

Multi-local Living: A Time-geographic Perspective

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A preliminary remark:

Sorry about my horrible English!



„*A geographic perspective*“

Quite an easy task?

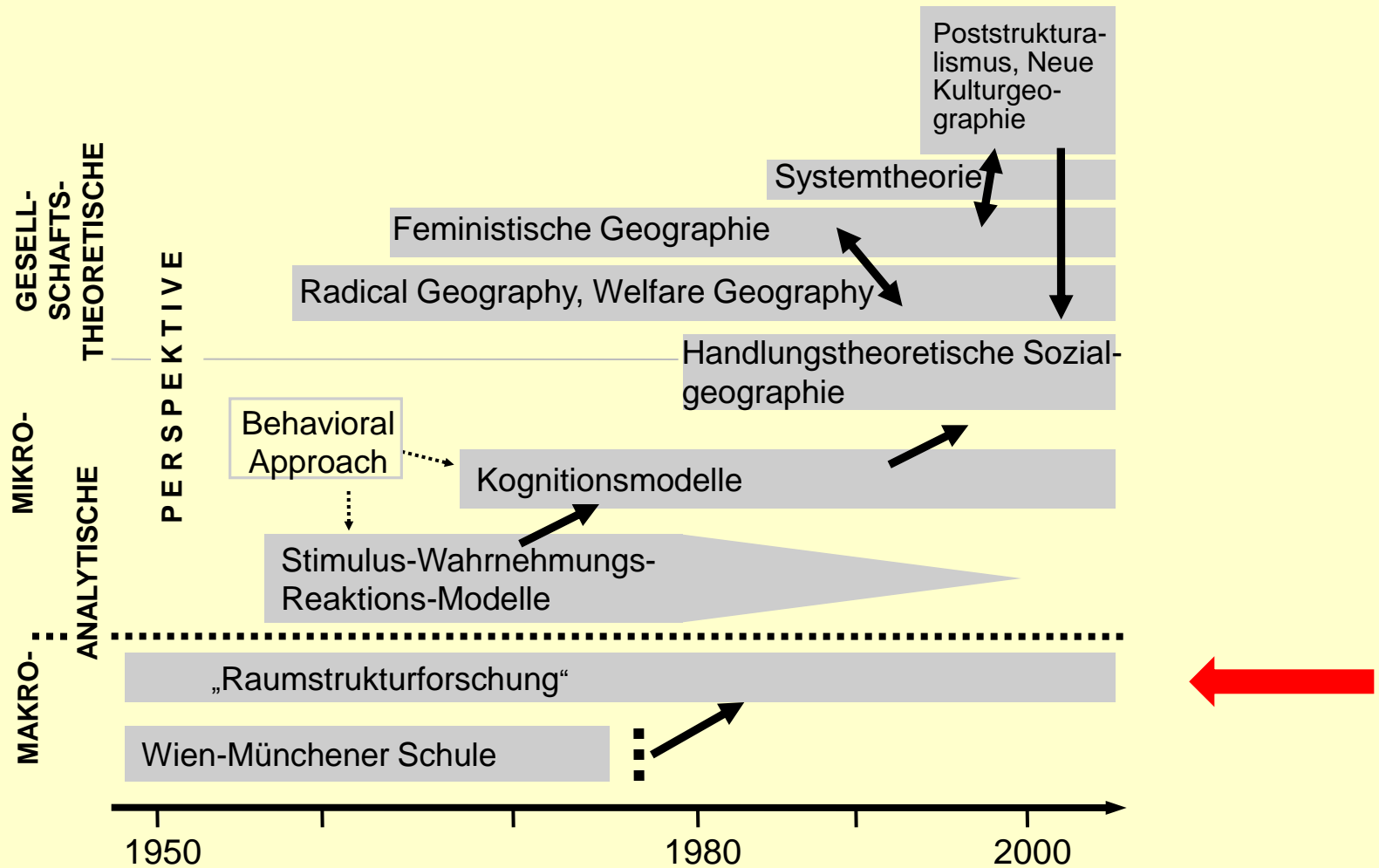
Not really, because current human geography is a multi-paradigm game and the paradigms involved are incommensurable systems of thought.

Yet, all the competing paradigms in human geography have one characteristic feature in common:

Their key research question is the *spatiality* of the world.

The main interest of all the existing human geographies is focused on the *spatial* structure of phenomena, at *spatial relations, locations, positions and sites*.

Current paradigms in human geography



Concepts of space

Paradigm:

Space₅
A priori of perception (E. KANT)

Space₄
"Spatiality" as an attribute of things (G. W. LEIBNIZ)

Space₃
Condition to make differences

Space₂
"Container space", space as a distinct ontological structure

Space_{1e}
Subjective space, hodological space, "Place"

Space₁
Section of the Earth's surface, some sort of "address"

Space_{6s}
socially constituted and constructed

All these concepts of space are relevant for describing and explaining residential multilocality!

Action theoretical geography

Action theoretical geography, new cultural geog., poststructuralist approaches, feministic geog.

Spatial approach, research on spatial structures

Behavioural approach, "humanistic geography", action theoretical geog., new cultural geog.

Spatial approach, research on spatial structures

Source: P. WEICHHART, 2008, Fig. 81, p 327, modified

Multi-local living

Most researchers agree that it is not the fact of multi-local living which is new, but the structure and the intensity of the phenomenon.

The current practice of residential multilocality allows us to draw conclusions on social change, on modified claims on space and on new modes of the social construction of space.

Therefore, the phenomenon is frequently discussed in the theoretical context of second modernity, reflexive modernisation, risk society, and globalization.

Multilocality has something to do with the increasing mobility in our time: “The age of mobility has replaced the sedentary age” (J. ROLSHOVEN, 2008, p. 17).

“Mobile sedentariness”

Yet, multi-local living cannot be characterized exclusively by mobility. Residential multilocality is rather to be seen as a *conjunction or nexus between mobility and sedentariness*.

Residential multilocality means that the actors involved practise a *double or two-fold sedentariness*,

since the crucial requirement for practicing multi-local living is the availability of *two dwellings* and the entitlement to dispose of both places of residence.

Space₂

Let us take a brief look at space₂, the container space.

In this concept, space is conceived as something like a box or repository where things, objects, people or events have been stored or found. Nation states like Germany or Austria, or specific regions may serve as examples.

This concept, however, is absolutely unsuitable to help us grasp aspects of social interactions and social relations. So in migration research, we need a “transnational perspective” that explicitly avoids and criticises this concept.

