

SPACES AND PLACES OF SUCCESSFUL AGEING

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Abstract: The ageing is both a curse and blessing for human beings. After the introductory section, the contribution gives a quasi-empirical picture on one of the consequences of the heterogeneity of ageing in Hungary. The contribution tries to foresee through the lens of university and college students in order to explore the spaces and places of successful ageing for individuals. Moreover, hypotheses are formulated about the effect of ageing on the internal and international processes in the near future.

Key words: ageing, migration, student visions, Hungary

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INTRODUCTION

In the recent decades there are two main population challenges in the World: over-population and aging. These processes in parallel are without example during the long-distance population history. In the global view the growth of population is over its peak. The process of aging is developing so fast, it is impossible to forecast when and how level will it culminate (Halmos, 2002). The explanation of these so-called contradictory phenomena is the grand regional differences in our planet. The wealthier part of the world faces on the aging processes, the poorer ones fights against the over-population. In one hand, the result of spreading development and welfare causes that the population of poor countries is getting older. The aging becomes a world problem (Prskawetz, 2005; Bloom et al., 2008; Józán, 2008). On the other hand, the population growth is getting slower and slower in rich countries because of the following factors: decreasing fertility, mortality, emigration of young people.

Aging is not only a social and economical challenge, but an important life period of the concerned people. Ageing brings up troubles like the uneven regional development compared to the national one, the price condition overturn of the property market, acceleration of the regional imbalance of population, labour market distortion, change in the structure of consumption (Schirrmacher, 2007; Gál & Tarcali, 2008; Széman & Harsányi, 2008; Botos, 2009; Loureiro de Matos, 2011; Végh & Illés, 2011).

We recognize the process of population aging as an irreversible process in long term and during peaceful epoch when we put it into a theoretical framework of the demographic transition. In the XIX–XX century the growth rate of population appeared a change, firstly in the advanced

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countries, later in developing world. The previously high level of mortality and fertility dipped onto low values under relatively short time. Demographers call this process as a demographic transition. The emergence of the demographic transition coincides with switching to the industrial revolution, the civil societies' development due to bourgeois revolution, generally with the process of the social modernization.

Our insights are limited by the virtue of our exclusive focus on fertility and mortality. There is a need for a parallel examination of migration. The international migration flows with youth age composition can restrain the ageing process in short term. The immigration does not function as a general solution because of the ageing of immigrants in the country of destination. Immigrants' ageing at place provides another source of the pensioners in the receiving country. Continuous and sustainable immigration streams with the dominance of young people can brake on the intensive growing of ageing process. In reality, there is no chance to maintain the huge amount of youth inflows in long term whatever in the World.

Ageing is considered previously as a particular demographic process became a general problem in the 21th century. In Europe the demographic transformation started earlier and lasted longer time period compared to the rest of the regions of the World. At the end of the 20th century the demographic differences between the regions of the Earth are very considerable. The mainstream economical, social and political process fuelled the divergence. In contrast the ageing becomes universal and convergence dominated. Both the poor countries and rich countries the ageing process will increase extremely (Iván, 2002; Stoica, 2011).

The broader interpretation of ageing it is a positive process, an appropriate indicator of the socio-economic development. As the first stage of ageing process the decrease of the dependency ratio of young people relieves the support burdens, increases the activity, affects to the workforce supply beneficially. This phase of aging is a sort of prosperity creator, but this joyful stage appears only once during the demographic transition and lasts until some decades. Latter the proportion of active age groups inevitably decreases and the share of pensioners increases (Vaskovics, 2006).

Ageing and its consequences mean challenges never seen in Europe and more particularly Central Europe. For instance, the effect on health condition of population (Pál and Uzzoli, 2008), pension system and intergenerational transfers (Gál et al., 2008), housing conditions (Egedy et al., 2009; Kovács, 2010) and last but not least the consumption behaviours (Végh, 2008; Michalkó, 2010; Ilies et al., 2011) are the hot topics of most recent researches in Hungary.

STUDENTS' VISIONS ON THEIR OWN SUCCESSFUL AGEING CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

The acceleration of ageing process in the world provides challenges never seen in the human history that involves the research of adequate responses for the different disciplines (Cziegler, 2000). These challenges require new and innovative solutions.

