2. A social cartography of ageing

2.1 Ageing as a social issue

The role and status of older people in contemporary Europe, and indeed elsewhere in the world, is in flux. There is a heavily ageing population throughout Europe, and in the European Union there are decreasing resources to address the consequences of the trend through state-sponsored initiatives (Carone and Costello, 2006). The importance of this ageing issue and all its surrounding themes are in evidence in the 2012 EU project, the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. It brings together European organizations and governments, not to mention researchers, social entrepreneurs and other issue professionals, focused on finding ‘innovative solutions to economic and social challenges facing the ageing European population’, with one goal ‘to help empower older people to stay in good physical and mental health and contribute more actively to the labour market and to their communities’ (AGE Platform Europe, 2012a). Among its many initiatives, the Year has occasioned ageing-related NGOs from nearly 30 countries to form the online platform, the AGE Platform Europe. (To express its affiliation with the European Year project, it has chosen the .eu top-level country code for its website, age-platform.eu.) Of interest initially are the actions and specific roles of the European non-governmental organizations in the research and provision of well-being strategies for the elderly as the populations grow older. How is the issue being addressed and by whom? How is ageing being made into a matter of concern? In other words, how is it being issuefied?

NGO umbrella websites can be said not only to organize activities and mobilize actors into collective action but also express an issue agenda (Warkentin, 2001; Carpenter and Jose, 2012). Here we study how particular actors (non-governmental, governmental, and others) render ageing as their issue. The language they use and the alignments they make also may demonstrate how issue professionals create or revive a matter of concern. Issuefication, which is examined here, may be described as the labour of each entity participating in a debate or as a set of skilled activities, which invite the actors to make a difference, and so to remain active and associated in a network of the issue.
2.2 How to trace associations: Operationalizing social cartography using digital methods

‘If a dancer stops dancing, the dance is finished. No inertia will carry the show forward’ (Latour, 2005, p. 37). This carefully constructed analogy, put forward by Latour, alludes to the movement necessary to create the fabric of the social, which is in a continual state of reconfiguration by virtue of the associative dynamics of actors creating and recreating ties. So as to be able methodologically to trace the social as it comes into state, the researcher must not resort to considering it ‘a special domain, a specific realm, or a particular sort of thing, but only as a very peculiar movement of re-association and reassembling’ (Latour, 2005, p. 7). Insisting on the study of dynamics, Latour also believes that the demonstration of any kind of social artefact or order must be constantly renewed, as it ‘can never be simply postulated’ (2005, p. 53). For Latour, ‘there is no society […] but there exist translations between mediators that may generate traceable associations’ (2005, p. 108). The traceable associations that arise from these dynamics should be described, rather than interpreted, and the analytical frameworks, if at all deployed, arise from the actors’ accounts, rather than the analysts’. How to map the action?

Building on the work of Latour, Tommaso Venturini has developed a detailed methodological toolset for the application of social cartography. To map one must go as slow as possible and also be methodologically promiscuous, as the use of different toolsets may output complementary – or even oppositional – viewpoints that enrich the overall research work. Multiply the methods, tools and maps. The general instruction to the researcher, again methodologically, is the necessity of giving actors the benefit of the doubt (and thus the floor or the microphone), and to recognize the value of their ways of seeing and their accounts of the topic at hand, thus in a sense turning over to the actors method as well as theory.

When is one able to chart the movement of the social and trace associations? When does the social scramble (so to speak)? The rationale for choosing controversies (over other phenomena to study and map the social) lies in the moment and its productivity; controversies stir up the social, its richness, and its dynamics. They prompt movement. With the involvement of different (and unequal) actors, the tendency is to expand the debate and delay its immediate resolution, and the conflict or opposing viewpoints they stimulate are all important features to justify the investigation of controversies. In other words, as associations are forged, and oppositions developed, the constant renegotiated nature of the social is palpable through
the unfolding of controversies. As Venturini puts it: ‘both liquid and solid at the same time [...] in a ceaseless mutual transformation [...] the social is unremittingly constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed’ (2010, p. 264).

Venturini puts forward certain rules in the selection of a relevant and researchable controversy, touched upon in the introduction. The first two are somewhat similar, avoid cold controversies and avoid past controversies (2010, p. 264). Ideally, controversies must be at the peak of their debate activity, and the observer should not be chronologically removed from them. The third rule’s importance, avoid boundless controversies, is discussed in terms of doability, where the choice to map not climate change (the big issue), but climate change adaptation (the narrowed issue) would be a case in point. And as the social is stirred by debate in public or out in the open, the fourth rule states avoid underground controversies, or those which may slope towards conspiracy theory.

The tracing process follows a specific set of pathways, beginning from statements and moving to the literatures. To map the controversy, one makes a collection of arguments (expressed as slogans, phrases, keywords, terms, etc.) aired in the chosen debate involving the matter of concern, and from these statements demarcates the literature (or corpus). Where and by whom are these statements being made and taken up? By tracing the web of relations of those arguments, and identifying the actors involved in their production/dissemination, one moves on from literature to actors. As the researcher identifies the web of relations of those actors, that is, how they relate to each other and to the arguments, she is directed from actors to networks. Subsequently, the researcher seeks to identify cosmoses, or the underlying ideologies that organize the networks. Finally, Venturini states that actors (and not scholars) ‘are responsible for deciding controversies’, a comment that positions the researcher as having a limited impact on the objects and subjects of study (2010, p. 268). To summarize Venturini’s perspective on the topic of the politics of controversy mapping, ‘the cartography of controversies takes the strongest political stand: not just changing the world, but giving others the chance to do so’ (2010, p. 269).