Yet, space₂ is an indispensable prerequisite for any version of census. Accordingly, when making quantitative statements about residential multilocality, we need to refer to space₂.

Multi-local living: How many people are affected?

We know only very little about the population size that practices multi-local living. Therefore, quantitative studies are an important desideratum of research.

In most countries relevant census data on this topic are either not available and/or difficult to interpret.

Estimates for Switzerland suggest that 8.5 per cent of the whole population uses or owns secondary residences. For Germany, some rough estimations vary from 3 to 14 per cent. In Austria, census data allow better estimates.

Secondary residences as an indicator for multi-local living - Austria

Wohnungen mit Neben- bzw. ohne Wohnsitzangabe 2001 nach Gemeinden

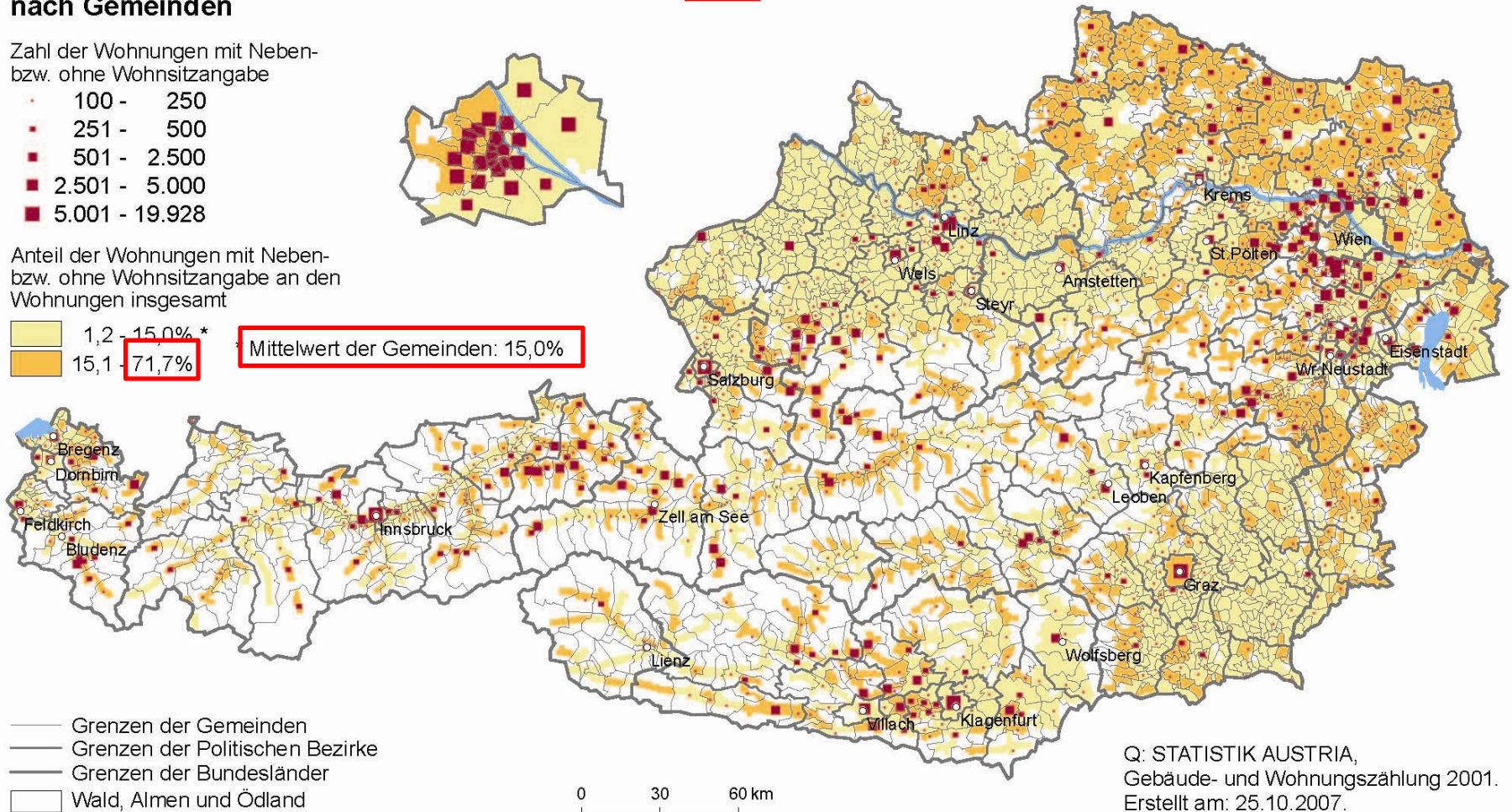
Zahl der Wohnungen mit Neben- bzw. ohne Wohnsitzangabe

- 100 - 250
- 251 - 500
- 501 - 2.500
- 2.501 - 5.000
- 5.001 - 19.928

Anteil der Wohnungen mit Neben- bzw. ohne Wohnsitzangabe an den Wohnungen insgesamt

- 1,2 - 15,0% *
- 15,1 - 71,7%

Mittelwert der Gemeinden: 15,0%



Secondary residences as an indicator for multi-local living - Austria

“Probezählung 2006“ (“Trial Census 2006“):

Total number of secondary residences in Austria:
1,077,400 (one quarter of all dwellings (sic!))

Number of Austrians with at least one secondary residence:
816,277 persons (9.9%)

More than one secondary residence: ~ 60,000 persons

Austrians living abroad with secondary residence: 94,694

Foreigners with secondary residence in Austria: 166,450

Multi-local living is actually a mass phenomenon in Austria.

Space₁

Let us now consider space₁ as an analytical background when dealing with residential multilocality.

The significance of this concept becomes evident as soon as we remember the corporeal dimension of human existence.

Some consequences of the corporeality of human beings

Human beings have a body and, hence, they are elements of the physical-material world.

This seems absolutely trivial, and therefore, it has not been a central topic of current social science research. Yet, we should not ignore that this is an extremely important fact of human existence involving serious consequences.

Corporeality implies that we need a *location* in the physical world and that we need material resources to fulfil the requirements of somatic metabolism. So we *need to* interact with the physical environment to satisfy the needs resulting from corporeality.

Some consequences of the corporeality of human beings

Moreover, we have demands on the social, economic and cultural conditions of the world.

All these conditions are *unevenly distributed over space* and are made concrete and localized via the material substratum of the social world.

All these *attributes of location* which seem appropriate to satisfy specific human needs may be labelled as “*site offers*” (Standortofferten) of this place.

