Ageing and Later Life: Unsettling Development Assumptions

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Abstract: This Special Issue brings into focus the topic of ageing and of older people, both of which have been neglected and/or narrowly addressed in development studies and policymaking. As such, this collection of articles seeks to unsettle some of the stereotypes that are commonplace in development debates that portray older people as frail, vulnerable, burdensome and passive. It does so by looking at the process of ageing and the lived experiences of older people across a range of topics and geographical locations. We hope that through this collection we have initiated a conversation around the place of ageing and older people in development from a relational and intergenerational perspective; that is, from a perspective that is focused around interdependence between older people and wider society rather than one restricted to the dependence of the former on the latter.

Key words: Ageing and development, conceptualizations of age, interdependencies in ageing and development, intergenerational perspectives on ageing and development, older people in development, UN Decade of Healthy Ageing

I. Introduction

This Special Issue brings into focus a neglected topic, that of ageing, and a neglected group, that of older people. Taking on the invitation by Jones (2011) who, in this very journal, called on readers to 'make space' for younger people in development, we argue that now is the time to also 'make space' for older people as well as ageing as a process. The argument for space making is not solely derived from global trends in declining fertility and population ageing (UNDESA, 2022), but from the recognition that ageism and age discrimination may be undoing material and social advances made earlier in life. This undermines the rights of older persons and can negatively impact families, community, environment and national economy. We argue that making space for older persons will support both older people and wider society. Making space for older people in development must include a review of concepts and approaches deeply embedded within development debates. This collection of articles seeks to unsettle stereotypes that are commonplace in development debates in which older people are portrayed as frail, vulnerable, burdensome and passive. It does so by looking at the lived experiences of older people across a range of topics and geographical locations.

This will be a first Special Issue, to our knowledge, in a decade or so, that aims to take older people beyond the lenses of loneliness, ill-health and vulnerability in development debates and discusses their diverse lives in

context. Between them, the articles decentre widespread notions of age and ageing, critique conceptualizations of age and intergenerational relations rooted in coloniality and Western European perspectives and adopt theoretical approaches that take local knowledges as points of departure.[1]

This introduction to the Special Issue provides a brief background on approaches to later life that have shaped policy and development agendas, starting with an assessment of how issues of ageing in development have been neglected in policy and academic debates, before continuing with a focus on demographic trends and debates. We present alternative strategies for thinking about later life, the relations between people of different age groups and, most significantly, whether and how development initiatives in earlier life stages can be carried forward into later life. Finally, the article will briefly review the articles in this Special Issue. Through this review, we aim to move the debate on, from what might be called development gerontology's focus on what older people as a group need, to a better understanding of their already existing contributions to development alongside a contextualized understanding of how their needs vary. The articles in this special issue cover a range of development-related topics: from multilateral ageing and development policies, migration and development, translocal and intra-household dynamics, representation of older people in the media and public policy, social care provision for older people who can be both vulnerable and 'resilient', to creating sustainable development in the context of environmental change. Collectively, they provide the basis for new thinking about ageing as a social process and older people and development, and make the case that both need to be central to development thinking and development interventions.

II. 'The Last Minority' in Development Studies

'Why don't we care about older people as much as children?'—a provocative question posed by Guardian journalist, Glennie (2015). Reflecting on a collection of essays edited by the international Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Age International (2015), including an essay by Vera-Sanso, Glennie suggests that the reason for the neglect of later life in development arises from institutional and perceptual factors. Glennie points to the contrast between the high-profile role of UNICEF in the development space and the support of children and youth in the Sustainable Development Goals, on the one hand, and the much more limited focus on older people's rights on the other. He goes on to highlight the perceived threat of jobless, disaffected youth to national and international progress and stability as a contributing factor to this perception. Such a perception is underpinned by the idea that older people are not part of the solution to development issues, while youth have the potential to be actively engaged in change. In the development space's imagination, older people are primarily associated with the past. This viewpoint is long-standing; the United Nations' Human Development Index (HDI), which is the UN's key measure of development, was launched in 1990. HDI focuses on national achievements at the early end of the life course, that is life expectancy at birth and schooling.[2] In recognition of this, the UN Economic Commission for Europe introduced the Active Ageing Index, which aimed at measuring the 'untapped potential of older people [age 55 and above] for active and healthy ageing', measuring independence, paid employment, social participation and capacity to age actively (UNECE, undated). More useful is HelpAge International's *Global Age Watch Index*, in which the aim is not to locate untapped potential but to track how well older people are faring in 96 high-, middle- and low-income countries by focussing on income security, health status, capability (employment and education) and enabling environment (HelpAge International, undated).

