

HOMESHARING AMONG STUDENTS AND SENIORS – A PROMISING CONTRIBUTION TO ELDERS’ SATISFYING EXPERIENCE OF AGEING IN PLACE?



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Bachelor thesis Geography, Planning and Environment (GPE)

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August 2018

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10 August 2018

Word count: +/- 19.150

PREFACE

When I moved to Heidelberg, Germany, to start my Bachelor program a few years ago, I knew an old lady living in my neighbourhood. Being no longer able to walk more than a few steps and a severe eye disease which had turned her almost completely blind, she was somehow a captive in her own home. Unlike her physical condition, her mental fitness was remarkably high. She always enjoyed talking to people and loved the few occasions when neighbours stopped by her open window for a little chat.

I had often asked myself why she did not want to move to one of her children or to a retirement home, supposing that she could easier engage with others there and would not be that lonely. When I finally asked her, she told me she was afraid to leave the only place on earth she fully knew 'every nook and cranny' in: After having become nearly blind she was afraid of living in a place she had never fully seen before.

One day when I came home from university I saw an ambulance parking in front of her house, with two people carrying her out on a stretcher. Other neighbours told me that the old lady had fallen down the stairs when trying to bring out the garbage. Some weeks later, after having returned from hospital, she burnt her hand while trying to cook. Shortly after these events, the lady's daughter organised her move to an old age home. Worried about her mother's safety, she seemed to overlook that her mom indeed needed some assistance, but was far from being dependent on permanent care. From that day on I had never seen my neighbour again. However, forced to leave the only place she felt home at, I always supposed her to be quite unhappy with the new housing situation.

Some years later, when I came across the intergenerational homesharing program *Wohnen für Hilfe* (Englisch: Housing for help) (WfH), a housing model in which seniors offer accommodation to students and in turn receive assistance with daily household tasks and companionship, the old lady came to my mind again. Wouldn't that program have been a promising possibility to fulfil her –and many other elderlies' wish, to live at home as long as possible, to 'age in place'?

Keen to find an answer to this question, I eventually decided to investigate WfH and its possible contribution to seniors' satisfying experience of "ageing in place" within the scope of the present Bachelor thesis. The latter, however, would not have been possible without the support of the following persons: First, I would like to thank my supervisor Hanna Carlsson for her personal assistance during the planning and writing process and her helpful comments regarding my questions and ideas. Second, many

thanks to all the WfH project coordinators all over Germany, who kindly agreed on being interviewed, and thus granted me valuable insights into their daily work and experience. Last, I am very grateful for the continuous support I was given by my family and friends, especially Hannah.

ABSTRACT

It is nowadays commonly believed that the majority of old people wish to remain living in their homes as long as possible. Scientists and gerontologists in this context refer to the concept of “ageing in place” (Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008). Staying at home in old age is generally considered as a possibility for elders to keep up their independence and autonomy and simultaneously not losing contact to existing social networks such as friends, family or neighbours. Being a less expensive option than residential care, ageing in place is also generally supported by politicians or health providers. There are, however, indications that remaining living at home in old may involve various challenges, such as isolation or struggles with home maintenance and mobility. As a possible way to overcome these issues some scientists have referred to the concept of intergenerational homesharing among seniors and students (see Altus & Mathews, 2000). This housing form’s underlying idea is that pensioners offer affordable housing to students and in return receive companionship as well as assistance with daily tasks. Up to now, however, the scientific examination of intergenerational homesharing within the context of ageing in place barely exists.

Aiming to contribute to closing this gap, this study investigated *“to what extent the German homesharing program “Wohnen für Hilfe” provides a promising contribution to seniors’ satisfying experience of ageing in place”*. In order to do so, a comparative case study based on eight WfH projects has been carried out. Within this scope, the respective project coordinators have been asked for their experiences via telephone or skype interviews.

It has been revealed that WfH does provide a promising contribution to seniors’ satisfying experience of ageing place. However, as the program is at present generally facing low numbers of homeshare pairs, only few seniors can benefit from its positive contribution. In order to change that, the current challenges of the program need to be tackled, whereby it should above all be concentrated on allaying seniors fears to engage in homesharing. As the latter was found to work best within the time-consuming means of personal consultancy and meetings with the students, project sponsors should ensure that there is sufficient staff available on behalf of the coordinators.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation

WfH	Wohnen für Hilfe
Resp.	respectively
GDR	German Democratic Republic

1. Introduction

People in Germany are getting increasingly older, whereby the age group of seniors is steadily growing: Whilst in 1980 almost one in three persons was younger than 20 years and only 16 % of inhabitants represented the age group 65 or older, in 2017 only 18 % were younger than 20 and already 22 % were older than 65 years. Latest forecast predict that in 2040 nearly every third German will be 65 or older, compared with only 17 % younger than 20 (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2015a). Main reasons for this 'ageing society' are peoples' growing life expectancy due to medical progress and continuously declining birth rates (Bofinger et al., 2011).

According to a study by the Statistische Bundesamt (2015b) (English: Federal Statistical Office) examining lifestyles of the 'generation 65+', approximately one in three persons of this age group lives in a one-person household. This tallies with the findings of Altus and Mathews (2000, p. 139), stating that "older adults overwhelmingly report that they wish to continue living in their own homes as long as possible", also known as 'Ageing in Place' (see Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008). 'Home' "is associated with feelings of safety, identity, and meaning" (Milligan, 2009, p. 114, referring to Milligan, 2003)

Nonetheless, living on one's own in old age may carry various challenges such as difficulties with mobility (Altus & Mathews, 2000) or home maintenance (Fausset, Kelly, Rogers & Fisk, 2011). Moreover, some studies report that living alone is a "predicting factor for loneliness" (Sánchez, García, Díaz, Duaigües, 2011, p. 375, referring to Theeke, 2009; Savikko et al., 2005): According to Kleinhubbert and Windmann (2013), basing on a study from the Deutsche Zentrum für Altersfragen (English: German center for Gerontology), more than 20 % of Germans aged 70+ have only one or even no contact person they can rely on. One in four person of this group even receives visits of friends and acquaintances less than once a month. This lack of human contact appears particularly risky when considering "that the social environment is a key influence upon the experience of later life and that, at the oldest ages, the social context and the physical environment exert a more potent influence upon the experience of old age than intrinsic genetic or biological factors" (Victor et al., 2005, p. 358).

In parallel with ageing society, Germany is currently facing another trend, namely a growing amount of students: Various factors including the abolition of compulsory military service for boys in 2011, the shortening from baccalaureate from 13 to 12 years as well as increasing pupils with university entrance qualification led to a rise in student numbers of almost 40 % between 2007- 2013 (Glatter, Hackenberg & Wolff, 2014). With more than

two million students in the winter semester 2017/2018, there have been enrolled more students at a German university than never before (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2016). In most university cities, this development results in increasing rents and a lack in student housing (Schürt, 2013). In Cologne and Münster, two cities where the lack in student housing is particularly pressing, this year student associations offered provisional emergency shelters for those who could not find affordable accommodation at the beginning of the semester (WDR, 2017). In Göttingen some freshmen even started their first weeks of student life sleeping in tents (Munzinger, 2014).

As a possible answer to address both challenges, literature refers to the concept of intergenerational homesharing among students and pensioners (see Sánchez et al., 2011; Hagmann, 2010). Hereby, “older adults take in an unrelated tenant (often a college student) for assistance with household services, companionship, safety or simply for payment of rent” (Altus and Mathews, 2000, p. 140). Initially emerging in the United States of America in the early 1970s (Johnson & McAdam, 2000), the model was first established in Germany in 1996 under the heading ‘Wohnen für Hilfe’ and is today widespread among the country (Homeshare International, no date). The program foresees that the tenant supports the homeowner with a certain amount of hours of help per month, for instance household tasks or gardening (Universität zu Köln, 2017 a). The tenant, in return, receives a reduction of rent (Universität zu Köln, 2017 b). Homeshare pairs must not necessarily only include seniors and students: Depending on individual project regulations, WfH can also address families, single-parents, disabled persons or any other interested person seeking companionship and assistance (see Universität zu Köln, 2018 a). Within the scope of the present study, WfH will however solely refer to the ‘usual’ case of homesharing between a student and a senior.

In this connection, the program will be investigated in terms of its contribution to seniors’ satisfying experience of ageing in place, using eight German WfH projects as a base for a comparative case study. Theories on ageing in place as well as intergenerational homesharing will provide a theoretical framework and are later contrasted with own empirical findings gained from interviews with the respective WfH cities’ project coordinators. In order to gain a general understanding of the program, it will first be enlarged upon the participants’ characteristics. In a second step, seniors’ benefits from taking part in the program will be investigated by analysing how the challenges they face due to living alone might be mitigated by hosting a student. Afterwards, the program’s main difficulties arising within its practical application will be presented. Lastly, WfH’s future prospects in terms of the program’s extendibility will be critically discussed.

1.1 Scientific and societal relevance

Even though intergenerational homesharing has been mentioned as probably being a promising alternative to residential care, “allow[ing] elders to ‘age in place’ with safety and autonomy” (Altus & Mathews, 2000, p. 140), the actual contribution of this housing form in view of seniors’ satisfying experience of ageing in place has – to my knowledge – both in Germany and abroad gained only little scientific attention so far.

Instead, existing homeshare literature mainly concentrated on “provid[ing] demographic information about homesharing participants, describe[ing] the process of homesharing, and outlin[ing] methods for designing and implementing a homesharing program” (Altus & Mathews, 2000: 140). When it comes to the specific program of WfH, however, only one single study has been carried out so far (see Hagmann, 2010). The research, in this respect, only concentrated on analysing whether WfH might be a fruitful option for the city of Zurich, but did not evaluate the effects of homesharing regarding elders’ ageing in place.

However, against the background of the current desire of many elderlies to remain living at home (Tinker, 1997; Vasulinashorn, 2012), and concomitant issues such as elderlies’ loneliness (see Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008), it appears to be crucial - particularly for politicians, gerontologists, but also for old peoples themselves - to gain a better understanding of WfH, as it might contribute in helping elders to mitigate the challenges when ‘ageing in place’. Thus, they might be able to better evaluate the benefits and pitfalls occurring within the context of WfH, and therefrom may derive concrete measurements and recommendations for their respective field of action, no matter if in politics, research or in their private lives. Additionally, an investigation of WfH within the context of ageing in place may reveal findings which can provide a basis for studies concerning similar housing models such as cohabitation among old and young, not necessarily between students and seniors but, for instance, apprentices or job starters and elderly.

1.2 Research objective

As already mentioned previously, this study concentrates on the investigation of the program WfH in terms of its contribution to seniors' satisfying experience of ageing in place. Hereby, the assessment grounds on the insights gained from interviews with eight different project coordinators, who kindly shared their personal experiences. The research shall be seen as an addition to the yet almost inexistent literature on Intergenerational Homesharing in the context of Ageing in Place and might serve as a starting point for further research. Consequently, the research goal is as follows:

To gain a deeper insight into the program of WfH in terms of its contribution to seniors' satisfying experience of ageing in place.

1.3 Research model

In order to fulfil the just-mentioned research objective, the following four phases (A-D) shown hereafter will be carried out:

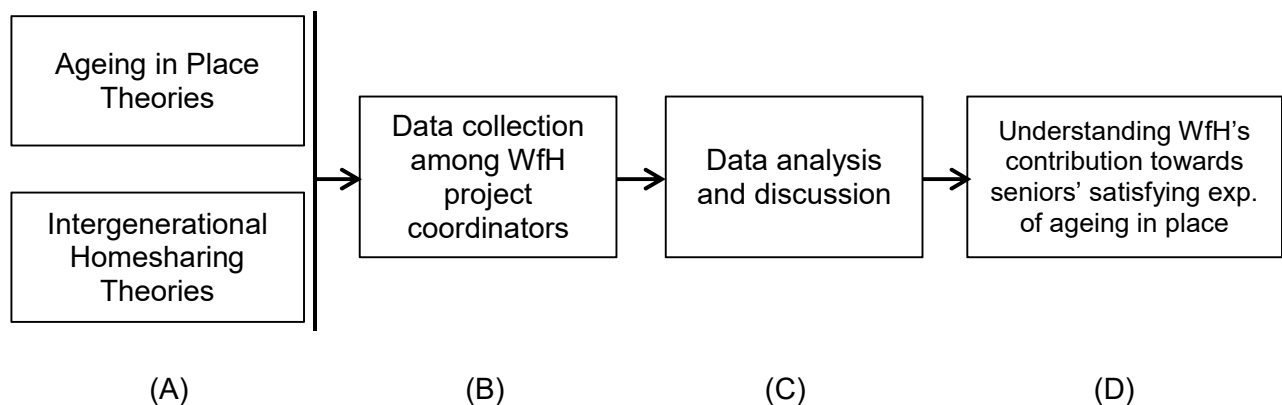


Figure 1: Research model (own illustration)

Existing theoretical concepts and experiences of Ageing in Place (A) and Intergenerational Homesharing will be used as a framework for the (B) data collection among WfH project coordinators. Afterwards, the data will be analysed and contrasted against theoretical findings (C), providing an understanding in the question of WfH's contribution to seniors' satisfying experience of ageing in place (D).

