Dear Readers,

Welcome to the February 2018 edition of our newsletter. We are delighted to include a summary from Lars Christer Hydén of his recently published book, as well as a PhD overview from Malene Bødker at the University of Copenhagen. Also featured is a report on a PhD workshop that took place in Helsinki last May, and a look at research project MOMENT that is addressing senior entrepreneurship in Germany and Poland.

The next midterm conference for the Network is taking place in Brno, Czech Republic from 5th to 7th September 2018. The Call for Papers is now open. Please find details on page 14 below (and on the conference website).

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

Edward Tolhurst
Message from the Chair of the Network:
Prof. Dr. Dirk Hofäcker

Dear Readers,

First of all, let me take the opportunity to wish you a good and happy new year 2018! We are very happy to present to you the first newsletter of the Research Network on Ageing in Europe after the 13th ESA conference in Athens last year. We were very happy to welcome a lot of known but also numerous new faces at our various thematically focused sessions at this event.

Furthermore, a new board was elected in Athens - you can find an overview at the end of this newsletter. New members of the board are Amílcar Manuel Reis Moreira (University of Lisbon, Portugal), Anna Urbaniak (Cracow University of Economics, Poland) and Kevin Gormley (Queens University of Belfast, Northern Ireland). I would like to take the opportunity to thank Bernhard Weicht, the previous chair of our network from 2015 to 2017, for his dedicated and highly fruitful work throughout this time. We are equally grateful to Magnus Nilsson who retired from the board after various years of active participation. At the same time, in Athens we also marked the death of Chris Pliakos, previous board member, who sadly died in May last year. He greatly contributed to our network, including the editing of our newsletter, and we are deeply appreciative of both his professional and personal engagement in our network. Please find a tribute to Chris and his contribution to the network on page 16.

Today’s newsletter, on the one hand, looks back at previous activities of the network in 2017, namely the PhD workshop on “Life-course influences on retirement” at the University of Helsinki, which provided early-career researchers in ageing the opportunity to present their work in front of a knowledgeable audience. A special feature of the meeting was a training in stakeholder engagement, a key issue if we as researchers want to make our—often highly politically relevant—results known to a broader public audience. We very much appreciate the work by Kathrin Komp and her local team in Helsinki who made this meeting a great success. You can find more details on page 9 of this newsletter.

At the same time, we are looking ahead to the next major event of our network, the forthcoming Mid-Term conference, organised by Lucie Galčanová at the University of Brno, Czech Republic. It will take place from September 5-7 and will focus on the issue of “Agency, Citizenship and the Dynamics of Power”. You can find the call for papers on page 14, and I would like to encourage you to apply for it. The deadline for the submission of abstracts will be February 28, 2018.

Beyond this, the newsletter contains a number of interesting further contributions which Edward Tolhurst, who kindly has taken over principal responsibility for the newsletter, has already outlined in the editorial.

Enjoy your reading!

Dirk Hofäcker
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 Prof. Lars-Christer Hydén, Linköping University.

He offers valuable insights into his recently published book that addresses storytelling and the experience of dementia.

For many years I have been engaged in research about how people who have a dementia diagnosis live their lives. As more people live longer the number of persons with a dementia diagnosis will increase. Many of these persons will live a long time with a diagnosis in their homes and only spend time at a care unit during the final stage of the disease. We need to know more about the ways persons with dementia adapt to and learn to live with the disease in their everyday life so it is possible to sustain both relations and identities.

One of the most important everyday venues for sharing experiences, negotiating identity and spending time together, is storytelling. When one family member or spouse gradually becomes more and more challenged in telling stories, and takes part in storytelling events due to Alzheimer’s disease, this is potentially a threat both to the experiences of belonging together and to the participants’ individual identities. Thus, learning about how persons with dementia together with their family members can participate in storytelling is important because it means that we can learn something about how persons with dementia can sustain their personhood and identity.

