



Nordic Gerontological Federation

GeroNord

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

Volume 30, no 1, 2021

In this newsletter:

- [Words from the President](#)
- [The 25th NKG will be online](#)
- [Prof. Andrus Viidik In Memoriam](#)
- [Presentation of the prize winners for the 25NKG](#)
- [COVID-19 and the Nordic countries](#)
- [Recent doctoral dissertations](#)
- [The board of the NGF](#)

Words from the President

After last year full of restrictions, we may turn to 2021 with more optimism. The vaccinations have begun and we hope to be able to return to a more normal sense of life before the summer - even if I think we will all be changed and behave different than before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Even if we may be optimistic, we must still be realistic and take care. That is why we have decided that the 25th Nordic Congress of Gerontology will be an online congress.

The organizing committee has done a great job despite the uncertainties about whether it would be possible to arrange an onsite congress or not. We hope many of you will join us for 3 days of sharing knowledge and our common interest and engagement in the issues of ageing and later life.

Postponing the 25th NKG one year means that the 26th NKG will take place June 8-10, 2022. This time we will invite you all to join us in Odense, Denmark. The preparations are already in motion.

[Go here to learn more about the 26th NKG.](#)

For more information and updates about the online 25th NKG, please visit:

<https://www.25nkg.is>

2021 is also the year to welcome the new secretary and treasurer, Louise Scheel Thomasen. Louise is taking over the role after Linda Enroth from the Department of Health Sciences at Tampere University, who have been the backbone of the organization in the federation since 2017. Linda has done an excellent job and been an invaluable help, keeping an overview of the finances, preparing the meetings, and taken care of communication with the member organizations. I thank Linda for the collaboration and the dedication she has put into the job for almost 4 years.

The new secretary, Louise, is an anthropologist from the University of Copenhagen (2009) who have worked with research, editing and public administration in the area of elderly and late life. Currently

Words from the President

she is working on a qualitative project funded by the EGV Foundation in Denmark, focusing on elderly people receiving home care and how they experience and manage restrictions and risks related to COVID-19.



Linda Enroth,
Secretary & Treasurer,
2017-2021



Louise Scheel Thomasen,
Secretary & Treasurer,
2021-

I hope to see you online for the 25NKG in June!

Nils Holand,

President, The Nordic Gerontological Federation



The 25NKG will be online



Welcome to the 25th Nordic Congress of Gerontology,
June 2nd - 4th 2021,
ONLINE

About one year ago, we in the organizing committee were planning the science program and the social program of the NKG25 with the aim of having the best time of the year with our Nordic friends and colleagues in Reykjavik. Then a world pandemic turned our lives upside down, and we had to postpone the conference. During the past months, we in the organizing committee for the 25th NKG in Reykjavik have been holding on to a small hope that we would be able to welcome you in Reykjavik in person in the beginning of June 2nd - 4th 2021.

We were hoping to have a conference where we could meet and work on new and old networks away from the "home office" and the computer screen. To once again having to run between congress halls to catch the most exciting lectures, share a coffee with new acquaintances and savour good food and entertainment in the evenings. Unfortunately, the situation surrounding the COVID pandemic is still very uncertain, the vaccination program has been proceeding slower than hoped and the virus is still spreading globally. Therefore, we feel that we can no longer postpone our decision on how to proceed with the congress and that our only option at this point is to hold the NKG25 conference entirely online.

We are working hard to ensure a great online experience and will be ready with a new program in the coming few weeks. We will keep the dates and schedule for the online congress as close to those

The 25NKG will be online

for the onsite congress as possible, though minor changes might occur which will be announced with good notice. All accepted abstracts will remain accepted and we sincerely hope that you will be willing to participate in online form. The registration fee will be reduced and those who have already paid for an onsite congress but will want to keep their registration for new knowledge in geriatrics but online one will get a refund for the difference in fees. The reduced registration fee will also be announced shortly.