1.4 Research question

Drawing on the research objective outlined in subsection 1.3, the research question for this study is as follows:

To what extent does the intergenerational homeshare program WfH provide a promising approach in contributing to seniors' satisfying experience of ageing in place?

Aiming to answer this question in an organised way, the research question will be split into four sub-questions, which are as follows:

I: What are the characteristics of the program's participants?

II: Against the background of the various challenges seniors can face when living alone, how and to what extent do they benefit from hosting a student in their home?

III: What are the main challenges arising within the practical implementation of the program?

IV: What are the future prospects of the program in terms of its expansion potential?

Whilst the answer to the first question provides an introductory approach helping to better understand the program, the responses to the three remaining ones in their entirety will provide an answer to the main question.

2. Theoretical framework

The following section enlarges upon relevant theories and existing empirical findings within the context of Ageing in Place and Intergenerational Homesharing, serving as a theoretical framework for the subsequent data analysis.

2.1 Ageing in place

Over the course of recent years, the concept of 'Ageing in place' (also Aging in Place) became increasingly popular in ageing theory and practice (Vasulinashorn, Steinmann, Liebig & Pynoos, 2012) and substantially influenced the current health and care policy for the elderly (Andrews & Phillips, 2005). It refers to elderly's "remaining living in the community, with some level of independence, rather than residential care" (Davey, Nana, de Joux, & Arcus, 2004, p. 133). The notion's basic assumption is that "helping people to remain living at home fundamentally and positively contributes to an increase in well-being, independence, social participation and healthy ageing (Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008, p. 219). Moreover, enabling people to live at home as long as possible is generally seen as a less costly alternative to residential care (Tinker, 1997), thus being widely favoured not only by the elderly but also politicians and health experts (Wiles, Leibing, Guberman, Reeve, & Allen, 2011, referring to the World Health Organisation, 2007).

2.1.1 Meaning of home to older people

There is widespread agreement in literature that the vast majority of old people wish to live in their homes as long as possible (see, for instance, Tinker, 1997; Altus & Mathews, 2000; Vasulinashorn, 2012). Studies investigating the meaning of home underline that home is of particular importance for people (see Déspres, 1991): Independent of the dwelling's quality, "a person's home is the central organizing structure for the stream of activities that constitute a life" (Rivlin, 1990, p. 44). In literature, home is frequently seen as a "haven or refuge [...] where people can retreat and relax", a place associated with feelings such as "security" as well as "freedom and control" (Mallett, 2004, p. 70, referring to Moore, 1987, respectively (resp.) to Dovey, 1985, and Darke, 1994). For Bruner (1987, p. 25) home is "a place that is inside, private, forgiving, intimate, predictably safe", while the "real world " is "outside, demanding, anonymous, open, unpredictable, and consequently dangerous".

Spending a considerable amount of time at home when being older (Baltes & Smith, 1999), home becomes even more important with growing age (Hillcoat-Nallétamby & Ogg, 2014). Over the course of the years, elderly usually "construct meanings and memorable experiences which they associate with their home" (ibid., 2014, p. 1773, referring to

Burholt, 2006; O'Bryant & Murray, 1986; Scheidt, 1993) and learn "to align [...]their changing physical and cognitive abilities with confines and contours of the physical, built dimensions of their home" (ibid., 2014, p. 1773, referring to Carp & Christensen, 1986; Kahana et al., 2003, Lawton & Nahemow, 1973; Peace et al., 2007). As a consequence, they become more and more attached to their place (ibid., 2014) and increasingly value their overall residential situation (Chapman & Lombard, 2006; Dekker et al., 2011), resulting in modest willingness to move (Kearnes & Parkes, 2003).

2.1.2 Ageing in Place in practice: Opportunities and challenges

Over the course of recent years, literature has provided various insights as to how the concept of Aging in Place is experienced in practice. It is nowadays widely acknowledged that remaining living in one's home indeed holds various advantages for the elderly, however, simultaneously poses certain challenges (see, for instance, Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008; Chui, 2008; Wiles et al., 2011; Fausset et al., 2011). The following paragraphs enlarge upon both, starting with the benefits:

In a study among old people in two New Zealand communities, Wiles and her colleagues (2011, p. 363-365) found that ageing in place allowed the seniors to keep "a sense of attachment or connection" not necessarily only to their houses, but to the whole community as such. "Friendships, clubs, access to resources, and familiar environments" made them feel as "insiders" in their neighbourhoods and resulted in a great feeling of warmth and belonging towards their communities. Moreover, the familiarity within the latter regarding people but also places such as "knowing the local supermarket or health services well" made the seniors feel safe:

L: You know, I'm secure in the thought that I've got a family, I've got a doctor to go to. There's a hospital here...there's a dentist here. Whatever it is else I need. I feel quite secure that they're all in this community.

J: If you change places you've got to rethink all those things. How do I get to here? Which shop do I use and those kind of things...

The fact that familiarity or continuity is favourable for old people's lives has persevered in gerontology research since 1960 and 1970 when 'continuity theory' was launched (Johanson et al., 2013). It supposes that every stage of life is characterized by certain social and psychological needs, whereby old people "have the need and the tendency to maintain the same personalities, habits and perspectives that they have developed over their life course" (Estes, Biggs & Phillipson, 2003, quoted by Johansson et al., 2013, p.3).

Another advantage of staying at home is the latter's key role regarding 'autonomy' and 'independence' (see Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008, Haak, Fänge, Iwarsson and Ivanoff, 2007). Whilst the first one refers to "freedom to determine one's own actions or behaviour", independence "is grounded in the ability to be physically self-sufficient in carrying out personal and social tasks as well as daily deciding "when and how things will be done to one's body and environment" (Haak et al., 2007, p. 3, referring to Beauchamp & Childress, 2011, resp. to Zemke & Clarke, 1996). According to Sixsmith and Sixsmith (2008, p. 224), "the house confers considerable control over access into private domain of the individual and the ability to close the door on the outside world is central in retaining control over one's life and maintaining a sense of identity". Moreover, the various tasks upholding a home requires can help elders to both maintain certain capabilities and simultaneously prove their "ability to remain independent". According to Rubinstein et al. (1992, p. 19) "to have a home, to live in one's home, to be in the home are very much part of a sense of personal coherence and continuing physical viability". Leaving one's home and thus losing independency would arguably be seen as very undesirable, particularly in Western cultures where dependency is considered to be very unfavourable (Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008).

Next to feelings of belonging, security and independence, staying at home does also prevent seniors from moving to housing alternatives such as nursing homes, an option they are often anxious about (Altmann, 2014) and which would also require considerably more money (Tinker, 1997).

Besides the just-mentioned advantages of ageing in place, there is clear evidence in literature that staying at home in old age can also become onerous in certain cases (Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008; Fausset et al., 2011), thus possibly turning home "into a place of social exclusion, isolation, fear and vulnerability" (Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008, p. 225). This change of perception arguably appears as a direct consequence to the various issues elders commonly face when ageing in place, presented hereafter:

First, seniors remaining in their homes often experience severe levels of loneliness. This mainly results from the loss or death of a partner, relative or even pet, but also due to shrinking social networks as a consequence of the death of friends (Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008). Loneliness is not uniformly defined, but has been associated with "perceived deprivation of social contact; the lack of people available or willing to share social and emotional experiences; [...] and a discrepancy between actual and desired interaction" (Victor et al, 2002, p. 2, referring to Victor et al, 2000). "Acute loneliness", to quote Rokach

(1990, p. 41) is “a terrorising pain, an agonising and frightening experience that leaves a person vulnerable, shaken and often ‘wounded’”. Loneliness or social isolation may not uniquely arise due to close peoples’ death or loss but also as a direct consequence of elders “inappropriate aspects of their living environment”: Sixsmith and Sixsmith (2008, p. 225) found that old people sometimes receive no more visits from ageing friends or relatives as these guests cannot handle the stairs anymore.

Second, ageing in place might be risky due to the very features of the home itself: Whilst many elders appreciate their homes for providing some kind of privacy and control (see section 2.1.1), the downside of this is that aging in place can be used as a way to hide a person’s actual frailty. When physical activities decline old people can have a hard time to admit to their growing neediness towards potential helpers. They fear that asking for outside support may be a sign of decreasing independence or could mean “positioning people as unwilling helpers”. As a consequence, they prefer to deal with their problems themselves (Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008, p. 227). This, in turn, may arguably lead to an unsatisfying experience of ageing in place.

When outside support is inevitable, however, elders were found to prefer to pay for services rather than being relying on assistance by family or friends. In this way, they feel to be still able to control the services needed, which in turn is considered as a sense of independence (Sixsmith and Sixsmith, 2008). Referring to Sixsmith (2006), the authors (2008) note that the quality of care received from elders staying at home may nevertheless be inappropriate or insufficient: They argue that a combination of cost-containments and increasing need for nursing care have resulted in a disregard of people with minor care requirements. Moreover, a lot of old people living at home are not even reached by high quality care for simple logistic reasons.

Third, research suggests that elders staying at home might face severe difficulties in performing home maintenance. In their study among US-American seniors living at home, Fausset and colleagues (2011, p. 6) identified a huge amount of household tasks elderly had problems with, including mainly cleaning activities such as “vacuuming, tidying, changing bed lines, washing dishes, doing laundry” or outdoor tasks, for instance “mowing the lawn, painting the outside of the home, cleaning the gutters [...]”. This may not only result in a dangerous home environment but can also threaten seniors’ satisfying experience of ageing in place (Fausset et al., 2011): As Haak et al. (2007) state, remaining able to keep up one’s household is essential for old people both in terms of confirming their independence and feeling positive towards their homes. Moreover, poor

housing conditions were found to be negatively associated with old peoples' health and well-being (Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008) as they could both increase the odds for a fall (Tinker, 1997) or lead to "psychological distress" (Evans, 2003, p. 1).

A last crucial factor which has the potential to significantly lower one's satisfying perception of ageing in place is age-discriminatory infrastructure: As a consequence of the rising usage of cars many urban settings have been undergone structural changes, resulting in important services and amenities no longer being reachable within walking distance (Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008, referring to Sixsmith, 2006). This particularly marginalises old people who are frequently no longer willing or able to drive (see, for instance, Taylor & Tripodes, 2001; Ragland, Satariano & McLeod, 2004). Public transportation means such as buses or taxis are not always a promising alternative as they can be too expensive, difficult to enter in terms of physical capabilities or simply run irregularly. As a result of these transportation issues, social participation of elderlies can once again be threatened (Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008).

To sum up, it can be noted that the concept of Ageing in Place is favoured by many seniors and does indeed offer various advantages such as continuing attachment to one's community, security or independence. However, those benefits can be threatened by four challenges. These include the vanishing of social networks, seniors' disguise of actual neediness, struggle with home maintenance or inappropriate structures in terms of mobility and transportation.

2.1.3 Research hypothesis

Deriving from the just-outlined paragraphs, the following research hypothesis can be suggested:

The fewer the amount and impact of the four challenges seniors can face when remaining living alone at home it old age, the more satisfying their experience of ageing in place.

Or, in other words: Seniors' experience of ageing in place will be satisfying the more the four challenges they face when remaining living at home can be mitigated.

2.2 Homesharing

There is some evidence in literature that homesharing might be a promising way for elders “to age in place with safety and autonomy” (Altus & Mathews, p. 140). A unique definition does not exist of ‘homesharing’ but there is a number of different ones, whose main difference lies in its specification of residents: Whilst Sánchez et al., 2011, quoting Kreickenmeier & Martinez (2001) generally define homesharing as an “exchange of services” in which “a householder offers accommodation to a homesharer in exchange for an agreed level of help”, other researchers clearly associate homesharing with old and young people, “being an innovative approach” allowing elders to age at home and simultaneously providing “affordable housing options to younger people” (Johnson & McAdam, 2000). Altus & Mathews (2000, p.140) in this context describe homesharing as a housing option “where older adults take in an unrelated tenant (often a college student) for assistance with household services, companionship, safety or simply for payment of rent”.

As also the terminologies used by researchers within the concept of homesharing vary, this thesis will follow the suggestion of Johnson & McAdam (2000), and thus consistently use the following terms in order to avoid confusion:

The *householder*, the person with a home to share.

The *homeseeker*, the person in need of accommodation.

The following sub-section provides an overview of empirical findings on intergenerational homesharing found in the current literature:

2.2.1 Resident constellations

As already indicated within the previous sub-section on homesharing definitions, there are various possible constellations of householder and homeseeker. Besides the pair of a student and a senior, matches can, for instance, also include two elderlies sharing living expenses, a senior and a young couple or a senior and a single mom/dad (Johnson & McAdam, 2000). Ahrentzen (2003), referring to Koebel & Murray (1999) underlines that homesharing does not only affect ‘poor’ people, but might be practical for everyone experiencing high expenditures on housing. It is however remarkable that despite several studies’ different settings it is mostly women who engage in homesharing on behalf of the householder (see Howe, 1985; Danigelis & Fengler, 1990; Altus & Mathews, 2000; Hagmann, 2010; Sánchez et al., 2011). This might be as women tend to live longer than men, thus finding themselves “at risk of being socially isolated” towards the end of their

lives (Howe, 1985: 186). Also on behalf of the student engaging in homesharing there, generally, seems to be a particular surplus of female students (see Hagmann, 2010; Sánchez et al., 2011).

