



Ageing in Europe

NEWSLETTER OF THE ESA RESEARCH NETWORK ON AGEING IN EUROPE (RN01)
JULY 2018, ISSUE 23

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the July 2018 edition of our newsletter. We are delighted to include a summary from Josephine Dolan of her recently published book on contemporary cinema and old age. We also welcome a PhD overview provided by Gustavo Sugahara at the Oslo Metropolitan University, which offers insights into his work on urban ageing. Also featured in the newsletter is a look at a research project Distance Caregiving "DiCa" that is evaluating care in Germany and Switzerland.

The next midterm conference for the Network 'Agency, Citizenship and the Dynamics of Power' is taking place in Brno, Czech Republic from 5th to 7th September. An update on the arrangements features on page 12.

If you would like any further details on the Network's activities please don't hesitate to contact us.

Edward Tolhurst

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Message from the Chair of the Network:

Prof. Dr. Dirk Hofäcker

Dear Readers,

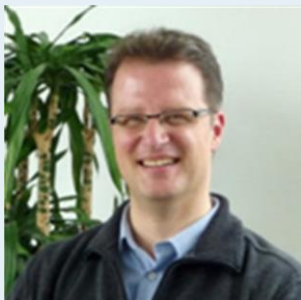
We are very happy to present you the 23rd Newsletter of the ESA Research Network on Ageing in Europe. It covers numerous research updates from our members that nicely reflect the breadth of perspectives in our Network. Contributions address various different topics related to ageing - from the images and pictures of age and ageing, the living and housing conditions of older people, to issues of care and caregiving.

The research portrayed also reflects the wide array of methodological approaches that we use: from analyzing secondary quantitative data to qualitative interviews and the analysis of consumer culture. Finally, we are also happy that this issue combines contributions from researchers in different stages of their "academic life course", ranging from early-career researchers to experienced scholars.

It is one of the great strengths of our Network that this diversity of members and perspectives is understood not as a barrier or obstacle, but rather as a stimulus and starting point for joint work on researching ageing. We will continue this tradition of cross-cutting research on ageing also at our upcoming mid-term conference this fall. The newsletter contains further details on this as well.

Wishing you a good summer and a good reading,

Dirk Hofäcker

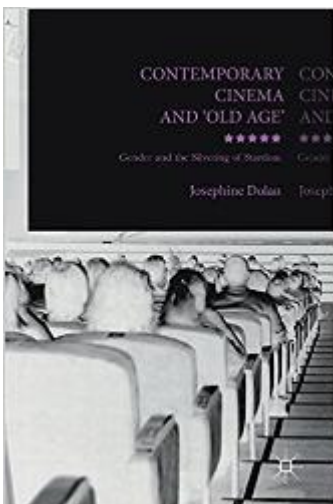


BOOK REVIEW

In this regular newsletter feature, we ask an author to provide a summary of their own book.

This month we are delighted to include a review from Dr Josephine Dolan, Visiting Reader at The University of Gloucestershire, UK. She offers valuable insights into her recently published book, *Contemporary Cinema and 'Old Age': Gender and the silvering of stardom* (Palgrave MacMillan).

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Building on a burgeoning body of scholarship variously concerned with cinematic representations of 'old age', my book, *Contemporary Cinema and 'Old Age': Gender and the silvering of stardom*, recognises the impact of the ageing demographic on the composition of cinema audiences as much as the proliferation of highly profitable and critically acclaimed films that tell stories about 'old age' and are populated by stars and actors well past the expected age for retirement. Once audiences and stars are placed in the frame any idea that film is a discrete medium collapses and the economic and ideological flows between cinema and broader consumer culture are highlighted. *Contemporary cinema and 'old age'* thus takes its bearings from the dual meanings of 'silvering' - profits and embodied signs of ageing. With gender placed at the forefront, my analysis combines several feminist approaches such as placing my ageing self in the research process (the personal *is* political), adopting anti-essentialist accounts of gender and 'old age' while also mobilising strategic essentialist research practices that enable arguments to proceed as if femininity, masculinity and 'old age' are coherent and knowable products of biology and/or chronology, as well as unpacking the operations of power through which such categories are defined and regulated.

