

The Ageing Society.
Analyzing the coverage of the population ageing
in a Belgian quality newspaper

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“Il nous fallut bien du talent
Pour être vieux sans être adultes”

La Chanson des Vieux Amants - *The song of Old Lovers*
From the Belgian singer Jacques Brel, 1967

We had to have much talent / To be old without being adults

**Remembering the terrorist attacks of 22 March 2016 in Brussels, Belgium
for many years my home**

“Mijn Brussel
al ben je erg ziek
een mollepijp, een braakland
in ruïne ken ik je niet
ach je bent wreed veranderd
Al ben je als een lelijk huis
toch voel ik me hier veilig thuis”

Brussel - *Brussels*
from the Belgian singer Johan Verminnen, 1976

*My Brussels / even though you are very sick / a molehill, a wasteland /
in ruins I don't know you / oh you have cruelly changed
Even though you are like an ugly house / I feel safe at home here*

Abstract

This study has examined how the ‘Ageing Society’ -a society with a rapidly ageing population, a growing share of older persons and a decreasing share of younger persons- and its implications for the Belgian population are represented in the Belgian quality newspaper *De Standaard* (2011-2013). As such, the study delivered first-time Belgian empirical findings about the coverage of the Ageing Society. For most people, media are a central information source and an important factor in their opinion building. It is therefore highly important to increase the knowledge regarding the Ageing Society-media coverage they are provided with, and will possibly act upon.

The study has applied a mixed methods approach. First, a qualitative content analysis inductively identified the labels and frames in the Ageing Society-coverage. Subsequently the frequencies of these labels and frames have been assessed. This two-step approach allowed identifying new labels and frames while considering their individual importance in the coverage as well.

The Ageing Society mostly appeared in the newspaper *De Standaard* as a threat for the public budget, labour market and health- and social systems. The newspaper dominantly applied political- and economic frames to cover the Ageing Society, and hence established the Ageing Society mainly as a political-economic concern. Frequently applied as well in the coverage of the Ageing Society was the health frame. To a much lesser extent, the Ageing Society was also framed in terms of education and awareness.

Several Ageing Society-related topics appeared seldom in the coverage; e.g. the (non-financial) contributions of older persons to society, the connectedness between the various generations, the implications of the Ageing Society for the individual and the human-made element in population ageing. Also, the dominant normative perspective of the Ageing Society as threat for the welfare state excluded other, more positive perspectives. Such perspectives could nevertheless complement the existing coverage by exploring the opportunities of the Ageing Society, and reporting about alternative policies to address its implications.

The policies to address the Ageing Society were critically reflected upon in the newspaper’s comments and opinion articles. Most of these opinionating articles nevertheless did not attribute responsibility to specific persons or instances deemed accountable for addressing the Ageing Society. Sources for the Ageing Society-coverage in *De Standaard* were mainly professional experts, such as politicians or researchers. Other potential non-professional expert sources, such as representatives from the civil society, communities or individual (possibly ageing) persons were less represented.

The research findings and theoretical insights have been translated into journalistic recommendations for a more varied and balanced media coverage of the Ageing Society.

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Table of Content

1	Introduction.....	15
1.1	Introduction to the Ageing Society.....	15
1.2	Research Context.....	16
1.2.1	Earlier research and knowledge gap.	16
1.2.2	Research approach.	16
1.2.3	Contribution.	17
1.3	Thesis Outline.....	19
2	Theory.....	20
2.1	Ageing Society: Definition and Context.....	20
2.1.1	Definition.....	20
2.1.2	Ageing Society in the international context.	24
2.2	International Concerns and Recommendations.....	29
2.2.1	Concerns regarding the Ageing Society.....	29
2.2.2	Recommendations for the Ageing Society.	33
2.3	Belgian Ageing Society.....	37
2.3.1	Belgian population ageing: fertility, life expectancy and migration.	38
2.3.2	Age structure of the Belgian population.	40
2.3.3	Implications of the Ageing Society for the Belgian public expenditure.	42
2.4	Ageing in the Media	45
2.4.1	Older people in the media.....	47
2.4.2	Ageing Society in the media.	49
2.4.3	Multidimensionality of media coverage.....	51
2.5	Agenda-setting theory and the transfer of salience	54
2.5.1	The communication of importance	57
2.6	Summary.....	60
3	Methodology	62
3.1	Research Questions.....	62
3.2	Hypotheses.....	62
3.2.1	Hypotheses for labeling.....	62
3.2.2	Hypotheses for the general framing of the Ageing Society.	63
3.2.3	Hypotheses for the political and economic framing of the Ageing Society.	63
3.2.4	Hypothesis for political and economic policies, responsibility and sources.	64
3.3	Data Collection	65
3.3.1	Belgian newspaper <i>De Standaard</i>	65
3.3.2	Sampling method: random stratified sample with constructed weeks.	66

3.3.3	Research corpus: Ageing Society-articles from <i>De Standaard</i>	67
3.4	Text Analysis	70
3.4.1	Labeling and framing.	70
3.4.2	Content analysis.	75
3.5	Summary.....	78
4	Findings.....	80
4.1	General labeling of the Ageing Society	80
4.2	General Framing of the Ageing Society	81
4.2.1	Frames overview.	81
4.2.2	Frame frequencies and hosting article types.	84
4.2.3	Thematic framing of the Ageing Society.	85
4.2.4	Normative framing of the Ageing Society.	89
4.3	Framing of the political and economic aspects of the Ageing Society.....	90
4.3.1	Belgian Budget for the Ageing Society.	91
4.3.2	Challenging preparation for the Ageing Society.....	95
4.3.3	Impact of the Ageing Society on the pension system.	96
4.3.4	Impact of Ageing Society on the labour market.....	99
4.3.5	Investment in Ageing Society-businesses.....	102
4.4	Summary.....	103
5	Discussion	104
5.1	Discussing the labeling of the Ageing Society	104
5.1.1	Evaluation of the hypotheses for the labeling.	104
5.1.2	Ageing Society as common sense and discursive argument.	105
5.2	Discussing the general framing of the Ageing Society	107
5.2.1	Evaluation of the hypotheses for the general framing.	107
5.2.2	Ageing Society as inevitable threat demanding instantaneous measures.....	108
5.3	Discussing the framing of the political and economic aspects of the Ageing Society.....	109
5.3.1	Evaluation of the hypotheses for the political and economic framing.	109
5.3.2	Political-economic coverage with strong financial focus.	110
5.4	Discussing the political-economic policies for the Ageing Society.....	111
5.4.1	Evaluation of the hypotheses for the political-economic policies and sources.	111
5.4.2	Political-economic Ageing Society as professional-expert issue.....	112
5.5	What is underrepresented in Ageing Society-coverage.....	116
5.5.1	Underrepresented topics.	117
5.5.2	Underrepresented sources.....	122
5.5.3	Underrepresented perspectives.....	125
5.5.4	Congruence Ageing Society-agendas in <i>De Standaard</i> and international ageing-policy documents.....	127

5.6	Recommendations for future Ageing Society-coverage	130
5.6.1	Assessment of journalistic quality criteria in <i>De Standaard</i>	130
5.6.2	Journalistic recommendations.	133
5.7	Answer to the Research Questions	138
5.8	Conclusion	140
6	References.....	144
7	Appendix.....	167

