



AIAS
CONFERENCE
THE HANDS OF TIME
MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES
ON AGING



AARHUS
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AARHUS INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES

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CONFERENCE TOPIC AND FORMAT

High-level researchers from around the world are brought together at this international multidisciplinary two-day conference to explore a variety of perspectives on 'Aging' to address one of the key global challenges in the world today: Our increasing aging populations. The conference will seek to enlighten the main theme of 'Aging' from four main academic areas and is structured around these four areas:

"The Aging Human Individual: Body"

"The Aging Human Individual: Mind"

"The Aging Society"

"Aging and Culture"

Each of the four sessions will commence with a keynote speech from one of the four academic areas above (BODY, MIND, SOCIETY, CULTURE). Each keynote speech is followed by two-three short presentations by speakers representing one of the three "remaining" areas. These presentations are thought of neither as oppositions nor as direct commentaries, but rather as supplementary remarks from the point of view of another disciplinary approach as a means to broaden the discussion and to ensure the multidisciplinary perspectives on the topic of the keynote speech in question. Hereby, a total number of 4 invited keynote presenters and 11 invited speakers will be engaged at the AIAS over the two days. Moreover, the poster session to be held in the AIAS Hall on the first day will further enlighten the conference topic by presentations from 16 researchers from various fields of studies.

We hope to see you at the AIAS in June!

Register at the conference website:

<http://aias.au.dk/events/the-hands-of-time-multiple-perspectives-on-aging/>

THURSDAY 11 JUNE

- 08.30 – 09.00 Registration and coffee
- 09.00 – 09.10 Opening speech - Welcome by Morten Kyndrup, AIAS
- SESSION 1: BODY** | Chair: Karl-Erik Andersson
- 09.10 – 10.05 **Keynote:** Laura Frataglion, Karolinska Institutet, Sweden: 'What is good health among the oldest old?'
- 10.05 – 10.30 **Speaker:** Sharda Umanath, Washington University, St. Louis, USA: 'Aging and reduced suggestibility: The impact of intact knowledge'
- 10.30 – 10.50 Coffee break
- 10.50 – 11.15 **Speaker:** Bent Jesper Christensen, Dept. of Economics, Aarhus University, DK: 'Economic perspectives on health and aging'
- 11.15 – 11.40 **Speaker:** Armin Geertz, Study of Religion, Aarhus University, DK: 'Religion and Health in Ageing'
- 11.40 – 12.10 Joint discussion of session 1
- 12.10 – 13.00 Lunch
- 13.00 – 14.30 **Poster presentations**
- SESSION 2: MIND** | Chair: Dorthe Berntsen
- 14.30 – 15.25 **Keynote:** Michael Ross, University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: 'Aging and Everyday Memory'
- 15.25 – 15.50 **Speaker:** Annamaria Giraldi, Sexological Clinic, Rigshospitalet, Copenhagen, DK: 'Sexuality in the aging women – do old women have sex?'
- 15.50 – 16.15 Coffee break
- 16.15 – 16.40 **Speaker:** Fabrizio Mazzonna, Faculty of Economics, Università della Svizzera italiana, Switzerland: 'Aging, cognitive abilities and institutions'
- 16.40 – 17.10 Joint discussion of session 2
- 19.00 – Conference Dinner
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FRIDAY 12 JUNE

- SESSION 3: SOCIETY** | Chair: Torben M. Andersen
- 09.00 – 09.55 **Keynote:** Pierre Pestieau, Dept. of Economics, Université de Liège, Belgium: Some policy implications of increasing longevity
- 09.55 – 10.20 **Speaker:** Carol Holland, Aston Research Centre on Healthy Aging, Aston University, Birmingham, UK: A multidisciplinary longitudinal evaluation of an active supported living environment for older adults: effects on psychological processes, wellbeing and mobility impacts
- 10.20 – 10.45 Coffee break
- 10.45 – 11.10 **Speaker:** Dagmar Westerling, Lund, Sweden: 'Pain in the elderly: the perspective for the individual and for society'
- 11.10 – 11.35 **Speaker:** Suresh Rattan, Dept. of Molecular Biology and Genetics, Aarhus University, DK: 'Ageing, health and longevity: a biological perspective'
- 11.35 – 12.05 Joint discussion of session 3
- 12.05 – 13.00 Lunch
- SESSION 4: CULTURE** | Chair: Rane Willerslev
- 13.00 – 13.55 **Keynote:** Caroline Humphrey, Asian Anthropology, Kings' College, Cambridge, UK: 'The Ageing of Empires'
- 13.55 – 14.20 **Speaker:** William Hirst, Psychology, The New School of Social Research, New York, USA: 'Passing on the past: Ageing, Mnemonic Transmission, and the Failure to Connect'
- 14.20 – 14.45 Coffee break
- 14.45 – 15.10 **Speaker:** Georg Sørensen, Dept. of Political Science, AU, DK: 'The ageing of empires. A perspective from political science'
- 15.10 – 15.35 **Speaker:** Karen ní Mheallaigh, AIAS, Aarhus University, DK and Exeter University, UK: 'Experience vs innocence? The metaphor of aging in ancient Greek literature'
- 15.35 – 16.05 Joint discussion of session 4
- 16.05 – 16.30 Closing remarks