In a separate text Venturini also describes how to map, in the sense of which statements, literatures, actors and so forth to choose from, and whether (and how) to order them: ‘the task of unfolding the complexity of controversies should never be separated from the task of ordering such complexity’ (2012, p. 797). The main challenge of this aspect of the cartography of controversies lies in properly attributing relevance to all the points of view, and at the same time attributing the significance of some over others, according to the rule of proportionality. ‘Being proportional in
social cartography means giving different visibility to different viewpoints according to 1) their representativeness, 2) their influence, and 3) their interest’ (Venturini, 2012, p. 798). Not all statements are equally interesting to the actors and not all actors are mediators who can change the course of action of a debate. It is important to communicate these differences through the mapping. It is also important to retain hierarchy. Equal weight should not be given to both sides of the story (or to the many facets). There should be no ‘talk show [...] equity’ (Venturini, 2012, p. 798).

The main advantages of conducting such research through collecting web data and applying digital methods are the accessibility, aggregability, and traceability of the statements and literatures as well as their connection to actors and of actors to each other. Associations between these elements can be identified through the traces left by digital behaviours and specifically those on display such as outlinks (connecting one digital space with another), shared vocabularies by actors in comment sections on blogs and news sites and in the frequency of keywords in sets of documents, to name just a few. They can be identified, clustered, mapped, and the resulting work can be stored, re-accessed, and re-evaluated. One may make numerous maps, multiplying the views, and each dot may be traced back to the source. Meeting the social cartography protocols, the traces are hard-linked, and the maps are reversible.

Having briefly mentioned the guidelines of combining controversy mapping with digital methods, we proceed with the mapping of the issues surrounding the ageing debate with a kind of preview. First, we study the ageing issues as they are defined by AGE Platform Europe on their newly updated .eu website, and compare them to the issue lists of the local NGOs who have joined the platform. The research asks, What is present on the European agenda, in the particular format of the Year as formulated by the Platform, and how are these issues spread among local NGOs doing the issue that year? We examine which issues gain visibility in the local contexts, and which local issues (so to speak) are not on the EU agenda. If there are increasingly no specific issues in member states, in a domestic realm, could we speak in terms of the Europeanization, or EUropeanization, of ageing issues?

Subsequently, we zoom in on how ageing is issuefied in a single member state (Poland) via the AGE Platform members based there. The decision to move to Poland is made not only because of the specificity of its issues and formats (e.g., Grandmother’s Day and the University of the Third Age), but also because we found that Eastern European countries (as EU newcomers) have been adopting the EU issue framing more than other EU countries (as
represented by the activities of the NGOs). Thus we are interested in how to describe and interpret the Europeanization of issues in newcomer countries.

In the next undertaking, attention is paid to those formats that are most dominant in the domestic debates on ageing-related controversies (on the stages we have managed to capture, in the U.K. and again in Poland). We look at the British debate over public sector pension reform, where there were street protests and strikes in 2011 and 2012, mapping the actors and alignments that are particularly relevant. Not only is there a tension between issue languages (as one would expect in a debate), but also different cosmoses may be identified through reference to such mundane objects as tea and pens. Those who have time to drink tea (and organize tea parties) as well as those who wield or push the pen as an instrument of power are cosmos-subjects, so to speak, in the retirement age controversy network. The last step is to map the Polish pension and retirement reform debate, where the proposal is to raise the retirement age to 67 for both men and women, who previously retired at ages 65 and 60, respectively. Mapping as a practice becomes all the more apt when it is observed that protest marches follow the precise route of legislation in the Polish capital, Warsaw, from the parliament to the prime minister’s office. In Poland, unlike in the European Year of Active Ageing, retirement becomes a women’s issue not only for the differentiation in retirement age, but also for older women’s discrimination in the workforce. Also introduced are instantiations of ‘active ageing’ that do not include working longer. Ultimately, however, federal legislation passes under the banner of Europe’s active ageing, the EU language employed by the Polish government to legitimate the goal of raising the retirement age.

2.3 Ageing as a European issue? The EU initiatives and local agendas

The intention of the first part of the project is to map ageing issues (matters of concern) by examining the AGE Platform Europe, a significant group formation for making and addressing the ageing issue in Europe. The network is comprised of approximately 165 European NGOs, unified by an interest in working with issues surrounding ‘people aged 50+’ (AGE Platform Europe, 2012a). As previously described, the decision to map issues surrounding ageing within Europe also is taken in relation to issue activity, and the launching of not only the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing but also the AGE Platform Europe. On the Platform is a directory of all partner organizations with their respective contact information, including websites (AGE
Platform Europe, 2012b). To collect data to map, one central organization from each EU country is selected from the directory and their respective websites harvested. Using the news archives from each of the websites, all news releases from January to December 2011 are logged; within each news report, the issue being addressed is recorded, along with the primary actors indicated from the report – such as professionals, institutions, research projects, etc. In terms of Venturini’s pathway method, we start with a list of statements or in fact keywords. By recording the data separately per month, it is possible to add an extra layer of analysis that shows if there is a link between time of year and issue prevalence, and if certain countries could be considered issue leaders.

