratic changes in 1989, the first new settlers from Western Europe – some Britons – bought houses in the village; this was around 20 years ago, our respondents recalled. The new arrivals did not feel comfortable among the local population and left. An interlocutor described those first foreigners (just a couple of families) as noisy: they would often get together and drink beer, and they were too loud. The respondent did not know whether anyone among the locals had made any remark to them about this; in any case, they moved away, selling their houses to other British citizens.

British, German, Polish, and Swiss citizens are living in the village now, having settled there during the last ten years. Looking for a small, peaceful place to live, these foreigners found the village attractive. It is near the sea without being on the coast itself, where real estate property is much more expensive. Gurkovo is very picturesque, and, although its residents are mostly pensioners, it is not among the villages that have fallen into disrepair. Lately, it appears to have become a very multicultural place, popular also among foreigners. We visited it on a warm spring day and found its atmosphere very pleasant.

### ***The villagers and their meeting places***

In most Bulgarian villages, the main buildings a visitor sees in the center are the office of the mayor, the community center, and the church. Gurkovo is not an exception to this rule. Situated in the core of the village are the mayor's office, the community cultural center Freedom-1897 (*chitalishte 'Svoboda-1897'*), and the Orthodox Church of St. Dimitar. There are also two shops with tables and chairs where people meet, drink coffee or beer, and mainly exchange news, recipes and gossip. On a Sunday afternoon, you may meet more Britons than Bulgarians in the center, which, a respondent told us on a positive note, is one of the charming aspects of the place. The majority of the local people, being pensioners, mainly take care of their houses and gardens, grow

their own fruits and vegetables, and raise chickens (for the eggs) and small livestock. In general, life there is peaceful.

Besides the shops, the two main meeting places are the community center and the church. In the community center, there is a library and halls where people hold dance rehearsals. Although its population is relatively small, the village is proud of its several active folklore groups. Also, since the beginning of 2023, the pop band Retro Boys Band – Gurkovo has been revived at the community center. The singing and dance groups meet and practice regularly and take part in various folklore festivals, such as the one we happened to attend at the tekke in Obrochishte. There, we became acquainted with the amateur singing group Preselski Nakit, the amateur musical club Multi-Kulti (the members of which are ladies of several nationalities who sing and dance), and the dance company Folklore Magic.

The Church of St. Dimitar is also a gathering place in the village. This nicely renovated, functioning church is open mainly on holidays. The local priest, who is under the authority of the Varna diocese, holds religious services here and in several other churches in the region. The people who regularly attend religious services are mostly from the village, but people from other villages in the surrounding area also visit the church. In 1992, the church was declared an architectural and artistic immovable cultural heritage site (State Gazette No. 41 of 1992). Its construction in the early 1830s was funded entirely by donations from the villagers. According to the church clerk, it was opened in 1834 – the date was inscribed on the church bell, which was unfortunately stolen some years ago.

In the Bulgarian tradition, the cult of St. Dimitar, whose feast day is 26 October, is associated with the start of winter. His twin saint, St. Georgi, whose feast is on 6 May, is associated with the beginning of summer. Many churches in Bulgaria are dedicated to St. Dimitar. St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki<sup>6</sup> was born there in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century; his father, the governor of the city, kept an icon in a room in his house and introduced him to Christianity. After the death of his parents, Demetrius, then holding a high military rank, was ordered to persecute Christians, but he protected them instead.<sup>7</sup> During our stay in Gurkovo we did not hear any stories about why the church was dedicated specifically to St. Dimitar. We learned that the local historian Tzonka Sivkova was about to publish a book on churches in Balchik and the surrounding area, but when we contacted her, she refused to give us information about the Gurkovo church before the book is published.

We were very impressed by the church clerk, whom we interviewed at the church. She is a lively and gregarious person, energetically pursuing a variety of activities.

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.pravoslavieto.com/life/10.26\\_sv\\_Dimitar\\_Solunski.htm](https://www.pravoslavieto.com/life/10.26_sv_Dimitar_Solunski.htm) (accessed 6.12.2023).

<sup>7</sup> This information is available in the “Bulgarian Orthodox Catalogue”, an online encyclopedia of Orthodox Christianity in Bulgaria.

Among other things, she is one of the key organizers, dancers, and singers in the community center's folklore groups. We consider her to be a multi-local actor as well, as she now resides mostly in the village of Gurkovo but regularly lives for shorter periods of time in Balchik, where she worked as a teacher and where her children currently live.

Thus, in these two places, the community center and Church of St. Dimitar, we encountered two women who are important for our research. One is the chairperson of the community center, a woman with international experience who had lived more than 15 years in Germany and recently returned to the village. The other, mentioned above, is the church clerk, who has lived mainly in Balchik and returned to the village about ten years ago in order to look after her elderly parents and the parents of her husband. Both women have experienced, and still pursue, different ways of multi-local living – international (between two countries) in the first case, and national (between two places in Bulgaria) in the second. Their rhythm of multi-locality varies – from several times per year in the case of the community center chairperson, to several times per month in the case of the church clerk. We define both these women as multi-local actors of change that devote their time and expertise to reviving the village community and preserving its landmark sacred site. In this part of the article, we pay more attention to the village community than to the church as a religious site because it is within context of the village's multicultural and multi-local life that the significance of the church stands out.

### ***Local and multi-local actors of change***

The chairperson of the community center had lived in France and Germany for nearly 20 years, working there as an interpreter (with English and German). After the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, she realized that the quality of life in the village would be better for her, given that she could continue practicing her profession of a translator and interpreter by doing distance work from there. Thus, in 2020, she decided to return to Bulgaria and the village of Gurkovo. Many things changed for the local community with her return. Her fluent knowledge of English and German made her a key figure for bonding and exchange in community life; moreover, her energetic and friendly personality makes her a natural mediator. She soon became the chairperson of the community center, working on a voluntary basis. There, she created the Multi-Kulti dance group, in which women of different nationalities dance together. Also, she recently convinced an Italian drum player and a Belgian guitarist to join the revived pop band Retro Boys Band – Gurkovo.

As to how things have evolved in the last two years for the other multi-locals in the village, she explained:

*Most of them settled [here] from 5-6 years to 10 years [ago], they live in Gurkovo mostly and visit their countries on special occasions. Until now,*



*for one reason or another, they were not part of the village community. I speak English and German, I am an English teacher and that helps a lot. In the community center, and particularly the musical formations [companies], they have found a place where they feel complete. And as soon as they joined, they also wanted to give. They donated a lot to our charity bazaars. One lady knits amazing fluffy mittens and hats. For Christmas, we were raising money for one of our female conductors from the Dobrudzha folk choir; these women supported the cause. One of the men gave us 1,000 leva [to buy] a professional camera. They want to be part of us and contribute. (Female in her early 50s, April 2023)*

Visiting the festival at the tekke, we were fascinated by the Multi-Kulti dance company and wanted to know more about it. The dance group,<sup>8</sup> created in the middle of 2021, includes people of five different nationalities: five Britons, one German, one Pole, three Ukrainians, and two Bulgarians. The creator of the group is the chairwoman of the community center. She has dual citizenship (Bulgarian and German) and dances wearing both the Bulgarian and German flags on her dress during performances. She explains how the idea of creating the company arose:

*In general, it was my idea because I wanted to learn Bulgarian dances myself, and slowly the idea changed, since when we started getting together, it turned out they were willing to teach us their Renaissance dances, so we dance their dances, too, and now we are learning Ukrainian dances, and we are also starting [to learn] Sirtaki (a Greek dance). The idea behind the dance company is to exchange cultures from all over the world, not just the five countries that are represented in the club. It is open to anyone who wants to join and who is of another nationality because there are also Swiss people in the village, they have not yet confirmed that they will join, but we have invited them. I started with the idea of [us] dancing for health, for a good mood, getting together once a week, but the idea developed further, they proposed a dance from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, then a second, a third one and it became very interesting, really like an exchange of cultures between countries. (Female in her early 50s, April 2023)*

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<sup>8</sup> Only the leader of the dance company (who is also the secretary of the community center) had some previous dancing experience, albeit as an amateur. She teaches the group after learning the dances herself. They also create the choreography for some of the songs, such as the song *A Dark Cloud is Coming Up*, which will be performed at the community center's Easter concert. The latest member of the club, who joined a month ago (in the beginning of 2023), is a professional choreographer from Ukraine. She has started teaching the group Ukrainian dances. Last year, during the New Year season, the chairwoman conducted a campaign to expand the group with new members, and as a result, three Ukrainian women joined the club in 2023. These women were married to Bulgarians and had come to Bulgaria before the war in Ukraine.



In the opinion of the chairwoman, all the people who settled in the village have come here to enjoy life. Some of them are trying to socialize, others are rather reserved people who do not go out of their houses much and communicate mainly with their neighbors. The chairperson describes these different groups as follows:

*The ones looking for contacts want to fit into the community, to be part of it, of our life, and others are very closed and isolated, and they encapsulate themselves, which is bad. But a little bit at a time, with a lot of goodwill, when we emphasize that we are doing it [gatherings, activities] for a noble cause, to make them feel part of us, of our village, then they also show understanding and get involved. Here now, one of the most reserved Germans paints pictures and she promised me to organize an exhibition in the community center, but otherwise she is a very reserved person. There are introverts and others who are more sociable. (Female in her early 50s, April 2023)*

About the community of foreigners, another respondent from the village explains:

*They communicate mostly with their neighbors. A house where there are English people, next to them there are our people, the Bulgarians, they exchange cooking recipes, they talk to each other about holidays, about crops; English people have no experience, they watch the neighbors plant tomatoes, peppers or something, they show interest, how the soil should be cultivated, how to plant in it. For example, my foreign neighbors, they made a great garden and orchards. (Female in her mid-60s, May 2022)*

Most of the foreigners, being Catholic, do not often visit the village church. However, the church clerk told us she had noticed that they liked the calm and peaceful atmosphere of the church, showed some interest in the icons, and wanted to donate money to buy what is necessary for the church. A difference is visible in the case of the Russian-speaking community in the village and the region in general. As they are of the Orthodox confession, the clerk sees them as true believers who help her with certain tasks in the church such as cleaning or selling candles for religious services. They also sing with her during services. The clerk mentioned two Russian-speaking women (she did not know, and had never asked, whether they were from Russia, Ukraine, or some other country). She was impressed by their diligence in visiting the church for every service and by the help they gave her:

*They live in Kranevo, they are mother and daughter, and the son comes, too, the whole family lives here in Bulgaria. From Kranevo to Gurkovo*

*is quite a distance, and they [come to] Gurkovo for every service. The mother speaks very good Bulgarian and the daughter sings very well, she sings at the service. They pray on their knees, they do it very devotedly, it is very impressive. (Female in her mid-60s, March 2023)*

Religion was prohibited during the communist period in Bulgaria, which explains why the church became an immovable cultural heritage only after the political changes in Bulgaria (in 1992). The clerk finds her job at the church, which she inherited from her mother in 2015, fulfilling. Since she started working there she has been doing her best to learn more about saints, religious services and rituals; she has also been buying new books about how the service is conducted, etc. She is very communicative and is good at telling stories as well as attracting the attention of visitors (she previously worked as a teacher). She explained to us:

*The priest is very pleased because he sees in me a good helper, and at the same time people started visiting the church, attracted by the calm atmosphere, by the many worries that have been piling up lately, whether illnesses or lack of money and other domestic and health problems. They began to find support in the church. The interesting thing is that not only villagers arrive [to the church] ... because we are a small village most of the people are elderly, but when they can, when the weather is good, they will come. When the weather is bad they can't, but I was surprised to notice that people from the golf hotel have started visiting as well, [the hotel] where Ukrainian people are accommodated now, for example, near the village, these are Ukrainians and other foreigners that are Christians; they need it [coming to church] for [their] spiritual well-being. They are interested [to know] when there will be a service, the history of the church, and they ask me, and I try to explain as best I can. (Female in her mid-60s, March 2023)*

Thus, changes in village practices and village life are slowly coming about through the active participation of these two multi-local women in Gurkovo – one with trans-local experience between countries, and one with multi-local experience between the nearby town and the village. Both women are creating new multicultural opportunities for their fellow villagers through culinary events; the exchange of recipes; the exchange of dances, songs, and music; learning about different cultural norms and habits; appreciating the local culture and heritage; and learning words in different languages:

*They even know our names now, I am surprised when I pass by them and they shout at me 'Dimkaaa, hello', as they pass by walking their dogs*

*and wherever they meet me, I see that they behave like that to other people as well; how should I say, we Balkan people are warm-hearted, open, we are very different, they are colder people. It was very difficult, it took them years to be able to open up, to be able to receive us, even to this day you can very rarely go into the home of an English person, for example, they neither visit nor invite anyone. We try to invite them to public buildings, where they are not obliged to do anything and whoever wants to may come, and we started making the announcements in English and Bulgarian so they can read about what is happening in the community center and we can welcome them there. (Female in her mid-60s, May 2022)*

What unites all the people is their care for the village as a whole. They take part in community work like painting the fence of the community center, donating to certain causes, and being active in keeping the village clean. They collect garbage not only when participating in organized occasions but on a daily basis, when making their early morning hike and walking their dogs. Thus, both old and new local members of the community are creating new meanings in one remote village in northeast Bulgaria, making it a multicultural place through the constant exchange of old and new traditions and practices. Within this multicultural context, the village community manages to preserve the Church of St. Dimitar as its main religious site despite community members being of different religions or not particularly religious. This is mostly due to the example of the church clerk and her devoted work at the cultural and religious site. Understanding the significance of the church for the history of the village and its people, she not only keeps the keys but also looks after the valuable old objects in the church such as religious books and icons as well her personal family relics, including a tapestry she inherited from her mother, who was from North Dobrudzha. The other multi-local actor, the chairperson of the community center, also plays a very important role as her knowledge of foreign languages and community-building skills enable her to attract donations and thus help preserve and popularize the church as a place where anyone can find peace and seclusion.

## Conclusions

On the basis of the examined research cases, we can conclude that the active migration processes and demographic changes that have taken place from past times to the present in the region of the two villages, Obrochishte and Gurkovo, have had an important impact on the preservation and change of the cultural heritage there. We have focused special attention on three multi-local actors: the curator in Obrochishte, the chairperson

of the community center, and the church clerk in Gurkovo. All of them were defined as multi-local people because of their living and working simultaneously in more than one place. Their active roles have had a strong influence on promoting the villages and their immovable cultural heritage – Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke and the Church of St. Dimitar.

Against the backdrop of the historical development and continuous transformation of the folkloric image of the Muslim saint Ak Yazılı Baba, we see that, under the curator's influence, recent changes have occurred in the mythology related to the tekke. These changes have resulted in the site being popularized through a new narrative. The experts from the municipality, the former and current employees at the Historical Museum Balchik and the tekke, as well as the local residents did not discuss the curator's influence. However, according to our observations, his presence left an impact that was at least attested to by casual visitors who came not to venerate the saints Ak Yazılı Baba or St. Athanasius but to pour 'healing' water. Thus, the importance of the tekke as a place of pilgrimage is diminishing, while efforts are made to turn it into a tourist destination. This can be interpreted through the optic of Noel Salazar, according to whom:

Tourism imaginaries are easily re-embedded in new contexts by a process that constantly alters both the imaginaries and the contexts, building on local referents to establish their meaning and value...Imaginaries often become the symbolic objects of a significant contest over economic supremacy, territorial ownership, and identity. (Salazar, 2012: 880)

In the case of the tekke, the 'tourism imaginaries' have changed through the commercialization of practices related to belief in the spring water's healing properties or through new practices. In order for visitors' wishes for health to be fulfilled, they must put money in a glass jar placed at the head of the sarcophagus. Moreover, the fees required for entering the *türbe* and *imaret* and for taking pictures or videos aim to enhance the economic effect of visits to this cultural site.

In the second case, the initiative of the community center's chairperson has had an impact on the dynamics of social relations in Gurkovo in terms of people's care for the preservation of the church. While this site is continuing its initial religious tradition and practice more closely, changes in the village population's composition, resulting from migrations and the presence of multi-local actors, bring additional meaning to the Church of St. Dimitar. This transformation is visible at the two ends of the range of church visitors. The multi-cultural actors from West European countries, being mainly Catholic, consider the church as a place where one finds solace, a peaceful atmosphere, and a possibility to contribute with small donations. At the other end, for the new multi-cultural actors coming from Orthodox countries, the church is a traditional sacred place where they can practice their religion devotedly and contribute with work for the religious site.

As for the local citizens, it appears they can be placed in the middle range between the two categories in terms of their everyday practices. They regularly visit the church on major Orthodox holidays (such as Easter and Christmas), perform the respective rituals that make the church a sacred place, and socialize there with other villagers. The church clerk, while attending to her duties, is witness to a variety of practices and meanings that the church has for different visitors. However, despite the varied meanings implied by people's everyday practices related to the church, the sacredness of the site has been preserved, in contrast with the commercialization of the tekke.

From our study of these two religious sites linked to two main religions in Bulgaria, we may conclude that, in the first case, the meaning of the tekke and the practices related to it have changed from sacred to touristic and rather commercial. However, in the second case, within the dynamic of a multicultural context, the sacredness of the religious place is affirmed. These tendencies we observed and studied are developing due to the attitudes, expertise, and devotion of the multi-local actors in drawing attention to, preserving, and/or bringing change to the sites.

We interpreted these two cultural heritage sites as multi-local and multi-vocal landscapes where, as Margaret Rodman states, “different actors construct, contest, and ground experience in place” (2006: 212). Thus, following Rodman, we conclude that the two sites have polysemic meanings for their different users, and multi-local actors play key roles in bringing out the multi-vocal dimensions of the sites.

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## **Multilokalni akterji sprememb v dveh verskih središčih na severovzhodu Bolgarije: med tradicijami in novimi vsakdanjimi praksami**

Avtorici analizirata povezave med podeželskima verskima središčema – Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke (vas Obročište) in cerkvijo sv. Dimitrija (vas Gurkovo) v severovzhodni Bolgariji – in multilokalnimi akterji sprememb, ki prispevajo k preoblikovanju tradicij lokalnih skupnosti in nastajanju novih vsakdanjih praks. Po razlagi Margaret C. Rodman (1992: 647), da je »fizična pokrajina lahko multilokalna v smislu, da oblikuje in izraža večpomenskost kraja za različne uporabnike«, predvidevamo, da so multilokalni ljudje akterji sprememb, ki prispevajo k oblikovanju novih pomenov verskih središč. Muslimansko obredno svetišče Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke in krščanska pravoslavna cerkev sv. Dimitrija sta zgodovinska in kulturna spomenika, ki sta po bolgarskem zakonu o kulturni dediščini priznana kot »nepremična kulturna dediščina lokalnega pomena«. V obeh vaseh živijo predvsem priseljenci različnih etničnih izvirov, t. i. življenjsko-stilski migranti (iz Anglije, Nemčije in Poljske), in ljudje, ki trenutno delajo v teh krajih in se dnevno vozijo iz bližnjega mesta Balčik; v tej študiji so obravnavani kot multilokalni akterji. Avtorici v članku obravnavata, kako uvajajo nove vsakdanje prakse ter vplivajo na pomen in pomembnost mitologije, povezane z obema svetiščema. Primer omenjenih sprememb je, da pretekle slavnostne obrede *kurban* (verski obredi, ki temeljijo na žrtvovanju živali) v Ak Yazılı Baba Tekke nadomeščajo folklorni in družabni dogodki. V primeru cerkve sv. Dimitrija je pozornost namenjena temu, kako novi prebivalci – državljani iz različnih držav in glavni multilokalni akterji – s skupnimi kulturnimi nastopi popularizirajo cerkev in vas kot celoto. Raziskava prispeva k poglobitvi mikropristopa pri preučevanju heterogenosti multilokalnega življenja v majhnih podeželskih krajih, njihovih razmerij in vpliva na dojemanje lokalne kulturne dediščine (Greinke, Lange, 2022). V članku so uporabljene pripovedi in intervjuji, zbrani med etnografskim terenskim delom leta 2022 v raziskavi Politike za ohranjanje in spodbujanje nepremičnih kulturnih vrednot lokalnega pomena v Bolgariji: etnološka analiza na primerih občin Balčik, Kavarna, Garmen in Sandanski pri projektu BG05M2OP001-1.001-0001 Ustvarjanje in razvoj Heritage BG, Center odličnosti.



# The Multi-locality of Students during COVID-19 and Its Effects on Spatial Development: A Quantitative Case Study of Leibniz University Hanover

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Multi-locality is common in the age group between 18 and 29, mostly due to participation in education processes. The COVID-19 pandemic affected students by abruptly establishing new forms of learning (e.g., virtual classes). A quantitative survey of students from Leibniz University Hanover was conducted during the pandemic in 2020. The survey showed that 78 percent of students live multi-locally and that the pandemic considerably influenced students' multi-local lifestyles.

▪ **Keywords:** housing, infrastructure, engagement, pandemic, multi-locality, students

V starostni skupini od 18 do 29 let je multilokalnost pogost pojav, predvsem zaradi udeležbe mladih v izobraževalnih procesih. Pandemija covida-19 je študente prizadela z nenadno uvedbo novih oblik učenja (npr. virtualni razredi). Med pandemijo leta 2020 je bila izvedena kvantitativna raziskava med študenti Univerze Leibniz v Hannoveru. Raziskava je pokazala, da 78 % študentov živi multilokalno in da je pandemija opazno vplivala na multilokalni življenjski slog študentov.