In the book, I review previous research on dementia and storytelling and introduce some of the theoretical concepts as well as empirical findings that I think can help us understand how
people with dementia can tell stories together with others. The book stresses the possibilities that are inherent in collaborative storytelling for sustaining both relations and identities. In particular, when one family member or spouse gradually loses the ability both to tell stories and to remember shared events and stories due to dementia, this is often experienced as very distressing by other family members. Most spouses and family members try to remediate the communicative problems caused by the progressing dementia by taking over some of the functions lost by the person with dementia through collaborative compensatory adaption. As the person with dementia progressively loses some of the cognitive and linguistic abilities that are important in collaborative storytelling, the healthy spouse will have to take on a greater responsibility for the storytelling activity. It is suggested that one way to do this is through the creation of “scaffolds”. These scaffolds can consist of suggestions, hypotheses, repetitions, etc. that both parties can use in order to negotiate shared meaning and hence be able to continue their joint storytelling – what is called narrative scaffolding.

The book also discusses how professionals and healthy relatives can learn to listen and make meaning in stories that otherwise might appear to be meaningless. Listening to and telling stories together with people living with a dementia diagnosis will help to re-imagine dementia: away from a notion of persons with dementia being “empty vessels” to seeing them as collaborative meaning-makers.

Prof. Lars Christer Hydén
Linköping University

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Negotiating needs, negotiating old age – a practice study of transitions in eldercare as played out in the introduction of reablement in Denmark

Introduction

In the face of population ageing, welfare states worldwide are currently searching for ways to accommodate the rising need for homecare services in the coming years. Reablement – defined as short-duration, home-based, multi-disciplinary training programmes aimed at increasing older people’s independence – is one policy solution implemented in several countries. Despite widespread optimism, however, the most recent reviews conclude that the evidence for the ability of reablement to reduce dependency in old age is insufficient (Cochrane et al. 2016; Whitehead et al. 2015). Practice studies demonstrate that professionals face significant challenges in engaging older people in reablement (Meldgaard Hansen 2016; Rabiee and Glendinning 2011) and that older people and relatives often feel neglected in the process (Wilde and Glendinning 2012).

In order to uncover the reasons for the discrepancies between policy ambitions and the challenges experienced in practice, this PhD explores the practical workings of reablement in a Danish municipality. In Denmark, municipal homecare providers have since 2015 been obliged by law to offer reablement programmes to homecare applicants for whom reablement is thought to improve the functional capacity and, hence, reduce the need for homecare.

In my research, I subscribe to a performative and relational understanding of reablement, which involves studying how reablement emerges as a practice through the interactions between heterogeneous actors – humans, technologies, physical aids, spaces – since it is through these interactions that reablement gains its characteristics, effects and broader societal implications (Law and Hassard 1999; Mol et al. 2010).
Aims
In order to capture the complexity of reablement, this PhD explores how reablement unfolds as a practice from the perspective of each of the following actor groups: eldercare professionals, older people and relatives. Accordingly, the research questions pursued are:

1) Which professional logics do eldercare professionals draw on when putting the notion of ‘potential’ into practice?
2) Which assumptions about the lives of older people are embedded in reablement and how do they correspond with the lived realities of the older people?
3) Which role do relatives take in the care of older people and how is this role redefined in the context of reablement?

Methods
The empirical material for this study was produced through ethnographic fieldwork. Approximately 150 hours of participant observations were conducted by shadowing municipal eldercare professionals involved in reablement (assessors, occupational therapists, nurses and homecare assistants) and comprised all of the phases of a reablement programme from the initial request for homecare and the assessment of the person’s qualifications for receiving reablement, and, if assessed to qualify, through the 8-week reablement programme. Furthermore, a total of 20 interviews were conducted with professionals, older people and relatives. The analysis of the empirical material was guided by situational analysis (Clarke 2005) and abductive analysis (Tavory and Timmermans 2014).