Social policy more generally is permeated by a 'social investment perspective' that considers children as the future, and key to a country's

future economic growth, whereas older people are positioned as a 'burden' on 'economically active' or working age groups and a 'drain' on a country's finances, either through demands on healthcare provision or the drawing of old-age pensions. However, far from being a burden, older people's work, whether paid or unpaid, is critical to household economies, family networks and, if we trace the forward linkages of their work, plays a significant role in helping a nation carve out a place within the global economy (Vera-Sanso, 2012; Vullnetari, this volume).

This lack of attention to later life is partly due to individual and population ageing being erroneously considered a high-income-country issue. It was not until the First World Assembly on Ageing held in Vienna in 1982, that ageing came to be recognized by global development players as an issue of concern for developing countries. The UN's adoption of the Vienna Action Plan on Ageing singled out 'older persons and development' as the top priority area in global development agendas (UNFPA, 2012: 31). Since 1982, the UN has made repeated calls for including older people into development agendas with limited success, leading Desai to decry the 'almost total absence of discussion on ageing *and poverty* in the global development agenda' (2014: 460; see also Lloyd-Sherlock, 2004a; Vera-Sanso and Sweetman, 2009; and articles by Vera-Sanso and Vullnetari in this issue). We have yet to see whether this marginalization of later life from development agendas will start to change with the UN's Decade of Healthy Ageing (2020–2030) being positioned as critical to the Sustainable Development Goals' success.

Similar to policy arenas, the field of development studies has paid scant attention to people in older ages, leaving the concerns of this group to what might be called gerontology of the Global South. Instead, the focus has been on younger people and children as this journal's selected areas of interest and history of articles demonstrates (see Jones, 2005, 2008, 2011; also Bourdillon, 2004; Mayo, 2001). In this journal, this is the first Special Issue to focus on older people. The central concern here is not the focus on young people but the exclusion of older people and the consequent lack of understanding of the ways lives are linked both synchronically and across the life course. Failing to acknowledge and understand these linkages may prevent the developmental benefits gained in early life being carried forward into later life and may have implications for the intergenerational transmission of well-being (Lloyd-Sherlock and Locke, 2008). It is indicative that one of the earlier publications on older people and development was published by the international NGO HelpAge International (Randel et al., 1999). Development studies as a discipline has paid some attention to ageing and the life course (see for example, the work of Vera-Sanso, 2006, 2007, 2012; Wright, 2012; for broader discussions on the importance of a life-course approach see Bailey, 2009; for a gendered life-course approach, including masculinity, see Vera-Sanso, 2010, 2016; for methodological concerns see Locke and Lloyd-Sherlock, 2011). Chapters on ageing exist in three main Handbooks of or Companions to Development Studies, edited by Clark (Lloyd-Sherlock, 2006) and the third edition of Desai and Potter (Desai, 2014) and Sims et al. (Vera-Sanso, 2022). The *Sage Handbook on Aging, Work and Society* (Field et al., 2013), *Demographics, Employment and Old Age Security* (Alam and Barrientos, 2010) and *Population Ageing and International Development* (Lloyd-Sherlock, 2010) are notable exceptions to the scant research into older people's economic contributions and rights in development studies publications. However, these publications have yet to make a lasting impact on development debates. Just as concerning as older people's near absence from the development literature is the dominance of the unidimensional portrayal of older people as vulnerable and needing development interventions that overlooks older people's *actual* and *potential* contributions to development (Lloyd-Sherlock, 2004b; Vera-Sanso, 2016).

