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"The ageing European Population: opportunities for the lift industry?"

Social and ecological aspects of old age

A ghost is haunting Europe - the ghost of an ageing society.

The philosopher Peter Sloterdijk (1996) talks about the "quiet revolution of the older generation". A new class has established itself worldwide. Comparable to the proletariat which appeared on the world stage with the industrialisation of the 19th century and the employees of the service industries in the 20th century, a new class has emerged as a mass phenomenon in the 21st - that of the old-aged. The constant increase in life expectancy is an almost universal phenomenon, age is on a worldwide march. This rule is proven by small exceptions - decreasing life expectancy for middle-aged men in some successor states of the former Soviet Union (Wahl/Heyl 2004, 12). The proportion of those aged 65 or over in the total population has increased from the beginning of the 20th century from 7% to about 16% in 2003 (Wahl/Heyl, 13). This has been caused by a huge increase in life expectancy combined with a simultaneous stagnation in birth rates.

The "quiet revolution" of the older generation, sometimes called the demographic revolution, has radically changed our world and will continue to change it. The revolution of the older generation is as important for our century as the revolution in information technology that is changing the material basis of our society and has

caused globalisation. Economies all over the world are now globally interdependent (Castells 2001). This has led to new relationships between economy, government and society. Simultaneously the majority of individuals acting in this new internationally connected world are becoming older. This alters individual needs, ways of living together and the demands on politics and the economy. It prompted the United Nations to present and recommend an international plan of action for ageing in Madrid in 2002.

What consequences will this have for your business? If you want to win over older people as customers you not only need to know how big this potential customer base is, but also how they live and the specific social aspects which need to be taken into account. Only then can you develop appropriate marketing strategies and products for this market.

I am going to respond to the question of how older people are living in Europe in three parts:

1. First, I will look at what it means to be "old" today. When are you old? Who is getting old? (Demographic facts and scientific definitions)
2. Second, I will examine different types of partnership. Who are the elderly living with? Do they live on their own, with a partner or with children and grandchildren?
3. Third, I will show how important suitably designed accommodation is for independence in old age.

I will conclude by considering what all this means for your business.

When are you old?

Ageing is a complex process. This recognition at the beginning of the last century led to the development of a new interdisciplinary science: gerontology - a discipline addressing doctors as well as psychologists, sociologists and social workers. The most important gerontological observation was this: Ageing processes and way of life in old age are not just caused biologically, but are determined by the relevant social, ecological and contemporary historical circumstances. Old people have obviously existed at all times, but what it means to be old is dependent on the individual social and historical situation (hier ist vielleicht was doppelt). Extreme old age is historically not a new phenomenon. The difference is that now old age has become a "collective phenomenon". Gerontologists are talk about the "fourth" age as a new collective phase for life beyond the age of 80 to 85. This phase is particularly important socio-politically since the risk of ill-health and need for care at this age increase dramatically.

Proper "old age", the so-called third phase, is usually split into two parts in the scientific literature: the young old (55 to 70) and the old old (70 to 85). These terms seem absurd and language fails us: we have no expression for this historically new phenomenon. When you leaf through old novels you will never read about the "third" or "fourth" age or even of the young old and the old old. Age used to have a different function and meaning from today. What are the "young" old? What are the "old" old?

Everybody has a different answer to this question. You can see here a random selection of answers from people of all ages who were asked by students from my seminars the question: "When are you old?"

Folie :Sprüche

The age at which a person can be called "old" is obviously very dependent on the individual perspective. In sociological terms the definition "old" is linked to retirement or "de-professionalisation". What exactly this means - depending on current regulations and specific regulations (part-time work, early retirement etc) - is, however, variable.

I would now like to present some results from research into ageing which looked at how people cope with their old age. It was aimed at those aged 55 to 70 i.e. the so-called "young" old. I am referring here to results of research in Germany. The use of German research is not only for the practical reason that I am familiar with it - but also based upon one important fact: Germany today is the country with the third highest proportion of the over 60s (after Italy and Greece). We therefore have a role in predicting the future of this worldwide trend (reduction in birth rates / increase in life expectancy).