When it comes to looking at the homesharers' cultural backgrounds, the existing literature only scarcely provides any insights: Besides the positive exception of Hagmann's work (2010), finding that at least in two of the investigated five German WfH projects there seems to be a particular surplus of foreign students being interested or participating in the program, no further information can be found.

2.2.2 Typologies of homesharing

Same as resident constellations differ; literature also provides several types of different homesharing kinds (see Howe, 1985; Jaffe & Howe, 1988; Hemmens, Hoch & Carp, 1996). These range, for instance, from "independent" types, where two people share a house but apart from that live their individual lives without any or few points of contact, to "total care" where the homeseeker is paid for providing care for his/her frail housemate, to "mutual exchange", a mix between the other two pairs, where the homeseeker supports the householder with daily tasks such as cleaning or cooking in exchange for room and board (Howe, 1985, p. 189-190).

2.3 Intergenerational Homesharing

As this thesis will only concentrate on homesharing between students and seniors, so called 'intergenerational homesharing' (Sánchez et al., 2011), who live within the context of 'mutual exchange', remaining types shall no longer be considered hereafter. The following sub-sections provide an overview of existing empirical findings found within the context of this housing form:

2.3.1 Residents' motivations

When it comes to students and seniors' reasons for choosing this housing form, Sánchez and colleagues (2011) find that the key motivation on behalf of the elderly is to diminish solitude and for students the possibility to easily access suitable and affordable housing. Besides companionship, older people may also opt for homesharing as it provides an "alternative to common institutional care to age in place with safety and autonomy" and simultaneously does not pose a high financial risk on behalf of the householder (Altus & Mathews, 2000, p. 140). For the students however, next to financial matters, homesharing might also be seen as a promising option to practice for a career in geriatric care (Howe,

1985) or to prepare for the ageing of close family members: A student surveyed in Danigelis and Fengler's study (1990, p.167) reported: "I am learning a lot about living with an older person, and it helps me because my father is 67. It sensitizes me to the problems of older people". Additionally, Haggmann (2010) finds that some students wish to engage in homesharing as they want to learn from old peoples' life experiences.

2.3.2 Recruitment process

In her study among 35 homeshare programs in the United States of America Howe (1985, p. 188) finds that there was indeed high interest for this housing form among both householders and homeseekers, however, the number of actually arranged homeshare pairs was usually low. She concluded that people, and particularly elderly, are hesitating in moving in with a complete stranger and will thus only consider this option when "the necessity seems quite pressing". Possible explanations for this might be that elders generally suspect help or support from unknown persons (Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008, referring to the Enable-Age study) or – in contrast to younger people - are more afraid of becoming a victim of crime (see Yin, 1980)

In the direct context of WfH Haggmann (2010) figures out that the projects are usually experiencing far higher numbers of student applicants than seniors. Besides the just-mentioned fears of seniors to engage in this housing form she states that students are also more desperate in their search for living space, meaning that they are more likely to accept engaging in homesharing.

2.3.3 Benefits and disadvantages of homesharing

In the study conducted by Sánchez et al. (2011, p. 382), 93 % of elders and almost 99% of students stated that participating in the homeshare program was beneficial. Whilst for the elderly this was mostly due to the help they had received within personal care activities, the students mainly mentioned that they "learn[t] new things" and had a "valuable experience in life". Both groups agreed that they had offered something to their housemate, for instance "emotional support", "company", "happiness" or "security".

Homesharing also seems to have a positive impact on the elderlies' well-being and health: More than 90 % of them reported that the fact of having young people around led them feel better and also resulted in greater ability to carry out activities such as doctor appointments, shopping or run errands. Moreover, the seniors felt valuable for the students due to the help and care they gave those (Sánchez et al., 2011). There are indications in literature that the effects of homesharing on well-being and health of the

householder depends on gender: Danigelis and Fengler (1990) find that male householders felt significantly better and healthier than females. An explanation might be that men adapt easier to sharing their house as they were somehow used to receive help with household tasks.

Besides the positive aspect of homesharing certain drawbacks exist: First, homeseekers often need to leave their familiar neighbourhoods when moving with their new housemate (Peace & Nusberg, 1984). Second, both parties have to give up some privacy when living close together (Peace & Nusberg, 1984; Danigelis & Fengler, 1990), and “may face a messier house, [...], unwanted visitors or late-night noise” (Altus & Mathews, 2000, p. 140). This, in turn, might lead to conflicts (see also sub-section 2.3.5). Lastly, there is a possible threat of exploitation on behalf of both the householder and the homeseeker: Whilst the elderly could become victim of assaults or neglect, homeseekers might be expected to do more than previously agreed upon. There is thus a clear need for detailed arrangements prior to the program’s start (Johnson & McAdam, 2000).

2.3.4 Relationship between homesharers

There is some evidence in literature that sharing a home will often result in a close relationship between the homesharers: In a study among participants of a US homeshare program, one in two householders even stated that he or she “had become “friends” or “close friends” with their partners over the course of the match” and about 40% felt that they could consign personal problems to their housemate (Pynoos, Hamburger & June, 1990).

2.3.5 Conflicts

“When two people begin to live together, even if they plan to retain separate life styles and keep living spaces distinct, adjustments are inevitable” (Danigelis and Fengler, 1990, p. 167). In the case that both persons’ lifestyles do not match well, conflicts are likely to arise. Hagmann (2010), in line with Howe (1985), finds that they essentially occur when homeseeker and householder differ in their expectations on how homesharing should work, for instance when old people want too much companionship or the student is never at home. Moreover, disagreement appears when students have not enough time as previously indicated due to study work load or both homesharers’ personalities simply do not go well together. In some cases, this leads to the termination of the homesharing agreement.

According to Danigelis and Fengler (1990), personal discrepancies and differing expectations can also lead to conflicts in three other fields, namely “life style”, “social interaction” and “access”: Whilst the former could include problems regarding cleanliness of the home or discrepancies regarding the heating temperature, the second field may cover problems such as moral obligations on behalf of the homeseeker to now permanently be at home. In the case of conflicts due to access, the homesharer might forbid the homeseeker to use certain rooms or devices, such as the stereo or dryer. Conflicts due to the difference in age among the homesharers were however found to scarcely exist.

2.3.6 Duration

Hagmann (2010) finds no universal answer in the question of how long students usually live with householders: Whilst in one extreme case a match ended after only two days due to conflicts among residents, other students stayed for the whole period of their studies. In the case of Freiburg, typical duration would be of 1.5 – 2 years. Following Howe (1985), it can be argued that householders regarding the question of duration will often be dependent on the students’ timeframe, as the latter might need accommodation only for a short period of time due to changes in the study program, exchange semesters or similar purposes. Referring to Schreter (1983), Howe (1985, p. 189) argues that homesharing is predominantly not orientated towards the long-term as homesharers are generally “in transition”, whose completion will “naturally” terminate the homeshare: Whilst the student may want to live on his/her own after graduation, old people might become more and more frail and finally die.

2.4 Conceptual model

The aforementioned four challenges hampering seniors’ satisfying experience of ageing in place (see sub-section 2.1.2) as well as this study’s research aim and question translate into the following conceptual model (see below). It illustrates how this research’s central question should be answered: In order to find to what extent WfH provides a promising approach in contributing to seniors’ satisfying experience of ageing in place, WfH is analysed with respect to its mitigation potential regarding four ageing in place challenges.

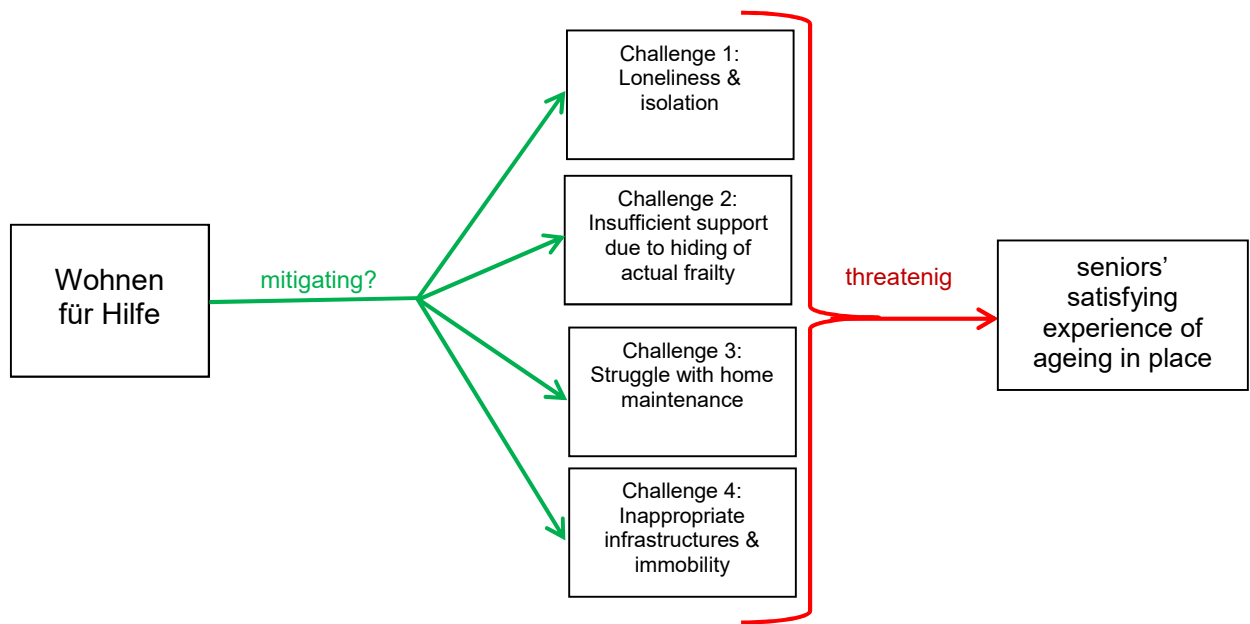


Figure 2: Conceptual model (own illustration)

3. Methodology

The following sections provide detailed information on how this research has been conducted. Hereby, it will first be enlarged upon the selected research strategy, whereby both the rationales for doing a case study as well as interviewing the project coordinators will be given. Afterwards, it will be explained how the data was collected and analysed.

3.1 Research strategy

In their textbook “Designing a Research Project”, Verschuren and Doorewaard (2010, p. 155) define a research strategy as “the coherent body of decisions concerning the way in which the researcher is going to carry out the research”. The authors (p. 157) differentiate among five main research strategies, namely:

1. Survey
2. Experiment
3. Case study
4. Grounded theory
5. Desk research

Verschuren and Doorewaard (2010, pp. 156) suggest the researcher to consider the following three questions when deciding on the research strategy:

1. Should the research be either broad or profound?
2. Should the research be qualitative or quantitative?
3. Should the research be of empirical nature with new data carried out or does the researcher prefer a desk research, building upon previous literature and already existing data?

In the present study, the author chose a *qualitative* and *empirical study*, which profoundly (or *in-depth*) investigates the phenomenon of intergenerational living within the program of WfH. This decision was made carefully based on the following reflections:

First of all, using a qualitative rather than quantitative approach results from the mere fact that with the positive exception of the work by Hagmann (2010) almost no scientific research on the program has been carried out so far. According to Creswell (2007, p. 39-40) this calls for a qualitative rather than quantitative approach, as the latter would require certain theories and contextual knowledge related to the subject. Second, this shortage of scientific data in turn required empirical fieldwork (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010, p.

162-164), being considered as the only means to acquire suitable data for answering the research questions. Finally, the decision for choosing an in-depth approach over a broad one relates to the overall research goal of this study, as the author seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of the program of WfH.

The research goal was also the decisive factor when it came to choosing one of Verschuren and Doorewaards' (2010) five research strategies. Being a method which allows gaining a "profound and full insight" into the program of WfH (ibid., p. 178) and concentrating on "a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (Yin, 1994, p.13) – in this case intergenerational homesharing - the case study was considered to be the most suitable strategy for this study. Creswell (2013, p.97) states that a case study is "a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes". He mentions that within a case study one can either investigate a "*single case* or *multiple cases*" (Creswell, 2007, p. 73-74). Whilst within the first approach the researcher only focuses on one single case (Creswell, 2007), the second one allows him/her to "explore differences within and between the cases" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 548, referring to Yin, 2003). The latter approach does in fact require more time, however, analysing various cases and not only one its results are regarded to be "robust and reliable" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 550). Within this study, it has been decided to analyse more cases, as it was aimed to obtain more general and reliable findings. As the author compared and contrasted the projects against each other, one can also speak of a '*comparative case study*' (see Vannoni, 2015).

