

Peca Stefan, notes from interviews

Peca Stefan realized a series of interviews in elderly houses and high schools in Karlsruhe and the surroundings. The questions focused on the perception people have about their age, the important moments of their life, their expectations and philosophy of ageing.

Haus Edelberg: "Aktiv altern in Grünwinkel" (ageing actively in Grünwinkel)

- Different groups (e.g. literature, cooking classes for men, discussions, going for a walk, ...)
- They are only guests at Haus Edelberg, which provides the rooms and some coffee and cake
- They meet once per month
- The first intention was to get old people that are living alone out of their homes and become more active
- Many of them already did some voluntary work before they joined this program
- Travelling, even if it's only in their own region is important to them, they still want to see new places (e.g. one of them went to Palestine)
- Some of them are all alone at home (wife/husband died, kids moved away) and felt like they needed to do something and meet other people
- Most of the women worked their whole lives except for a few years to raise their children
- One woman (aged 73) had a heart attack 3 years ago: that's when she realized she was getting old -> she couldn't do the things she used to do anymore (e.g. sports like volleyball, but she still plays indiacca)
- If they had one wish:
 - o To speak Spanish like she used to (she learned it when she was 60, but forgot a lot) -> you forget the things you learned when you are older much faster
 - o More tolerance and understanding for neighbors, foreigners, younger people, ... in our society
 - o Families living together in one big house with the grandparents, parents and their children like it used to be mostly in the last centuries
- What they love/hate about Karlsruhe:
 - o + many parks; you can get everywhere by foot or bike easily; the location of Karlsruhe; many cultural institutions like museums, theatres, ...
 - o - a lot of trash everywhere; the current construction works; the administration of the city restrains projects like these sometimes
- Time machine:
 - o 1960: A 21 year old woman working at the television station in Hamburg as a cutter. She's working the whole day trying to choose which excerpt they should use for their political broadcast. She's dressed fancy and is wearing high-heels, her fingernails are painted and she put lipstick on. She got short dark hair. She would tell herself that she shouldn't work that much and that it's not possible to work the whole day.
 - o 1967: A 13 year old girl living in a small village that's surrounded by endless grasslands and woods, where they always use to play, lies on top of her closet, wearing a mini-skirt, having short hair. She hides there and reads when she wants some time for herself. She would tell herself that she thinks it's great, that she does her own thing and comes to rest from time to time.

- 1968: An 18 year old girl stands in the hallway at the company where she does her apprenticeship. She wears a white mini-skirt and afro hair. She would tell herself that she should continue with everything like it is and should just do her own thing.
- 1969: A 35 year old man working at the major's office in the town-hall wearing suit and tie and having a lot of curly hair. He would tell himself that he should help a family with quadruplets. Background: The father of the quadruplets came to the town-hall to ask for help, because his family didn't have enough money to take care of all the babies. Additional: When he was 13, he nearly died of tuberculosis, he was very underweight (it was right after the war) and only weighed about 15kg
- 1982: A 42 year old woman wearing her working clothes from the hospital where she works. Her future husband comes every day to visit his father in the hospital and asks her out every time but she says no. She would tell herself that she should say yes earlier and realize what that man could mean to her.

Jürgen Theurer (Kulturlotse), 70 years old, retired 7 years ago

"Wer die Musik nicht liebt, ist kein Mensch, human, wer die Musik liebt, ist ein halber Mensch, human, wer die Musik ausübt, ist ein ganzer Mensch."	Whoever does not love music, is no human, whoever does love music, is half a human, whoever makes music, is a full human.
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About the project „Kulturlotsen“ (something like culture pilot):

Older people taking children (aged 6-12) from socially weak families to the theatre. Both get in for free. Mr. Theurer read about it in the newspaper and applied for it. He's doing this for already 3 years now. The theatre chooses who will be a "Kulturlotse" and also the children.