This unidimensional portrayal is partly due to uncertainties as to what terms, such as 'older persons', 'older people' and 'ageing', refer

to. Do they refer to an objective category of people or to a social status? Does ageing refer to a process or is it a euphemism for old age? Is ageing more a social or a biological process? Just as the term 'youth' has a mobile reference point so does 'older person'. For statistical purposes the UN defines 'youth' as persons aged 15–24, whereas the African Union defines it as 15–35 years. Because the experience of being socially classified as young can vary substantially between countries the UN consider 'youth' as a flexible category, stating that 'context is always an important guide to UNESCO's definition of youth' (UNESCO, undated). The value of this approach lies in recognizing that age-based or life-stage statuses are socially constructed and relational; people are younger or older in relation to some thing or some person(s). Often the classification justifies constraint and discrimination. For example, people may be considered 'too young' or 'too old' to receive pay equal to that of their prime-age co-workers, or people in their early teens and older may be classed as 'too old' for education when family resources are tight and choices are being made as to who will go to school and who will work. While 'older persons' can refer to a socially constructed category or an imposed category, as happens in policy-orientated and survey-based research, research into the sociology of ageing investigates the social process of ageing. This is the socially determined process of moving from the status of 'adult' to being socially classed as 'older'/'old' or, more accurately, 'too old for this' or 'too old to do this'—a classification that is relational and contextualized, hence unstable (Vera-Sanso, 2017). Research into later life and development has yet to interrogate these transitions from adult status to a later life status and the social and material losses that this engenders. Instead, research and policy are focused on ameliorating losses once people are defined as 'old'.

To date, research tends to use the terms 'ageing', 'older', 'the old', 'elder', 'elderly' and 'seniors' interchangeably, although there are tendencies towards or away from certain terms reflecting author's engagement with, often regional, trends on respectful terminology (e.g., Cook and Halsall, 2011; Reygan and Henderson, 2019). This means that we must read research and databases with an eye to how age and ageing are being defined. For example, while the United Nations' term 'older persons' has the merits of recognizing everyone as persons and age as a social and relational classification, the UN undermines this nuance by imposing chronological cut-offs. These cut-offs not only differ between UN departments and across UN literature, but they have risen over the years from age 50 to age 60 and 65, and are increasingly being driven more by high-income country policy interests than low- and middle-income-country contexts (UNDESA, 2019).

It is past time that issues concerning 'the last minority', as Gorman (1995) labelled older people in development at the turn of the 1990s, are made visible. Visibility is only part of the problem, as we discuss in the next section of this article. Centring older people's perspectives and unsettling stereotypes around their role and participation in development is the harder part. Much more work is needed in this area and the articles in this Special Issue point to potential directions in which an ageing and development lens could take the development agenda. Despite the scale of the task, we are now in a good position to reignite calls for development policy and research to focus on ageing and development, partly due to the global demographic shift: there are now more people aged over 60 than under age 5. Later life, in terms of health and care, if not in economic terms, is considerably more visible due to the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing. The Decade's objective is to 'foster healthy ageing' and 'to improve the lives of older people, their families and communities in which they live' (UN Decade for Healthy Ageing, undated). In order to meet the central transformative promise of the SDGs' 'Leave no one behind', the UN identifies four areas for action: age-friendly environments, combatting ageism, integrated care and long-term care. This is a welcome

initiative in that it moves the debate from framing global demographic transition in a crisis-based discourse that positions older people as a present and looming burden. Instead, the UN presents a rights-based framework that locates older people within their families, communities and nation. The most significant call is to reverse ageist stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination at all scales of the development project—from interpersonal relations right through to research, policy formation and implementation. The SDGs' call to reverse ageism in the development agenda demands an approach that foregrounds how physical, social and economic environments are themselves drivers of incapacities, vulnerabilities and dependences—the point here being that there is no more uniformity to ageing than there is to childhoods, gendered relations and so on.

The call to reverse ageist stereotyping necessitates a shift from seeing older people as inevitably vulnerable, passive and dependent. This aligns well with existing and emerging research that unearths a complex reality. This research finds that many people in later life are resilient, lead active lives and make direct contributions to the survival and well-being of their family members as well as to development more broadly, though frequently under conditions of significant hardship (Age International, 2018; Bastia, 2009; Bastia et al., 2021, 2022; Harris-White et al., 2013; King et al., 2017; Vera-Sanso, 2007, 2010, 2012; Yarris, 2017).

