

## **Panel 2: Individual abstracts**

### **Fencing off and keeping close. Ambiguous intimacies and space in elderly Ik Lives**

*Lotte Meinert*

Based on current fieldwork among elderly Ik in Uganda I explore troubles with intimate others: Elderly interlocutors' practical problems with intimate others and with sustaining themselves; and conceptual trouble of delineating self and other in this context. Taking the intersubjectivity of bodies and spaces as a starting point for a phenomenological exploration, I consider the elderly's efforts of creating separate spaces and selves of their own.

Often those who are considered intimate others by elderly Ik are close kin, neighbors and friends who are proximate in space. Paradoxically this space is created with lots of physical barriers – not only external stockades around the village for protection – but also internal fences which separate intimate spheres between kin, houses, kitchens and granaries. Keeping intimate others at some distance, but still close is particularly essential, but also troublesome for the elderly as they grow increasingly dependent on others. In this intersubjective sphere the elderly share and keep wisdom, blessings, cash, alcohol, and tobacco, in exchange for intimate others' food, water, firewood and care. The sharing and keeping speaks to larger questions of relationality as a basic human condition. I discuss this relational condition with the feminist phenomenologist Lisa Guenther's work and highlight the deeply ambiguous features of practical relationality and elderly Ik people's work of cultivating 'intimate others' - keeping close, but still at some distance - as a way to sustain themselves.

### **Welfare others – dependencies in patient care paths after hospital**

*Helle Wentzer*

'Welfare others' is not an expression of irony. We tend to think of intimate others as family and friends but in a contemporary Danish context significant intimate others are often from the welfare state. An ethnographic exploration of elderly patient care paths in Denmark after discharge from hospital confirms the role of the 'welfare other' in securing the citizens a safe homecoming. Elderly with multimorbidity and chronic diseases often discover uncertainties in what will happen next, who will care for them, and what the future will bring. A sudden fall might bring turmoil into the daily life of the elderly that transcends the physical and social borders of the individual person. Suddenly the elderly is dependent on 'the other' as welfare state, as health care system, and as health care professionals. Family and friends stand at the outskirts, waiting and looking by, perhaps granting a visit within visiting hours, bringing some personal stuff, and watering the flowers at the elderly's home. The uncertainties of the elderly become theirs as well: what are their tasks, and roles to play as 'intimate others'?

The interlocutors point to welfare others who have played a significant role in restoring their life, not as it was before, but configured into the new life conditions. The philosophers Levinas and Løgstrup, both present the relational other as the foundation of ethics. The paper reflects their phenomenological analysis of the face and the interdependence of the other in an analysis of the elderly's experiences of their care paths and the welfare other's role herein.

### **Aging as a relational act: Inter-bodies, alterities, and the ethics of care**

*Cheryl Mattingly*

Focusing on the ethical relationality of care has the potential to significantly contribute to considerations of the aging body. It can even, in a very basic way, raise the question: Who is the aging self? In the case I present, Nicholas, a severely cognitively and physically impaired boy who is almost blind, cannot talk, and is nearly paralyzed, is being collectively raised by his great-grandmother, his grandmother and his great-aunt. Old age, in this household, is something shared among the three women rather than an attribute attached to a particular body or individual. While the women certainly experience their bodies as in one sense their own, they also share an inter body-self because of their shared project of care. By contrast, Nicholas, the centripetal force that has propelled this intensively intertwined mothering, is decidedly different. His body and its vulnerabilities are not shared. To be connected to him demands cultivating unusual avenues of relationality. Touch assumes vital importance. Rubbing noses, for example, is a shared pleasure between Nicholas and his grandmother; relationality emerges across deep bodily divides. Feminists have long argued for an ethics that emphasizes relationality and care of others. Drawing upon feminist phenomenologists, I consider aging in this household as an ethical project that both complicates an ethical emphasis on self-cultivation and calls for an ethics of alterity.

### **From money to poop**

*Harmandeep Gill*

When the first Tibetans escaped into exile in 1959, they hoped to return to Tibet within a few years. However, today they find themselves growing old in exile. Elderly Tibetans lead lives often characterized by uncertainty, partly due to their status as 'refugees' but particularly due to the large on-migration in recent years of exile-Tibetan youth to Western nations. This has left many elderly alone in the last phase of their lives. In many cases, children or family members living abroad often provide care for aging parents/relatives through financial support. While the elderly's livelihood is often provided for through financial support by family, the most intimate support and care such as maintenance of the body is in many cases provided by hired caretakers or other non-kin. Many elderly engage in different types of relations with non-kin. This can be the hired Tibetan/Indian caretakers, people from the same birthplace in Tibet, the next-door neighbour, an anthropologist like me, NGO workers, staff at an old age home, Tibetan-Buddhist deities etc.

Dying in the absence of family or children is also regarded as a 'bad' form of death, which can result in a bad rebirth as well. In my paper, I will explore how the current situation affects the elderly Tibetans' expectations of care and intimate others. Who becomes the intimate other when family is absent? What does it mean to be intimate with someone? Last but not least, what becomes of the 'good' death in the absence of family?

### **Ghosts from the past – German elders and the presence of World War 2**

*Thomas Schwartz Wentzer*

In a nursery home for men, driven by a public charity related to the Catholic Church in Germany, biographies crossed in a way that exhibits the intricacies of German history. The material of this paper goes back to an eight-months-stay at a particular nursery home in the city of Aachen thirty years ago. In those years, victims of the Nazi-regime were living side by side with their perpetrators, having to deal with the daily prospect of eating together, celebrating Christmas or Cologne carnival, going to service on Sunday etc. These settings did not only encompass the actual victims or Nazi-representatives, but their relatives and family care-givers too, as well as the professionals (the nurses, the priest, the civil service people etc.). How does one conceptualize these intergenerational experiences in and with history? – Drawing on a phenomenological or hermeneutical account, the paper will try to elaborate the idea of lived history as responsiveness-in-proxy; somebody responds to the requests of history on behalf of somebody else.

