

Age and Generation

The global increase in life expectancy brings about the reshaping of relations between the generations. Corresponding debates as well as social, institutional, temporal and spatial practices are the result and basis of longer-term processes of transformation that produce specific demographic structures; also in Africa and Asia. Without ignoring the studies on youth, the focus of this research unit strengthens the historical perspective as well as the ongoing research on middle aged and the elderly.

The unit seeks to understand how state as well as civil society organizations influenced contextual conceptions of age and generation and resulting practices. It studies how the reorganization of intergenerational relationships transforms socio-spatial practices triggered by rapid urbanization, infrastructure development and migration.

How does this affect debates on intergenerational justice?

Can we identify context-dependent concepts of 'correct' coming of age through the study of transforming intergenerational relationships?

Research Projects

- Veterans, Volunteers, and Welfare in (Post)colonial East Africa
PD Dr. Katrin Bromber, Head of Research Unit
- Future Building in Central Asia: Intergenerational Cooperation, Infrastructure, and Translocal Mobilities
Dr. Aksana Ismailbekova
- Young Syrian Mothers in Berlin-Marzahn: Housing and 'Home-Making' Practices (VW)
Dr. Sarah Jurkiewicz
- The Search for a Normal Life (Thyssen)
Dozent Dr. Samuli Schielke



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Veterans, Volunteers, and Welfare in (Post)colonial East Africa

PD Dr. Katrin Bromber

The project explores intergenerational relations through the lens of social and institutional engagements in volunteer organizations and veteran associations. It studies the links between family, civic institutions, and the bureaucratic practices and policies of the state in Ethiopia (1940s–1970s) and East Africa (1940s–1980s). How did the representation of the veteran come to serve as a 'good example' of social conduct within the larger attempts made at moulding the youth into the 'torchbearers of progress'? Did progress-driven conceptualizations of 'the' veteran lead to a set of specific ideas about acceptable or preferable forms of being old or experiencing the process of ageing? Which long-term consequences, in terms of material well-being and prestige but also expectations and social pressures to fulfil the legacy of the veterans, developed and shaped the nature of intergenerational relations?

The Search of a Normal Life

Dozent Dr. Samuli Schielke

At the heart of this project is a central paradox of the age of globalisation: the possibility of a stable, normal life at home relies on destabilising processes of growth, expansion, and mobility. Rural-urban and international migrations in and from the Global South are often socially conservative projects: strivings to actualise conventional ways and ideas of a good life. Generational continuity and reproduction are central to such dreams of a normal life based upon ideas of stability. This project follows trajectories of men from a rural region in northern Egypt along a trans-local migratory network stretching to Egyptian cities, Western Europe, and Arab Gulf states where they work to build the means of a normal, settled adulthood at home.

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Future Building in Central Asia: Intergenerational Cooperation, Infrastructure, and Translocal Mobilities

Dr. Aksana Ismailbekova

This project is a comparative study of elderly care, translocal mobilities, and future building in the Soviet and post-Soviet Central Asian contexts. It investigates the processes through which elderly care is provided in different types of kin relationships in the region, together with a historical perspective on how it has changed in the period from Soviet to post-Soviet (1991 and onwards), which marked the transition from Soviet Rule to independent nation-states. For instance, during the Soviet period, the authorities attempted to limit certain types of kin ties, which have since been revived after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union also provided many kinds of state-led institutional care which have now, because of increased mobility in the region, taken new forms and practices. Migrant remittance is one such, which the project explores in detail to understand the intersection between mobility and intergenerational care.

Young Syrian Mothers in Berlin-Marzahn: Housing and 'Home-Making' Practices

Dr. Sarah Jurkiewicz

The project explores everyday practices of 'home-making' by Syrian mothers in Berlin-Marzahn who are all 'young' (at least in terms of 'social age') and share experiences of forced migration. A particular focus of the project is on the phase when the women have moved out of the community accommodation provisions provided in Berlin and started constructing their own 'home'. How do they construct and inhabit their new space, both in material and emotional terms? How does the idea of having a 'home' intersect, and is shaped by, the experience of migration?

Another leading research question relates to the gendered and spatial practices of home-making: Who is responsible for specific tasks involved in the process of 'home-making'? How has the relationship between migration and home-making affected the gendered notion of work and care?

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