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10<sup>th</sup> October 2024

OWN-EU/Li.U-ASC

joint online conference

“Ageism and sexism in old age: The need for a new narrative on ageing”

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## PROGRAMME: 10.00 – 16.00 CEST

### Opening 10.00 – 10.10

10.00 – 10.10: Opening session by **Susanne Kelfve**, Head of Division Ageing and Social Change, Li.U, and **Anne-Sophie Parent**, Chair OWN-EU

### Part 1: 10.10 – 12.30

Moderator: **George Pavlidis**, Senior Lecturer, Karlstads University, Sweden

10.10 – 10.45: **Keynote session #1: Nena Georgantzi**, Human Rights Manager, AGE Platform Europe, « *Towards a rights-based approach to women's equality in old age* »

Q&A session

10.45 – 12.30: **1st Thematic session on Ageing and Sexism** (incl. a short break)

- ❖ **Senjooti Roy**, Bar-Ilan University, Israel “*...because I am a woman, an old woman, I have no voice...*”: Gendered ageism and disempowerment of older women in three African countries.
- ❖ **Satu Heikkinen**, Assoc. prof. of Sociology and **Tara Mehrabi**, PhD of Gender Studies, Karlstad University, Sweden: “*The Intersection of age and gender in research on welfare technologies for older people*”
- ❖ **Patricia Conboy**, Adjunct Lecturer Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, University of Galway, Ireland: “*Digital access for older women and men – a global policy perspective*”

Q&A session

### 12.30 – 13.30: Lunch break

**Part 2: 13.30 – 15.50**

Moderator: **Elizabeth Mestheneos**, Researcher, board member 50plus Hellas, Greece

13.30 - 14.05: **Keynote session #2: Monika Allgurin**, Professor at Jönköping University, Sweden: "*Speaking is doing - on language and everyday life of discrimination*"

Q&A session

14.05 – 15.50: **2nd Thematic session on the need for a new narrative on women in old age**

- ❖ **Ieva Stončikaitė**, Postdoc and English literature lecturer at the Department of Humanities at Pompeu Fabra University, Spain: "*Beyond the Western Gaze: Exotic Liberation, Ageing, and Self-Discovery in The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* »
- ❖ **Mélissa-Asli Petit**, PhD in Sociology, CEO Mixing Générations, France: "*Building a new narrative on ageing based on children's literature*"
- ❖ **Shlomit Aharoni Lir**, Bar Ilan University and University of Haifa, Israel: "*I was born a man - I'm close to myself": Israeli film directors and cinema in the MeToo era*

Q&A session

**Closing remarks 15.50 – 16.00**

15.50 – 16.00: Conclusions and proposed next steps, **Elisabet Cedersund**, Professor em. ASC-Li.U, and chair of the conference organising committee and **Bianca Suanet**, Professor in ASC-Li.U.

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## Speakers profiles and abstracts

### OWN-EU/Li.U-ASC online Conference, 10 October 2024

**Part 1: 10.10 – 12.30 CEST**



**Moderator: George Pavlidis** is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the Institution for Social and Psychological Studies, Karlstad University. He is a graduate psychologist with a PhD in social gerontology and cognitive psychology. His research focuses on improving our understanding of social factors influencing older persons' wellbeing and health, the effective administration of health and social care to older persons, and the continuous development of professionals in these sectors. Prior to his academic career and studies, he was a professional basketball player at the highest level for 13 years in Greece, Spain, and Germany.



**Keynote speech #1: Nena Georgantzi, PhD**, Human Rights Manager, AGE Platform Europe, Adjunct Lecturer, University of Galway. A trained lawyer specialized in human rights (MA, Université de Strasbourg, France) and social protection (MA, KU Leuven, Belgium), Nena Georgantzi is working since 2010 for [AGE Platform Europe](#) (AGE), an EU network, which aims to voice and promote the rights of older people in the European Union and to raise awareness on the issues that concern them most. Nena holds a PhD in Law from the University of Galway in Ireland where she is also an Adjunct Lecturer. She has participated in the drafting of the Council of Europe recommendation on the rights of older persons and has consulted the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Labour Organization. She is actively involved in the political process around a new UN convention on the rights of older persons and has served as Deputy Chair of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older Persons. Nena is the author of several reports, articles, books chapters and co-author of a book on law, ageing and ageism.

