

In her lecture, Judith Brehmer will explore the history and complex role of pensioners' clubs within the socialist welfare system of Czechoslovakia from the late 1950s to the 1980s. Faced with the challenges of retirement in a society prioritizing work and productivity, these clubs emerged to counteract potential loneliness and social or political exclusion among older adults. Drawing on detailed records from the pensioners' club in Rožňava (in the Košice region) and insights from other clubs across the country, Judith Brehmer will discuss the sometimes conflicting goals of these organizations—balancing social care for older people with efforts to engage them in the workforce. She will analyze the establishment and activities of the clubs, exploring the extent of members' self-management as well as their individual perspectives on their involvement in the club and their relevance within the socialist society. The lecture will examine how state authorities and pensioners themselves negotiated different ideas of a “successful” old age within these spaces and argue that while the state aimed to integrate the ideal of the socialist worker into old age, pensioners' clubs primarily functioned as local, subsidiary structures facilitating social engagement.

Judith Brehmer works as a research coordinator at Collegium Carolinum (Research Institute for the History of the Czech Lands and Slovakia) and is a PhD candidate at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München. Her project “Un/Doing Old Age in Socialist Czechoslovakia 1948–1989” explores processes of constructing and deconstructing Old Age as a life stage in public discourse, social care institutions and on the individual level under socialist rule. She has studied political science, law and East European studies in Munich. Her research interests also include the gender history of Czechoslovakia in the 20th century, with articles published in journals such as *Bohemia* (2020) and *Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung* (2024).

Zoom link: [IOS Regensburg Combating Isolation, Maintaining Engagement: Pensioners' Clubs and Social Participation in Socialist Czechoslovakia](#)

September 25–27, 2025

University of Graz, “WALL” building, Merangasse 70, 8010 Graz

More information [here](#).

The workshop “Unpacking Inequalities: Ageing, Care, and Gender in Southeast Europe” will bring together scholars to discuss the intersectional dimensions of ageing and care work, particularly within the Southeast European context. It will begin with a panel discussion that examines the social, political, and financial aspects of ageing and care work through critical ethnographic and intersectional research. Following this, we invite you to a documentary screening that highlights the personal and ethical dilemmas faced by a female caregiver balancing her responsibilities and choices followed by a discussion. The workshop will take place on **November 7, 2024**, from **15:00 to 19:00** at the **University of Graz, Elisabethstraße 27, SR 67.01** (Ground Floor).

## Program Highlights:

15:00 – 16:30 | Panel Discussion

### **Being part of a European Family: Perspectives of Female Paid Domestic Care Workers from Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**Nejra Nuna Čengić** (Anthropologist & Former Marie Curie Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for South-East European Studies)

### **Transforming Anxieties of Aging in Southeastern Europe: Project Outline and Preliminary Results**

**Ulla Kriebelnegg** (Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Aging and Care)

**Ivana Spirovska** (Centre for Southeast European Studies)

16:30 – 17:00 | Coffee Break

17:00 – 19:00 | Film Screening & Discussion

**Măine Mă Duc - Tomorrow I Leave** directed by Maria Lisa Pichler and Lukas Schöffel

(Documentary Film, 75 min, Romanian & German with English subtitles)

### About the Panelists

**Nejra Nuna Čengić** is an anthropologist, dealing with transformation of labour, social memory and war violence. During the last three years, she was a Marie Curie Postdoctoral fellow at the University of Graz, Centre for Southeast European Studies, researching female domestic paid care work in Bosnia and Herzegovina and beyond.

**Ulla Kriebelnegg** is professor of Cultural Aging and Care Research and director of the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Aging and Care (CIRAC) at the University of Graz. She has a background in North American Studies and is associate editor of *The Gerontologist*. She is a PI in the project “Transforming Anxieties of Ageing in South Eastern Europe” (Volkswagen Foundation).

**Ivana Spirovska** is a Doctoral candidate and a Researcher at the Centre for Southeast European Studies on the project “Transforming Anxieties of Ageing in Southeast Europe”, funded by the Volkswagen Foundation. She has a background in law, education and migration studies. Human rights, statelessness, national/ethnic minorities, and migration have been at the heart of her research.