List of figures

Figure 1 Growing global number of persons 60 years or older.....	26
Figure 2 Projected expenditure increases in the European Union.	33
Figure 3 Life expectancy in Belgium and the European Union.....	38
Figure 4 Fertility in Belgium and the European Union.....	39
Figure 5 Net migration in Belgium and the European Union.	39
Figure 6 Old age dependency ratio in Belgium and the European Union.....	41
Figure 7 Projected changes in strictly age-related expenditure in the European Union, in p.p. of GDP (2010-2060).	42
Figure 8 Public pension expenditure in Belgium and the European Union (2010-2060).....	43
Figure 9 Public health expenditure in Belgium and the European Union (2010-2060).	44
Figure 10 Public long-term care expenditure in Belgium and the European Union (2010-2060).....	44
Figure 11 Public education expenditure in Belgium and the European Union (2010-2060).	45
Figure 12 Frame frequencies in various article types.	85
Figure 13 Focus on the Belgian Budget for the Ageing Society.....	92
Figure 14 Focus on the challenging preparation for the Ageing Society.	95
Figure 15 Focus on the Ageing Society's impact on the pension system.....	97
Figure 16 Focus on the Ageing Society's impact on the labour market.....	100
Figure 17 Focus on the investment in Ageing Society-businesses.	102
Figure 18 Recommendations for a balanced Ageing Society-coverage.	134

List of tables

Table 1 Ageing Country Clusters in Europe.	28
Table 2 Indicators for the Ageing Society in Belgium and the European Union.	40
Table 3 Content types in the sample.	67
Table 4 Composition of research corpus.	69
Table 5 Frame level classification system.	75
Table 6 Inductive category building.	77
Table 7 Frames overview table.	83
Table 8 Evaluation of the hypotheses for research question 1.	104
Table 9 Evaluation of the hypotheses for research question 2.	107
Table 10 Evaluation of the hypotheses for research question 3.	110
Table 11 Evaluation of the hypotheses for research question 4.	112
Table 12 Journalistic quality criteria in <i>De Standaard's</i> Ageing Society-coverage.	133

Glossary

Caregiver / Careprovider:

A caregiver or careprovider is a person who provides unpaid, informal care, mostly to (older) relatives or neighbours. (Barrett, Hale & Butler, 2013, p. 2)

Care worker:

A care worker is a person providing professional, formal care, which is paid for. (Barrett, Hale & Butler, 2013, p. 2)

European Union:

The political entity “European Union” (EU) includes following 28 member states: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom. (European Union, 2015) In this thesis, all values provided for the European Union are averages. The adjective “European” refers in this context to the political entity European Union (and not the ‘continent Europe’).

Fertility rate:

“The fertility rate is the average number of children that would be born to a woman over her lifetime.” (Paz, 2013, p. 330)

Flemish:

Flemish is the variant of Dutch that is spoken in Belgium, as opposed to the Dutch spoken in the Netherlands. The Flemish-speaking northern part of Belgium, Flanders, has 6.161.600 inhabitants. (Algemene Directie Statistiek, 2015)

Gross domestic product:

“Gross domestic product (GDP) is the market value of all final goods and services produced within a geographical entity within a given period of time.” (Saleem et al., 2013, p. 2)

ktn:

refers to “Karen Torben-Nielsen” and is used to flag an addition from the author,

mainly to clarify a quotation. E.g. “ ... this phenomenon (the Ageing Society, ktn) is illustrated ...”.

Long-term care:

“Long-term care refers to care for older people, chronic patients and people with disabilities lasting more than 2 years.” (Abma & Baur, 2015, p. 2328)

Low- and middle income countries

Low-and middle income countries (LMIC) are countries with a Gross National Income per capita of less than \$12,616. This term, used by the World Health Organization and the World Bank, replaces the former term ‘developing countries’; which could be perceived as paternalistic. (World Bank, 2015; World Health Organization, 2015)

Median age:

“Median age is the age that divides the population in two parts of equal size.” (Mattei et al., 2015, p. 3)

News articles:

This term refers to newspaper articles that cover actual events. The focus in news articles is on the topicality (and e.g. not on background information). News articles are written by the newspaper’s staff.

Net migration:

Net migration is the balance between immigration and emigration over a given time period. It is often expressed as an increase or decrease per 1,000 population of the area in a given year. (Cangiano, 2014, p. 3; Population Reference Bureau, 2015, 1st paragraph)

Old age dependency ratio:

The old age dependency ratio is calculated by dividing the population aged 65 and over by population in working age (15-64 years old). The resulting number shows the ratio between the ‘economically dependent’ older adults (65+) and the ‘productive’ younger adults (15-64 years). (Lanzieri, 2011, p. 11)

Opinionating articles:

This term is used in this thesis as the collective noun for opinion articles and comments.

Percentage point:

“A percentage point is the unit of measure for the arithmetic difference between two percentages.” (Herbst-Murphy, 2015, p. 9)

Persons 65+:

The term ‘persons 65+’ refers to persons who are 65 year old or older. In the remainder of this thesis, following descriptions refer to this age group as well: older adults, older persons/people, seniors, senior persons/people.

Population projection:

“A population projection is a computation of future changes in population numbers, given certain assumptions about future trends in the rates of fertility, mortality, and migration.” (Population Reference Bureau, 2015, 1st paragraph)

Public Expenditure:

Public expenditure refers to the “investments or budget lines of public authorities for actions expressly and directly aimed at implementing (...) policy”. (Vander Laenen et al., 2008, p. 26)

Welfare state:

A welfare state is a state with “a system whereby the state undertakes to protect the health and well-being of its citizens, especially those in financial or social need, by means of grants, pensions and other benefits”. (Carney & Witt, 2014, p. 541)

The Ageing Society.

Analyzing the coverage of the population ageing in a Belgian quality newspaper

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Ageing Society

There may be more shops for prostheses than for children's toys. The walking time at traffic lights could be a bit longer and the crosswalks a bit broader. Businesses might want to adapt to an older target group; and so it could happen that a manufacturer moves from baby diapers to adult 'incontinence aids'. Welcome to the Ageing Society, a society where there are ever more older people and ever less younger ones.

These examples from Elisabeth Niejahr's book '*Alt sind nur die anderen*' (Old are only the others; 2004), in which she examines possible implications of the ageing of the population, obviously display some rather frivolous consequences of the Ageing Society. The real, everyday implications are however already affecting most European countries and other Western societies to date. Many low-income regions are projected to face similar demographic changes in the decennia to come, and to transform into Ageing Societies as well. Ageing Societies are societies with a rapidly ageing population, a growing share of older persons and a decreasing share of younger persons.

International organizations such as the United Nations, the World Health Organization and the European Union are concerned about the great challenges the Ageing Society poses to economies and welfare systems. The United Nations (UN, 2012a, p. 3) consider the global rise of the Ageing Society "one of the most significant trends of the 21st century", with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon stating that "the social and economic implications of this phenomenon are profound, extending far beyond the individual older person and the immediate family, touching broader society and the global community in unprecedented ways" (UN, 2012a, p. 3).

Belgium has in the European ageing context a 'laboratory-character': the ageing of the population has set off earlier in Belgium than in many other European Union-countries because of the specific Belgian values for fertility, life expectancy and migration; which determine the ageing of a society. Therefore, Belgium is currently one of the first European countries where the concrete implications of the Ageing Society, such as e.g. the challenged sustainability of the pension system or the growing need for elderly care, are becoming palpable. The way Belgium addresses these Ageing Society-implications –and how this is covered in the media- may be closely observed by other countries as they too will be confronted with similar challenges in a few years to come.

1.2 Research Context

1.2.1 Earlier research and knowledge gap.

Previous research has shown that media coverage is for most people an important source of information. It affects how people see themselves and others, and how resources are allocated (e.g. Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2012, p. 42; Milner, Van Norman & Milner, 2011, p. 27; Lin et al., 2004). However, the academic knowledge about the media coverage of the Ageing Society remains to date relatively restricted. Numerous studies over the last decennia have indeed investigated how ‘older people’ were represented in the media. Numerous as well are the studies which examine the implications of the Ageing Society; e.g. with regard to the pension system, health situation or labour market. Clearly less numerous are the studies about the representation of the Ageing Society in the media. The interest in the media representation of the ‘Ageing Society’ as a demographic phenomenon with a broad range of implications for all age groups, is comparatively young and part of a growing body of literature. The earlier findings suggest that the media represent the Ageing Society mainly as a societal risk and economic problem.