▪ **Ključne besede:** nastanitev, infrastruktura, sodelovanje, pandemija, multi-lokalnost, študenti

## Introduction

Multi-locality or multi-local living means a way of life in two or more places at the same time. During “*vita activa* in several places”, people use their residences in functionally diverse ways for varying periods of time (Rolshoven, 2006: 181). As a “mass phenomenon” (Weichhart, 2015: 378), multi-locality has already been studied in numerous disciplines such as housing, household and family research (Hilti, 2009; Schier et al., 2015; Wood et al. 2015), as well as migration and mobility research (Nadler, 2014; Kilkey, Palegna-Möllenbeck, 2016). It has also received increased attention in the spatial sciences (Tippel, Plöger, Becker, 2017; Di Marino, Lapintie, 2018; Greinke, 2020; Plöger, 2020; Garde, 2021; Othengrafen et al., 2021). Numerous studies conclude that multi-local lifestyles are represented in almost all age groups and social backgrounds (Hilti, 2013; ARL, 2016; Österreichische Akademie, 2019). In the life phase of young adults between 18 and 35, the main motives for living in two or more places are education or studying (Zeilinger, 2017; Othengrafen et al., 2021). Multi-locality is increasingly common among students (Kramer, 2020). This analysis focuses on 18 to 29-year-old students, as this age group represents a large proportion of those living multi-locally in Germany (Dittrich-Wesbuer, Sturm, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic affected students by abruptly establishing new forms of learning (e.g., studying from home or virtual classes) (Bartik et al., 2020; Bick, Blandin, Mertens, 2020). These changes include the shift from face-to-face teaching to virtual and location-based distance learning as well as contact restrictions and limited access to university buildings (e.g., libraries, lectures halls, student laboratories), which affected student life (Neises, 2021). For multi-locals, these developments can have an impact on their lifestyles as well as on the people they live with and the spatial surroundings they inhabit. Willberg et al. (2021) assume that multi-locality may decline due to these changing forms of studying. In addition, Reuschke and Felstead (2020) expect that these changes can have many implications, even on mental health. Spatial development authorities require information on multi-locality to effectively respond to the extent and characteristics of the phenomenon. The paper aims to analyze the impact of multi-locality on students enrolled at Leibniz University Hanover during COVID-19 and to identify its effects on spatial development. The focus is on housing, leisure behavior, infrastructure, and the COVID-19 pandemic, including as well a discussion of opportunities and challenges.

The paper introduces the state of research on the multi-locality of students before presenting a case study with a quantitative online survey conducted with students from Leibniz University Hanover in Germany. The survey results are presented and discussed, followed by conclusions and outlook.

### **Multi-locality of students**

Bachelor's students in Germany are on average 24.7 years old, and 92 percent of them study full-time – an average of 33 hours per week (Middendorff et al., 2017). The federal capital of Berlin represents the largest German student city with around 194,000 students, followed by the city of Munich (114,000 students) and the city of Cologne (106,000 students) (Studis-Online, 2020). The following study focuses on the city of Hanover, the capital of Lower Saxony, where around 45,000 people study (Schirmer, 2017). Overall, 10 percent of all students in Germany live multi-locally. 62 percent of multi-local students have their second accommodation with their parents at a location separate from their university residence (Middendorff et al., 2017).

The majority of students have always lived multi-locally (Weichhart, 2009). Multi-locals spread their everyday life over several places in diverse ways. For example, some students regularly stay overnight in the accommodation of their partners as Living Apart Together (LAT) couples, mostly switching between two separate households (ARL, 2016). In addition, some multi-local students sleep on the sofa of their acquaintances or at their parents' house – be it in former children's rooms or guest rooms (cf. Sturm, Meyer, 2009; ARL, 2016).

Due to numerous existing forms of multi-local living and overlapping motives, multi-local lifestyles are difficult to measure quantitatively or in terms of residence registration data (Albrecht, Dittrich-Wesbuer, 2021). Multi-locals are hardly visible in official statistics because they are often not registered with a secondary residence (Sturm, Meyer, 2009; Dittrich-Wesbuer et al., 2015; Weichhart, Rumpolt, 2015; Albrecht, Dittrich-Wesbuer, 2021) and because the status ‘student’ does not exist in the German register of residents (Kramer, 2021). In Germany, every person is assigned to a territorially defined area under registration law (ARL, 2016). Although people have the option to register a main and secondary residence in several places (Weiske, 2013), many do not do so. For example, some university towns with a secondary residence tax have very low numbers of registered second homes. However, in the case of cities with a high proportion of students but without a corresponding municipal ordinance, there are higher numbers of secondary residents. It can be assumed that many students in cities with a secondary residence tax do not comply with their registration obligation (Albrecht, Dittrich-Wesbuer, 2021) – also for cost reasons. In such cases, students still mostly continue to use their parents’ home as their registered residence for an indefinite period of time (Weichhart, 2009). Therefore, it can be assumed that the ‘dark number’ of people living in multiple locations is significantly higher than is often supposed (ARL, 2016).

There are some statistical data and empirical studies on the multi-locality of students. For example, a micro census conducted in 2010 shows that 2.1 percent of persons aged 18 and older lived in another apartment (also room, (shared) accommodation or dormitory) in Germany. Just under half of the respondents belong to the age group up to 30 years, so it can be assumed that these are professional or student arrangements (Dittrich-Wesbuer, 2016). In another quantitative online survey of LATs, shuttles<sup>1</sup> and local residents (n = 1270), 46.1 percent of surveyed shuttles and 42.9 percent of LATs live multi-locally (Petzold, 2011). A survey of students at the Institute of Technology (KIT) in Karlsruhe in 2010 showed that 25 percent of students live multi-locally. However, multi-local living seems to be a temporary phase for students because many of them give up their multi-local lifestyle in favor of a mono-local one and move out of their parents’ home to their place of study in their later years of study (Kramer, 2015). Other studies show that academics tend to continue to live multi-locally after completing their university studies (Zeilinger, 2017). More recent studies in the eastern city of Karlsruhe from 2016 also showed that 59 percent of students live multi-locally (Kramer, 2021).

When choosing accommodations, students mostly prefer central and inner-city sites (Weichhart, 2009; Zeilinger, 2017) as well as relatively small (1-2 rooms), and, if possible, furnished accommodations (Zeilinger, 2017; Greinke et al., 2021). In rural areas, students prefer to live mainly in the immediate vicinity of their place of study (Greinke et al., 2021). However, the types of housing often differ widely. For example,

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<sup>1</sup> Persons with an occupational second home.

students may live in properties provided by relatives or acquaintances, shared flats or student dormitories (Zeilinger, 2017).

Students must be able to afford dual household management with or without parental support to lead a multi-local life (e.g., paying rent at their place of study). In addition, there are mobility costs involved in commuting between locations. In many cases, students often depend on public transport because they cannot afford a privately owned car. Additionally, access to transportation can vary according to location (Fischer, 2020). Mostly, students travel back and forth between their places of residence on a weekly basis, especially at the beginning of their studies. Usually, they are at their place of study within the week and, depending on the timetable, leave for their other accommodation on early Friday afternoons. However, whether and how often students commute also depends on distance and associated travel costs (Zeilinger, 2017). Students are for the most part present during the lecture period. More extended absences from their university accommodations are expected during the lecture-free period, during which time the flats can be expected to be vacant (Zeilinger, 2017). On the other hand, the housing market is tight in most cities in Germany during the lecture period. Whether and how students live multi-locally also depends on students' emotional connections to different places, their parents, family, and rational determinants such as the labor market. In addition, having partners at students' municipality of origin can also be a reason for staying at the accommodation "at home". In many places, especially rural municipalities, soft site-related factors such as natural qualities of the areas encourage students to live multi-locally (Fischer, 2020).

In addition, an analysis of Austrian statistics (Statistik Austria) in 2013 showed that around 30 percent of students live multi-locally (Zeilinger, 2017). Furthermore, a quantitative survey of 540 geography students at the University of Innsbruck in the summer semester of 2021 showed that many students changed their living situation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The reasons given for this were mostly the desire for an independent lifestyle and the existing availability of leisure activities (Neises, 2021). Compared to before the pandemic, the number of those living in student accommodations at their primary place of residence increased. In addition, more people are living in shared accommodations, and fewer people are living with their parents or grandparents. According to respondents, the main reasons for their lifestyle changes during the pandemic were time-consuming travel, quarantine regulations, and border controls. Due to the pandemic, many students also reduced the frequency of commuting between their places and stayed more often at their primary residence (university accommodation). However, the duration of the stays mostly remained the same (Neises, 2021). Whether students return after graduation to their place of origin as mono-locals depends on numerous factors. For example, a quantitative survey of 128 students at the University of Vienna showed that family, nature, friends, property, or profession could influence relocation (Kappelmüller, 2014).

Multi-local students are an interesting target group for spatial development and municipalities. The migration of students and resulting brain drain can pose a challenge for some municipalities (especially structurally weak ones). However, the opportunities that may arise from the presence of multi-local students are also often discussed – including their potential for bringing new ideas into a municipality (Fischer, 2020) or participating as volunteers.

Students can be a catalyst for urban life (Kramer, 2021). Although “studentification” is already being critically discussed in the UK in reference to the term gentrification (Kramer, 2021: 10), students identify themselves as (future) residents of their neighborhoods. Their creative potential and their commitments – whether they are political, social, or voluntary in associations and churches – could enliven a neighborhood far more than is currently the case if they were offered low-threshold opportunities to participate in local life (e.g., trial memberships, project formats, workshops). They should therefore be engaged even more in spatial planning, development, and design processes in the future (Kramer, 2021).

“University sites are places of multi-locality” (Zeilinger, 2017: 116). In recent years, some actors are already responding to the demand for small and furnished flats for ‘young professionals’ (ARL, 2016: 9). New forms of furnished housing with additional services (e.g., WIFI, common rooms) in student dormitories have become an established practice in many cities, allowing students to move in quickly and use flats immediately. In addition, these accommodations are mostly affordable on students’ tight budgets. Furthermore, student dormitories have already been converted into ‘normal’ flats and hotel rooms during the lecture-free period to avoid vacant apartments (Zeilinger, 2017).

In summary, multi-locality has changed and evolved due to societal changes. Existing research has demonstrated that multi-local lifestyles are prevalent in the age group between 18 and 29 years. There is an exceptional need for additional research in this topic area for university sites. The case study of the city of Hanover as a university site examines existing students’ multi-local lifestyles together with the resulting opportunities and challenges.

## Methods and case study

A comprehensive literature review,<sup>2</sup> followed by a quantitative survey with students from the Faculty of Architecture and Landscape Sciences of Leibniz University Hanover, was conducted to analyze the impact of the multi-locality of students during COVID-19 and to identify its effects on spatial development.

<sup>2</sup> A literature analysis (conducted according to Brink, 2013) on student multi-locality serves as the background for the case study of the city of Hanover. Multi-locality and students were entered as titles on Google Scholar, and 993 hits were found. The titles and abstracts for the search terms were read and then selected for further analysis. Further approximations to the field are exploratory.

The city of Hanover was chosen as a case study given that compared to other large cities, Hanover is mainly populated with young adults between 18 and 29. Moreover, it has the third highest proportion of students in the population due to it being an attractive location for work, education, and university sites. Hanover is also forecast to have a positive natural population balance between births and deaths in the future (LHH, 2021), due not least to (international) immigration and people moving to Hanover. As a result, the city's population is growing (Kaiser, Blaschke, 2019).

Hanover is home to the second largest university in Lower Saxony, Leibniz University Hanover, which has over 28,819 students in 85 degree programs in the winter semester 2021/2022 (KFSN, 2020; Das Präsidium der Leibniz Universität Hannover, 2022). It is organized into nine faculties, one of which is the Faculty of Architecture and Landscape Sciences (Das Präsidium der Leibniz Universität Hannover, 2022). Approximately 1,450 students are enrolled in 13 degree programs at the faculty in the winter semester of 2022/2023.

The core city of Hanover is a preferred place to live for students. Many students also live in the immediate vicinity of their university, for example, in the urban district Hanover-Nordstadt; however, neighboring districts are also inhabited comparatively often (Unicum, 2015). In Hanover, students mainly live in rented flats (40 per cent) – with or without a partner or children. The fact that only six per cent of students live in student dormitories is striking. On average, 18 per cent of respondents live at their parents' accommodation, and 35 per cent live in a shared flat (Schirmer, 2017).

A total of approximately 1,178,316 persons have registered their primary residence in the Hanover Region, with 542,393 of these primary residences being registered in the city of Hanover. There are also 24,495 people in the Hanover Region with a registered secondary residence, with 12,093 of them registered in the city of Hanover. This means that approximately 2 percent of the inhabitants of the Hanover Region have a secondary residence (Region Hanover, 2019). A good tenth of the student population (eleven percent) has two registered residences (Schirmer, 2017).

### ***Quantitative online survey***

With the help of an actively recruited, quantitative online survey, students of the Faculty of Architecture and Landscape Sciences at Leibniz University Hanover were selected as a list-based sample (Baur, Blasius, 2014). The students of the faculty were surveyed as a non-representative sample of all students at the university location in Hanover (Flechtner, 2020). The online survey format ensures a high level of anonymity (Taddicken, 2013; Korn, 2018).

The survey was developed with the help of the "Limesurvey" survey software. It started with a welcome text briefly explaining multi-locality and the target group of the survey (students of the Faculty of Architecture and Landscape Sciences at Leibniz University Hanover). In addition, a contact e-mail address was given to which questions

could be sent in order to clarify any unclear issues. Participants had the possibility to answer any question with “no statement” or add “other” in free text. Almost all questions had predefined answers, meaning that the survey could be completed quickly. The survey had been checked in a pretest, during which various people filled in the questions on a sample basis (Kirchhoff et al., 2003). Afterwards, the structure, conclusiveness, formulations and coherence were adjusted and revised. The structure of the survey was based on previous research and followed a survey of multi-local students according to Kramer (2015, 2020), resulting in the division of the questionnaire into four main categories: housing and reporting behavior, infrastructure, leisure behavior, and change in behavior due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The section on housing and reporting behavior began with the following question: “How many accommodations do you regularly stay at? What are the reasons for using the different accommodations?” Respondents were given the option to indicate the number and multiple reasons for each accommodation. In addition, respondents were asked for the zip code of their accommodations and where they were officially registered. Furthermore, they were asked how they live in their respective accommodations. The section also included questions about the length of time that respondents stay at their respective accommodations. Finally, respondents were asked how long they usually stay at each accommodation.

The section on infrastructure began with a question about the means of transport used to and from Leibniz University Hanover. In addition, respondents were asked how much time they need to travel from their accommodation to Leibniz University Hanover and how much time they need to travel between their accommodations. Furthermore, respondents were asked to indicate what could be improved in the city of Hanover and the surrounding area for those living in various accommodations. The section also included questions about the use of urban green spaces and forests in Hanover.

The section on leisure behavior contained questions about how often respondents used hairdressers, doctors, pharmacies, post offices, and grocery shopping at their accommodations or went shopping for small goods, books, hi-fi equipment, furniture, and clothes. In addition, respondents were asked to name their engagement in various clubs or organizations at the respective accommodations. Furthermore, they were asked how often they participated in the following range of leisure activities: visits of family members or friends, cultural or sports events, dining establishments, discotheque/dance events, going for walks, and shopping.

The section on change in behavior due to the COVID-19 pandemic started with a question about how their multi-local lifestyle changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They could also answer why their lifestyle changed.

In the final section, respondents were able to state their gender, year of birth, family status, their study program, and semester at the Faculty of Architecture and Landscape Sciences. In addition, they could enter the amount of money they had

available per month in their budget, whether they work during their studies, and the country where they got their university entrance qualification. The questionnaire closed with a thank you.

The survey was carried out from 12 June 2020 through 5 July 2020. For this purpose, the Faculty of Architecture and Landscape Sciences students were contacted by email. The enrollment office of Leibniz University Hanover informed them about the research project and invited them to participate in the survey. In addition, the call for participation was disseminated on social media. The quantitative online survey has been evaluated with the “IBM SPSS Statistics” statistical analysis software using a coding procedure. For this purpose, the data was checked for errors and cleaned (Kuckartz, Ebert, Rädiker, Steffer, 2009). The participants’ answers were quantitatively processed, and different answers were intersected with one another in cross-tables.

### **Multi-locality of students at the Faculty of Architecture and Landscape Sciences**

The following section presents the socio-demographic data of the respondents, followed by a discussion of the survey results regarding housing, leisure behavior and engagement, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### ***Socio-demographic data of the respondents of the survey***

A total of 341 students took part in the quantitative online survey, with 252 completing the questionnaire in its entirety. 242 questionnaires were evaluated after data cleaning. 77.7 percent of the respondents identified as female and 20.2 percent as male, 0.4 percent identified themselves as gender-diverse, and 1.7 percent made no statement. The average age of the respondents is 25 years, with the youngest student being 18 years old and the oldest student being 48 years old. Around 55.3 percent of respondents were born between 1996 and 1998. Furthermore, 55 percent of the students stated that they were in a steady partnership, 36 percent were single, and 2.1 percent were married or in a registered partnership. Around 27 percent of the students were in their first or second semester of study, 26 percent in their third or fourth semester, 19 percent in their fifth or sixth semester, and 12.4 percent in their seventh or eighth semester of study. 34.3 percent of the respondents have 601-800 euros a month at their disposal for living expenses, 16.9 percent report having 801-1000 euros, and 16.5 percent 401-600 euros. Approximately 87 percent of the students acquired their higher education entrance qualification in Germany and 5.4 percent outside Germany (1.2 percent in China, 0.8 percent each in Iran and the Czech Republic, 2.6 percent are distributed among Croatia, Ecuador, India, Luxembourg, Russia, and Spain).



### ***Multi-local living and housing***

How many accommodations do students regularly stay at? Overall, 78.1 percent (189 students) of all respondents live multi-locally. Of these, 43 percent live in two accommodations and 25.6 percent in three accommodations. Officially, 53 percent of all respondents are registered at their primary accommodation and 18.9 percent at their second accommodation (see Figure 1). Overall, about 80 percent of multi-locals are officially registered and appear in the statistics. Younger multi-locals (born 1995 to 2000) usually have two accommodations, and older respondents (born 1996 to 1999) have three accommodations or only one accommodation (mono-locals). The percentage of respondents living as multi-local students at the Faculty of Architecture and Landscape Sciences at Leibniz University Hanover is significantly higher than the 11 percent statistically recorded for the city of Hanover (Schirmer, 2017).

Moreover, the survey results also exceed the findings of other studies; for example, the analysis of Austrian statistics found that 30 percent of students are registered as multi-local (Zeilinger, 2017), and the study of students at the Institute of Technology in Karlsruhe found that 25 percent of students lived multi-locally (Kramer, 2015). However, one reason for this difference may be because Kramer (2015) studied the reporting behavior in Karlsruhe and the surrounding area, while this study considers all accommodations and is not limited to Hanover and its region.

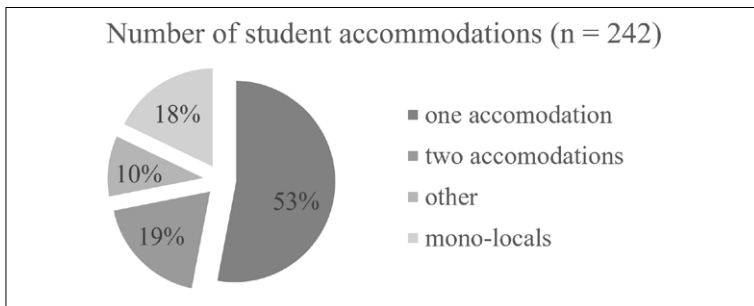


Figure 1: Number of student accommodations. Source: own illustration.

What are the reasons that students gave for using different accommodations? The primary accommodation is mainly chosen because of studies (30.7 percent of respondents), but also due to family (16 percent of respondents) or friends (10.3 percent of respondents). 7.5 percent choose their primary accommodation because of a partnership, and 7.2 percent because of emotional ties to the accommodation. The second accommodation is chosen mainly for family reasons (27.9 percent of respondents) but also because of partnership (15.3 percent of respondents), studies (12.6 percent of respondents), or friends (11.7 percent of respondents). Students still seem to be quite connected to their families and friends and don't wish to give up their primary accommodation completely – and thus live multi-locally.

Where are the accommodations located and what sort of accommodations do they live in? 95 percent of students' accommodations are located in Germany, 3 percent in Europe, and 2 percent outside Europe. 71 percent of their accommodations are located in Lower Saxony. As far as types of accommodation are concerned, 36.4 percent of the students use a shared flat as their primary accommodation, 27.3 percent their parents' accommodation, 21.9 percent live with a partner, and 9.1 percent live alone (see Figure 2). Female respondents mostly live in shared accommodations (32.4 percent) or with their parents (28.2 percent), whereas male respondents indicated that they live primarily in shared accommodations (49 percent). Data about second accommodations demonstrate that 37.2 percent of the respondents live with their parents, 10.7 percent in a shared flat, and 7.9 percent with their partner, and 3.7 percent live alone (see Figure 3). Students therefore prefer to share living space rather than live alone – in both of their residences. The reasons for this were not asked, but it is probably also for financial reasons and not necessarily directly due to the specific desire not to live alone.

Similar results were found in the study by Kramer (2015): 41 percent of surveyed students live in shared apartments while 13 percent live in student dormitories, presumably because more student dormitories are available in Karlsruhe than in Hanover. It must also be considered that students from all degree programs were surveyed in Karlsruhe while only students of the Faculty of Architecture and Landscape Sciences were surveyed in this study. Therefore it must be considered that interest in a student dormitory may be lower among students in the faculty than among students specializing in other subject areas. A study conducted by Othengrafen et al. (2021) in rural areas has likewise made it clear that students also turn to temporary forms of accommodation such as holiday homes during periods when there is a lack of suitable accommodation. This temporary renting for more extended periods of time is an opportunity for property owners to intermittently rent out vacant living space. Therefore, student dormitories or other forms of temporary accommodation and affordable housing are important for cities for they attract students as the young generation as potential newcomers that may stay longer than the course of university study as well as other target groups (e.g., people with low income). Property owners, employers, universities, and other urban actors can benefit from these target groups as new residents.

