Dale Dannefer & Chris Phillipson (eds.) (2010). *The SAGE Handbook of Social Gerontology.* Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: SAGE Publications, 712 pp. ISBN 978 1 4129 3464 0 (hardcover)

Reviewed by Peter Öberg*

The SAGE Handbook of Social Gerontology with 50 chapters on 712 pages is a comprehensive handbook covering a vast range of different topics in social gerontology. The chapters are generally well-written by internationally recognised experts representing multidisciplinary approaches to social gerontology. One of the editors is North American, the other European.

The book is divided into five sections. The first section, *Fundamental and Disciplinary Perspectives on Ageing,* gives an introduction to the book by eight chapters on topics such as: the life course, global history, economics, demography, epidemiology, disability and environmental perspectives – i.e. perspectives from central core disciplines in social gerontology.

The second section, *Ageing and Social Structure,* covers topics such as inequality, gender, ethnic and sexual minorities, religion, family, networks and intergenerational relations. The third section, *Ageing and Individual Change,* is comprised of chapters on identity, cognition, stress, agency and structure, wisdom, loneliness, health, dementia, the body and time.

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The fourth section, *Ageing, Culture, and Development*, covers the topics of – and comparative perspectives on – migration, global and population ageing, grandparents, health and anti-ageing medicine. The fifth and last section, *Ageing and Social Policy*, contains chapters on social policy from different contexts (European, North American, Australian) relating to topics such as work and retirement, long term care, technology and urban ageing, imprisonment in later life, politics, ethics and end of life issues.

The scope of the handbook is consistent, both in terms of its focus on social gerontology and sociological aspects on ageing, and when it comes to its global and comparative approach. While there always is a risk in social gerontology that empirical issues are too local and context bound to be relevant for readers from other places, the global perspective and the focus on theory in this volume make it valuable for readers from different parts of the world.

The chapters give good, well-written introductions and overviews of the field considered. The empirical parts in many chapters cover an impressive view of selected countries. For instance, in chapter 17, ''The Significance of Grandparents to Grandchildren: An International Perspective'', empirical material is used from the European Union, USA, Africa, Russia and China, among others. Some of the chapters however seem more local than global, e.g. chapter 11 on "Ageing and Health among Hispanics/Latinos in the Americas" – although there is an intention to generalize the issue concerning selective migration and health outcomes. A reader with special interests could always find some issues that have not been included, but still the 50 chapters correspond to what can be expected from a handbook in social gerontology.

The book is also well structured, although the difference between section two on social structure and section three on individual change seems to blur for some chapters. Chapter 18 on ''Friendship and Ageing'' is e.g. placed under section two on social structure, while the micro-macro theorizing in chapter 22 ''Agency and Social Structure in Aging and Life-Course Research'' is placed in section three on individual change.

One merit of the handbook is the generally strong emphasis on theories and theoretical perspectives, as can be found for instance in the historization and generational discussion on LGBT ageing in chapter 17. The book also includes chapters on rather ''new'' issues in social

gerontology, such as chapter 45 "Later Life and Imprisonment". The last chapters in the handbook are pointing at future directions and need of research, such as "Growing Old in the Century of the City" and "Technology and Older People".

In conclusion, this is an important contribution to the literature in social gerontology, covering a broad range of issues of high relevance which should be interesting internationally for both students and researchers in the field. It is easy to support one of the advertising statements about the publication, namely that this handbook should be in the library of every social gerontologist (or, one could add, at least the library of every social gerontology department – considering the price of the volume).