So far, it has not been investigated how the Ageing Society is covered in Belgian media in general, or in a newspaper in particular. Although the Belgian population is currently one of the oldest in Europe, with far-reaching implications for all dimensions of society, little is known about the media’s coverage of this situation. Consequently, there are no empirical data available about how this demographic phenomenon and its implications are presented in Belgium’s most read quality newspaper, *De Standaard*.

1.2.2 Research approach.

The insights from earlier research and the existing knowledge gap concerning the Belgian situation have led to an analysis of the coverage of the Ageing Society and its implications for the Belgian population in the quality newspaper *De Standaard*, over the period mid 2011- mid 2013. This time frame was selected as it allowed an understanding of the Ageing Society-coverage at a moment in which implications were starting to become ‘real’ and palpable, f.e. with regard to the Belgian pension expenditure; which the European Commission projected to increase strongly between 2010 and 2020.

This study has started with an examination of the labeling of the Ageing Society and the various frames which were applied in the Ageing Society-coverage. The research then focused in-depth on the framing of the political and economic aspects of the Ageing Society, with special attention for the sources of the coverage, and the political and economic policies suggested to address the Ageing Society. Hypotheses were that the coverage would mostly refer to the Ageing

Society with the neutral Flemish¹ label ‘*vergrijzing*’² (different from the acoustically similar, but negative German term ‘*Vergreisung*’), whose broad use as ‘signpost’ in different contexts might make the coherence between the various ageing-issues explicit. It was also expected that the political-, economic- and health frames would be prominently used in the coverage of the Ageing Society. Within the framing of the political and economic aspects of the Ageing Society, it was expected to find subframes concerning the changing labour market, the demanding situation of the familial careproviders (persons who voluntarily take care of an older relative) and the upcoming costs for the pension- and care systems. It was hypothesized as well that the suggested political and economic policies for the Ageing Society would focus on the building of financial resources for ageing-related costs and a reformation of the pension system. Finally, it was expected that mainly professional experts would appear as sources in the political and economic coverage of the Ageing Society.

With regard to the research strategy, this study has applied a mixed methods approach. A qualitative content analysis first inductively identified the labels and frames in the Ageing Society-coverage. Subsequently, their respective frequencies have been assessed. This two-step approach allowed identifying new labels and frames while considering their respective importance in the coverage as well.

1.2.3 Contribution.

The key objective of this study has been to deliver first-time Belgian empirical knowledge about the newspaper coverage of the Ageing Society. Until to date, only restricted international knowledge in this realm has been available, and the Ageing Society-media coverage hence differs as emergent research subject from other, more established subjects or branches in media research; which have large amounts of empirical data at their disposal (an example being agenda-setting research, of which it has been argued almost thirty years ago that it needed “a thorough meta-research analysis much more than it needs a 154th empirical study” [Rogers & Dearing, 1988, p. 582]). Indeed, the growing research interest in the Ageing Society-coverage has not come close to such empirical saturation point yet.

With regard to the theory, practice and policy, the study has made a threefold contribution. First, regarding communication theory and -research, the study has added to the academic knowledge and state-of-the-art with its findings about the Ageing Society-newspaper coverage, and by connecting these with established theoretical concepts and earlier research results. Second,

¹ Flemish is the variant of Dutch that is spoken in Belgium, as opposed to the Dutch spoken in the Netherlands.

² Literal English translation of ‘*vergrijzing*’ is ‘greying’.

concerning the journalistic practice, the study formulated recommendations for the future coverage of the Ageing Society based on the understandings from media theory and the own findings. Third, with regard to the policy, the study has provided a deeper understanding about the Ageing Society-messages distributed by *De Standaard*, Belgium's most read quality newspaper. This provides valuable empirical knowledge to policy makers, e.g. for the design of own communication campaigns regarding (measures to address) the Ageing Society.

A deepened understanding of the Ageing Society-coverage is of utmost importance as earlier studies have shown that media coverage affects not only how the public regards the topic at hand, but also the people involved and the distribution of the available means. Applied to the Ageing Society, this suggests that the media influence how the public sees the Ageing Society and the (needs and wishes of) other generations, and how it evaluates the measures and means to address the implications of the Ageing Society; e.g. the rising retirement age.

This study has aimed at making the Ageing Society and its implications tangible by reviewing and presenting the international data and projections of the population ageing. The data for the European Union and Belgium have demonstrated the Belgian 'early set off' with regard to the population ageing, and the country's forerunner role in Europe regarding ageing processes. The literature review shed light on the international discourse about the Ageing Society, and the elements which dominate it. The study's empirical findings have attempted to fill the knowledge gap regarding the Ageing Society-media representation, by suggesting how the Ageing Society has been covered in the Belgian quality newspaper *De Standaard* (mid 2011- mid 2013). The findings can serve as benchmark for other studies concerning the coverage of the Ageing Society in other (Belgian and international) media.

Publication of the study results in scientific journals and in other, broader outlets -such as news media or blogs- may inspire the debate about the Ageing Society and its implications for the population. Certainly, more steps will be necessary on the way to a broad public discussion. However, as media scholar Maxwell McCombs remarked, "If the media tell us nothing about a topic or event, then in most cases it simply will not exist on our personal agenda, or in our life space" (McCombs, 1976, p. 3). Publication of the study findings may therefore help placing the Ageing Society further on the agenda and facilitate the debate. On a more direct level, the research findings can and will be integrated in academic curricula, to transfer the empirical insights to students and stimulate the critical reflection upon them. A first course about the media coverage of the Ageing Society will take place in the autumn semester 2016 at the Bern University of Applied Studies; the institute where the author has a teaching function.

Until to date, the research for this thesis has led to dissemination in various academic and other media. The author has published about the media coverage of the Ageing Society in an

edited book (Torben-Nielsen, 2013), a scientific journal (Torben-Nielsen & Russ-Mohl, 2012), an applied-sciences journal (Torben-Nielsen, 2016) and the European Journalism Observatory (Torben-Nielsen 2012 & 2014). The research and findings have moreover been presented to- and discussed with the scientific community at various international academic conferences³. Finally, this dissertation has paved the way to a follow-up research project, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, which will provide insights in the representation of the Ageing Society in three Swiss newspapers.

1.3 Thesis Outline

In the remainder of this thesis, *Chapter 2 Theory* provides an extensive overview of the state of the art, with international population statistics, concerns and recommendations regarding the Ageing Society, the demographic situation in Belgium, the representation of the Ageing Society in various media and the concept of agenda-setting. *Chapter 3 Methodology* elaborates on the research questions, data collection, research strategy and provides hypotheses for the study. *Chapter 4 Findings* first describes the labeling of the Ageing Society and the various frames applied in its coverage. The chapter then zooms in on the framing of the specific political and economic aspects of the Ageing Society, with the respective sources and policy suggestions. *Chapter 5 Discussion* brings the findings into connection with earlier research results and communication theory, and elaborates upon what remained underrepresented in the coverage of the Ageing Society. Based on the theoretical insights and research findings, journalistic recommendations for a balanced coverage of the Ageing Society have been formulated. Finally, the chapter indicates the limitations of the study and makes suggestions for future research. A conclusion positions the study findings in a broader perspective.

The *References* provide an overview of the literature. The *Appendix* offers background information regarding the sample and the codebook, while also presenting the original Flemish newspaper quotes used in this thesis, which are –for reasons of language clarity- provided in English in the remainder of the work.