III. Beyond the Demographic Crisis Approach to Later Life and Development

Despite the erroneous but widely held belief that an ageing population is mainly a concern for high-income countries, the reverse is true. While the UNDESA (2019) predicts that the number of people aged over 65 will double by 2050 to 1.5 billion people, two-thirds will live in less developed countries. These numbers have given rise to a population crisis approach that can be seen in key texts such as the World Bank's *Averting the Age Old Crisis* (1994).

Underpinning the demographic crisis approach to population ageing is the assumption that older people do not and cannot support themselves in later life, that they are a burden on 'working age' people, either directly on their families or on the population of workers. However, when we drill down into the literature we find unsettling information. The idea of later life incapacity is the remnant of policy objectives around employment strategies in labour surplus post-war European, labour unions' pension objectives and capital's post-war attempt to rejuvenate its labour force (Walker, 1980). In the United States, this work/retirement model of the life course is limited to white collar and unionized blue collar. It did not apply to women and minorities whose paid work histories were episodic and part-time (Moen, 2013). In most parts of the world, most people still do not have any pensions and need to work into deep old age (Barrientos, 2009; Vera-Sanso, 2012, 2013, 2017). Only those who either have assets themselves or who have economically secure relatives can retire. The vast majority of the world's older people have always contributed to family subsistence strategies or been self-supporting through paid and unpaid work, be that by directly earning a living, through manufacturing, agriculture or service work, or indirectly, by looking after children, negotiating loans or representing family interests in community level formal and informal fora (and so on) (Bastia, 2009; Vera-Sanso, 2017; Vullnetari, this volume).

Taking seriously the SDG objective of 'Leave no one behind' requires moving beyond the demographic crisis approach, yet this is hampered by the paucity of reliably conceptualized 'data'. The first issue is the limited conceptualization of what activity counts as worth counting. This is a long-standing issue regarding unpaid work, which erases the value of the work that women, children and older people put into (re)producing the family, community, labour power and socialized citizens for today, tomorrow and years to come (Raghuram, 2012; Razavi, 2007), the

importance of which was amply demonstrated over the COVID pandemic. This conceptualization of what counts as work is both sexist and ageist, and clearly discriminatory, contributing heavily to policy and practice that reproduce a deficit model of later life. The SDG demand for better data, which appears to be leading to more data on older people's paid work, will go some way towards removing some of the erasure, although the social construction of 'work' and 'worker', versus 'just passing time', in later life has yet to be addressed (Vera-Sanso, 2012). More work is needed to develop ways of conceptualizing and capturing essential areas of activity that are neither acknowledged nor commodified.

The second issue is the conceptualization of age. As data analysis, policy and implementation practices orientate themselves around chronologically set age boundaries, what should be set as the threshold for later life? It is notable that the threshold has been rising in UN documentation; in 2019, it jumped from 60 to 65 (UNDESA, 2019), a figure driven by developed country concerns about pension age thresholds. Not only are births not registered in many developing countries, making chronological data unreliable, but there is a social health gradient evident in every world region, in that poorer people age faster than people who benefit from better nutrition, healthcare and better living and working conditions (Marmot, 2005). Further, as age is a relational social status, strong arguments exist for a culturally determined life stage-based definition of age (Lamb, 2000).

The social health gradient and the life staged-based definition foreground ageing as a social process, the former based on political economy and the latter on social categorization. These two perspectives warn us that we need to be alert to conceptualizations of aging that attempt to generalize a culture-specific or class-specific model. One such model is the widely used four-stage model of ageing based on levels of dependence and health. The model's first age is one of dependence (learning), the second of independence (earning), the third

age of healthy independence (retirement) and the fourth of 'final dependence, decrepitude and death' (Laslett, 1987: 135). As Laslett (1987) cogently argues, the capacity to have a third age is historically determined. It is only available to a globally privileged minority who have independent means for a good retirement, whose first and second life stage has not sapped their health and whose family does not rely on their physical and economic support. A large proportion of the world do not experience a third age. Instead, they move from a long second age straight into a short fourth age. Also questionable is the proportion of people in high-income countries who manage the 'fit and fabulous' leisured independence of the third age. The social gradient in health demands the application of a classed-based, context-specific and intersectional lens to later life, which undermines the notion of a chronologically valid threshold for later life (Vera-Sanso, 2006). This presents a fundamental challenge requiring not just new ways of conceptualizing age but of collecting and analysing data.