How long do students stay at their accommodations? Respondents with two accommodations often have one at their home/primary residence and one located near the university. This allows them to avoid the time commitment and potential stress of a daily train or car journey of several hours' duration. However, proximity between the two accommodations may encourage students to switch between the accommodations regularly and at shorter intervals – for example, every week or every 14 days during weekends. These patterns of multi-local living stem from a desire to see family or friends regularly; respondents most often state that they shift between their accommodations

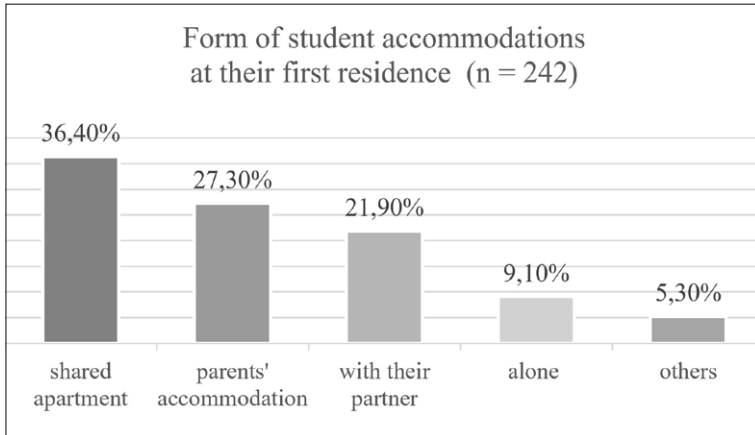


Figure 2: Accommodation of students at their primary residence. Source: own illustration.

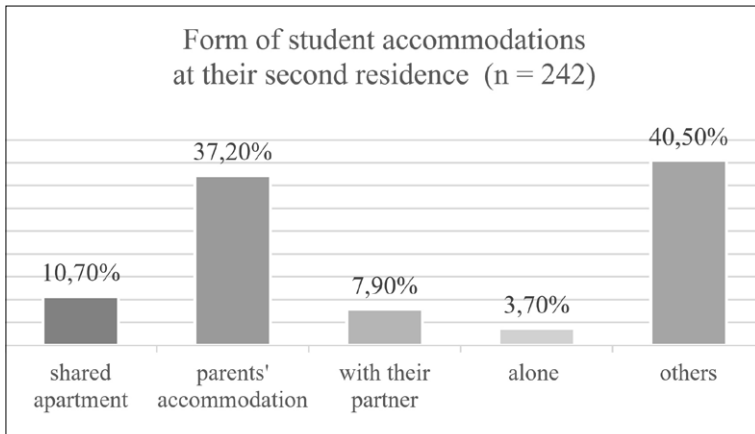


Figure 3: Accommodation of students at their second residence. Source: own illustration.

due to their family or friends. Another study also confirmed that multi-local living in two accommodations, at the university site and in the hometown, is students' most common form of multi-local practice (Kramer, 2020: 284).

During the lecture period, 75.7 percent of the multi-local respondents (n = 143 multi-locals) stated that they would stay at their primary accommodation at least once a week, 9 percent do so at least once a fortnight, and 6.9 percent at least once a month. 38.1 percent of the surveyed students stay at their second accommodation at least once a week, 16.9 percent at least once every 14 days, and another 22.2 percent at least once a month. More than half of the respondents (64.4 percent) visit their primary accommodation at least once a week during the lecture-free period. Another 15.9 percent visit their primary accommodation at least once every fortnight, and 14.3

percent at least once a month. More than a quarter of the participants (31.2 percent) visit their second accommodation at least once a week during the lecture-free period, 27 percent at least once a fortnight, and 23.8 percent once a month. When comparing the frequency of visits and lengths of stay at accommodations during the lecture periods and the lecture-free periods, it is noticeable that there is a slight change in leisure time behavior regarding visiting family members. Some respondents, for example, no longer switch to weekly visits to their parents during the lecture-free period but instead to fortnightly visits – and then staying with the family for more extended periods of time. Kramer (2015), Zeilinger (2017), and Fischer (2020) also came to a similar conclusion in their studies. They also observed that students detach themselves from their parental home as they progress in their studies (Kramer, 2015; Fischer, 2020) and move into a shared apartment, for example (Kramer, 2015). Although the data does not provide clear results on this topic, this trend can also be seen in the survey data of this paper. For example, students from the 5th and 6th semesters onwards more often live alone or with their partners. One reason for this could be that they have found new friends and leisure activities at their accommodation near their place of study. Furthermore, it can be assumed that students are more interested in breaking away from their parental home as they grow older to build a more independent life.

### ***Leisure behavior***

The surveyed students were asked which means of transport they use to travel to the university and how long it takes them to travel between accommodations. They mostly travel to the university from their primary accommodation and not, for example, their second or third accommodation. They mostly use a bicycle (28 percent) or public transport such as urban railways, trams, subways (27.5 percent), and trains (13.8 percent) (see Figure 4). Their answers depict that they really live in Hanover – they spend a lot of time there and are not just temporary guests. Their use of the city infrastructure consequently renders them a target group for local transport at university sites.

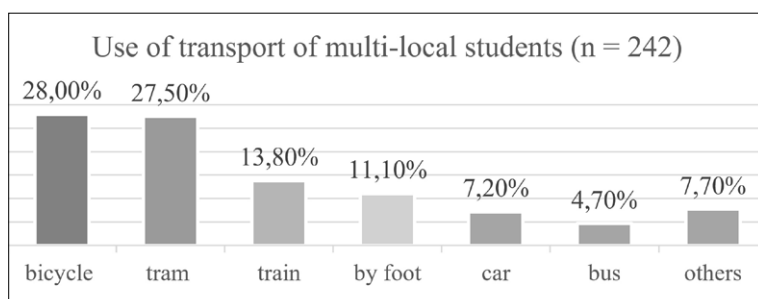


Figure 4: Use of transport of multi-local-students at their primary accommodation.  
Source: own illustration.

How often do respondents use existing services in the vicinity of their places of accommodation? Although students usually have their primary accommodation at the place of study and spend much of their time there, they rarely use services there such as hairdressers. They also only sometimes (33.5 percent) or rarely (35.1 percent) visit doctors near their primary place of accommodation. However, this can also be attributed to the overall low demand for doctors; only 3.3 percent of the students visit doctors very often. The responses on the use of pharmacies also provide similar results. However, it is noticeable that demand for these services falls in the case of the second accommodation. Only 18.6 percent of students sometimes visit pharmacies near their second residence, and 15.3 percent never do. Larger purchases are made very often near their primary residence by 33.9 percent of students and often by 26.4 percent. They thus make such purchases significantly less often near their second place of residence. In a similar vein, food, drinks, and small daily necessities are also bought by 55 percent of the students at the primary accommodation, and less often at the secondary one. Other items like books, CDs, and DVDs are rarely purchased at any location. On the other hand, clothes are mostly bought at the accommodation located near the university and less often at the secondary accommodation. Students at their primary accommodation mostly visit their family or friends in their free time. Less time is dedicated to available cultural events: for example, 22.3 percent of those surveyed seldom attend cultural events, and 40.1 percent sometimes do so. However, 16.5 percent use sports facilities very often, and 18.6 percent often. 30.2 percent of the students frequently visit gastronomic establishments near the university residence, and 16.9 visit very often. Thus, respondents still use services close to their primary accommodation that they have known for a long time – from their life before being a student. Many students thus continue to visit a familiar doctor or hairdresser and do not immediately switch to others at their second accommodation. However, it can be assumed that this will change over time because some students (particularly in their later semesters of study) shift their focus in greater part to their lives near their university, which is primarily frequented for daily needs and other purchases as well as use of corresponding infrastructure and services.

### ***Engagement***

How engaged are the surveyed students in various clubs and organizations? The survey showed that 39.2 percent of students are not engaged at all in the places where they live (see Figure 5). The more accommodations they have, the lower their level of engagement. If students are engaged, they mostly do so in sports clubs (23.6 percent in their primary accommodation and 12.5 percent in their second accommodation). Kramer (2015) was also able to confirm this in her study: students prefer to be engaged in sports clubs, followed by cultural, music, theatre, and dance clubs. Interest in local politics and citizens' initiatives is also very low among the respondents. Kramer (2019: 286) explains that the accommodation at the university site is a "biographical transit station"

because the students only stay there for a short time. For this reason, they participate less in their district's social and political life than families or pensioners who have their permanent center of life there. Political processes or the concerns of citizens' initiatives, for example, may go on for several years, sometimes lasting longer than the students' accommodation on-site. Hence, students' motivations to participate are very low. Kramer (2019) emphasizes that student participation in projects is more likely to succeed if they extend over shorter periods of time and can be implemented as promptly as possible. In summary, students become less engaged the more accommodations they have and clearly focus on their interests during their engagement.

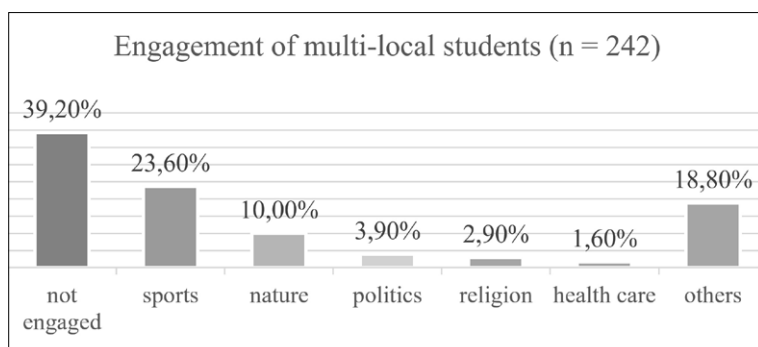


Figure 5: Engagement of multi-local-students at their primary accommodation.  
Source: own illustration.

### ***Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic***

How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect student multi-locality? Survey questions addressed the housing behavior of students during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on student accommodations, frequency of use, and whether students gave up their multi-local lifestyle during the pandemic. Furthermore, questions focused on ascertaining why their behavior changed during the pandemic. Survey results show that compared to the situation before the onset of the pandemic, 32.6 percent of surveyed students stayed at individual accommodations longer, 11.3 percent reported shorter stays at individual accommodations, and 12.1 percent of the respondents stayed at only one accommodation during the pandemic. For 25.3 percent of the students, travel between accommodations was also less frequent due to the pandemic. 3.6 percent of the respondents had even given up one of their accommodations due to the pandemic. Only 7.9 percent of the students were not affected by pandemic-related changes (see Figure 6). The study by Neises (2021) confirms these trends, showing that many students reduced the frequency of commuting between their places due to the pandemic, staying more often instead at their primary place of residence (near their place of study). However, the duration of their stay at their residences hardly changed (Neises, 2021).

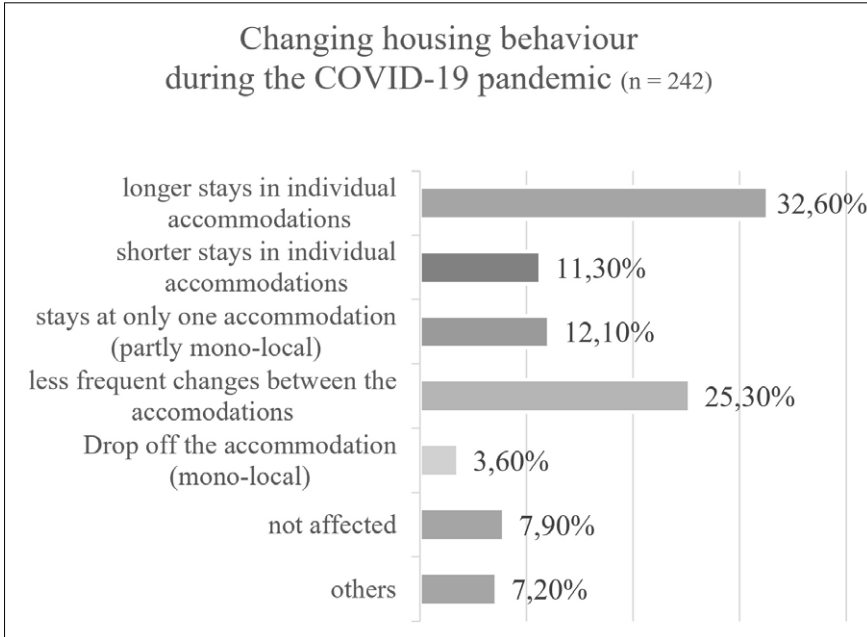


Figure 6: Changing housing behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic. Source: own illustration.

How long did students stay at their accommodations? During the COVID-19 pandemic, more than half (68.3 percent, n = 143 multi-locals) stayed at their primary accommodation at least once a week, 9.5 percent stayed at their primary accommodation at least once a fortnight, and 10.1 percent at least once a month. 36.5 percent of respondents visited their second accommodation at least once a week during the COVID-19 pandemic, 16.4 percent went at least once every fortnight, and 19.6 percent stayed at their second accommodation at least once per month. Therefore, students tended to stay longer at their primary residence and less often at their secondary one during the COVID-19 pandemic. They left Hanover more often and did not stay that long at their place near the university. In addition, comparable research (Neises, 2021) demonstrated that compared to before the pandemic, the number of people living in student dormitories increased from 6.2 percent to 8.1 percent of respondents. Furthermore, more people lived in shared accommodations (from 41.0 percent before the pandemic to 42.9 percent during the pandemic), and fewer people lived with their parents or grandparents (31.1 percent before the pandemic and 26.7 percent during the pandemic). According to respondents, the main reasons for the changes during the pandemic were time-consuming travel, quarantine regulations, and border controls (Neises, 2021). As a result, university cities temporarily lost a number of inhabitants during the COVID-19 pandemic, as these stayed at their accommodations longer, which means alternative accommodations were vacant for brief, but not extensive amounts of time.

Why did the behavior of students change due to the COVID-19 pandemic? The main reason for the shifts in (housing and living) behavior given by 19.1 percent of the students was the closure of the university buildings and the obligation to study at a distance. In addition, 17.1 percent preferred to live in an accommodation with a garden during the pandemic, and 14.1 percent cited the possibility of working independently of the workplace during the pandemic. Another 14.1 percent wanted to spend time with their relatives during the pandemic, and 13.6 percent wished to avoid using public transport, which is why they changed their (housing and living) behavior (see Figure 7). In particular, respondents who only stayed in one accommodation because of the pandemic cited avoiding public transport as the main reason for their change in housing behavior (54.4 percent). The reasons for changing behavior make it clear that the surroundings and circumstances at the places of residence can influence students' housing decisions since many students left the city when the university buildings were closed. Most students came back once university buildings were re-opened and on-site lectures resumed. Furthermore, good living conditions such as green surroundings or possibilities for healthy travel are important for students. However, Neises (2021) also concluded that for most students, it is an independent lifestyle or the availability of leisure activities that led to respondents' changed housing and living behavior – and not primarily the difficulties in commuting caused by COVID-19.

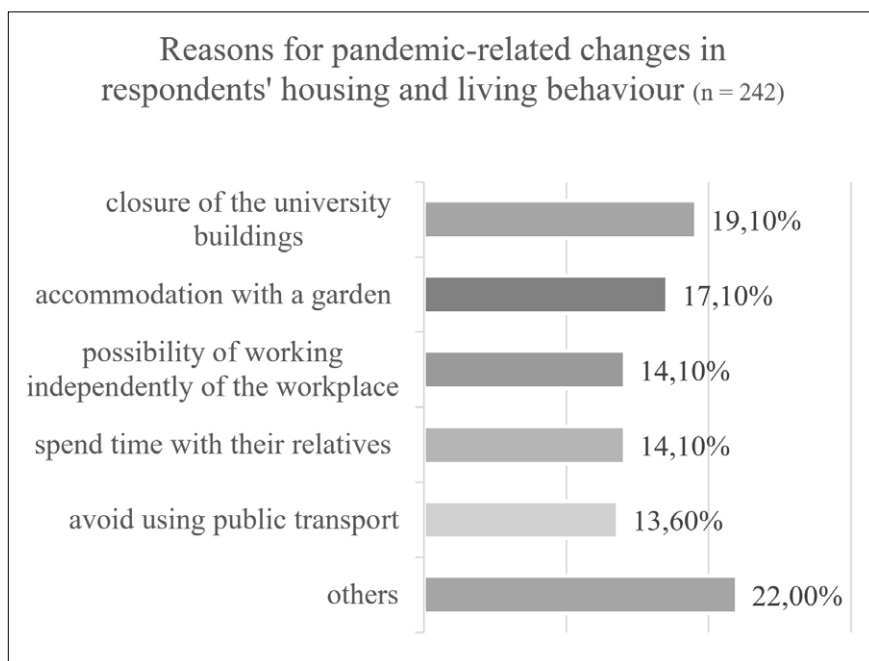


Figure 7: Reasons for pandemic-related changes in respondents' housing and living behavior. Source: own illustration.



### **Multi-local students and spatial development**

In Germany, it can be assumed that at least 10 percent of all students live multi-locally (Middendorff et al., 2017). The number is far greater in the case study of the Faculty of Architecture and Landscape Sciences (78.1 percent, or 189 students). Even though students usually only live at their residence near the university for the duration of their studies (or mostly during the lecture period) and are thus “temporary residents of a city” (Kramer, 2019: 285), they are an attractive target group for spatial development and municipalities. They can represent both a challenge and an opportunity for cities and municipalities. For example, the migration of students can lead to brain drain (Fischer, 2020). At the same time, multi-locals can represent potentially committed people and provide impulses for urban life (Kramer, 2021).

Approximately 71 percent of student accommodations are in Lower Saxony. The majority of the accommodations located near the university in Hanover are shared flats or accommodations shared with a partner. According to students, their accommodations should be as centrally located as possible – in or close to the city center (Weichhart, 2009; Zeilinger, 2017). They should also be comparatively small (1-2 rooms) and, if possible, furnished (Zeilinger 2017; Othengrafen et al., 2021). In Germany, most of the cities hosting a university already have student dormitories; however, some municipalities leave students to the housing market, which makes it difficult to find a place to stay. In Hanover, places in student dormitories are highly competitive and the supply of small flats is also limited. Students, therefore, need help to find suitable and affordable housing. Some cities in Germany have already responded to the demand for small apartments for young professionals (ARL, 2016) by constructing student dormitories. However, housing capacities in the city of Hanover must be increased to meet the demand. In addition, student residences already convert into flats and hotels during the lecture-free period to avoid flat vacancies (Zeilinger, 2017). For example, the youth hostel in Hanover offers long-stay rentals for students (Youth Hostel, 2023). Due to the financial situation of students, most of whom have low budgets, it will also be necessary for municipalities and (in cooperation with) investors to create affordable housing in the future (Reuschke, 2020). Suitable measures for students include the conversion or construction of small flats and different available housing options consisting of shared rooms, single-room apartments and flats in boarding houses – such as those offered by the city of Hamburg for multi-locals in HafenCity (Greinke, Lange, Othengrafen, 2020; Menzl, 2020). In addition, investments by municipalities or private investors in boarding houses with small residential units and additional services (such as laundry services etc.) could be an option (Greinke, Lange, Othengrafen, 2020). Another example are the so-called boarding houses that were developed to cover the needs of multi-local persons (employees and students) in rural areas in lower Saxony (e.g., <https://diepholzer-boardinghouse.de/>). Finally, cooperative initiatives can also be

a possible solution: for example, the housing society can cooperate with universities and private investors to create suitable and affordable housing for students.

Students are a target group for local transport near universities because they mostly travel by tram or bus, thus increasing the need for transport services and contributing to additional traffic burdens (Weichhart, 2020). However, the city of Hanover and the Hanover region already offers a good network of local and long-distance transport that provides multi-local students with suitable options for their mobility needs. The existing semester ticket enables students to use local transport at affordable prices. From May 2023 onwards, it is possible to extend this ticket with a comparatively low-priced *Deutschland ticket* for local transport throughout Germany. For 49€ per month, people can travel the entire local and regional train and bus network across the country. Furthermore, students spend their free time with family, friends, and acquaintances that they also invite to visit them at their university location, and the increased demand could even contribute to the city's revitalization (cf. Leubert, 2013). Students' guests can bring additional purchasing power to municipalities, helping revitalize ('abandoned') city centers.

Overall, students tend to be less engaged in their localities and are also less interested in local politics and citizens' initiatives (Dittrich-Wesbuer, 2016; Kramer, 2019). However, some respondents are engaged in sports clubs or other activities. Due to their fluid lifestyles, students usually have limited free time at any given location. This raises numerous questions, including which new formats of participation and communication suit multi-local lifestyles and how temporary presences and absences can be sufficiently considered in urban governance (cf. Dittrich-Wesbuer, Plöger, 2013; Dittrich-Wesbuer, 2016; Danielzyk, Dittrich-Wesbuer, 2020). Multi-local students are residents of municipalities, and therefore the number of people who are potentially available for voluntary participation in the city also increases (cf. Leubert, 2013). Kramer (2019) emphasizes that the participation of students in projects is more likely to succeed if these extend over a shorter period of time and can be implemented as promptly as possible. For example, some good practices exist with dual memberships in football clubs or dual memberships in the fire brigade. This allows multi-locals to be active in two associations and thus be engaged in two places. In addition, the exchange between multi-local and mono-local people, suggested by Menzl (2020), could be important for good neighborly arrangements in the city of Hanover. A combination of the two ways of life could even cross-stimulate each other. Small-scale approaches can be beneficial, because individual neighborhoods represent an important (social) unit for consideration (Dittrich-Wesbuer, Plöger, 2013).

The COVID-19 pandemic influenced the (housing and living) behavior of the students, who stayed for longer periods at their different accommodations. These longer periods have positive potential impacts for cities and places. For example, students can become more deeply engaged and they use infrastructures more often. This can help clubs and

organizations fulfill their citizens' involvement and can stabilize a system where fewer people are available. At the same time, longer stays at certain accommodations mean longer absences at the other ones, creating the opposite effect at other sites. If such durations extend in scope, they can create problems for cities as accommodations are rented but not used frequently, resulting in 'ghost accommodations' that are inhabited 'on paper' but used only for limited periods. Therefore, it is necessary that university cities build healthy environments with enough green spaces and healthy travel options for all inhabitants. This will ensure that students come back after a pandemic or stay longer during other crises by providing an attractive setting for them.