³ The research has been presented at following conferences: ‘Methods Festival’ in Basel, Switzerland; ‘Narration and Argumentation’ in Winterthur, Switzerland; ‘Conference of the Swiss Association of Communication and Media Research’, in Fribourg, Switzerland; ‘Media and Civic Culture’ in Bucharest, Rumania; ‘Screening Age’ in Mengkofen, Germany; ‘International Initiative on Ageing’ in Istanbul, Turkey; and ‘The Unlovable Press’ in Groningen, the Netherlands.

2 Theory

This theory chapter consists of two thematic sections: a demographic section and a media section. First, the demographic section starts off with a definition of the Ageing Society and the debate about the most accurate ways to measure population ageing. It then focuses on the international ageing situation with challenges and related policy suggestions, and zooms in on the ageing situation in Belgium. The ageing indicators show that Belgium currently has one of the oldest populations in Europe and is hence one of the first countries to be confronted with the implications of the Ageing Society. The second section of the chapter first discusses earlier research results concerning the depiction of ‘older people’ in the media, before reviewing how the demographic phenomenon ‘Ageing Society’ has been covered in the media. Subsequently, three assessment approaches suggest how to evaluate whether such media coverage is balanced and varied. The agenda-setting theory complements the theoretical framework with its focus on salience, and the media’s influence on the public perception. The theory chapter ends with a summary.

2.1 Ageing Society: Definition and Context

2.1.1 Definition.

‘Ageing Societies’ are societies which rapidly grow older, with an increasing share of older persons and a decreasing share of younger persons. “The extent and speed of ageing depend on future life expectancy, fertility and migration” (European Commission [EC] 2012a, p. 2). Although current literature does not identify a fixed demarcation point from which a society is considered an ‘Ageing Society’, it does provide four common indicators to measure the extent of a society’s ageing situation: “median age, proportion of persons aged 65 and over, proportion of persons aged 80 and over and old age dependency ratio” (Lanzieri, 2011, p. 1). Following Lanzieri, the old age dependency ratio (“calculated by dividing the population aged 65 years and over by the working age population [15-64 years old]”; Lanzieri, 2011, p. 11) shows the ratio between the ‘economically dependent’ older adults and the ‘productive’ younger adults.

The age structure of its population affects countries’ key socio-economic issues. For instance, states with younger populations may spend more for education, whereas states with older populations should allocate more resources to the elderly care sector. Population projections can make policymakers aware of major trends affecting (e.g. economic) development. Population projections are also used to estimate the future demand of services, energy, water and food (Population Reference Bureau, 2001, p. 1). Knowledge about the age structure assists as well in

foreseeing conflict potential, as e.g. a population with a large share of younger people may lead to unrest, if these young adults are not able to find a job (CIA, 2015, para. 1). A population with a greater share of older people could on the other hand have a negative influence on a country's economic evaluation, since rating agencies may consider older people to be less innovative (Niejahr, 2004, p. 39).

Some global numbers on ageing.

- The number of centenarians will globally strongly increase. In 2011 there were 316.000 centenarians, in 2050 there will be 3.2 million. (UN, 2012a, p. 7)
- From 2002 to 2012, “the number of people aged 60 or over has risen by 178 million” (UN, 2012a, p. 7) –roughly the equivalent of the populations of Germany, France, Belgium, Switzerland and Austria together.
- Life expectancy is globally increasing. Between 2010-2015, the life expectancy in high income regions was 78 years, and in low- and middle income regions 68 years. However by 2045-2050, newborns in high income regions “can expect to live to 83 years” (UN, 2012a, p. 7), and in low- and middle income regions to 74 years.
- “The number of people with dementia worldwide is estimated at 35.6 million (in 2010, ktn) and is projected to nearly double every 20 years, to 65.7 million in 2030.” (UN, 2012a, p. 7)

Various measurements for the population ageing.

Over the last years, debates over the most accurate ways to measure the population ageing have emerged in academic research. Although it is not contested that the median age, nor the share of people over 65 or 80 years old, have strongly increased in Western societies, it is however debated how such ageing-related aspects should be measured to ‘reconsider the ageing phenomenon’, as for instance d’Albis and Collard (2013, p. 617) have proposed. As the ‘chronological age’ (e.g. ‘70’ year old) and fixed age definitions become less important in individual ageing processes, critics have argued that the common demographic measurements may not be the most suited tools to examine tensions in ageing populations. Hereby, two questions stand especially in focus: first, whether the classic old age dependency ratio provides an accurate image of the old-age dependencies in society; and second, whether the cutoff-age (or entry point) to the ‘old age population group’ should be a fixed chronological age (e.g. ‘60’ or maybe ‘73.5’), or not. Depending on the criteria used in calculating the old age dependency ratio, or the cutoff age in calculating the old age population group, the results vary. This has led some scholars to state that the process of population ageing takes place at a slower pace than is commonly assumed (e.g. Sanderson & Scherbov, 2010, p. 1287).

It has been argued that the old age dependency ratio is not the most appropriate way to measure old-age dependencies in society (e.g. Spijker, Riffe and MacInnes, 2014, p. 1; Sanderson & Scherbov, 2010, p. 1287). Following Spijker et al., the old age dependency ratio is “not fit for purpose. It counts neither the ‘dependent’ elderly nor those who sustain them. It merely takes (...) the state pension age and assigns adults to the two sides of the ratio accordingly” (Spijker et al.,

2014, p. 1). Sanderson and Scherbov (2010, p. 1287) have proposed various alternatives to the old age dependency ratio: e.g. the adult disability dependency ratio, determining the population share of adults with disabilities, which often appear at alter age; or the prospective old age dependency ratio, determining the population share of people with remaining life expectancies of fifteen years or less. The latter ratio is based on the notion that most health care costs, and hence ‘dependency’ according to the authors, “occur in the last few years of life, which happen at ever later ages as life expectancies increase” (Sanderson & Scherbov, 2010, p. 1287). Therefore, they argue that focusing on the (expected) last fifteen life years is a more suited dependency-calculation manner than using a fixed age demarcation. Also Spijker et al. have applied the expected remaining last fifteen life years to determine the period of age-related dependency. In addition, they use not the complete population in working age (15-64 years) as dominator for the old age dependency ratio, but rather the number of the “actually employed, irrespective of age” (Spijker et al., 2014, p. 3). When the old-age dependencies are calculated according to these suggestions, they result in a ratio that is clearly lower than the classic old age dependency ratio. Of course, the crucial discussion point is the definition of ‘dependent’: are older persons dependent when they have an (age-related) disability? Or when they are in the expected last fifteen remaining years of their life, a period in which they generate most health care costs? Or, as states the ‘classic’ formula, when they enter retirement and receive a state pension? As the old age dependency ratio is one of the main indicators for the population ageing, d’Albis and Collard (2013, p. 617) have argued that the way it is calculated reflects on the demographic developments, thus affecting its perception by the public and policy makers.