Although the case study has been considered to be the most suitable research strategy for this research's goal, there is, however, a small hurdle when applying the method in this study: Verschuren and Doorewaard (2010, p. 179) state that in order to obtain depth, a case study calls for a "triangulation of methods" and "triangulation of sources", meaning that a combination of methods and sources shall be used for data collection (for instance individual interviews, group interviews, observations, documents, etc.) Whilst the triangulation of sources was achieved by interviewing several project coordinators (see sub-section 3.2), methodological triangulation was difficult, as only limited verified data on the projects existed. There were in fact some newspaper articles regarding the individual cities' experiences; however they mostly concentrated on one homeshare pair and thus lacked in providing substantial data concerning the whole project. The same applies for

many of the projects' websites. As a consequence, different data than the one gained from the interviews only contributed with a small share. This shortcoming seems nevertheless acceptable, considering that the case study is still deemed to be the most suitable approach for answering my research questions.

Judging from previous phone contact to some project coordinators, I was well aware from the beginning that research in this context might be challenging. According to some project coordinators old people can be too frail for being interviewed, or feel stressed by this unusual situation. Sometimes, they are also simply too shy as they fear the disclosure of their personal data. As a solution, I decided to interview project coordinators instead of project participants. This was not only beneficial in terms of their greater resilience and willingness to be interviewed but also suited my overall research goal better: Grounding their responses on their longstanding experiences with various homeshare cases - and not only one specific one as it would have been the case when interviewing participants – they granted me with both more objective and more comprehensive insights into their respective WfH project.

Moreover, they could easily provide me with reliable data, such as the projects' overall number successfully matched homeshare pairs, which was important for my analysis. With respect to this research's limited time frame the comparatively little time and effort required to reach the coordinators (email and phone contacts were openly accessible) was considered as another advantage for interviewing them instead of participants. Nonetheless, further researchers with a less tense time schedule should consider also including students and elders' experiences within their studies. This may not only be done for the sake of completeness but also in order to include some first-hand experiences with living in WfH.

3.2 Data collection

Prior to the collection of data, I initially conducted an internet research on currently existing WfH projects in Germany, aiming to find out how many projects there were, who the coordinator was, how they could be contacted, etc. Hereby, the overview of WfH cities and their respective coordinators provided by the University of Cologne (2017) (<http://www.hf.uni-koeln.de/30204>) was found very helpful. In a first attempt, 30 out of 36 project coordinators have been asked by email or phone whether they would be available for an interview. As response rate was rather low, nearly all of them have been contacted by phone for a second or even third time, resulting in an overall response rate of 26 persons. Hereof, 10 agreed to be interviewed, whereby one person answered that late, that data collection had already been completed. Subsequently, nine interviews were

conducted, all taking place between the 07 and 16 May 2018. The coordinators who responded but refused to be interviewed mainly mentioned that they had insufficient time, too little experience or, in two cases, already ceased the project due to lacking success. An overview of WfH projects investigated can be found in sub-section 4.4.

It was decided to conduct *semi-structured* interviews. This method was considered advantageous as all interviewees were asked about the same main topics, but nevertheless had “a fair degree of freedom in what to talk about, how much to say, and how to express it” (Drever, 1995, p.1). The interview guide initially consisted of 23 questions, dealing with the four topics a) general information and inhabitant structure, b) the homeshare experience and matching process itself, c) benefits and obstacles of the project and d) future perspectives (see Appendix B). After carrying out the first two interviews, the guide has been extended with three more questions, resulting in an overall of 26 questions to be asked to the remaining seven interviewees. Whilst two of the nine interviews were conducted by skype, the remaining ones were conducted via telephone. In order to capture all relevant data, interviewees were asked for permission to record the conversation prior to the interview. The overall duration of interviews ranged from around 30 to 45 minutes.

3.3 Data analysis

In order to analyse the obtained primary data, all audio files (WAV) were transcribed word by word, and converted into one single file. During the transcribing process one interview turned out to be inappropriate for the analysis, as the interviewee had only little experience compared to the other coordinators and thus answered most of the questions only half or not at all. Moreover, the little information which was obtained was partly contradictory and overall did not add any new insights into the project. As a consequence, it was decided to exclude the data from the sample. The remaining eight interviews were subsequently coded with the help of the software *Atlas.ti*, whereby Corbin and Strauss' (1990) three-stage coding system of *open, axial and selective coding* was followed. As the interviews were initially held in German, all quotations presented within this study have carefully been translated into English. In some cases, the statements could not always be translated word by word. I have, however, paid attention to properly render their content.

4. Case study introduction: The German homeshare program 'Wohnen für Hilfe'

Homeshare programs among students and seniors nowadays exist in various countries worldwide, e.g. in Spain (see Sánchez et al., 2011), North America (see Howe, 1985) or Great Britain (see Ward, 2004). Arguably, they are all pursuing the same aim, namely “alleviating the solitude of elderly people and facilitating access of young university students to decent and affordable housing” (see Sánchez et al., 2011, p. 375).

In Germany, the most famous homeshare program is probably 'Wohnen für Hilfe'. It was founded in 1992 as a student project in Darmstadt and over the course of the years established in various other German cities such as Freiburg, München, Cologne, Düsseldorf and Münster. It became particularly popular after 2011, when compulsory military services for boys was ended and baccalaureate shortened from 13 to 12 years, leading to a rise in student numbers and thus an even bigger shortage in student housing (HomeShare International, no date). Nowadays the program exists in 36 German cities (Universität zu Köln, 2017 a), with Leverkusen soon to become the 37th (Meyer, 2018). The individual projects are run by different project sponsors (Universität zu Köln, 2017 b), for instance, municipal institutions, welfare organisations or non-profit organisations (Universität zu Köln, 2017 a).

4.1 Basic principle

Despite minor individual variations, WfH works according to the same principles in every city: For each square metre rented by the tenant, he or she supports the homeowner with one hour of help per month (Universität zu Köln, 2017 a). Exact details about the scope and content of the support services are individually agreed upon by both parties and specified in a written contract. Frequent forms of support include, for instance, “household assistance, gardening, grocery shopping or joint walks”. The program does explicitly not include any care activities among the lodger (Universität zu Köln, 2017 b). Although the latter point is not further described on the website, this seems to mean that students are not responsible for any nursing tasks such as washing or dressing the elders.

4.2 Main goals

According to Hagmann (2010, p. 22-23), referring to a report on WfH by ProSenectute Zurich, the program pursues the following goals:

- “Avoiding or reducing isolation on both sides

- Improving the living conditions and quality of life amongst all participants involved
- Increasing the level of social competency among the participants
- Creating new images of ageing and providing and transporting a positive image of the young generation
- Contributing to a reduction in housing shortages by using unused housing space
- Allowing financial savings for both sides due to a reduction in rent for the students and the prevention of costs for the elderly for external help or moving expenses”

4.3 The role of the project coordinators

Being the ones where “all the roads run together”, the project coordinators play a critical role in ensuring the successful development of the homeshare experience (ibid., p. 23). Even though there might be minor differences among the individual projects, all coordinators arguably perform similar tasks. The website of the project of the city of Paderborn (WfH Paderborn, no date) lists the following in this context:

- “Receiving applications
- Matching up potential homeshare pairs
- Holding meetings with homesharers
- Accompanying the project
- Offering consult in case of discrepancies
- Providing help with the contract conclusion among the homesharers
- Informing about legal foundations”

Despite the project of the city of Munich which asks for a commission fee, the service provided by the coordinators is mostly free of charge for the homesharers (see overview of WfH cities in Germany provided by Universität zu Köln, 2017 a).

4.4 Overview of investigated WfH projects

The following table and map show an overview of the WfH projects investigated within this study.

City	Year of Foundation	Number of coordinator’s weekly working hours	Number of homeshare pairs since establishment	Number of currently existing homeshare pairs	Project being still existent?
Rostock	2015	not known	not known	7	Yes

Mainz	2012	not known	3	0	No
Bremen	2014	12	16	6	Yes
Erlangen	2011	15 (another colleague works additional 15 hours)	about 40	about 25	Yes
Paderborn	2015	not known	6 or 7	4	Yes
Kassel	2014	not known	6	4	Yes
Konstanz	2013	not known	30	3 or 4	Yes
Würzburg	2011	about 5.5 (another colleague works about the same amount)	49	13	Yes

Table 1: Overview of investigated WfH projects (own illustration)



Figure 3: Geographical location of investigated WfH projects (adapted from mixmaps.de , 2018)

Deriving from the three key figures “number of homeshare pairs since establishment”, “number of currently existing homeshare pairs” and “project being still existent” (see Table 1), one could classify the projects into three different groups, namely the “successful ones”, the “quite successful ones” and the “unsuccessful one” (see Table 2).

Classification / Group	Project characteristics	WfH Project (s)
The successful ones	Project still existent, total number of homeshare pairs matched up >40 and total number of currently existing homeshare pairs >10	Erlangen Würzburg
The quite successful ones	Project still existent, total number of homeshare pairs matched up >5 and total number of currently existing homeshare pairs >3	Kassel Rostock Bremen Paderborn Konstanz
The unsuccessful one	Project discontinued, total number of homeshare pairs matched up <5 and total number of currently existing homeshare pairs <3	Mainz

Table 2: Classification of WfH projects

Aiming to provide a better understanding of the results presented in section 5, some background information on all groups’ projects will now be given. Moreover, important factors which influence whether a project is successful, rather successful or unsuccessful will be elaborated and reflected on.

4.4.1 The successful ones

4.4.1.1 Wohnen für Hilfe Erlangen

In Erlangen, a city with approximately 112.800 inhabitants (Stadt Erlangen, 2018 a) located in Bavaria, Southern Germany (see Figure 3) WfH was started in the summer of 2011. It was founded on the initiative of the head mayor as an answer to that year’s double intake of school high school graduates in Bavaria, resulting in huge amounts of students searching for housing (WfH coordinator Erlangen, interview, 09 May 2018). The project is sponsored by the city of Erlangen itself and closely cooperates with the Studentenwerk Erlangen – Nürnberg (English: Student Union Erlangen – Nürnberg) (Stadt Erlangen, 2018 b). It is not only targeting students and seniors, but also addresses single-parents, disabled persons and families as householders. Since its establishment, 177 homeshare pairs have been successfully mediated, of which circa 140 pairs include

students and seniors. Today about 25 of the latter are still in place (WfH coordinator Erlangen, interview, 09 May 2018).

4.4.1.2 Wohnen für Hilfe Würzburg

The city of Würzburg is situated in Bavaria, Southern Germany (see Figure 3) and currently has a population of approximately 129.000 inhabitants (Stadt Würzburg, 2018). WfH here is a cooperation project between the *Caritasverband Würzburg e.V.* (English: Caritas association) and the *Katholische Hochschulgemeinde* (English: Catholic Student Community) (Universität zu Köln, 2018 d) and was founded in July 2011. It addresses seniors, families, or disabled persons on behalf of the householders. Since the projects start 119 homeshare pairs have been paired up, of which around the half included a student and a senior. At the moment, 13 of these pairs are still in place (WfH project coordinator, interview, 16 May 2017).

4.4.2 The quite successful ones

4.4.2.1 Wohnen für Hilfe Kassel

Kassel is a city with around 204.000 inhabitants (Stadt Kassel, 2017) located in Hesse, Central Germany (see Figure 3). WfH was founded here in 2014 and since then has been organised by the *Allgemeiner Studierenden Ausschuss* (English: General Students' Committee). Whilst in the first two years no pairs have been matched due to lacking interest of householders, since the interviewed project coordinator's start of work in 2016 six homeshare pairs have been set up. Currently, four of them are still in place. They all include a student and a senior, however, the project would generally also be open to families or single persons (WfH coordinator Kassel, interview, 15 May 2018).

4.4.2.2 Wohnen für Hilfe Rostock

Rostock is a city with around 208.000 inhabitants (Hansestadt Rostock, 2018) located in Mecklenburg Western-Pomerania, North-East Germany (see Figure 3). During the partition of Germany in an Eastern and a Western part between 1949 and 1990 (Die Bundesregierung, 2018), Rostock formed part of the 'Deutsche Demokratische Republik' (English: German Democratic Republic (GDR)) (see map provided by Diercke Weltatlas, no date). According to the coordinator this political system's rather xenophobic world views still influence the seniors' minds and leads to severe reluctance in accepting a student from a foreign country as a housemate. WfH was established here in February 2015 and is sponsored by the *Europäische Integrationszentrum* (English: European Integration Center). In Rostock the project is only addressing students and seniors. At the moment, there are seven homeshare pairs, whereby the amount of students matched with

seniors since the project' start is significantly higher than seven as there have been a lot of changes due to frequent changes among this group (WfH project coordinator Rostock, interview, 07 May 2018).

4.4.2.3 Wohnen für Hilfe Bremen

Bremen is a city with around 565.000 inhabitants (statista, 2018), situated in Northern Germany (see Figure 3). The program was founded here in 2013 as a cooperation project by the *Senatorin für Soziales, Jugend, Frauen, Integration und Sport* (English: Senator for Social Matters, Youth, Women, Integration and Sports), the *Studentenwerk Bremen AöR* (English: Student Union Bremen) and the *Paritätische Gesellschaft für Soziale Dienste mbH* (English: Parity Society for Social Services) (Stöver, 2018). Exactly like in the previously described projects, WfH Bremen is only addressing students and seniors. In total, there have been 16 homeshare pairs so far, of which six still exist. At the time of the interview, the project coordinator worked 12 hours a week (WfH coordinator Bremen, interview, 08 May 2018).

