



Nordic Gerontological Federation

# GeroNord

News on research, developmental work and education within the  
ageing area in the Nordic Countries

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The 25<sup>th</sup> NKG 2.-5.6.2021



Dear all

We are experiencing very special times. The Covid-19 pandemic has changed our way of living and thinking at least for a while if not for forever. Congresses as well as other big and small events are postponed and we all need to take a new step in digitalization, especially in communication, to keep the physical distance to each other. Many countries have already shown that older people and people with underlying diseases are particularly at risk of suffering the most severe social and health-related consequences of the spread of the virus including higher mortality.

The strategies for protecting the vulnerable groups and limit the spread of the infection have among other focused on the strict isolation of older people. Isolation affects the quality of life, not only for older people, but their close ones as well and may have long-standing effects on physical and mental health. The fact that many have died without a possibility to have a family member at present in the last few hours, is heart breaking.

For researchers, the Covid-19 pandemic provides a setting for a unique natural experiment. It is important to multidisciplinary examine the spread of the virus and its consequences in different populations. Perhaps, research on the effects of isolation on individual's quality of life could be presented in 25NKG. Acknowledging the difficulties in living alone and being under restriction strikes and the challenges faced in round-the clock care facilities, it might be interesting to analyze the quality of life for people living alone and as part of different kinds of communities and the role of social networks.

This situation is of course, frustrating, peculiar and even frightening also for us who are working and try to cope with daily routines. I encourage everyone to stop for a moment and think if there is someone who may be more isolated now because of the restrictions and who would appreciate an extra contact.

Nils Holand

President of Nordic Gerontological Federation (NGF)

**THE 25<sup>TH</sup> NORDIC CONGRESS OF GERONTOLOGY, JUNE 2-5, 2021, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND**

Dear friends,

Every once in a while, we in the organizing committee for the 25th NKG in Reykjavik have tried to imagine the difficult task the Icelandic organizing committee for the 20th NKG faced 10 years ago. A large volcanic eruption in Eyjafjallajökull glacier put a halt to almost all international flights in Europe in the spring of 2010, putting the congress plans in jeopardy. Fortunately, the situation improved and the congress was held according to schedule, but possibly with fewer participants due to the uncertainty surrounding the eruption.

During the past few years of preparations for the 25th NKG we have sometimes playfully speculated what unprecedented catastrophe might threaten our plans this time. Never in our wildest dreams could we have foreseen that the year 2020 would bring a global coronavirus pandemic, resulting in widespread lockdowns and a total collapse of international travel. As there is no end to these restrictions in sight we have been forced to face the fact that it is inevitable to postpone the congress. We do this with a heavy heart as we had a wonderful program ready, a strong group of international keynote speakers as well as exciting symposia and oral and poster presentations covering the most current research in multiple areas of gerontology. There was great interest in the congress with participants coming from all corners of the world, opening up for opportunities for networking and future collaborations. The mayor of Reykjavik was planned to open the congress with a talk about Reykjavik's participation in The World Health Organization Age-Friendly Cities Project and the city of Reykjavik had generously invited all the participants of the 25th NKG to use the cities' numerous geothermal swimming pools free of charge for the duration of the congress.

The congress has now been postponed to **June 2nd – June 5th 2021**. We truly hope that the extra year of preparations will make the congress even better! I believe that most of us have learned many lessons from the current situation, both personally and as professionals within the field of gerontology. The pandemic has revealed both strengths and weaknesses in the approach to the care and wellbeing of older individuals in our communities and as a result, new and interesting topics have emerged for us to discuss in 2021. What better way to address these new challenges than through fruitful conference days in Reykjavik followed by a relaxing swim on a bright summer evening.

Participants who are already registered for the congress in 2020 can keep their registration if they choose to do so and join us in 2021. Those who keep their registration and have abstracts that have been accepted do not need to send those abstracts again, they will automatically be accepted for the congress in 2021. We will open up the registration system again in November 2020 for new participants and abstracts and are looking very much forward to finally welcoming you! Please follow the latest news on the congress website, <https://www.25nkg.is/>, and also, we would very much appreciate you spreading the word and sharing the Facebook page of the congress.

Finally, I hope that we will see many of you in 2021, as I think most of us are longing for face-to-face discussions and a return to a more normal way of life. Doesn't Iceland sound like the perfect place to travel to after COVID-19, a sparsely populated island with wide open spaces and wonderful nature?