**Abstract: « Towards a rights-based approach to women's equality in old age »**

*In a 1972 [article](#) in the International Journal of Aging, Myrna Lewis and Robert Butler asked why feminism ignored older women. The invisibility of older women is still seen today in EU gender equality policies. This intervention will shed a light on how both ageing and gender policies can benefit from applying a rights-based approach to enhance older women's rights and how a new UN convention could help support this transformative process.*

## Thematic session #1: Ageing and Sexism



**Senjooti Roy**, is a social gerontologist and a postdoctoral research fellow in the Department of Social Work at Bar-Ilan University, Israel. Her work comprises explorations of lived experiences of ageing, (gendered) ageism, (dis)empowerment of older adults, climate change and ageing, and intergenerational relationships among diverse populations within interdisciplinary contexts. Her work has been published in several prestigious journals.

### **Abstract: "...because I am a woman, an old woman, I have no voice...": Gendered ageism and disempowerment of older women in three African countries.**

*Gendered ageism refers to the intersectionality of age and gender bias and discrimination. It may be understood as a “double jeopardy” whereby two power systems, patriarchal norms and societal preoccupation with youth, interact to result in the rapid deterioration of older women’s status in society. Gendered ageism is widely prevalent. It leads to inequality, injustice, oppression, exploitation, and disempowerment of older women. To explore and identify disempowering impacts of gendered ageism on the lives and rights of older women, we interviewed 18 women, aged 54-85, from 3 African countries. The findings highlight older women’s lack of voice in their inability to make choices, to claim their rights, and to participate meaningfully in decision-making. These manifest in various ways including in the suppression of older women’s interests, opinions, and aspirations in public life; denial of justice; prejudice and discrimination within family settings; exploitation, harassment, abandonment, and violence; and an overall devaluation, dehumanisation, and silencing of older women. Globally, women tend to outlive men, yet their lived experiences and unique challenges receive limited acknowledgement and redressal. In lower- and middle-income countries, older women face multiple forms of oppression arising from gendered ageism. This study highlights such experiences with the expectation that they will generate awareness, garner support from stakeholders, and help inform policies for the protection and equal treatment of older women.*



**Satu Heikkinen** is associate professor of sociology at Karlstad University. Her research has focused on age and ageing in relation to topics such as mobility and sustainability, welfare technologies, emotions and leisure. Theoretically her research has addressed power and resistance, ageism, discourse and sociology of emotions. Methodologically she has worked mainly qualitatively with e.g. ethnography, interviews and discourse analysis. She is the coordinator of the research group, Critical Studies on Age and Ageing (CriAgeing) at Karlstad University. She is a member of the EMER network (Everyday resistance in the Nordic welfare state). Her present research concerns dance, theatre and ageing as well as digitalisation, ageing and intersectionality.



**Tara Mehrabi** is a senior lecturer in gender studies at the Social and Psychological Studies Department, at Karlstad University. She is a feminist technoscience scholar who is interested in exploring socio-material relations through which bodies, life/death, health/illness, scientific knowledge, and digital technologies come to matter differently. Her current research follows three lines: Queering, decolonizing, and posthumanizing death and mourning; Theoretical and methodological exploration of intersectionality and feminist new materialism through one another; Interplay of aging, gender, and migration in digitalization of care within the Swedish context.

**Joint abstract: “The Intersection of age and gender in research on welfare technologies for older people”**

*Within aging research, there is a widespread recognition of the heterogeneity among the older population. This implies that old age interacts with various power dimensions, such as race and gender, in shaping the experiences, possibilities, and obligations of older people. Such intersectional aspects of aging are however often missed in governmental discourses of care, especially within the current digital transformation paradigm, as technologies are mistaken to be neutral. For example, it is less discussed how individuals of different social positions and gender are affected by digitalization of care in various ways. This is problematic since technologies of care embody social norms and bias (e.g. Lupton). Against this backdrop, we critically investigated whether and how intersectionality has been used and conceptualized within previous research on welfare technologies for older people. We have reviewed studies from five databases—Scopus, CINAHL, Web of Science, PubMed, and PsycInfo. We focused on theories and concepts related to intersectionality, such as double jeopardy, triple jeopardy, matrix of domination, and multiple power relations, etc. Building on our results, within the scope of this presentation, we discuss how the intersection of age and gender is analyzed in this previous research and how the power dimensions of ageism and sexism are manifested as mutually constructed in digital care for older people and with which potential consequences.*