- Mr. Theurer has been a fan of the theatre for all his life, he saw his first play when he was 5
- He was working for an insurance (company pension for people working in the civil service) and was a trainer for the apprentices, so he had contact to young people most of the time
- He and his kid from the program (Alexander, aged 12) visit the theatre at least once a month, but also do a lot of activities in their freetime
- In 1971 he wanted to emigrate, but his wife didn't want to, but he doesn't regret that he wouldn't emigrate alone
- From 1984 to 2005 he went to the US for canoeing every year and travelled a lot throughout the whole US (e.g. Alaska). He started to write diaries about his travels and still keeps them.
- He's married to his wife for 47 now. She's 2 years younger than him.
- He collects old clocks (oldest piece from the 18th century) which will probably go to his son sometime. He said that would be a better investment than anything else.
- He thinks you should try to stand your ground and shouldn't change your opinion just so you could maybe profit from it
- He said: "The older you get, the more rebellious you get." Because you don't have anything to lose anymore (like your job)

Goethe Gymnasium (10th grade, aged 15-16)

- They sometimes feel older than they actually are when they are amongst other older friends
- When are you old? -> Most of them think that it depends on the person and how he/she feels with his age. Also depends on your physical condition. One of them said that you are old when you want to die or at least don't have a problem with dying anymore.
- What do they want to become? -> Mainly they want a job that fulfils them and that gets them appreciation and doesn't only pay their rent, taxes and so on.
- Do they want their own house/flat? -> Many see that as an investment and had the dream of having a family with kids and an own house/flat, but some also doubt if they can stay at the same place for a long time, because travelling is important to them.
- How old will they get? -> Maybe around 90, but many don't want to be older. One said the soul also ages and at some point you may have seen everything, gained their goals and persuaded all their interests. They also said that old people have to die at some point because it always needs new people on this world.
- Are they going to vote? -> Yes, they think it's very important and that the people in Germany should be grateful that we have a democracy here. Maybe there won't be a huge change in society, but if you don't vote you may help extremists, so you have to compromise sometimes if there isn't a perfect party for you.
- Do they want to have children: Most of them yes, but only if they have a secure income
- Time machine:
 - o 2006: A 7 year old girl with a ponytail wearing brown baggy pants and a purple shirt sits in her messy room (clothes, books and her guitar lying on the floor) reading. She would tell herself that she should stop wearing those pants, go back to her judo course, stay away from some people (she would give herself a list), spend more time with her grandparents as long as they are still around and that she should go her own way.
 - o 2043: A 46 year old woman with short hair working as a clothes designer is wearing a gray pullover while sitting on her bed talking to her to kids (both girls, aged 15 and 17). She would ask herself about the decisions she made in her life, if she quit school and what were the biggest things happening in her life from the age 16 up to 46. She would also ask if she was happy what became of her and if she should make different decision.

Wissens- und Hobbybörse (knowledge and hobby market)

A group of elderly people with different interests and knowledge share their ideas and skills with others, everyone brings some input. There are many different groups and activities (e.g. language courses, memory training, lectures, going to the theatre/museum...). They all want to stay active and in contact with other people, they say this keeps them young.

- What are advantages or disadvantages of being old?