On behalf of the organizing committee of the 25th NKG,



Ólöf Guðný Geirsdóttir,
Secretary General

For more information, please visit <https://www.25nkg.is/>

Prof. Andrus Viidik In Memoriam



Professor Andrus Viidik In Memoriam

Jon Snaedal, professor emeritus, Reykjavik, Iceland

Eino Heikkinen, professor emeritus, Helsinki

Marianne Schroll, professor emerita, Copenhagen

Aase-Marit Nygaard, past CEO of Norsk kompetansesenter for aldersdemens, Norway

The Nordic Gerontological Federation (NGF) was established in 1972 and already two years later, Professor Andrus Viidik became secretary of the Association. In the remaining three decades of the twentieth century, NGF expanded and flourished and many new initiatives were presented, most of them still in place. Even though many distinguished researchers in gerontology and geriatrics were active inside NGF in its infancy, it is only fair to say that Andrus Viidik was the main driver in most of these initiatives. He served as secretary of NGF for 14 years under the leadership of Prof. Alvar Svanborg from Gothenburg and he was elected President of the association for another 14 years or until 2002. He was therefore an influential person in the association for 28 years.

Andrus always kept an open mind and saw NGF as an inclusive rather than exclusive federation. This was evident when the very structure of NGF was discussed. It had been an association of one gerontological and one geriatric association from each of the five Nordic Countries when a research association from Finland asked to join (Föreningen för forskning i uppväxt och åldrande). This was not welcomed by all Board members but through diplomacy, Andrus was able to secure changes in the Bylaws at the 10th Nordic Congress in Gerontology in Reykjavik in 1990 to allow for inclusion of other national associations and since 1992, members of NGF have been eleven for most of the time.

Just to mention some of the initiatives Andrus either proposed or supported was the current

Prof. Andrus Viidik In Memoriam

structure of the biannual Nordic congresses, the Gero Nord newsletter since 1992, the Sohlberg prize in Gerontology since 1994 and support to young researchers from not only the Nordic countries but also the Baltic States for attending the congresses. He started a collaboration with the Journal of Experimental Gerontology that lasted for two decades.

Under his leadership, the function of NGF was very well planned. The Board met annually, every second year at the congress and in the years between in Oslo where the Secretary was housed at Norsk Kompetansesenter for aldersdemens, Oskarsgate 36. Aase-Marit Nygaard worked closely with Andrus for many years as the secretary of NGF and Toril Utne at the centre was responsible for the meetings and together, they secured that decisions of the Board that concerned the Secretary were materialized. The Board meeting started when all board members had come to Oslo around lunch time. In the evening, there was a cultural event, often at the National Theatre followed by a dinner at a restaurant. The following morning, the meeting continued until lunch when Board Members left for home. The agenda was well structured and almost all decisions were made with consensus under the firm chairmanship of Andrus. However, it is clear that the social part of the meetings had also great influence for the Board and thereby for NGF as such.

Andrus Viidiks interest in Nordic collaboration was genuine. He was born in Estonia but came as refugee to Sweden with his family at an early age. He made his early carrier in Stockholm and became an internationally renowned researcher in biological gerontology. He was appointed as professor in gerontology in Aarhus in Denmark and during that time and with other researchers he initiated the Nordic Research in Ageing (NORA) project, an interprofessional longitudinal project on ageing in three Nordic areas, Gothenburg, Glostrup and Jyväskylä.

Andrus Viidik had an aristocratic appearance and he easily gained respect from his fellow collaborators. He was extremely knowledgeable of every aspects of NGF and he had good feeling of what was realistic to plan. When a decision had been made, he followed up important decisions of the Board.

Following his retirement, he moved to Austria where he lived with his wife, Monika Skalicky, another ageing researcher, for the rest of his life.

We think with gratitude to Andrus and his work for NGF and it is certain that the association would not have been the same without him.

The Sohlberg Prize Winner: Marta Szebehely



Marta Szebehely is a Professor Emeritus of Social Work at Stockholm University, Sweden.