It is important to note the rationale for NGO inclusion in the corpus. The fact that some member countries do not have registered NGOs, or that the available NGOs do not have websites, or that many of those websites lacked the required news section, or the relevant period archived, ultimately narrows the data set to 14 countries. (Here we recall that the World Wide Web is not the world.) When there is more than one candidate, the organization deemed most significant is chosen, so that we retained hierarchy (some NGOs are much larger than others) but also representation from smaller as well as newcomer states. The final list includes the websites from FNG (France), 50 Plus (Greece), ADA (Italy), Projecto Tio (Portugal), CEOMA (Spain), Association Balta Maja (Latvia), Foundation Samaritanus (Poland), Zivot 90 (the Czech Republic), Forum Pre Pomoc Starsim (Slovenia), Charity Association Donka Paprikova/Tulip Foundation (Bulgaria), Age U.K. (the United Kingdom), Age Action (Ireland), Seniorer I Tiden (Sweden) and the Slovenia Federation of Pensioners (Slovenia).

A first impression is that a heightened sense of the local is behind the multiplicity of viewpoints in the debate; there is a total of 163 issues and sub-issues addressed by the AGE Platform members. Working on the assumption that an issue shared by many of the actors deserves more visibility than others (the significance point made by Venturini), a visibility hierarchy is put forward in a representation – a word cloud, or in fact an issue cloud (see Figure 3). For an issue space, clouds display the salience of issues and sub-issues, and to emphasize this point, Figure 3 includes an inset, a zoom into the issue cloud, depicting the marginality of ‘violence against the elderly’ in relation to those more resonant.

The greater the number of actors behind the issues the higher the level of visibility for the issues inside the cloud, with the top ones across this data set being pensions, Alzheimer’s, active ageing, IT skills, health, care homes and healthcare. Health-related issues tend to form a major cluster
inside the cloud. The cluster groups such issues as health (issues related to the actual state of health of older people) and healthcare, but also specific conditions that we note are more prevalent in the language of Western European countries: Alzheimer’s and dementia. Pensions and IT skills are two matters of concern that stand out from other issues and are in the top
five according to actor reference, but also active ageing almost as if in step with the EU policy preferences for 2012.

At the same time, as Venturini argues, the social cartography space should also be filled with the presence of ‘disagreeing minorities’, for despite their marginality, they have the potential to unlock ‘original perspectives’, or in this case reveal powerful senses of the local (2012, p. 798). This approach in turn is two-fold: discover the issues as well as their owners and locations. Thus, first, the considerable number of smaller issues and sub-issues in the cloud that are supported by figures lower than ten actors represent a galaxy of diverse European NGO activities directed towards the needs of the elderly, with such interesting examples as sports and cultural activities for the Nordic countries: creativity, writing, elderly emotions, table tennis, and recreation; or for certain Southern and Eastern regions, another set of issues: violence, world day to combat violence against elderly, emergency care and assistance. There is even a specific issue (or issue format) in a country, Grandmother’s Day and (a day later) Grandfather’s Day in Poland. All together, approaching the most and least visible issues in the cloud, according to the countries providing the actors mentioning the issues, we can gain a sense of majorities, minorities, and the local. Old Europe, a reference to non-newcomer EU countries, tends to be more active in the issue space, in Latourian terms perhaps acting as mediators, or at least influencing the distribution of issue visibility inside the cloud, with the U.K. being a suggestive example in that it introduces nearly by itself the most representative issues in the top ten. The NHS reforms and care homes (as perhaps the specific language indicates) are issues discussed in the U.K. NGO space. Country clusters also emerge when focusing on the type of actors and referencing behind the most representative issues in the cloud. Thus established EU countries such as the U.K., Spain, France or Portugal are behind the Alzheimer’s issue. Embracing active ageing (the EU issue frame) are such newcomers as the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Poland, and Latvia. By visualizing the issue space in this manner, it is also possible to ascertain the universality or locality of the issues and also the links formed between countries (so-called issue alignments). It can be interpreted as a visualization of how these statements (issue keywords) relate to each other, and therefore lead the researcher towards additional pathways. Now we ask, who are the drivers behind these issues (actors) and which are the associations between them (actor-networks)?

These relationships between issues and countries are subsequently mapped as a bipartite network, a network with two types of nodes, and then represented as an alluvial diagram, as mentioned in the introduction (see Figure 4). In identifying and analysing the main issues inside the data
Fig. 5: Ageing issue trends, depicted as a bubble matrix chart, where the size of the bubble represents frequency of mentions. Chronological distribution of the top five NGO issues, extracted from the news sections of the AGE Platform Europe members’ websites, January to December 2011. Since there are more categories than months, time is represented on the vertical axis, inviting the reader to read the chart from top to bottom. The left side of the graphic displays the issues that remain relevant in the news during the year 2011 and their variations per month, and the right side
set collected from the AGE Platform’s network of members, the resulting depictions are efforts in second-degree objectivity, i.e., showing not only what the issues are, but where they are and to whom.