Kristijan Fidanovski is a doctoral candidate at the University of Oxford, currently conducting research as a visiting fellow at the Center for Southeast European Studies (CSEES) at the University of Graz.

**Date:** 5 November 2024

**Time:** 1-2 pm (CET)

**Place:** Centre for Southeast European Studies (CSEES) & SOEGA & Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft, SR 111.41,  
Beethovenstr. 8, 4.OG (4th floor), 8010 Graz and online

Join via [Zoom](#)

In her lecture, Julie Vullnetari applies a generational lens to understanding the role of older people in development, focusing primarily on older parents who stay in areas of origin while their adult children emigrate. An emerging body of literature from around the world demonstrates that older parents frequently provide childcare for their migrant family members, mainly in the country of origin, and sometimes through migrating themselves. This lecture goes further. It makes the conceptual argument that this carework should be regarded as development work. Drawing on research into Albanian families, located in Albania and Greece, Julie Vullnetari asks how does carework by older people contribute to development and what are the relations of power around this? The analysis shows that grandparents provide significant support particularly for childcare but also for social reproduction and critically for building and maintaining productive assets and safety nets for migrants in their home country. In short, grandparent carers are the lynchpins in complex intergenerational strategies of migration and livelihood development. The analysis contributes to the literature on migration and development by bringing older people from the margins to the centre of these debates. Older people's childcare, together with other productive and reproductive activities that they undertake for migrant children in countries of origin, is central to invisibilized 'economies of care' that underpin migration's contribution to development. Moreover, this carework by older people contributes to development in home and host countries, thus bridging the Global South-Global North divide. Finally, older people's carework is gendered, with older women doing the vast majority. Taken together, these insights disrupt two dominant (economistic and Eurocentric) narratives that: (a) development in migration contexts only happens in the Global South and (b) the most significant drivers of this development are migrants' social and financial remittances from the Global North.

Julie Vullnetari is Associate Professor of Human Geography at the University of Southampton (UK), where she has been researching and teaching on migration and development for the last 10 years. The intersection of ageing and migration is one of her key areas of interest, and she has researched this from the perspective of older people in migrants' areas of origin. Empirically, her research has been grounded in studying Albanian migration, both internal and international, although she has supervised PhD students researching other geographical contexts such as India, Pakistan, the Philippines, the UK, and more recently the Caribbean. Alongside migration, Julie Vullnetari has also worked on exploring everyday life in socialist societies (also in Albania), within which she has developed scholarship around feminist geopolitics of borders. She is also passionate about equality and inclusion and has recently supervised participatory action research on understanding student experiences from ethnic minority backgrounds in her Faculty, with the aim of making university spaces anti-racist and inclusive.

Zoom link:

IOS Regensburg Older People's Contribution to Development Through Carework: The Role of Childcare by Grandparents in Migration and Development

This lecture is part of the Lecture Series on Aging and Care that is organized over the course of the summer semester 2024 by the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Aging and Care (CIRAC) at the University of Graz. The 3rd lecture will be held by Prof. Dr. Sarah Falcus (CIRAC Fellow). Her lecture is titled: "Not-so-secret Gardens: Age, Generation and 'Greenness' in Children's Picturebooks."

**Date:** 29 May 2024

**Time:** 18:00-19:30

**Place:** HS 15.06 (RESOWI) and online

Other lectures and links can be found [here](#)

The Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Aging and Care (CIRAC) at the University of Graz is organizing a Lecture Series over the course of the summer semester 2024.

The 2nd lecture in the series will be held by Prof. Dr. Anita Wohlmann from the University of Southern Denmark (SDU) in Odense. Her lecture is titled: "Abortion Narratives: Reproductive Health Care between Nuance and Polarization."

**Date:** 22 May 2024

**Time:** 18:00-19:30

**Place:** HS 15.06 (RESOWI) and online

Other lectures and links can be found [here](#)

This lecture is part of the Lecture Series on Aging and Care that is organized over the course of the summer semester 2024 by the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Aging and Care (CIRAC) at the University of Graz. The 1st lecture will be held by Prof. Dr. Valerie Barnes Lipscomb from the University of South Florida, USA. Her lecture is titled: "Age-conscious Casting: Comedy and the Middle-Aged Ingenue."