- + you stay more relaxed in stressful situations or when facing other problems; you have wisdom of age; you're an expert when it comes to your own interests and hobbies; you have more freedom, time and life experience
- – you may get more stubborn when you get older
- What did you do for your kids that you are really proud of?
 - They have a good life because of their good education and nurture
 - Showed them the right way
 - Gave them the freedom to make their own choices and mistakes, the kids think about what they do if you give them the choice
- What that your parents do for you that you are really proud of?
 - They supported them wherever they could
 - Good confidence base between parents and kids
 - One of them could talk to her mother about everything; the mother apologized for her mistakes to the kids
 - No prohibitions, parents only said: "Don't do anything we would be ashamed of."
- What is it like when your kids get kids themselves?
 - It's great, because you have more time when you are older
 - You can support them
 - The relationship between you and your kids gets more intimate
- How will the German society look like in the future?
 - There will be almost no German kids anymore, only foreigners
 - Old people will get more respect and will be more important
 - There will be more programs and activities for old people; they will be more socially integrated
- How has ageing changed and how will it change in the future?
 - With medical improvements people will get older
 - People nowadays stay young longer
 - You are young as long as you're sane
 - You have to defy your age
- Time machine:
 - 1968: A 26 year old woman leaves for work and notices, that the temperature regulation of the fish basin (her husband was breeding fish) wasn't working anymore. She's desperate, because they fish are going to die. She would tell herself that she should think about her decisions and be aware of the responsibility they bring.
 - 1990: A 45 year old man is having an argument with his boss in his office. He's skinny, wearing a suit and has long hair. He would tell himself that he shouldn't hate his boss and should apologize. Also he would give himself the advice that he should stay more relaxed in such situations.

ArcheNOAH (Meeting and consulting service for elderly people)

- Fashion for elderly people?
 - You shouldn't hide yourself or try to fit in in the normal view of fashion for old people
 - Stay optimistic, wear different colors and dress up and maybe put on some makeup

- Adhere to your grey hair and your wrinkles
- How old are they and how old do they feel?
 - 70: she feels like 50, says it's because of her good genes; doesn't has a problem with her age only with the number; she stays active and does sport a lot (gold, tennis, cycling); still wants to travel a lot (e.g. to Mexico), learn more languages and do some tap-dancing, but her husband is much older and in need of care
 - 71: feels younger; his daughter is a disabled person and in need of care; he wants to do many things, but can't do them because of his daughter; he still can't deal with it very good; his wife and daughter are a good team, he sometimes feels left out; he was a teacher but was also painting and making sculptures as a hobby; had three bypasses a few years ago now he isn't allowed to do most sports anymore; diseases change people
- They basically have contact to the younger generation within their families. They noticed that younger kids (up to 14) have more respect for them than older ones (16+)
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the young generation?
 - + They don't fear anything like new technologies and try out everything; are open to all kinds of people
 - – take themselves to serious; they always have to stay in contact and have the feeling of missing something; they can't communicate in person, they're always on their phones; never experienced something like war; their parents don't have any time for them; often they're snobs (bragging about their expensive phones/travels/clothes)
- Is marriage important? If so, what is the ideal age?
 - Marriage isn't that important, but kids need both parents
 - Gay and lesbian couples shouldn't be allowed to get kids, because a kid needs a mother and father
 - Shouldn't marry too early (not under 25) but not too late because of getting kids
- Their first apartment:
 - Aged 20: moved out to study. Lived in a furnished room a family chartered her in their house. It had a bed, table and chair and a wardrobe in it. She wouldn't go out at that time because she was too shy, so she would meet friends at home and listen to the radio and read.
 - Aged 28: had a very intimate relationship with her parents so it was very hard for her to move out. She didn't tell her parents about her plans, searched secretly for a flat and signed the rental contract without them knowing. She moved to a small apartment that was already mostly furnished. She had a hard time living alone at first, but was also proud of herself.
- They think some older people are impolite (e.g. pushing in the tram). One lady said about this: "Maybe they are in a hurry, because they soon will be gone."
- They're surprised sometimes if teenagers help them or are offering their seat in the tram
- Is life easier for elderly men or elderly women?
 - Basically it's balanced, but if the man is alone he may will have some problems in his daily routine, because his wife used to do all this stuff (e.g. cooking, shopping, housekeeping)
 - Men are often overextended with living alone

- If you retire you are always facing the problem of what will come next

Alten- und Pflegezentrum St. Anna (Retirement home)

