

José María Armengol
Spain

Tony Tracy
Ireland

Roberta Maierhofer
Austria

Linn Sandberg
Sweden

Marge Unt
Estonia

Liat Ayalon
Israel

Humanities, Social Sciences

Overview

The primary objective of this research is to analyse social constructions of ageing masculinities and/through their cultural representations in contemporary European literatures and cinemas. The study specifically seeks: (a) to understand more fully the interrelationship of masculinities with a variety of social issues specifically associated with men's ageing: older men's health; social inclusion and exclusion; sexualities and affective relationships; and ageist stereotypes; (b) to explore men's experiences of, and attitudes to, ageing across different European cultures, exploring their commonalities and differences, at both national and transnational levels; (c) to gain a deeper understanding of ageing masculinities in and through cultural representations; and (d) to share the results of this project with other researchers, practitioners and policy-makers to help them devise strategies and policies designed to promote greater gender and age equity.

If age studies focus on youth and gerontology studies of either older women or "ungendered" portraits of ageing (Saxton and Cole 2012), this project will explore the gendered specificities of men's ageing.

Applying to the cultural analysis an interdisciplinary corpus of masculinity and age studies, the project seeks to make an impact by crossing the traditional Social Sciences-Humanities boundary and by proving that not only do social notions of masculinity shape their cultural representations, but they simultaneously affect the social (de-)construction of both gender and age.

Project Outcomes

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Our project methodology involves the conduction by different national teams of a number of qualitative interviews with older men. Thus, the project may be seen as benefitting the group of older men in Europe overall as it highlighted intersections of ageing and masculinity that had hitherto largely been overlooked. Indeed, we proved the project to be beneficial to the participants themselves, as it gave possibilities to articulate one's own experiences of ageing, including experiences of ageism. Looking at story-telling as an inter-personal political activity, what Clive Baldwin (supra) refers to as "narrative citizenship" (2008: 222), the project did ultimately aim to allow older individuals to define, express, and so empower themselves in terms of social inclusion and citizenship as practice. Moreover, the very topic of our project revolved around the intersections and ageing and gender.

Team members

	Woman	Man	Other
Gender balance in the whole consortium	18 (56%)	14 (44%)	0 (0%)
Presence of women as lead researchers/PIs	4 (67%)	2 (33%)	0 (0%)
Gender Experts in the team	10 (56%)	8 (44%)	0 (0%)
Subsequent team members trained (Gender equality and/or IGAR)	0	0	0

Contribution to the achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

It has proven the relevance of gender, especially masculinity, to aging showing how both women and men are affected by aging, albeit sometimes differently.

Differences/inequalities between women and men highlighted by the project

The project has shown how the topic of aging has seldom been analyzed from a masculinity studies perspective, having traditionally focused on the specificities of older women. The study explored different images of older men's sexualities and affective relations, gay and straight, in order to both challenge existing stereotypes and promote alternative images. Thus, the project both deconstructed ageist gendered stereotypes that diminish and dehumanize older men, exploring their different forms and intensity across different European cultures, and analysed alternative positive images from European literature and film, which associate ageing with freedom, uninhibitedness, fulfillment of hitherto suppressed wishes, etc.

Positive impact of the project on gender equality/scientific evidence on gender in the field

The project has played a pivotal role in proving the centrality of gender, especially masculinity, to aging and aging studies.

Socio-economic impact; involvement of policy makers/civil society

The results of the project have indeed been shared with policymakers and political agents (for example, at the Masculinities conference organized by the Government of Estonia in Tallinn in September 2020). We also organized, together with the SGAE Foundation, a final 4-day dissemination conference in Madrid in February 2023, which was open to the general public and counted several film directors, actors and actresses (including well-known Spanish actresses such as Lola Herrera and Miriam Díaz-Aroca), and film scholars so as to make the results of the project accessible to the general population. The panelists also included representatives of civil organizations such as Federico Armenteros, Director of the Fundación 26 de Diciembre, dedicated to the well-being and care of older people in social risk situations. This conference also included the projection of several Spanish movies on older men (free access to the general public) at Cines Golem Madrid. The different sessions were videotaped and transcribed and will also be published as part of a dissemination volume (in preparation). A final joint dissemination publication on the Gendernet-Plus Era-Net cofund programme is also being prepared by different PIs of the Gendernet-Plus consortium.