



Universität
Basel

Research Project

Alter(n) als Zukunft. Zukunftsbezogenes Alternshandeln in kulturvergleichender Perspektive

Third-party funded project

Project title Alter(n) als Zukunft. Zukunftsbezogenes Alternshandeln in kulturvergleichender Perspektive

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Department

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Status Completed

Old age has come to occupy a major part of an individual's life and it also constitutes a reality to which society at large must adapt. The "Ageing as Future" project investigates how individuals perceive, construe, and prepare for their old age and ageing. We address this topic from an interdisciplinary perspective, combining different methodological approaches that mutually complement and inform each other (in-depth interviews, questionnaires, online assessments, experiments). The project has an international format, with data collection in three different countries (Germany, USA, Hong Kong), which allows us to study and compare processes of ageing across different societal contexts. The design of our study enables us to interconnect individual and societal factors in understanding processes of ageing. The major topics of our project center around three interrelated themes: Views on ageing, preparation for old age, and time management in old age. During the first funding period, the project has generated a data base that is unique with respect to its multi-method approach and its in-depth assessment of age-related variables and constructs in three different countries. Core findings focus on (a) the domain-specificity of views on ageing and age-related preparation, (b) processes of internalization of age stereotypes into personalized future self-views, (c) relations between ageing-related beliefs and a wide range of developmental outcomes (e.g., preparation, life events, perceived age discrimination, subjective age, well-being), (d) modes of time management and time perception (time suspension, logic of catching up, temporal self-continuity), and (e) country differences in ageing-related processes and their determinants (perceived situation of older people in a society, age stereotypes). Besides of having a strong impact on ageing research (high ranking publications, symposia at national and international conferences), we have also disseminated our research findings to the public (handbook introducing the project and its core results, educational materials, presence in the media, press releases).

In a second funding period, the project will capitalize on and expand the current data base. Specifically, we will conduct additional measurement waves, resulting in a fully longitudinal, multimethod design across multiple countries. These data will allow us to separate effects of age, cohort, and historical time; to investigate the causal direction of relations between variables; and to compare and interconnect findings and insights that were gathered with different methodologies within different parts of the project. Furthermore, two countries will be added to our project. Data will be gathered in the Czech Republic in order to investigate effects of societal transformation on individual attitudes towards ageing in a country that changed from a state socialist, highly protectionist welfare regime to a capitalist society emphasizing individual liberty and responsibility. We also include data collection in the Tainan region in Taiwan in order to compare processes of ageing between more rural and metropolitan regions (Hong Kong) in

Asia. Finally, the project will put a particular focus on what emerged as superordinate core topics in all parts of the project during the first funding period (age discrimination, ageing during the “fourth age”, attitudes toward longevity).

Our project addresses a topic that is of major societal relevance. It will continue to have a strong scientific impact on ageing research and it will also have substantial practical implications for understanding and optimizing processes of ageing within “ageing societies”. By drawing on a unique data set and on a group of outstanding international researchers, who have collaborated intensively and successfully during the first funding period, the project will yield increasing returns during the second funding period.

Financed by

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