She has been partnering and leading several Nordic and international comparative research projects on eldercare, and for almost four decades, she has analysed how policy and organisational changes in eldercare have affected the everyday life of care workers, older people with care needs and their family members.

Her research interests include gender, social policy and care; shifting boundaries of care (family, state, market); comparative and historical perspectives on care policies; everyday life perspectives on formal and informal care; living conditions and use of care among older and disabled people; working conditions in care work.

[Link to personal web page](#) (in Swedish).

Promising researcher in Gerontology: Agnete Aslaug Kjær



Agnete Kjær is PhD in Political Science and Chief Consultant at the City of Copenhagen's Finance Administration. Until December 2020 she was a researcher at VIVE – The Danish Centre for Social Science Research. Her academic work is centered on life course research within the field of social gerontology. In her research she focuses specifically on transitions and life events which influence late life outcomes. Agnete has published her work in journals in the fields of social gerontology, public health, and public administration. In her most recent research she investigates individual preferences for future long-term-care services.

COVID-19 and long-term care in the Nordic countries

On the 8th March 2021 a webinar brought together researchers on Long-Term Care from the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The speakers presented on how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected people who use and provide long-term care in their countries, considering both the public health policy responses and the underlying features of the care systems as factors in mediating the impact of pandemic in each country.

[Go here to watch the recordings and download the slides from the webinar.](#)



The slide is divided into four quadrants by a vertical and a horizontal line. The top-left quadrant is a dark grey rectangle containing white text. The top-right quadrant is white and contains two logos: CPEC (Care Policy and Evaluation Centre) and LSE (The London School of Economics and Political Science). The bottom-left quadrant is white and contains a list of speakers. The bottom-right quadrant is white and contains a globe icon and the text 'INTERNATIONAL LONG TERM CARE POLICY NETWORK' with a red play button icon.

Welcome to the LTC covid webinar, 8th March 2021

COVID-19 and Long-Term Care in the Nordic countries

- ❖ Tine Rostgaard (Denmark)
- ❖ Leena Forma and Mari Aaltonen (Finland)
- ❖ Olafur Samuelsson and Thordis Tomasdottir (Iceland)
- ❖ Frode Fadnes Jacobse (Norway)
- ❖ Marta Szebehely (Sweden)

CPEC
CARE POLICY AND EVALUATION CENTRE
Research at LSE

LSE
THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

INTERNATIONAL LONG TERM CARE POLICY NETWORK

1

COVID-19 and the Nordic countries

Speakers

Sweden

Marta Szebehely, Professor Emeritus from the Department of Social Work, Stockholm University.

Norway

Frode Fadnes Jacobsen, Professor and Research Director at Centre for Care Research, Western Norway.

Finland

Mari Aaltonen and Leena Forma (Gerontology Research Center (GEREC), Tampere University and Centre of Excellence in Research on Ageing and Care (CoE AgeCare), LF also University of Helsinki).

Denmark

Tine Rostgaard, Professor at Roskilde University, Denmark, and Stockholm University, Sweden.

Iceland

Olafur Samuelsson, MD specialist in geriatrics and int. medicine, Consultant Landspítali University hospital and Medical director for Eir Nursing Home.

Thordis Tomasdottir, Reg. Nurse, Infection Prevention Specialist and Quality Project Manager at Eir Nursing Home, Project Manager and team leader of SVÖT (Infection Control and safety team) for the Directorate of Health and the Department of Civil Protection and Emergency Management of Iceland.



A critical analysis of dementia-friendliness

Tania Erika Aniol Hansen has been awarded a PhD at the Department of Public Health at the University of Southern Denmark on January 28th 2021.

