

Housing for the Elderly: A potential analysis of the spatial distribution of the elderly in Vienna

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Initial situation

Demographic scenarios predict for Vienna not only a significant population growth - according to current estimates, the city will have 2030 exceeded the limit of 2 million inhabitants primarily as a result of immigration - but also to more older people in the city. This process of *demographic aging* – not equivalent to a general aging of the population – is associated with socio-cultural change. The advancing age groups – generations shaped by the cultural and economic development of the post-war decades – share new and also more diverse horizon of experiences: of social and often spatial mobility, new attitudes and lifestyles, also with regard to the image of old age, whereas the dominant societal discourse kept long time a vision of ageing, connoted with social withdrawal, loss of status, and reduced autonomy. This is also true for the area of housing, and the basic questions that arise are: How should we assess the potential of this structural change in terms of its urban spatial dimension? What conclusions can be derived for the needs of the elderly in Vienna with regard to their (individual) living spaces?

Contents and goals

The present study undertakes, following up to earlier studies and reports on ageing in the city, and based on a detailed screening of administrative population statistics, a potential analysis of the socio-spatial distribution of the elderly in Vienna. This research objective is relevant for several reasons: First of all, today's consensus is that people should be able to live as long as possible in their familiar environment. For the internationally much-debated question regarding the consequences of these changes both on the level of the individual dwellings, the neighborhood as well as for the level of urban planning and policy, a scientifically sound argumentation basis is required. This regards both to knowledge regarding the spatial and social structure of the demographic development, as well as the assumption that the housing needs of the elderly are changing.

It proves to be crucial to take the structural change of age as starting point. This refers to the process of differentiation of age and aging, becoming manifest in new categories (and stages) of age, and in new life styles, and which also lead to new pretensions concerning in particular also the field of housing. Whereas for a long time, the topic of housing for elderly was mostly discussed under the angle of care, today housing situation and housing needs of young-elderly (55-69) and the seniors (70-80 years) are re-interpreted in the context of age as an extended, and generally healthy life-span, with housing in the core of an active concept of ageing. The challenges of age-appropriate housing in the case of long-term care and chronic disease are shifting into the stage of very old age ("compression of morbidity"), although it remains important to consider the differences in life expectancy between women (currently 82.4 years) and men (currently 77.3 years). On the other hand, the larger social changes (high divorce rates, new family forms, rising educational levels, structural change of employment, migration processes, etc.) do not only favor a pluralization of socio-cultural milieus and lifestyles, of housing forms, and conceptions of housing (in the sense of the slogan, 'the 68 are becoming 68'), but also the emergence of new and deepening existing social inequalities. All these processes are important in connection with the issue of elderly housing.

The study was mandated to gather planning-relevant information on the structure and development of the elderly population in the city of Vienna, with regard to the topic of housing for elderly. In detail, the study tries to find answers to following questions:

- How the elderly population is, from a demographic point of view, developing and spatially distributed?
- What pattern shows the differentiation of age (measured in three age categories) at the city and district level?
- What trends can be identified in terms of structural characteristics such as gender, social status (education), marital status and family composition, type of housing, household size, nationality and origin (country of birth)?
- What is the extent of migration and mobility behavior among elderly (internal and external migration)?

Methodology

For the potential analysis of the spatial distribution of the elderly in Vienna, data from administrative surveys and register counts were used. The analyses were carried along in the population structure characteristics for three age cohorts: younger elderly (50-64), seniors (65-79) and old age (80+). In order to make longer-term trends, the observation period extends from 2002 to 2014. The choice of the reference year results from the need to take into account the category 'origin' (country of birth) which had been considered for the first time in 2002. The analysis includes a comparison of the city and district populations of the two time points in absolute terms

as well as in percentage of units. Calculations were effected on the basis of the total population of the city or on the basis of the respective district populations between 2002 and 2014. Additionally, the concentration of the elderly in the city was calculated. Another focus is the analysis of age-cohorts with respect to relevant structural characteristics such as gender, social status (education), household mold, household size, nationality and origin. The latter variable was defined by country of birth and was grouped into four categories: Austria, Ex-Yugoslavia (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Macedonia), Turkey and other non-Austrian countries of birth. Small-scale analysis of the structure and evolution of the population had been not possible due to a restricted availability of the data.

Results and conclusions

The results of the analysis can be summarized in eight statements:

Constant proportion of elderly, growing potential of the very old. Given the rapidly growing population, the absolute number of elderly people is (over 50) increased in absolute terms during the observation period, but remained proportionally constant. An exception is the growing age category of seniors (65-79 years), indicating the increasing potential of the so-called baby-boom generation.

According to the international literature on aging, the differentiation of age leads to two distinct age cultures, of high relevance also in relation to the topic of housing: a culture of active aging, marked by continuous acquisition of competences, health promotion, and social participation as prerequisites for quality of life; and a culture of care. In contrast to the culture of care, where the challenge is to develop new forms of assisted living, the housing needs in the culture of active aging are often in continuity to earlier stages of life. Crucial for planning and development of elderly adapted housing therefore seems to be to focus on the social conditions and socio-cultural milieu differentiation among the elderly population.

The feminisation of old age is slowing down. For a long time, the feminization of aging has been seen as a key element of the changing structure of aging. Feminization of aging means that in advanced age categories the proportion of women increases sharply, mainly reflecting the longer life expectancy of women. Between 2002 and 2014 the gap between men and women has becoming smaller, and it can be assumed that in the following decades the elderly population will be slightly more male than is the case today, and this is also true in the very old stage of life i.e. for people over 80 years.