Folie: Einstellung zu Alter

When asked about their attitude towards their own age the "young" old in Germany answer as follows: 31% live quietly but contentedly; 29% are enjoying their age; 25% are the active "new old"; 15% are resigned to old age (BMFSJ 1998,77). This indicates that the great majority of the "young" old questioned have a positive attitude towards their own age and a lot enjoy and actively shape this phase of their lives. I am certain that the same survey in the 50s and 60s of the last century would have led to a totally different result. After all the ageing process as well as how we deal with it

is largely determined by the social and historical context. Each generation ages within a different context and brings with it its own personal biography, thus determining its attitude towards old age. In Germany there is now speculation about what will happen when the so-called generation of '68 gets old. The former student revolutionaries will certainly have different expectations of residential care for the elderly than for example the people who experienced World War II. In Germany the first models are being developed to try and integrate the elderly into society and offer opportunities for meaningful activity post-retirement such as senior expert services and knowledge exchange.

Who is getting old and how old will we become?

During the last third of the 19th century the average life expectancy in Germany was 37. By 1950, i.e. immediately after World War II, it had increased in West Germany to 64.6 for men and 68.5 for women. Today the average life expectancy is approximately twice as long as in the 19th century. In 1999 life expectancy at birth in (the former) West Germany was approximately 75 for men and approximately 81 for women - in the former East Germany it was 73 and 80 respectively (Wahl/Heyl 2004,12). The differing life expectancies in East and West show the importance of environmental factors as well as social-historical conditions. Immediately after reunification life expectancy in the West was approximately 8 years longer. It can be assumed that living and ageing conditions in East and West will further converge. It is clear though that women live longer than men and the proportion of the very old in particular is increasing quickly. This is not only the case in Germany. The following diagram shows the average life expectancy of men and women in the EU. You can

clearly see that the different living conditions in the individual countries are reflected in the average life expectancies.

Folie: Mittlere Lebenserwartung in den Ländern der EU

I would now like to discuss how the relationship between the old and young has changed in recent times and will continue to change: this takes us back to the increasing proportion of older people amongst the population. By 2050 the proportion of those over 60 will have increased by about 60% in the current EU while the proportion of those under 20 will have decreased by about 20%.

It is not a question of which direction development will take, but by how much the number of older people will increase. Currently 21% of the European population are over 60. Since tomorrow's old people have already been born we can predict the development of the age structure. One can safely assume that the number of those over 60 will increase from current 21% by another 8-15% by 2030 to about 30-36% of over 60 year olds. This is a dramatic increase not just from the perspective of population experts (Lutz/Scherbov 1999).

I would like to illustrate this development using the German population as an example. How the relationship between old and young has changed during the last century is shown in the following diagram.

Abb.2: Verhältnis Alt/Jung im historischen Wandel

The primary reason for increasing life expectancy in the 20th century was the drastic reduction in infant and child mortality. This caused a major increase in longevity. In general we can assume that this trend will continue and the proportion of those over 60, currently approximately 22%, will continue to increase. The German Federal Office of Statistics predicts that this age group will reach 37% in 2050. In particular the number of the very old will increase. Experts expect by 2050 that 12% of the population will be over 80. This proportion currently is 4% and was only 0.5% in 1900. "If these predictions come true the age structure of the population will have been reversed between 1950 and 2050: While in 1940 there were approximately twice as many people under 20 as people over 59 in 2050 there will be twice as many old people as young ones!" (Lutz/Scherbov 1999).

In the future longevity in particular will grow. In West Germany the number of the centenarians has grown from 148 in 1965 to 2501 in 1998 (vierter Bericht 2002, 29). These are the so-called "long-lived" - another new category in that stage of life that we call old age. We now have the "young" old, the "old" old, the very old and the long lived over a period of nearly 50 years. No other age is as varied and multi-faceted as this new historical phenomenon.

Social influences have an impact on longevity. Apart from gender and regional differences, there are also differences reflecting social status, family circumstances and "social support" (see Deutscher Bundestag 1998, 80), i.e the rich live longer than the poor (class), the married longer than singles, and people with good social contacts longer than those who are isolated and lonely. International research has also found a relationship between such social indicators and age specific mortality figures: " Office workers are demonstrably less threatened by mortality at a young age than manual workers, senior civil servants and members of the clergy

were found to have the highest life expectancy " (see Deutscher Bundestag 1998, 80).

