

# Silence, scenic beauty and fresh air – A proved recipe for high-quality aging in peripheral alpine areas?

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Current media discussion on saving the quality of life of the older generation runs on a very abstract level and focuses on approaches relating to care. Spatial implications rudimentarily have been taken into account. This is one of the most important deficiencies of a sectoral (political) access.

Completely different, aging in peripheral rural areas is being debated within spatial sciences. From an integrative point of view – comprising the interrelationships between quality of life and spatial aspects as well as relevant traits of different types of rural areas – debate concentrates on the importance of the quality of infrastructure nearby the residential environment.

It is mainly addressed to the dramatic situation in structural weak rural areas. In public discussion scientists from spatial disciplines are often faced with political opposition and lack of understanding. The reason for this lies in still romanticizing the rural-urban-dichotomy on behalf of some politicians and their thinking that silence, scenic beauty and fresh air are – compared to the frantic and anonymous life in urban areas – guarantors for a high-quality aging in rural areas.

In fact, the objective quality of daily supply of goods and services of daily use in sparsely populated and peripheral areas further thins out more and more and available social networks work hard to make up deficiencies.

From a spatial point of view one anxiously looks ahead into the near future, thereby focusing on external changes that affect everyday life of the older generation in peripheral rural areas on the one hand and taking into consideration transformation of the old themselves (e. g. auto-mobility up until old age, importance of individuality, increasing heterogeneity of lifestyles and living conditions, satisfaction of needs and desires at different places) on the other hand.

Against the background of the fact of the lack of equality of living conditions, debating opportunities for a high-quality aging in peripheral alpine areas has – among others – to comprise the following aspects: the increasing of individual expectations versus decline of financial public and private rooms for manoeuvre as well as personal opportunities to rely on volunteering and support from neighbourly help.

From today's perspective it can be stated that spatial development in peripheral rural areas only will focus on saving a basic supply of goods and services. In order to achieve this aim accurate solutions for tomorrow have to prove for the causes and effects of spatial aspects and the quality of aging. Furthermore, the courage to turn away from *ceteris paribus* conditions will play an important role in creating sustainable solutions.

In this context, "civic participation" – an often-quoted remedy for generating more accurate approaches – as well as an honest estimation of the expected contribution of volunteering have to be brought into discussion of guaranteeing the quality of life of the older generation of today and the day after tomorrow even in peripheral alpine areas.