

Doing family under multi-local conditions

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Conceptual Challenges

- How can we define families which do not fit into the household-centred models of family, like the ‘nuclear family’?
- How can we understand the plurality, complexity, and fluidity of today’s family lives?
- How can we approach the diverse practices families develop to deal with multi-locality?
- How can we understand the geographies of familial relationships of multi-local families?

Outline

1. Definition of Family
2. The Concept of ‚Doing Family‘
3. Multi-local everyday life: challenges for ‚doing family‘
4. Conclusions

1. Our idea of ‘family’

Family is a fluid social network

- based on emotions and centred at personal care relations between generations and genders.
- including a high variety of relationships
- characterised by different spatialities

2. The Concept of ‚Doing Family‘ (1/4)

‘Families are what they do’ (Silva/Smart 1999)

→ Families are created through sets of everyday practices

The Concept of ‘Doing Family’ or ‘Family Practices’

(Morgan 1996, 2011; Smart 2007, Schier/Jurczyk 2007, Jurczyk 2012)

Takes up:

- **‘Doing gender’** (West/Zimmermann 1987)
- **‘Daily conduct of life’** (alltägliche Lebensführung; Voß 1991) or
- **‘Familial conduct of life’** (familiäre Lebensführung; Rerrich 1994, Jürgens 2001)
- **Concepts of action-oriented social geography** (settings; Weichhart 2004, ‘locales’; Werlen 1997)

2. The Concept of ‚Doing Family‘ (2/4)

Basic forms of ‚Doing Family‘

Creating social ties while maintaining boundaries (Nelson 2006)

- Boundary work, boundary management (Nippert-Eng 1996)

Coordinating individual patterns of daily life management into a joint daily life management (familiale Lebensführung, Jürgens 2001)

- On temporal, spatial, social and emotional level

Constructing intimacy, a sense of belonging together, we-ness (Galvin 2006)

- Everyday and biographical interaction processes

‚Displaying family‘ (Finch 2007)

- To convey the message ‘this is how we do family and it works’

2. The Concept of ‚Doing Family‘ (3/4)

Family Practices

...take place in the course of everyday activities and routines; ‚quality moments‘

- while sharing dinner, reading a bedtime story, while waiting or doing household chores

...take place at specific places

- at home, at the workplace, at school, in supermarkets, while driving,...
- individuals use concrete ‘settings’ or ‘locales’ for family practices (Weichhart 2003, Werlen 1997)

...are embedded in broader contexts

- social, spatial, temporal, economic, cultural conditions on different spatial levels

2. The Concept of ‚Doing Family‘ (4/4)

How family is ‚done‘?

Family is ‚done‘ by all family members: adults and children

Gender shapes family practices

Individuals ‚do‘ family by resorting to their individual resources, orientations, and abilities

Family practices are shaped by individual concepts of ‚good family life‘ as well as by ‚family habitus‘

What are the challenges of families who are living a multi-local every-day life?

3. Multi-local everyday life: challenges for ‚doing family‘ (1/4)

Multi-localisation – decision to live at two or more places



New spatio-temporal patterns of family life shaped by

- number of actively multi-locally living family members
- location of and distances between their residences
- duration, frequency, rhythms, and regularity of their shuttling