Others have tried to circumvent the complexity of determining contextual factors by examining functional age to build internationally comparative data sets. They have found inter-country differentials of 10- to 20-year age gaps in average rates of 'activities of daily living' (e.g., independently bathing, dressing and eating) between the best and worst national averages of functional ageing (Sudharsanan and Bloom, 2019). Moreover, there seems to be no association between GNP and functional age, as the United States and Spain do much worse than South Africa and Indonesia (Sudharsanan and Bloom, 2019). This clearly demonstrates that ageing is not a purely physiological process; it is mediated by social, economic and policy contexts.

As policies continue to be framed around chronological age thresholds, policy-orientated research with the objective of 'Leaving No One Behind' needs to identify carefully thought-through, context-specific, intersectional, age thresholds and determine how tightly or

flexibly they are applied. These thresholds and their application must be aimed at realizing objectives on older people's rights and dignity. These objectives require three interrelated approaches. The first approach is the tracing of backward and forward linkages of what older people do in order to foreground and protect their contribution to family, community and national development. This will include identifying obstacles in the physical, social and economic environment that prevent older persons realizing their potential. The second approach is an attention to intergenerational interdependencies, including younger people's dependence on older people. The third approach is an alertness to the consequences for older persons of social inequalities, which demands a disaggregated approach to later life. Hazardous living and working conditions, poor nutrition and high levels of road accidents raise morbidity and mortality rates, punching holes into family networks and thereby constrain the network's capacity to spread the risks inherent in economic systems that perpetuate insecurity, deprivation and inequality for large proportions of the world (Vera-Sanso, 2022). These risks can drive negative cycles of unmet needs across generations (Kreager and Schröeder-Butterfill, 2007) and necessitate older people undertaking physically depleting paid and unpaid work deep into old age.

IV. Making Space for Older People in Development: An Intergenerational Approach

The articles in this Special Issue offer both individual and collective contributions to advancing the discussion on ageing and development, and more specifically to understanding and appreciating the role of older people in development processes and society more broadly. The articles are connected by a common concern that insufficient attention is being paid to the issue of ageing and older people in development, both in the field of development studies and development policymaking. Where these discussions are present, the voices of older people

themselves are rarely heard. The articles centre these concerns and older people's voices, engaging as they do from a bottom-up approach with older people themselves. All empirical articles draw on research that relies strongly on qualitative methods either singularly, or as part of a mixed-methods approach. We believe this is the best approach to explore older people's views and experiences, and how they make sense of the world they live in—as part of their families, communities and indeed the environments they live with and shape (see also Locke and Lloyd-Sherlock, 2011). This triple relational, intergenerational and interdependency approach to analysis is a common thread that runs through the collection, whether in examining why trans-locality matters for households headed by older women and men (Walsham) or understanding how intergenerational knowledge transfer on living with a changing environment can be key to climate change adaptation (Beckwith et al.). All the articles in the collection have clear policy implications that can help inform public policy around these issues. Perhaps the key one is to take a nuanced approach that is informed by an understanding of the 'heterogeneous, dynamic and context-specific nature of later life', that does not apply one-size-fits-all solutions, but recognizes both intergenerational interdependence and the frailty of familial reciprocity, and thus the need for adequate public support (Schröeder-Butterfill et al., this volume).