Successful or active ageing develops as a diffusive phenomenon worldwide (Tate et al., 2003; Litwin, 2005; Chow & Bai, 2011). Mankind in the global era investigates completely new forms of success in later stages of individual life (Kendig, 2004; Kinsella & David, 2005). We believe that successful ageing is the result of the life long learning, a process of mutual preparation for elderly life stage. Preparation for ageing in general starts immediately after the birth, but the initial phase of conscious preparations is in the early stages of adulthood. We supposed that the university and college students can comprehend the idea of successful ageing and can make projections on their own successful ageing in an abstract way. After forming own individual ideas, the real exam will be their own elderly life span in the future.

In our opinion, it would be too late to interview elderly people on how they plan their own successful ageing, because the mechanism of the post hoc rationalism would influence their answers. We suppose that the adults could give reliable answers; however our current research concentrates exclusively on Hungarian university and college students.

SHORT LITERATURE REVIEW

Firstly, an initial study of the literature on successful ageing could be done in the following. The key concepts and definitions of successful aging (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Gingold, 1999) could be selected, with a special focus on recent studies. For example the integrative model of successful aging by Ryff (1982) proposed 6 dimensions related to positive functioning in old age, namely self-acceptance, positive relationship with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. Besides, the measures of Freund and Baltes (1998) could be utilised, which are subjective well-being, positive emotions and the absence of feeling loneliness. Then, the dimensions of Erikson's (1984) psychological stage model of development could be used, who claimed that successful ageing can be achieved if the criteria of psychological peace and ego integrity are fulfilled. He proposed that old age is time for sum life up and see one's life as positive. Moreover, there are interesting theories (Meyrowitz, 1984) suggesting that in the recent decades characteristics associated to age and life stages are blurred, whereby children become adult-like and adults childlike (e.g. take up hobbies previously associated with youth, wear bright colourer clothes, travel long distances etc.). Therefore old age turns to be the scene of a prolongation of active adult life, which is strongly connected to consumerism, body maintenance and ways of self-preservation (Featherstone & Hepworth, 1990).

DATA AND METHODS

The first step of the research was to disseminate the recent formal knowledge on successful or active ageing in the indirect way. The main elements of the concept of successful ageing compared to the active (or positive or productive) ageing (Baltes et al., 2000; Avramov & Maskova, 2003) were discussed during college and university courses of Demography, Migration Studies and Tourism Geographies.

Hungarian students of three institutions of the third level (geographers, social workers and managers of tourism) were asked at the end of the semester to formulate plans on their own successful ageing. The original question, which was raised after their formal written examination, was as follow: „*How do you imagine now your own successful ageing?*”. Students got 20 minutes for answering the question in handwriting, which was not obligatory; however they could gain 5% extra points in the exam for participating in our research. It has to be noted that weak pressure and mild stimulation characterised data gathering. The final results and therefore the basic units of our inquiry were essays (often coherent), which got into our database, constituting the basis of our qualitative study. In order to analyse the understanding and perception of successful aging of contemporary Hungarian college and university students of some selected institutions, qualitative methods, more specifically content analysis could be applied (Krippendorff, 1995). It would be utilised for determining the presence of certain words, concepts, phrases etc. within the texts, written by the students as class assignment. Taking several randomly selected texts of the respondents into consideration, a coding system could be developed, in order to record the occurring individual themes and the combination of these themes by each respondent in reference to their visions of their own successful ageing. Furthermore, since the texts are all hand-written (there is no electronic version so far, which would make data analysis faster and more effective), the texts will have to be coded manually by one of the researchers and verified by the other. This is important due to intercoder reliability. The minimum acceptance level of reliability could be 0.80 or greater. The previous set of coding system could be used for the analysis. The initial data processing method was content analysis by one of the researchers. He tried to distinguished the so-called „*idea units*”. The idea units were responses to the simple questions as the follows: „*how*”, „*with whom*” and „*where*”. Fourthly, the category of „*others*” made the classification complete. With the help to the idea units we could transform the words and groups of words into numbers. We would compute average idea units by dimensions of „*how*”, „*with whom*”, „*where*”, furthermore we might investigate the effect of gender, type of student specialisation and the dimensions of time „*till retirement*” and „*after retirement*”.