**Date:** 13 May 2024

**Time:** 18:00-19:30

**Place:** HS 15.14 (RESOWI, Bauteil E, 1st floor) and online

Other lectures and links can be found [here](#)

In their lecture, Alanna Armitage and Zeljko Blagojevic will discuss demographic trends, with a focus on population ageing in Europe. Alanna Armitage will highlight the consequences of framing population ageing solely as a threat, arguing that it skews data collection, exacerbates intergenerational conflicts, perpetuates ageist stereotypes, and fosters policy environments that can neglect or even endanger the lives of older individuals. Conversely, Zeljko Blagojevic will counter this narrative by arguing that while ageing presents significant challenges to economies, proactive societal interventions – such as implementing preventative health measures and promoting active engagement in activism and volunteerism – can effectively mitigate associated costs and foster social development.

Alanna Armitage is UNFPA Representative for Mexico and Country Director for Cuba and the Dominican Republic. She is the former Director of UNFPA's Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia. She holds a PhD in Anthropology and Sociology of Development from the Geneva Graduate Institute. Her research has focused on exploring how imagination and ideology, rather than purely technical considerations around demographic data, are central to the creation and construction of the notion of population crisis. She is the author of numerous articles including a recent chapter "The silver tsunami, the ticking time bomb and other demographic imaginaries: Moving from demographic threat to demographic resilience", in the edited book, *Ageing of the Oppressed: A Pandemic of Intersecting Injustice* (Perel-Levin 2023). She is committed to bringing academic knowledge and policy worlds together in the pursuit of more robust public policies that improve people's lives and wellbeing.

Zeljko Blagojevic, Population and Development Programme Specialist at UNFPA Bosnia and Herzegovina since 2016, has focused on promoting demographic resilience policies and evidenced based strategies to contribute to the increased pace of socioeconomic development in the Western Balkans. With over 27 years of experience in programme management, Zeljko has worked closely with government authorities, civil society, and the private sector to find innovative solutions for improving the lives of different population groups. In collaboration with the University College London, he co-implemented surveys on loneliness in older persons and the impact of healthy ageing centres. He has advocated and contributed to the establishment of a network of healthy ageing centres in BiH that represent a unique and low-cost initiative with high return on investment in terms of health prevention and local activism/voluntarism.

Alanna Armitage and Zeljko Blagojevic's lecture is part of the project "Transforming Anxieties of Ageing in Southeastern Europe. Political, Social, and Cultural Narratives of Demographic Change", funded by VolkswagenStiftung.

Zoom link:

[IOS Regensburg Ageing in Europe: Navigating the Divide between Threat and Opportunity \(leibniz-ios.de\)](https://leibniz-ios.de)

This lecture is organised by the Cluster Aging, Demography and Care of the University of Graz research network Heterogeneity and Cohesion in cooperation with the research project Transforming Anxieties of Aging in Southeastern Europe: Political, Social, and Cultural Narratives of Demographic Change, funded by VolkswagenStiftung.

The speaker, Tatjana Petzer, is Professor of Slavic Literary and Cultural Studies at the Department of Slavic Studies at the University of Graz. In her talk, she will ask two main questions: Can death be overcome, should man become immortal? The findings of the natural and life sciences since modern times have created a new awareness of mortality and the prolongation of life. With cybernetics, digital and human enhancement technologies, physical immortality can no longer be scientifically dismissed. Tatjana Petzer will present literary thought experiments by three authors from the former Yugoslavia, Vladan Desnica, Borislav Pekić, and Stevan

Pešić, who, against the background of contemporary developments in the experimental disciplines, vividly discussed the ambivalent way in which humans deal with their knowledge of the possible dissolution of the limits of life.

The lecture will take place on site and online.

**Room 33.1.224**, Department of Slavic Studies, Merangasse 70, 8010 Graz, first floor.

To receive the **Zoom** link, please **register** by **19 March** 2024, 12:00, via e-mail to: [natalie.klimenko@uni-graz.at](mailto:natalie.klimenko@uni-graz.at)

By registering, you consent to the processing of your personal data (name, institution, e-mail address) for the purpose of organising the event.