

Editorial

By *LINN J. SANDBERG*

In 2006 I had just started my doctoral studies and I remember very well the first issue of IJAL which was launched that same year. One of the articles, by Liz Schwaiger, addressed the gendering of ageing bodies – a theoretical text that became absolutely central for how my doctoral research unfolded and how I emerged as a gender and age scholar. It is therefore a great honour that I now, 16 years after the inception of IJAL, will be taking over as the Editor-in-Chief. I will be doing this work in close collaboration with the excellent and experienced editorial team consisting of Torbjörn Bildtgård, Cristina Joy Torgé and Peter Öberg, which I am very grateful for.

We live in uncertain and troubling times which raise urgent questions on the diverse presents and futures of ageing. The Covid-19 pandemic brutally exposed pervasive ageism, older people were isolated and often regarded as disposable, in particular older people living with illness and disability (Robertson & Travaglia f.c., Grenier & Phillipson f.c.). In this crisis it became evident that cultural and critical gerontologists have an important role to play, to interrogate the social and cultural representations of ageing and later life and the lived experiences of older people. In the upcoming years the major questions of our time, the climate crisis and ecological collapse, will undoubtedly be issues that we as critical age studies scholars will have to further interrogate. Extreme weather conditions will impact in particularly adverse ways on the health and mortality of older adults (Watts et al 2021). While every new generation experience shifts and changes in what it means to grow old, the climate crises will most likely be absolutely defining to later lives across the globe in the years to come.

Whatever the future holds there will be a continuous need to ‘unpack the metaphors of population ageing’ (Shivers 2021) and to explore how ageing is diversly experienced in variety of contexts, but also to turn the gaze upon ourselves to ask not only “what gerontology says but also “what gerontology does” (Katz 2014, 18). It is my ambition to continue the work with IJAL as a place for dialogue, debate and theoretical, methodological and empirical exploration for critical and cultural gerontologists from different disciplines and contexts.

References

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