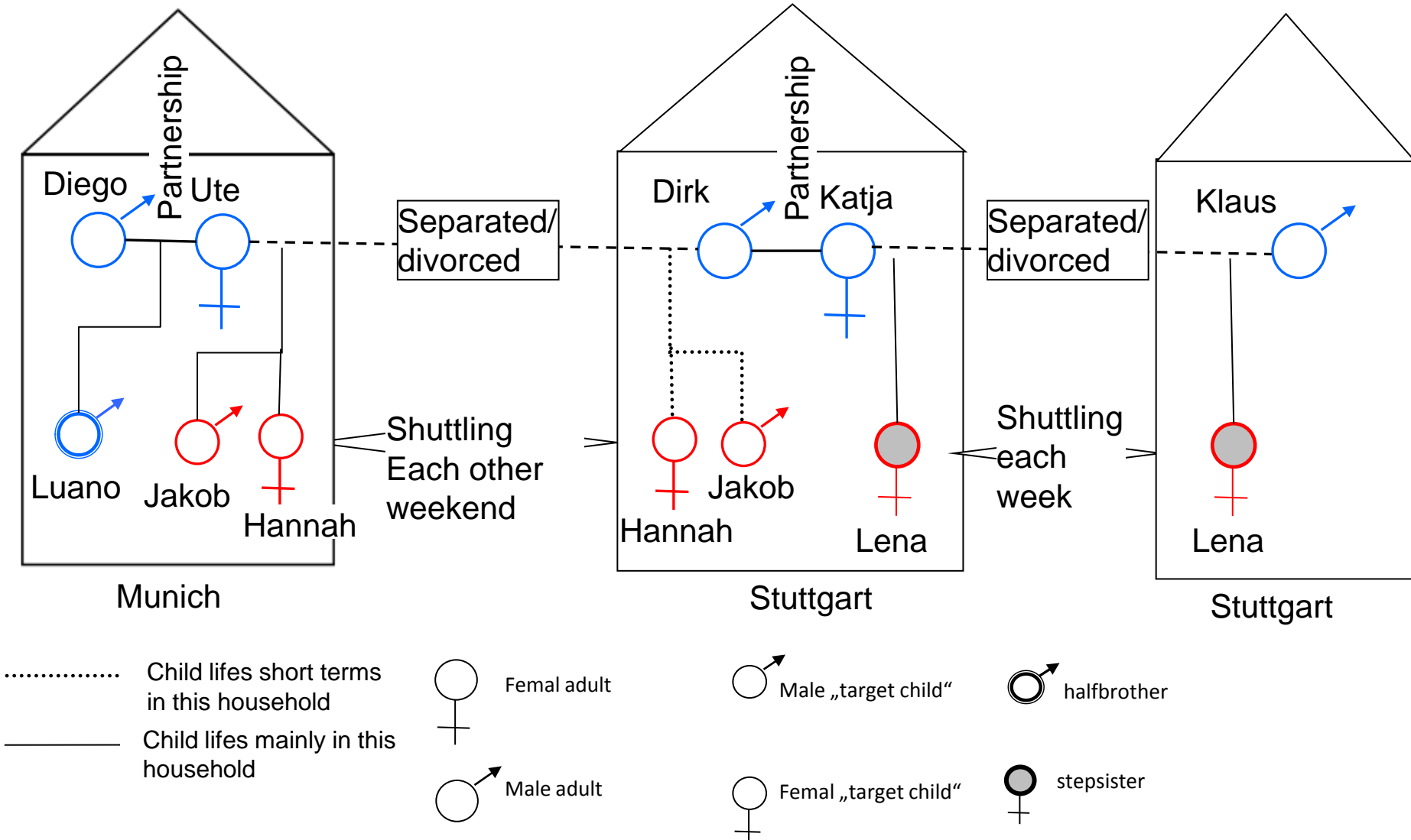
New contours of the communal life of family members

- alternating numbers of family members living together at one place
- alternating (shorter or longer) periods of co-presence and absence
- contact mobility – important element of daily family life



New everyday practices have to be developed in daily family life

Different requirements for ,actively‘ and ,passively‘ multilocal family members.



3. Multi-local everyday life: challenges for ‚doing family‘ (3/4)

New requirements for ‚doing family‘ arising from multi-locality

Coping with...

1. ...being repeatedly on the move from here to there and backwards
 2. ...daily life and social-spatial embeddedness (social integration, territorial belonging) between and at multiple places
- are requirements concerning first of all **actively** multi-local family members.

Coping with...

1. ...managing the ‚choreography‘ of joint everyday life
2. ...long or short residential distances
3. ...intermittent co-presence and absence
4. ...maintaining intimacy at a distance

are requirements for **actively** as well as **passively** multi-local family members.

3. Multi-local everyday life: challenges for ‚doing family‘ (4/4)

Practices for ‚doing multi-local family‘

1. Family life deviating from normative model
 - redefining family ties, rights, tasks, obligations
 - greater effort for ‘displaying family’
2. New organisational and coordinating tasks
3. Maintaining intimacy and feelings of we-ness at a distance as well as in short times of co-presence
 - creating ‘quality moments’ during short periods of co-presence
 - substituting practices for spatial co-presence: telecommunication, gifts, financial support
 - Visits – contact mobility

=> Development of mobile, translocal and local family practices

4. Conclusions

The added value of a combination of geographical and sociological approaches to study late modern family life:

Defining family as a fluid social network => focus on boundary-crossing dynamics of family practices

The concept of ‘doing family’ => opportunity to approach the plurality, complexity, and fluidity of today’s family lives

Focus on everyday practices => opportunity to comprehend how families manage their multi-local life

Action-oriented social geography approach => families use spatiality for practising family, spatial arrangements form family life, families ‘make geography’

Problems, as well as new opportunities, for families get visible.

Thank you for your attention!

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