Background and aim

Worldwide, dementia-friendly environments are subject to intense political attention, and many initiatives to support such projects are taken. Literature showed dementia-friendliness as highly ambiguous and influenced by current cultural and historic trends. The understanding that dementia-friendliness discursively contains implicit understandings and ideological assumptions about rights, knowledge and identities related to people with dementia, which mirrors the ways in which dementia-friendliness is interpreted and expressed in society motivated this PhD project. The development and sustainable establishment of dementia-friendliness that meet the needs of people living with dementia therefore requires a clarification of its discursive construction. Thus, this study aimed at uncovering the before-mentioned implicit understandings and ideologies by exploring the discursive construction of dementia-friendliness.

Methods and material

The construction of dementia-friendliness was examined from different perspectives:

- 1) A policy perspective, by analysing five Danish and 16 international policy documents concerning dementia-friendliness.
- 2) The perspectives of people with dementia and their relatives through the analysis of thirteen semi-structured interviews, seven of which as individual interviews with people living with mild to moderate dementia. A further six interviews were conducted, three with the relatives of a person living with dementia and three with married couples affected by dementia. The empirical material also included notes from six months of fieldwork in a day centre for people with dementia and a drop-in centre for

Recent doctoral dissertations

people with dementia and their families and notes taken during participant observation of everyday activities with seven people living with dementia.

3) The perspectives of professionals involved in dementia care, project workers in dementia-friendly projects and communities by analysing three focus groups, of which two involved health professionals and one involved project workers engaged in establishing dementia-friendly nursing homes. Further, a semi-structured interview with a consultant and a project worker working with dementia-friendly initiatives on local authority level was included.

Inspired by Norman Fairclough critical discourse analysis, provided the theoretical framework and the analytical tool for studying the discourses constructing dementia-friendliness.

Results

Within the policy perspective, five discourses were identified: the socioeconomic, the rehabilitation, the knowledge, the responsibility and a good life. The analysis also showed dementia-friendliness embedded in an overall ideal of empowering the individual to maintain autonomy, take responsibility for his or her own life and health, and participate in society. Further, dementia-friendliness seems to become a means to compensate and protect people with dementia against the consequences of loss of competencies, identity, control and autonomy.

People with dementia and their relatives were challenged to construct the meaning of dementia-friendliness. In constructing dementia-friendliness, people with dementia and relatives drew on three discourses: the sameness discourse, the security and care discourse, and the autonomy discourse. Health professionals involved in dementia care and local authority representatives and project workers engaged in developing dementia-friendly initiatives constructed dementia-friendliness by drawing on four discourses. Two of the discourses concerned knowledge and responsibility. Yet, with slightly different formulations, the same discourses were also found in policy documents. The third and fourth discourse concerned dignity and illusion respectively, and may represent a distancing and incipient critique of the concepts of dementia-friendliness and dementia villages.

Recent doctoral dissertations

Across the studies, a discursive negotiation of being a person diagnosed with dementia as e.g. either disabled and dependent or autonomous and independent took place, which may influence the ways dementia-friendly initiatives develop, establish and are conceived by society in general.

Conclusion

Overall, dementia-friendliness appeared constructed by ten discourses, which appear to draw on somewhat opposing values related to standardization, and being a responsible, active citizen versus values related to an individual approach and emphasize individual rights, such as the freedom to follow one's own free will. The concept of dementia-friendliness seems generally to have currency in the political domain, to a lesser degree among professionals, and only marginally among people living with dementia and their families. Dementia-friendliness seems mutually influenced by the somewhat controversy way the social identity of people with dementia are discursively negotiated and constructed as e.g. either disabled and dependent or autonomous and independent. Therefore, dementia-friendliness appears to be framed by an overriding ideal of empowering the individual to maintain their autonomy and ability to participate in society. Dementia-friendly initiatives and communities become levers to achieve the ideal in order to compensate and protect people with dementia against the consequences of loss of competencies, identity, control, and autonomy.

Contact: taha@pha.dk

Recent doctoral dissertations



Doing informal care: Identity, couplehood, social health and information and communication technologies in older people's everyday lives

Frida Andréasson has been awarded a PhD in Health Sciences at the Linnaeus University, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Department of Health and Caring Sciences, on January 29th 2021.