The authors of the articles included in this Special Issue are scholars at different stages of their career—from early-career researchers to more established academics—from different disciplinary backgrounds such as human geography, international development, anthropology and gerontology, researching in different geographical and development contexts—including Uganda, Indonesia, Vietnam and Albania. In addition, Vera-Sanso's investigation of the international development agenda was stimulated by her research in India, and she draws on the Indian context to exemplify more general points. While we never aimed to have any type of comprehensive geographical

coverage, the articles do cover countries of different sizes and in different geographical regions. These articles, as discussed above, are an invitation to open up the debate around ageing and older people and development, rather than provide a comprehensive representation of older people's lives in different regions.

We organize the articles so that they begin by addressing older people and ageing from a policy perspective (Vera-Sanso), then move on to discuss how older people and ageing are represented in popular discourses (Shröeder-Butterfill et al.), before focussing more specifically on older people in translocal and intergenerational households (Walsham), then discussing older people, gender and care in a context of high out-migration (Vullnetari) and finally considering the role that older people play in community initiatives to tackle environmental change (Beckwith et al.).

Vera-Sanso's article brings together two multilateral policy arenas, that of ageing policy and the international development agenda, which are coalescing under the rubric of the SDGs and the Decade of Healthy Aging. A historical overview of policy making reveals the shifting discourses underpinning policies on older persons and later life and the stereotypical trail they have left of seeing older people as a target group disconnected from wider social and economic conditions. From this viewpoint, older people's main issues, identified as health, dependence and loneliness, are derived from the ageing process itself, not distributional, economic and social factors. Using the World Health Organisation's recent, though now underplayed, position that socio-economic factors are the prime determinants of health, known as the Social Determinants of Health, Vera-Sanso interrogates the SDGs and the Decade of Healthy Aging, to see whether the reliance on the private sector and technology-based solutions to improve health will relieve, or exacerbate, age, gender and class-based inequalities.

Drawing on long and in-depth research in Indonesia, Schröeder-Butterfill et al. offer a nuanced discussion of the diverse realities of later life in this country, which they contrast with the two dominant representations of older age in the media and public policy there. The authors highlight the problematic nature of these binary representations. Older people are seen, on the one hand, as vulnerable and dependent on intergenerational family support and, in rare cases, on generous government pensions. On the other hand, there is a new preference for portraying older people as active and productive, enjoying healthy ageing. Both representations 'invisibilize' the experiences of older people who do not fall into either of these stereotypes but are instead frail, in ill-health, and with family networks which struggle to provide adequate care. This article explores the heterogeneity of experiences through an intersectional analysis that considers social class, gender, social position and context-specific macro-factors. Making frailty and need in old age visible, the authors argue, is crucial for ensuring that provision of adequate care becomes a collective responsibility shared by families, communities and the state. In addition, it would promote the recognition that frailty, decline and dependence—and a caring response to these—are fundamental aspects of the human experience.

Walsham's article proposes that we rethink the 'translocal household' and the role of older people in shaping this household—and the concept itself, from older people's perspective. Stemming from his research in the Kiboga district of Uganda, the article examines the connections–and frictions—between older people-headed households and their migrant offspring. Walsham argues for a 'gendered relational' approach to studying and understanding intra-household dynamics, which in turn reveals intergenerational interdependencies, themselves understood within a wider socio-economic, political and cultural context of power asymmetries. One of the most important ideas the article advances is to move the discussion on older people in development away from a 'dependence-independence' binary to explore instead interdependences across localities.

Gender is a central aspect that shapes these experiences and lived realities of older age. For example, Walsham finds gendered differences in how older women and older men with migrant children viewed mutual translocal support, relationships with and caring for their grandchildren, and how they describe their needs and aspirations to others. As such, older men understated the support they received from their migrant children and somewhat highlighted the negative sides of caring for their grandchildren, while older women overstated this support while considering caring for their grandchildren as essential to their well-being. This gendered portrayal of men as being more 'independent' and women as more 'dependent' aligned with their traditionally ascribed gendered roles in the local communities. Moving away from ideas of 'independence' as the Eurocentric ideal of 'healthy ageing', Walsham shows how older women research participants in Uganda felt that '[T]ranslocal [mutual] relationships of support were fundamental to their wellbeing'. The policy implications are clear: the translocal matters for older people's well-being in ways that are profoundly gendered. Consequently, adopting a gendered relational approach to households headed by older men and older women which accommodates translocality is essential if we are to better understand older people's needs and contributions, and to more effectively support them through social welfare programmes.