The actions of the everyday practice of life are located at specific places or locales, which display a specific combination of site offers.

Some consequences of the corporeality of human beings

Corporeality implies that it is impossible for a human being to stay at two or more different places at the same time.

To overcome the distance between two localities requires an *effort of transition*, which may be made measureable as *subjective transition cost* for the actor.

Utilising the site offers of a specific location as well as practicing intimate social relations require the *bodily presence* of a person at the respective location.

Site offers are restricted

A specific location supplies a *limited* combination of offers. Therefore, a specific place is suitable to a greater or lesser degree to provide all those facets of usability a human being needs to fulfil their current demands.

An optional strategy for a person to secure their livelihood would be to move between two or more locations and alternately use their complementary site offers.

Hence, multilocality may be seen as a social practice which allows combining the site offers of different locations.

In need of a dwelling

However, it is impossible for us to move freely between any desired locations because we need a dwelling as the centre of our life world.

As a rule, our daily activity space is limited by demands of regeneration (sleeping, eating, body care etc.), which are structured in a circadian rhythm. As we have to come back to our dwelling regularly in a daily rhythm, the location of our dwelling determines and restricts all other site offers and options for utilization of infrastructure. There are exceptions, but the routine utilization is restricted to the surroundings of the dwelling.

The location of the dwelling defines the site offers at disposal

The permanent and lasting use of site offers is only possible for those that are within reach of our daily activity space.

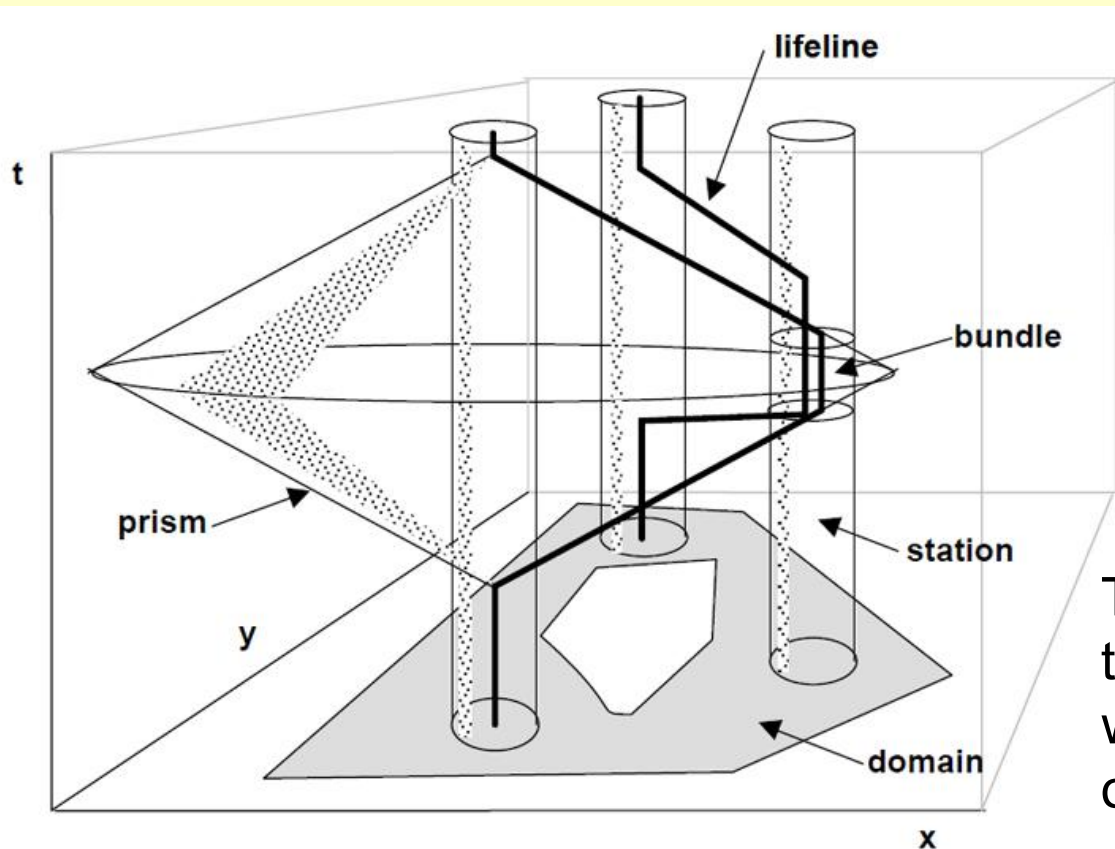


Figure 1. Some time geography elements

The Swedish geographer Torsten HÄGERSTRAND came up with the concept of time geography which drew our attention to these trivial, yet most significant limitations of human activity potentials.

This “tyranny of space and time” is not an absolute one; we are able to escape, but only for short periods.

Housing and migration

If the site offers at a specific location are not (or no longer) adequate to secure the livelihood of a household, or if a household wants to improve its living conditions through the site offers of a distant location, there are two options for action:

The household (this may also be a single person) may decide to leave its present dwelling and migrate to another place providing better living conditions.

The other option would be to keep the existing dwelling and establish a *second residence*, which is used for a part of the lifetime *in addition* to the existing dwelling. This alternative constitutes a multi-local lifestyle and implies a strong attachment to the existing dwelling place.

Migration versus multilocality

To demonstrate the difference between migration and circular mobility on the one hand and multilocality on the other hand, it seems useful to discuss some aspects of the disparity in the structure of life worlds and of the cognitive-emotive meanings for the actors.

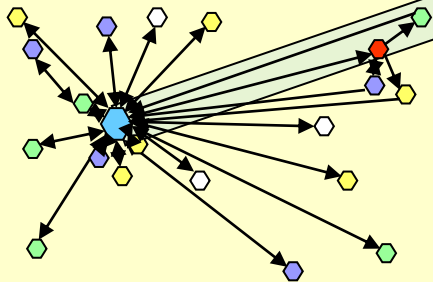
In the theory of migration, a distinction is made between *inter-regional* migration and *intraregional* migration. The first case denotes remote migration, the second refers to relocations over short distances.