Another focus point in the debate concerning the manners for measuring the population ageing, is the question whether a fixed chronological age (e.g. ‘60’ years) is the most fitting way to define the starting age for the ‘old age group’, or other age groups for that matter. In this regard, d’Albis and Collard (2013, p. 617) have proposed to define the starting age (or ‘cutoff age’) differently. Similar to the definition question regarding the old age dependency ratio, also here applies that another definition of ‘old age’, and another corresponding cutoff age, leads to a different share of ‘older people’ in society. For instance, if the ‘old age group’ is said to start at 75 and only includes people above that age, then its share in the population will be smaller than when the ‘old age group’ is said to start at 60 and includes all people over 60 years old. International organizations as the United Nations commonly use fixed ages to define ‘old age’, mostly 60 or 65, as these “correspond to the eligibility ages of certain social programs, most notably the (...) pension system” (d’Albis & Collard, 2013, p. 618). However, d’Albis and Collard argue against such fixed cutoff ages, not only because the retirement age may change, but because they consider this measurement used by the United Nations biased: “The age at which one becomes an ‘older

person' is a notion that changes over time; thus, calculating the proportion of 'older persons' based on a fixed age only provides us with biased information" (d'Albis & Collard, 2013, p. 618). Therefore, they suggest to define a person's age in terms of years left to live, thus "not according to the number of years lived since birth, but according to the remaining number of years that he or she is expected to live" (idem, p. 619) – an idea that was initially developed by Ryder (1975). Following the authors, this approach has the great advantage that it "enables the distinction between individual and population ageing" (d'Albis & Collard, 2013, p. 620). They applied the method of optimal grouping techniques, originally used by Aghevli and Mehran (1981), to the age distributions and created endogenous age groups, with relative cutoff ages. The findings suggest that two elements have strongly changed in Western populations in the second half of the 20th century: first, the age distribution, and second, a person's relative position within that age distribution. As a consequence, being 55 years old today is not the same as being 55 years old half a century ago. Not only is the life situation of 55-year olds very different from the one of their grandparents at the same age two generations ago, also their place in the ageing scale of society is very different: "Let us consider an individual of age 55. In 1933, this individual would have been classified as belonging to the group of the oldest. This is no longer the case in the current US society. Otherwise stated, at age 55, a US individual is 'younger' in 2005 than in 1933" (d'Albis & Collard, 2013, p. 628). Spijker et al. have come to a similar conclusion about the British population of 2009: "Despite being much 'older' as measured by *years lived*, (the population, ktn) was nevertheless 'younger' than that of 1900 in terms of *years left* for its members to enjoy" (Spijker et al., 2014, p. 2; their italics). This also shows the difference between ageing processes in individuals and populations: "Unlike an individual, populations can grow older (a rise in average years lived) *and* younger (a rise in average years left) at the same time" (Spijker et al., 2014, p. 2).

These argumentations demonstrate that the population ageing can be measured in different ways, leading to different depictions of the demographic changes. However, independent of the chosen measure, the increase in median age and thus the chronological ageing of Western societies is recognized, and as such the starting point for the various alternative approaches. Hereby it should be remarked that 'ageing' sometimes has a less than neutral connotation. D'Albis and Collard refer in this regard to the "demographic evolutions, some of which were associated with the myth of decline" (2013, p. 617), or to a "dramatic portrayal" (idem). Other authors as well have noted a similar reluctance against ageing⁴. Ageing researcher Niejahr (2004, p. 16) noted that most older people do not like to consider themselves 'old'. Despite this youthful

⁴ See section '2.4 Ageing in the media'.

attitude, Spijker et al. remarked that “sixty may not quite be the new forty” (2014, p. 6). The American writer Betty Friedan has asked: “Why did we all seem to feel the need to distance ourselves from age, the closer we got to it?” (Friedan, 1993, p. 20). This widespread disinclination against ageing processes and their implications add an extra dimension to the debate about how the situation should be measured and depicted.

In full knowledge that there are various other ways to measure the population ageing as well, this thesis uses the calculations from the United Nations and the European Union. These calculations are based on the chronological age and are to date the most common and widespread, as also d’Albis and Collard (2013, p. 618) and Sanderson and Scherbov (2010, p. 1287) acknowledge. Both the UN and EU prepare similar calculations for all member states, thus allowing for comparison and making them particularly suited to provide an international overview. It is well possible that some of the measuring proposals described above will at some point be integrated in the common measurements for population ageing. To date however, this is not the case. Therefore, not the alternative measures but the common measures from the United Nations and the European Union have been used in the description of the Ageing Society that follows.

2.1.2 Ageing Society in the international context.

“In a world in which much change is unpredictable and immediate, global ageing (...) is a highly foreseeable long-term trend”, states Klaus Schwab (as cited in Beard et al., 2011, p. 2), founder and executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum. Following Schwab, the global ageing will “dramatically alter the way that societies and economies work” (idem, p. 2). Because of those “far-reaching implications for all aspects of society” (UN, 2012a, p. 3), the United Nations consider the Ageing Society “one of the most significant trends of the 21st century” (idem, p. 3): “With one in nine persons in the world aged 60 years or over, projected to increase to one in five by 2050, population ageing is a phenomenon that can no longer be ignored” (UN, 2012a, p. 3).

The expectations about the future demographic situation stem from population projections. Projections are however not fixed forecasts, but estimations of the future population, based on existing data (European Commission, 2012b). The American non-profit Population Reference Bureau (PRB) came, after an extensive examination of previous population projections, to the conclusion that the smaller the time period and the greater the geographic area, the more accurate the projections were. This is because false assumptions have amplified effects over a longer period (more than two decades); and faults at the smaller country level may annul each other if they are combined at the larger region or global level area. Also projections for more developed countries have been more accurate than for less developed countries, since the first could deliver more “reliable data on current population size and birth and death rates” (PRB, 2001, p. 2).

Projections may nevertheless lose accuracy in case of unexpected and radical events, such as natural catastrophes or war. To date, the large refugee streams towards Europe caused by the current war and unrest in the Middle-East and North-Africa may change the demographic composition of the European society, claimed the American political scientist Valerie Hudson (Hudson, 2016). Although Hudson's prediction has been relativized by demographic experts (mainly because Hudson based her claims on Swedish country-specific statistics and extrapolated them to the whole of Europe), it does demonstrate which negative effects such unexpected events may have on the accuracy of demographic projections. It is at this point of time, for obvious reasons, not possible to directly evaluate the existing projections for the future –such evaluation can only take place afterwards. However, the accuracy of previous projections has been examined. The United Nations have projected the global population size for the year 2000 twelve times since the 1950s. After examination, the PRB (2001, p. 2) stated that “all but one of these projections has been off by less than 4 percent”. The sections below draw on the population projections of the United Nations and the European Union, as these are the most rigorously calculated and used projections regarding the future demography and its implications⁵.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon has stated that, contrarily to what is still often assumed, the Ageing Society does not only affect older people but instead the whole society: “The social and economic implications of this phenomenon are profound, extending far beyond the individual older person and the immediate family, touching broader society and the global community in unprecedented ways” (Ban Ki-Moon as cited in United Nations, 2012a, p.3). On a global level the widespread population ageing may be considered a great human achievement: “People live longer because of improved nutrition, sanitation, medical advances, health care, education and economic well-being. (...) Life expectancy at birth is over 80 now in 33 countries; just five years ago, only 19 countries had reached this” (UN, 2012a, p. 3). Indeed, the observation that populations are globally ageing at great speed is “a cause for celebration” (Chan as cited in Beard et al., 2011, p. 3), states also Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization: “In part, it reflects our successes in dealing with childhood disease, maternal mortality and in helping women achieve control over their own fertility” (idem, p. 3). Population ageing currently takes place in all regions; with the population ageing progressing fastest in low- and middle income countries (LMIC), also in those with a large population of younger people.

At present, the oldest societies worldwide are situated in Western-Europe and Japan. The ageing situation in many countries around the globe, e.g. in North and South America and Asia, is nevertheless projected to evolve in the same direction over the next decennia. Moreover, the latest

⁵ In case projections were available for various scenarios, the reference scenario has been used.