**Patricia Conboy** is an Adjunct Lecturer with the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, University of Galway, Ireland. She has expertise in policy analysis and influencing related to ageing and older people at community, national and global levels. As Head of Global Ageing, Advocacy and Campaigns with HelpAge International (2016 – 2021), Patricia provided strategic leadership on initiatives to advance the rights of older people in low- and middle-income countries through engagement with multilateral stakeholders, governments and civil society organisations, and supporting the agency and voices of older people. Prior to joining HelpAge, Patricia was director of Older & Bolder, an Irish alliance of NGOs campaigning with older people at community and national levels to advance their rights and deliver a National Positive Ageing Strategy. She has also chaired the International Advisory Group for STRiDE, an initiative led by the London School of Economics to improve dementia research and policy in middle-income countries (2018 – 2022). Conboy P. (2021) Older-Age Exclusion and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In: Walsh K., Scharf T., Van Regenmortel S., Wanka A. (eds) Social Exclusion in Later Life. International Perspectives on Aging, vol 28. Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-51406-8\\_28](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-51406-8_28)

**Abstract: “Digital access for older women and men – a global policy perspective”**

*In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a growing global policy focus on counteracting digital divides, including between high-income countries and low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). This presentation will examine the policy landscape and key trends regarding global digital divides in a context of demographic ageing and limited recognition of the effects of ageism. The implications for digital access and barriers to digital inclusion of older women and older men in LMIC contexts will be explored. Potential strategies to address policy gaps, including blind spots on ageism and sexism, and to bridge digital divides with older women and men in LMIC contexts will be presented for discussion.*

**Part 2: 13.30 – 15.50 CEST**



**Moderator: Elizabeth Mestheneos** is a UK trained sociologist and academic who moved to Greece in 1983, working in film production with her husband. From 1988 she was a social researcher in an independent company she ran – Sextant Co. and has published widely on age related subjects. She co-founded the NGO “[50+ Hellas](#)” in 2002, was its MD for 10 years and on its Board subsequently. She served on the Board of [AGE-Platform Europe](#) from 2003, and as its elected President 2008-2011. Liz is active as advisor, juror, consultant and evaluator on a range of mainly EU funded projects concerning new technologies, carers, disability and ageing, accessibility, and the human rights of older people. She is now Emeritus Board member of the Hellenic Association for Gerontology and Geriatrics.



**Keynote speech #2: Monika Allgurin** is Professor in Social Work. Her research focuses on the intersectional approaches to the processes and practices of inequality (re)production within the context of the welfare state. In particular, she is interested in the agency-structure relationships within diverse contexts as well as the creation and use of various spaces at the individual, groups, organizational, and societal levels. Methodologically, she is trained in discourse and narrative analysis. Her most recent work revolves around the emotional dimension of qualitative research and institutional practices and applies interactional analysis to trace the emergence and construction of emotions within the context of meetings between professional and non-professional actors.

**Abstract: Speaking is doing - on language and everyday life of discrimination”**

*This talk addresses the question of everyday life of discrimination by looking at one of the most profound social practices which is language use. To participate in social life is to communicate and interact with others and these processes are mediated by language. Language becomes our entry door to the social world and social relations that we build. Language is not only a tool, but it is also a social practice through which meanings, identities and relations are being carried and mediated. One of the most intriguing aspects of language is its contextual dependence that may change the meaning of every single word from overtly positive to extremely negative. Using examples of such words and contexts, this talk draws attention to the mundane ways in which ageism occupies social space without being hardly noticed. It demonstrates the tools that are needed to sensitize our use of language to its potentially discriminatory and exclusionary practices.*

## Thematic session #2: The need for a new narrative on women in old age



**Ieva Stončikaitė**, Ieva Stončikaitė holds a PhD in Cultural and Literary Gerontology and English Studies. She is currently a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer at the Department of Humanities at Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona). Ieva is also a member of the research group CELCA (Center of Literatures and Cultures in English) at the University of Lleida, ENAS (European Network in Ageing Studies), and ESA RN01\_Ageing in Europe. She is interested in cultural and literary representations of ageing, medical humanities, dementia ethics and care, 'silver' tourism, age-friendly universities, and travel writing. Her peer-reviewed articles appear in *The Gerontologist*, *Journal of Aging Studies*, *Educational Gerontology*, and *Life Writing*, and edited collections published by Routledge and Palgrave.