Multi-local students mostly reside at their residences near their place of study in phases: however, their travel between their accommodations decreases during the study period. In addition, students in later years of study are less likely to switch between accommodations and are more likely to stay at their place of study. This may result in them – together with their guests – generating a stronger demand for services and helping revitalize urban settings and, indirectly, promoting the city (cf. Leubert, 2013) – even if they only live there for limited periods. Furthermore, students living for longer periods near their place of study may even decide to shift to a mono-local lifestyle. Therefore, multi-local students represent a potential for municipalities that should not be underestimated. However, it is necessary to offer students diverse forms of support (e.g., central and small accommodation, good public transport, project based engagement) so that for they may become more engaged in local life.

## Conclusion and outlook

Almost all age groups and social classes exhibit multi-locality or multi-local living. Students in particular are among those populations that live multi-locally. The COVID-19 pandemic affected (and still affects) students by abruptly establishing new forms of work (e.g., home office, virtual and distance learning, closing of university buildings). This paper presents an analysis of the impact of COVID on the multi-locality of the students of Leibniz University Hanover and identifies its effects on spatial development. The case study focuses on housing, leisure behavior, infrastructure, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

“University sites are places of multi-locality” (Zeilinger, 2017: 116), with students being “temporary residents of a city” (Kramer, 2019: 285). At least 10 percent of all students in Germany live multi-locally (Middendorff et al., 2017). 78 percent of the respondents studying at the Faculty of Architecture and Landscape Sciences at Leibniz University Hanover identified as multi-local, which is a significantly higher number than the 11 percent statistically recorded for the city of Hanover (Schirmer, 2017). Moreover, the percentage also exceeds those recorded in other studies, including the

30 percent of multi-local students registered in Austrian statistics (Zeilinger, 2017) and 25 percent of survey respondents that are multi-local at the Institute of Technology in Karlsruhe (Kramer, 2015).

Given the significant percentage of students that live multi-locally, students represent both a challenge and an opportunity for spatial development and municipalities – and should thus be included as a target group in spatial planning (Kramer, 2019, 2021). The creative potential of students can help them become impulse generators and (future) residents of a city (Kramer, 2021). As students, they get to know a place during the course of their study that they can learn to appreciate in the future; thus, students can be seen as an opportunity for municipalities that are interested in attracting new residents (Greinke, 2020). This makes them a relevant target group for the housing market in particular (Dittrich-Wesbuer, 2016; Danielzyk, Dittrich-Wesbuer, 2020) as well as for other areas and topics related to spatial planning.

In the future, more studies will be necessary to better assess the development of multi-local lifestyles and gain detailed data. Including students from other study programs into research on this topic is essential to determine possible similarities or differences. Furthermore, surveys could be conducted with other social groups to understand the range of multi-locality, which in turn could serve as the basis for further recommendations for the future spatial development of Hanover that can be adapted to multi-local lifestyles. Research and case studies in other cities would also be useful, especially because multi-locals reside in several cities, creating possible synergies and impacts in the different locations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the housing and living behavior of students. In addition, commuting between locations was reduced in some cases due to numerous reasons, including the closure of university buildings and the introduction of distance learning. The survey respondents seemed to be predominantly ‘weekend multi-locals’, staying at university residences during the week and with their families on weekends. The university area in Hanover is primarily frequented for daily needs, with also other purchases and the corresponding infrastructure and services being used accordingly. Students tend to be less engaged in organized social activities with the exception of sports clubs. The COVID-19 pandemic strongly influenced the survey respondents. The survey demonstrated that there were changes in the frequency and duration of visits to the various accommodations, the abandonment of a few accommodation facilities, and weaker use of public transport. These changes had (in)direct effects on multi-local lifestyles.

In regard to the spatial development of the city of Hanover, it became clear that multi-local lifestyles are a significant issue that should be addressed in spatial planning and development to balance out the gap between demand and supply. It should be mentioned that the administrative bodies of Germany have hitherto not paid much attention to the subject. However, the survey shows a need for action, especially in

the case of housing issues. There needs to be a greater number of small and affordable apartments in the city of Hanover and other cities in Germany. Promoting the integration and participation of multi-locals in spatial policy and planning is also important. Spatial planners can utilize existing information about multi-local lifestyles to prepare and adapt to their expected positive and negative effects. Therefore, it is necessary to address multi-locality in spatial planning practice in more detail and collect data in comprehensive sets.

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### **Multilokalnost študentov med pandemijo covid-19 in njeni učinki na prostorski razvoj: kvantitativna študija primera na Univerzi Leibniz v Hannoveru**

Multilokalnost ali multilokalno življenje pomeni življenje na dveh ali več krajih hkrati. Številne študije ugotavljajo, da je multilokalni način življenja razširjen skoraj v vseh starostnih skupinah in družbenih okoljih (Hilti, 2013; ARL, 2016; Oberösterreichische Akademie, 2019), vse pogostejši pa je pri študentih (Kramer, 2020). Ta analiza se osredinja na študente, stare od 18 do 29 let, saj ta starostna skupina predstavlja velik delež tistih, ki v Nemčiji živijo multilokalno (Dittrich-Wesbuer, Sturm, 2020).

Pandemija covid-19 je opazno vplivala na študente, saj je nenadoma uvedla nove oblike (po)uče(va)nja (npr. Bartik idr., 2020; Bick idr., 2020), vključno s prehodom z neposrednega poučevanja na virtualno učenje oz. učenje na daljavo, ter omejila stike in dostop do univerzitetnih stavb, kar je močno vplivalo na življenje študentov (Neises, 2021). Avtorica analizira vpliv covid-19 na multilokalnost študentov Univerze Leibniz v Hannoveru in prepoznava njegove učinke na prostorski razvoj.

Predstavlja analizo kvantitativne raziskave študentov Fakultete za arhitekturo in krajinske vede. V raziskavo je vključila nereprezentativni vzorec vseh študentov na lokaciji univerze v Hannoveru (Flechtner, 2020). Na podlagi prejšnjih raziskav o multilokalnih študentih (Kramer, 2015, 2020) se je spletna anketa, ki so jo reševali študenti, osredinila na štiri glavne teme: nastanitev, infrastruktura, vedenje v prostem času in pandemija covid-19.

Obračnavani rezultati temeljijo na 242 vprašalnikih. Na splošno 78,1 % (189 študentov) vseh anketirancev živi multilokalno. Od tega jih 43 % živi v dveh nastanitvah, 25,6 % pa v treh. Uradno je 53 % anketirancev prijavljenih v svoji primarni nastanitvi, 18,9 % pa v drugi.

Rezultati ankete so pokazali, da je pandemija covida-19 spremenila stanovanjsko in bivalno vedenje študentov. Poleg tega se je v nekaterih primerih zmanjšala pogostost potovanj med lokacijami, predvsem zaradi zaprtja univerzitetnih stavb in prevlade študija na daljavo. Študenti so za svoje vsakdanje potrebe uporabljali univerzitetno bivališče v Hannovru, vključno z nakupi in uporabo dane infrastrukture in storitev. Anketa je pokazala, da so multilokalni študenti praviloma manj angažirani, če pa so, so večinoma dejavni v športnih klubih.

Avtorica na primer multilokalnih študentov obravnava izzive in priložnosti za prostorski razvoj občin. Študenti lahko s svojim ustvarjalnim potencialom kot (bodoči) prebivalci mesta dajejo pobude za urbano življenje (Kramer, 2021). Pri razvoju prostorske politike je pomembno upoštevati multilokalne posameznike, saj lahko prostorski načrtovalci na podlagi razpoložljivih informacij pripravijo in prilagodijo ustrezne razvojne strategije.



## Multi-local Living in Mazowieckie Province: Specificity and Universality of an Underestimated Phenomenon

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The article presents a study of the practices of multi-local residents of Mazowieckie Province in Poland, examining their spatiotemporal arrangements, motives, activities, and how they perceive the influence of multi-local living on their life. The analysis is based on semi-structured, problem-oriented interviews and an online survey conducted in 2023 on a sample that preserves the key socioeconomic characteristics of the inhabitants of Mazowieckie Province.

• **Keywords:** residential multi-locality, multi-local living arrangements, mobility, Mazowieckie Province, Mazovia, Poland

V članku je predstavljena študija praks multi-lokalnih prebivalcev Mazovijskega vojvodstva na Poljskem. Raziskane so njihove prostorsko-časovne ureditve, motivi, dejavnosti in dožemanje vpliva multilokalnosti na njihovo dnevno življenje. Analiza temelji na polstrukturiranih, problemsko usmerjenih intervjujih in spletni anketi, izvedeni leta 2023 na vzorcu, ki predstavlja glavne socialno-ekonomske značilnosti prebivalcev Mazovijskega vojvodstva.

• **Ključne besede:** multilokalna bivališča, multilokalne življenjske ureditve, mobilnost, Mazovijsko vojvodstvo, Mazovija, Poljska

### Introduction

Research on human mobility and residential mobility has had a long tradition in the discipline of geography. However, changes in lifestyle and the labor market, accompanied by new communication technologies and rapid means of transport – as well as increasing living expenses in cities, lack of affordable housing, uneven distribution of labor opportunities, and the Covid-19 pandemic – have modified human spatial behavior and opened new avenues of research. One of these lines of inquiry gaining popularity as an independent research topic in recent years is the concept of multi-locality. Multi-locality (multi-local life, multi-local living arrangements) is most often understood as *vita activa* in several places – everyday life distributed over several locations that are visited for long or short periods and serve different functions (Rolshoven, 2006). We find various definitions of spatial behavior related to multi-locality and many synonyms for this term in existing literature.<sup>1</sup> In this article, multi-locality is also understood as the practice of living alternately in different places, with an emphasis on residential

<sup>1</sup> The literature on this topic also introduces other terms referring to life in several places, such as Stock's (2009) concept of polytopic living, Duchêne-Lacroix's (2014) archipelago (German: Archipelisierung), or Beck's (1997) orthopolygamy (German: Ortspolygamie).

multi-locality. It is assumed that multi-locality is pragmatic spatial behavior<sup>2</sup> in places characterized by a particular and content-restricted range of available resources and utilization potentials (Danielzyk et al., 2020). In this article, multi-local living arrangements are considered a socioeconomic practice performed by individual or collective actors to carry out their intentions and achieve specific goals in a space where goods, resources, and utilization potentials are unequally distributed. They are also specific spatiotemporal organizations of everyday life that mediate between the needs of different spheres of life and connected persons that cannot be satisfactorily fulfilled in a single place (Weichhart, 2015; Weichhart, Rumpert, 2015).

A review of the international literature revealed that multi-local living is not a new issue; however, nowadays it seems that the phenomenon has changed in quantitative and qualitative terms. Quantitative changes indicate that people are increasingly living in ‘constant motion’ or sometimes simultaneously in several places, and qualitative changes include aspects such as motivations, causes, and manifestations of life, their individual and social alterations, and the importance of a mobile lifestyle (Danielzyk et al., 2020). Wood et al. (2015) emphasize that multi-local living is both a reason for and a consequence of mobility practices, and is therefore connected with mobility research. To note, mobility studies have had a significant impact on the development of multi-local research, introducing a paradigm shift in mobility research (Urry, 2007; Cresswell, Merriman, 2013). Nevertheless, multi-locality cannot be characterized exclusively by mobility, and it should be seen more as a conjunction or nexus between mobility and sedentariness. Multi-locality research most often describes the everyday practices of mobile employees and changes in their lifestyles (see Rolshoven, 2009; Rolshoven, Winkler, 2009), while residential multi-locality is considered a new concept in mobile housing arrangements (see Reuschke, 2012). The first group of studies on multi-locality concentrates on career-oriented elites who operate on a global scale (see Bonss et al., 2004) as well as a local one. Studies can also be found that deal with specific mobile groups frequently using repeatable routes – for example seasonal workers, permanent campers, the inhabitants of boathouses, airline staff, and children staying with each of their parents after separation (Hilti, 2013). The multi-local lifestyle may also be related to recreational activities – for example, through regular demand in holiday homes/apartments. Studies related to housing, on the other hand, concentrate on the standard of living in different house types, access to affordable housing, residential preferences, or residential segregation (Grzegorzczuk et al., 2019); however, only a few have so far referred to the dynamic character of housing arrangements (e.g., Weichhart, Rumpolt, 2015). Publications in geography indicate that more studies are needed to explore how the area of residential multi-locality influences spatial development. Some emphasize

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Spatial behaviors’ are understood as the spatially manifested or overt acts of people performing a range of daily or other episodic activities (e.g. journey to work, shopping, recreation, education, and so on), but also relate to how individuals regulate and use their spatial environments.

that research has to focus on the interaction between residential multi-locality and numerous areas of life (Dittrich-Wesbuer, 2016; Eichhorn, Schulwitz, 2017; Danielzyk et al., 2020), while others posit it should offer an alternative perspective to current debates on urbanization, population concentration, and new spatial linkages between urban and rural areas (Lehtonen et al., 2019; Slätmo et al., 2019; REBUST, 2021).

The literature review revealed a gap in multi-locality research in Poland. *Wielolokalność*, a term that is a direct translation of multi-locality, is not widely used in Polish scientific literature.<sup>3</sup> In Poland, multi-locality has usually been studied inexplicitly; however, there are anthropological and ethnographic studies highlighting social and spatial mobility from a multi-sited perspective (i.e., Stanisiz, 2012; Kaczmarek, 2015). There is a significant amount of sociological, economic, and political science research on migration and social change (i.e., White et al., 2018) or the migration of highly mobile groups (Brzozowski, Kaczmarczyk, 2018 – on professionals) that also use transnational and translocal perspectives. Geographical studies in this vein focus on spatial mobility, commuting, and their impacts on different spatial practices (Komornicki, 2011; Śleszyński, 2012; Krzysztofik, 2019; Wiśniewski et al., 2020). Existing research on second homes, conducted within the framework of the geography of tourism or rural geography, seems to be closest to the issue of multi-locality (e.g., Heffner, Czarnecki, 2011; Czarnecki, 2017; Społeczny Instytut Ekologiczny, 2021). Geographical research takes spatial development and environment into consideration but does not concentrate enough on people's activities that have nowadays expanded through the development of a nexus of relationships between two or more places of residence. There is still the need for studies where the center of gravity shifts, placing focus not only on macroscopic perspectives but also on households themselves, people's way of life, the organization of everyday life, and subjective prosperity.

This article provides a geographic analysis of the spatiotemporal practices of the multi-local residents<sup>4</sup> of Mazowieckie Province (Mazovia<sup>5</sup>). It examines residents'

<sup>3</sup> To the author's knowledge, this term has only been used in sociological, anthropological, or ethnographic studies. As an example, A. Bańka (2006) uses the phrase 'multi-locality of life' when writing about transnationalism and the changing conditions of work and professional careers. A. Stanisiz (2012) uses the term 'multi-locality' to describe the living environment of Polish long-distance truck drivers employed in companies operating in Western Europe. The second direct translation, *wielomiejscowość*, is used primarily in criminal law (multilocation principle) "Art. 6 § 2 k.k. is about the principle of multilocation, according to which a prohibited act is considered to have been committed in the place where the perpetrator acted or failed to act to which he was obliged, or where the effect constituting the hallmark of the prohibited act occurred or was intended by the perpetrator" (Nawrocki, 2016: 89).

<sup>4</sup> Multi-local residents are considered to be people who declare that they use at least two places of residence, including at least one located in Mazowieckie Province.

<sup>5</sup> The term Mazovia is used hereinafter in the text referring to the Mazowieckie Province. The province has an area of 35,579 square kilometers and, as of 2019, a population of 5,411,446, making it the largest and most populated province of Poland. It should be noted that in terms of geographical divisions, the province covers a larger area than the Mazovia region. The eastern part of the province is the Podlaskie region, while the southern part is the Sandomierz land, which is part of Lesser Poland. Moreover, part of historical Mazovia region (most of the former Łomża Voivodeship) lies outside the current territory of the province.

perceptions of their multi-local lifestyles by posing the following questions: How do respondents organize their lives in space and time? What are the motives behind multi-local practices? What are residents' activities at their different places of residence? How do residents perceive multi-locality and its effects on different aspects of their lives, and would they like to change their lifestyles?

The analysis is based on select materials obtained from semi-structured, problem-oriented interviews, which were conducted as part of the preliminary research in 2022 (n=11), and an online survey on a sample that preserved the key socio-economic characteristics of the inhabitants of Mazovia (n=996). The analysis is based on research conducted for the project titled 'Residential multi-locality in Poland and its importance for sustainable spatial management'.<sup>6</sup> The results from the qualitative and quantitative studies are intentionally combined in this article to show different aspects of the multi-local living arrangements of Mazovia inhabitants.

Mazovia is located in east-central Poland, with its capital located in the city of Warsaw. Mazovia is the center of science, research, education, industry, and infrastructure in the country. It currently has the lowest unemployment rate in Poland and is classified as a high-income province. The decision to concentrate on Mazovia as a case study follows the assumption of the pulling force of the capital city, a specific and complex labor market with the highest wages in the country, and an increasing number of remote job offers. Moreover, in Mazovia, we can observe a specific housing situation characterized by very high real estate prices and a large number of new flats and residential buildings completed both in the capital and in the surrounding communes (Jarczewski, Sykała, 2020).

### **Specificity and universality of multi-locality in Poland**

In the case of Polish (geographical) research, studies of multi-locality are almost non-existent (Jaczewska, 2023). This is partially due to a lack of official data on living in multiple places. In Poland, the phenomenon of using many locations simultaneously and for various purposes is not uncommon. However, a person can have only one place of residence under Polish law. Moreover, according to Polish civil law, the place of residence is not defined as a specific address (flat, house) where a given person lives, but the town where this address is located. For many years, the most important information for

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<sup>6</sup> Financed by the National Science Centre, Poland under Sonata-17 (no. UMO-2021/43/D/HS4/00153). The aim of the project is to assess the advancement of the phenomenon of multi-local living and the socio-spatial effects related to residential multi-locality. The second goal is to identify how the problem of residential multi-locality is perceived by local authorities' representatives. The methodological aim is also to evaluate empirical research methods and propose the most appropriate approach for Polish research. The practical goal is to identify the tools available to municipalities in responding to the phenomenon of residential multi-locality. The project will be conducted in 2022-2025.



statistical purposes was the registered place of residence.<sup>7</sup> The registration obligation is generally ignored nowadays in Poland: it is a common practice to maintain a permanent residence address in a place other than the place of permanent residence (e.g., city of birth) to obtain privileges resulting from the registration (accommodation, lower rates of motor insurance, the possibility of enrolling a child in kindergarten). This registered location is still commonly and wrongly identified as a place of residence.<sup>8</sup> The lack of data makes multi-locality impossible to capture based on official statistics, as numerous researchers analyzing this phenomenon have also pointed out (see Othengrafen et al., 2021; Danielczyk et al., 2020). The ‘unreported number’ of people living in several places simultaneously is probably higher in Poland than in Western Europe because they live with friends, family, other relatives, or in a shared flat – but are not registered there.

Another reason for the lack of studies results from specific historical circumstances. Before 1989, centrally planned housing policy limited multi-locality. The lack of financial resources, the so-called housing gap – namely, the shortage of housing – and overcrowding in flats meant that having two or more dwellings only concerned a small part of society (Grzegorzczuk, Jaczewska, 2018). Restrictive regulations on permanent residence did not allow for two places of residence.

Nevertheless, studies connected with mobility and living arrangements in numerous places have been indirectly maintained in Poland since the 1960s and 1970s, mostly in relation to commuting and second (holiday) houses. The industrialization of Poland after the Second World War and the resulting displacement of the population caused great interest in the issue of commuting to work (see Gawryszewski, 1974) and longer-term circular mobility (Dziewoński et al., 1977). Numerous studies, based on surveys and interviews conducted in workplaces, have made it possible to shed light on different facets of commuting practices (means of transport, travel costs, motivations, characteristics of the place of residence, etc.). An interesting group of commuters are the so-called peasant-workers (*chłoporobotnik*). Peasant workers (the peasant dual-occupation population) would spend the week in the city working in industries and living in hostels, moving to rural areas on weekends or for seasonal work (Słabek, 2002). Their social and spatial practices have commonalities with those of today’s seasonal workers or migrant workers. They created new cultural and social spaces between rural and urban areas. Even though they have not always perceived positively by city dwellers,

<sup>7</sup> Regulations on the obligation to register from the People’s Republic of Poland period show significant similarity to analogous Soviet practices, although they were not as restrictive. After the political change in 1989, the regulations on ‘registration’ were not formally abolished in Poland. Military institutions dealing with the records of conscripts and reservists base their registers on this data, similar to the judiciary and the banking system.

<sup>8</sup> These two types of information are completely separate, as the place of residence is a concept based on civil law, while the concept of a registered residence functions on the basis of demonstrative law. Registration itself is not tantamount to residing in a given town (although submitting an application for registration is tantamount to submitting a declaration that a given person intends to stay in a given place permanently – in the case of registration for permanent residence, or temporarily – in the case of registration for temporary residence).

they were a link through which social changes taking place in cities were transferred to rural areas. After a period of great interest in the issue of work-related mobility, there was a departure from this topic among researchers, especially during the period of political and economic transformation (Wiśniewski, 2013).

The second set of studies linked with mobility and living arrangements developed in Poland focused on second residences, mostly created as holiday houses, and known in the former ‘Soviet Bloc countries’ as *dachas* (*дача*). *Dacha* does not have a single meaning but can refer to luxury second homes at the seaside, year-round houses next to the bigger cities, seasonal residences in rural areas, or collective gardens both inside and outside the city (Rusanov, 2019; Moskalonek et al., 2020). Because of the dominance of state ownership of land,<sup>9</sup> sometimes owning a plot of land for recreation was the only option for Polish inhabitants. After the transformation and privatization of land in the 1990s, the number of holiday and second homes spread all over the country, especially on the outskirts of bigger cities and in attractive tourist areas (Kajdanek, 2022).