There are different ways how the results can be reported. Figures can be reported as one particular variable at time (univariate) but variables could possibly be cross-tabulated using bivariate and multivariate methods as well.

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

Since the autumn semester of 2006 more than 1,200 texts have been gathered for this research. Until now, 101 respondents' ideas were processed in the initial phase of the analysis. The refusal rate was very low. Out of 129 students 28 could not create written text. In other words, they decided not to answer because the ageing was a sort of unrealistic problem in their current life. Besides, 27 students did not understand the task (of formulating their own opinion) completely. They partly reproduced the formal knowledge, which they heard during the lectures with some elements of their own opinion. All in all, 101 respondents (71 females and 30 males) produced relevant information. Interestingly, they mirrored roughly the gender ratio of the 60 population of Hungary (based on the elderly scenario of population projection of Demographic Research Institute for 2050).

Table 1. Idea units by gender of respondents
(Data source: Authors' separation and calculation)

	With whom		Where		How		Other		Together	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Till retirement	3	3	2	0	21	54	3	1	29	58
After retirement	38	144	14	47	49	205	34	88	135	484
Total	41	147	16	47	70	259	37	89	164	542

164: 30~5.5 average male idea units

542: 71~7.6 average female idea units

Students, who were all in their twenties during the data collection, demonstrated positive attitudes toward their own ageing. They realised that retirement age, just as the adulthood, was a period of life that was worth preparing for it. Due to the heterogeneity of individual ageing processes, there was no general receipt on successful ageing. More than one tenth of the „*idea units*” (87 out of 706) reflected the life stage before retirement. These idea units echoed healthy life style and maintenance of physical and cognitive functions. The majority of ideas (88%) revealed the plans and visions for the retirement age. The manner of ageing (how students would like to live) was the core of the plans and visions. 329 idea units out of 706 mirrored the „*how*” and „*ways*” of individual ageing. 188 idea units revealed the personal network („*with whom*”) of the imagined ageing. The third factor of successful ageing was the place and space where ageing would happen, but it had relatively little importance (63 idea units). High weight of the other factors (126 idea units) was explained by the fact that the three main factors overlapped, and it was hard to distinguish the idiopathic type of idea unit within the multidimensional phenomenon. In other words, the original ideas could not have been made into one of the three clusters.

The average idea unit of all respondents was 7.0. It was impossible to judge this indicator from quantitative point of view. This amount indicated the multi-layer character of the plans of individual ageing. The average female idea unit (7.6) was higher than the male counterpart (5.5). We distinguished 329 idea units, which related to the question of „*how*”. It constituted for 47% of the idea units. The perceptions of health, activity and financial security dominated with 23%. The work and learning had the weight of 6%. Thirdly, the relaxed lifestyle, searching for harmony and hobby were mentioned with 11%. Finally, programmes with friends, dealing with new things, charity, leisure and independence played a role in 7%. We separated 188 idea units, which were related to the question of „*with whom*”. It meant 26% out of the total idea units. We found that

23% of the responding students would like to live within large and loving family. 16 students mentioned friends and 9 respondents wanted to live together with pets. They represented 3%.

The category of other factor with 126 idea units represented 18% of the idea units. In these cases the level of heterogeneity was far higher than with the idea units related to the spaces and places of successful ageing. Two characteristic clusters can be distinguished. Firstly, it relates to travelling. 56 students would like to travel within their own country or in the world. Secondly, 28 of the respondents want to enjoy spas and the programmes of wellness-weekends. 5 students plan to write a novel and 3 students would just like to live for a long time.

Spaces and places of the perception of successful ageing

We distinguished large variety of idea units of spaces and places for successful ageing. All in all we detected 63 idea units related to the question of „*where*”. It represented 9% of all idea units. As one of the major groups 23 respondents imagined their ageing place in countryside, small towns, small summer cottages close to Lake Balaton, small houses far to the civilisation, and mountain areas in Hungary or simply quite places in Hungary. More than one third of inhabitants live in Budapest but no respondents would like to live in the capital. This share echoes the potential exodus of elderly people from the big cities for the future. We can state great probability that university and college student forgot the simple fact that high quality medical institutions are situated in the capital, Budapest and there is little chance in the modification this situation. We can conclude that student' perceptions fuel the dezurbanisation processes in Hungary in the future.