ABSTRACTS

SESSION 1: BODY

Keynote: Laura Fratagioni, MD, PhD, Professor, Director of the Aging Research Center, Karolinska Institutet, Sweden

“What is good health among the oldest old?”

Human health is a dynamic and multidimensional status, and this is especially evident in aging, when health changes occur more frequently and at an increased rate. Using data already collected in our cohort studies of middle-aged and elderly people, in this presentation we will address two research questions: 1) How can we measure the health status of older adults in a more comprehensive way? 2) What are the chains of events that culminate in the development of poor health in elderly people? Specifically, we aim to: 1) integrate multiple health dimensions in a score to better describe health and health trajectories among older adults; 2) quantify the effect of the major social, environmental, psychological, and biological determinants and their life-long interactions on health and survival in older adults; 3) explore time trends in mortality and morbidity among the older population. After two decades during which researchers in the aging field (including several from our group) have identified numerous factors that contribute to health in aging, the challenge is now to understand the interplay among these many factors in a life course perspective, taking into account different components and their impact at the societal level.

Speaker 1: Psychology (Mind):

Sharda Umanath, Washington University, St. Louis, USA

“Aging and reduced suggestibility: The impact of intact knowledge”

Despite declines in memory related to specific events, people maintain intact general knowledge into very old age and often use this knowledge to support remembering. Interestingly, when older and younger adults encounter errors that contradict general knowledge, older adults suffer fewer memorial consequences. That is, older adults use fewer recently encountered errors as answers for later general knowledge questions compared to younger adults. Why do older adults show this reduced suggestibility, and what role does their intact knowledge play? These questions were explored through several experiments, examining suggestibility following exposure to errors in fictional stories that con-

tradict general knowledge. Older adults consistently demonstrated more prior knowledge than younger adults but also gained access to even more of their stored knowledge across time. In addition, they failed to show consistent deficits in learning new (mis)information from the stories, suggesting a lesser contribution of episodic memory failures. Critically, when knowledge was stably accessible, older adults relied more heavily on that knowledge compared to younger adults, resulting in reduced suggestibility. Implications for the broader role of knowledge in older adults' remembering will be discussed.

Speaker 2: Economics (Society):

Bent Jesper Christensen, Dept. of Economics, Aarhus University, Denmark

"Economic perspectives on health and aging"

Aging implies that changes in health status occur more frequently. Different types of health changes result in different changes in medical spending, labor market participation, saving behavior, and mortality rates. In aging societies, health related costs are rising as people experience more health changes with increasing longevity, and the financing is complicated because they spend more years in retirement, thus working a smaller fraction of their lives. We compare several facts on medical spending and institutional frameworks of the health care systems across a number of countries. Is health care financed through taxes, out of pocket, or through payments to insurance companies? In either case, continued work helps paying for medical expenses, and we consider the effects of different types of illnesses and pension systems on retirement behavior. Basic trends in health care expenditures are considered, along with micro facts on the concentration of medical spending, its correlation over time, and Gini coefficients to study dispersion across individuals. Special attention is paid to medical spending before death. The work on Denmark uses the detailed full population Danish register data on objective medical diagnosis codes from individual level hospital records, merged with labor market and socio-economic information.

Speaker 3: Religion (Culture):

Armin Geertz, Dept. of the Study of Religion, School of Culture and Society, Aarhus University, Denmark

"Religion and Health in Ageing"

Much of the literature on ageing and religion assumes that religion is good for your health and that most people become more religious as they grow older. Much of this literature, however, is based on studies in the United States which may not be as universally applica-

ble as proclaimed. Furthermore, these studies are hampered by methodological and theoretical problems. My brief talk will address this issue. A second issue that is relevant to the above is that the role of religion and health in ageing is startlingly complex when viewed from the perspective of the history of religions. My talk will briefly note the variety of cultural models of religion, health, and ageing.