The distinction between these two types is frequently not defined by *distance*, but refers to the activity space of the household and to the “total displacement – partial displacement hypothesis”, formulated by C. ROSEMAN (1971)

Migration I

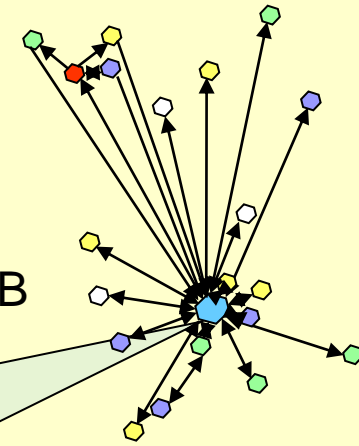
“Total displacement”
(C. C. ROSEMAN, 1971)

The former dwelling place
is left, the former activity
space is deactivated.



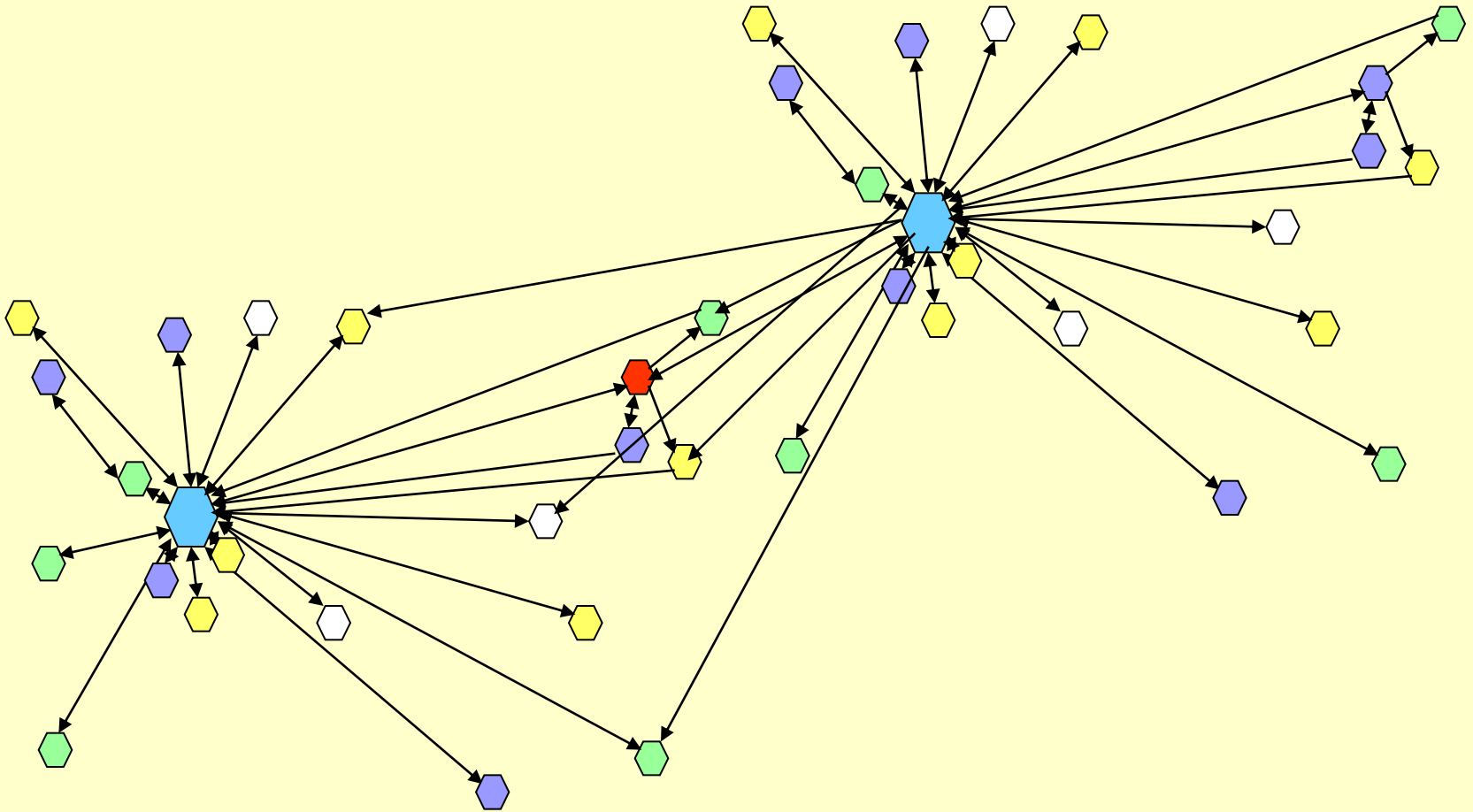
Dwelling A

Dwelling B



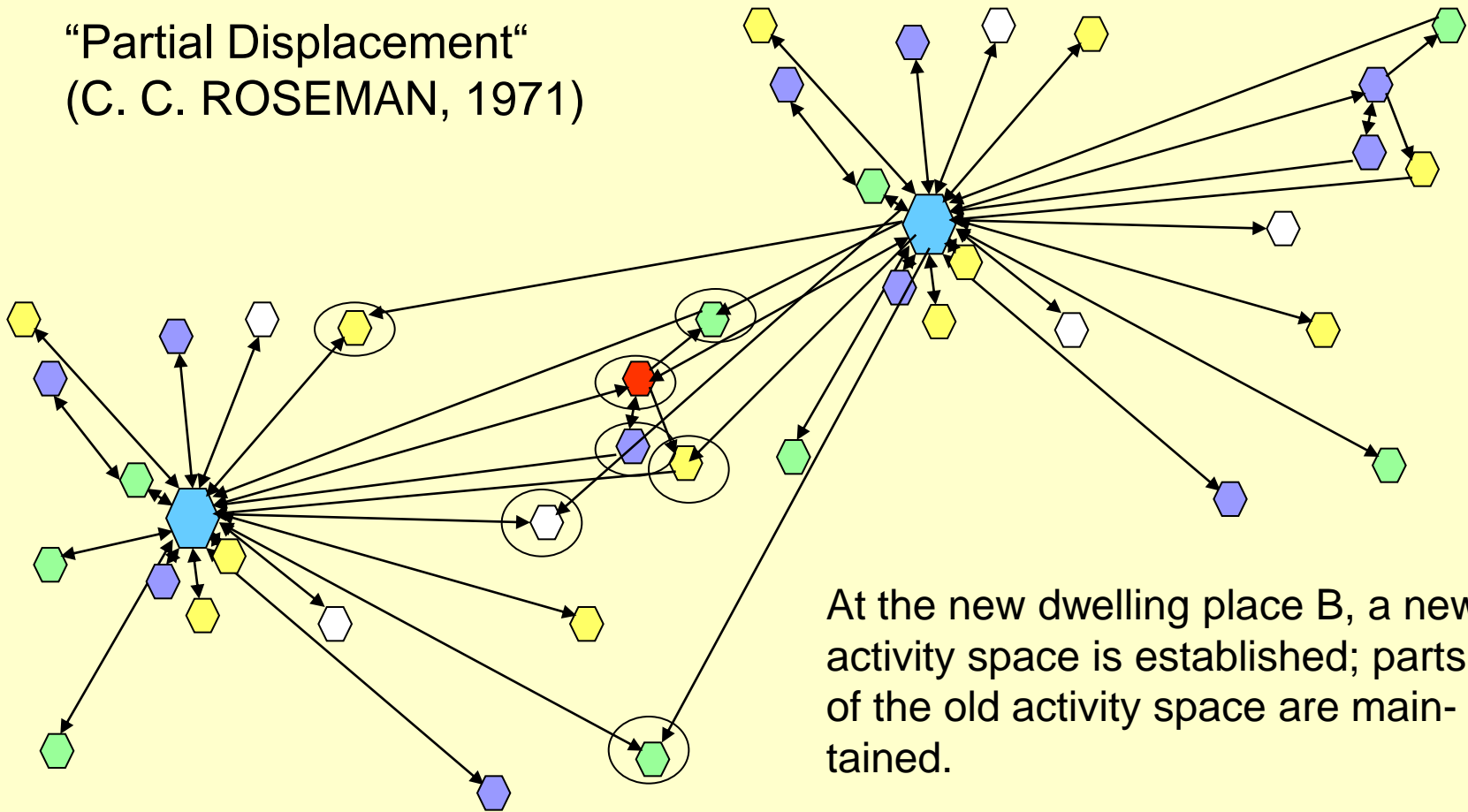
At the new dwelling place,
a new activity space which
activates a new set of site
offers is established.