Apart from biological factors individual life style and diet influence life expectancy. Women show a less class specific mortality. Class is here mainly defined by education, income and professional position. In principle a positive relationship between life expectancy and higher degrees is evident. For women, work seems to have a mainly positive effect on life expectancy. Important risk factors for early mortality are circumstances, situation and lifestyle.

How do old people live?

The change in the age structure of the population has led to a situation in which parents typically live for more than half a century at the same time as their children (Bericht der Sachverständigenkommission 2000,261). This is also a totally new historical phenomenon. Never before have people lived so long and so many generations lived in parallel. The common life of grandparents with their grandchildren lasts on average more than 20 years. There are even grandparents that still have their own grandparents (Bericht der Sachverständigenkommission 2000,261). We talk about a verticalisation of family structures, which means that there are fewer and fewer family members of the same generation, but more and more members of different generations.

Simultaneously life style has changed. The fact that many family members live at the same time has no bearing on their relationships and contacts with each other. According to the results of the micro census in April 1998 in Germany 18.5 million

people aged 60 and over lived in private homes and approximately 0.5 million in facilities, which include residential care for the elderly. This means that more than 97% of the old live in their own homes or in private homes of those close to them (Bericht der Sachverständigenkommission 2000,261).

Currently 32% of people over 60 live on their own. 56% of them live in two person households. In nine out of ten out of these it is their spouse. 12% of older people in Germany live in households with three or more people. The dominant lifestyle for older people is therefore in the single household or life with a partner (Bericht der Sachverständigenkommission 2000,261). There are only minimal differences between East and West Germany in this regard.

More important than the East-West differences are the differences between men and women. Since women generally have a longer life expectancy and are often younger than their male partners, their risk of becoming widowed is greater. This results in the majority of men, even in very old age living with their spouse, while as they get older more and more women live alone. This tendency is increased in Germany by the after effects of two world wars that have increased the number of widowed women. In 1998 44% of all women over 60 lived on their own while only 15% of the same age group lived by themselves. The older the women get the more of them live on their own.

When looking at the question of social contacts and relationships it is not only life with a partner that is relevant, it is also contacts and exchanges with children, sons- and daughters-in-law and their relatives. A number of studies have shown that parents keep in regular contact with their children after they have left home,

particularly since in 80% of all cases at least one child lives in the same town (Kohli et al 1997, 275 f.).

Relatively few people share a home with their grown-up children or their aged (NB Pronounced here as age-ed) parents. Only 14% of people over 60 in private accommodation live with one or more of their children or other direct relatives. The parents as well as grown-up children prefer the "proximity with distance", living independently with the option of regular contact. (Bericht der Sachverständigenkommission 2000, 266).

How important is the accommodation/home?

The home and its direct environment are of central importance for older people. The design of the home is critical in determining if and for how long independence can be maintained despite failing health. The quality and the fitting out of the home is decisive for how long and to what extent help and care are required. Often old people could still leave their homes by themselves if these had been designed without barriers, i.e. if there was access to a lift from ground level to an apartment that was higher up.

As they get older people tend to stay at home. Being accustomed to home and environment can partly compensate for any deficiencies in design it may have. Ecological theories of ageing emphasise the importance of the "compatibility" between the capabilities of the ageing person and their particular environmental conditions. Anglo-American gerontology has studied these questions since the 1960s. Important in this context is the "environmental-docility-hypothesis" by Lawton

& Simon (1968) which assumes that ageing also means a greater sensibility to environmental pressures, for example with respect to physical impediments in the home. This means that the importance of environmental factors in explaining behaviour as an individual's competence decreases grows critically. To put it in simpler terms this means that the more the physical, psychological and mental condition of a person deteriorates, the more important becomes their environment. Anyone who has had to spend an extended time in hospital will appreciate what this means. Environment in technical, spatial and social terms determines a person's quality of life and their chances of survival.

In a survey on the problems supplying living aids in East Germany, the elderly disabled frequently mentioned that they would not like to move into accommodation designed for the disabled in a different area since they could depend on their neighbours' help in the house where they were growing old. It's an important argument in this sense to be a human being with a biography in a familiar environment rather than an anonymous case without a history (Michel/Riedel 1995, 38). Improved means of adapting one's home to suit individual needs are therefore of crucial importance for independence in old age. The first thing when assessing potential adaptations is to avoid obstructions to mobility. There are by now a large number of tested means of adapting a home to the needs of older and disabled people. They include wheelchair access to a flat, lifts, widening doors and fitting flush shower basins (Singelenberg/Stolarz 1997). The affected person can avoid a lot of problems if the suitability of a home for old age is assessed early on. The availability of a lift is of central importance in maintaining independence and mobility. In Germany this facility is an exception rather than the rule in multi-storey accommodation.