A spatial-centric perspective was used in the surveys researching mobility, commuting, or second homes. Quantitative estimates were predominant, the majority of which focused on travel to work, reasons for travel, behavior in the field of mobility, or the influence of second houses on spatial development. The focus in these studies was on group (mainly male) mobility rather than on households and partners of mobile workers as well as on spatial or economic development (a place-based approach was used more frequently than a people-based approach).

The last thirty years have been marked by dynamic change due to numerous political, economic, and social transformations. These alterations caused similar processes to begin to shape the phenomenon of multi-locality in Poland as well as in the countries of Western Europe (Danielzyk et al., 2020). Political changes have facilitated the mobility and the migration of Polish citizens, including their economic migration to other countries – especially in EU countries (White et al., 2018). Economic changes, characterized by a shift from a state-led economy to policy reforms characterized by the slogan of “less state, more market”, caused significant changes in the labor market and the spatial distribution of both employers and employees (concentration of job offers in the cities). Reforms that were carried out in the neoliberal spirit created the conditions for deregulation and increased the flexibility of labor markets (Arnholtz, Leschke, 2023). The instability of labor relations, combined with increased mobility opportunities, led to an increase in multi-local practice patterns. Economic changes made it possible for groups of people who had achieved economic success to create or maintain several places of residence. There was a growing interest in building houses and second homes in suburban areas, particularly at the end of the 1990s, which resulted

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<sup>9</sup> State-owned enterprises, in order to attract employees, also offered the possibility of obtaining a recreational plot. To this day there are colonies of plots scattered all over Poland with preserved names of former industrial plants.

in significant urban sprawls (Mantey, Sudra, 2019). At the same time, social changes, individualization, and the differentiation of lifestyles also led to 'relational forms' that apply to relationships within couples with separate households (Botterill, 2014).

The specificity of multi-local practices in Poland results from the above-mentioned historical, political, economic, and social conditions. There are lower levels of mobility and greater levels of stability of residence in comparison to Western European countries. Nevertheless, it can be observed that increasing numbers of people in Poland live at more than one location and establish spaces for their everyday activities at each location (residential multi-locality). The reasons for such living arrangements are connected with a universal need to have gainful employment, attend school and university, access medical or cultural facilities, maintain social relationships, or other reasons such as holidays and recreation. In Poland, we can observe an increasingly uneven distribution of resources (especially access to work and gainful employment) and utilization potentials (spatially unevenly increasing property prices), which will contribute to greater mobility and more frequent multi-locality practices.

Although the issues of multi-locality are not widely discussed and next to invisible in geographic research, the concept of multi-locality fits into the debate on changing topics of study in the discipline. After the post-war dominance of neo-positivist philosophy in the scientific approach in geography, which resulted in an increased interest in quantitative methods and concepts of modeling spatial processes, there was renewed interest in the humanistic approach in the early 1970s. Consequently, research has emerged, broadly defined as the 'cultural turn' in human geography. The new face of the geography of culture and the growing importance of radical approaches (social geography) have opened up new opportunities for importing many theoretical concepts and methodologies that have been developed in the social sciences into geography. These include approaches to the study of space, which are expressed not only in terms of real territorial space but also in terms of socially or culturally constructed space (Lisowski, 2003). Human geography, therefore, concerns people's relationship to their living environment resulting from the ways they 'inhabit' it, and these interactions materialize in specific forms.<sup>10</sup> Contemporary interpreters of Vidal de la Blache believe that *genre de vie* (lifestyle) is a way of 'dwelling', and its essence is society's adaptation to the surrounding conditions (Wójcik, Suliborski, 2021). Milieu (place, living environment) is a reflection of everyday problems and values assigned to individual elements of the environment. Multi-locality from this perspective can thus be seen as a specific *genre de vie* that expresses possible adaptations to surrounding conditions (social, economic, demographic, environmental, political, etc.), which in turn reflect the everyday problems of individuals and the values they attribute to the elements of a widely understood living environment.

<sup>10</sup> Rembowska (2005: 104) defines the living environment as "the world which a human being inhabits, shapes, gives meaning to, perceives, identifies with or feels a presence about."

## Methods and data

An exploratory approach was used to characterize the spatiotemporal practices of Polish multi-local residents – including their motives, activities, and their perceptions of multi-local life. First, semi-structured, problem-oriented interviews were conducted. Respondents for the preliminary study were randomly selected using the snowball method (chain sampling) and academic or personal contacts.<sup>11</sup> The preliminary study sample included 25 people. However, only 11 of them were taken into consideration in this article, as they were the respondents who were multi-local and had at least one residence in Mazovia. The interviews were conducted from May to October 2022 using communication tools (Google Meet, Zoom) and in person. They lasted from 40 to 120 minutes and also covered topics that are not included in this article.<sup>12</sup> The interviews were examined by using MAXQDA software for qualitative content analysis (Barbie, 2013). Table 1 lists the main characteristics of the interviewees, including their most important residences, main reasons for becoming a multi-local resident, whether the multi-locality is connected with family obligations, frequency of travel, and type of movement. All the respondents were around the same age, highly qualified, and worked predominantly in knowledge-intensive sectors. This part of the study does not assert to be representative and intends to contribute to a better understanding of the specificity of multi-local living arrangements in Poland. It was used to refine the research tools.

Table 1: Characteristics of the research group (interviews). Source: own elaboration.

No.	Code*	Occupation	Main places of stay	Main reason	Connected with family obligations	Frequency of travel	Type of movement
1	B.01.K.40	Researcher – engineer	Warsaw – Copenhagen – Sierock (touristic area)	Work	Yes	Often	International
2	A.02.K.40	Researcher – geologist	Wrocław – Warsaw –USA	Work, lifestyle	No	Medium often	International
3	A.04.K.45	Researcher – geographer	Montpellier – Warsaw – Asia	Work, lifestyle	No	Medium often	International
4	K.05.M.39	Researcher – social scientist	Warsaw – Wrocław	Work	Yes	Often	Domestic
5	D.07.K42	Researcher – political scientist	Kraków – Warsaw	Work	Yes	Often	Domestic

<sup>11</sup> I used the non-probability sampling technique where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances. Thus the sample group is said to grow like a rolling snowball.

<sup>12</sup> During the interviews, I asked questions related to (1) the motives behind multi-local practices, (2) the respondents' organization of their lives in space and time and their activities at particular places of stay, (3) housing solutions used and attributes of places of residence that are important to them, (4) means of transport used, (5) importance of modern technologies for them and the use of any elements of the sharing economy, (6) the advantages and disadvantages of operating in several places and whether they would like to change their lifestyle, and (7) how COVID-19 affected their spatial behavior.

6	M.08.K.40	Economist – international firm	Warsaw – Rome – Paris	Work lifestyle	No	Medium often	International
7	M.10.M.53	Economist – international firm	Warsaw – Rome – Mazuria Lake District (touristic area)	Work	Yes	Medium often	International
8	A.11.M.38	Transport company owner	Warsaw – hometown	Work family	Yes	Medium often	International
9	A.12.K.40	Interpreter	Warsaw – Brussels – Zegrze Lake (touristic area)	Work recreation	Yes	Often	International
10	J.13.K.38	Interpreter	Warsaw – Brussels	Work	Yes	Often	International
11	U.14.K.37	Administration employee	Kraków – Warsaw – family house in mountains	Work	Yes	Medium often	Domestic

\*The data in the study were coded. The first letter means the first letter of the name, the number means the interview number, K stands for female, M for male, and the last number means the respondent's age.

The second part of the data was obtained from the nationwide research panel ‘Ariadna’.<sup>13</sup> Research was conducted as an online survey (CAWI) that took place from December 2022 to January 2023. It included 996 persons with at least two places of residence, including at least one in Mazovia. The survey sample reflected the key socioeconomic characteristics of the adult inhabitants of the voivodeship in terms of age, sex, education, and size and type of place of residence (city, rural areas, etc.) (Table 2). The data were examined using SPSS IBM software.

Table 2: Characteristics of the research group (panel survey). Source: own elaboration.

Variable	Subgroup	n	%
Gender	Female	595	59.7
	Male	401	40.3
Age	18–24	111	11.1
	25–34	272	27.3
	35–44	265	26.6
	45–54	151	15.2
	55 and more	197	19.8
(Main) Place of residence	Village	130	13.1
	Small town (up to 20,000 inhabitants)	69	6.9
	Medium-sized city (from 20,000 to 99,000 inhabitants)	181	18.2

<sup>13</sup> Ariadna is the biggest independent nationwide research panel in Poland with a valid Interviewer Quality Control Program (PKJPA) certificate confirming the high quality of the research services provided. Website of the panel: <https://panelariadna.pl>.

	Big city (from 100,000 to 500,000 inhabitants)	118	11.8
	Very large city (more than 500,000 inhabitants)	498	50.0
<b>Education</b>	Primary/middle school	12	1.2
	Vocational	31	3.1
	Secondary	196	19.7
	Post-secondary	120	12.0
	Higher undergraduate	122	12.2
	Higher master's degree or equivalent	503	50.5
	Other	12	1.2

In Poland, the Polish term *wielolokalność* describing multi-locality is not popular. The ambiguity of the concept became particularly evident during the interviews conducted as part of the preliminary research. People participating in the study spoke more often about living arrangements in numerous places than “multi-locality.” Living in multiple places was associated both with daily life in multiple places, rhythmic everyday practices, cyclical travel, and specific lifestyles. Being aware of the ambiguity of the term in the panel research, the author decided to adopt a description of multi-local living arrangements and purposely did not use the Polish term *wielolokalność* to describe multi-locality.

The following section combines the results obtained from the qualitative and quantitative studies. The qualitative research sheds more light on forms of multi-local practice and their remarkable diversity, while the quantitative research reveals general trends and characteristics of multi-local performances.

### Multi-local living arrangements of Mazovian residents

#### *How do multi-local respondents organize their lives in space and time?*

In the qualitative interviews, respondents indicated that they organize their lives in space and time in very diverse ways, and these arrangements change quite often. Having two residences was the most common arrangement among respondents, but seven out of eleven people indicated that they also use a third place. The third place was mainly related to the specificity of their employment or recreation needs. Due to the overrepresentation of people with high qualifications, mobility was very high and concerned mostly with moving between large cities (in six cases, these were regular trips abroad).

The following statement clearly shows the changeability of practices over time. An economist working in an international company indicated that she works remotely and has considerable freedom as far as her residence is concerned: “*I currently work, mostly remotely, from my first and second place of stay and don't have any formal*

*travel schedule [...] It all depends on the project and where I have to be*” (M.08.K.40). However, the interpreter working for European Union agencies indicated a regularity and cyclical pattern to her travels: *“It’s like three times a month I go away for three to four days, and it’s either Brussels or Strasbourg. So, three weeks in a row and then a week off. This week’s break is not due to the nature of work, because I could go every week, but I don’t want to. I am on a contract, not a full-time job; therefore, I can choose and decide how much I will work”* (A.12.K.40). In the case of regular and cyclical trips, the characteristics of activities undertaken in space and the time spent were strictly defined.

The practice of multi-local living involved various forms of mobility. Four such forms related to changes of residence were identified in the interviews: relocation (settled movement), migration (international and internal), travel (tourism and business), and daily mobility. These forms are often interrelated and interdependent and also change over time – features that could only be captured in the qualitative part of the study. According to respondents, multi-local living arrangements are usually not connected with a one-off event but they constitute a process that continues with varying degrees of intensity throughout a person’s life. These arrangements affect all aspects of a mobile person’s daily life, as well as that of the non-mobile people with whom they are in a relationship.

Of the 996 persons that participated in the survey, 86.1% of respondents indicated that they had two residences, 12.6% had three places, and 1.3% had more than three places. A vast majority declared that their main place of residence was located in Poland (99%). Furthermore, many also declared that their main residence was in Mazovia (85.2%), which is due in large part to the structuring of the survey sample. Other common voivodeships include Lublin, Lesser Poland, Łódź, Pomeranian, and Podlaskie (voivodeships closest to Mazovia) (Figures 1 and 2). Only 68% of respondents declared that they were permanently registered at their main place of residence, which confirms that the place of registration does not coincide with the place of the main residence.

The majority of respondents indicated that their secondary residence was also located in Poland (96.6%); 36 respondents indicated that their second place was abroad.<sup>14</sup> Within the second place of residence, we continue to observe the dominance of Mazovia (73.3%), but there was also a higher percentage of inhabitants from the Lublin, Podlaskie, Łódź, Warmia-Masuria, and Silesia voivodeships. The location of the secondary place of residence corresponds to areas from which employees are attracted to Warsaw (e.g., Lublin, Podlaskie, Łódź voivodeships) as well as areas that are attractive for second, holiday homes (e.g., Warmia-Masuria and Podlaskie voivodeships). Almost 22% of

<sup>14</sup> Examining the places found abroad, the most important were countries such as Germany (13 respondents) and the United Kingdom (9). Mostly, the second places of residence were located in Europe (34) and only two were outside Europe (in the USA). This corresponds with the most important migration destinations for Polish citizens.

respondents were permanently registered at their second residence. The third place of residence was located mostly in Masovian and Lublin voivodeships.

The quantitative part of the survey indicated the dominance of two places of residence close to each other. Bilocation (two places of stay) seems to be the dominant type in Poland, but the quantitative part of the research did not allow for the selection of a greater number of residences (more than three) or a demonstration of changes in practice over a lifetime (questions only addressed the situation at the moment of the survey). A significant concentration of places in the Warsaw Metropolitan Area is also evident. Particularly significant connections between Warsaw and the surrounding areas can also be observed based on the analysis of migration processes (suburbanization), commutes to work, commutes to secondary schools, etc. Results indicated that commutes to work include the broader zone of Warsaw's influence – not only the immediate Warsaw area but also communes located along the main roads and railway lines towards bigger cities like Białystok, Lublin, and Kraków – as well as cities in the western part of the voivodeship. The suburbanization areas to which the inhabitants of Warsaw move include a much smaller number of communes located close to Warsaw, in particular in the southwestern part of the capital region (Jarczewski, Sykała, 2020).

Respondents were asked how they came to live at multiple locations. About 38% answered that they had maintained one residence in Mazovia (mostly in Warsaw) and established an additional place within the voivodeship. In this group, the first residence was usually an apartment in Warsaw and the new one was connected to both second homes and holiday accommodations established in the voivodeship. About 26% of the respondents indicated that they had changed their first place of residence and moved to Mazovia, keeping their secondary place of residence outside the voivodeship. In this second group, there was an overrepresentation of new residences being associated with work opportunities in the Warsaw Metropolitan Area. About 23% had previously lived in one place within the region (mostly in Warsaw) and established a second location outside Mazovia. The third group was most often connected with people setting up a holiday home outside the voivodeship in more tourist areas.

The frequency of travel between residences varied, but most people traveled once a week (22.5%); more frequent trips (two to three times a week) were declared slightly less often (21.5%), as were trips less than once a month (19.3%). The organization of activities in space and time was largely influenced by spatial conditions, particularly distance and time linked to travel between residences. Travel time ranged from less than one hour to more than 8 hours. The majority of respondents indicated that the time needed to access the second residence was between half an hour and one hour (17.3%), one and two hours (30.6%), or between two and four hours (16.8%). Answers concerning travel time indicate the predominance of moving over relatively short distances, and the analysis of directions shows that it is often a migration between communes adjacent to the capital city of Warsaw.



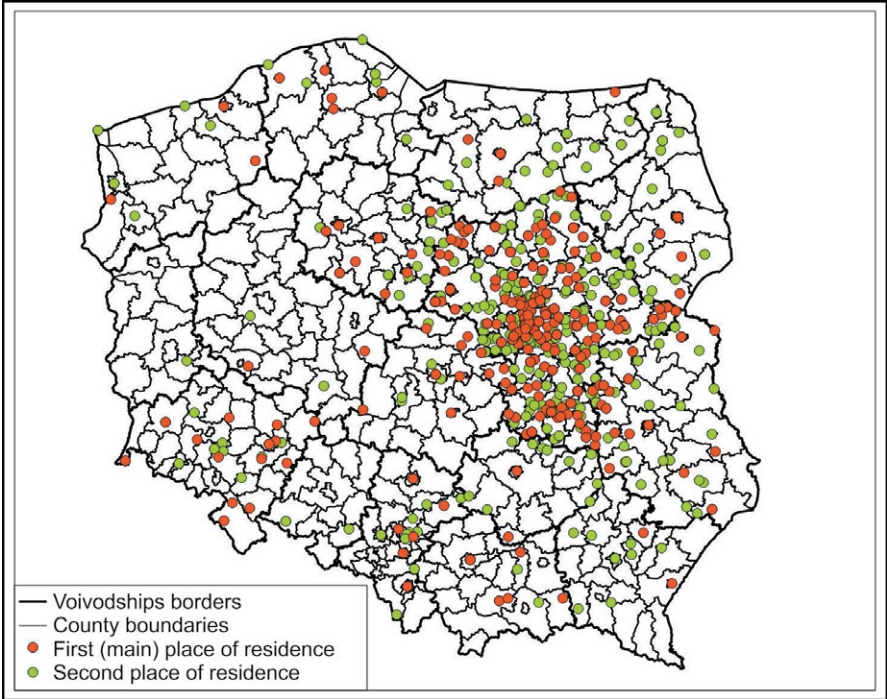


Figure 1: The spatial pattern of the multi-locality of Mazovian residents.

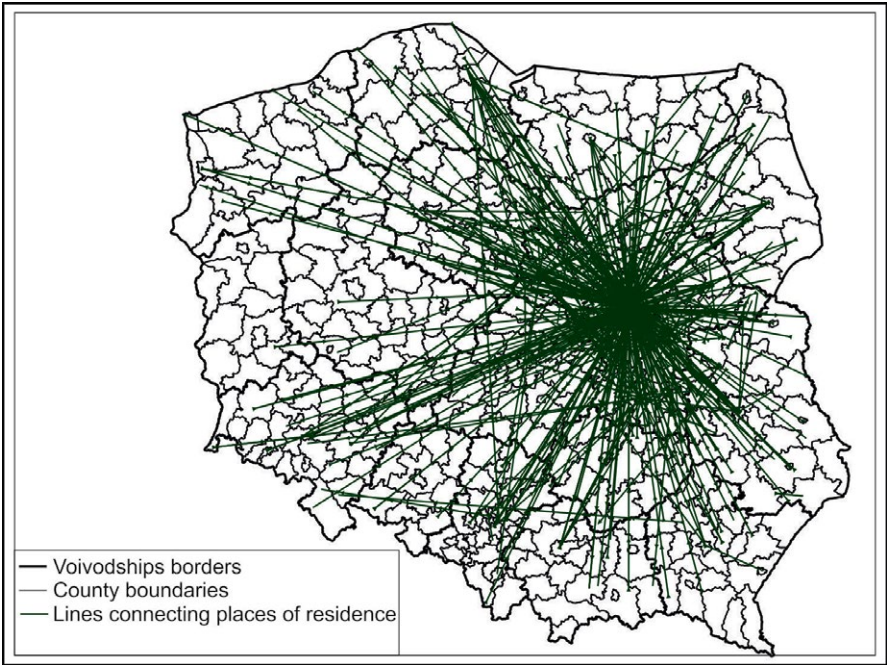


Figure 2: First and second places of residence of multi-local Mazovian residents.

Questions concerning modes of travel showed that travel by private car as a driver and passenger (66.5%) was predominant, followed by train (24.5%), and bus (16.7%). The length of the journey, the availability of different means of transport, and the cost of the journey influenced the frequency of travel. The travel time declared by respondents did not always match the declared distances between residences. Respondents often revealed longer distances (in km) and shorter travel times, which shows that respondents' perceptions of time and distance, as well as of space of activities, were perceived differently from the real geographical distance and space in question.

Respondents specified that they spent most of their time during the year at their main place of residence (75.4%), 15.1% of people spent more time at the second place, and only 9.4% at both places. The stability of places of residence was significant: 29.9% of people indicated that they never moved, 28.9% only moved once, and 20.2% moved twice. The average time of people lived at their first, as well as their second place of residence, was long. Although most respondents were living at their first and second residences for an average of 3 to 5 years (over 20%), as many as 15.9% indicated that they had been living at their first place of residence for more than 30 years. In addition, 16.4% stated that they been using their second place of residence for more than 30 years.

A lower degree of residential mobility and the long-term use of multiple residences are characteristic features that result from, among other things, the specificity of housing preferences and the real estate market in Poland. Poles value owning flats: as many as 84% of them live in owner-occupied flats. The remaining 16% reside in rented accommodations. Such a proportion is not only distinctive to Poland but is also present in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Milewska-Wilk, Nowak, 2022). Most people strive to own real estate, and this also leads them to rely on long-term housing loans. Relatively cheap loans in Swiss francs, which were popular not so long ago, nowadays mean that the debt incurred exceeds the value of the apartment or house; thus, it is not profitable to sell. On the other hand, the very high prices of flats or houses in Warsaw do not allow for the fulfillment of residents' aspirations; hence, they try to build houses in the suburbs. The first place of residence, if not necessary, is left as an element of capital investment or is 'kept' for children or retirement.

