ABSTRACT

PROPERTY AND BODY:
AGEING IN SOUTHERN AFRICAN CITIES

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The global population is ageing. In Africa the average proportion of elderly persons in the population is still low, but being a rapidly urbanising continent, a growing number of elderly women and men are ageing in town. At the same time the economy is declining and disease is taking its toll in the middle generation. Ageing is connected to bodily decline but instead of receiving care, many elderly become carers of sick and children. Few countries have more than very limited pension and welfare systems. This paper presents a research programme that aims at exploring how urban living conditions among elderly people are gendered. Focus is on domestic space, housing and household arrangements, and on livelihood care systems. Patricia McFadden has identified control over property and the own body as cornerstones in the struggle for women’s agency for full and active citizenship in southern Africa. On basis of experiences from a first fieldwork in Zambia, which was conducted in May this year, the paper will discuss how concepts such as generational contracts, property control, and livelihood strategies may be used in a gender analysis.