According to demographic projections, life expectancy at birth is estimated in 2060 for women with 90.6 years and for men with 87.3 years (throughout Austria). Even though the figures indicate a decreasing gap between in the life expectancy of men and women, according to international research, this will not level all differences between men and women. It is assumed that men will continue to live to a higher degree in a couple household, while women remain more likely singles also in the future.

The diversity by origin (migration) is increasing: The elderly population has always been a mirror of the history of migration. In Vienna, the elderly population is composed by different experiences of migration: voluntary immigration and labor migration (recruitment of labor force) just as voluntary emigration, forced expulsion and exile. Data-analyses confirm the following trend: While the number and proportion of persons who migrated to Austria after the Second World War is significantly decreasing (this concerns primarily displaced persons from the former Sudetenland), the numbers of elderly immigrants of the so-called guest work-program are strongly increasing. This includes primarily former workers (and family members) from the former Yugoslavia and Turkey, but also people from the Philippines and Iran. The number of older people with origins former Yugoslavia has doubled from 2002 to 2014, the number of older people with origin Turkey even tripled, as well as the number of immigrants from Asia. Immigrants from former Yugoslavia are now the largest group of elderly with foreign origin. The second and third largest group consists of immigrants from the old EU countries, and migrants from the new EU member-countries.

The growing importance and increasingly diverse character of migration is not only relevant with regard to the so-called cultural differentiation of aging; it also strengthens the experience of social inequality (the marginalization of many migrant groups in the labor and housing markets creates important constraints in retirement, in particular with regard to limited financial and health resources), whereas, at the same time, new and migration-adapted life styles and forms of living are emerging, such as transnational household structures, ethnic community building, or pendula migration.

The process of singularisation gain particular relevance in later stages of life. Singularisation denotes the increasing trend to single-person households, mainly in the context of very old age. This trend is observed for decades and reflects changes in social and family structures, i.e. elderly people are living fewer and fewer in traditional organizational forms of kinship or (artisan, peasant) production community. The structure analysis indicates that the absolute number and proportion of two-person households remain relatively constant until the second cohort, whereas singularisation (one-person households) increases rapidly in higher stages of life, especially in the stage of very old age, and in all social classes, i.e. this trend is independent from social status and education. This trend is slightly weaker on the socio-structural edges of upper class families with many children, and in milieus of labor migration.

It is important to note that, today, the category of the very old consists of parents of the baby boom-generation, whereas the 60-80-year-old consist the elderly of the "generation pill". It can be assumed, that the proportion of childless elderly will increase significantly in the next decades. These childless elderly form a new category of singles. For them, living as a single is shaped by earlier experiences of life, and this transforms also the meaning of being a single in later life as well as the capacity to manage this form of living. At the same time, being childless also means fewer resources with regard to care.

Living in non-private households are limited to the stage of the very old age: Age related risks of multi-morbidity (chronic and multiple illnesses, dementia), functional impairment and related need for care are more and more concentrated in the late stage of life (over 80 or 85 years). The structure analysis shows that living in non-private households concerns mainly elderly in the category of the 80 plus. Whereas among the young seniors 99 percent live in private households, and among the seniors 98 percent, the proportion of persons in non-private households rises up to 14 percent the category of the over 80-year-old.

The so called phenomenon of a rejuvenation of old age has a double and contradictory meaning: Whereas on the one hand, in different areas of life, the label of being (too) old is used more and more earlier as an argument of exclusion, e.g. in the labor market, elderly people themselves are remaining oriented towards younger adults, e.g. in their living and housing needs, and they also tend to take a self-perception as young into the stage of old age. As a consequence, many elderly postpone questions of age-adequate housing, or alternative housing, into the future, according to recent studies often into the stage of very old age.

The new elders are higher educated: Today, the elderly people belong to a generation that has seen striking gains in prosperity and rising education levels in the decades after Second World War. Thus, the data confirm educational gains for younger elderly, while among the very old the educational capital remains relatively low. At the same time, the data show, in comparing young elderly (50 to 64) and seniors (65 to 79), a remaining relevance of low educational levels. Beside a general increasing educational level, this finding indicates a potential of educationally disadvantaged elderly within the next generations, elderly in risk of poverty, often with working class backgrounds and migration biographies.

Educational skills and competences are important driving forces in the context of active aging, since these tools allow a more self-determined handling of the aging process. Therefore, being aware of educational inequalities within the elderly is not only relevant with regard to inequalities in terms of a good supply of housing, but also to the unequal distribution of capacities to realize self-defined conceptions of good life.

No concentration of elderly in the urban landscape of Vienna: The spatial distribution of the elderly population corresponds, on the city-scale, to the general distribution of the population. However, there are older and younger districts. The older districts include the Inner City, Hietzing, Döbling and Liesing; the younger districts include Rudolf-Fünfhaus, Margareten, Simmering, Leopoldstadt, i.e. all those districts that have experienced significant gains in population in the last decade mainly due to immigration. The highest proportion of older immigrants is recorded for Rudolf-Fünfhaus.

The results confirm the general findings of the research on segregation in Vienna. Small-scale analyzes show selective concentrations of older population groups in limited areas, e.g. in age-homogeneous housing estates or suburban areas of the city with a dominance of single-family

housing. Especially with regard to elderly in suburban areas it can be assumed that old age will strengthen a preference for more densified and better equipped inner city residential areas, even better if green areas are accessible.

Low but selective migration behavior: Mobility both within Vienna as well as abroad is rare. Only for elderly people with foreign origin a slightly negative migration balance is recorded, indicating return migration.

The data emphasize that elderly people tend to stay where they already live. Conversely, it can be assumed that those who have experienced residential mobility tend to be more mobile also in later life. However, residential mobility in later life is hampered not only by psychological factors, but also by financial risks associated to relocation; also tendencies of social permeability and social closure in the housing market hamper residential mobility.