Background and aim

It has been estimated that as much as 80 percent of all long-term care in Europe is provided by informal carers. Looking at the older segments of the Swedish population as many as one in four above the age of 65 are actually carers, in the sense that they on a regular basis provide practical help with activities of daily living, help with contacting authorities, personal care and more. Hence, given the vital role carers play in the support of older people living at home, it is essential that there are effective and responsive support services available to meet their needs and preferences for information, education and support. To date studies addressing the impact of informal care on different areas in the lives of carers tend to focus on one perspective at a time, either the carer or the care recipient. Although informal care is embedded within a relationship, it is often overlooked in the literature.

The aim of the thesis has been a) to analyse how informal care influences the identity of carers and care recipients, their sense of couplehood and social health, and b) to explore the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the context of informal care and the everyday lives of older people.

Methods and material

The thesis builds on four studies and in general an ethnographic approach to the research. Data have been gathered through ethnographic interviews and participation observations in carers and care recipients own homes, studying how informal care impacts on couplehood and social life. Further, postings on an online social forum targeted at informal carers were analysed, as well as carers participation in a co-design study aiming at developing a support programme for

Recent doctoral dissertations

carers.

Results

The findings of the thesis show that becoming and being a carer and care recipient have a significant impact on involved parties' daily life, their understanding of their relationship (couplehood) and self. To meet the needs and preferences of carers and care recipients, it is therefore vital to address informal care as an identity forming practice. Taking a relational perspective, the thesis shows that new power relationships and gender dynamics between spouses evolve due to a caring situation. Carers and care recipient's sense of "we" and "I", their couplehood, is being negotiated in different ways, in relation to for example health, sense of moral obligation within marriage, sense of autonomy and thoughts about a professionalised relationship.

Further, informal care has implications for the social health of carers and care recipients. Carers and care recipients often experience a sense of loneliness in their relationship. Not only is the social life of the care recipient affected by physical limitations due to illness, the thesis shows that there is a certain transferability of ill bodies also to carers. The thesis emphasise that online interaction (with other carers) can be used as a flexible and emancipatory mean for carers to socially negotiate their understanding and doing of informal care. ICT can also be used as a means to manage care, as well as a way for carers and care recipients to uphold (joint) hobbies, interests and social contacts, and negotiate couplehood.

Conclusion

There is a need for further research regarding the consequences of increasingly transferring the responsibilities for health and social care from the formal sector to informal carers (and care recipients). In a time when an increasingly amount of specialised care is being provided in people's own homes, there is also a need for increased knowledge on how this will potentially impact on the daily lives of carers and care recipients.

[Go here to learn more about the dissertation.](#)

Contact: frida.andreasson@lnu.se

Executive committee

Nils Holand: President

Steinunn Þórðardóttir: 1. Vice president

Marja Jylhä: 2. Vice president

Marijke Veenstra: Secretary General of the 24NKG

Christine E. Swane: Secretary General of the 26NKG

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 Geriatri ry - Finlands Geriatriker rf): Eija Lönnroos.

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 Íslands): Sírý Sif Sigurlaugardóttir & Sigrún Huld Þorgrímsdóttir.

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

Norway

Norwegian Society for Aging Research (Norsk selskap for aldersforskning): Marijke Veenstra.

Norwegian Geriatrics Association (Norsk geriatriisk forening): Nils Holand.

Sweden

Swedish Gerontological Society (Sveriges Gerontologiska Sällskap): Sofi Fristedt.

Swedish Geriatrics Society (Svensk Geriatrik Förening): Peter Nordström.

The Board & Executive Committee of the NGF

The Editorial Staff of GeroNord

Nils Holand: nholand@online.no

Louise Scheel Thomasen: contact@ngf-geronord.se

Secretary and treasurer

Louise Scheel Thomasen