

The Effect of Housing Diversity on Marital Relationships: Choosing Van Life as a Couple

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ABSTRACT

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, many people implemented changes in their living and inhabiting (Bomey, 2021; Brousse, 2020). Neo-nomadism has been adopted by couples and families seeking a simple way of life, closer to nature, with greater freedom and autonomy. Professional reasons or ecological concerns have also contributed to this choice (Bernard, 2021; Boeckermann et al., 2019; Chevillot, 2019). This research analyzes the experiences of five couples who choose to make a van their primary residence for at least 6 months. To collect our data, we used anamnestic questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

Our results show that if the motivations stem from confinement, they are also related to life accidents, the desire for a new lifestyle, or getting away from a sedentary routine. The participants intensively use technology, especially social networks, to share their lifestyles, keep in touch with loved ones, and work. Living in a smaller home brings relief to all subjects. It leads to greater cohesion and better communication with the partner, even if adjustments are necessary to allow each to find time to themselves. The results also highlight a different, more egalitarian division of tasks. Negative aspects include fear of the unknown, risks of equipment theft, and danger of traveling in particular geographical areas. Participants also pointed out difficulty finding personal privacy and hygiene challenges.

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