- Their first memories about Karlsruhe:
 - Bomed city
 - Her daughter was born right after she came here
 - The dialect, she couldn't understand it
- Their first apartment:
 - 1954 aged 26: it was the first apartment tower, warm water and heating, very modest furniture, when they had free time they would go to the lake
 - 1963 aged 20: living in a nursery housing doing her apprenticeship. She was wearing her working clothes and had pinned-up hair.
 - 1940 aged 19: she moved together with her first husband; had to flee during the war, her husband died. Her second husband was from Karlsruhe they moved together in 1945
 - 1955 aged 28: She moved together with her husband in a big house where they had there shop in the basement. In their free time they would go to the Zoo and spend most their time in the parks and on the rivers.
- They didn't have much money for entertainment like going to the cinema so they just went outside (in the 50s and 60s)
- When she studied (1979) she had a lot of free time which she mostly spent going out with friends to bars and clubs
- Your first/last day at work:
 - First:
 - aged 26, working as a maid for Americans, she was surprised by all their luxury, they had a lot of kitchen devices she had never seen before
 - working in the pharmacy, she had to dust all the packages and bottles to get to know all the medicine; she didn't feel very good about it and thought if this should go on like this
 - her parents had a farm so she had to work all the time even as a kid, it was very hard work, she also had to quit school at some point for it
 - aged 24 working at the hospital; she had a good day although she was very nervous before
 - Last:
 - She was very relieved
 - It was very hard for her to retire, she was crying the whole day, but she stayed active and was dancing folklore till the age of 83
 - She was happy and relieved, because she wouldn't have so much stress anymore (she was working very much the whole time)
- Is your pension enough? What do you need to be happy?
 - If you didn't work your entire life your pension is never enough to pay for everything so you need savings
 - As long as you aren't in need of care it's possible
 - You need at least 2000€ a month

- All you need to be happy is your family, without them they couldn't go on
- How old were they when they got kids? What are they proud of
 - 23,24: in 1963 she had a divorce, she's proud she was able to raise them good alone
 - 24,28,34: although they were poor she tried to make anything possible for her kids
 - 50: she adopted the daughter of her niece; she's proud that although it was very hard she enabled a good life for her
- Is there a perfect age for marriage?
 - Not too late but not too soon
 - Until 25 it's the best time
 - Can't compare it to older times
- Is there an object you would always want to be with you?
 - Photos of kids and grandkids
 - Photo of her husband in her wallet
 - Pillow she got when she was born and a bracelet of her grandmother
 - A ring with the family crest of her husband (she presented this to him for their wedding) -> it's already a part of her, so she already forgot it's always on her finger
- Advantages and disadvantages of being old?
 - Not really, just some discounts and special offers for elderly people
 - You have more freedom
 - Giving up your apartment is very hard
 - Not being able to take care of yourself is awful
- How old do they feel?
 - Younger, because of her voluntary work
 - Younger than 93
 - Sometimes like 100 sometimes like 50
 - She is 54 but feels fitter than she did when she was 30, she feels like she arrived in her life

Wilhelm Lorenz Realschule (10th grade, aged 15-16)

- What do you think when you hear the title "The Art of Ageing"?
 - More time when you get older
 - The way how you get old, some try to hide their age
 - Maybe you can't do everything like you used to because of your physical condition
 - You may get the feeling you missed something in your life
 - How can you escape loneliness? -> always stay in contact with friends, family; do sports; go out to the cinema or disco
- Time machine:
 - 1
 - Aged 7: In front of the school; wearing sneakers, jeans and a white shirt; she would tell herself: you will meet someone who you think is very nice first, but don't trust him/her!
 - 2050: living in Capetown, South Africa and working there as a geologist; she has a husband, two children and her own flat; would ask herself: would you

say that the decisions you made were the right ones? Do you regret anything?

