



# WEDNESDAY SEMINAR

19.06.2024, 17:00 Uhr, Übungsraum (and online)  
IKSA, NIG, Universitätsstraße 7, 1010 Wien, 4. Stock

**Natashe Lemos Dekker (University of Amsterdam)**

Withdrawing from the World: Finitude, Alienation, and Everyday Experiences of Aging in Brazil



**Natashe Lemos Dekker** is a Cultural Anthropologist based at the University of Amsterdam, whose work is situated at the intersection of Medical and Psychological Anthropology. In her ethnographic research in Brazil and

the Netherlands, she asks how people live towards the end of life and how they recreate their world in the face of loss and grief. She is interested in the temporal orientations and moral values through which death and dying are managed.

She is the PI of NWO Veni project 'Grief Politics' which explores the experiences of people who lost relatives during the Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil and who have become politically active as a result. In 2020 she obtained her PhD from de University of Amsterdam for her research on end-of-life care for people with dementia. She was a visiting fellow at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) in 2022 and at the University of Montreal in 2016.

The continuation of everyday life when confronted with finitude and in the face of physical and cognitive changes is a major challenge for many older adults. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Brazil, I explore in this talk how finitude becomes manifest in everyday lives and narratives of older adults, and how their experiences of frailty and alienation relate to the perceived immanence of the end of life.

Many of my interlocutors expressed a sense of disconnection, a feeling they no longer fully belong to the world. Some no longer engaged in specific habitual or social activities, taking precautions out of fear of physical injuries or feelings of shame, thereby letting go of specific aspects of life. Yet, they refused to foreclose the future by narrating possibility and aspiration.

In seeking to ethnographically understand these experiences of estrangement, finitude, and adjustment, I trace some of the ways in which older adults reconfigure their lives and orientations to the future. Reflecting on the concept of alienation as a heuristic device, I discuss how older adults may both embody and resist a scenario of frailty and withdrawal. Ultimately, the paper shows how they confront changes in their own abilities and their social relationships and struggle with how to relate to the world at old age.

Details:  
<https://ksa.univie.ac.at/en/department/events/wednesday-seminar/>

