

AGE-C Ageing and Gender in European Cinema

Initiative: Herausforderungen für Europa

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The working hypothesis of this project is that in an ageing Europe cinema has emerged as a socially and politically significant platform for the rearticulation and redefinition of the experience of old age and gender. For global audiences, Hollywood films offer few roles for women over 35. By contrast in Western Europe stars like Catherine Deneuve headline films in their late 60s to 80s, while films about old age win awards and succeed in cinemas. The starring roles for older female actors in particular offer a productive challenge to established perceptions of gender and old age, pushing more diverse representations in terms of sexuality, agency, and the renewal of family structures. The project team traces this challenge with three interrelated questions: 1) How do European cinemas represent and narrate old age and gender? 2) How can these representations be explained through decision-making processes in production and distribution? 3) And how do these representations compare across national and cultural boundaries in how they shape notions of old age and general well-being? The project combines textual analysis with production studies and digital methods to conduct an empirically grounded study of the interpretive frameworks of old age and gender in European media culture. The project team aims to establish cultural gerontology as a key approach in film studies by training a cohort of postdocs to study how cinematic representations of gender shape notions of old age and well-being across Europe.

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