4.4.2.4 Wohnen für Hilfe Paderborn

In Paderborn, a city with around 150.300 inhabitants (Stadt Paderborn, 2017) located in North-Rhine Westphalia, Western Germany (see Figure 3), WfH is organised by the *Allgemeine Studierendenausschuss*. According to the coordinator interviewed, WfH had already been existent in Paderborn at some point in the past, but was no longer pursued until its re-establishment in 2015. Since then, there have been six or seven homeshare pairs among students and seniors, of which four do still exist today (WfH project coordinator, interview, 09 May 2018). The project does not only address seniors on behalf of the householders but generally all citizens of Paderborn who are looking for assistance and have a room to spare in their home (Universität zu Köln, 2018 b).

4.4.3 The unsuccessful one

4.4.3.1 Wohnen für Hilfe Mainz

The city of Mainz currently has about 214.000 inhabitants (Landeshauptstadt Mainz, 2018) and is located in Rhineland-Palatinate, Western Germany (see Figure 3). WfH was established here in 2012 within the model project *Gelungene Nachbarschaften* (English: Felicitious neighbourhoods), which, in turn, was part of the project *Soziale Stadt* (English: Social City). The project was only targeted at students and seniors and carried out in only one district of Mainz, namely *Lerchenberg*. The latter is characterized by a mixed neighbourhood consisting of social housing on the one side and big, single-family homes on the other hand, which has been “pound from the ground” as an anniversary settlement

in 1962. In contrast to other districts of Mainz where inhabitants are close as they grew up together, Lerchenberg has always been divided, with people rather “sealing off” from each other. The project was only financed for three years. Subsequently it was not extended due to insufficient time and staffing capacities as well as an overall lacking of success: The interviewed project coordinator stated that despite substantial efforts, there were only three homeshare matches in total (WfH coordinator Mainz, interview, 07 May 2018).

4.4.4 Important factors influencing a project’s success

When thoroughly looking into the individual projects of each group, one could argue that there seem to be two decisive factors which play a crucial role regarding the total number of past and currently existing homeshare pairs, and thus, a project’s overall success. In the following, those factors will be further described and enlarged upon.

4.4.4.1 Duration of project existence

The two most successful WfH projects Erlangen and Würzburg are also the ones which have been existent for the longest time. It is likely to conclude that the longer a project is being run, the more people will know about it. This, in turn, will probably lead to an increase in homesharers. As a consequence, coordinators facing difficulties with recruitment should not give up too early but rather trust that more participants will be attracted in the course of time.

4.4.4.2 City or district’s history

Both the coordinators of Mainz and Rostock reported difficulties in attracting participants due to the respective district or city’s past: Whilst in Mainz most of the potential seniors were rather isolated and not used to accept outside help due to the district’s foundation history (see sub-section 4.4.3.1), some seniors in Rostock are influenced by the rather xenophobic world views of the GDR system, which they have lived in for many years (see 4.4.2.2). In both cases this leads to severe difficulties in convincing seniors to take part in the project. Both examples underline that project coordinators need to know their specific cities peculiarities in order to take those into account when planning the project.

5. Results

Aiming to find an answer to the research question, this section will present relevant findings gained from the interviews and - where possible - discuss them against the background of previously identified literature on aging in place and intergenerational homesharing.

Following the four sub-questions, sub-section 5.1 will enlarge upon the current characteristics of the program's participants. Subsequently, sub-section 5.2 deals with the benefits seniors gain when participating in WfH, whereby special regard will be given to the numerous challenges they possibly encounter when remaining living alone. Afterwards, sub-section 5.3 will provide insights into the difficulties arising within the practical implementation of WfH – both prior to and during the homeshare. Lastly, sub-section 5.4 focuses on the program's future development possibilities in terms of its further expendability.

5.1 WfH participants' characteristics

Aiming to provide a better understanding of WfH as such, this research will initially expand upon the program's participants' characteristics and therefore answer the first sub-question "*What are the characteristics of the program's participants?*" It will first be expanded on the seniors who engage in WfH (sub-section 5.1.1) and, in a second step, information on the partaking students will be given (sub-section 5.1.2).

5.1.1 Seniors participating in WfH

Consistent with the findings of Hagmann (2010) and Howe (1985), this study found that in almost every investigated project, the number of seniors applying for WfH is far smaller than the number of student applicants. When exploring the reasons for this reluctance on behalf of the elderly, this study found supportive evidence for Howe's (1985) claim that old people are generally unwilling to share their houses with a stranger: The majority of project coordinators said that seniors often worry about letting an unknown person into their homes (see sub-section 5.3.1 for more details).

Moreover, this research confirmed homesharing literature's general finding of unbalanced gender distribution among homesharing participants: Nearly all project coordinators stated that they have a huge surplus of female homeproviders. Men, in contrast, were only very scarcely engaging within the projects or, in some cities, were not even presented at all. Being asked for the cause of this disparity, some coordinators assumed a mere biological

reason, which is, that women live usually longer than men. They concluded that women would consequently remain more often alone in their houses in old age and thus be larger presented within a project targeting at seniors living at home on their own. According to Howe (1985), older single women particularly face the risk of social isolation towards the end of their lives and are often reliant on themselves in terms of carrying out daily tasks. Besides biological reasons, two coordinators provided some other explanations for men being underrepresented within WfH: Whilst one supposed that women “*are more willing to get involved in moving in with somebody*”, another one thought that in contrast to men they can longer cope with the situation of being alone and less often decide to move to housing alternatives such as residential homes.

Interestingly, there were almost no seniors with non-German backgrounds engaging in WfH. The majority of coordinators had no explanation for this. One coordinator indicated that in contrast to German seniors foreign elders are often not living alone in old age but with the whole family. As they probably receive support from their relatives in these cases, homesharing with a student would arguably be not required.

5.1.2 Students participating in WfH

In contrast to attracting seniors, many coordinators reported that they generally do not face any problems in finding students for their projects. In most of the investigated cities there were more than twice as many students than seniors applying for WfH. In Würzburg, the coordinator even stated that they generally have 20 student applications opposed to only one from a senior. Some coordinators assumed that the students are that attracted by the project as the housing market in university cities is generally tight. Consequently, the students seize any opportunity to find a room to live in – no matter if this means living with an unknown elderly person. This tallies with the findings of Hagmann (2010) who found that students have lower inhibition thresholds to engage in homesharing than seniors as they desperately need accommodation.

When it comes to the gender distribution of the participating students, there was not such a big disparity as within the group of seniors: Whilst four coordinators did not especially report on differences in gender distribution, one coordinator stated to have significantly higher numbers of male students. Three other coordinators, however, underlined that they experience far more young women within their projects. This corresponds to the results found by Hagmann (2010) and Sánchez et al. (2011), who both reported a particular surplus of female students engaging in homesharing. When searching for the reasons

causing this female dominance, two coordinators referred to the rather social fields of study the students typically come from. One stated:

“I think they (the female students) are simply more willing to socially engage. Among our applicants we have a lot of students coming from the rather socially related fields of study, such as social pedagogics, teaching, special pedagogy. [...] And here the women are also disproportionately represented. Moreover, we often have students who do or did voluntary work [...] or engaged as an Au Pair. These students are simply mostly female”.

Another coordinator assumed that women generally have a “*more social aptitude*” than men.

In contrast to the seniors who were almost exclusively of German nationality, the interviews revealed that WfH does particularly attract foreign students. There could not be identified any specific country or region which was particularly represented among the international students applying for the project. Instead, they come from all over the world. Being asked for the reason why there are so many foreign students interested in WfH a number of different explanations was given. Whilst some coordinators stated that they consider homesharing as a possibility to get to know the German culture, others assumed that international students face particular difficulties with finding a favourable apartment: This is as they do not know the language or – in the case of students who come for the whole course of their studies – do not receive any support from their university as it is the case with Erasmus students who come for only one or two semesters. Arguably, a project like WfH with a coordinator who helps finding a room to live in is thus considered very attractive.

Even though some minor exceptions have been mentioned, the coordinators were generally convinced that homesharing pairs including a German senior and an international student did not work particularly better or worse than those with only German homesharers. The reason for this might be that the coordinators generally pay attention to only match students who are capable of at least basic German, ensuring that the homesharers can communicate – a crucial factor for a successful homesharers’ relationship. Within the few exceptional cases where seniors knew English, also students who did not know any German could be mediated.

5.1.3 Conclusion

This section has provided some insights into the program's current participant structure and demonstrated that the overall distribution of senior and student applicants is very unbalanced: It was found that there are generally far higher numbers of students who wish to engage in WfH than seniors. This is mostly due to twofold reasons of seniors being afraid of letting an unknown person in their homes and students' desperate search for living space within an overstretched housing market in German university cities. Moreover, it has been revealed that the seniors who participate in WfH are almost exclusively female as they are generally overrepresented in old age due to biological reasons and more often stay living at home on their own. The students, however, were rather equally distributed, with a slight surplus of female students in some projects. Whilst there were almost no seniors with a migrant background engaging in WfH, many coordinators experienced high numbers of international students within their projects. This is as the latter are interested in getting to know the German culture or consider WfH as a possibility to receive assistance within the difficult search for an affordable apartment.

5.2 Benefits for seniors due to participating in WfH

The second sub-question of this study is: "*Against the background of the various challenges seniors can face when living alone (see sub-section 2.1.2), how and to what extent do they benefit from hosting a student in their home?*". In this respect, it will be differentiated among benefits related to companionship (sub-section 5.2.1), home maintenance and mobility (sub-section 5.2.2), safety (sub-section 5.2.3) and care (5.2.4).

5.2.1 Benefits related to companionship

The interviews with the project coordinators have clearly disclosed that hosting a student in one's home is beneficial for the seniors in terms of combating isolation and loneliness, two issues frequently associated with old age (see Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008). There was consensus amongst all interviewees that the cohabitation with students provided the seniors with feelings of companionship. Joint activities such as cooking or watching the television together but also the mere exchange about daily life made the elders feel "*connected to the world*" and helped to prevent feelings of loneliness. One coordinator was convinced that frequent contact to young people does not only "*bring new live to seniors' places*" but does also avoid elders' "*mental decline*" as well as their "*withdrawing in themselves*". Moreover, he concluded that WfH has the potential to serve as some kind of prevention regarding typical age-related diseases, as the latter can be caused by isolation.

Congruent with the findings of Pynoos, Hamburger and June (1990), this study has found that homesharing does frequently result in close relationships among the homesharers. Many coordinators stated that in the majority of cases the students and seniors develop strong feelings of affiliation towards each other, often comparable to a “*grandchild – grandma relationship*”. The relationship with the student can become very important for the elderly. Consequently, when their housemate moves out, seniors can feel helpless and desperate, as the following statement given by one coordinator underlines:

“I once had a senior where a student has been living for 2.5 years and then moved out due to an internship. This has been really hard for him (the senior) for around nine months in advance. Every time we spoke on the phone he told me ‘Man, he needs to move out soon and I will be alone again’. It was really hard. [...] These relationships simply grow and become very important for the seniors then, particularly when there are no longer a lot of other contacts.”

The termination of the homeshare must however not necessarily mean a loss of contact between the homesharers: Some coordinators stated that the students regularly visit or call their former homeproviders. In an exceptional case, the homesharers had such a close relationship that the student even invited the senior to her wedding in China. Nevertheless, it should be noted that not every homeshare pair experiences such a close bond. Sometimes, both rather consider their housemate as “*a means to an end*”.

Next to the positive aspects of companionship and friendship, hosting a student can also bring “*a breath of fresh air*” into seniors’ lives. Thus, they learn about new things or ‘update’ their knowledge on a certain topic. In this context, one coordinator reported about the following homeshare pair:

“There was a retired teacher who had some room to spare in his house and did not want to live alone after his wife had passed away. I then matched him up with a student [...] who studied for becoming a teacher, they really complemented each other: He corrected her assignments and said that it was great to be able to exchange on job-related things after he had retired from active working life. Simply seeing how studying today works and remaining updated within this field of topic”

Additionally, congruent to findings of Sánchez et al. (2011, p. 384), some coordinators stated that seniors felt somehow “useful through taking care of and helping the students”,

for instance in case of international homeshare pairs, when they could teach the students German: In this context, one coordinator stated:

“He (the student) really speaks German very well [...]. That has not always been the case. [...] But the landlord really enjoyed the contact with the student, teaching him German and getting to know his culture”.

5.2.2 Benefits related to home maintenance and mobility

Next to the benefits related to companionship, this study also found that participating in WfH is advantageous for seniors in terms of overcoming the issues of home maintenance and mobility. Many coordinators stated that hosting a student enabled the seniors to remain living at home as the students helped them with tasks they had severe troubles with or could no longer be performed. These often included tasks related to the garden, such as cutting the hedges, mowing the lawn or shovelling snow. Other elderly received support with household tasks, for instance, with cooking or doing the groceries.