When issue salience in the NGO news is mapped over time (throughout 2011), one takes note of the prevalence and temporal fluctuation of specific topics. In terms of temporal fluctuation, there are calendar, platform, and event effects. Issues may be associated with particular days of the year (dedicated days on the issue calendar as well as the European Year itself), with seasons or times of the year (holidays and issues) and specific events (issues arising from a news report). There are also relatively stable issues. What is initially clear from the Ageing Issue Trends chart is that certain issues maintain a strong presence throughout the year (see Figure 5). These include pensions; other prevalent topics are the related Alzheimer’s and dementia issues, with Alzheimer’s affected as well by the calendar, climbing, and peaking around World Alzheimer’s Day on the 21st of September, an international calendrical issue format (like the national ones, Grandmother’s and Grandfather’s days in Poland). With respect to the issue of active ageing, the European terminology branding the Year, it was unable to maintain issue strength two months in a row but reappears as a relevant issue through the year, with interest peaking in December, just before the 2012 Year of Active Ageing is set to launch. There are also certain issues that could be seen to be gaining relevance owing to the specificity of the month in which they fall. Indeed, loneliness and volunteering become more prevalent issues in November and December as Christmas approaches. These are issues that are absent from issue lists throughout the rest of the year even though such issues would still be relevant to the actors concerned. Events also animate issues. There is a rise in care home mentions as elderly abuse becomes a visible issue, arriving specifically around the time of the reporting of abuse at Rostrevor House nursing home in Dublin in May 2011 and the financial difficulties faced by the central British care home provider Southern Cross in June 2011 (Age Action Ireland, 2011; Age U.K., 2011). There is also a strong indicator of issues specific to particular countries appearing on the chart. References to the United Kingdom’s NHS become visible in one month, showing the main health service as a strong actor in concerns around ageing. This is visible with the separate Swedish issue of the deportation of the elderly and inappropriate drug use in other months. What is clear from this map is that very few issues maintain a strong presence throughout the year. The other issues occur at intervals in short, sudden episodes, peaking around particular issue days, seasons or news, and (for the ‘active ageing’ term) the fashioned European Year events.
Another conclusion to be drawn from this sub-study is that there is a geography of ageing issues – there are those common to countries and there are uncommon ones, too. There are issues shared by blocs of countries, so to speak, and European Year activities tie those as well as others together. As a case in point, regional concerns are identified, including the Western European countries’ attention to Alzheimer’s and dementia, mostly ignored in Eastern and Southern European countries. Newcomer EU members tend to embrace the new European projects, including the issues of the European Year. We first turn to the uncommon concerns, and take as our case local Polish ageing concerns, and the extent to which there remains activity around them, given the new European emphasis on active ageing.

2.4 Polish ageing NGOs, issue formats and the local variation on Europeanization

In order to study the specificity of local issues, and the extent to which the local issues are being Europeanized (especially in newcomer EU countries), we would like to take up the case of Poland (with its specific issue identified previously), again with AGE Platform Europe as the entry point. In the Platform, there are two Polish actors listed as full members: Foundation Samaritanus and the Foundation for Women’s Issues (‘Ja Kobieta’). The first has its own website, whereas searching for the latter leads to Forum 50+ Seniorzy XXI wieku, the association that gathers 22 Polish NGOs concerned with ageing under one umbrella website (with 9 of them having individual websites). According to its ‘about section’ it is an informal association of organizations that share the mission of improving seniors’ quality of life. Samaritanus, the not-for-profit organization focused on the needs of the elderly, is also a part of Forum 50+. Using a digital methods tool called the Link Ripper, we gather the outlinks from the websites (usually found in the members section). In a mapping procedure, we draw a node and line map of the outgoing links from the websites (see Figure 6). With one exception, Polish ageing NGOs link only to non-Polish ageing organizations, both inside and outside Europe. There are no common co-links (i.e., outlinks to the same organization); that is, no two Polish organizations link to the same Polish or non-Polish organization, perhaps filling in the description of the umbrella group as an informal association of Polish NGOs dealing with similar issues. It also could indicate a splintering of the local, or loosening of local ties, owing to a lack of shared issues, or even because the international partnerships have become more significant than national ones.
We set out to explore the hypothesis of the loosening of local ties by examining if the NGOs and their websites are associated by means other than outlinks. Since they do not interlink, what may hold this group together beyond their expressed participation in Forum 50+? How to otherwise trace their association or group formation, if it may be called such? Two additional types of queries are employed. First, the names of the NGOs are queried to follow common actor mentions by third parties and actor inter-mentions are made and unmade through activity and movement. That is, we set out as temporary group formations, where the ties holding the actors together as a stable structure and instead, using a Latourian outlook, studying them as an emerging object. We seek their inter-mentions. Do the NGOs mention each other on their websites, and in which contexts? Do they report on each other’s projects, attend each other’s events or otherwise group together? Here, in both cases, we are adapting (or inverting) Venturini’s step-by-step mapping method, for we seek the actors and their networks, and only subsequently ascertain their statements and literatures (or, in this case, issues and projects). Overall, the analysis is conceived as moving away from an understanding of a network as a stable structure and instead, using a Latourian outlook, studying them as temporary group formations, where the ties holding the actors together are made and unmade through activity and movement. That is, we set out to follow common actor mentions by third parties and actor inter-mentions...

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**Fig. 6: Polish ageing NGOs, websites’ outlinks map.** Depiction shows outlinks from Polish ageing NGOs generally are not common, with each having different linkees, be they international or national partners, authoritative sources, etc. Links manually harvested from the websites of Polish NGOs listed on Forum 50+, http://www.forum50.org, 1 March 2012. The outlinks map is made by hand.
so as to map when and how, even if momentarily, these Polish organizations leave traces of their acting together.

Only a small number (of the links retrieved through the first query) makes mention of the Polish NGOs together. They are described as taking part in common activities and events, including their celebration of the International Day of Older People 2012 in Poland. Forum 50+ has organized a picnic for the occasion. The second most significant NGO inter-mention by a third party is the European Year, and preparatory meetings and info-sessions where multiple ageing NGOs gather. A third is a conference, Zaangażuj się! (Get Involved!), organized in February 2012 by the Polish Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. In it a number of the NGOs are participating in a panel named, accordingly, Forum 50+. The ties that briefly bind and form the group appear to be effectuated by the greater calling of the European and national event calendar rather than joint projects, at least according to the engine returns.