Migration II



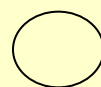
Migration II

“Partial Displacement”
(C. C. ROSEMAN, 1971)



At the new dwelling place B, a new activity space is established; parts of the old activity space are maintained.

Dwelling A and *parts* of the activity space of A are deactivated.



maintained site offers

Multilocality

A completely different situation is given in the case of multilocality. Multilocality as “vita activa” at two (or more) places means that *two (or more) activity spaces are coupled or linked together.*

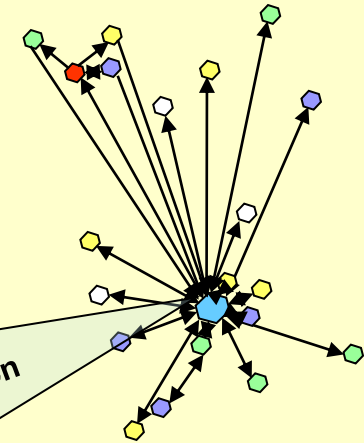
This requires availability of a second (or third) dwelling which is used as an anchor point of everyday life at another location, apart from the initial home.

The crucial benefit of multilocality lies in the fact that the site offers of two or more places may be combined and utilized for the household by this social practice.

Multilocality – Living at two (or more) places

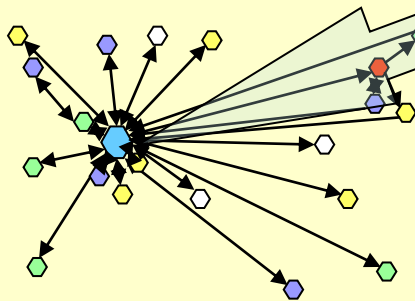
From the actors' perspective the localities or places can be defined as specific configurations of potentials of appropriation and utilization. Site offers of *two places* may be transformed into subjective place utilities.

“Attracting forces“ of the new place



Critical site offers

“Binding forces“ of the current place



Critical site offers

Space of transition, costs and utilities of transition

“Coupling“ of the site offers of two or more localities.

Multilocality allows individual actors (or a collective of them) to combine the actor-specific place utilities of two (or more) places and thus increases the gain in their practice of acting.

Transition and transition costs

Multilocality requires at least one person of the household to move in (predominantly) regular intervals from one place to the other.

This action constitutes a *transition space* which develops into a repetitive component of the respective actor's subjective life world.

This transition space comprises means of transport (car, train, aircraft), settings, situations, opportunities, risks, and social interactions.

Multi-locality causes costs. They consist of *transition costs* (including not only the monetary expenses but also psychic cost all of which are connected with the act of moving and staying at a remote place) and *additional housing costs*.

An explanation according to rational choice theory

A household will decide to live multilocal if the members assume that multilocal practice will generate a *surplus value compared with continuance in place or migration to another dwelling place.*

However, it has to be assumed that an additional condition must be fulfilled: The expected surplus value of multilocality has to exceed the perceived total costs of this practice at least by a marginal amount:

$$U_{ml} > C_{ml}$$

Time-geography of multi-local living

Multi-local living is characterized by specific *movement patterns* of persons in space and time.