Eurostat projections demonstrate that in Europe “over the next 50 years, population ageing is likely to attain unprecedented levels” (Lanzieri, 2011, p. 1). Obviously, “over the course of history, populations may have boomed or shrunk, but their age distributions have never been shaped almost like reversed pyramids, with the oldest age classes bigger than the youngest ones” (Lanzieri, 2011, p. 2). This general population ageing will be enforced by the further decline of fertility on the one hand, and lower mortality rates among the elderly on the other hand. Migration may play a soothing or intensifying role in the individual countries’ ageing situation (idem, p. 10).

Clearly, there are obvious ageing differences between the global regions. In Europe currently 22 percent of the population is 60 years or older, in Northern America 19 percent, while in Africa 6 percent is 60 years or older (United Nations, 2012a, p. 3). Still the globally increasing life expectancy and the strong population growth have led to a rapid rise in the number of older persons worldwide (see figure below).

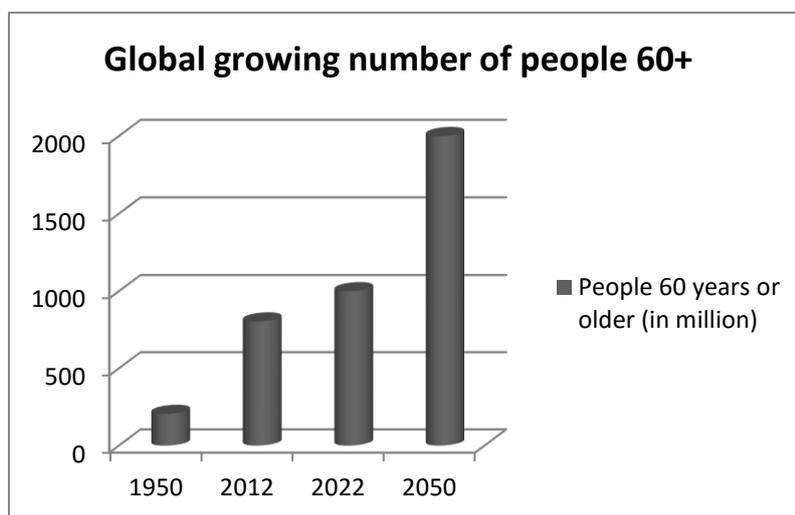


Figure 1 Growing global number of persons 60 years or older.
 Source: United Nations, 2012a, p. 4.

The United Nations (2012a, p. 4) hold that whereas in 1950 there were globally 205 million people aged 60 or over, this number had already increased to almost 810 million in 2012. Moreover, the number of people of 60 years or older is projected to reach one billion worldwide in less than ten years and then to double by 2050, reaching two billion.

Not only the absolute number of older people increases worldwide, their share in the total population also grows. This share is often expressed via the ‘old age dependency ratio’, which, following Lanzieri (2011, p. 11), shows the proportion between the ‘economically dependent’ older adults and the ‘productive’ younger adults. The old age dependency ratio is also frequently regarded as an indicator for the impact an ageing population has on the country’s expenditure, particularly on its pension expenditure (Shamash, 2011, p. 2).

Globally, the old age dependency ratio is set to roughly double between 2000 and 2050 in the high income regions and to triple in the low- and middle income regions of the world. This is illustrated by Lanzieri's observation (2011, p. 11) that in 2009, not a single country worldwide had a ratio of less than two working age-persons per person over 65 years, and only very few countries had a ratio of between two and four working age-persons per person over 65 years. However in 2050, a significant part of Europe is projected to have a ratio of less than two working age-persons per person over 65 years, and the majority of countries worldwide will have a ratio of less than four working age-persons per person over 65 years (Lanzieri, 2011, p. 11).

Since many low- and middle income countries are at present strongly occupied by other than ageing challenges (e.g. safety, poverty, lack of education possibilities, etcetera), their changing old age dependency ratio may remain under the radar for a while. This could however mean that these countries will have less time to adapt when suddenly confronted with the implications of the rapid demographic changes, leading to negative implications for their economic growth and social security (Herrmann, 2014; Shamash, 2011).

Europe: a greying continent.

Unlike other continents, Europe is not heading towards a major *growth* in the population, but rather towards a major *ageing* of the population. Demographic projections show that in 2060, Europe will not have a much larger population, but a much older population instead. The population of the European Union (EU) is projected slightly grow from 507 million in 2013 to 523 million in 2060 (EC, 2015b, p. 2). Meanwhile, the age profile is expected to change drastically; in 2060, nearly one out of three persons will be aged 65 or over (EC, 2012a).

This strong ageing process is determined by the combination of the three ageing factors. First, the future life expectancy in the European Union increases ("from 76.7 years in 2010 to 84.6 in 2060 for males and from 82.5 to 89.1 for females" [EC, 2012a, p.2]). Second, although the fertility in the European Union will climb modestly, it is expected to "remain below the natural replacement rate of 2.1 births per woman" (EC, 2012b, p.24) (from 1.59 births per women in 2010 to 1.71 births in 2060). Third, after an initial increase towards 2020, the net migration is projected to decline by 2060 (increase from 1.043.000 people in 2010 to 1.332.500 people by 2020, and then decreasing to 945.000 people by 2060). It should nevertheless be noted that the large current refugee streams from the Middle-East and North-Africa towards Europe may render the migration projections less accurate. However, it is not possible at this point in time to directly evaluate the accuracy of existing projections for the future and such evaluations can only be made afterwards, as the Population Reference Bureau has pointed out before (PRB, 2001, p. 2).

Despite these general European tendencies, the ageing process in the individual countries may vary regarding timing, speed and/or extent (Schmähl, Augurzky & Mennicken, 2012). The projections for the four ‘Ageing Society’-indicators - “median age, proportion of persons aged 65 and over, proportion of persons aged 80 and over and old age dependency ratio” (Lanzieri, 2011, p. 1)- led Lanzieri to cluster the European countries in subgroups with similar ageing processes.

Belgium, on which the focus will be in the remainder of this thesis, belongs to the cluster of Central and Northern European countries that were confronted as early as 1990 with the rapid ageing of their population, but which will have (compared to the other European countries) relatively young populations in 2060.

Ageing Country Cluster	Countries	Type of population ageing (period 1990 - 2060)
1. Central & Northern Europe	Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark, Great Britain, Norway, France, Finland, Austria, the Netherlands	From older to younger populations These countries were “relatively old in the 1990s but are projected to be among the youngest populations by 2060”. (Lanzieri, 2011, p. 10)
2. Sweden	Sweden	From the oldest to the youngest population Sweden was one of the first European countries with a relatively old population ⁶ , but it may have “one of the youngest European populations a hundred years on”. (idem, p. 10)
3. Germany & Italy	Germany, Italy	Traditionally older populations These countries have a consistent record of aged populations. They “have been and/or will be the ageing pacemakers for a long period”. (idem, p. 10)
4. Across Europe	Bulgaria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Luxembourg	Moderately ageing populations “Moderately aged populations, but with a prospect of relatively high OADR (Old Age Dependency) levels.” (idem, p. 10)
5. Eastern Europe	Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Malta, Liechtenstein, Poland, Romania, Slovakia	From younger to older populations These countries start from much younger populations and are projected to develop population structures almost as aged as the cluster ‘Across Europe’.
6. Islands	Ireland, Cyprus, Iceland	Young populations The populations of these countries “were and may remain the youngest in Europe”. (idem, p. 10)

Table 1 Ageing Country Clusters in Europe.

Source: Lanzieri, 2011, p. 10.

⁶ Sweden was the first European “country to reach a median age of 38 years, in 1986, with the second one (Italy) following only seven years later” (Lanzieri, 2011, p. 4).