### ***What are the motives behind multi-locality practices?***

Motives linked to work and family obligations were predominant in the answers provided in the qualitative interviews. Usually, there was not just one motive but often two or more interrelated ones. The need for a recreational place of residence was not so evident; instead, respondents would more often talk about their individual personal needs (hobby, sport, contact with nature, mental health, etc.). Some respondents indicated that their multi-local practices were associated with a strong sense of attachment to their original place of residence, which discouraged them from giving it up. One of the respondents who worked as a researcher in France and maintained an apartment

in Warsaw expressed: *“The second place (Warsaw) is also a matter of a kind of, how to say ... longing. I kept Warsaw because I like to go to Poland, I like to go to Masuria (Lake District), visit friends, and I like to go to the mountains and visit friends. It's like ... a ‘refuge’. You know, a place where when something difficult happens or I have to intervene then.... This is also a place in Poland where it's easier for me to act”* (A.04.K.45). The nature of attachment was very diverse. In addition to functional and economic factors (partner's place of work, children's education, property), the emotional ties associated with identifying with a place were essential. The statement below effectively reflects the varied emotional attachment to different places: *“Even though I've lived in Warsaw for 12 years and this is my home... I don't feel... you see, I'm a ‘jar’<sup>15</sup> unfortunately, and I also realize that I don't put much effort into building up this place [...] I don't feel at home also there (in the second place of my parents' house in Wrocław). I don't have such emotions related to the place as are traditionally prescribed for a family home. I spread these emotions to the whole city of Wrocław. My place is there. That is my place, and I feel well there”* (K.05.M.39).

Almost all the respondents also indicated the need for freedom and independence. A researcher who divides his life between Warsaw and Wrocław indicated that: *“I treat these trips as compensation for my innate selfishness [...] So I would like to be independent [...]. This allows you to keep your distance. I just need more of this space for myself. But when I go to Wrocław, I automatically start to miss my family, so I start to appreciate what I don't have at the moment. So, it's a positive thing, even though most people around me are rather surprised and see it as a cost”* (K.05.M.39). The varied responses show an extended approach to housing in which multi-locality was defined not only by multiple locations but also by multi-local relationships between space and everyday practice (Stock, 2009).

In the quantitative part of the research, the most important motives were related to work, recreation and leisure time (the need for rest and recreation or the need to escape from the hustle and bustle of the city), and family obligations (Table 3). Subsequent answers can be divided into several subcategories. Some concerned personal preferences and needs – for example, the need to maintain independence (8.1%) or pursue hobbies (4.4%). Some resulted from attachment to a place of residence (7.6%) and a lack of desire to move permanently (2.2%). The responses also included motives related to continuing long-distance relations (5.8%) or maintaining contact with friends (1.6%). In addition, it was indicated that the inheritance of the house contributed to the adoption of multi-local living arrangements (6.8%). Several people also pointed to negative aspects, such as the inability to buy or rent a flat for the whole family.

<sup>15</sup> “Warsaw jar” – a term used to describe people who work, live and study in Warsaw, but who do not originate from this city and regularly (usually during weekends) travel home. These inhabitants traditionally often brought homemade food in jars to Warsaw, and hence they were called “jars”.

Table 3: What was the main reason that contributed to your living in several places? Source: own elaboration.

	N	%
Work	209	21.0
Recreational and leisure needs	172	17.3
Family obligations	141	14.2
Having a second place of residence allows me to maintain my independence	81	8.1
I like my family home and don't want to move out permanently	76	7.6
I inherited an apartment/house	68	6.8
Education	63	6.3
Long-distance relationship	58	5.8
Free time and pursuit of hobbies	44	4.4
I didn't want to move permanently	22	2.2
I couldn't buy/rent a flat for the whole family	18	1.8
Keeping in touch with friends	16	1.6
Because of health reasons	15	1.5
Other	13	1.3
Total	996	100.0

Among the work-related motives that contributed to multi-locality, respondents most often indicated searching for a job that met their financial expectations. Quite a large group specified that the type of work they performed required them to live in several places. What seems interesting is that the possibility of working remotely was indicated as an important factor by only 7% of the respondents. In the case of family commitments, apart from caring for children (19.3%), caring for parents and grandparents was also important (16.8%). Gender differences are also interesting: while there was no difference in declared involvement in caring for children between women and men, there was a visible difference in declarations of care for parents and grandparents, where women's answers were predominant. The second difference observed was a higher percentage of men indicating the need to maintain independence, and a higher percentage of women indicating the need for recreation.

### ***What are the most important activities in different places of residence?***

In qualitative research, organization around work and the attempt to combine activities related to work and family duties were more clearly visible in the respondents' description of the activities conducted than in quantitative research. Only two respondents indicated that while they are at work, they also have time for themselves, hobbies or time to meet friends. The feeling of the lack of a work-life balance and a sense of neglecting their duties towards children due to working outside their place of residence was particularly evident among women. The translator who spends three days a week abroad pointed out: *"When I'm at home, I mainly take care of the children. You know, homework, visits to the doctor ... life. I also have this feeling that because I'm often*

*away, I neglect them. So, when I am there, I try to make up for lost time and relieve my husband a bit. I have a problem with the division between the spheres of professional and private life. When I'm at work, I think I'm neglecting my home, and when I'm at home, I think about my backlog of work"* (B.01.K.40).

The last group of activities related to free time was more diverse, and sometimes people devoted their free time to participating in current cultural events, practicing sports, and gardening. Among the respondents, it was clear that the boundaries between individual places of stay were unclear concerning activities. Such 'blurring boundaries' (Jordan, 2008) involve sets of oppositions such as primary residence and secondary residence, or work and free time. However, they are also expressed in the demarcation of places of activity and the existence of places 'in between' with ambiguous structures of social interaction.

Several characteristic activities in various places of residence were identified in the quantitative part of the research. The first group included those who identified with organizing life around family, relatives, and work. Activities related to family and relatives at particular residences were closely related to the stage of life of individual respondents. People with small children tended to concentrate on caring responsibilities during their stay at the main place of residence. People who did not have children or already had independent children mentioned more often, for example, the available recreational facilities or cultural events at their main place of residence. People who had elderly parents/grandparents tried to find time to ensure regular contact with their relatives. In the case of people who would commute to work for a few days, it was clear when questioned about organizing life around work that they were absorbed by work. The majority indicated that they tried to work very intensively, and did not have enough time for other activities. Due to the different activities undertaken at the first and second residences, it was apparent that they served different functions (Table 4).

Table 4: What are the most important functions of the first and second places of your stay? (Multiple-choice question). Source: own elaboration.

	What are the most important functions of your first place of stay for you?		What are the most important functions of your second place of stay for you?	
	n	% of all answers	n	% of all answers
Family residence	503	30.7	387	25.9
Partner's place of residence	235	14.3	138	9.2
A meeting place with friends	199	12.1	196	13.1
Workplace	323	19.7	183	12.3
Place of training and education	84	5.1	74	5.0
A place to use the recreational offer	66	4.0	218	14.6
A place to enjoy the cultural offer	100	6.1	77	5.2
A place to pursue a hobby	109	6.7	185	12.4
Other	19	1.2	34	2.3
	1638	100	1492	100.0

The first place of residence was more often connected with activities concerning family obligations and work, while the second place was connected with recreational activities as well as those related to family. The second residence is frequently recreational, such as holiday homes, but they are often family homes as well; hence, family relationships remain an important activity there.

### ***How does multi-locality affect the different aspects of their lives?***

In the interviews, respondents indicated both advantages and disadvantages to living in several places, but none wanted to change their lifestyle. Among the advantages of living in several places, they most often mentioned profits related to the possibility of career development and better payment. The second argument that appeared quite often was freedom – as well as the possibility of enjoying a combination of the attributes (access to green areas, culture, medical facilities, etc.) of both places.

An economist who lived his life in Warsaw, Rome, and a village in Masuria Lake District pointed out that multi-local living is associated with problems, especially in maintaining relationships with loved ones. However, the advantages exceed the drawbacks: *“I just like it ... I know that it makes my private life very complicated, but it gives me a lot of satisfaction”* (M.10.M.53). He also added that a change of environment allows him to broaden his horizons and look at the world from a perspective other than ‘strictly Polish’: *“Besides, it allows me to get to know other people’s worldviews and go beyond our strange Polish customs, lifestyle, way of thinking about values”* (M.10.M.53).

In the panel survey, respondents were asked about the impact of living in several places on selected aspects of life. The impact on housing conditions and the quality of living, income and material situation, professional development and career, as well as family, children, and partnership, were positively and negatively assessed (Table 5).

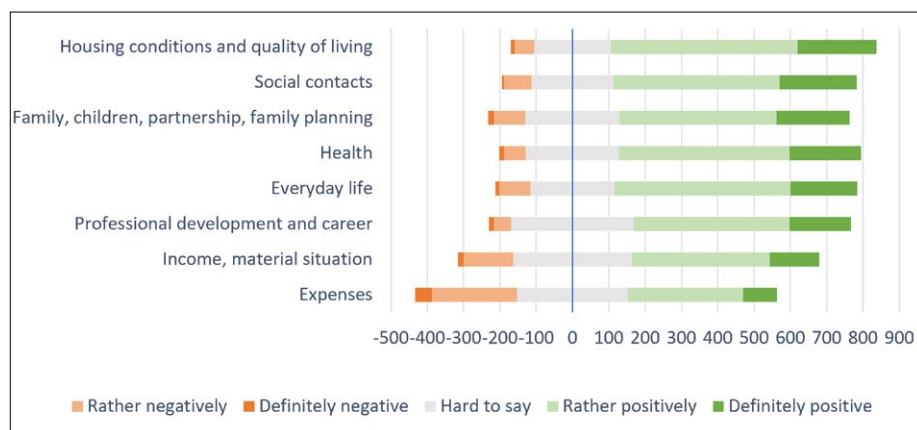


Table 5: How do you assess the impact of living in several places on the following aspects of your life? (Number of positive and negative answers). Source: own elaboration.



Most respondents positively assessed the impact of multi-locality. The impact on living conditions and quality of life was assessed particularly positively, followed by maintaining social contacts, health, and professional development. Positive responses were also visible in the case of the impact of multi-locality on the family, children and partnership. However, in this case, respondents often indicated a negative impact. Expenditure was rated the least positive, recognizing that an additional place of residence always entails additional costs. Respondents assessed that there were more advantages than drawbacks associated with living in several places.

However, when asked if they intended to change their multi-local lifestyle, the greatest share of respondents indicated “yes, but I do not know when it will be possible” (38%). Almost 20% of respondents specified that they considered their current situation temporary, 25% stated that they still wanted to continue living in more than one place, and 17.5% were hesitant.

A positive assessment of the impact of multi-locality, with the simultaneous indication of the willingness to change their way of life, indicates that a major share of respondents treat this practice as a temporary solution. In the case of the inhabitants of Mazovia, this way of life seems to create tension between compulsion and free will.

### **End remarks**

This article describes the practices and behaviors of multi-local Mazovian respondents in Poland. The research presented focused on spatial arrangements and time use (duration and rhythm), motives and activities, and the perceived influence of multi-local life arrangements. Qualitative research exposed the remarkable diversity of multi-local practices, while quantitative research reveals general trends and characteristics of multi-local living arrangements.

The term ‘multi-locality’ is far from unambiguous, and the subject is not commonly understood in Poland. The combination of research results obtained in qualitative and quantitative studies showed that multi-local practices offer a wide range of implementation options, with smooth transitions from one place to another. The description of this phenomenon, therefore, requires a broader explanation of the dimensions of the attributes of living in several places. The spatiotemporal organization of inhabitants’ lives is influenced by the need for spatial mobility. Spatial mobility is increasingly recognized as a key phenomenon of the present day and is treated as both a precondition and a consequence of the global, spatial division of labor and the constantly expanding organization of private social networks (Axhause et al., 2007). Multi-local residence can be considered an example of pragmatic behavior in which, because of the intensity of spatial mobility and the hybridity of its forms, the boundaries between permanent mobility (migration) and daily mobility (circular migration) blur. High mobility means

that new spaces are constantly being created – for example spaces for work or life, but this is not only expressed in terms of real, territorial spaces but also of socially or culturally constructed ones (Lisowski, 2003; Löw, 2016). The socially and culturally constructed space was more clearly visible in respondents' statements than strictly geographical space. The intertwining of different areas of activity was also visible. Respondents indicated the 'blurring boundaries' between motives or activities in different places related to work and free time, but they also expressed the existence of places 'in between' with ambiguous structures of social interaction (e.g., the family house used from time to time as recreational or holiday place – and sometimes also as workplace).

The qualitative and quantitative portions of the research showed that living in several places was a form of mobile living and an alternative to moving. From this perspective, multi-locality can be perceived as a combination of forms of migration with temporary forms of sedentary lifestyles, but also as an independent socio-spatial strategy (Kaufmann, 2002). In the case of Poland, it is a coherent element of a highly mobile lifestyle, as well as a response to mobility overload (lack of desire to commute daily).

In Mazovia, living in two places in close proximity to each other was the predominant form of multi-locality. As already indicated in the text, a significant concentration of places in the Warsaw Metropolitan Area was evident as well as a high level of stability of places of residence. Characteristic features of Polish multi-locality include a smaller number of people relocating and long-term use of residences. Geographical space affects how respondents function, and the distance and time needed to move are important determinants of how often respondents move between places. The research confirmed the strong impact of spatial conditions on the decision to become or remain multi-local; it also demonstrated how these conditions shape spatiotemporal organization. Better quality, high-speed transport systems have enabled and generated both mobility and multi-locality, making it possible to reach spatially distant places in shorter time periods. Public transport is preferred where available; in other cases, people are forced to use private transport. Research results demonstrate the predominance of private transport, which is often associated with the lack of other possibilities for quick access to towns located even in the vicinity of Warsaw. At the same time, it should be noted (this was not the subject of this analysis and requires further research) that multi-local life also affects space. For example, multi-local practices increase land use (urban sprawl) and traffic volume, contributing to tight housing markets and rising housing prices, usually in inner-city neighborhoods. In addition, temporary population fluctuations lead to changes in available commercial facilities, greater use of infrastructure on certain days, and price increases for household services.

The motives for adopting multi-local life practices are diverse but are similar to those in other European countries. Othengrafen et al. (2021) emphasized that motives for multi-local lifestyles are mutually dependent, which is also visible in this research. Usually, multi-locality serves as a strategy for performing tasks connected with work



and family. In this survey, the main motives were related to work, recreation, and family obligations.

The first major reason is the need to find a suitable job. Unevenly distributed labor resources (concentrated in Warsaw) significantly influence practices, as was apparent in the study, which indicates a relationship between one place of residence and the existence of a well-developed labor market. The deregulation of labor markets and instability push employees to work in different places during their professional careers, which, combined with increased mobility opportunities, leads to an increase in multi-local practice patterns. The presented research does not confirm that multi-locality in Mazovia has its source in a changing working style (remote work), accompanied by the development of telecommunications technologies. Instead, multi-locality is probably more related to the reduction of affordable housing, the inability to meet housing aspirations, or the spatially concentrated labor market. Only 7% of those who indicated work as the main reason for becoming multi-local expressed that remote work influenced their decisions. The second motive is connected to the preference for a recreational place to live, which also stems from historical, political, and economic conditions.

Private relations with family, partners, and friends seem to be mutually dependent on the two above-mentioned motives. In Mazovia, which seems to be a Polish specificity, a significant proportion of second homes are (1) inherited or shared by families in rural areas from which employees (part of a family) moved to the city, (2) holiday homes on recreational plots (called *dachas* in Eastern Europe), and (3) second homes that manifest inhabitants' preferences to have their place in suburban areas (sometimes connected with the lack of possibility of fulfilling aspirations within the city). Quite often, one location is a family home or a shared recreational plot used by different members of the family. Frequently, one of the places is where parents or grandparents still live.

When analyzing the activities at individual places of residence, it was evident that work and family were the central elements around which everyday life revolved for most people. It can be seen that there are no clear boundaries between work time and leisure time or between the place of work and the place of private activity. Activities are closely related to people's stage of life as well as their social status, which was not analyzed in this article, but which I intend to take up in the next paper. An individual's activity patterns result from interactions between personal factors (e.g., socioeconomic characteristics, preferences, attitudes, and prejudices) and external factors (e.g., environmental and social structures). Spatial mobility reflects the scale of possible interactions between social groups. Mobility changes people's experiences and modifies their relationships with particular places. Differences in people's mobility can be considered a factor contributing to further social differentiation or stratification, and thus may create a kind of mobility inequality.

Most respondents positively evaluated the influence of multi-locality on their lives. What seems interesting is that, in quantitative research, only 25% of respondents

indicated that they wanted to stay multi-local. Almost 40% of the respondents said that they intended to stop multi-local living but did not know when it would be possible. In the case of the inhabitants of Mazovia, this way of life is treated as temporary and creates tension between compulsion and free will.

Even considering the specificity of Polish research, it seems that the social changes that are currently taking place are universal. Nowadays, multi-local households can also be primarily interpreted as a phenomenon of social change that has developed as a result of increasing demand for mobility. This demand stems from changing economic and political conditions and a personalized lifestyle, which in turn need to cope with different family/relatives obligations and one's own development (Othengrafen et al., 2021).

The research described herein is only a fragment of the issues that seem to be socially important. From the point of view of geographical research, the concept of multi-locality or living in many places can be seen as a significant and complementary research approach for studies analyzing only one place of residence. Contemporary research based on statistics on one residence does not give a full picture of how inhabitants function in space. Incorporating multi-local living practices into research creates an opportunity to understand where people also live temporarily during the year, the rhythm and duration of their stay, and the relationship with a given place; both when present and absent. This approach can help avoid the idea of a static and closed spatial network, which is mostly visible in Polish research by instead emphasizing movement, flow, and new interdependencies between spaces. There is not enough awareness about multi-locality in Polish general debates. Further studies may lead to an increase in understanding of the influence of multi-local practices on changing demands for different services over time and sustainable development. It may also help in understanding differences in the form and content of civic engagement relationships between multi-local residents and local communities. Moreover, in the case of Poland, multi-locality can draw attention to the specificity of inequalities in access to resources, goods, and services and can also help analyze the factors of social and spatial exclusion (gender inequality, transport, or digital exclusion).

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### **Multilokalno življenje v Mazovijskem vojvodstvu: posebnost in univerzalnost podcenjenega fenomena**

Avtorica preučuje prostorsko-časovne prakse multilokalnih prebivalcev Mazovijskega vojvodstva (Mazovija) na Poljskem, pri čemer se osredinja na njihove motive, dejavnosti in dožemanje multilokalnega načina življenja ter njegov vpliv na vsakdanje življenje. Multilokalnost ni novo vprašanje, vendar se zdi, da se je danes ta pojav kvantitativno in kvalitativno spremenil. Kvantitativne spremembe kažejo, da ljudje vse pogostejše živijo v »nenehnem gibanju« ali živijo hkrati v več krajih. Kvalitativne spremembe vključujejo motivacije, vzroke in manifestacije multilokalnega življenja, individualno in družbeno vrednotenje multilokalnosti ter spreminjanje pomena mobilnega življenjskega sloga. Multilokalnost postaja vse bolj preučevan pojav, vendar primanjkuje raziskav, ki bi analizirale razmere na Poljskem. V članku predstavljena analiza temelji na kvalitativni in kvantitativni raziskavi: enajst polstrukturiranih, problemsko usmerjenih intervjujev je bilo opravljenih v predhodni raziskavi leta 2022, spletna anketna raziskava, izvedena leta 2023 pa na vzorcu (996 anketirancev), ki predstavlja glavne družbeno-ekonomske značilnosti prebivalcev Mazovije. Po uvodnem poglavju avtorica obravnava razmere na tem področju, pri čemer se osredinja na specifičnost in univerzalnost pojava multilokalnosti na Poljskem. Nato so predstavljene uporabljene metode in rezultati raziskave. V besedilu so izbrana opažanja iz kvalitativne raziskave združena z bolj kvantitativnimi analizami, ki temeljijo na podatkih iz ankete. Zadnje poglavje obsega povzetek analize in usmeritve za nadaljnje raziskave.

Raziskava osvetljuje specifične značilnosti multilokalnega prostorskega vedenja, na katero vplivajo družbene, gospodarske in okoljske razmere. Motivi za uporabo več lokacij vključujejo izpolnjevanje družinskih obveznosti, iskanje ustreznega dela in rekreacijo. Poljske specifičnosti multilokalne bivanja so povezane z velikim pomenom, ki ga imajo družinski odnosi in potrebe po rekreaciji.

Vendar se zdi, da posebnosti poljske raziskave kažejo na družbene spremembe, ki so univerzalne. Multilokalnost postaja *genre de vie*, ki je posledica prilagajanja ljudi razmeram v okolju, hkrati pa izraža vsakdanje težave in vrednote posameznikov v razmerju z njihovim življenjskim okoljem.





RAZPRAVE



ARTICLES



# “Laments Are Made by Life and Pain”: Ethnographic Interviews as a Context for Performing Greek Death Laments

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This article investigates how death laments were constructed by their performers as a genre and acquired their meaning through ethnographic interviews conducted in three Greek mountain villages in 2017. The analysis is based on anthropological and folkloristic performance-oriented research. The situational communication with and about laments, especially the process of negotiating an appropriate performance, proved to be a fruitful source of knowledge about the local lament genre. It is argued that the role of musical features of performance, such as the tempo of singing, could be established as prominent in the process of constructing the local genre of the death lament in the interviews.

▪ **Keywords:** ethnographic interview, folklore as communication, performance research, entextualization, Greek death laments

Avtorica je preučila, kako so izvajalci v etnografskih intervjujih, opravljenih v treh grških gorskih vaseh, ustvarili žalostinke ob smrti kot žanr in kako so v intervjujih pridobile svoj pomen. Situacijska komunikacija z žalostinkami in o njih se je pokazala za ploden vir znanja o lokalnem žanru žalostinke. Avtorica dokazuje, da je bilo mogoče ugotoviti, da je v intervjujih vloga glasbenih značilnosti izvedbe v ospredju pri oblikovanju žanra.

▪ **Ključne besede:** etnografski intervju, folklo-  
ra kot komunikacija, raziskave performance,  
entekstualizacija, grške žalostinke



Figure 1: View across the Pindos mountain range from the village of Eratyrta in April 2017. Photo: Riikka Patrikainen, 26.4.2017.

