

A.J. LASSEN, M. ERTNER. *Reconfiguring old age through rehabilitation technologies. Gerontechnology 2016;15(suppl):43s*; doi:10.4017/gt.2016.15.s.704.00 **Purpose** Welfare technologies become increasingly inscribed into policies of old age and care practices in Denmark¹. This is partly due to the pressure on welfare resources due to demographic change² and coincides with an intensified focus on active ageing³ and regaining capacities after accidents, disease or decline⁴. The purpose of this paper is to explore how some welfare technologies – the technologies focused on reablement, which the authors term rehabilitation technologies – reconfigure old age, and what kinds of care practices that are formed through the focus on self-sufficiency, technology and freedom embedded in such technologies. **Method** The paper combines two sets of data. Initially, it draws on a document analysis of the policies of old age from three Danish municipalities. In this analysis, the authors detect patterns in the policies that point to a focus on self-sufficiency, narratives of freedom through functional capacity and activities of daily living, as well as the opportunity of sustaining, supporting and promoting such phenomena through rehabilitation technologies. Using this analysis as its outset, the authors explore ethnographically the ways such policies become embedded and formed through rehabilitation technologies in the municipality of Copenhagen, by both following the municipal office responsible for the implementation of welfare technologies, as well as some older citizens using rehabilitation technologies. **Results & Discussion** In policy documents older people are figured as reservoirs of resources that should be brought out by rehabilitation technologies. Care thus becomes a matter of optimizing functionality through technology. In this reconfiguration of care and old age, freedom and self-sufficiency are the ultimate aims. But freedom in these cases is the freedom to regain functional capacity and perform activities of daily living. Through comparing a municipal policy on elder care with cases from our ethnographic fieldwork, the authors discuss what it means ‘to function’. In policy, functionality is defined as the body’s capacity to master tasks. In practice, what it means ‘to function’ does not only depend on the rehabilitated elderly body’s capacities, but is configured through a negotiation between economic rationales, experiences of safety and different versions of freedom and care.

References

1. Regeringen. Et Danmark der står sammen [A Denmark that stands together]. Copenhagen: The Danish Government Platform; 2011
2. European Union. Pension adequacy in the European Union 2010-2050. Brussel: European Commission; 2011
3. Lassen AJ, Moreira T. Unmaking old age: Political and cognitive formats of active ageing. *Journal of Aging Studies* 2014;30(1):33-46; doi:10.1016/j.jaging.2014.03.004
4. Rostgaard, T. Failing ageing? Risk management in the active ageing society. Pp 153-168, in: Bengtsson TT, Frederiksen M, Larsen JE, editors, *The Danish welfare state: A Sociological investigation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan; 2015

Keywords: changing geographies of home care with technology, care, freedom, function

Address: University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark;

E: ajlas@hum.ku.dk