### **Abstract: Beyond the Western Gaze: Exotic Liberation, Ageing, and Self-Discovery in The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel**

*By employing the framework of cultural-literary gerontology and the lens of leisure travel, this presentation addresses the often-hidden truths and the invisible status of older women and sexuality as exemplified in Deborah Moggach's best-seller The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel. Through the humorous and witty portrayal of the ageing characters, Moggach demonstrates how different forms of gendered ageism and sexism can be remediated outside the Western world. In India, the ageing heroines not only find a sense of community, agency, belonging, and respect that help palliate loneliness and social exclusion, but they also come to their true selves through the discovery of an enhanced sense of self and sexuality. Moreover, the old British colony's exotic and sultry atmosphere stimulates the sexual desires and fantasies of older heroines and helps them become more self-confident and less constrained in expressing their sexual views. Instead of regarding later life as a phase of liberation from the male gaze (Greer, 1991), Moggach's older characters show interest in intimate encounters and physical contact. By reversing age- and gender-related notions that otherwise would be more complicated to challenge in their home space, Moggach's heroines challenge the narrative of decline (Gullette, 2004) and the double standard of ageing (Sontag, 1972) as they demonstrate that asexuality and older age are not correlated. Yet, they do not follow the ideals of successful ageing and its neoliberal imperatives, but rather create their own empowered narrative of ageing outside the Westernised standards of a good old age.*



**Mélissa-Asli Petit** is a French sociologist specializing in aging issues. In 2015, she founded Mixing Générations, a sociological research and consultancy firm focusing on longevity issues and the lifestyles of retired people. In 2016, she published "Les retraités: cette richesse pour la France" (Éd. de l'Harmattan). She has also created a podcast called Carnet de route. In season 1, she focused on retired women who create organizations from France, Europe, North America and Australia. Mélissa-

Asli PETIT is particularly interested in the following topics: intergenerational transmission, gender inequalities in old age, and age-related social representations, particularly in children's literature.

### **Abstract: Building a new narrative on ageing based on children's literature**

*How do we educate to grow old? In 1994, French psychologist Geneviève Arfeux-Vaucher spoke of how everyone builds his or her own education about aging from childhood. By being around*

older people, whether on the street, in the park or with grandparents, children shape their view of aging. Children also learn about aging through culture, particularly children's literature. Books are a way of understanding aging, and help to shape a vision of aging. A few decades ago, elderly female characters were mainly portrayed either as grandmothers in a traditional role, or as witches. Today, children's literature plays a major role in creating new narratives on aging. Based on a selection of children's literature (for children aged 3 to 8) from the Chronos Prize for Children's Literature, this paper will explore how children's literature today proposes a different way of thinking about aging, one that is free of sexism and ageism, and helps to promote a different kind of education about growing old.



**Dr. Shlomit Aharoni Lir** is a feminist activist, author, and research fellow at Bar Ilan University and the University of Haifa, specializing in intersectionality. Her research explores the intersection of gender, age, and social factors in various domains, including Israeli society, media, digital spaces, and environmental movements, with a focus on equality, diversity, and inclusion. Her work examines how identities shape experiences, particularly in cinema, creative industries, and social activism, highlighting how gender and age influence societal roles. She has also researched masculinity within the film industry, exploring the interaction of gender norms with professional and age-related contexts. Aharoni Lir's publications focus on the second half of life, showing how aging intersects with gender to create unique challenges for women. As founder of Women Activists Online, she promotes women's leadership through social media and activism. Her background in IT further informs her analysis of technology's role in gender and social engagement. Her contributions have earned her numerous awards, including the Golda Award from the Israeli Ministry of Science and Technology. Through her work, she advances intersectionality studies, offering valuable insights into the interplay of multiple social categories.

**Abstract: "I was born a man - I'm close to myself": Israeli film directors and cinema in the MeToo era**

The MeToo movement exposed distinct inequalities between men and women on and offscreen. It shed light on the latent politics of power relations between the sexes and tremendously influenced various aspects of social life. Nevertheless, the question, addressed in this study, of how senior male film directors perceive the change in the gender power dynamics, has not yet been sufficiently addressed. This qualitative study is composed of semi-structured extended interviews with 13 award-winning Israeli directors, who are in the second half of their lives. Applying interpretative phenomenological analysis, the findings indicate that the directors acknowledged that the power relations between men and women have changed. However, the findings also demonstrate remaining difficulties and a backlash in reaction to the change. Based on the findings, two models have emerged. The first, *The Phases of Change*, demonstrates the process of change as consisting of awareness, avoidance, diversity, women's stardom, and support. The second, *The Cycle of Perseverance*, elaborates on the resistance to change as consisting of tokenism, neutrality, androcentrism, and persistence. As the model can indicate, the unequal power relations retain many of their aspects, both in front of and behind the camera. These include the exclusion of women and numerous representations of women that are based on age, objectification, and sexism.