Qualitative Living Environments
for Older People

Binding up objective and subjective dimensions
in an intercultural comparison

The “Ideals of Living” of older people
The EU-OIKEIN Model

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Introductory questions

What do we mean with the term “age-friendly living environments”?

What changes with the ageing process?

What are the ideal living conditions for older people themselves?

Are there intercultural differences on the “Ideals of Living”?

Can an IDEAL ENVIRONMENT FOR OLDER PEOPLE exist?
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The importance...

- Demographic changes show the need of creating age friendly living environments in the future
- Older people spend 4/5 of their day in their home
- Leisure interests and activities take place in the immediate environment
- Protective space and secure location of the living environment
- Most older people wish to continue living in their homes although age-un-friendly (satisfaction paradox)
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The aims of the study

❖ To collect the “ideals for living environments” of older people themselves
   ❖ Needs
   ❖ Wishes
   ❖ Thoughts
   ❖ Fears etc

❖ To explore and explain the “satisfaction paradox” with new methods further

❖ To bind in the objective and subjective dimensions

❖ To create a model of sustainable age-living environments
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Theories

Pyramid of the Hierarchy of Needs (A. Maslow, 1971)

- Is the place for nutrition, sleep and body care
- Provides a feeling of security and safety
- A place for social interaction (family, friends)
- A symbol for status and recognition
- Infrastructure of the immediate environment (i.e. mobility, rooms for activities etc) contributes to self-actualization and self-development
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**Theories**

- **Five-Pillars of Identity** (H. Petzold, 1993)

Identity is influenced throughout the lifespan...
- Body changes (health and attributions)
- Changes due to retirement
- Changes in social relationships
- “Free-time” Activities
- Self-image + Image of others
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ILSE Study (2000)

Person

Subjective psychological Dimensions

Emotional

Cognitive

Environment-related autonomie

Routine, Habitation

Memories, Reflections, Internalizations, Planning

Home as part of the identity

Behavior-related

Occupation at home

Social

Roommates/Homemates

Visits and Contacts

Space-related

House Equipment

Infrastructure, Mobility, Accessibility

Location, area, physical environment

Environment

Objective Dimensions

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ILSE Study (2000)
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Factors affecting relocation decisions
(more than 40% chance)
- Health deterioration
- Financial difficulties
- Emotional attachments (Biography)
- Personality (Sense of control, self image etc)
- ...

Factors influencing positively
- Sense of belonging (posessions)
- Social contacts
- Participation in relocation decision
- Realistic attributions
- ...

...
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The study
- Exploratory study
- Quantitative + Innovative Qualitative Methods
- Intercultural (Greece-Germany)
- Rural + Urban areas
- Residential Homes + Own Homes
- 50 Interviewees 65-85 years old
- Not a representative study but results still very impressive
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The methods

- Semi-structured interviews to serve as background information for better understanding the Puzzle

- “Ideal-Living” Puzzle (IL)
  - 50 images
  - 7 accessibility circles
  - Creation of own puzzle cards if needed

- TASK: To create an ideal living environment for me

- Past-Present-IL Measurement Scales for Satisfaction

Advantage of these methods: create an environment WITH THEM and not FOR THEM!
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Example of an “Ideal Living”-Puzzle
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Results (1)

Material dimensions:
- Age-friendly housing and immediate environment
  - Accessibility
  - Sufficient lighting
- The infrastructure
  - Daily shopping opportunities,
  - Socialization-promoting structures,
  - Activity options, learning-conducive structures, etc.
- Services
  - Health care,
  - Person-centered services, such as help-at-home, hotline, janitor, barber, etc.
  - Seminars, courses, activities (not cultural!)
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Results (2)

Immaterial Dimensions

- Maintaining their independence
- Participation in decision-making processes concerning their living environments
- Recognition and respect by others in the social circle
- Keeping a sphere of privacy
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Cross-cultural differences

Only present due to different country circumstances (existing infrastructure, services, income, weather??? etc.).

Differences between groups

Occupation opportunities and social activities are desired for the residential home group even more than for the home group.
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Satisfaction scales

- In the Past
- In the Present
- And in the hypothetical “Ideal Living”
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Reasons for possible relocation in IL

About 3/4 of the participants in the study responded positively with respect to moving into an “Ideal Living” situation.

“Just to think about what I could do there, it's a reason to smile!”

"I would like to go.... I would feel free... it feels more familiar”

"To have such a living situation where I would have the opportunity to do so much, I never thought of it! Of course I would want to go! Tomorrow already!"

“There are so many possibilities! I would never get bored!“

- To win new or not to lose old social contacts
- Choice between different options
- Have a sense of control over the housing situation
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Positive/Negative Reactions for IL

- “better infrastructure” (43%)
- “more things to do” (14%)
- “more social contacts” (2%)
- alternative living environment (11%)
- "ghetto" (5%)
- "no need" (9%)
- last solution (11%)
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Synergies
The interaction between the person and their environment depends on the synergies between material and immaterial dimensions

Examples:
- Infrastructure serves
daily shopping needs
opportunities for social networking and gathering
self-actualization and development through structures for activities, learning opportunities etc

- Accessibility/mobility strengthens the sense of independence and the sense of control

- Health and social services give a sense of security and protection

- Participation in decision making processes about the environment gives a sense of belonging, a sense of control and a sense of independence
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Combining the theories, the interviews and the puzzles...
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**Objective**

Society/Kulture

Meanings, Wishes, Needs, Experiences

Ecology

Non-material

Privacy

Sense of Belonging

Social Recognition

Social Environment

Work and Achievements

Services

Infrastructure

PERSON

Subjective

Psyche/Mind

Body

Meanings, Wishes, Needs, Experiences

Sense of Independence and Autonomy

Security

Material Security, against Criminality, against physical difficulties

Health

Health promoting structures

Quality of Building, protection, Privacy, protection, Equipment, size, accessibility, garden, balcony, ergonomics, lighting...

Housing

Living environment

Ecology

Quality of Living Conditions

Self-actualization

Transcendence

Participation and inclusion

Making processes

Material Security, against Criminality, against physical difficulties

Non-material

Material

Quality of Living Conditions

Physical environment

Place, Green-Zones, Forest, Noise, Pollution

Urban/Rural area, Noise, Pollution

Learning-rooms

Activity-rooms

Public spaces, Pedestrian Walks, Parking

Pavements, Barrier-free structures

Health

Health promoting structures

Quality of Building, protection, Privacy, protection, Equipment, size, accessibility, garden, balcony, ergonomics, lighting...

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Objective

Subjective

Meanings, Wishes, Needs, Experiences

Psyche/Mind

Body

Ecology

Society/Kulture

Material

Non-material

Environment

Social Recognition

Social Environment

Friends, Family, Neighbours, etc

Work, Volunteerism, etc

Work and Achievements

Sense of Belonging

Privacy

Self-actualization

Transcendence

Values, Religion, Spirituality

Life-long learning and self-development

Mobility, Self-decision making, Self-determination

Quality of Living Conditions
Limitations

- Representativeness
  - Not a representative study but an exploratory study

- Gender issues
  - not considered in the design of this study.
  - No gender effects came out in the analysis

- Validity
  - Pre-Tests
  - Innovative research methods
  - Further development and improvement

- Hypothetical living environment
  - Relocation decision in a real situation might differ
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Innovations of this study

- Intercultural study on living environments for older people
- New qualitative methods
- New data on the “satisfaction paradox” question
- Combination of multiple theories and qualitative data for the creation of a model
- Future research opportunities
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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