(Preliminary) Findings
Research question 1: Professionals’ perspective

With reablement, the notion of potential has become the central principle by which professionals are to allocate and provide homecare: those with potential for improving their functional capacity are to receive reablement, whereas the others are to receive traditional homecare. I identify two divergent logics of care (Mol 2008), which professionals draw on in their practical endeavours to identify, operationalise and realise older people’s potentials in practice. One is the logic of reablement, encapsulating ideals of active ageing and lifelong development. The other is the logic of retirement, according to which people at the last stage of life should be allowed to retreat and spend their remaining time on enjoyable activities. I demonstrate that professionals carefully balance these logics in order to live up
to policy obligations as well as professional moral standards of good care. There is, however, a tendency for them to lean more towards the logic of retirement the closer to the practical task of realising older people’s potentials they work, due to the high degree of physical, mental and/or cognitive decline characterising homecare applicants. Professionals therefore often allowed reablement programmes to focus on leisure activities instead of household tasks, downscaled goals during the course of the programme or granted people traditional care without them having to go through reablement first. As a result, only very little was achieved in terms of reducing the need for homecare, which I argue reflects that that idea of large amounts of unutilised potential among homecare applicants is a myth (Bødker, forthcoming).

Research question 2: Older people’s perspective

In order to explore the assumptions embedded in reablement and how they relate to the lives of the older people, I in this paper deconstruct reablement into three parts. ‘Re’ – the idea that there in the near past exists a state of higher functional capacity, possible and desirable for the older person to return to – is problematic because most older people do not request homecare as soon as they experience difficulties, but often manage independently for months or even years using creative everyday tactics. Once the person applies for homecare and is offered reablement, it is therefore often too late. ‘Able’ – the idea that reablement indeed makes people more able – is problematic because many older people find it disabling to receive homecare, regardless of it being reablement or traditional care, because it disrupts their self-image of being able and independent. ‘Ment’ – a suffix used to signify an outcome – is problematic because reablement does not produce enabled individuals, but enabling care networks (Law and Hassard 1999). In these networks, care assistants are crucial, since they provide motivation as well as practical support. The idea of removing the care assistants from the context after 8 weeks is therefore highly problematic. The concept of reablement therefore rests on several assumptions, which are inconsistent with the lives of older people.

Research question 3: Relatives’ perspective

This paper, which is yet to be produced, will point to some of the paradoxes that appear for people caring for older relatives. This happens when the type of care often provided by relatives, i.e. ‘help’, comes to be seen as damaging in the context of reablement, which instead promotes ‘help to self-help’.
References


Wilde, A. and Glendinning, C. 2012. ‘If they’re helping me then how can I be independent?’ The perceptions and experience of users of home-care re-ablement services. Health and Social Care in the Community, 20, 6, 583–90.

Malene Bødker

PhD Student, University of Copenhagen

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One of the consequences of population ageing is an increasing number of pensioners. In response to this change, policymakers may need to introduce reforms aimed at delaying retirement. Recent research has shown that life-course influences are significant for retirement. Life-courses describe everything that happens in our lives from the cradle to the grave. These life-courses contain causal influences that can last for years or even decades. For example, having a serious accident may force people to take sick leave, to restructure their work activities afterwards, and even to retire early on disability benefits.

To explore life-course influences on the different aspects of retirement, the University of Helsinki in cooperation with the Finnish Centre for Pensions, the ESA Research Network on Ageing in Europe, the European Social Policy Analysis Network and the Social Policy Association in Finland organised a workshop titled “Life-course influences on retirement: Perspectives from research and stakeholders”. The event was held on 17-19 May 2017 in Helsinki, Finland, and it brought together 26 PhD students from across Europe. Prof. Jorma Sipilä (University of Tampere) opened the workshop with a keynote speech reflecting on the workshop theme from a Finnish perspective. This was followed by the PhD students’ presentations of their own research. Feedback for these presentations was given by senior researchers, who included Dr. Noora Järnefelt, Dr. Kati Kuitto and...
Dr. Jyri Liukku from the Finnish Centre for Pensions, Dr. Karri Silventoinen (University of Helsinki), Prof. Dirk Hofäcker (University of Duisburg-Essen), Prof. Jonas Radl (University of Carlos III de Madrid) and Prof. Traute Mayer (University of Southampton). The PhD students also received stakeholder engagement training and participated in a stakeholder dialogue during a conference held on the last day of the workshop at the Finnish Centre for Pensions.