To answer the second question (concerning inter-mentions) the names of the 22 NGOs are queried in each of the 9 available websites. When do they mention each other, and for which issues and projects? Are they principally nationally or EU-related? The presence of these inter-mentions is visualized as a network, where the nodes connect to each other by inter-mentions, meaning the name of an NGO appears on the website of another NGO (see Figure 7). The central organizations in the group are Mali Braci Ubogich, focusing on fighting the marginalization of the old and specially addressing the issue of loneliness, followed by Espar50+, dedicated to promoting physical activity in people over 50 years old and connecting generations through recreation. Espar50+ is also the coordinator of Forum 50+. Ja Kobieta, the women’s issues NGO (and member of AGE Platform Europe), is also one of the larger, central nodes, given the numerous mentions it receives, and one at the time of the query without a website. Foundation Samaritanus (the other member of AGE Platform Europe) is also significant. These organizations are central in the network because the names of the other NGOs are most frequently mentioned on their websites and they are, at the same time, most mentioned by other NGOs; it could be said that they are performing work to form the association and define its boundaries. In the analysis, however, it becomes evident that these central nodes do not mention each other with any great frequency or regularity, apart from the occasions of events (such as the International Day for Older Persons but also Senior Days (when a fair with exhibitors attracts NGOs) as well as the European Year activities. Ja Kobieta is the exception, with particular projects (e.g., finances workshop and a portraits competition for 50-year-old women), announced by other NGOs.
Fig. 7: Polish NGO inter-mentions map, depicted as a directed network map, providing a means to trace associations between these organizations online. Links (or edges) appear between the nodes when the name of an NGO is mentioned in one of the websites (inter-mentions). The size of the nodes is determined by the total degree (or number of mentions), and the nodes representing websites are ringed. The inter-mentions occur mainly in connection with shared participation at conference panels and events on ‘issue days’ such as the International Day of Older People. List of Polish NGOs is from Forum 50+, http://www.forum50.org. Queries made with Lippmannian Device on 2 September 2013, and converted from a tabular to network data format with Table2Net. The network is produced using the network visualization tool, Gephi, and its built-in layout algorithm, ForceAtlas2.
In sum the NGOs grouped under Forum 50+ do not share outlinks, are only occasionally mentioned together by third parties, and the most central organizations in the larger network do not mention one another significantly. When they do name each other the occasions are calendrical, including local Senior Days, International Older People’s Day and the European Year of Active Ageing. The issue calendar, so to speak, appears to be by far the most important impetus for group formation and association. Returning to the original question, the loose ties of the Polish NGOs during the rest of the year cannot be attributed, at least according to these small studies, to the Europeanization of the Polish NGOs and issues. On the contrary, the framework of the European Year and events taking place in it appear to be strengthening a group formation that otherwise seems fragmented, as the outlink, third party and inter-mentions analyses showed. Also of note is the Year’s impact on issue mapping. Whilst many of these Polish NGOs could have been invisible to our research techniques prior to 2012, it is the Polish participation in the European Year that not only has brought them together on more occasions, but also made them visible to a European ageing issue mapping.

Indeed the challenge faced during the study of this particular group formation has been the lack of a significant online presence of certain members of Forum 50+ (especially Ja Kobieta), and the implications for online issue mapping. In an attempt to grapple with their offline-ness (so to speak) and still map them with online data, we have employed such strategies as querying for all the names of the NGOs and searching for traces of their behaviour outside of their own space. We also sought inter-mentions, but in both cases the results are sparse, leading to the conclusion that the groups act together on very specific occasions. Without introducing mixed methods (such as interviewing them), it is difficult to conclude otherwise. Here we return to Venturini’s warning that the web is not the world, and add that (three) separate and similar web findings still may require further grounding.

The next step in the analysis of the Europeanization or re-localization of Polish issues is to compare the issues of Polish NGOs with those of the main areas of European policy on ageing, according to the website run by the AGE Platform Europe in connection with the European Year. Do Polish organizations share issues with Europe, so to speak? In order to study ageing issue matching and mismatching between Poland and the European Year, we compile an issue list from the Polish NGO websites, where the keywords are nestled under menu items called issues, or otherwise manually extracted. The European set of keywords or statements is taken
from the AGE Platform Europe's list of seven essential policy areas: accessibility, anti-discrimination, employment and active ageing, health, social inclusion, social protection, and solidarity between generations. We first line up the issue lists side by side, so as to gain a sense of the extent to which the Polish issues resonate with Europe's (see Figure 8). While the EU issue list is shorter, there is some overlap between the two, with the Polish terms being somewhat more poignant and the EU’s more polished (exclusion, isolation, dignity, discrimination and integration are employed by the Polish NGOs, and anti-discrimination and social inclusion by the EU). Using the Lippmannian Device we also query each of the Polish NGOs for each of the Polish terms, and AGE Platform Europe for each of Europe’s issues; this particular query design provides each space's issue hierarchies. Whilst cool (in the sense of a heat list), the European language of inter-generational cooperation has entered the Polish space, as has volunteering, the theme of the 2011 EU Year. The Polish emphasis on ageing women, or ageing as a women’s issue, stands out in the contrast between the two issue lists, as does sport and education, showing the interest in such initiatives as the University of the Third Age. There also seems to be a divide in how to fill in the notion of ‘active’ ageing – where the one refers to working longer, and another to fitness.

