

Project 9: A technological economy of ageing: How technofutures enter the political economy of ageing

This dissertation project critically explores the political economy of ageing as it is increasingly expressed through technology and innovation policy. It questions dominant policy approaches that position older people as “problems in need of repair” and instead asks how prevailing innovation narratives can be productively reconfigured in ageing societies. To this end, it brings theories from Science and Technology Studies to bear on the political economy of ageing and examines empirical cases in which older people complicate or unsettle common stereotypes of problematic technology users. The project relies on qualitative methods such as ethnographic research, document analysis, and expert interviews. The overall aim is to contribute to an agenda that foregrounds new understandings of older people as a basis for shaping more progressive and sustainable approaches to innovation policy.

Host institution: Open University of the Netherlands (OU), Netherlands

Preferred start date: October 2026

Contract duration: 36 months full-time

Supervisors: Prof. Alexander Peine, Assist.Prof, Karin van Leersum

Secondments: Karl Landsteiner University (Austria), [VICESSE](#) (Austria)

Additional Information

We encourage applications from individuals with varied backgrounds and experiences to join our research team. In particular, we are looking for candidates who meet some or all of the following criteria:

- Holding a Master’s degree ideally in the areas of Science and Technology Studies, critical, cultural or social gerontology, social anthropology, health humanities, or a related field.
- Demonstrating a strong academic track record and a keen interest in conducting original, critical research at the intersection of Science and Technology Studies and ageing.
- Possessing expertise in qualitative, empirical research methods; experience with ethnographic fieldwork is desirable.
- Showing interest in co-creation and participatory research methods.
- Thriving in inter- and transdisciplinary environments, working collaboratively with societal partners, engineers/designers, caregivers (formal and informal), and older people.
- Communicating effectively with diverse stakeholders and demonstrating strong analytical skills.
- Having excellent written and oral communication skills in English; while Dutch is not required at the start, a willingness to acquire a good command of the Dutch language within one year is expected.

Working at the Faculty of Humanities

The Faculty of Humanities focuses on the cultural dimension of major societal challenges of our time, including technological innovation and digitalisation, identity, diversity and inclusion, and (mental) health. The faculty is completing a re-profiling programme called Connected Humanities (Cultuurwetenschappen in verbinding), which supports new and non-traditional forms of humanities research that reach beyond its classic fields of history, art, philosophy, and culture. Connected Humanities encourages close collaboration with the Social Sciences and other disciplines. The announced position is part of the research group on ageing, care and technology, led by Prof. Alexander Peine, which studies how social, infrastructural, cultural and material factors influence the ways ageing, care, (mental) health and technology interact and develop together.

More information about the Open University and the Faculty of Humanities can be found on our website www.ou.nl.

For 19 consecutive years, the OU has ranked among the top three universities in the Netherlands in student evaluations, and in 2026 it was designated the [highest-rated university](#) nationwide. We take pride in sustaining this standard.