Based on the feedback received from the PhD students, the workshop was found as useful for developing their theses, using research methods more effectively and exploring further research topics. The participants also saw the three-day event as a convenient time for both meeting peers from different backgrounds and for practicing stakeholder engagement. Above all, the event was also appreciated for its warm atmosphere and the meaningful networking it provided. This laid a solid foundation for a new European community of upcoming researchers engaged in a research field which will be increasingly relevant for years to come.

The organizational team is very grateful to all the students and senior researchers who took part in the event, as well as to the Finnish Work Environment Fund and the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies, who financially supported the event.

The event was financially supported by:
IN EACH NEWSLETTER WE PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW OF EXCITING AGEING RESEARCH TAKING PLACE IN EUROPE: THIS EDITION PRESENTS...

“The Making of a Mature Entrepreneur: life course perspective on the entrepreneurship in older age in Germany and Poland”

Project description
Mature entrepreneurship is gaining momentum. In both numerical as well as in socio-political and economic terms. This research intends to examine the process of becoming an entrepreneur in later life with relation to previous career paths in order to establish how life course experiences determine the shift to self-employment.

The expression “mature entrepreneur” used in the proposal’s title possesses a twofold meaning. Mature in the sense of chronological age (such as 45/50+), and mature in terms of life and work experience, as well as social, human and (often) economic capital. This research explores a basic question about how individual and institutional conditioning impacts on the process of making of mature entrepreneurs. The thesis proposed here is that the entrepreneurial motivations and activities of older adults are an outcome of a dynamic and reciprocal relationship between their personal and occupational life paths on the one hand, and societal and structural feedback received from institutional (formal and informal) actors on the other hand.

The project suggests a dynamic and temporal approach to studying this process. It aims to incorporate into the research design, both an analysis of past transitions and trajectories, as well as individuals’ future plans and projections. For theoretical reasons therefore, this project adopts a life course analysis as the most appropriate tool to tackle this question due to the following reasons. Firstly, what marks out mature entrepreneurs from young ones is their diverse life experience and the accumulation of social, human and often also economic capital, which are of critical importance for setting up a business in older age. Secondly, the life course perspective allows a study of the shifting patterns of modern life courses (such as de-standardization or de-institutionalization), as well as the nexus between the occupational and private biographies of individual actors. Moreover, the project looks also at the role of experts (from state, NGOs and private sectors) as those actors who influence not only the policy making in the
area of mature entrepreneurship, but also the construction of images and narratives about them.

The research methodology adopted in the project is an integrative qualitative approach, where in-depth interviews with older entrepreneurs and experts are carried out in two countries – Germany (West and East) and Poland. They represent diverse approaches to mature entrepreneurship and life courses due to differences in welfare regimes that allows for cross- and intra-country comparisons.

The research will contribute in an innovative way to the study of mature entrepreneurship in ageing societies in the context of contemporary academic and political debates about the alternative models of economic activity of older adults. Moreover, the project aims to provide empirical evidence for studying the variations in modern life courses and their institutional embeddedness.

Funding: German Scientific Foundation (DFG, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft)
Duration: January 2017 to December 2019

Project Leader:
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For further details please see the project Website: www.moment.oei.fu-berlin.de
Research Network on Ageing in Europe (RN01) - Board, 2018-2019

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Justyna Stypinska, Freie University Berlin, Germany
Anna Urbaniak, Cracow University of Economics, Cracow, Poland

Amílcar, Marja, Dirk, Justyna, Ed and Jenni at the ESA Conference in Athens
Dear Colleagues,

We kindly invite you to participate in the 4th Mid-Term Conference; *Ageing in Europe: Agency, Citizenship and the Dynamics of Power*, of the European Sociological Association Research Network on Ageing in Europe (ESA RN01) that will take place at Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic, from Wednesday to Friday, 5 – 7 September 2018. The organizers welcome individual and team contributions from the sociology of ageing, social gerontology, and related academic fields, as well as submissions for thematic session proposals.