One coordinator especially pointed out that the assistance from the students is very helpful as – in contrast to support staff such as a cleaning lady - they are also around *“in the meantime”* and can quickly provide help with minor things such as getting the curtains down when wanting to wash them. Moreover, as the students’ support is previously agreed upon and a fixed component of the terms of WfH, it can be assumed that the seniors do not need to fear that they exploit them “as unwilling helpers” (Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008, p. 227) and will therefore probably not hesitate to ask the students when needing them.

Furthermore, one interview revealed that hosting a student can be helpful in overcoming the frequent issue of decreasing mobility in old age (see Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2018). One coordinator stated that one old lady particularly wished for a student with a driving licence as she was no longer able to drive her car but wanted to get the possibility to be driven to certain places, such as the supermarket. The coordinator generally considered this request feasible as students nowadays sometimes already have a driver’s licence.

5.2.3 Benefits related to care

After enlarging upon the several benefits seniors receive due to participating in WfH in terms of companionship, home maintenance and mobility, it must, however, be noticed, that the interviews did also clearly reveal the program’s ‘limit’ when it comes to supporting seniors with care: All project coordinators stated that WfH does not include any care

activities on behalf of the students. As one coordinator underlined, the program is very strict on that point: Even though putting on compression socks would probably only require a little help by the students, this is not foreseen. According to another coordinator, this is as carrying out care measures would require a “*specific training which students regularly do not have*”. It should therefore be noted that hosting a student is not beneficial for seniors in terms of support with care tasks. This means, that if the seniors developed a care dependency, the homeshare had to be stopped. In such cases the seniors either hired professional staff or even moved to old peoples’ homes providing residential care.

5.2.4 Benefits related to safety

Although within the ageing in place literature researched for this study, seniors’ feelings of unsafety have not explicitly been found as being a threat to elders’ satisfying experience of ageing in place, the interviews demonstrated that feeling safe at home is crucial for many elderlies. There was widespread agreement among the project coordinators that taking part in WfH is beneficial in that respect: Many interviewees reported that the mere presence of students in their homes made the seniors feel safer, particularly against the background of burglaries. For example, one coordinator stated:

“For the seniors it (the benefit) is the safety someone provides when always living in the home. What kinds of seniors do participate? They are seniors with big apartments, who are widowed, who do not want to leave their apartments. [...] But they want to have a feeling of safety and that’s what they get when the student sleeps in their homes. There is so much rumours about burglaries, and especially an old lady [...], one never knows...”

Next to prevention from criminal acts, a person who is always in the house does also offer a certain kind of safety for the seniors in case of emergencies: For instance, if they should fall, they do not need to fear that “*no one notices*” but can be sure that the student will find them and will provide assistance. Emergency buttons might not be a promising alternative here, as the experiences of one coordinator underline:

“Very often there is this issue that someone should be in the house during the night. Many are afraid that if they fall, they will not get up again. I have already had someone who has had an emergency button but did not press it as he was so scared that he did not think about it anymore.”

5.2.5 Conclusion

To sum up, it can be said that hosting a student within the program of WfH is generally beneficial for seniors, particularly with regard to the various challenges they can face when living alone. It was found that homesharing did prevent elders' feelings of isolation and loneliness due to regular contact and exchange with the student. Additionally, the interviews revealed that students provided a great support within difficult tasks related to home maintenance and thus enabled the seniors to remain living in their homes. The fact that students could drive them to the places they wanted to allowed seniors to be continuously mobile also in old age. The fact that students' support is an explicitly foreseen component of WfH has been considered positively in combating seniors' fears to ask for foreign help. Furthermore, this study has shown that having a student in one's home provides elders with the crucial feeling of safety - both in terms of their support in emergencies as well as protection from burglaries. However, besides these various benefits, the interviews have clearly confirmed that also in practice participating in WfH does not provide the seniors with any care assistance. In conclusion, it can thus be stated that WfH is generally beneficial in helping seniors to obtain a satisfying experience of ageing in place – at least as long as they do not require any nursing measures.

5.3 Current challenges of WfH

In order to be able to answer the main question, one also needs to reflect upon the challenges arising within the practical implementation of the program. In this section, it will first be looked at the challenges occurring before the homeshare, and in a second step, the ones arising when students and seniors actually live together.

5.3.1 Challenges arising before the homeshare

The interviews with the project coordinators have revealed that the main challenge the projects face prior to the actual start of the homeshare is the generally low figure of students and seniors engaging in WfH (for an overview of homeshare pairs set up since the projects establishments see Table 1, section 4.4.). It was found that this results from impediments in five different categories, namely: *attracting seniors*, *application behaviour of students*, *program's lacking publicity*, *application cycle* and *suitability of seniors' apartments*. In the following, it will be enlarged upon each particular category.

5.3.1.1 Attraction of seniors

Almost all project coordinators face great difficulties in acquiring elders for their WfH projects (see sub-section 5.1.1). As a consequence, only comparatively little homeshare

matches can be set up and many students remain 'unmatched'. As already outlined previously, many seniors worry about sharing their homes with an unknown person. Whilst some are afraid that the students would be partying all the time, others fear that they could permanently invite other unknown persons into their houses: In this context, one coordinator said:

"It is no problem when the partner or family is now and then staying overnight, [...] but some (seniors) just fear that someone is going to move in permanently [...] or that unknown people wander around the house and surprise them...When there are suddenly visitors one did not know of before and one then finds oneself standing in a bathrobe in front of an unknown man".

The interviews revealed that seniors' fear of strangers turned out to be particularly high when the student they would possibly share their home with is of non-German origin, or - even more undesirable - has a dark skin colour. Whilst some seniors were found to be xenophobic or simply insecure towards foreigners, others were anxious that these students have a too different culture or would not understand German, thus making communication difficult. The reluctance towards foreigners was especially high in Rostock. According to the coordinator, this is as the current generation of seniors here has had only very few or no contact at all to people from other countries during their lives: During the GDR regime there were strict entry and exit regulations, prohibiting people from travelling freely. As a consequence many old people did not have the chance to meet people from other cultures and countries for a long time (see Schultke, 2008). According to the coordinator this longstanding seclusion caused severe preconceptions towards strangers, which in turn results in severe reluctance among Rostock's seniors to consider homesharing with a person from another country.

Seniors' rejection regarding foreigners is particularly challenging as in most of the investigated cities WfH is especially attracting international students (see sub-section 5.1.2). In order to allay the elders' fears the coordinators developed different 'strategies': For instance, one coordinator reported that he always tries to publish the cases in which homesharing among a foreign student and a German senior works out very well in the local newspaper.

Moreover, this study also confirmed Howe's (1985, p. 188) assumption that old people will only consider to share their homes with an unknown person "when the necessity is quite

pressing". Being asked for the reason for the few numbers of seniors engaging in the project, one coordinator answered:

"On behalf of the seniors exist huge thresholds in letting someone in their homes [...]. Often their need for support is not as big yet, so they think 'I can still manage and I can still pay the gardener or the cleaning lady' and therefore be at peace at home".

In Mainz, WfH even had to be put to ice again as the demand on behalf of the seniors was too little, although potential would have been there. He reported:

"So I think the most difficult thing was to get into contact (with the elderly). It was not that there have not been enough seniors, who would have had the logistic requirements, as most of the houses had a small lodger-flat [...] as I have seen. But when finally the moment had come that the students could have moved in the seniors backedpedalled. [...] When the time was ripe for a decision many said 'Oh I think I can still manage, but I will get back to you when it is getting acute again. And then we knew already they got cold feet."

"Acute" in this context probably refers to the point of time when the seniors feel either lonely or need frequent assistance with household chores.

Next to seniors' unwillingness to move in with a stranger, this study also found some evidence for the presumption that old people might be reluctant in participating in homesharing as they are particularly afraid of becoming a victim of crime (see Yin, 1980): Some coordinators reported that the elderly fear that the students could destroy or even steal their property. Moreover, some were worried about being exploited. One coordinator explained that he faces severe troubles in allaying this fear as recent criminal statistics just showed an increase in crime towards old people.

Apart from seniors' fears regarding engaging in the project, many of them were found to have (too) specific demands on the students: Besides the already mentioned refusal of foreign students, male and female seniors often prefer to share their homes with a female student, assuming that they are tidier than male students. A specific gender of the potential housemate is however not the only thing sometimes required by the seniors. For instance, one coordinator pointed out:

“I once had a senior who said that now where he just retired he would like to learn Spanish [...]. There are often very specific wishes but I cannot immediately (fulfil them) as in that moment I do not have a student who is a native Spanish speaker. Moreover, there is the issue of religious confession. (Some say) ‘I do not want a Moslem’ or whatsoever, and occasionally we also face preconceptions towards students of a darker skin colour [...] or foreign men, who are also very hard to match up”.

No matter if it is seniors’ fear of strangers, fear of crime or their too high expectations, in all cases the coordinators usually try to allay seniors’ fears and prejudices within the framework of counselling talks and/or meetings with the potential student. Hereby, the seniors can establish a personal contact with the student in question and they are able to get a more precise idea of their possible tenant. This face to face meeting can also serve as an “ice-breaker”, as the following story told by one of the coordinators clearly underlines:

“I have always tried to bring the people (the seniors and students) together, so that they can get to know each other and that was also the case with this Syrian student. I took him with me to the old lady, we sat down and talked a bit and she was a little deaf and then she asked ‘where are you from?’ and he said he was from Syria. And she said ‘Oh, Thuringia, I am also from Thuringia’. Can you imagine how hard we laughed then? One could really notice the ice was broken. When we explained (the misunderstanding) to her she burst out laughing and she said ‘He is great, I like him, let’s do this!’ (the homesharing)”.

However, particularly within the matter of seniors’ negative stance towards foreign students, some coordinators ‘gave up’ trying to change their mind-sets, acknowledging that certain worldviews can no longer be changed in old age and must be accepted. This tallies with the ideas of the continuity theory (see Johanson et al., 2013, p.3), suggesting that old people seldom change the “habits” and “perspectives” they acquired along their lives.

5.3.1.2 Application behaviour of students

Next to the challenges faced within the attraction of seniors, another reason for only few figures of homeshare pairs to be set up lies in the application behaviour of students:

Consistent with findings of Hagmann (2010), this study found that project coordinators usually do not have any problems in finding student applicants due to their desperate

housing situation. However, 'keeping' those students can be difficult, as the following statement given by one of the coordinators shows:

“The students always try various ways at the same time, they also apply in student residences and have a look at wg-gesucht (a German online flatsharing-community housing portal) and of course a lot of them find a room elsewhere. So they do not engage in WfH as they do necessarily want to help, but rather because they are searching for a room, and for a lot of them this (WfH) is a cheap possibility to live. But when they find a cheap room elsewhere, they will also live elsewhere. And often this is what happens”.

Another coordinator stated that students would “try everything” particularly at the beginning of the semester, so that in a lot of cases they do not even know what the program is about. As a consequence, some coordinators developed some ‘coping strategies: For instance, one coordinator was only considering applications from those students who were willing to personally visit the coordinator’s consultation hour. When they agreed to come, the coordinator could be sure that the students were truly interested in the project and had previously looked into the program’s concept. Nevertheless, in some cities, the unsteady student behaviour including a lot of back outs is still a big challenge for the program.

5.3.1.3 Struggle with program’s publicity

There was generally widespread agreement among all coordinators interviewed that publicity of WfH is very important when it comes to attracting potential homesharers. Although many coordinators thought that their intensive and time-consuming advertisement has indeed resulted in generally satisfying degrees of awareness within the respective cities, they partly experience problems while promoting: For instance, one coordinator could not find a senior who agreed in being interviewed in the newspaper when a journalist offered to write an article about the project. Within the context of the press, another coordinator reported the following issue.

“They (the press) do only have their quotes, they did not present the program correctly and they promised me to publish (the article) here in xy, as we are related to xy where the university is. But they published (the article) in xy, but xy does not even have a university! I cannot offer the project there. So I had to disappoint a lot of people, which harmed the project!”

As a consequence, the coordinator decided to completely stop working with the press.

5.3.1.4 Different application cycles of seniors and students

A further difficulty arising within WfH already prior to the actual homeshare set up is the incompatible application cycles of students and seniors, which make mediation hard. Whilst students generally look for rooms only at the beginning of the semester, seniors offer their homes throughout the whole year. As one coordinator indicated, the latter's applications are often result from an article in the newspapers, which encourages the elderly to apply. Furthermore, it was mentioned that the number of seniors and students applying is generally volatile. Due to these fluctuations, not every applicant can be mediated on short term.

5.3.1.5 Suitability of seniors' apartments

The final challenge occasionally reported by some project coordinators occurring prior to the actual homeshare is the fact that apartments offered by seniors are now and then inappropriate, which means that the old people living there cannot take part in the project: Three coordinators pointed out that some apartment offers were inadequate for students to live in as they were too far from the university and had poor connection to public transportation service. Another criterion mentioned for excluding seniors' room offers was when the elderly could not provide Internet connection in their homes. The same applies if the apartment is in a very questionable condition: In one extreme case, a coordinator could not match a senior with a student "without a clear conscience" as the flat was totally unkempt. In one of the investigated cities, Rostock, the construction of many of the seniors' apartments did not prevent them from taking part in the project, however often hinders elders to apply: Typically for the architectural style of the GDR many dwellings have only one bathroom including the toilet, but no additional guest toilet. According to the cities' coordinator most seniors are less inclined to share the toilet with a student and thus often refuse to engage in homesharing.