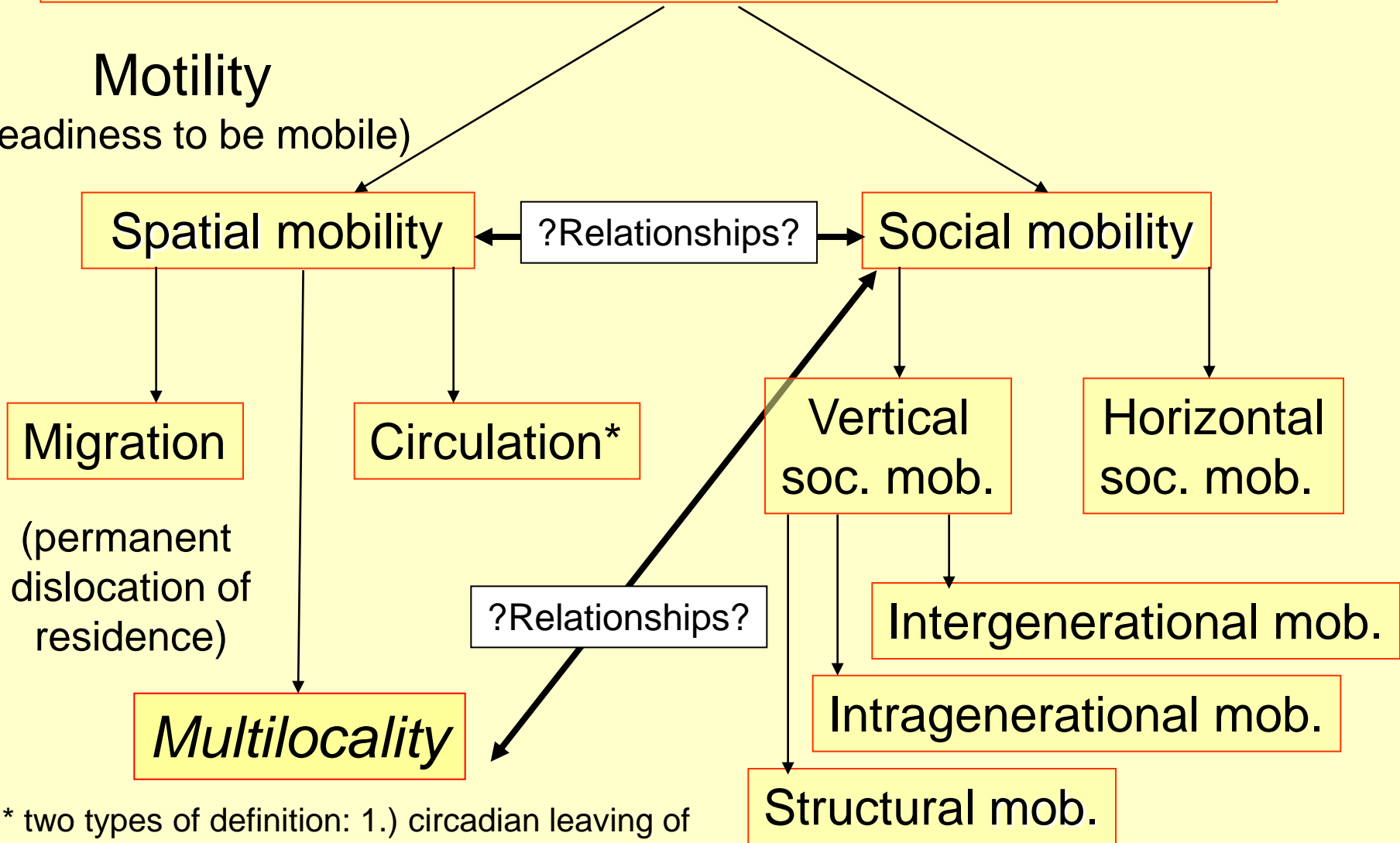
By applying a time-geographic perspective we may use these movement patterns to demonstrate some characteristics of residential multilocality and come up with some clarifications on terminology.

Mobility

Change of the position within a specific system

Motility

(Readiness to be mobile)



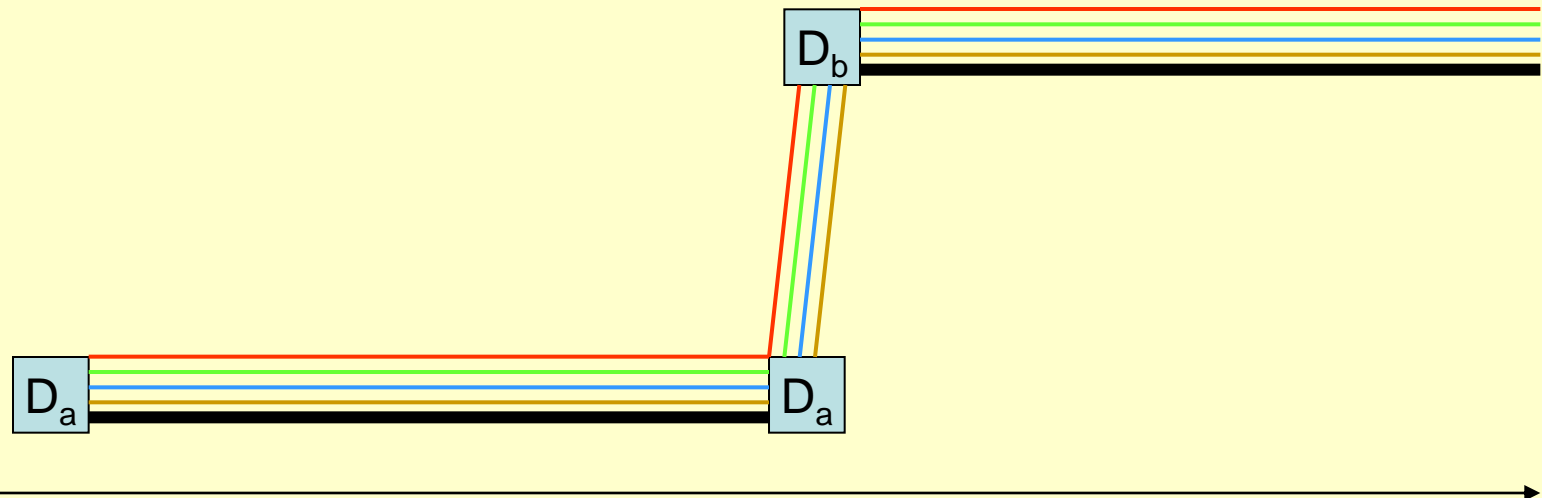
* two types of definition: 1.) circadian leaving of the home (e. g. commuting), 2.) circular mobility.

Time-space diagrams

By applying “usage lines” of dwellings and “life lines” of household members, I will distinguish four basic types of spatial mobility.

Type 1: Migration

Space (~km - km * 10²)



□ Dwelling

— „Usage line“
of dwelling

— — — —
Life lines of
the household
members

Time (years)

