

## WS 40

### Later-life negotiations: experiencing older age within and across borders

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**Megha Amrith** (MPI Göttingen)

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In recent years, there has been growing interest in anthropology to further understand the inter-connections of two key phenomena of the twenty-first century: ageing populations and global migration. Relevant contributions include the recognition that older populations are not merely passive, but are also increasingly active players within their own personal and familial migration projects. Taking an agency-led approach, but also attentive to the vulnerability that some older populations face, we wish to unpack the social, cultural, political, and economic contexts in which social negotiations in later-life take place. We are particularly intrigued by the negotiable, but also non-negotiable dimensions of ageing and later-life, and its various scales of action – from the ageing body to the geographical and cultural nuances of growing older, as well as the realities of hardened state borders.

In this workshop, we welcome papers exploring the active embeddedness of older populations in transnational networks, how they engage with new forms of sociality, activism and politics, how they embody, negotiate, and experience the ageing process, and older people's integral role in the various expressions of familial care practices. We invite papers from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, with diverse geographical dimensions, and creative methodologies.

Vortragende / Speakers:

**Dumitrița Luncă** (Hamburg University)

**Transnational (re)negotiations of life, love and sexuality: aging Romanian migrants in Rome**

In three decades, the number of Romanians in Italy has surpassed one million, many of which are over 50 years old. Some have migrated in the 1990s and 2000s, others more recently, benefitting from existing transnational networks and softer border regimes. Their lives are defined by a past marked by the coming of age in a totalitarian regime, a violent revolution and the subsequent transition to the free market, a fast-paced, fragmented present characterized by mobility and technology and a potential future return to an uncertain "home."

This paper explores the emotional lives of aging Romanian transnational migrants in Rome, Italy, focusing on their (re)negotiations of work, family and social environment on one hand and love, intimacy and sexuality on the other. Whether they are ending a decades-old marriage or trying to make one work, (re)discovering a dormant sexuality or deciding to remain celibate, taking up politics or internet dating, these later-life negotiations are played out between a sense of duty towards their families and a fear of "what will people say." Far from being passive, their lives reveal agency and a desire to stop caring about others and finally live for themselves.

*Lisa Johnson* (University of Trier)

**On the move: the importance of mobility and return in the migratory life pathways of retired Jamaican women in Montreal**

The analysis of return intentions of Jamaican female pensioners, who migrated to Montreal in the 1960s, offers inside views into interpersonal networks, socio-cultural practices and mobility concerning their migratory journeys. By accompanying these older women on their homeland travels and through interpreting their narrated life stories, movement strategies and a strong bond to Jamaica become visible. Returning demonstrates a life-long, multilayered process of yearning for connection, childhood memories, traditions, geographies and of accumulating wealth to build retirement houses in Jamaica. Places do symbolize specific life experiences, expectations and people that make sense of memories, imaginaries and affective ties. Life stories show the importance of e.g. female relatives in shaping migratory practices through inter-generational articulation. Jamaican women in their late-60s actively shape and maintain connections across cultural, geographical and political borders, influenced by dynamic socio-cultural, economic as well as political processes in which re-migration takes place. Through flexibility and redefinitions of space, females are able to develop altered routes towards a desired future.

*Cati Coe* (Rutgers University, US)

**Negotiations about care: competing models of retirement in a Ghanaian transnational family**

This paper examines negotiations about care between an aging Ghanaian home health worker in the United States and her young-adult daughter who struggled academically in schools in both Ghana and the United States. Over three years, the aging mother tried to balance her desire to retire from a physically demanding form of work to return to the house she was building in Ghana with the demands of launching her daughter into successful adulthood, associated with education and professional work in the United States. Competing models of retirement placed the mother in a bind: one in which she planned and was responsible for her own future wellbeing, a model dominant in the United States and becoming more prominent in middle-class circles in Ghana, and another in which she relied on her children to care for her out of obligation for what she had previously done for them, a model which has been dominant in Ghana but which is increasingly perceived as dissatisfying and precarious. I argue that later-life care decisions in Ghana are inter-generational ones, with transnational effects across the generations.

*Erdmute Alber* (Universität Bayreuth)

**Retirement as a new way of living old age in West Africa**

In the republic of Benin, a new way of imagining, planning and living old age is actually emerging. This process could be understood as the dissemination of an idea of retirement from the sector of formal labor and the corresponding social security system to a general notion of a good life in the late life course.

This emergence is linked to broader transformations, mainly new ways of living the life course in the African middle class, urbanization and also an expansion of the real estate markets. Additionally, it goes along with a process of social differentiation, for, retirement is the way of living old age for people who are better off. My contribution analyzes the emergence of retirement by describing how middle class people in Benin negotiate their social and spatial mobilities in order to prepare old age. I do that by following some life histories of elderly in Benin.