International retirement emigration will probably spread in the near future in Hungary because 12 respondents expressed their idea about living in a foreign country. Within this group 3 students added a specific characteristic, namely foreign country with sunshine. The weight of student wish of retirement emigration was far higher than the emigration potential measured during adult population in Hungary. We can hypothesise that international migration potential of recent student will be significantly grander than their parents. Significant gender differences existed, five times higher women planned their later life abroad than men. The phenomenon of international elderly emigration will have been emerging in the Hungarian society. For 10 students the quality of housing was of great importance. Detached house with garden was their ideal space for successful ageing. This housing type situated in the top of hierarchy of housing preferences in Hungary so this decision of students fitted into the general trend. It is worth mentioning that significant gender differences existed. Four times higher women than men imagined their elderly life within a detached house.

Students preferred separate life of generations (8 idea units) to generations living together (3 idea units). This attitude fits for recent family life style in Hungary. Moreover, the students would not like to migrate far from their parents, because 6 students out of 8 emphasised the necessity of closeness to parents. This characteristic modification on attitudes provides new challenges from social policy makers, regional planners to architects. We can presume with large probability that the phenomenon of living close to immediate family members will develop faster for old age pensioners than the phenomenon of generation living together or generation living far from one another. As one of the consequences of this process the volume and intensity of internal migration will increase and the extremely strong attraction force of local sense will decrease in Hungary.

The vision of generations living together in the future for 3 students motivated the authors to think about it. The question arises that which sort of housing forms will be fit for generations living together or nearby life of generations? These problems demanding innovative solutions on behalf of architect and business sciences for instance are out of the scope of this research. However, we could identify some challenges for the near future if the recent students' behaviour will serve as example to be followed for other segments of society.

Only 3 students planned to move to institutions for elderly. Firstly, this fact mirrored the desire living private housing facilities than institutional context. Secondly, this low number of idea

units proved that the students overwhelmingly considered in their answers the first (healthy, active, mobile) stage of the ageing without chronic illness and disability. The next 3 idea units reflected as the most important wish living in healthy environment. It was a surprise for the authors that only 3 students imagined their late life in institutions for elders. This little share reflects a sort of strong negative attitude related to the institutional old people care. It must mention that this attitude is opposite of the recent reality. It would be necessary to create positive image on elderly care institutions in Hungary.

Only 1 person will not move to her usual place of residence. This weight is another proof on the potential intensification of spatial mobility in Hungary within future elders.

Table 2. Idea units of the spaces and places of successful ageing by gender of respondents
(Data source: Authors' separation and calculation)

Where?	Male	Female	Together
Detached house (with garden)	2	8	10
Foreign country	2	7	9
Separate life of generations (but nearby)	2	6	8
Countryside	1	5	6
Small town	2	2	4
Small summer cottage close to Lake Balaton	2	2	4
Healthy environment	1	2	3
Foreign country with sunshine	0	3	3
Small house far to the civilisation	1	2	3
Quiet place in Hungary	1	2	3
Generations living together	1	2	3
Institutions for elders	0	3	3
Mountain areas in Hungary	1	1	2
Village	0	1	1
Usual place of residence	0	1	1
Total	16	47	63

The idea units were distinguished by the continuum between real places and abstract spaces. According to this scope of the analysis the overhanging majority of ideas related to abstract spaces (58 idea units). The question of „*where*” detected idea units were considered as abstract social spaces (Nemes, 2009). Only 5 respondents signed real places. In which 4 students' idea contained the vision of small summer cottage close to Lake Balaton and only one student would be like to age in her own usual place of residence.

Due to the relatively small number of idea units we can handle gender differences cautiously. From quantitative point of view we did not distinguish significant gender differences on the ideas related to the particular places and general social spaces compared to the context of gender distribution of all ideas. The ideas on living detached houses with garden, living foreign country and living elderly institutions were more characteristic options for females than males.

NEXT STEPS OF THE RESEARCH

First of all, we can state that Hungarian university and college students can create original visions on their own successful ageing. The force of formal knowledge of challenges of ageing in line with their own perceptions exceeded the stereotypes about older people, for instance losses in autonomy, activity, mobility (Droogleever, 2010). The refusal rate was very low, exactly 0.22, according to the recent stage of data processing.