The major conference theme brings together topics that have traditionally stood at the core of sociological thinking, but that have not been necessarily at the heart of gerontological theory and research. Many authors now point to the contemporary struggles over the representation of older age within and beyond the realm of the social sciences. Later life and older people are represented on one hand as a quiescent minority bearing multiple disadvantages within a social status of limited agency and increasing dependency, experiencing a loss of autonomy and the need to redefined one’s role in the community and society. On the other hand, older people are also seen as a source of new political, economic, and cultural ‘grey’ power, as an influential actor in contemporary societies, shaping the contours of new policies and welfare regimes. These debates reflect the diversity of the experiences of ageing selves and the pluralities of life courses as well as of the institutional, political, and social changes with which the personal and individual experience is inseparably interlinked. These struggles lead also to the reformulation of the concepts of agency, autonomy, or power themselves and to the calling for their even more reflexive application in academic accounts of the human experience in later life.

We would like to particularly invite papers and sessions that will discuss ageing-related issues within (but not limited to) the following topics:
- Changing welfare and political regimes under which old age is given shape
- Contemporary theories of power and citizenship in later life
  - (In)dependency, interdependency, and personhood in older age
  - Homes, communities and power in the context of migration
  - Structural changes and existential challenges in later life
  - Older persons as (political) actors in contemporary societies
  - Research methodologies and power relationships within research (in the field)
- Roles of various stakeholders in ageing related agendas and policies as well as in influencing individual ageing conditions

**MASARYK UNIVERSITY**

**SEPTEMBER 5 – 7, 2018**

**Brno, Czech Republic**
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
In Memoriam: Christos Pliakos

It is with great sadness that we inform you that our board member Christos Pliakos passed away in early May last year after he suffered a fatal stroke.

What Chris did for the board was tremendous. He was on the board for just two years, but during these years, he made a new design and concept of the newsletter for our network. It has been a huge success and has received very positive feedback. Chris furthermore helped to keep the webpage running and up to date and introduced our Twitter account.

Chris Phillipson, Professor of Sociology and Social Gerontology of the University of Manchester wrote the following about him:

“"I was deeply saddened to learn of the death of Christos Pliakos, a gifted and dedicated researcher in the field of ageing. Christos was undertaking important comparative research on the theme of ageing in place in Greece and the UK, pursuing a number of innovative methodologies in his work for a doctorate at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN). I met Christos on many occasions in Manchester, where he was a regular attender of seminars organized by MICRA. He had a wide range of enthusiasms and was always keen to learn about new thinking and theories in gerontology. I especially admired his exceptional commitment to early career researchers, both at UCLAN and in his work for the Research Network on Ageing in Europe. Christos was as well a keen writer of poetry: truly someone with a wide range of talents and abilities. He was at the beginning of a great journey in gerontology. I am certainly very grateful to have met Christos; he will be greatly missed by myself and many others."

Who Chris was and what he meant to us is hard to summarize in just a few words. We remember him as incredibly friendly, warmhearted, supportive, full of fun and creative ideas. He was a successful amateur photographer, a poet, and working on a book ‘My Prestonian Tales’ in which he combined his own poems with his own photographs. There was no email without a joke, and I remember one in which he bragged about how exited, proud, and delighted he was to work with us in the board and being a member of this incredible think-tank, but ended with asking apologies for his Greek extrovert behavior. He was very much looking forward to showing us his hometown during the conference in Athens, but sadly this was not to be.

We miss him terribly.

We applaud him to express our gratitude for all the work he did for the board and the network.

Oslo, February 2018
Marja Aartsen