## Introduction

It is April 2017, and spring is in full bloom in the highlands of West Macedonia, Greece. A fresh green mountain view with red poppy fields passes by the car window, and far to the east one can see the snow-covered peak of Mount Olympus. Only a week has passed since the cheerful Orthodox Easter Sunday, so visibly celebrated throughout Greece, and now is the forty-day celebration period of it. We are on a fieldwork journey in the home region of my husband Ioannis, and our aim is to interview people that have practiced lamenting at funerals. Unlike in Greece, in my home country, Finland, ritual lamenting is found nowadays only in archives. Although Greece belonged to my life for over twenty years, I had never experienced a lament performance, and neither had my husband.

The lamenting tradition is known to exist in certain mostly rural areas in various places of Greece. Finding lamenters was not easy, and our quest resembled the work of a detective more than a scholar. Eventually, the path to the source of information in the north passed through the south, through the folklore studies communities in Athens and through scholars and traditional enthusiasts familiar with it in Thessaloniki. Laments were also expectedly challenging to perform in interviews for various reasons. First, the subject is delicate because performing laments evokes difficult memories of death and loss. Second, death laments are meant to be performed on ritual occasions, a context quite different from ethnographic interviews. Finally, laments are ritual songs mastered by elderly women, and they present a vernacular worldview – one that is pre-Christian in their poetry – that stands in opposition to the main religion of Greece, Eastern Orthodoxy (see, e.g., Caraveli-Chaves, 1980: 129). Would our informants find it comfortable to perform these ritual songs in front of a foreigner and a scholar, who even brought along her husband, an Orthodox priest?

The oral poetry of laments depicts an ancient worldview. Unlike the Christian paradise, the place where dead people go is called *Hades* (Αἰδης);<sup>1</sup> it is the land of the dead under the earth and is ruled by an ancient divinity of the same name. This place is also called the *Káto Kósmos* (Κάτω Κόσμος), literally meaning the ‘place or the people under the earth’. The ancient deity that collects the souls of the dead is called *Cháros* (Χάρος), who acts in laments by the command of Hades or the Christian god (Du Boulay, 2009: 228). Many of the laments include quite brutal images of how the Black Earth eats the buried dead. In her thorough study of Greek death laments, “*Black Earth*” and *Helen: Rituals of Death and Rebirth: Chthonic Mythology, Ceremonies of Death and Laments in Contemporary Greece* (“Μαυρηγή” και Ελένη: τελετουργίες θανάτου και αναγέννησης: χθόνια μυθολογία, νεκρικά δρώμενα και μοιρολόγια στη σύγχρονη Ελλάδα, 2008), largely

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<sup>1</sup> This article uses pronunciation transliteration in Greek. If there is already an English equivalent for some words and names, I use them. In direct quotes, I have also retained the stresses of the Greek words.

based on her fieldwork, the Greek lament researcher Eleni Psychogiou (2008) states that the *Mavrigi* (literally, ‘Black Earth’) in Greek death laments represents Mother Earth, a divinity even older than the gods in ancient Greek mythology.

In her research on lamenting, Anna Caraveli already wrote in 1980 that “[t]he present generation of lament poets is undoubtedly the last link in an uninterrupted chain of transmission” (Caraveli-Chaves, 1980: 129). Despite this assertion, the chain of transmission of laments remains unbroken until today; however, the custom of lamenting for the dead has become even more marginal. According to Caraveli’s definition, Greek death laments are “performed during ritual activities such as funerals, memorial services, and visits to the cemetery [...]. The poetry accompanying such ritual activities is sung unaccompanied to various melodic patterns which differ from locality to locality” and they “[a]re usually punctuated by stylized wails and intersections of pain.” Laments are an “orally transmitted” genre that is “composed and performed by women only” (Caraveli-Chaves, 1980: 129).

During our fieldwork journey, we recorded knowledge about funeral customs, laments, and lament performances in three West Macedonian mountain villages. The interviews took place in the interviewees’ homes as group interviews. In general, the funeral customs were the same in these villages, with only Eratyra standing out as a village with a lost culture of lamenting. On the first day, we interviewed the lamenters of Aiani, a small town of two thousand people in the regional unit of Kozani. On the second day, we conducted interviews in the neighboring regional unit of Voio – first in the small town of Eratyra, which has a population of about one thousand, and then in the small village of Horigos with approximately fifty people.

The livelihood of these villages has long been based on agriculture but, along with urbanization in the twentieth century, working-age people largely left these areas. All my interviewees were elderly women (who told us that younger ones did not know how to lament), born between the 1920s and 1940s. Following Greek custom, the women wore only dark colors as the symbol of the death of a close person, usually a family member. They had married young and they had performed their life work as housewives that had taken care of the house and the family as well as working in the fields. They all had a personal relationship with the lamenting tradition, whether living or now forgotten.

### **Greek laments as a focus of research**

Much prior research on Greek death laments in the twentieth century is characterized by a focus on the written form of lament poetry. Initially, our informants also thought we were only interested in “collecting” poetry texts. In any case, Greek culture is unique with its long literary tradition of poems; one can trace the roots of the ritual

laments back to the time of Homer. This opportunity to study laments by comparing modern laments with historical sources makes Greek laments a unique research topic in the European context (Håland, 2014: 4). *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (2002 [1974]) by Margaret Alexiou was the bedrock study presenting this continuity of oral tradition to an international audience.<sup>2</sup>

The focus on laments as a part of the life of society, and not as contextless poems, started to interest scholars toward the end of the twentieth century. Long-term research based on fieldwork by scholars such as Anna Caraveli, Loring M. Danforth, Nadia Seremetakis, and Juliet Du Boulay has served as an inspiring model because their work provides profound insights into how oral poetry works as a part of the life of the community, how laments are used as female power in the life of an otherwise patriarchal society (Danforth and Seremetakis), how laments form a female culture providing information about the values and hardships concerning women's role in society (Caraveli), what their function is as part of the rites of passage of the village and in an Orthodox context (Danforth), or as a genre that communicates with other genres of the society connected with its central values, which are strongly influenced by Orthodoxy (Du Boulay).

This research adds to previous fieldwork-based research by analyzing ethnographic interviews, with a focus on the analysis of situational communication with and about laments in the contexts of the interviews. The aim is to produce information about the meaning of Greek death laments for their performers by analyzing the process through which they were performed in the interviews.

### **Articulating the central concepts of studying folklore as communication**

The term *performance* already gained popularity in various academic disciplines in the mid-1950s. Simon Shepherd, a professor emeritus of theater and drama in London, studied the popularity and development of the concept of performance in scholarly use in his comprehensive work *The Cambridge Introduction to Performance Theory* (2016). According to him, the work of the Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman in particular had an impact on thinking about performance. Most accounts of the development of a non-theatrical concept of performance begin with his 1956 work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Shepherd, 2016: 1, 3).

According to Shepherd, articulating a general theory of performance is difficult, among other things because “[i]n terms of performance the substantial change, over the last sixty or so years, has been a new understanding of what it is that we are meant

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<sup>2</sup> With regard to the Balkan Peninsula, the Slavic tradition of funeral laments has been studied by Oksana Mikitenko (1992).

to be studying” (Shepherd, 2016: 221). Bringing together his observations, he suggests the following definition for the concept of performance: “[It] is both a practice and a mode of analysis. It is communicative behavior for which there is no other name [...]. It is a mode of analysis that works by framing, thinking of, its material as if it were performed, which is to say as if it were a deliberate communicative practice” (Shepherd, 2016: 222–223). The wide use of the same term creates ambiguity in using performance as a mode of analysis. The folklorist Richard Bauman describes the many uses of the performance approach by stating that “[t]he term ‘performance’ and its grammatical variants and compound forms cover a lot of ground, and the terrain is far from clearly marked [...] none of these approaches are mutually incompatible and, in the hands of various practitioners, they often combine quite freely” (Bauman, 2011: 707). Therefore, one should be exact about describing the method of performance analysis in use – also in folkloristic performance research.

This article follows the example of U.S. performance-oriented folklorists, anthropologists, and linguists, such as Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs, and Dell Hymes, in understanding the concept of performance. Since the early 1970s, the development of folklore studies has been multidisciplinary, and this has taken place with one main focus of interest: the situational use of language. This approach first appeared in research by Dell Hymes, in “the ethnography of communication” (Bauman, 1975: 290; Shepherd, 2016: 36). Basically “[a] crucial move in the establishment of performance approaches was a shift from the study of texts to the analysis of the emergence of texts in contexts” (Bauman, Briggs, 1990: 66).

This direction of research, in which the context of the emergence of oral folklore was central to its interpretation, had already been indicated by Alan Dundes in 1964 (the aim of folklore studies is “to discover exactly how language is used in specific situations”) and Dan Ben-Amos in 1971 (the crucial context for the text is “the performance situation” (Dundes, Bronner, 2007: 6; Ben-Amos, 2020 [1971]: 24–25). In folklore studies, this “new emphasis on performance directed attention away from the study of the formal patterning and symbolic content of texts to the emergence of verbal art in the social interaction between performers and audiences” (Bauman, Briggs, 1990: 60). This shift in focus started the development of a whole new field of study and thinking. The questions that performance-oriented research on oral folklore poses are the following: What does one actually *do* in using verbal art in the interaction between the performer and audience in specific situations? What is the function of oral folklore as communication? What do we need oral folklore for in the conduct of social life?<sup>3</sup>

Richard Bauman has been developing the concepts of performance-centered research, starting with his well-known article “Verbal Art as Performance” (1974). In this article, Bauman says that he develops “a conception of verbal art as performance, based

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<sup>3</sup> See Bauman and Briggs, 1990.

upon an understanding of performance as a mode of speaking.” In his articulation of this new object of study, Bauman makes it clear that “not every ‘doing’ of an item of folklore is necessarily a performance in the more marked sense of the term” (Bauman, 2012: 101). Bauman qualifies the term *performance* as a “distinctive frame, available as a communicative resource along with the others to speakers in particular communities” which “as a mode of spoken verbal communication consists in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence” (Bauman, 1974: 293). For Bauman, performance is always a joint achievement of the performer and the audience, based on the communicative skill of the performer. As communication, it stands out as a way of influencing the audience with a special intensity (*ibid.*).

In creating terminology for studying this phenomenon, Bauman borrows the concept of “keying the performance” from the sociologist Erving Goffman (Bauman, 1974: 295, 1992: 45), which means that “each community will make use of a structured set of distinctive communicative means to key the performance so that communication within that frame will be understood as performance within that community” (Bauman, 1992: 45). According to Bauman (2012: 100–101), these “[k]eys to performance” are “‘metasignals’ that alert co-participants to interpret the act of expression as performance,” which “are to be discovered ethnographically, not assumed *a priori*.”

Nonetheless, not all the keys are necessarily culture-specific (Bauman, 1992: 45). As an example of possible keys he gives, for example, special framing formulas; formal patterning principles or devices; special speech styles, or registers; special prosodic patterns of tempo, stress, and pitch; special paralinguistic patterns of voice quality and vocalization; appeals to tradition; special kinds of bodily movement; special settings conventionally associated with performance; and disclaimers of performance (Bauman, 1974: 295; Bauman, Braid, 1998: 110–111). What is important about Bauman’s list is that we are not simply dealing with language but also with “paralinguistic features” (Shepherd, 2016: 39), meaning the elements that are left in communication by speech after subtracting the verbal content.

### **Entextualization and laments as text**

The development of performance-centered research brought about new thinking of the semiotic process through which the performance of oral folklore gains its meaning as part of social life. In the article “Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life” (1990), Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs introduce the concept of entextualization as “the process of rendering discourse extractable, of making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit – a text – that can be lifted out of its interactional setting. A text, then, from this vantage point, is discourse rendered decontextualizable” (Bauman, Briggs, 1990: 73). This concept defines a phenomenon



that is close to the former formulations of the study of performance but not exactly the same: “The means and devices outlined as ‘keys to performance’ [...] may be seen as indices of entextualization”; performance is one mechanism of entextualization, which “as a frame intensifies entextualization” (Bauman, Briggs, 1990: 74). “Keying” is about meta-signaling the audience how to interpret the communication in question as performance within that community (Bauman, 1992: 45), whereas “entextualization” means the elements of communication – whether the communicative frame is performance or something else – that make the communication recognized as a certain genre also outside the performing context and render quoting possible.

The new approach to interpreting the meaning of oral folklore eventually changes the understanding of the bedrock concepts of folklore research such as genre. In their article “The Ethnography of Performance in the Study of Oral Traditions,” Bauman and Braid (1998: 114) state that “[g]enre is commonly used as a classificatory concept, a way of grouping oral traditions into normative typological categories – fairy tale, legend, myth, ballad, riddle, and so on – each with its conventional defining attributes.” They continue that “[i]n terms of performance, though, genre is better understood as a socially provided and culturally shaped framework for the production and reception of discourse, a model (or frame of reference, or set of expectations) that serves as a guide for the fashioning of an appropriately formed, intelligible utterance.” It is “the system of generic discriminations employed by the members of the performance community” the researchers are looking for, “not the more universal analytic categories formulated by scholars for comparative purposes” (ibid.).

In his international study on lamenting, “Crying Shame: Metaculture, Modernity, and the Exaggerated Death of Lament” (2009), the U.S. anthropologist and lament researcher James Wilce defines the genre of laments by their performance. His research is a synthesis of his own fieldwork across different continents and written sources, and he sets out the following general definition of what unites this genre across the world: the “combination of three elements – tuneful, texted weeping” (Wilce, 2009: 1). The genre cannot thus be identified without the simultaneous occurrence of these three performance elements. For the purpose and goal of performing laments, Wilce (2009: 2) states that “Lament is a typically improvisational genre in which women (and some men) have expressed grief and aired grievances, one in which communities have ritually reconstituted themselves in the face of loss.”

In his book, Wilce takes the definition of the process of entextualization by Bauman and Briggs a step further. He says that “Bauman and Briggs’ (1990) treatment of entextualization dealt primarily with language – the poetics of linguistic performance – and for good reason. Of all the modalities performances exploit, language may be the most portable, the most memorable” (Wilce, 2009: 34). However, “[t]extuality is more than words. Text is a repeatable, coherent set of signs – and this definition fits musical signs such as melodies as well as lyrics” (see also Laskewicz, 2003). What

makes laments memorable or quotable is more than words: “[p]eople feel that lament melodies convey or bespeak grief, with or without words. Thus, musical and not only lyrical textuality help give laments their meaning” (Wilce, 2009: 14).

Wilce points out another process of reproducing culture, which he calls “the flip side of entextualization”; namely, contextualization. It is “the process whereby discourse takes root in very particular moments” (Wilce, 2009: 34–35). “The play of contextualization and entextualization – processes by which laments come to appear as texts despite their shifting contextualized grounding, dialectically engaging with actions that submerge any sense of the old in a flood of immediacy – reproduces culture, and laments as a particular cultural achievement” (ibid.). The performance of laments thus always gains its meaning in a given community in the particular moment of performance of two simultaneous processes of meaning-making: contextualization, which provides the situational meaning of the performance, and entextualization, which makes the laments a specific mode of communication in a certain community.

Not everything that is otherwise visible to the interviewer in the interviewing situation is necessarily part of the meaning-making process of interviewees in the interviews. On the contrary: as a researcher, I need to observe the “contextualization cues” (Bauman, Briggs, 1990) of the interviews for finding out what contexts are situationally relevant for my interviewees.

### **The visibility of a researcher is an ethical choice**

The data of ethnographic interviews are not born in isolation, but as a result of interaction between the interviewer and interviewees at a certain specific time and place. Anthropological and folkloristic performance-oriented research understands oral folklore as communication that is rendered meaningful in specific situations. When doing research on interaction, it is important to describe as comprehensively as possible all the parties that take part in the interaction, and the positioning of the researcher is part of this process.

As the researcher Amanda Coffey states about the position of an ethnographer, “[o]ur analyses of others result from interactional encounters and processes in which we are personally involved” (Coffey, 1999: 2). In ethnographic research, the researchers are part of the field, whether they want it or not. Coffey says that “[t]o remain silent is to deny our existence and our biographical place” (Coffey, 1999: 11). To write only about the interviewees is like hiding half of the picture of the interviews: the interviewees are responding to someone in a manner most suitable for the situation and for the message to be understood. The fact that I present my own background in this article is thus simultaneously an ethical research choice and an important part of the performance study method based on the interaction analysis.



Figure 2: The interviews in Aiani are about to start. I, Ioannis (taking the photo), Grigoris, Maria, Panagiota, and Matina are waiting for more women to arrive. Photo: Ioannis Lampropoulos, 25.4.2017.

Although performance research focuses on the interaction between the audience, the performers, and the stage, not everything can be written openly in the name of ethical research – not about the subjects or the researchers. The challenge of such research is therefore to find a balance in how to describe the performers and the information they are providing without telling too much about them. This applies to the interviewers too: one must be aware that knowledge of religious conduct and private life can put both the researcher and the interviewee in a difficult position in front of the reading audience.

With the consent of my interviewees, I have decided to refer to them by their first names. This is because attending interviews was also a matter of honor for them. Their complete anonymization in this article would not be right either – they were laments that wanted their skills to be recognized.

### Research questions

As noted above, there is more than one way of carrying out performance-centered research on oral folklore. In this study, the aim is to determine what is accomplished when death laments are performed as part of ethnographic interviews. I use the insights of Bauman, Briggs, and Wilce to understand what kind of communication (speech,

gestures and expressions, bodily movements, and their interpreted meanings) death laments are in my fieldwork villages, and what their connotations are for the participants in my interviews.

Three types of communication can be distinguished within the interviews. The first is communication based on words; that is, diegesis. This is not just the use of words, but the communication in relation to the words in the presentation, how they are attached to the words, and how meanings are created in them. The second is non-verbal communication, or mimesis, which includes facial expressions and gestures and is the communication between the words of the performance and the audience. There is also communication between performers about issues related to the performance.

The third type, performance, is the communication that I focus on in my analysis. I ask how performance is keyed and how appropriate performance is negotiated within the interviews. The central focus of this approach is how folklore texts emerge in their contexts and what we can learn about the community through this process of communication. I present the process connected to the performance of death laments with the theoretical model introduced and compiled by Richard Bauman. How do the interviewees lift up the performance frame in a performance situation not so typical for laments, and how do they “key” the performance to be understood as a certain genre, here death laments, within the community? How did we as interviewers influence the interaction of the interviews, or the situation and the place where the interviews took place?

Finally, I construct a picture of death laments as a local genre by also asking what makes them recognizable, memorable, and quotable outside the interviews. I utilize the insights that the lament researcher James Wilce offered about the process of entextualization of laments and his understanding of laments as text, which is based on their performance. I expand the concept of entextualization, first introduced in research on oral folklore by Bauman and Briggs, following Wilce’s model, by including the musical and emotional elements in the “text” of laments.

## Conducting the interviews

### *Aiani*

The road from the city of Kozani became narrower and more winding the closer we got to the small town of Aiani. As our guide, we had Grigoris, a teacher and philologist, who had published an anthology about the laments of Aiani, his home village, the previous year and his wife, Maria. The interviews took place in Grigoris’s mother’s kitchen, where we began talking with Panagiota and her friend Matina over coffee while waiting for two more women, Vaia and Thomai, to arrive. While waiting, Matina



Figure 3: Vaia, Thomai, Panagiota, and Matina did everything they could to help me understand the custom of lamenting the dead in Aiani. Photo: Riikka Patrikainen, 25.4.2017.

praised Panagiota's lamenter skills, saying that in her eighties Panagiota knew many more laments than the younger women in the interviews.

The number of interviewees surprised me because I thought the interviews would take place individually, not as a group of many lamenters and even other people. For the locals, however, it was self-evident that the interviews would be crowded with people. When everyone was present, Grigoris introduced us to women, who were relatives and long-term friends, starting with things that united us: that we were married, Orthodox, and have children, and that Ioannis was born here.

The fact that I was a cantor was something extraordinary. *"She is a real cantor [kanonikí psáltria]."* although I was a woman, *"just like Antonis in our church,"* Grigoris clarified to the women. This was a matter of respect because in Greece women cantors are exceptions: the arena of women's ritual agency is the home, and men's arena is the church; the ritual laments for the dead are a good indication of this. The women said they were doing everything they could to make me understand them; their desire to help and the focus was impressive. Throughout the interview, we were treated respectfully with ecclesiastical titles – Ioannis was referred to as *páter* 'father' and I was called *papadiá* 'the priest's wife'.

It was clear that the women did not want to proceed to death laments straight away. Only after singing us some Easter songs and playful songs about priests (probably out



of uncertainty regarding Ioannis's attitude towards them) led by Matina, the women told us about the traditional wake. The first set of laments for the dead was performed after the deceased was placed in the coffin and decorated with evergreens. The people of the village knew about the wake by the church bells and went to bid farewell to the deceased. "*Each and everyone who is able to 'sings her pain' [ton póno tis], and brings a candle and flowers with her,*" explained Vaia. Performing laments continued until after sunset. When the darkness was broken at twilight, the *sávano*, the death garment, was lifted from the face of the deceased and it was washed with wine. After this, laments were performed until the priest came for the deceased to lead the funeral procession to the church approximately twenty-four hours after the death. The next time the women in Aiani sang laments was on the third day after the death, in the cemetery. Except for these key points, the order of the laments during the wake was free. At home, the repertoire was nevertheless different than in the cemetery.

Performing death laments is an adult women's skill, learned alongside women older than oneself. The women started attending wakes after they got married. Thomai said that she had to learn the laments early because she had lost a child. When we asked whether men also lamented, the women laughed: they only knew one man, but he was an exception, one in a thousand.

We asked whether the women lamented when the priest was present, and they said yes, but not during the holy services. If the priest at some point stopped the women from singing, it was not because the local church had a negative attitude toward the laments, but because the songs provoked strong sorrowful feelings. Once a doctor had forbidden Thomai to sing after a brain hemorrhage; strong emotions were not allegedly good for her health. All the women agreed with this: performing laments was physically demanding.