Contemporary cinema and 'old age' illuminates the importance of a growing silver audience, and related box-office profits, to the survival of auditorium exhibition of films in the context of a declining youth sector that increasingly watches films via streaming technologies. While this trend in audience demographics is relatively gender neutral, the pre-production market research that supports the green-lighting of budgets for new films is not. Segmented by gender and age, with 'older' commencing at 25, the tastes of young male audiences and their preference for action genres are privileged, even reviving the careers of Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone (et al.) as hard-bodied action heroes for whom 'old age' is an advantage, rather than a barrier. Meanwhile, the tastes of older women are disregarded except in niche, low-budget productions, such as *Mamma Mia! The Movie* and *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, that nonetheless earned huge profits for the Hollywood conglomerate. Despite the disparity in the chronological ages of the female stars of these films, they are equally categorised as 'old' within a taxonomy of ageing that deems actresses over forty to be 'past it', even as the careers of male counterparts are typically shored up by pairings with incrementally younger female leads. From here, *Mamma Mia! The Movie* and *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* are used

as case studies that illuminate highly profitable links between cinema, 'old age' and broader consumer culture via spin-off sales from soundtrack CDs, copy to own DVDs, streaming technologies and tourist industry appropriation of film locations. My analysis of on-line marketing for DVDs points to the regulation of older women's tastes akin to those discourses of chronological decorum associated with clothing, and the extent to which Greece's *Mamma Mia* wedding industry and India's *Marigold Hotel* adventure tourism subsumes the films' 'older' provenance into a disturbingly white and heteronormative youth market.



Analysis of cinema's role in broader consumer culture is further developed via the economy of celebrity, beginning with the marketing of 'late style' derived from film costume associated with the ageing stars Diane Keaton (*Annie Hall*), Dame Judi Dench (*The Marigold Hotel* films) and Clint Eastwood (*Dirty Harry*). Unsurprisingly, across the gamut of on-line advertorials, fashion and gossip blogs, Keaton and Dench are positioned as exemplars of graceful ageing and chronological decorum, lauded for negotiating the twin perils of frumpy or mutton dressed as lamb in their avoidance of shine, fabrics and faces, and the concealment of flesh. Even as Keaton and Dench are offered up as accessible role models for older women's late-style, the money, labour and expertise that underpins the achievement of their appearances is effaced, and their ostensible inclusivity actually functions

to exclude the majority of older women who are often disadvantaged in pension provision. While Eastwood's late-style can similarly be located within the regulation of masculinity, this is not age related. Whether wearing an Italian cut suit or workaday denim, Eastwood exemplifies the lack of ornamentation connoting 'proper' masculinity to the exclusion of youth sub-cultures, manual workers and non-whites, while simultaneously constituting 'growing older' as an enhancement of hegemonic masculinity.

A similar formation of non-ageing, mature masculinity emerges when analysis shifts to explicit and lucrative star endorsements for profitable products as diverse as Nespresso, Synergy Vodka, Brain Age games, and a wide spectrum of beauty and grooming products. Again and again, ageing masculinity is located within the terms of veteran or vintage where 'old age' adds value, like a car or a fine wine, whereas ageing femininity is relentlessly couched in terms of decline and degradation, with 'old age' pathologised as a symptom to be concealed or overcome through regimes of body management and the rejuvenatory products of consumer culture.

With a shift from the economy of celebrity to 'narratives', I elucidate how 'old age' is inserted into well-worn and already gendered genre formats, such as action, heist, and romantic comedy, playing between generic and cultural verisimilitude, that is faithful to conventions of genre as much as representing the off-screen social world. While this goes some way to explaining the limited and stereotypical range of representations of 'old age' we see on our screens, it is not an excuse. Consequently, generic verisimilitude and gender stereotyping often works to the advantage of ageing masculinity when long-established

representational privileges are simply reiterated. And while we might celebrate the increased visibility of older female stars, especially at award ceremonies, and the emergence of sexually active older female characters across the genre spectrum, both trends need to be tempered by knowledge of the rejuvenatory regimes surrounding older actresses and the recuperation of passive femininity via the dictates of romantic scenarios, even in action movies such as *RED*. Just as troubling is the whiteness of contemporary cinema and its relentless heteronormativity. So too storylines that chime with the crisis of ageing discourses, such as the neo-colonialist underpinnings of *The Marigold Hotel* films, or the normalised embodiment of deferred retirement by stars and characters who not only work beyond established retirement ages but also efface any obstacles and objections to extended working lives.