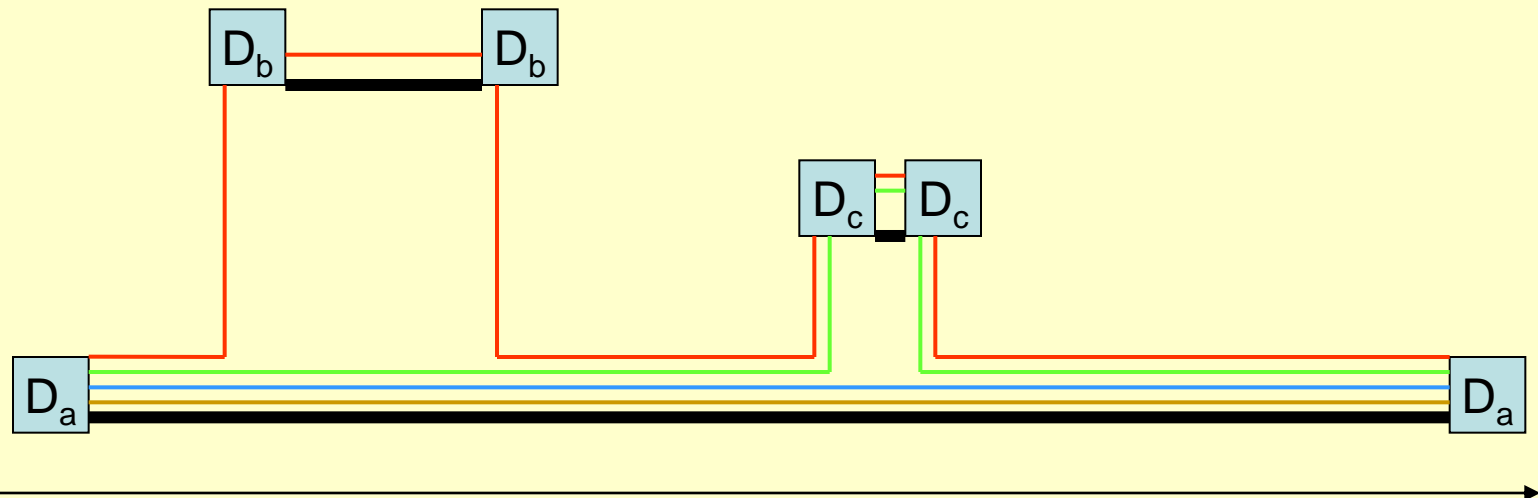
Time-space diagrams

See: W. ZELINSKY, 1971, or H. FASSMANN, 2007

Type 2: Circular migration/mobility

Other type: return migration
(time scale 10^1 years)

Space ($\sim \text{km} * 10^2$)



■ Dwelling

— „Usage line“
of dwelling

≡ Life lines of
the household
members

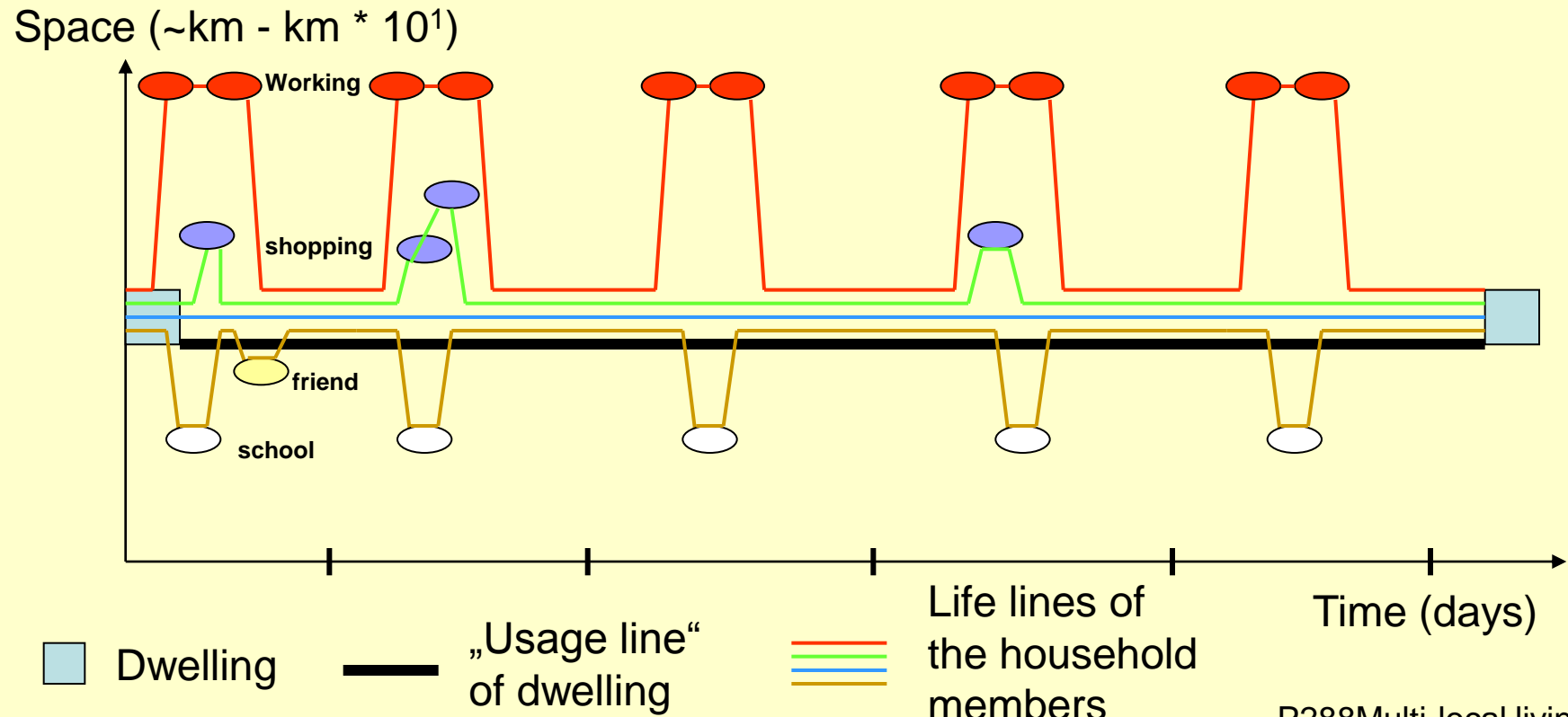
Time (years)

Time-space diagrams

(Going to work, commuting, shopping, going to school etc.)

Type 3: Circulation (circadian leaving of home)

Please note the change of scale!