Above we found both the trickle of EU issues into Polish ageing vocabularies (inter-generational, volunteering) as well as a particular cleft between the two, with women’s issues and active ageing (without joining the workforce) being significant subjects of interest to Poland only. Having pinpointed local issues (not specifically on the EU issue list), we are interested in how those are done in Poland. Ageing NGO attention to women’s issues and active ageing are also consistent with the findings made from the link analysis. Among the links extracted from the Polish NGOs’ sites are to women’s organizations concerned with older women’s issues, integration of women of all ages, and overcoming issues with ageing through mountain climbing (menopauza.pl, kobietasoplus.pl, stowarzyszenie-kilimandzaro.pl). Also on the map is the Active Foundation (‘Aktywni’), the NGO that combines ageing issues with sporting activity, especially Nordic walking. Nordic walking sticks are not only used by older people to stay fit, but they actively contribute to new representations of ageing and may be considered rather as mediators than intermediaries (returning to Latour’s distinction), insofar as they redo the ‘active ageing’ issue. Such an enunciation of active ageing is not necessarily fully incompatible with the EU’s, though the emphasis lies outside of the workplace.
Finally, the Polish NGOs, if they resort to such a definition, use 50 as a lower limit, above which one has aged, whereas the European Year of Active Ageing speaks of life over 60, and indeed over 70 and 80, thereby raising the age that is associated with issues. The age for ageing varies per issue space.
2.5 Which issue formats lend themselves to domestic debates on pension reform? The cases of the U.K. and Poland

As discussed above, the ageing-related issues that animate NGOs in European countries differ somewhat from each other (along particular geographical lines), and in comparison to the European agenda. Poland, for example, has a certain specificity to its issues, at least when one studies the non-governmental organizations. Here we move in the mapping away from the differing minorities to central players in the issue cloud, so to speak, and focus on U.K. political parties in an issue mapping of pension reform and the larger problematik of the welfare state. Having mapped language, actors, and alignments (along issue-geographical lines), our focus moves also to the cosmoses, especially the terms (and objects) that appear to do ideological work, providing markers that organize a debate along those lines, too.

2.6 Tea and pens as ‘cosmos-objects’ in the British public sector pension reform debate

In late November 2011, approximately two million members of U.K. unions staged a strike, the largest British industrial action in decades. Part of a series of actions, the strike was in protest of the government’s proposed public sector pension reforms: future pensions calculated on the basis of a career-average scheme, rather than final salaries, an increase in monthly pension contributions, and an older retirement age. Especially the rise in the retirement age is a controversy coursing through British politics. The proposed rise in the public sector retirement age is from 65 years of age to 66 by 2020, 67 by 2028 and 68 by 2046. Prime Minister David Cameron has argued that it is an absolutely necessary measure as there is significant difference between public sector pensions with a lower retirement age and private sector pensions (Ross, 2012). The argument is as life expectancy has now increased, so should the retirement age, thus giving people the chance to work a couple of years longer. On the other hand, leading figures from the Labour Party have stated that in their opinion the reform program is an attempt at ‘mass privatization’ and that soon enough the reform will abrogate public sector pension rights and prompt the outsourcing of public sector services to the private sector (Curtis, 2011). Organizations and associations are also positioning themselves. For example, the National Union of Teachers has been organizing marches. The British Medical Association, representing doctors and medical students, decided to suspend industrial
action, taking part instead in the government’s Working Longer Review board. Besides those protesting and those participating in governmental processes, there are also strong supporters of the reforms, including the Confederation of Business Industry, Institute of Directors, Taxpayers’ Alliance, British North-American Committee, and Department for Communities and Local Government.

Given the heightened issue activity, the mapping of the public sector pension reform controversy is a timely exercise. Employing both Latour’s and Venturini’s insights, including the pathway approach to mapping (moving from statements to literature, from literature to actors, from actors to networks, from networks to cosmos and cosmopolitics), we aim to sketch out the state of the issue, and how it is animated in political discourse. Ultimately, in that space, we find what could be called cosmos-objects – those things (non-humans) such as tea, pens, and strikes that drive wedges and also represent alignments.3

One has time for tea (and tea parties) when working others do not. One exercises power with the stroke of a pen. Strikes are unspeakable outside of the fringe parties. Indeed, actors’ usage of such objects may be just as telling or more so than the everyday issue framing or specific use of particular issue terms by one party over another, such as Conservatives’ persistent use of ‘state pension’ versus Labour’s ‘public sector pension’.

We start by exploring the web (and, in particular, news-related websites) for statements, and we trawl the literatures, including government documents on official pages of government agencies, current or archived newspaper articles, reports by independent or state agencies as well as expert points of view on various websites. Studying the literature directs us to a number of actors (those mentioned, referenced, or quoted in the literature). For example, The Guardian newspaper reports that on 30 November 2011 the strike against the proposed reforms

saw walkouts by tens of thousands of border agency staff, probation officers, radiographers, librarians, job centre staff, court staff, social workers, refuse collectors, midwives, road sweepers, cleaners, school meals staff, paramedics, tax inspectors, customs officers, passport office staff, police civilian staff, driving test examiners, patent officers and health and safety inspectors. (Carrell et al., 2011, n. pag.)

Together with the political actors discussed at the outset, all listed above also can be considered as actors and even mediators (in Latour’s sense), for they participated in a strike that put the social in motion. Each may not be
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queried directly, however, in a digital methods procedure. So, we compiled a list of political parties as well as unions and associations representing the strikers, and, using the Lippmannian Device, queried those for the terms we collected in the literatures, as we discuss. The results are visualized as a word cloud, where issues are resized according to frequency of mentions (see Figure 9).