In a comparative study between East- and West Germany it was established that people aged 55 or over living on the 5th floor or above only rarely have access to a lift. In the East 39% of this group have use of a lift and in the West only 12% of the members of this group (Mollenkopf/Flaschenträger 2001, 127). This shows the clear differences in the living conditions between East and West - in which the East seems to be the more "modern" oriented of the two. It must be assumed that the East Germans questioned have after the political reunification of Germany moved from delapidated pre-war housing into new high-rise estates with modern heating, bathrooms and lifts. But even here a great deficiency in modern lift technology has to be acknowledged with regards to the growing age of the population. The situation in West Germany is even worse. If we take the German East-West relationship as typical of European trends this would mean that "good old Europe" is indeed growing old whereas the new regions in the East have necessarily become more modern, because they are starting from scratch. You would therefore have two market regions with different requirements:

- The "old" West, where existing multi-party housing needs to be retro-fitted to allow older people independent lives.
- The "new" East, where things are starting from scratch and anything is possible.

To conclude: What does this all mean when considering how you can gain older people as customers? What have we learned about this new customer segment?

- The potential grey market (customer base) is large and constantly growing worldwide. In 2050 a third of the population will be over 60 years old.

- The meaning of ageing has changed. New phases of life have emerged: the relevant research distinguishes between the "young" old (55-70), "old" old (70 to 85), the very old and the long-lived.
- The "young" old have a largely positive attitude to their age and enjoy and shaping this phase of their lives actively.
- In all European countries women have a longer life expectancy than men.
- People with good social contacts, better education and a higher income have a longer life expectancy.
- The pre-dominant way of life in old age is the single person household or life with a partner in a two-person household.
- The "old" old are mainly women living on their own.
- The barrier-free access and fitting-out of the home is of central importance for independence in old age.

If you want to sell lifts to old people you have to convince women because it is in the main women who grow very old and it is usually the women who are responsible for the home and the household. At the same time the technology for today's generation of elderly women is a typical "male" preserve. This should be taken into account when choosing your marketing strategies.

An important group are the so-called "young" old, i.e. the 55 to 70 year olds, who actively shape this historically new phase in their lives. A barrier-free home is of central importance for independence in old age. In this sense a lift is health-improving for the elderly - it contributes to maintaining independence and self-determination and increases social well-being. This is the information that needs to be conveyed to your potential clients. And this is what your customers roughly look like: Folie!

This is the market of the future.

You have put a question mark behind the title of today's conference: "The ageing European society - opportunities for the lift industry?" - this question mark is superfluous. The European society will carry on ageing - indeed you will not find any other market in the future!

Appendix: When are you old?

Seminar WS

2002/03

"When you have lived a long time in the world"

(aged 4 ,f)

"When you cannot look after yourself anymore"

(aged 96, f)

"When you have lost contact with the other generations "

(aged 18 , f)

"Great-grandmother (aged 84) is ancient, but grandfather (aged 60) is not old, because he is always joking."

(aged 5, m)

"That is a question of attitude, there is no particular age. Anybody who stays mentally and physically active, who is open to new things and always stays a bit childlike will not get old no matter how many long they have lived."

(aged 44, f)

"You are as old as you feel. Somebody can be young at 60 and somebody can be old at 20, because that's how he feels."

(aged 17, f)

"When you get into more and more situations in which you say to yourself: I am too old for that."

(aged 24, m)

"You are old when any hope of realising your lifelong dreams is gone."

(aged 66, f)

"When you have lost all the child in you and when you feel it - when you are very, very wise."

(aged 38, m)

"So from 60, when you have got grandchildren, but maybe you are never old. When you have a lot of wrinkles."

(aged 12, f)

"When you don't want to start anything new, when you have no interest in new things, and you are not curious anymore. When you set your own limits, because there are a

lot of things that you can't do anymore, When you have more friends in the graveyard than amongst the living."

(aged 65, f)

"My limit is at about 40, but not with your own parents, with them I would say from 55. When you do not talk that young (you repeat everything). When you need big fat glasses."