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 - Aged 7: one hour before going to school; at home; still in his pajamas; would tell himself: don't worry about anything; take your grandma to the doctor to get her checked for cancer
 - 2050: living in the Caribbean; owns house at the beach; wears swimming trunks and sunglasses; works for a big company, but can work with his laptop at home; would ask himself: have I made the right decisions? Did I do anything wrong?
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 - Aged 7: standing in front of her family's apartment in the garden, wearing a t-shirt and jeans; her hair is curly and she plays with the neighbors; would tell herself: don't trust some people (names them); go to many Muslim camps; be good in school
 - 2050: living in Damascus, Syria (her home country); has 5 children (all married and living in different countries) and a husband; wearing a hijab, sneakers, jeans and a long shirt; would ask herself: what were your biggest mistakes? Can I do anything to prevent them? Am I happy? Will my children be well-behaved or cause many problems?

Acabelle de fleur (Private retirement home)

- Their first memory about Karlsruhe?
 - Living with her family in a long street with a hill at the end of it; she could hear the animals from the zoo nearby; her parents sent her to get some beer in the next bar with a big jug
 - The Parents of one of her friends from school were working for the fair in Karlsruhe so she would get free rides for the Carrousel and ride on it all the time
 - She was visiting the theatre with her father; in the break during the play they stand outside, her father was talking to the concertmaster when the bell for the end of the break already rang; she said to her father: "We have to get inside or they will start without us!" the concertmaster replied to her: "I guess the orchestra can do without the concertmaster, right?"
 - There was a bar where a lot of artists would meet and the workmen that also would come there would sometimes pay for the artists depts.
- What did they want to become as a kid?
 - She wanted to be dressmaker and started her apprenticeship when she was 14; already opened her own business with 17; later she became a fashion designer
 - She wanted to work for the bank and on one day her boss was greeting her with "Heil Hitler" and the typical salute. When she only was replying "Heil Hitler" without the salute her boss would scream at her why she wouldn't do the salute, but she couldn't do it because she was carrying bags and other stuff in both hands
- Does humor keep you young?
 - Without humor she would have already been dead

- You need to have fun to stay young and forget about the bad things that happened to you in your life
- Jokes: What's the difference between a squirrel and a piano? The squirrel climbs up the tree, the piano doesn't; A man comes to the doctor and says: "Doctor, I got some problems down there..." The Doctor answers: "Ah what's the problem?" – "It doesn't want the way I want..." – "Don't be scared I will prescribe you something phosphorus based." – "But Doctor, I don't know if you got that right: It should stand and not glow!"
- First apartment:
 - 1960 aged 37: small apartment in an old building; only 2 rooms: big kitchen and a bedroom; they were very poor and she was happy about small thing she could get for her apartment (kitchen machines, furniture,...)
 - 1940: living in an apartment the marine provided for her and her husband (he was working for them); she got her first kid there, at the end of the war they had to flee
- Your first/last day at work?
 - On her first day her boss would scream at her and she would just leave without saying anything and coming back the next day. Her boss was very impressed by her being so tough
 - She was very relieved on her last day of work, because the last years were very hard for her also with her physical condition
- Is there an ideal age for marriage and having kids?
 - Nowadays there isn't, people get kids and marry between 16-46
 - After the war there weren't many men left, so a lot of women had to stay alone
 - Don't get your kids too early, you need to be mature first
 - Having grandchildren is even better than having kids, because you can just give them back to their parents when they're doing something bad
- What did you do for your kids?
 - Good education
 - Supported the whole family
- Do you vote?
 - Yes, postal voting
 - Every vote counts
 - Everyone should vote
- What's the most important thing to you in life?
 - Friendship: she had a very close friend; they spent all the time together and shared everything; 2 hearts one beat/one soul two bodies
- What is the object you have the longest?
 - Wedding ring: wears it all the time
 - Lost a lot during/after war
 - A healthy heart
- Do you treat people differently because of their age or do you get treated differently?
 - It's easier to say your opinion
 - Sometimes they get treated like little kids
 - Some think you get stupid and dumb just because of your age
- How old are they and how old do they feel?

- 96/70
- 87/younger
- 92/younger in the head
- 91/younger