Moving focus from cinema's on-screen representations of the third age and silvered stardom's embodiment of successful ageing, the final section of the book is concerned with cinema's profoundly gendered depictions of fourth age abjection. For masculinity, abjection hinges on erectile dysfunction in comedic Viagra scenarios with younger women. But any anxieties raised by the failure of potent masculinity for individual characters, star images or viewers are rapidly defused by restorative, age appropriate couplings that render women the sexual carers to vulnerable masculinity. Meanwhile, Hollywood's cycle of dementia films consistently feature female protagonists, effectively feminising the condition, while standardised costumes and performances reduce characters living with dementia to abjected incoherence. This is especially pernicious in biopics when public memory of women famed for astute intellect, such as Iris Murdoch in *Iris* and

Margaret Thatcher in *The Iron Lady*, is shaped in terms of their final confusions and degradation. Examples of masculinised dementia are rare, typified by the likes of *Remember* and *Mr. Holmes*, in which male figures remain coherent, able to solve mysteries and in full control of dress and appearance, ensuring that abjection is constituted as feminine. The figure of degraded and degrading ageing femininity also figures in fantasy movies like *Stardust* and *Snow White and the Huntsman* by way of the witch-queen, for which there is no male counterpart. Here CGI technologies enable rapid transitions between the witch-queen's magically restored youthful beauty and the reality of her underlying peeling, decaying 'old age'. The witch-queen thus articulates both the underlying ideals of contemporary rejuvenatory regimes, and anxieties concerning a potential collapse that not only reminds of universal mortality but whose liminal abjections threaten the gender binary.

Thus overall, even as the 'silvering' of stardom can be located within the profit making mechanisms that flow between contemporary cinema and consumer culture, it simultaneously mobilises gendered depictions and embodiments of 'old age' that normalise deferred retirement and reiterate heteronormative discourses, even as white privilege is reasserted in the context of neo-colonial claims to care for an ageing population from third world sources. For masculinity, 'old age' is a valuable extension accruing the patina of veteran and/or vintage, whereas for femininity, 'old age' constitutes a pathologised condition, either in want of concealment within the rejuvenatory regimes of consumer culture, or as the bearer of abjection and its surrounding anxieties about mortality and the potential collapse of binary thought.

For another of our regular features, a **PhD Highlight** has kindly been provided by **Gustavo Sugahara** from **Oslo Metropolitan University**. Below, Gustavo provides us with an overview of his current study on urban ageing.



Urban Population Ageing and Its Impact on Social Policy - Lessons from Oslo

The Urban Milieu: The most important characteristics affecting contemporary ageing and old-age

My PhD project falls into the broad field of urban ageing. The main impetus to study ageing in this particular context is the fact that ageing in cities is the most dominant, and at the same time unprecedented, characteristic of the contemporary ageing process. For the first time in human history, the majority of the world population is growing old in cities^(1,2).

Ageing and urbanization bring major consequences and implications for all facets of human life. We see changes not only in terms of population structure and location, but also in living arrangements, family composition and family relations^(3,4); economic dynamics in terms of growth, savings, investment and consumption, labour markets, pensions, taxation and intergenerational transfers^(5,6,6);

health and health care; housing and migration; voting patterns and representation; etc.

Population ageing affects social and care policy in urban areas differently. Partly this is simply due to broader population dynamics, such as the concentration of people in metropolitan areas. Partly it is because the kinship ties and spousal situation in cities differ, in terms of both extent and proximity.

Thus far, however, little discussion exists about the diversity and particularities of the urban ageing phenomena, how it affects and is affected by public policies, and implications for the construction of old age.

This PhD critically examines some of the particular characteristics of age in cities in the light of a concrete case study, the city of Oslo, asking: Are there particular characteristics of the ageing process in Oslo that would require specific social policy response?

Mixing methods: From essential demographic data to open-ended interviews. How old is older in Oslo?

This project is organized in three papers. I started by unpacking an apparently simple question: Is Oslo getting older?⁽⁷⁾

This question was the starting point to highlight the importance of demographic information to city planning. I use the city of Oslo as an example of the varieties of approaches that can be used to assess ageing on a specific population.

Contrary to the general assumption that Oslo will face an “elderly boom”, the study shows that the city’s ageing process today is less intense than that observed in the past. I also found a significant variation in terms of demographic dynamics and composition within Oslo’s different districts (see Figure 1 – *on following page*).