Before coming to the findings, it is instructive to mention briefly how certain objects made our list of keywords, and why we came to think of
them as cosmos-objects. Single-user comments on newspaper websites (such as that of The Guardian) produced a number of keywords of some pertinence. The first is ‘tea’. In some cases ‘tea’ acted as a class indicator, a symbol for divide within the public sector between those working in menial, low-paid jobs, and those that do well in the British government by earning a lot more per annum. Such a divide was exemplified not too long ago in a scandal in which government officials, members of Parliament, and ministers were claiming personal expenses as government ones, e.g., on mortgages for second homes. The same idea is given by a union officer from GMB, Britain’s general trade union, deriding an idea for a 15-minute strike: ‘Maude’s proposal for a 15-minute strike is a daft idea. We are asking members to vote for a strike not a tea break’ (The New Worker, 2011, n. pag.). A tea break in this instance would signify a lack of fight and willingness to commit to a strike. Another example is how the mayor of Derry, a well-paid member of government, as is said, was forced to cancel his tea party because of strikes. The mere act of cancellation demonstrates a conflict between tea, and those who can hold tea parties, versus those affected by public worker strikes – people who are after basic pay. Here is a comment from The Guardian website posted by a user called ‘Mokkie’: ‘I am sick and tired of the constant undermining and slander of public service workers, as if we just sit around drinking cups of tea’ (Waldram, 2011, n. pag.). Here is another one by ‘Victoria Jones’: ‘I can’t tolerate a government that depicts me as a lazy, pen-push ing, tax-draining bureaucrat who spends my working days drinking tea while waiting for my fat cat pension’ (Waldram, 2011, n. pag.). To suggest public service workers sit around drinking tea may be considered derogatory towards the workers themselves. We read of tea drinking as an activity for those who have time to do so, or even see tea as a symbol of lax as well as leisure behaviour. Victoria Jones is seeking to defend her image and explain that she is not a tea-drinking bureaucrat, which brings us to related object, ‘pens’.

The contract signed by public employees when taking the job of teacher and healthcare worker included a pension. ‘I know of no other contract where one side can impose major change at a late stage at the stroke of a pen’; ‘Anne D.’ repeats a similar message about governmental pension reforms: ‘What other contracts are there where one side can impose big changes through a stroke of a pen?’ (Waldram, 2011, n. pag.). Pens here in this instance are wielded by high-ranked government officials and bureaucrats.

Among the objects sought on political party and union websites (through searching them via Google, using the Lippmannian Device) were not only tea and pens, but others collected from the literature, certain of which are
materials that imply more expensive healthcare services. ‘Zimmer frame’, ‘wheelchair’, and ‘medicine’ mean bills and effects on the cost of living, items that recur frequently across the mainstream parties’ sites. Figure 10 highlights the Conservatives’ keyword frequency on their website, where wheelchair, medicine, tea, and pens are in evidence. Teas and pens are
absent on Labour’s site. When viewing keyword output for Labour, two other words stand out: ‘pay more’ and ‘women’s pension’. Additionally, the flaunting of the term ‘public sector pension’ demonstrates their openness to the controversy.

The choice of words, diction used by parties on their respective websites, are also indicators of their associations. For example, it is interesting to note that ‘public sector strike’ (notably ‘strike’ in the search term) has only brought results in smaller parties such as the Scottish National Party, SDLP, and the Green Party. Put differently, it is also the lack of the term appearing on the current government’s website that creates an association between the fringe parties and public sector workers.

In the exploration of statements and literature it is evident that unions are significant actors as they represent groups of public sector workers. What we have attempted to do is to sketch their basic ties to viewpoints (and thus to the parties) based on the same keyword list. While each union caters to specific professions within the public sector, the cloud arrays main union concerns: the unions are tied to fringe party issues with their use of strike language such as picket line, public sector strike, and pension strike. While they share terms with others (e.g., NHS pension, care home, wheelchair), their specific language resonates with a negative stance towards the reforms: pay more and work longer (see Figure 11). In all the effort has been to map the controversy along ideological lines through the identification of the use of certain keywords, material objects such as Conservatives’ mentions of tea and pens and fringe party as well as unions’ strike talk.

2.7 Staging the pension reform controversy in Poland: Which formats could empower action?

The other national debate on pension reform that we have mapped is the Polish one, a discussion that is changing rapidly, drawing in actors with sub-issues (such as women’s issues, as we have seen previously), and leaving aside others, such as the clergy’s pensions, as we come to. Akin to the British debate, the main purpose is to map the current state of the controversy as it is presented in the news media, and, additionally, to create a chronology of dispute. We employ the Polish version of Google News as our meta-source set, and aggregate relevant content over a 45-day period, when issue activity is at its height. The captured articles (including blog postings) contain the following search terms (queried in Polish): ‘retirement’, ‘pension’, ‘retirement age’, ‘pension reform’ and ‘ageing’. The sub-study’s timing could be described as in the middle of the pension reform debate (February to April 2012), with two significant days shaping the results: March 8th is Women’s Day, and union strikes are anticipated on the 28th of March; both evinced heated debate and show peaks in media interest.

To identify a beginning to the controversy, we required historical insight and employed another Google tool (Google Insights for Search), querying it for [wiek emerytalny emerytury], or [retirement age pension]. A first issue boiling was in November 2011 when the Polish prime minister gave his inaugural speech and launched governmental proposals to raise the retirement age from 60 for women and 65 for men to 67 for all. It marks the beginning of the timeline (the map), which presents key actors and
their claims, and flags moments of increased media interest (the highest number of results from Google News) (see Figure 12). Women’s issues are successfully foregrounded on the timeline, owing in no small part to International Women’s Day on March 8th, which is observed widely in Poland. Women’s issues spokespersons are rather at odds with governmental legislative proposals, disagreeing with the raising of the retirement age of women, and, interestingly, with levelling it with the men’s. Political leaders make opposing statements, while deploying particular formats in doing so, delivering Women’s Day wishes and bunches of red tulips. The next section of the timeline in the Spring of 2012 is the expert debate hosted by the Polish president, at the Public Debate Forum, in a session dedicated to solidarity in society and the security of the family. Another actor is the Association of Universities of the Third Age, dedicated to older people’s

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learning (and well-being). It held a congress on the occasion of the Year of Universities of the Third Age, which is a national event accompanying the European Year for Active Ageing. The prime minister gave a speech during this congress in which he stressed the importance of active ageing, the EU Year theme, together with raising the retirement age, thus making deft use of the European Year for national policy change.