As the first step of the analysis the formal knowledge repeated by students can be separated from their own ideas. After that we distinguished clear idea units related to the life stage before and after retirement. In this paper we concentrated on the ideas about spaces and places. All in all, 12 idea units revealed living foreign countries. Students imagined their later life first of all detached houses with garden (10 idea unit). The fundamental question of generations living together or separately seems to be solved. 8 respondents preferred to separate life of generations (but nearby). In contrast, there were 3 students who envisioned generations living together in order to utilise intergenerational transfers (Gál & Tarcali, 2008).

Based on the structures and weights of idea units classified, there is chance to formulate hypotheses for the near future as messages to social and territorial planners, architects and policy makers as well (WHO, 2002; Holtzer, 2010). As one of the robust results, there is a high probability that the effect of the ageing process will fuel the counter-urbanization process in Hungary. 23 respondents would like to live in countryside, for instance in a cottage close to Lake Balaton, in small house far from the civilization, and in a quiet place in Hungary. The major territorial consequences of students' ideas that there is no student wanted to live in the capital city, Budapest. Finally we must mention that this section provided preliminary results of the research. The work is in progress. The next subsection will discuss the concepts and methods of the further analysis. Conceptual analysis could be used for deeper understanding of the studied questions, by checking the existence and frequency of certain concepts in the texts. Furthermore, relational analysis would be helpful for investigating the groupings of the words, phrases etc. and the different meanings, which can emerge from these classifications.

However, for such complex analysis the hand-written texts should be typed and be accessible to computer analysis, later. Alternatively, a computer software (e.g. ATLAS) could be utilised for assisting the analysis of the data. The respondents provided their gender to researchers who are able to group the texts of the individuals. This dimension could be taken into account when analysing all variables. Gender differences with regard to aging and successful ageing would be very interesting to investigate and later may compare to other similar research conducted in the neighbouring countries and among the nations of the „west” (cross-cultural comparison).

Based on experiences gained this initial research, some further methodological improvements are needed. Sub-categories of the four factors would make the analysis transparent and more sophisticated. Simple co-authorship with division of tasks is not reliable for validation in the first stage of the research, namely for the conceptual analysis. Independently from one another, two researchers will process more than 1200 handwritten text using the standard system of categories and sub-categories of idea units created until now.

CONCLUSIONS

As contemporary phenomenon the population of the poor countries also starts to get older after the rich countries, so the aging becomes a world problem. This is an exceptional stage in population history and a never seen situation and challenge (asset) in one. Aging is a macro-level phenomenon, but in individual level this process is an important period of the concerned people's life. In order to judge ageing process we can say that, all in all, it is a positive process and a good indicator of the social-economical development in the World.

Ageing (statistical point of view, the increase of old people within the population) has been the most perspective demographic process since the end of the last century in Hungary one of the results of second demographic transition. Due to the heterogeneity of ageing, it is hard to prepare

for the potential consequences. The continuous falling trend of total fertility rates in line with the growing life expectancies at birth and other ages play the fundamental role of ageing process within a closed population. But the third component of population change, namely the migration starts to play an important role, too. In this paper we put emphasis on the effect of migration on the ageing process and its consequences.

In this paper the students' visions on their own successful ageing yielded another side of the coin. Students, who were all in their twenties during the data collection, demonstrated positive attitudes toward their own ageing. They realised that retirement age, just as the adulthood, was a period of life that was worth preparing for it.

They distinguished large variety of idea units of spaces and places represented 9% of all idea units for successful ageing. Student' perceptions may fuel the dezurbanisation processes in Hungary in the future. Town-dwellers mainly imagined their ageing place in countryside, small towns, small summer cottages close to Lake Balaton, small houses far to the civilisation, and mountain areas in Hungary or simply quite places in Hungary. Moreover, we can hypothesise that international retirement emigration will increase in the near future from Hungary. Significant number of respondents expressed their idea about living in a foreign country or foreign country with sunshine. The facts on Bihar area and the plans formulated by students serve as proves against the stereotype of immobile elders.

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