The categorization of laments, in Greek *moirólógia* (laments) or *nekriká tragoúdia* (death songs), turned out to be complicated. It could be that the same song was a *moirólógi* in one village but in the next village it was an Easter song. The lament was recognized as a lament of Aiani through its melody, and the same poems could be sung in different melodies. The usual meter of laments was an iambic fifteen-syllable metric line (Kontos, 2016: 20), just like in other folk songs and dances.

The most common lament in Aiani today was *Mana'm ti stolistikes?* that is, 'Mother, why have you dressed up?' The deceased was addressed as though she had dressed up to go to a wedding. In the lament, the deceased replies that she is going to be entertained by Charos – the Grim Reaper in Greek mythology. The women told us that the lament was always adjusted to the person in question; for example, if the deceased was a father, he was addressed as *Babá mou* 'my father'.

The women first recited the words of the lament, but they were uncertain how they should perform it: laments and crying belonged together, and they were not sure whether they could cry when we were present. Vaia told us a story about one woman

in the village who would not drop a tear, even if the deceased was a young person and this was very difficult for the other people present, and Thomai continued: “*My whole body shakes and the song breaks when I start crying.*” When I finally asked them if they could sing for us, after telling us so much about laments, Vaija said: “*If we start to sing, we’ll start to cry,*” and Ioannis answered her: “*Let us cry together!*” The tension burst into laughter and the women performed “*Mána mou ti stolístikes,*” adding after each line “*Wake up my dear mother!*” The women were singing this lament, like all the following, together, which was a typical way to sing laments in Aiani.

Μάνα μου τι στολίστηκες, μάνα μου τι στολίστηκες  
Τι στέκεις στολισμένη, ξύπνα μανούλα μου  
Μηνά σε γάμο σ’ καλνούνι, μηνά σε γάμο σ’ καλνούνι  
Μηνά σε πανηγύρι, ξύπνα [...]  
Ούτε σε γάμο μ’ καλνούνουν, ούτε σε γάμο μ’ καλνούνουν  
Ούτε σε πανηγύρι, ξύπνα [...]  
Μ’ κάλιασεν ου Χάρουντας να, ακάλιασεν ου Χάρουντας να  
Πάω να μη φιλέψει, ξύπνα [...]

An abridged translation of this fragment of the longer lament performed is as follows: “My mother, why have you dressed up? Wake up, my dear mother! Are they calling you for a wedding? They aren’t calling me for a wedding. I was called by Charos to go to be entertained by him.”

Many laments were performed after this. The moment they started singing, the direction of their gaze turned downward, and their thoughts started to focus more on their own memories than on us. Maria shared handkerchiefs with the women to wipe tears in the same way that she had served coffee previously. Thomai wondered aloud if it might not be right to lament the dead in an interview, and that a few examples would suffice. She sharply pointed out to Vaia in the middle of performing a lament that the name of the deceased should not be mentioned during the interview: “*Clap wood [instead]!*” For the women the laments were clearly a sacred language, the real situation of their performance being funerals – a language that the deceased would hear in the Otherworld (*ston állo kósmo*). There was no excuse for performing them in vain.

The laments that were first performed for us were connected directly to the ritual, but, when the interview went on, the most prominent feature of the laments was the women’s pain of being left alone. When with the words of one lament the deceased said that “*Everyone tells me to leave,*” Thomai commented emphatically that “*This is not true; does anyone really want the deceased to leave?*” “*Maybe the daughter-in-law?*” asked Vaia playfully, and everyone laughed. Speaking and singing about relatives that have moved abroad and stayed there, which is the meaning of *xenitiá*, was another occasion when the women started crying tears. Referring to *xenitiá*, Panagiota said “*All*

[the laments] *have their meaning.*” Laments also showed how difficult the life of a widow was in the village: “*If you walk fast, they say that you are going to a wedding, if you walk slow, they say you are proud.*” “*All of them are made of life, my daughter*” (Εμ, όλα είναι απ’ τη ζωή βγαλμένα μα κορίτσι μ’), Vaia said after this lament, showing her personal relationship to the lament just sung. At this point, at the end of the interviews, I was not addressed as a *papadiá* but as a daughter, a term of endearment.

### ***Eratyra***

Our second day of fieldwork was directed to the regional unit of Voio, northwest of Kozani. We drove with Ioannis first to the age-old mountain village of Eratyra with a population of about one thousand, built around a beautiful spring between two large mountains.

Our interviews took place at Katina’s house. To start, we went downstairs to a small room, where there were two beautifully made beds around the fireplace in the traditional style. The old mistress of the house, Katina, served coffee and a traditional sweet confiture to me, Ioannis, Kalliopi, and Anastasia (or Anastasula), a sister-in-law of Katina in her late eighties. At coffee, the women immediately told me that laments were not performed in Eratyra anymore. The women, now in their seventies and eighties, told me recollections of the wakes they witnessed in their childhood. The deceased was placed on a wool blanket on the floor and the older women, their mothers and aunts, knelt around the deceased and performed death laments. As children, the laments had not interested the women, and nowadays the custom of lamenting at wakes is no longer practiced. Katina thought that the tradition had ended with the arrival of commercial burial activities and coffins. The women knew that there had been a lot of laments in Eratyra – they even remembered a few great lamenters by name – and they regretted not being as familiar with the tradition as they wished.

Anastasia said that she did not want to learn how to lament because she had been orphaned by her mother as a child, and the laments felt too painful. According to her, the entire life of the deceased was told in the laments. In her view, laments were no longer performed because people did not want to feel pain: “*Oh, how they cried in those days!*” The women remembered the past, also Ioannis’s late grandmother, who had been their friend and neighbor. They were very well aware of our existence, of Ioannis already when he was born. Here Ioannis was treated as a grandchild of Rina, and not so much as a priest.

We took the stairs to the salon upstairs, which was a festive room, and the temperature was cold due to it seldom being used – “*just like at my grandma’s house,*” Ioannis remembered. When the camera was turned on, the tone of the interview became more official. The interviews began with the presentation of the interviewees. “*We three never left Eratyra,*” said Katina, meaning herself, Anastasula, and Kalliopi, “*We were born here, and here we will die.*” All three women had married young through



matchmaking and started a family, as was the common custom in the 1940s. All of them earned their livelihood from agriculture. Cultivating tobacco had been an important part of the financial management of the families, and with that income they were able to buy land, build houses, and marry off their children.

Eratyra had a dark history with the bloody battles of the civil war (1946–1949), especially in 1948, when the battle of Eratyra (*i máhi tis Erátyras*), had taken place. The war divided the population of the village based on a communist-dominated uprising against the established government of the Kingdom of Greece. This was also reflected in the women’s narration. With the stories of the women, the horrors and injustices of the civil war suddenly came alive before our eyes. Anastasia’s first betrothed had been killed in a bell tower in the center of the village, which was right next door – in the bell tower that we had just passed. After this, she had married a younger brother and life had continued.

In addition to the civil war, the women also reported other losses and injustices in their lives. Katina’s son had died in an accident, and that had taken all the joy from life for years. However, raising grandchildren with the help of a young widow helped her forget the pain for a while. Now that the grandchildren had already grown up, there was time to think about her son.

Haido, a friend of Katina, arrived at the salon a little later and, because of the solemn selection of the interview place, immediately said to Katina that “*you brought us to the salon like to an engagement party!*” Haido was originally from a neighboring village, but she had moved to Eratyra due to her marriage. Perhaps it was because of Haido’s comment that the women started singing songs from the engagement ceremony: five long and happy songs altogether. When they finally started speaking about laments, Haido expressed regret at the negative attitude of the village toward those that would have liked to perform laments at wakes: in the neighboring villages around Eratyra, the custom was still practiced. “*You just gossip at the wake!*” Haido accused the women, which showed that the lack of laments also meant a lack of respect for the dead. The women born in Eratyra stated that it might be so nowadays, but it had not always been like that. Haido said that this must have been long ago because she had arrived forty-two years earlier and she had never heard laments in Eratyra. However, she could not say what had caused the laments to stop.

Jannis asked Katina if she lamented to her dead son. It came as a surprise to the other woman that Katina said yes; “*Could I have let him leave without a song?*” At the end of the wake, when the bishop was already approaching the house, Katina had asked “*Isn’t anyone really going to sing anything?*” Her son had been a happy person, a singer, and “*he deserved a song,*” Katina explained. Here lamenting clearly functions as a rite of passage that marks the moment of leaving home permanently (see van Gennep, 1960 [1909]). And so she performed a lament, and everybody cried along with her song. Ioannis asked if she could sing this song to us, but Katina said she

needed a little time to get ready for it. When she felt ready, she asked, “*Is the camera on?*” and started to sing a lament about the mother of Charos. All the women looked down, some of them were humming with Katina. Listening to the deep sorrowful voice of Katina and seeing the reactions of the women was difficult; I was not even able to hand handkerchiefs to Katina.

Του Χάρου η μάνα κάθουνταν ψηλά σε μια ραχούλα.  
 Δεν κελαηδούσεν σαν πουλί κι ούτε σαν χελιδόνι.  
 Μόν’ τραγουδούσιν κι έλεγε, μόν’ τραγουδάει και λέγει.  
 Χαρείτι νιές, χαρείτι νιοί, χαρείτι παλικάρια.  
 Γιατί έχου γιόνπραματιφτή κι γιο πρώτο κουρσάρη.  
 Δενπραγματεύει πράγματα, δενπραγματεύει ρούχα.  
 Μόν’πραγματεύει τις ψυχές κι δεν χαρίζει κανέναν.

Charos’ mother sat high on the mountainside.  
 She didn’t sing like a bird or like a swallow.  
 She just sang and said, he just sings and says,  
 Rejoice young girls, rejoice young men,  
 For I have a merchant son and a son like a pirate.  
 He doesn’t offer things for sale, he doesn’t offer clothes for sale.  
 He only trades souls and doesn’t miss anyone.

After singing the sorrowful, descending melody of the lament, Katina commented that the words of this lament are true: Charos is coming to take each and every one of us one day.

After the emotional performance by Katina, Haido also started to tell about a lament from her own village, very similar to the one Katina had just sung. She was apologizing that this lament was a bit different than in Eratyra, but other women encouraged her to sing. Katina said that she needed a little time to get over her lament, but she would follow soon in singing Haido’s lament. Haido started a lament very similar to Katina’s, but with a different melody than Katina. The melodies of the laments were clearly village-specific because Haido and Katina always sang their own songs with the same melody.

In the end, after we stopped recording and asking questions, the women were happy and relieved, and they thanked us for offering an interlude to their otherwise dull everyday life. The moment we left the house, Katina told us with a happy voice, “*When you come next time, count us!*” meaning that they were already old, and that maybe this would be the last chance to meet them all.



Figure 4: At the end of the interview, the women of Eratyra gathered on the steps of Katina’s house for a group photo. “When you come next time, count us!” said Katina cheerfully. Photo: Riikka Patrikainen, 26.4.2017.

## Horigos

After half an hour's drive from Eratyra, we were in the small village of Horigos, again with Grigoris and Maria. We sat down outdoors in the afternoon sun in the garden of Maria's mother, eighty-three-year-old Garifallia, and the song of a canary was overwhelming in the silence of the small village. Garifallia was used to being interviewed, and she had sung the liturgies in the village church in the past. "*I know all the laments [ola ta moirologia]*", said Garifallia at coffee because she really was aware of her talent as a singer, and we also were convinced of that a few hours later.

We decided to have the interviews downstairs in Garifallia's house. After discussing her singing in the church, Garifallia asked "*Are you ready?*" and she started to sing her first lament. This commemorative lament was dedicated to her husband because during the forty days of Easter the souls of the deceased were "out" due to the resurrection of Christ. Garifallia told us, with a twinkle in her eye, that she was not sure whether her husband would hear the song because he had worked in Germany for eight years – maybe he was there and not here. Later, when introducing us to actual funeral laments, Garifallia stopped singing at the point where the name of the deceased should have been mentioned.

Later she asked me whether I wanted to hear songs or laments. I answered laments, but afterward I regretted this when I understood that the line between songs and laments was thin. Garifallia told us that she knew very sad, very "*heavy [βαριά]*" laments and very "*light [ελαφριά]*" ones, and she said that because of problems with her thyroid she could not perform very sorrowful laments, otherwise her throat swells shut. For the same reason, she could not perform the first laments for her own husband at the wake. The heaviest lament, according to Maria, was that one that was sung when the deceased was taken to church and leaving home: as the lament said, even the mountains bowed then. One should not be left without a song at that sacred moment, said Maria, thus emphasizing the importance of laments as a rite of passage at funerals.

While Garifallia was singing one of her laments, Maria asked, "*Do you really sing laments this slow or a bit faster?*" Garifallia answered that if she sang any faster the lament would turn into a dance. Garifallia said that in this interview she was performing the laments faster so that they would not last too long. The laments had thus two presentation speeds: very slow at real funerals and a bit faster for the interviews.

Garifallia said that she creates her own laments. This surprised Grigoris, and he asked: "*On the spot?*" Garifallia said "*Yes!*" and performed one of her own laments:

Θέλτε δέντρα μ' ν' ανθίσετε, θέλτε να φουντωθείτε.  
Δεν κάθομαι στον ίσκιο σας, ούτε και στην δροσιά σας.  
Μόν' φεύγω, φεύγω μακριά πάνω στον άλλο κόσμο.  
Πάνω να βρω τους φίλους μου, να ιδώ τους ιδικούς μου.

My trees, if you want to bloom, if you want to grow.  
I do not sit in your shadow, nor in your dew.  
I’m just leaving, I’m walking away up<sup>4</sup> to the other world.  
Up there to find my friends, see my own people.

After singing this lament, Garifallia said that “*Laments are made by life* [Αυτά βγάνει η Ζωή]”, from the soul (μέσ’ απ’ την ψυχή). The atmosphere of the interviews became more intimate, and Maria started telling us about the lonely life of her mother in the village and what the laments had to do with it. “*When my mother feels lonely or sad, she sings laments.*” Garifallia said that “*the laments are born out of life and pain, that moment* [Αυτά βγάνει η ζωή, ο πόνος [...] εκείν την ώρα]”, and that there had been a lot of pain in her life, but she was grateful for her life.

Maria said that, when her father had died, she had wanted to sing to her father as well but she did not know any laments. She had sung a children’s song, which she had sung often when her father was working in Germany and she had missed him. After everyone had settled around Maria’s father, Maria sang a song about a bird that



Figure 5: Garifallia is a skillful lamenter, able to compose her own laments according to the situation. Photo: Riikka Patrikainen, 26.4.2017.

<sup>4</sup> Referring to the Otherworld as a place whose location is “up,” as in paradise, and not “down,” as in the Underworld, might be a Christian influence in her lament.



had broken its cage and flown away. Garifallia had taken the words of the song and made it a lament by changing its melody. “*It’s [originally] a lament,*” said Garifallia to Maria. First Maria sang a children’s song about a little nightingale that escaped from a broken cage, after which Garifallia changed a few words of the song, “*the little nightingale*” now being “*dear mother,*” and the melody, turning the song into a lament. After performing this lament, there were tears in Garifallia’s eyes. It was time to finish the interview.

## Discussion

Although I speak Greek, for my interviewees as a Finnish woman I represented “*blond people, a different race* [ξανθιά ο κόσμος, άλλη ράτσα]”, as Anastasia in Eratyra said. The women’s desire to help me understand them and bring me into their experience’s inner circles was touching. The informative power of the interviews was precisely in the contrasts that coming together from different cultures, backgrounds, and positions created in our interaction – even the other people present at the interviews learned many new things about these death customs because they were explained to me. I was nevertheless not a complete foreigner, a *xéni*, to them, which created trust: I was Orthodox, a woman, and a mother, like the interviewees. The fact that my husband was a priest caused a certain tension at the beginning, but it quickly resolved after the interviewees got to know us better.

The process of keying the performance frame was similar in the interviews; no direct progress was ever made to the performance. At first, the interviewees told us about other village-related customs than death customs, such as Easter songs. After disclaimers – that is, first stating that the old lamenters knew more death laments than the young (Bauman, 1974: 295) – the interviewees recalled the words of the laments, and then the village-specific melody to perform them, a feature that was already mentioned by Caraveli (1980: 129). Finally, before the lament performance, it was ensured that the performance of the feeling of sadness inherent in the lament was, as it were, permissible. Only after we said that the tears were welcome could the performance of death laments truly begin. All these characteristics – disclaimers, words, melody, and tears – of death laments also served as keys to performance in the interviews (Bauman, 1992: 45).

When the performance frame was keyed, the performance of death laments affected the emotions of all in attendance to such an extent that the choice of laments from then on was influenced by the personal memories associated with them, not just their place at the funeral. In the body language, the direction of the gaze during the performance was important as well: after the lamenters turned their gaze away from other people, the presence of the audience did not influence the performance as much as their own memories.



Figure 6: Ioannis and Grigoris next to the cemetery in Aiani; the discussions continued long in the evening after the interviews. Photo: Riikka Patrikainen, 25.4.2017.

At the end of the interviews, coming back to the level of everyday life, the atmosphere became free, and the room was filled with laughter.

Many things were achieved through the performance of death laments. Death laments functioned as a genre for expressing pain and loss (Wilce, 2009: 2) and they showed care for the dead. They also served as transitional rites for structuring death-related category changes (van Gennep, 1960 [1909]), a feature that was especially prominent in the laments said to be performed when the deceased was taken out of the home to the church.

The negotiation process of an appropriate performance within the interviews provided interesting information about the difference between real funerals and the performance of death laments within the interviews. In the interviews, the death laments were not to be performed with the names of the deceased, and it was not suitable to perform too many of them. The prominent difference-making feature was the pace of singing. In Greek culture, slowness, and in general a slow pace, is an important symbol of death, and a fast pace is a symbol of the joy of life, such as at weddings (*“If you walk fast, they say that you are going to a wedding”*). The discussion in Horigos between Garifallia and her mother is a good example of the interconnectedness of dance and funerals: if the pace of singing were faster, the song would become dance-like; if slower, it would be like at a funeral.

For my interviewees, the poetry of laments alone did not suffice as a definition for death laments, and singing laments did not form an appropriate performance of death laments as such. This resembled very well Wilce’s definition of laments as “tuneful, texted weeping” (Wilce, 2009: 1). However, what makes laments memorable and quotable outside the performance situation and constructs them as a local genre is more than this. As Wilce says, “musical and not only lyrical textuality help give laments their meaning” (Wilce, 2009: 14). These features that make the laments a text, that define the local genre of death laments for the locals, are best found ethnographically. I argue that, in the case of the Greek death laments in the interviews, the role of the musical features of performance, such as the tempo of singing and the use of locally specific lament melodies, could be established as prominent in the process of constructing the local genre of death lament in the interviews.

## Conclusions

The aim of this study was to determine what was achieved by performing death laments as part of ethnographic interviews. In addition to this, the aim was to ascertain how the interviewees themselves defined the genre of death laments; that is, how they themselves identified laments as a separate mode of expression. As an aid to the analysis of the interviews, I used folkloristic performance research, especially Richard Bauman’s



idea of the regularity with which folklore performance is defined; that is, “keying the performance frame.” I also used the concept of “laments as text,” formulated by the lament researcher James Wilce based on the concept of entextualization developed by Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs.

In particular, the performance of laments within the interviews, a foreign context for performing death laments, and performing to interviewers foreign to the lamenters, influenced the “negotiation process” of the performance: the interviewees had to explicitly negotiate what would be appropriate in this situation and why, and they also often had to make sure that I had understood what they meant.

Laments were especially an expression of feelings of pain and loss as communication, but these experiences were not necessarily associated with death, but with other sorrows of the lamenters’ personal lives. Death laments were identified as death laments, as Wilce (2009: 1) had also defined them, by the fact that they were “tuneful, texted weeping.” In the musical expression, in addition to the village-specific melody, a typical feature was also the tempo at which the laments were performed, and the particular slowness of the laments. If the laments were not performed slowly enough, this would significantly change the understanding of the nature of the lament to dancing. This raises the question of what relationship death laments have to other local genres and what kind of network these genres form culturally.

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### **»Žalostinke so stkanе iz življenja in bolečine«: etnografski intervjuji kot kontekst izvedbe grških žalostink ob smrti**

V članku avtorica raziskuje, kako so izvajalci žalostinke ob smrti v etnografskih intervjujih oblikovali kot žanr in kako so pridobile pomen v teh intervjujih, izvedenih v treh grških gorskih vaseh aprila 2017, ko je zapisovala znanje o pogrebnih šegah, žalostinkah in njihovih pomenih. V analizi, ki temelji na antropoloških in folklorističnih performativno usmerjenih raziskavah, razkriva, kakšna vrsta komunikacije (govor, geste in izrazi, telesni gibi in njihovi interpretirani pomeni) so žalostinke v vaseh, kjer je potekalo terensko delo, in kakšne so njihove konotacije za udeležence intervjujev. S tem si prizadeva ugotoviti, kaj je bilo doseženo z izvajanjem posmrtnih žalostink v okviru etnografskih intervjujev in kako so intervjuvanci sami opredelili žanr posmrtnih žalostink – tj., kako so sami v žalostinkah videli poseben način izražanja. Pri analizi intervjujev si je avtorica pomagala s folklorističnimi raziskavami performance, zlasti z idejo Richarda Bauman o pravilnosti, ki določa folklorno izvajanje, in s konceptom »žalostink kot besedila« Jamesa Wilcea, ki temelji na konceptu entekstualizacije, kakor sta ga razvila Richard Bauman in Charles Briggs. Situacijska komunikacija z napevi in o njih, zlasti proces dogovarjanja o primerni izvedbi, se je pokazala za ploden vir znanja o lokalnem žanru žalostinke. Avtorica trdi, da je bilo mogoče ugotoviti, da je v intervjujih vloga glasbenih značilnosti izvedbe, kot je tempo petja, v ospredju pri oblikovanju lokalnega žanra žalostinke.



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