And last but not least, should we risk Iceland again in 2030?

Kind regards and best wishes to you all,  
Steinunn Thordardottir  
President of the 25th NKG  
Vice-president of NGF



The Nordic Gerontological Federation (NGF) offered grants for congress participation, two grants for each Nordic country and one for each of the three Baltic countries. For 25NKG, we received 28 applications coming from Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Iceland. The scientific committee for 25NKG had a difficult task to choose grant receivers from many good applications. The grant receivers were Halldóra Arnardóttir and Unnur Diljá Teitsdóttir from Iceland, Linn Elena Zulka and Marguerita Saadeh from Sweden, Angéline Galvin and Lea Graff from Denmark and Annele Urtamo and Tuuli Lehti from Finland. The travel grant receiver's research represents a great variety of gerontological disciplines and highlights the multidisciplinary nature of Nordic Gerontological Congresses (NKG).

**Halldóra Arnardóttir** is a PhD Art Historian. Her research interests lie in the project Art and Culture as Therapy which dates from 2007 and aims to open a broad debate on non-pharmacological treatment for Alzheimer's and to initiate new experiments within the research: the arts join the scientific investigation and qualitative evaluation. Furthermore, the project also offers an application of different tools within the arts, yet unknown to the scientific community.



**Unnur Diljá Teitsdóttir's** research interests lie in exploring novel biomarkers that could help in better understanding different aspects of Alzheimer's disease pathology and clinical expression. Currently, her research is focused on cerebrospinal fluid biomarkers reflecting inflammation and neuronal injury.

**Linn Elena Zulka** is PhD student at the Department of Psychology, and Centre for Ageing and Health, University of Gothenburg. Her PhD thesis focusses on cognitive health and retirement. In the research project HHealth, Aging and Retirement Transitions in Sweden – HEARTS she is investigating if and how the transition to retirement affects cognitive functioning.





**Marguerita Saadeh** is a doctoral student at the Aging Research Center (ARC), Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm (Sweden). Her PhD project is entitled “Enjoying life and living healthier: the role of psychosocial factors and lifestyle behaviors on functional trajectories in older age”.

**Angéline Galvin** works as a post doc in Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Biodemography at the University of Southern Denmark, Odense. Her work in this team focuses on long-lived families and particularly on robustness and resilience of long-lived siblings and their offspring.



**Lea Graff's** research interest is the organisation of public home care and health services for older people and how the recipients experience the services. She especially focuses on the implementation of reablement in the Nordic countries and how the home care services try to accommodate their interventions to the recipients' preferences. Her upcoming ph.d. study is about the growing involvement of for-profit home care providers and the volunteer sector in the delivery of care services.



Photo: Uzi Varon

**Annele Urtamo** has a Master's degree in Health Science and physiotherapy. She is a PhD candidate at the University of Helsinki. Her research interests focus on successful aging, physical activity and frailty. Her PhD study explores the associations of midlife factors with successful aging in Helsinki Businessmen Study (HBS) cohort.

**Tuuli Lehti's** PhD study explores the significance of symptom burden in overall health, wellbeing, and prognosis in the older population. She analyses cohort data from community-dwelling people age 75+ in the urban Helsinki area. Her first article is going to be sent to press this spring, and she is looking forward to share her results with the wider community.



**THE 26<sup>TH</sup> NORDIC CONGRESS OF GERONTOLOGY, June 8-10, 2022, ODENSE, DENMARK**

The congress organizations for 26th NKG have already started and the congress will continue the biannual sequence of the NKG congresses. This means that due to Covid-19 pandemic, there will be NKG congresses in 2021 and 2022.



The theme for the 26NKG will be Change and Continuity.

The congress will take place in the city of Odense at congress center Odeon.

You will receive the first announcement soon.

The President for the congress is **Christine E. Swane**, PhD, Director and Head of research at The EGV Foundation (Social inclusion of older adults).

The Vice President is **Jette Thuesen**, PhD, Senior researcher at The Danish Knowledge Centre for Rehabilitation and Palliative Care and Head of Master's Degree in Rehabilitation, University of Southern Denmark.

Organizing committee:

Pia Nimann Kannegaard, Secretary General

Karen Andersen-Ranberg

Kirsten Laila Vinding

Paolo Caserotti

## **Placing women? How locality shapes women's opportunities for reconciling work and care**

**Tiina Sihto** defended her doctoral dissertation in social and public policy, titled "Placing women? How locality shapes women's opportunities for reconciling work and care" on 7th of December 2019 at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland.