SESSION 2: MIND

Keynote: Michael Ross, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Psychology, University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

“Aging and Everyday Memory”

Most people would agree that memory declines in old age and that consumer fraud is more prevalent among older than younger adults. These two seemingly disparate “facts” are connected in that fraudsters purportedly capitalize on declines in memory and cognitive ability associated with normal aging. In my talk, I question this conventional wisdom. I note that older adults perform as well or better than younger adults in everyday prospective memory (remembering to perform intended tasks). Also older adults are apparently less susceptible than adults of other ages to consumer fraud. In my talk, I suggest that researchers of normal cognitive aging are sometimes too ready to jump from potential vulnerabilities demonstrated in the psychological laboratory to assumptions about prevalence in everyday life. In doing so, they may fail to consider experiences, behaviors, as well as social and physical infrastructures that help to offset older people’s cognitive vulnerabilities. I conclude with a short discussion of how to get the most out of social and physical infrastructure to improve everyday memory in adults of all ages.

Speaker 1: Health (Body):

Annamaria Giraldi, Sexological Clinic, Rigshospitalet, Copenhagen, Denmark

“Sexuality in the aging women – do old women have sex?”

Human sexuality is a dynamic state that is influenced by an interaction between bio-psycho-social factors. For many years research focus has been on male sexuality with the introduction of pharmacological treatment for erectile dysfunction. However, during the recent years more focus has been directed towards women sexuality and sexual activity in the aging couple providing a better understanding of sexual expectations in older women

as well of important risk factors for dysfunctions and the importance of the interaction within the couple.

The presentation will address 1) different models describing the sexual response in women and compare it to men, and 2) important risk factors for sexual problems in the aging women, including hormonal changes, increased burden of illness and the effect of the partner's sexual dysfunction.

The talk will show that sexuality and sexual life do not come to an end as a normal part of aging, and an active sexual life is for many aging women a part of a healthy life and good quality of life. However, the aging process will influence and maybe change women's sexual life including their sexual desire, arousability and orgasmic response – influenced by bio-psycho-social factors, which often can be difficult to differentiate from each other.

Speaker 2: Economics (Society)

Fabrizio Mazzonna, Faculty of Economics, Università della Svizzera italiana, Switzerland

“Aging, cognitive abilities and institutions”

What are the behavioral and institutional factors that affect the age profile of cognitive abilities? This is a fundamental question for aging society where preventing or delaying the age related decline in physical and cognitive abilities is becoming a fundamental target for health, labor and fiscal policy. In my talk I will show how and to what extent important behavioral and institutional factors such education and retirement (causally) affect the level and the rate of decline of cognitive abilities at older ages. I will also show how the influence of early life circumstances on old age cognitive and health trajectories is affected by different institutional settings.

SESSION 3: SOCIETY

Keynote: Pierre Pestieau, Professor emeritus, Dept. of Economics, Université de Liège, Belgium

“Some Policy Implications of Increasing Longevity”

Our societies are witnessing a steady increase in longevity. This demographic evolution is accompanied by some convergence across countries, whereas substantial longevity inequalities persist within nations. The goal of this paper is to survey some crucial implications of changing longevity on the design of optimal public policy. For that purpose, we firstly focus on some difficulties raised by risky and varying lifetime for the representation of indi-

vidual and social preferences. Then, we explore some central implications of changing longevity for policy making. We thus look at the issue of pension policies, poverty alleviation, long term care and health care.

Speaker 1: Psychology (Mind):

Carol Holland, Aston Research Centre on Healthy Aging, Aston University, Birmingham, UK

“A multidisciplinary longitudinal evaluation of an active supported living environment for older adults: effects on psychological processes, wellbeing and mobility impacts.”