(aged 11, m)

"You are old when your reactions are slowed and you wear old fashioned clothes."

(aged 16, f)

"You are old when you are not fit any more and you're impotent."

(aged 39, m)

"Approximately 35. When your hair goes grey. When you get frightened by new things."

(aged 19, f)

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Selected demographic age distributions in Germany

Proportion of elderly people in German population, 1953 to 2050*					
	1953	1971	2000	2020¹	2050¹
60 to 79 years old	15.1%	19.9%	23.0%	28.5%	35.8%
80 to 89 years old	1.1%	2.0%	3.6%	6.3%	11.3%
more than 90 years old	0.1%	0.1%	0.6%	1.0%	2.1%
Life expectancy by sex*					
	men	women			
at the time of birth	74.44 years	80.57 years			
in the age of 80	6.91 years	8.37 years			
Proportion of one-person-households by age and sex**					
	men	women			
60 to 64 years old	11.9%	22.2%			
65 to 69 years old	11.9%	32.3%			
70 to 74 years old	13.9%	45.1%			
75 to 79 years old	18.6%	60.7%			
more than 80 years old	32.7%	71.5%			
Proportion of elderly people living in old people´s home**					
	men	women			
65 to 79 years old	1.2 %	1.4%			
more than 80 years old	5.3%	13.2%			
Occupants of old people´s home by sex***					
	men	women			
	21.0%	79.0%			

* source: BMFSFJ, 2002; ** source: BMFSFJ, 2001; *** source: Schneekloth & Müller, 1999

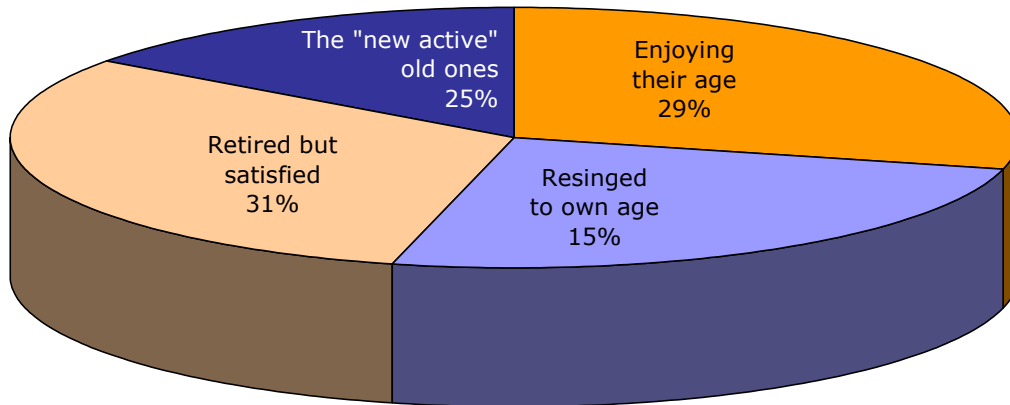
¹details for 2020 and 2050 are estimated values based on the 9th coordinated advanced calculation of population of the Federal Statistical Office Germany (version 2)

Country	Life expectancy at the date of birth in years		
	Men	Women	Average value
Austria	75.1	81.0	78.1
Belgium	74.9	81.4	78.2
Denmark	74.0	78.8	76.4
Finland	74.1	81.0	77.6
France	75.2	82.7	79.0
Germany	74.4	80.6	77.5
Great Britain	75.0	79.8	77.4
Greece	75.5	80.6	78.1
Ireland	73.9	79.1	76.5
Italy	76.2	82.6	79.4
Luxembourg	74.7	81.2	78.0
Netherlands	75.3	80.6	78.0
Portugal	71.8	78.9	75.4
Spain	75.5	82.7	79.1
Sweden	77.4	82.0	79.7
Total Europe	74.9	81.2	78.1
Eurozone	75.1	81.6	78.4
U.S.A.	74.1	79.7	76.9
Japan	77.4	83.9	80.7

Life expectancy

source: EUROSTAT; date: 2000

Attitudes on satisfaction with own age (55 to 70 years)



source: Staudinger, U. M.: Psychologische Produktivität und Selbsterfahrung im Alter. In: Baltes, M. u. Montada, L. (Hg.): Produktives Leben im Alter, 1996