We are now investigating if there are significant differences in terms of intergenerational relationships of older persons living in cities. Departing from the hypothesis that the lives of older persons are more affected by children, grandchildren or siblings living close by than if they have a more distant residence, the second paper of this PhD analyses different aspects of the set of family and kinship ties of different delimitations of the group ‘older

persons’. Using a registry-based dataset containing all individuals residing in Norway with information on residential location and a unique parent-child identifier we are able to identify the set of family links of individuals 70-80 and over 80 years of age.

Table 1 Share of 80+ according to kinship availability

	Oslo		Akershus	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Horizontal Link				
Widow(er)	4.7	23.8	3.8	20.1
Divorced	6.4	16	4.1	6.9
No spouse	21.5	43.2	12	30.3
Spouse 8 years older	0.9	11.2	0.6	10.6
Vertical Links				
No children	16.5	21.2	9	11
Same region	23	27.8	15.8	17.2
Same municipality	35.9	39.6	38.8	36.2
None or one grandchildren aged 15+ in the same region	49	48.3	42.2	38.2

Source: Authors’ own calculations (based on Norwegian registry data)

Our preliminary results are quite revealing. Table 1 is a small sample of the interesting contrast observed in Oslo even when compared to the largest neighboring municipality, Akershus. Apparently, ageing in metropolitan areas like Oslo represents a significant reduction in kinship “availability” – particularly for women.

The third article looks at the city’s response to the demographic change. I confront the academic discussion on Age-Friendly Cities⁽⁸⁻¹⁰⁾ with the analyses of official documentation and opened-ended interviews with “older persons’ advocates” in Oslo and various municipal departments.

Preliminary analyses suggest that the frail stereotype of old age is predominant, and the conceptual debate of what would be an “Age-Friendly Oslo” is virtually non-existent. However, there are other forces pushing the agenda of a more pluralistic perspective and “age-friendly approach” with regard to the demographic change in Oslo.

Designing better cities and social policies

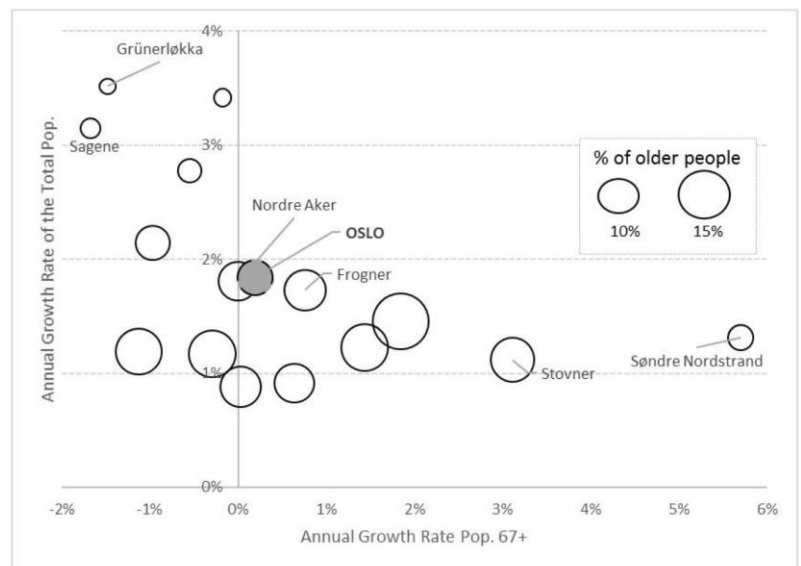
This project can only highlight a few aspects of the complexity of demographic ageing: (i) the impact of different age cut-offs; (ii) the historical perspective; (iii) the striking disparities when observing different scales; and (iv) the differences in terms of sex.

Both inter- and intra-variations in terms of demographic trends and family links proved to be relevant for Oslo.

Due to the fact that urbanization is a global trend, it is very likely that these variations will also be relevant for other countries, in particular for the developing world where the increase of the older proportion of the population is growing faster and generally in a more unequal setting.

I hope the evidence I have presented can support better policies, and at the same time, work as a bridge between disciplines. City planners and urbanists must pay a special attention when using demographic data to assess ageing. Social policy design should also benefit from regional analysis, in particular in big cities where we are all navigating uncharted waters.