Reconciling work and care is a central question for both individuals' well-being and the productivity and reproduction of society. The issue has received considerable attention nationally and internationally in both public discussion and social research during recent decades. The research has particularly focused on how parents, especially mothers, are able to combine paid employment with caring for their young children. Recent years have also seen the emergence of research focusing on the reconciliation of work with caring for one's ageing relatives.

In Finland, the research on work-care reconciliation has mainly focused on analysis done at the national level. Questions regarding place, space and locality have not traditionally been seen as fitting within the Nordic welfare state ideal, which highlights equal opportunities regardless of place of residence. However, in order to grasp how gender relations are lived and organised, it is essential to examine the local and everyday circumstances within which gender relations are conserved, (re)produced and (re)negotiated in families, the labour market and society as a whole

In my article-based PhD dissertation, the question of work-care reconciliation is examined from a local perspective. This study analyses the role of locality in how women combine work and care in the city of Jyväskylä, Finland. 'Care' is here understood as encompassing both childcare and care for older people.

The theoretical background of this research is situated at the interface of feminist welfare state and social policy research and feminist human geography. A case study approach is applied in this thesis. This study draws from different data sets and methodological approaches.

Articles I and II use local childcare policy documents and local care strategies as their data, with the aim of shedding light on the local social policy framework within which women reconcile work and care. Articles III and IV are based on four focus group interviews with working mothers and working carers, with the aim of analysing the everyday experiences of women who combine work and care. Methodologically, this study makes different uses of a mix of qualitative methods, aiming to highlight different facets of the research question.

The results of this study show that local developments in both childcare and care for older people have moved towards increasing marketisation of services, as well as placing greater responsibility on individuals and families. These developments can be seen as promoting implicit genderising, which does not explicitly aim to reinforce separate gender roles but often ends up supporting the existence of traditional gender roles. In terms of a women-friendly welfare state, these developments risk reinforcing the genderedness of care and deepening the divisions among women.

In the focus groups, a strong consensus and shared understanding was often reached regarding the 'moral' or 'right thing to do' in a given situation in terms of care. These understandings can be seen as reflecting not only the inner feelings and states of the interviewees, but also broader cultural ideals regarding care, and expectations of care which are culturally coded as feminine. However, gender was rarely explicitly mentioned in the interviewees' accounts, and was largely absent from local policy documents as well. This silence regarding gender, and the focus on the individual, can make gendered structures invisible, and thus hinder development towards equality at the local level.

Contact information: [tiina.sihto@jyu.fi](mailto:tiina.sihto@jyu.fi)

Link to dissertation: <https://jyx.jyu.fi/handle/123456789/66146>



Photo: Laura Mankki

**Executive committee**

Nils Holand: President

Steinunn Þórðardóttir: 1. Vice president

Marja Jylhä: 2. Vice president

Marijke Veenstra: Secretary General of the 24NKG

**Representatives from the member organizations**

**Denmark:** Danish Gerontological Society (Dansk Gerontologisk Selskab): Jette Thuesen

Danish Society for Geriatrics (Dansk Selskab for Geriatri): Pia Nimann Kannegaard

**Finland:** Societas Gerontologica Fennica: Mikaela von Bonsdorff

Finnish Geriatricians (Suomen Geriatriit ry - Finlands Geriatriker rf): Esa Jämsen

Finnish Society for Growth and Ageing Research (Kasvun ja vanhenemisen tutkijat ry - Föreningen för forskning i uppväxt och åldrande): Elisa Tiilikainen

**Iceland:** The Icelandic Gerontological Society (Öldrunarfræðafélag Islands): Sirrý Sif

Sigurlaugardóttir & Sigrún Huld Þorgrímsdóttir

The Icelandic Geriatrics Society (Félag Íslenskra Öldrunarlækna): Steinunn Þórðardóttir

**Norway:** Norwegian Society for Aging research (Norsk selskap for aldersforskning): Annelise Flor Dyrli

Norwegian Geriatrics Association (Norsk geriatriisk förening): Nils Holand

**Sweden:** Swedish Gerontological Society (Sveriges Gerontologiska Sällskap): Sofi Fristedt

Swedish Geriatrics Society (Svensk Geriatriisk Förening): Peter Nordström

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**Secretary and treasurer**

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