2.2 International Concerns and Recommendations

2.2.1 Concerns regarding the Ageing Society.

“An ageing population raises challenges for our societies and economies, culturally, organizationally and from an economic point of view.” (EC, 2012b, p. 11) As most of the oldest populations worldwide are situated in Europe, the European Union extensively monitors the demographic changes and indicates the challenges for the entire Union as well as the individual countries. Many of these concerns are thematized in the Ageing Report (2012a&b) of the European Commission: “Policy makers worry about how living standards will be affected as each worker has to provide for the consumption needs of a growing number of elderly dependents. Markets worry about fiscal sustainability and the ability of policy makers to address timely and sufficiently these challenges in several member states.” (EC, 2012b, p.22) The dimensions of the challenges depend on how the European countries address the changing demographic conditions. (EC, 2012b, p. 22) The strongest pressure is foreseen during the period 2015 to 2035, when the babyboom generation retires (AAL, 2016, 2nd al; also similar in EC, 2015b, p. 3).

International labour market.

The Ageing Society is projected to have great implications for the labour market: over the next decennia it is expected that there will be ever less workers in Europe, because many older persons retire and there will be less younger persons to enter the labour market. Concretely, it is projected that in 2060 there will be 195.6 million workers left in the European Union, which is 15.7 million less than in 2010. This evolution is expected to have negative implications on the economy: “The decline in the workforce will act as a drag on growth and per capita income, with a consequent trend decline in potential growth” (EC, 2012a, p. 2). Reiner Klingholz, director of the German Berlin-Institute for Population and Development, illustrates the possible implications with an example from the German labour market:

Companies (in Germany, ktn) have to prepare to manage in 2030 with 6.3 million less potential workers between 20 and 64 years old. At the same time, they have to be so productive that the society can finance the new 5.5 million people over 64 years old. And this trend will continue to grow bigger after 2030. (Klingholz, 2012, p. 25)

On the operational level, the labour market is likely to face a labour and skill shortage due to the demographic changes in the workforce. Following Shamash (2011, p. 1), to “offset the effect of a decreasing working population”, productivity, education and skill attainment may need to be

improved. With regard to the consumer market –which will age as well- it may be particularly interesting for some manufacturers to adapt their products to the growing target group of older consumers (Shamash, 2011, p. 1).

A challenge that will continue is the unemployment. Against popular belief that when there are less people in working age there will be a job for everyone, reality is different: a lack of educated work force and unemployment can exist simultaneously (Hermann, 2014; Niejahr, 2004). A solution may be to attract foreign employees and currently, gaps in the Western-European labour market are indeed often filled by South- and Eastern Europeans fleeing the unemployment in their native countries. However, as these countries have ageing populations as well, they will lose their migration potential. Therefore, the Western-European countries will have to find other solutions for their diminishing working population (Klingholz, 2012). Frerichs and Taylor (2009) note that the European Union has clearly shifted its focus from policies supporting an early withdrawal from the labour market, to policies encouraging ‘active ageing’ and a higher retirement age.

Whereas the population ageing’s structural challenges for the labour market are well documented, its impact on the individuals has a more speculative character. Shamash expects that workers will be confronted with a greater need for retraining to meet the changing professional demands. Workers may also experience social and financial pressure to “retire much later and stay in full-time employment longer” (Shamash, 2011, p. 4). Many persons may also be confronted with greater family care costs and responsibilities, as they belong to the pivot generation between both older and younger relatives (i.e. parents and children) which both require care and support (e.g. Fingerman, Birditt, Nussbaum & Ebersole, 2013). People taking up the role of familial careprovider, mostly to assist older relatives, could be confronted with such social burden, that not seldom leads to health problems for themselves (e.g. Brinda, Rajkumar, Enemark, Attermann & Jacob, 2014; Barrett, Hale & Butler, 2014; Lilly, Robinson, Holtzman & Bottorff, 2012). This clearly has an impact on their professional capabilities as well. The care for the family and close community is hence considered an influential factor in the decision to continue or finish the professional employment (Pinheiro, Silva Pinheiro, Diogo, Souza Góis & Paul, 2013, p. 168). Various age researchers nevertheless foresee that employment may not automatically stop at the retirement. Employment would rather change with retirees not working in fixed jobs anymore, but in short term jobs instead; as is relatively common in the United States (e.g. Coulmas, 2012; Vaupel, 2004).

Niejahr has indicated an important psychological element in the labour context of the Ageing Society, namely ‘psychological ageing’. This refers to the principle that older persons do not expect much of themselves anymore, because others do not expect much of them either

(Niejahr, 2004, p. 97). Psychological ageing could therefore reinforce clichés about roosted, inflexible older employees. Nevertheless, as the workforce will inevitably grow older, Niejahr points out that both employers and employees have to confront such prejudices and misconceptions.

International public expenditure.

With more older people requiring specific age-related support, such as e.g. pensions or long-term care, the Ageing Society concerns the sustainability of the public finance (EC, 2012b, p. 40; UN, 2012a, p. 3). Projections of the European Commission –which calls the demographic situation a “daunting challenge for policy makers” (EC, 2012b, p. 22) – show the timing and scale of the expected developments in the public expenditure. With regard to the Ageing Society, the projections focus on the strictly age-related expenditure; which is the public expenditure for pension, health care, long term care and education.

The first financial impact of the Ageing Society is expected to become apparent in the current period between 2010 and 2020 (EU Report 2012, p. 34). Following the European Commission, the response of policy makers should “comprise a vigorous structural reform agenda and appropriate policies to enhance the cost-effectiveness of care systems” (EC, 2012b, p. 44). Yet, the demographic challenge could have been prepared for better, argues the German ageing expert Reiner Klingholz (2012). His description of the situation in Germany is illustrative for many European countries. Although the Ageing Society has already been foreseen four decades ago, Klingholz states that Germany failed to prepare for the expectable gaps in the future pensions and labour market, to solve the lack of educated people and to construct modern family politics. Instead, the German governments have let the period with a great population share in working age slip away without taking sufficient precautions (Klingholz, 2012). Now that the population ageing is in full development, in Germany and in other European countries, the budgetary implications present themselves.

Although there are large differences in the projections for the individual countries, reflecting their very different approaches to pensions, health care and long-term care, and the timing of the upcoming changes in the expenditure may differ greatly, the projections generally show increases in the public expenditure with regard to pensions, health care and long-term care.

Following the European Commission’s Ageing Report, the strictly-age-related public expenditure “is projected to increase on average by 4.1 percentage points of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) by 2060 in the EU” (EC, 2012b, p. 34). In the Euro-area, the strictly-age-related expenditure is estimated to rise even stronger by 4.5 p.p. The Ageing Report expects that “most of the projected increase in public spending over the period 2010-2060 will be on pensions

(+1.5 p.p. of GDP), long-term care (+1.5 p.p. of GDP) and health care (+1.1 p.p. of GDP) in the EU. In the euro area, spending on pensions and long-term care will be higher, rising by 2 p.p. and 1.7 p.p. of GDP” (EC, 2012b, p. 34). The European Commission (2012b) does not project great increases in the public expenditure on education -which is the remaining factor of the strictly-age-related expenditure- as the share of people in educational age generally diminishes.

The public pension expenditure alone is in the European Union projected to rise by 2060 to nearly 13% of the GDP by 2060. Nevertheless, there remains a “large diversity across EU Member States, depending notably on progress with pension reforms” (EC, 2012a, p. 1). Concretely, the pension expenditure projections range from an increase of more than 7 p.p. (in e.g. Slovenia and Cyprus), to a decline of 3 p.p. (in e.g. Latvia). The timing of the developments in the pension expenditure differs greatly across member states as well. By 2020, the “public pension spending is estimated to rise by more than 1 ½ p.p. of GDP already by 2020 in Belgium, Cyprus, Luxembourg and Finland - alternatively put, an increase of between 15 and 25% of public pension spending over this period” (EC, 2012b, p. 37). Nevertheless, “in about a third of the member states⁷ pension spending as a share of GDP is either stable or falling over the medium-term to 2020” (idem, p. 37).