5.3.2 Challenges arising during the homeshare

Besides the just-mentioned difficulties arising prior to the homeshare, the interviews with the coordinators have further brought to light various challenges appearing in the course of the tenancy. These include the *fluctuation of students*, *conflicts among the homesharers* and *not enough financial support provided by the project sponsor*. The following sub-sections will enlarge upon each of these difficulties.

5.3.2.1 Fluctuation of students

Although there existed quite some positive exceptions in which homeshare pairs lasted for various years, many project coordinators mentioned that students generally do not live with their homeprovider for the entire duration of their study life. Instead, many students want to try different alternatives, as outlined by the following statement made by one coordinator:

“I would say that most of the students seek for something else after around one year. It often happens that students say I now want to live in a flat-sharing community, or student residence or move in with my boyfriend, or go abroad, do an internship. So I would say the larger percentage (of students) does not stay (with the homeprovider) for the whole course of their studies.”

Sometimes students do also only use WfH as some kind of “stepping stone” and then continue looking for alternatives once they actually live in the city. In both cases the experiences tally with the findings of Howe (1985), stating that the overall duration of the homeshare is often dependent on the student’s timeframe. Being asked if the seniors are aware of this ‘short life span’ of the project, the coordinators’ experiences differed. Whilst some seniors had no problems with hosting students only for a short time, others did not like this kind of fluctuation or even found themselves in an emotional struggle due to homesharing:

“For some homeproviders it is not easy. I have also already had seniors who were so frustrated when the first student stopped that they thought ‘Man, it must be because of me that no one wants to live with me’ and then they did not want to continue anymore”.

As a possible solution to prevent students from moving out after only a very short period of time, some cities require a minimum housing duration of at least one year. Though, one coordinator indicated that the downside of this is that foreign students who come for only one semester cannot take part in the projects.

5.3.2.2 Conflicts among the homesharers

In line with Howe (1985), Hagmann (2010), Danigelis & Fengler (1990), the interviews revealed that homesharing among students and seniors is not always free of conflicts. Although arising rather rarely, all project coordinators experienced some sorts of disagreement within at least some of ‘their’ homeshare pairs. Difficulties did mostly not

arise due to personal problems among the homesharers but rather due to different ideas on how homesharing should work (see Howe, 1985, Hagmann, 2010), whereby the coordinators reported various different cases. For instance, seniors felt that the students were not supporting them as much as agreed upon — either as he/ she had “*insufficient willingness to work*” or not as much time to help them as initially thought. The latter particularly occurs within freshmen, as the following statement made by one coordinator underlines:

“The compability (of university’s and homeproviders’ expectations on the student) is difficult. When the students just start studying [...] they do not know what to expect. They do not know their timetables or what they need to. So the biggest problem we often face afterwards is that the students have miscalculated. Thus, they do not have sufficient time to provide help or, unfortunately, their ‘help-times’ collide with their timetables. [...] Sometimes, one realizes that only late. Many students then recognize that it (helping and studying) is simply too much for them.”

Another example for a conflict sometimes mentioned was that the student was too often not at home and thus could not provide the companionship the senior had previously hoped for. Moreover, one coordinator reported a case in which the student was somehow ‘exploited’ by the senior: The old lady continuously required the student to care for her husband who suffered from dementia, although WfH does particularly not include any care activities. According to Johnson and McAdam (2000), those kind of situations clearly underline the need for detailed agreements prior to the homeshare’s start. Within the reported case, both parties had indeed signed a contract; however the old lady simply ignored its content.

Interestingly, this study found no conflicts arising within the three fields identified by Danigelis and Fengler (1990) (see sub-section 2.3.5), but instead one coordinator revealed that she witnessed conflicts due to homesharers’ different cultural backgrounds, for instance, when the student was used to cook three times a day.

Although the vast majority of conflicts could be solved as homesharers found compromises, or simply acknowledged that sharing a home does certainly require some “adjustments” (Danigelis & Fengler, 1990, p. 167) on behalf of both the homeprovider and the homeseeker, there were also cases in which difficulties could not be worked out, resulting in a termination of the homeshare.

5.3.2.3 Insufficient financial means provided by the project sponsor

A last challenge which has been mentioned by one in two coordinators is the fact that their projects are not provided with enough financial means by the project sponsors. This hinders the overall success of the project as measures cannot be implemented as the coordinators would like to. For instance, the poor financial position also leads to constant uncertainties whether the project will be continued. One coordinator reported:

“Almost all project cities face the issue of financing. In our view it is impossible to carry out the project on a voluntary basis, thus we need full-time staff but that needs to be financed somehow. There is no long-term funding. There are some project cities which do have that but we don't. It's been a struggle for seven years now [...] does it go on, do we get money again from anyone, can we continue somehow?”

In some cases the limited financial resources lead to the fact that the coordinators' weekly working hours were only very few. This means that they often do not have enough time for the project and can for instance not regularly visit all homeshare pairs. In this context, one coordinator stated:

“One should not forget that I have only 12 working hours for the project [...] That is the whole financial resource we have. [...] So I am doing it within a one-man business with 12 working hours, so I cannot always visit everyone.”

Another coordinator pointed out that sufficient personnel is crucial for the project's existence, above all in being able to promote the project:

“Thus one really needs to have the personnel in order to look after that, as advertisement is half the job. One needs to become known, one needs to talk to people. Going to a fair or giving a lecture requires a lot of time and that's what I need manpower for. [...] We often heard about cities which had to put the project on ice as they were understaffed.”

It can thus be noted that lacking financial means on behalf of the project sponsors' (see sub-section 4.4.1.1 and following ones for an overview of respective sponsor) can be a big threat to WfH and hinders the coordinators both in their advertisement activities as well as their contact maintenance with the homeshare pairs. In the latter case, students and

seniors may arguably feel insufficiently supported, which could in turn lead to dissatisfaction.

5.3.3 Conclusion

This section has clearly shown that there are numerous challenges occurring within the practical implementation of WfH – both prior to and during the homeshare - which cannot always be solved. Whilst difficulties arising before seniors and students actually live together included issues such as the attraction of seniors, application behaviour of students, program's lacking publicity, application cycle and suitability of seniors' apartments, the challenges appearing during the homeshare contained *fluctuation of students, conflicts among the homesharers, and not enough financial support provided by the project sponsor.*

It was found that the challenges occurring prior to the homeshare impeded coordinators' efforts to set up pairs among students and seniors, whereby the difficult attraction of seniors was seen as the biggest threat and in one extreme case even led to the termination of the project. The difficulties occurring during the homeshare, however, sometimes favoured an early dissolution of the matches as students wanted to live somewhere else or conflicts could not be solved. The fact that some projects did not have enough financial resources hindered both their marketing measures as well as coordinators' relationship to the homesharers.

When taking the above-mentioned challenges into consideration against the previously found positive effects of the program WfH in terms of seniors' satisfying experience of ageing in place (see sub-section 5.2), it can be stated that the difficulties have a neutralizing effect: Although seniors do considerably benefit from hosting a student, the coordinators' practical experience showed that set up and maintenance of homeshare pairs is difficult. Thus, the program's overall contribution towards seniors' satisfying experience of ageing in place is given, however only for a small number of participants.

5.4 Future prospects

Aiming to get an insight into the question how the project coordinators think about the future development of WfH, the last sub-question of this study is: "*What are the future prospects of the program in terms of its expansion options?*" Hereby, it will first be enlarged upon the generally poorly supposed future perspectives, however, in a second step, some quite positive outlooks will be presented:

5.4.1 Pessimistic future perspectives

There was generally widespread agreement among the coordinators that the overall future prospects regarding WfH's expendability possibilities are rather low. Many thought that the program will maintain its current "*niche character*" with only a few homeshare matches set up per year and thus will probably not work on a larger scale in near future. Being asked for the reasons which made the coordinators think in that direction, they mostly referred to the difficulties in acquiring people for WfH as well as the projects unsuitability for the mass market. Four different coordinators stated:

"It will always remain a niche (model). If I achieve my personal goal of continuously matching 10-12 seniors, then we would be at a good point".

"Based on my gut feeling (the project) is very specific and thus not suitable for the mass market".

"I think it always depends on the city, but at the moment it is really very hard [...] and I think it will be a very long process until people adapt to those housing forms".

"When I look into the future I don't think that in five years I will be able to match more homeshare pairs than today. I think it will always be around one or two [...]. It is simply difficult to bring people together and to find people who want to move in with someone".

Moreover, the coordinator of the WfH project in Bremen especially underlined that there are theoretically enough seniors with suitable apartments, but at the moment their scepticism to host an unknown person is still too big. He supposed that WfH would work better in countries such as Spain, Italy or France, as society here "*is more open*" and people are "*more curious*" and are not as shy towards foreigners as Germans.

Another issue which led to coordinators' rather pessimistic views is WfH's time consuming mediation process:

"Our main principle is to match people who get on well together, who fit together [...]. (People) we have been checked before, where a relationship can grow [...]. This simply requires a lot of time and personnel effort. I can only conditionally shorten this process, so placing about hundred students? No."

Despite these perceived poor future perspectives in terms of WfH's expendability, many coordinators were nevertheless fully convinced of the project. This was either due to their good experiences or the model's potential to use vacancies:

"I nevertheless think that the project is worthwhile. This is as I am fully enthusiastic about the homeshare pairs which do exist. They really work well and I made the experience that there are no problems among the people".

"I think it is important to have different housing models, so that there are alternatives on the housing market. The big advantage of WfH is that one can also make use of vacancies. One cannot build new apartments unlimitedly, at a certain point in time there is simply no more space, particularly in the cities. I just like that WfH makes usage of rooms which otherwise would have been empty".

One coordinator even stated that she would *"continue the project even if there would be only one mediation per year"*. Another coordinator concluded that WfH's success should be regarded from an *"individual's perspective"* and is to be regarded as a *"gift"* for those who participate".

5.4.2 Promising future developments

Some interviews revealed that although the project's future evaluation is basically negative, there were some positive hints given by the coordinators, which could still have the potential to further expand WfH within the next generations: Thinking about himself in 25 years, one coordinator mentioned:

"I can well imagine to do it (living in a flat-sharing community) later, and I think that many of my peers can also. There is much discussion about senior communities, buying a farm somewhere, renovate it and then move there together. Or letting students live in a lodger flat who care for the house work and can live there free of rent. These options are being discussed a lot, so I think it could get better in the future".

Another coordinator was equally positive about the future as she explained that the current German government aims at further promoting those housing forms. The coordinator of Rostock, the city where the generation of current seniors is particularly reluctant towards foreigners (see sub-section 4.4.3.1), was also convinced that WfH will

play a bigger role in the city in future: She thinks that the following generation, who has been raised in the period after the GDR regime and thus had more contact to foreigners will be more open and thus probably engage in WfH.

5.4.3 Conclusion

To sum up, this section has demonstrated that the overall future perspectives regarding WfH's expendability were found to be rather limited. The main reason for this negative outlook lies in the fact that the project is not suitable for the majority of people. It addresses only a small quantity of persons, particularly of the elderly, as they are often reluctant to living with a stranger. Additionally, the mediation process is very time-consuming but cannot be shortened as a thorough selection process of the homesharers is regarded as essential for the project's success. Nevertheless, one third of the project coordinators are that enthusiastic about the project that they do not want to give up their work for WfH even in face of only very small figures of concluded lease contracts. Some coordinators hoped for a further expansion of the project to come into effect within the next generation of seniors. They assume they will be less shy towards foreigners and simultaneously more open to intergenerational-living. Finally, there is hope for the project's future as the German government stated to continue the promotion of these kind of housing forms. Thus, it can be said that although at present the negative assessments regarding this project seem to outweigh the positive assessments, it should be stated that a third of the interviewed coordinators is convinced that the 'heyday' of WfH is yet to come within the next generation.

6. Conclusion

Since the four sub-questions have been answered within the previous sections, the following paragraph will now give an answer to the study's main question, which is "*To what extent does the intergenerational homeshare program WfH provide a promising approach in contributing to seniors' satisfying experience of ageing in place?*".

As it has been revealed that hosting a student is beneficial for the participating seniors in terms of mitigating the challenges they face when living alone at home, it can be concluded that WfH is generally a promising approach in contributing to seniors' satisfying experience of ageing in place. However, it has to be kept in mind that there currently exist various challenges within the practical implementation of the program, both prior to and during the homeshare. These include above all seniors' difficult attraction due to prevailing fears to let a stranger move in, students' steady wish or need to change location as well as homesharers' conflicts with each other. This results in an overall low figure of homeshare pairs to be set up or to last. Consequently, it needs to be admitted that the program's potential regarding seniors' satisfying experience of ageing in place is currently only reaching a very small group of elders. In order to bring about change here, the above-mentioned challenges need to be overcome. Though, there is uncertainty whether this will be achievable in the future: Whilst some coordinators underlined their scepticism whether the current niche character of WfH can ever be transformed into a program which is suitable for larger quantities, others were more hopeful. The latter expected seniors' fears to move in with an unknown person to diminish within the coming generations, as the 'new' seniors are supposed to be more open towards those housing models and used to contact with people from other cultures. Whilst this would arguably not positively influence all challenges – for instance students' high fluctuation rates – it would however mitigate the big difficulty of attracting seniors for WfH.

