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Department für Raum, Landschaft
und Infrastruktur

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

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Periphere Regionen zwischen Brachland und Hoffnung“,
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Overview



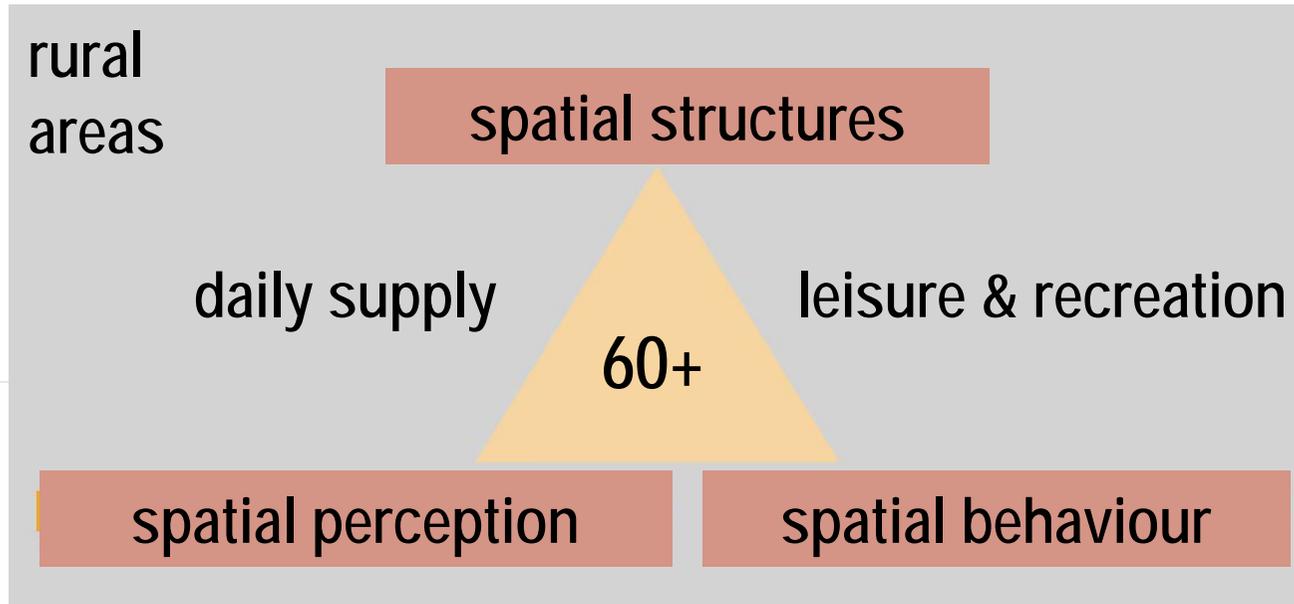
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1. Aging in peripheral rural areas from the spatial sciences' point of view
2. Rural areas are changing – What about the older generation? collectives – critical masses – qualities of supply
3. Facts – suppositions – interpretations – considering sustainable approaches

From the spatial sciences' point of view



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Tasks: provision, development, sustainability,
finding solutions – identifying rooms of manoeuvre

Principle: „looking precisely“

Approach: carry on dialogue, being next to (local) population

Aging in peripheral rural areas ... (1)

the crucial desire:

living a self-determined life in ones own four walls
as long as possible

discussion of quality of life:

point of views

„inside“: „people concerned“

„outside“: „infrastructure“

- different ways of compensating spatial (infrastructural) deficiencies, e. g.
the relevance of natural aspects
- „subjective components“ of quality of life change in course of life
- former amenities turn to burdens: house, garden, car-dependency
social-medical care, (social networks)



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Aging in peripheral rural areas ... (2)

relevant spatial aspects:

natural aspects

climatic factors, lighting conditions

exposition, natural hazards, „snow and glazed frost in winter“

topographic factors, structural conditions of residential areas

spatial aspects relating to the structures of settlement

size of municipalities and administrative organisation (cadastral municipalities)

settlement structures and settlement development

quality of local facilities and utilities

dwelling (size of houses, technical equipment) and residential environment

quality of public space, availability & quality of public transport

socio-spatial aspects

generations living-together

residences of family members

residences of friends and former colleagues



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Aging in peripheral rural areas ... (3)

interrelations of spatial aspects and quality of life:

„outer change“ relating to general conditions (trends)

socio-demographic change, concentration vs. centralization,
spatial structures more and more adjust to auto-mobility

- decline of local supply facilities
- selective outer-migration

„inner change“ relating to social cohesion

transformation of traditional „rural communities“

- heterogeneity of profiles of (local) population
- multi-local residence (young people)
- loss of spatial and social proximity (volunteering vs. institutionalisation)
- collective aging of settlements



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On the heterogeneity of the older generation (1)



diversity (life styles, ...)	common traits
desires biographies (e. g. former employment, migration background) needlessness, tolerance, existential worries	needs – crucial: living in ones own four walls as long as possible repression of „being old“ and „aging“

→ „urban value-systems“ penetrate (even structural weak peripheral) rural areas

→ objective quality of (daily) supply ≠ subjective quality of (daily) supply

→ emergency of „new collectives“ and „critical masses“ among the old

structure and organisation of everyday life	„duties – morning“, „spare time – afternoon“
access and use of information	
auto-mobility (men >< women; very old persons >< best-aged seniors) spatial behaviour – patterns of provision and leisure activities	in case of auto-mobility: importance of car-availability settledness
sensitiveness relating to perception of spatial changes	different ways of compensating the lack of spatial and social proximity

On the heterogeneity of the older generation (2)



activities / attitudes/opinions | experiences / demands | lifestyles/ „circumstances of life“

new challenges:

- relevance of selected socio-gerontological and -psychological aspects
(e. g. rejuvenation of age, plurality of lifestyles, increasing individuality, decreasing settledness?)
 - emerging of a new crucial desire: being auto-mobile as long as possible
 - dealing with „variety“: identifying demander groups for goods and services (e. g. identification, re-integration, bonds to urban areas)
 - consequences for the quality of village communities
- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| migration backgrounds) | and immobility and who have to rely on foreign help |
| | persons with low income at their disp. |

On the heterogeneity of the older generation (3)



What about the profiles of the older generation the day after tomorrow in peripheral alpine areas??

Supposition:

„new collectives“: immobile people with low income or rather without any support from social networks

„critical masses“: healthy auto-mobile seniors with middle or high income

2 key issues:

1. Who decides for aging in which type of rural area?
2. What about dealing with the very different circumstances of aging and opportunities for a high-quality aging even in peripheral structural weak rural areas?



Conclusion 1: Auto-mobile seniors do not perceive spatial (infrastructural) deficiencies.

Conclusion 2: For best-aged seniors today subjective quality of life means auto-mobility and social networks – spatially scattered very often.

→ 2 thresholds of losses of quality of life:

1. losing auto-mobility

2. transition from „need of help“ to „need of care“

→ shorter duration of immobility, but high intensity of perception

Conclusion 3: Spatial challenges do not diminish despite increasing auto-mobility (of the older generation) – they shift to those who care for those who have already become immobile.

Bottlenecks within reflection of quality of life of the older generation in peripheral (alpine) structural weak rural areas



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Focus: securing basic supply of goods and services

There is a mismatch between demands (desires) and actual opportunities.

Considerations about fitting supply and demand:

adaptation opportunities and resilience of small rural municipalities

small population – low densities

reachability – appropriateness

How to re-install spatial and social proximity?

Facts – Suppositions – Interpretations



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Availability and quality of information and knowledge

Dealing with qualitative data?!

Reflecting inductive approaches (application of „best practices“)

Lack of a general typology of rural areas

Political interpretation of research results

Considering sustainable approaches (solutions)



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Criteria: efficiency – effectiveness – economy

Necessities:

- starting a comprehensive discussion of consequences of demographic change in (alpine) rural areas
- turning away from updating trends
- discussing honestly potentials of volunteering and participation
- thinking about the suitable spatial level of solutions
- reflecting acceptance of suboptimal solutions
- talking about administration of small-scale solutions

Lack of knowledge of readiness to assimilation on behalf of all people concerned (in the near future).



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Thank you very much for your attention!

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