Figure 1: Annual Growth Rate of Older and Total Population in Oslo and Oslo's Districts 2001-16



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**IN EACH
NEWSLETTER WE
PROVIDE AN
OVERVIEW OF
EXCITING AGEING
RESEARCH TAKING
PLACE IN EUROPE:**

**THIS EDITION
PRESENTS A BI-
NATIONAL PROJECT
*DISTANCE
CAREGIVING "DiCa"*
(2016-2019) THAT
IS EVALUATING
DISTANCE CARE IN
SWITZERLAND AND
GERMANY**



In the course of demographic dynamics, increasing mobility on the labour market and changing family structures, it is becoming increasingly difficult to care for a distant family member far away. In this context, distance caregiving is still an unexplored field. The bi-national project **Distance Caregiving "DiCa" (2016-2019)** with an interdisciplinary German (Protestant University of Applied Sciences Ludwigsburg) and Swiss (Careum Research Zurich) research team aims to investigate different dimensions and actors in distance care: caregivers, employers and health services. The project uses the example of two neighbouring countries with high labour mobility across national borders.

The aim of this study is to identify strategies and innovative technologies that will help both employed and unemployed caregivers to meet this particular challenge and burden. The project also aims to raise awareness among employers and health services so that they are able to provide adequate assistance and communication.

Different methods are used for this: Literature review, Secondary Data Analysis (e.g., The German Socio-Economic Panel, German Ageing Survey, SHARE) as well as qualitative interviews. Distance Caregivers have been interviewed about their individual and specific challenges as a result of gainful employment. In order to take the employers'

perspective into account, qualitative expert interviews have been conducted with key persons from the partner companies. Moreover, qualitative expert interviews are conducted with social and nursing actors (organizations, institutions, authorities, social insurance companies, professional associations in the field of social affairs, health and migration).

Initial results from literature research and interviews with distance caregivers show that remote care involves many challenges, such as loss of control, travel costs, time expenditure, organization and management of a support network or the balance between work and care. The expert interviews also show that distance caregiving is not yet a topic of particular interest for companies and health facilities in Germany. Employees tend to avoid talking about care at the workplace; therefore, immediate supervisors need to be sensitive and empathetic. It means that employers need to extend their portfolio to better balance the demands of carers and family life and care needs for long-distance-caregivers.

Please find more information on our website: <https://www.distance-caregiving.org>





4TH ESA RN01 Midterm Conference
"AGEING IN EUROPE: AGENCY, CITIZENSHIP AND THE DYNAMICS OF POWER"
MASARYK UNIVERSITY, BRNO, 5 - 7 SEPTEMBER 2018

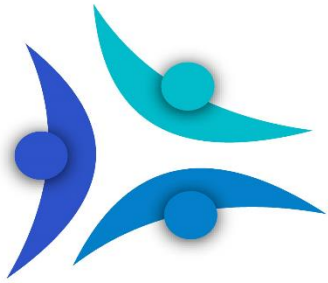
We are very excited that the 4th ESA Midterm Conference of the Research Network is forthcoming in September. The conference is taking place in Brno, Czech Republic. Academics and researchers from across Europe will be attending – and we hope to see you there!

An exciting programme has been put together with session topics covering, among other things: ageing and identity; agency, creativity and work in older age; dementia in the context of institutional care; family relations and informal care; equality and care accessibility; demographic trends; and ageing minorities in ageing societies.

There will also be some time for social activities: on Thursday afternoon guided tours will take place in Villa Tugendhat and Villa Stiassni, in the city centre, before the conference dinner in the evening.

We are also delighted that our keynote speakers are all confirmed. Paul Higgs from University College London, UK will be delivering a talk on 'Ageism, ideology and the social imaginary of the fourth age'; Jolanta Perek-Białas from Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland will be presenting 'Inequalities in active ageing – is it already exclusion or discrimination?'; Sandra Torres from Uppsala University, Sweden will be addressing 'Scholarship on ethnicity, race and old age: studying inequalities in an injustice-oblivious way'; while Thomas Scharf from Newcastle University, UK will be presenting 'Unequal ageing: challenges for research and policy'. For further details on the conference, please follow this link: <http://esaageing-conf.fss.muni.cz/>





Ageing in Europe

We are an association of researchers who are interested in ageing. We aim to facilitate contacts and collaboration among these researchers, and to provide them with up-to-date information. To reach these goals, we organize conferences and workshops, produce a newsletter, and maintain an email list. Because we are part of the European Sociological Association (ESA), many of our members work in sociology. However, we also have members who work in, for example, social policy or psychology.



Visit our homepage, where you can find information on all of our activities.

<http://www.ageing-in-europe.net/>



If you have any questions ... do not hesitate to contact us.

[info @ ageing-in-europe.net](mailto:info@ageing-in-europe.net)



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