To conclude, this research found that WfH generally has the potential to positively contribute to seniors' satisfying experience of ageing in place. As at present, however, there are only few numbers of homeshare pairs, only a very small group of elders can benefit from this contribution. Possible approaches as to how the overall participant number could be increased are discussed in section 8.

7. Reflection

In order to complete this thesis, this section will critically reflect both upon the selected method (sub-section 7.1) as well the research hypothesis (sub-section 7.2). In a second step, sub-section 7.3 will discuss the representativeness of my findings. Finally, sub-section 7.4 enlarges upon the questions which remain unanswered within this research.

7.1 Limitations regarding the selected method

Although the selected method has turned out to be beneficial in answering this study's research question, there have been some obstacles along the way:

First, it was previously planned to conduct the interviews personally, within a face-to-face approach. However, as the response and coordination process of the interviewees took rather long, there was no more time for personal visits and an adaptation was required. Despite the lacking face-to-face contact, the data was however still considered to be equally valid, as research on qualitative interviews conducted by Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) showed that there were no significant differences in results compared to traditional face-to-face interviews. I, nevertheless, assume that a personal visit in the coordinators' offices would have provided me with a more concrete picture of their daily work and thus enhance my overall understanding of the project. In this context, it would probably also have been very interesting to visit one or more homeshare pairs in their homes. As interviewing them was considered difficult (see sub-section 3.1) this has unfortunately not been possible.

Second, it sometimes occurred that during the interviews coordinators came up with new information which would also have been interesting to talk about with the other coordinators. This was possible for the ones to follow, however, not for the interviews already conducted at that time. Hence, the interview guide was more extensive towards the end than at the beginning and new questions could only be asked to some. However, in those cases where the newly obtained insights seemed particularly important to contrast against other coordinators' experiences, the respective coordinators have been contacted a second time.

Lastly, although it was endeavoured to minimise the interviewer's share of conversation within the interviews to not unnecessarily "spoil" the data by guiding the interviewee in a certain direction due to comments, particular questions, etc. (Diefenbach, 2009, p. 880), this might have happened from time to time. As the author argues this is, however, neglectable, as "the interviewer is an active part of the social interaction and he or she has

to intervene in that sense that the interviewee makes statements he or she would not make otherwise”.

7.2 Limitations regarding the research hypothesis

As it has been outlined in sub-section 2.4, this study grounds on the hypothesis *‘the fewer and the smaller the challenges seniors face when remaining living alone at home it old age, the more satisfying is their experience of ageing in place’*. Consequently, WfH’s contribution to seniors’ satisfying experience of ageing in place has been investigated by means of the program’s ability to mitigate the challenges elders can face when living alone. It must, however, be noted here that within the scope of this study these challenges were only restricted to the four ones listed by Sixsmith and Sixsmith (2008), Fausset et al. (2011) as well as Haak et al. (2007). Nonetheless, it is quite conceivable that there exist some further challenges which have not been included. Therefore, it might be possible that a different study investigating WfH’s ability to mitigate other challenges than the four mentioned ones will lead to completely different results in the question whether WfH presents a promising approach regarding seniors’ satisfying experience of ageing in place or not.

7.3 Generalisability of findings

Besides the just-presented shortcomings regarding the method and the conceptual model, the overall generalisation of this study’s findings also remains unclear. As already mentioned only a relatively small quantity of project coordinators has been interviewed: Out of 36 projects existing in Germany, only 8 project coordinators have been talked to. Consequently, the overall results only depend on the experiences of a few persons and thus only generalizable in a limited way. They should therefore not be considered as universally true but rather serve as a first incentive within the yet hardly researched fields of intergenerational homesharing and ageing in place. Moreover, one needs to keep in mind that the obtained data has only been gathered in Germany. Hence, it can be possible that the same case study conducted in another country would have led to different results. Following the assumption of one project coordinator who stated that people from countries such as Spain, France or Italy are *“more open”* than Germans, it could be possible that this research carried out in of these countries would find that attracting seniors for engaging in WfH is not as problematic than it was the case in most of the investigated German projects.

7.4 Unanswered questions

Within the course of this study, some issues could not be answered: Whilst the overall impediment for the generally low figures of homeshare pairs was found to be mainly caused by seniors' reluctance to participate in the program as they were afraid to move in with a stranger, it has not fully been investigated where these fears have their origin and – more important - how they could be tackled. Moreover, this study found no sound answer in the question why the program is currently only very rarely attracting seniors of non-German origin. The same applies for the issue as to how one could overcome further challenges the program currently faces, for instance the mismatching application cycles of students and seniors.

8. Recommendations

Deriving from this study's results as well as limitations outlined in section 7, the following paragraphs contain some recommendations both for practice as well as further research.

8.1 For practice

This study has clearly demonstrated that the program of WfH does currently provide a promising approach to seniors' satisfying experience of ageing in place, however, as the program faces various challenges - above all the generally low number of existing homeshare pairs - up to now only on a very small scale. In order to spread the program's benefits among a larger amount of elderly, the current challenges existing both prior to and during the homeshare need to be overcome. As seniors' fears to live with a stranger were considered as the most crucial factor responsible for the overall low number of homeshare pairs, it should first be focused in allaying their uncertainties. As this was found to work best by the time-consuming means of coordinators' personal consultancy as well as personal meetings with potential students, the project sponsors should consider investing in more project staff. Moreover, as advertisement was deemed very important for the project's overall success, it should also be ensured that the project coordinators receive enough money for promotional purposes.

8.2 For further research

As it has already been outlined in section 7, the present study's result cannot be generalised due to the overall low number of investigated cases. In order to achieve more reliable findings, future research should thus include more WfH cities' experiences - both national and international ones. To broaden the overall understanding of the program, it should then be aimed at not only interviewing project coordinators but to particularly include also the homesharers opinions concerning their subjective experiences with 'living' the project. Hereby, it would be of particular interest to further enlarge upon the reasons for seniors' fears to live with a stranger - and especially with foreign students - and how these fears could be overcome. In this context, it should also be investigated on solutions regarding the other identified challenges currently hindering the program, for instance, as to how coordinators could better respond to the currently mismatching application cycles of students and seniors. Moreover, particularly against the background of low figures of seniors engaging in the project, further research should analyse why WfH does currently only rarely addresses seniors with a non-German background. Additionally, it might be very interesting to evaluate if there are more challenges hindering seniors' satisfying experience of ageing in place than the four ones identified within this study. If so, WfH's contribution in mitigating or overcoming those should be investigated. Finally, with respect

to the revealed challenge of student fluctuation within WfH, it could also be worthwhile to investigate whether the program can also contribute to seniors' satisfying experience of ageing in place when sharing their homes with a job starter or apprentice. People among the latter groups are generally not subject to internships or semesters spent abroad. As a result, they might be more 'settled' and are thus not prone to changing their place of residence as often as students want to or have to do.

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10. List of Appendices

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A Interview guide (German)

Generelle Infos und Bewohnerstruktur

1. Seit wann gibt es das Projekt in Ihrer Stadt?
2. Seit wann arbeiten Sie als Projektkoordinator/in?
3. Wie viele Wohnpatenschaften zwischen Studenten und Senioren hat es seit Projektgründung insgesamt in Ihrer Stadt gegeben?
4. Wie viele solcher Patenschaften existieren aktuell?
5. Sind es eher die Studenten oder eher die Senioren, die sich mehrheitlich für diese Wohnform bewerben? (Warum ist das so?)
6. Ist das Geschlechterverhältnis bei den Senioren ausgeglichen oder sind es eher Frauen/ Männer die teilnehmen? Wie ist das bei den Studenten? (Warum ist das so?)
7. Welchen kulturellen Hintergrund haben die Senioren, welchen die Studenten? (Warum ist das so?)

Vermittlungsprozess und Wohnpatenschaften ansich

Vor der Wohnpartnerschaft:

8. Wie genau läuft der "Vermittlungsprozess" ab?
9. Was sind für Sie wichtige Faktoren für ein erfolgreiches „Wohnpaar“?
10. Was sind die größten Schwierigkeiten die sich bei der Vermittlung von Studenten und Senioren ergeben?
11. Was sind die Hauptgründe für die Senioren mitzumachen, was die der Studenten?

12. Welche Vorurteile und Ängste existieren auf Seite der Studenten, welche auf Seite der Senioren vor der Wohnpatenschaft? Wie lösen Sie diese? Wie lösen die Bewerber sie?

13. Welche Studenten hätten die Senioren am liebsten?

Während der Wohnpartnerschaft:

14. Was sind die größten Konflikte, die während der Wohnpatenschaft entstehen?

15. Welche Konstellationen funktionieren besser? Solche, in bei denen sich Gegensätze anziehen oder eher solche, bei denen die Bewohner sich sehr ähneln, z.B. das gleiche Hobby teilen, etc.?

16. Wie ist Ihre Erfahrung mit Wohnpatenschaft in denen verschiedenen kulturelle Hintergründe existieren? Klappen diese besser, schlechter, gleich?

17. Wie würden Sie die Beziehung der Wohnpartner über die Zeit beschreiben? Entstehen da echte Freundschaften?

18. Was hat die Wohnpatenschaft für einen Effekt auf die Senioren, welchen auf die Studenten?

Ende der Wohnpartnerschaft:

19. Wie lange dauern die Patenschaften in der Regel?

20. Was sind die Hauptgründe dafür, dass eine Wohnpatenschaft zerbricht?

Nutzen und Hindernisse

21. Was ist Ihrer Meinung nach der größte Nutzen des Projekts?

22. Was war Ihre bisher beste/ schönste Erfahrung mit dem Projekt?

23. Wo sehen Sie die größten Schwierigkeiten und auch Grenzen des Projekts?

Zukunft des Projekts

24. Zum heutigen Zeitpunkt ist "Wohnen Für Hilfe" definitiv ein Nischenmodell. Einige Städte, z.B. Bamberg und Tübingen haben es aufgrund fehlenden Erfolgs sogar wieder eingestellt. Droht Ihnen das auch? Wo sehen Sie Wohnen für Hilfe in Ihrer Stadt in 5 Jahren?

25. Glauben Sie das Projekt kann jemals aus seiner Nische rauskommen und auf breiter Basis funktionieren oder spricht es dafür einfach eine zu spezifische Gruppe an? Falls ja, warum? Falls nein, warum nicht?

26. Trägt es wirklich zu einer Lösung der studentischen Wohnraumknappheit bei?

B Interview guide (English)

General information and inhabitant structure

1. Since when has the project been existing in your city?
2. Since when have you been working as a project coordinator?
3. How many pairs including a student and a senior have there been in total since the project's foundation in your city?
4. How many of those pairs are existing at the moment?
5. Who is more likely to apply for this housing form? Seniors or students? (Why do you think this is?)
6. Is there a balanced gender ratio among the homeproviders / homeseekers or do more women/men take part in it? (Why do you think this is so?)
7. From which cultural backgrounds do the homeproviders come, from which the homeseekers? (Why do you think this is so?)

Matching process

Prior to the homeshare:

8. Can you describe how the matching process takes place?
9. What are important factors for a good match from your perspective?
10. What are the biggest difficulties you experience in matching students and seniors?
11. What are the main motivations for the seniors / students to take part in the project?
12. Which prejudices and fears exist on behalf of the students/ seniors prior to the homeshare? How do you resolve them? How do the homesharers resolve them?

13. What kind of students would the seniors like best?

During the homeshare:

14. What are the main conflicts arising during the homeshare process?

15. Out of your experience, which constellations work better, those where “opposites attract” or those where homesharers are rather similar, for instance, share the same hobby, etc?

16. How do you perceive pairs in which different cultural backgrounds exist? Does it work better, worse, the same?

17. How would you characterise the relationship of the homesharers over time? Do they develop friendships?

18. What effect does the homeshare have on the seniors / on the students?

End of the homeshare:

19. How long do the matches usually last?

20. What are the main reasons for ending a homeshare?

Benefits and obstacles of the project in general

21. In your opinion, what is the biggest benefit of the project?

22. What has been your best experience so far?

23. Where do you see the main difficulties and limits of the project?

Future of the project

24. Up to date “Wohnen Für Hilfe” is definitely a niche model; some cities (e.g. Bamberg and Tübingen) have even terminated their projects due to lacking success. Where do you see “Wohnen für Hilfe” in your city in 5 years?

25. Do you think the model could ever get out of its niche and then work on a broad scale, e.g. 1/3 of students in university cities living in such a housing form? If so, how? If not, why not?

26. Does it really contribute in solving the issue of shortage in student housing?