

**Joint spring meeting of the sections  
Sociology of Medicine and Health & Age(ing) und Society  
of the German Sociological Association (DGS)**

**Age(ing) and health: Sociological theories and current findings**

*29.02.-01.03.2024 International Center (IBZ) at TU Dortmund University*

In the public discourse on the corona pandemic, a stereotype on age that was thought to have been overcome became prominent again. According to this, all older people over the age of 60 are collectively to be regarded as a medical risk group, irrespective of the high health and social diversity of this age group, which has been repeatedly proven in gerontological research. In connection with the continuing demographic aging of society, this is reason enough for us to take stock critically of the sociological state of research on the topic of "age(ing) and health" and thus also to make a contribution to social enlightenment. In addition to a discussion of current empirical findings, we will fundamentally reflect on whether and how current theoretical and methodological approaches in the sociology of age(ing) and medicine can adequately describe, understand and explain health inequalities and diversity in old age and the ageing process.

In particular, the focus will be on the following topics or research questions:

- 1.) How can health inequalities be assessed from a life course perspective? What age, cohort and period effects can be observed? Do health inequalities level off with advancing age, do continuities predominate, or do inequalities intensify, as claimed in theories of cumulative inequality? And finally, how do the findings change when very old people are also studied and interviewed in a methodologically adequate way that is representative of the population?
- 2.) Which political, mass media and scientific discourses structure and dominate the public debate on health and age(ing)? What impact do the discourses of successful, active and healthy age(ing) have on socio-political programs, gerontological research activities and individual health and disease behavior? How are individual and societal responsibilities addressed and negotiated in these debates, and what images of age and body are used as arguments?
- 3.) How can the social and political participation and inclusion of elderly and old people with chronic diseases and disabilities be secured and expanded? What can be done against discrimination and ageist structures that target health-impaired older people? How can

the ethical and social ambivalences associated with an increasing medicalization of ageing be captured by the approaches of critical gerontology?

- 4.) What common (but also different) trajectories have the theoretical developments of the sociology of medicine and health and the sociology of ageing taken since their role- and structure-functional beginnings in the 1940s/50s? Which theoretical approaches determine the current discussions in both special sociologies, and which overlaps and mutual influences can be observed?

The joint spring conference of the sections Age(ing) and Society & Sociology of Medicine and Health (in cooperation with the HBS PhD program "New Challenges in Ageing Societies" and the Science Master Plan of the City of Dortmund) will address these and other current issues with the help of theoretical, empirical and/or methodological contributions. International perspectives and comparisons are particularly welcome.

We look forward to receiving proposals for contributions (approx. 250 words with the usual information) by November 15, 2023 to [martina.brandt@tu-dortmund.de](mailto:martina.brandt@tu-dortmund.de) and [ludwig.amrhein@uni-vechta.de](mailto:ludwig.amrhein@uni-vechta.de). We will send you feedback on whether the contribution has been included in the program by the end of the year.