In a longitudinal study, 161 volunteer new residents moving into active independent supported living environments across the UK Midlands were assessed when they first moved in and 3 and 12 months later, in comparison to 33 control participants staying in their original homes. This paper reports on changes in and relationships between cognitive, psychological and physical health, and independence indices. Although overall measures of cognition stayed relatively stable over the 12 months, a specific aspect known to be related to depression and social problem solving (autobiographical memory) showed a significant improvement relative to controls. Depression showed a significant reduction, and the two variables combined to predict outcome functional limitations and Instrumental Activities of Daily living (IADLs). Physical limitations in terms of mobility were also examined using mobility related illness diagnosis, and walking speed (where appropriate) to assess actual mobility, in order to examine whether the impact of mobility challenges on wellbeing change as people settle into this accessible environment. Slower walking speed was related to increase in the likelihood of depression at Baseline but had no effect 12 months later. The impact of osteoarthritis on likelihood of being depressed remained important although reduced by 12 months. Conclusions: Results suggest that there are positive impacts on depression and functional, socio-emotional cognition of living in an accessible and socially active environment. Results also demonstrate a reduction in the link between mobility impairment and depression validating the impact of the accessible and active environment. Implications for care needs will be discussed.

Speaker 2: Health (Body):

Dagmar Westerling, Faculty of Medicine, Lund University, Sweden

“Pain in the elderly: the perspective for the individual and for society”

Acute pain is a warning signal that is important in order to protect the body from severe injuries and damage. Long term pain may have multiple causes, does not have a protective function, inflicts suffering and costs to the individual and to society. Elderly individuals have a greater risk for long term pain (25-80 %) than younger individuals do (19 %). Pain in the elderly is most often caused by musculoskeletal pathology, but other diseases where pain is frequent, like cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disorders and neurological diseases are more common in the elderly compared to younger subjects.

Assessment of pain as well as pain management in elderly patients, who may have reduced organ function and several comorbidities, are challenging tasks. I will discuss limitations, possibilities and future goals for geriatric pain therapy.

Speaker 3: Biology (Body):

Suresh Rattan, Dept. of Molecular Biology and Genetics, Aarhus University, Denmark

“Aging, health and longevity: a biological perspective”

Biological ageing research has shown that there are no gerontogenes with the specific function of causing ageing. Genes assure survival of a species for a limited period known as the essential lifespan (ELS) in evolutionary terms. Human ELS is only about 40-50 years, but we are able to live and expect to live for much longer duration than our species' ELS. However, survival beyond ELS allows the emergence of ageing and senescence leading to eventual death. The highly complex, interconnected and dynamic nature of our biology makes it impossible to completely stop or reverse ageing. The very act of living and its biochemical processes constantly cause damage in cells. A complex network of molecular, cellular and physiological maintenance and repair systems control the damage and assure the survival. However, there is no state of homeostasis in living systems; life is dynamic, interactive, adaptive and constantly remodelling. Biological life beyond ELS is accompanied by a progressive failure of homeodynamics, reduced stress tolerance and increased vulnerability. Extending longevity – both lifespan and healthspan – requires practical methods to challenge and to go beyond the biological limits of our bodies, as determined by millions of years of evolution.

SESSION 4: CULTURE

Keynote: Caroline Humphrey, Professor, Fellow in Asian Anthropology, Kings' College, Cambridge, UK

“The Aging of Empires”

Can large social formations such as empires be profitably analysed through the heuristic of ageing? This lecture will address this question through discussion of the demise of three different imperial formations, the Mongol Empire (13th-14th centuries), the British (18th-20th centuries) and the Soviet Union (20th century). These empires are chosen because their contrasting main thrusts - broadly, military conquest, economic gain, and socio-ideological transformation - meant that they were differently constituted. Nevertheless, all three endured the passage of time. The question then arises whether some organisational principles of empires can renew eternal youth, e.g. in the case of Communism by revitalising a revolutionary spirit, while others are prone to experience gradual and ongoing sclerosis. Yet no empire in world history has survived indefinitely, so the lecture will ask whether analogies of human ageing, such as 'weakening', 'losing touch' and 'life span' are appropriate lenses through which to contemplate their ending.

Speaker 1: Psychology (Mind):

William Hirst, Professor of Psychology, The New School of Social Research, New York, USA

“Passing on the past: Ageing, Mnemonic Transmission, and the Failure to Connect”

At critical junctures, the personal intersects with the historical. People remember, for instance, where they were when they learned of the assassination of Swedish Prime Minister Olaf Palme, and those who lived through World War II remember not just that bombing occurred, but when they were bombed. How much of how individuals personally experienced a historical event is transmitted to a younger generation? Does the younger generation remember and know about their parents' and grandparents' personal experiences? Or does the rendering of the historical event take on a “generic” character for the younger generation, reflecting what might be learned in a history textbook rather than from someone who personally experienced the event? More broadly, how does the memories of those who lived through the historical event differ from those who did not? These issues are discussed as they apply to memories of World War II, the Argentine Military Junta of 1976, and the attack of September 11, 2001 in the United States. Results are discussed in terms of Assmann's (1995) distinction between cultural and communicative memories and Hirst and Manier (2002)'s distinction between lived and distant semantic collective memories.