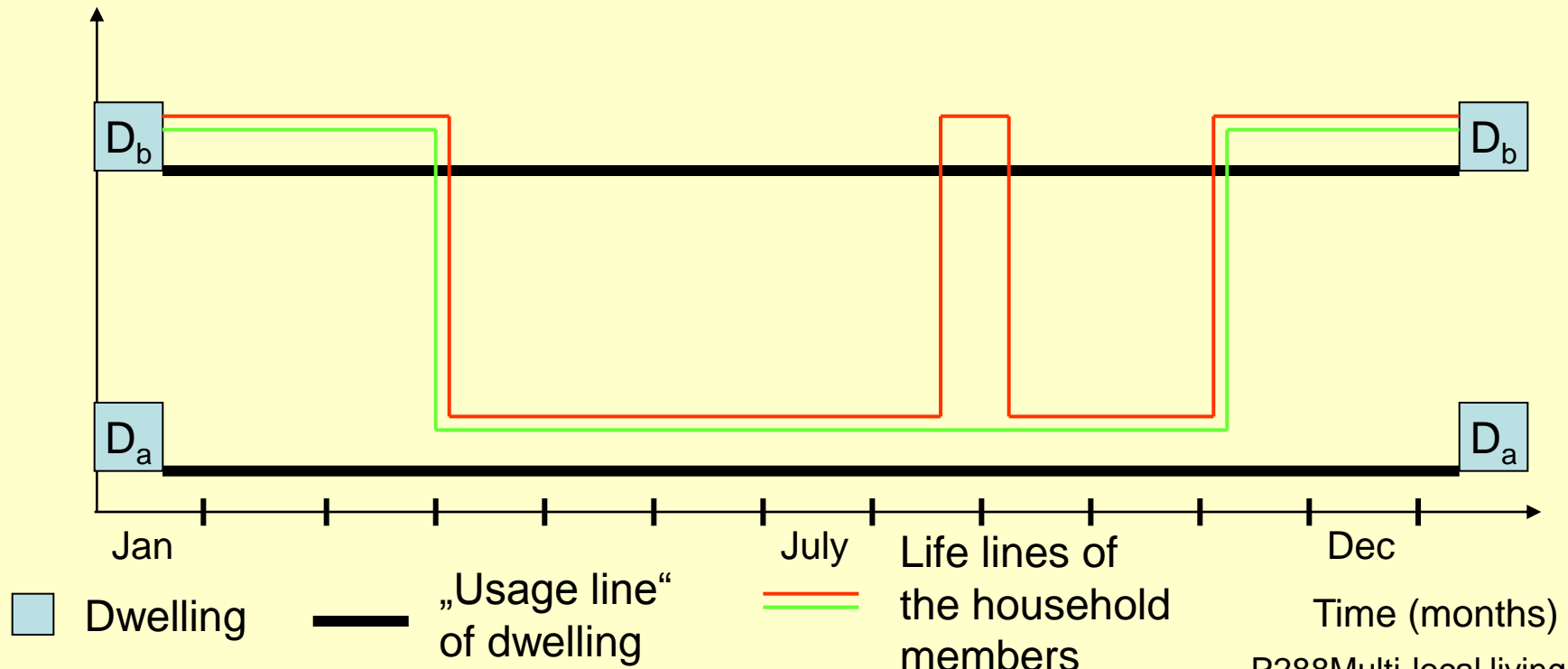
Time-space diagrams

(D_a dwelling at Munich, D_b second home on Mallorca, household members are retirees)

Type 4: Multilocality

Please note the change of scale!

Space ($\sim \text{km} * 10^1 - \text{km} * 10^2$)



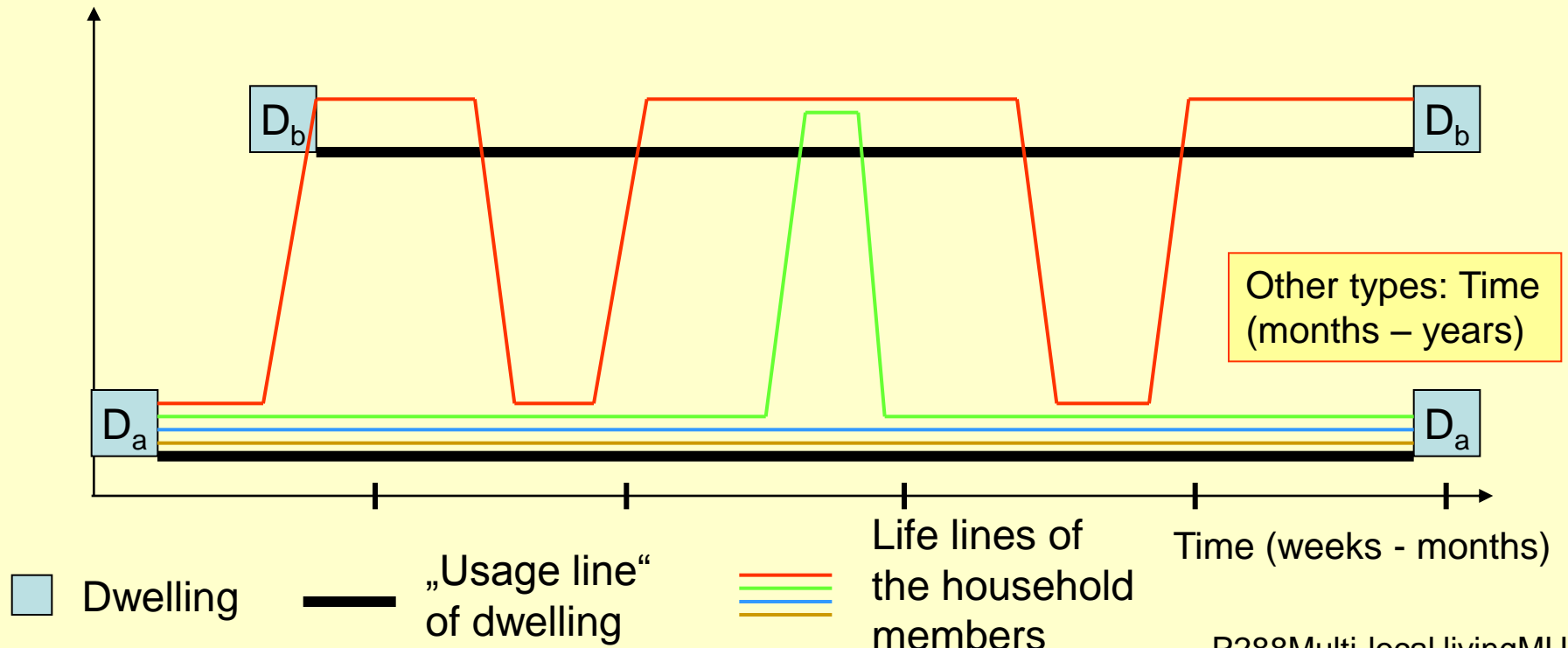
Time-space diagrams

(Commuting on a weekly/monthly basis, second home etc.)

Type 4: Multilocality

Please note the change of scale!

Space ($\sim \text{km} * 10^1 - \text{km} * 10^2$)



Other types: Time (months – years)

Consequences of residential multilocality

In comparison to mono-local living, residential multilocality as a mass phenomenon has various consequences whose impact exceeds the persons involved and effects their social, economic, political and material environment at two (or more) locations.