The next stage of the debate has trade unions, previously backgrounded, becoming pivotal protagonists, particularly Solidarity (NSZZ Solidarność). Unions are against raising the retirement age, but are in favour of partial pensions (or half pensions). They feel pension reform ought to be debated, and put to a national vote or referendum. To draw attention to their positions, the unions organize a strike and occupy the premises around the prime minister’s chancellery. This is a common form of protest in which workers pitch tents and demonstrate by blocking traffic. A disagreement is also observed within the governing coalition, and partners have to come to terms with irreconcilable views. They reach a deal; a new retirement law is to raise the age, and equal it, but also embrace half pensions and early retirement. When faced with unemployment, women aged 62 and men aged 65 are entitled to early retirement, but their pension income is halved from what it would be had they reached the statutory retirement age. The last entry on the timeline is the parliament’s rejection of the proposed referendum.

The main matter of concern in the debate is raising the retirement age. Is it necessary? Will it help? Should we work even longer? Is that active ageing? Perhaps even more importantly, how to come to terms? As the governmental bill is to be voted on in May, some stakeholders hold out hope that there still may be a change in the course of action, and resort to reference to the Polish version of the dictum, *nihil novi nisi commune consensu*, or ‘nothing new without common consent’ (Sokolińska, 2012). It is a major tenet of Polish civic life, taken from the historic act from 1505 that constituted ‘nobles democracy’, which wrested power from the king. ‘*Nihil novi*’ in this political sense is interpreted in the vernacular as ‘Nothing about us without us’ (in Polish, ‘*Nic o nas bez nas*’). The statement, according to Google search results, is often associated with grassroots initiatives such as those by the unions, and also has well-known formats. They organize a sit-down strike, called ‘*miasteczko emerytalne*’ (‘retirement camp’) which resembles (not only linguistically) ‘*białe miasteczko*’ (‘white camp’), a well-known and fondly recalled strike of Polish nurses that took place in 2007. Vivid demonstrations and a sea of white tents pitched in front of the prime minister’s office in Warsaw are considered a media-friendly format. To make it even more
Fig. 13: The main matters of concern in the retirement age debate in Poland, according to Polish ageing NGOs, depicted as a word cloud with issues resized according to frequency of mentions in English and Polish. The cloud is adapted from Wordle.net with insets zooming in on marginal issues. The two phrases that stand out are positions on either side of the debate: ‘agreement on retirement’ (which captures the coalition compromise leaving the retirement age the same, albeit with only half pensions) and ‘referendum on retirement’ (a contradictory position calling for the people to overturn the government’s proposal to raise the retirement age). Issues extracted from Polish NGO websites, and queried across all Polish NGO websites with Lipmanian Device, 8 April 2012. Source: Polish NGOs included in the Forum 50+, http://www.forum50.org.
interesting, the unions march from the PM’s office to the parliament, which is precisely the pathway of the retirement legislative proposals. The unions’ march may be conceived as geographical inscription, drawing politics in the soil (or carving it into the pavement), a form of counter-mapping that we discuss in the chapter on critical cartography. This specific kind of counter-mapping also elicits public attention.

The issue cloud has retirement age as the key issue, and two phrases stand out, namely ‘agreement on retirement’ (a phrase used often to describe the coalition compromise) and ‘referendum on retirement’ (an alternate mode of dealing with the ageing controversy) (see Figure 13). According to the unions, the debate is dominated by experts and policymakers and the people’s voice is missing; two millions Poles have signed the petition for a referendum and surveys have shown that some 64 per cent of the population is in favour of the national vote (Polskie Radio, 2012, n. pag.). ‘We want to debate’, cries a leader of Solidarity (TVP Parlament, 2012, n. pag.).

Polish debate on ageing-related controversies is often phrased in terms of domestic politics (alliances, deals and negotiations). Notably, Europe appears as a benchmark in those situations where Polish policies require additional legitimization by EU institutions; decisions are explained with reference to European standards and recommendations. In this sense, the congress of Universities of the Third Age becomes a place to merge national and supranational points of reference, and the Polish prime minister seizes the occasion to associate the legislative proposals with the concept of active ageing. Whilst the idea is endorsed by the European Union, it serves national political goals. The Europeanization of Polish ageing issues is concrete, manifesting itself in the legislation enacted.

We conclude with something of a coda to the mapping (and timeline that was made). After the parliament had rejected the request for a referendum, a new pension law to raise the retirement age to 67 was signed by the president and came into force in 2013. ‘The new regulations will be applied gradually over about 30 years in the case of women, who prior to the reform used to retire at the age of 60. For men, the transition period will be shorter and take 7 years, as they were already working until 65’ (World Bank, 2013, n. pag.). The manner in which this gradual change is to be implemented differently for men and women can be said to reflect a Polish issue space in which ageing has been framed as a women’s issue and as a measure of triumph for those organizations that opposed treating women – who, it is argued, face disadvantages in the Polish workforce – in the same fashion as men.