Speaker 2: Political Science (Society):

Georg Sørensen, AIAS Fellow and Dept. of Political Science, AU, Denmark

“The ageing of empires. A perspective from political science”

In the case of people, the eventual result of ageing—death—is a certain outcome. In the case of empires (or nation-states or any other social organization), death is never certain because there are no iron laws of history. Empires may in principle endure indefinitely because history has no in-built laws about their demise. Nevertheless, while recent empires have demonstrated some resilience, they eventually did not last. I propose that the longevity of empires rests on two fundamental pillars, power and legitimacy. Power is needed for enforcement of rules and for protection; legitimacy is needed because in its absence, empires will always be contested and in the risk of breaking down. Standard explanations for the decline of the British (18-20th centuries) and the Soviet (20th century) empires focus on the waning power in the face of stronger competitors. But it was really the loss of legitimacy, internally and externally, which led to the downfall of both empires. This carries important implications for the discussion of US/Western empires in today’s world, because the problems of Western dominance are not primarily connected to power, but to legitimacy.

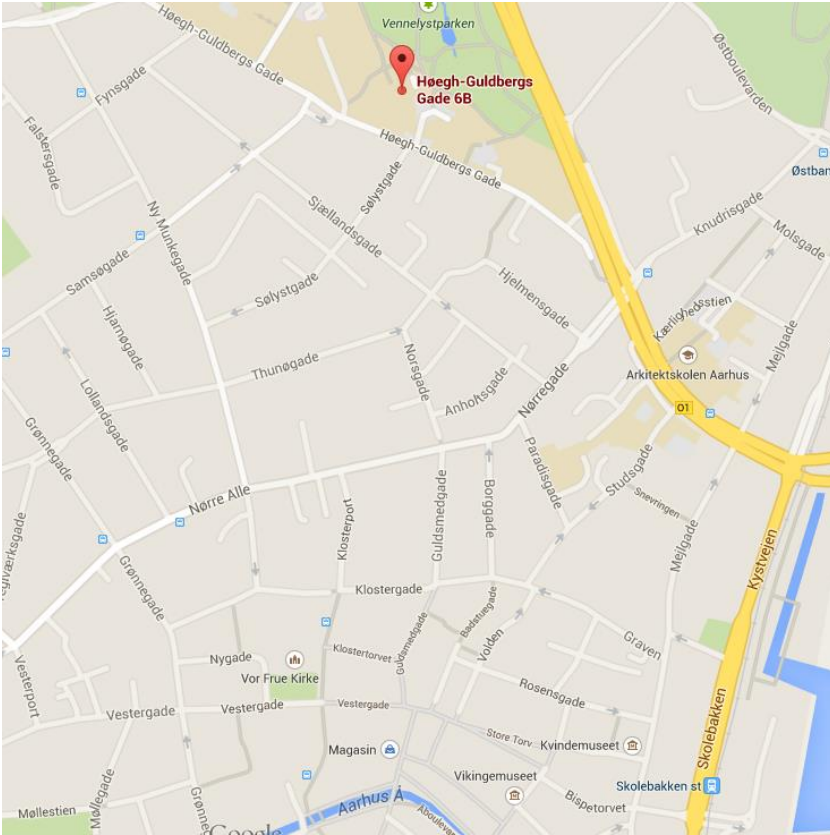
Speaker 3: Classics and Ancient history (Culture):

Karen ní Mheallaigh, AIAS Fellow, AIAS, Aarhus University, Denmark and Exeter University, UK

“Experience vs innocence? The metaphor of aging in ancient Greek literature”

This paper explores the use of metaphors associated with aging in ancient Greek literature, especially in the poetry of Callimachus, which was highly influential in ancient literary culture. As we shall see, Callimachus uses both the image of the old man and the young boy for thinking about his own role as a poet, in ways that challenge assumptions we may be tempted to make, as readers, about the figurative status of both youth and old age.

CONFERENCE MAPS



VENUE

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