Vullnetari's article contributes to debates around the role of older generations in migration and development, focussing on older people whose sons and daughters have emigrated abroad or internally. Using the concept of 'invisible economies of care' (Shah and Lerche, 2020) and drawing on empirical work in Albania, Vullnetari's analysis seeks to bring older people's voices into the centre of debates around migration and development. The article shows the range of productive and reproductive activities that migrants' older parents are engaged in, central to which is childcare. Taken together these activities form 'economies of care' that make a significant contribution to household economies, and by extension, to local and national economies and societies of migrants' origin and destination countries. Despite underpinning development across the global South–North divide, such 'economies of care' are generally invisibilized in policy and much academic work, in contrast to the celebration of financial remittances that have dominated migration-development debates for decades. This carework by migrants' older parents is gendered with older women carrying out most of it, which in turn—Vullnetari argues—compounds its invisibility in much migration-development policy and scholarship. In making this carework visible, Vullnetari unsettles Eurocentric, economistic and ageist development approaches, and in so doing reclaims the role of older people in migration projects and development processes.

The collection of articles closes with Beckwith et al.'s article which takes us back to South East Asia, where the authors explore one of the least discussed but immensely relevant, topics: that of older people in debates around development and climate change adaptation. Drawing on empirical findings in two rural areas of Vietnam, as part of a larger project on livelihoods in Deltas, the article takes a relational and place-based approach to examining local people's connections to their environment, arguing for an appreciation of different values of nature to support more locally relevant ways of addressing environmental change. Similar to Walsham's article, intergenerational relations are key here too to understanding how older and younger people live with, and adapt to, a changing climate. Older men and women play a crucial role in both conservation of the local environment, and transmitting local knowledge on climate change adaptation to the younger generation. By shifting the focus of discussion from vulnerability to recognizing older people's capabilities and contributions, the authors help us appreciate the complex relationship between communities and environments that sustain them. The key message of the article for policymakers is clear: 'locally-led adaptation' strategies

that centre intergenerational cooperation are key to addressing the impacts of climate change on some of the most vulnerable communities in the world, and older people can play an important role in addressing the adverse impacts of climate and environmental change.

We conclude this introduction by calling on development researchers, policymakers and practitioners to make space for older people in their work. Further, we advocate that they do so using an intergenerational approach. This is not a normative call, but a recognition of a complex reality that has hitherto been studied in splintered ways; intergenerational connections are not only key to thriving societies, they are the extant reality.[3] As such, singling out one group over another in policy initiatives is bound to result in partial solutions. The fields of development studies and development policymaking need to move towards a more integrated approach where generations are seen as interconnected rather than separated. While we recognize that each group has its own needs and capabilities, they are both part of interrelated and interdependent communities that are permeated by power asymmetries and hierarchies shaped along not just generational, but also gender, ethnic and racialized lines to mention a few. For this reason, we call for attention to how inequalities impinge on the interdependence of generations and what this means for older people and their current and potential contribution to and benefit from development. In doing so, we hope to initiate a conversation around the place of ageing and older people in development from a relational and intergenerational perspective; that is from a perspective that is focused around interdependence between older people and wider society rather than one restricted to the dependence of the former on the latter. Whether one's development research or policy is focused on ageing or not, understanding the place and role of older people in development from their perspective becomes crucial to progressing broader development agendas worldwide.

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Notes

1. The Special Issue emerged from a double session organized by Tanja Bastia and Julie Vullnetari at the UK Development Studies Association Annual Conference in July 2021 titled 'Ageing and older age: Unsettling development assumptions', for which Penny Vera-Sanso was a discussant. Four of the empirical articles here were presented at the conference.
2. In many countries, improvements in life expectancy at birth reflect reductions in child mortality rather than improvements in mid or later life expectancy. For the latter, life expectancy at age 60 is needed.
3. See, for example, the newly launched (2022) ESCR-funded centre on 'Connecting Generations' at the University of Southampton, available at: http://www.cpc.ac.uk/research_programme/connecting_generations/#Current

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