The projections regarding the public health care expenditure are “driven by the assumption that half of the future gains in life expectancy are spent in good health” (EC, 2012b, p. 184). This leads to a spending that increases to 8.3% of GDP in 2060 for the EU. Again, there are great differences in the increases for the individual countries, e.g. from a slight increase between 2010 and 2060 from 0.4 p.p. in Belgium and Cyprus to a large increase of 2.9 p.p. of GDP in Malta (EC, 2012b, p. 42).

Also the public expenditure for long-term care will be strongly impacted upward by the Ageing Society. The European Commission regards the decreasing health at later age as main cause: “frailty and disability rise sharply at older ages, especially amongst the very old (aged 80+) which will be the fastest growing segment of the population in the decades to come” (EC, 2012b, p. 40). The public spending on long-term care is projected to rise strongly to 3.4% of GDP in 2060 in the EU as a whole. The projected changes are “reflecting very different approaches to the provision/financing of formal care” (EC, 2012b, p. 40), and range from less than 0.5 % of GDP in a few Eastern and Mediterranean countries⁸ to more than 2.5 % of GDP in “Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden” (idem, p. 40).

⁷ “Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Sweden, and the United Kingdom” (EC, 2012b, p. 37)

⁸ Bulgaria, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Portugal and Slovakia

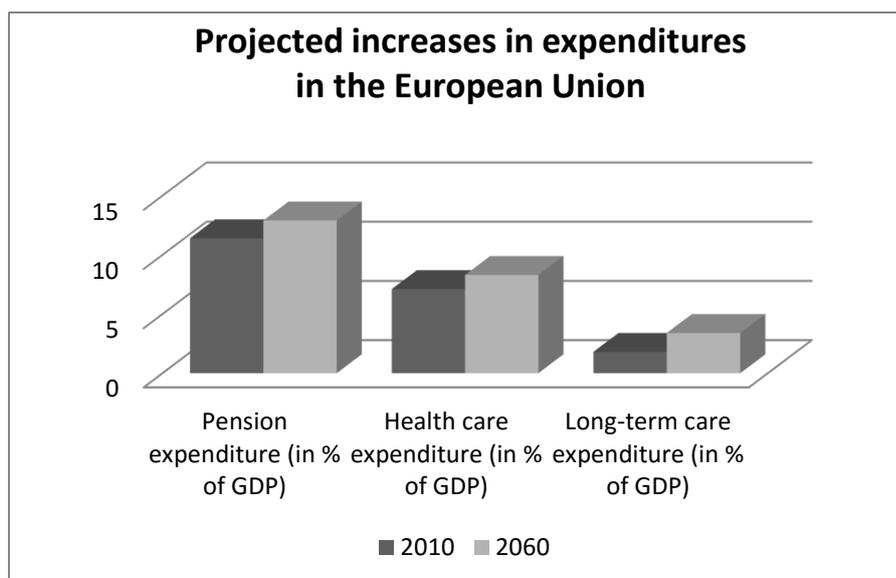


Figure 2 Projected expenditure increases in the European Union.

Source: European Commission, 2012b, p. 34-40.

Clearly the increasing public expenditure will be subject of intense public and political discussions, and hence of voting campaigns. The journalist Frank Schirrmacher, who wrote the book *‘Das Methusalem-Komplott’* (The Methusalem Conspiracy) about the Ageing Society, sketches two wide-ranging voting scenarios (as cited in Niejahr, 2004, p. 122). In the first scenario older voters may, albeit through their sheer number, force the government to higher pension- and health care expenditure, as this is especially useful for them –even when this means that fewer resources are left for e.g. education for the younger people. In the second scenario, the decisive power is rather with the younger voters, who may be in the minority but have to generate the care and resources for the older generation, and can refuse this if they deem it necessary. However, Schirrmacher did not expect the voting preferences to follow strict age boundaries soon. Rather he foresaw that the gap between the socially stronger and weaker of every age would deepen, and the social differences would increase.

2.2.2 Recommendations for the Ageing Society.

The United Nations and the European Union have projected “where, when and to what extent ageing pressures will accelerate” (EC, 2015a, 1st paragraph) in case their member states continue with their current policies. Based on these challenges, both organizations have formulated specific recommendations which function as indicators for policy makers.

On the global level, the Ageing Society clearly presents challenges to policy makers and populations. Nevertheless, it need not be seen as a crisis, argue the United Nations in their Ageing

Report: “It can and should be planned for, in order to transform these challenges into opportunities” (UN, 2012a, p. 3). The UN-Ageing Report adds that there is “no solid evidence that population ageing per se has undermined economic development” (UN, 2012a, p. 5), and emphasizes the great contributions of persons aged 60 years and over; for instance as “caregivers, voters, volunteers, entrepreneurs” (idem, p. 4). Therefore, the United Nations hold that “with the right measures in place to secure health care, regular income, social networks and legal protection, there is a longevity dividend to be reaped worldwide” (UN, 2012a, p. 4). The longevity dividend refers to social, economic, and health bonuses both for individuals and entire populations, that may be won by extending the number of healthy years in individual lives (Olshansky et al., 2006, p.31). Margaret Chan, the Director-General of the World Health Organization states that “indeed, if we can ensure older people live healthier as well as longer lives, if we can make sure that we are stretching life in the middle and not just at the end (...) the societies that adapt to this changing demographic (...) will have a competitive advantage over those that do not” (Chan as cited in Beard et al., 2011, p. 3).

The possible strategies to address the challenges of the Ageing Society worldwide are gathered in the ‘Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing’, adopted in 2002 in Madrid by the Second World Assembly on Ageing. The Madrid Plan calls for “changes in attitudes, policies and practices to ensure that older persons are not viewed simply as welfare beneficiaries, but as active participants in the development process whose rights must be respected” (UN, 2012a, p. 4). The United Nations hence summon governments worldwide to “realign 21st century society to fit the realities of 21st century demographics” (UN, 2012a, p.5). Obviously, the resources and also attention for these objectives range widely across the world, and hence the state of implementation clearly differs worldwide.

The UN have presented three global strategies to provide income security, access to health care and enabling environments to cope with the Ageing Society (UN, 2012a, p.5). The first strategy is concerned with the pension system or income security for older people. As income security is “among the most urgent concerns of older persons worldwide” (UN, 2012a, p. 5) and the situation has been intensified by the global economic crisis, the United Nations demand “economic security and access to health care in old age” (idem, p. 5). “Investments in pension systems are seen as one of the most important ways to ensure economic independence and reduce poverty in old age. Sustainability of these systems is of particular concern, particularly in developed countries.” (UN, 2012a, p. 5) The second strategy focuses on access to quality health care: “Good health must lie at the core of society’s response to population ageing. Ensuring that people, while living longer lives, live healthier lives will result in greater opportunities and lower costs to older persons, their families and society.” (UN, 2012a, p.5) The third strategy demands

enabling environments for older adults. When people grow older and are confronted with limited mobility or hearing and visual losses, an age-friendly physical environment becomes especially important. Affordable housing, accessible transportation and innovative technologies are essential to remain independent and enable social contacts. (UN, 2012a, p.5).

These three main UN-global strategies on ageing have been operationalized in a shortlist of ten Ageing Priorities:

Top Ten of United Nations Ageing Priorities (UN, 2012a, p. 6)

1. “Recognize the inevitability of population ageing; and the need to adequately prepare all stakeholders (governments, civil society, private sector, communities, and families).” (UN, 2012a, p. 6)
2. “Ensure that all older persons can live with dignity and security, enjoying access to essential health and social services and a minimum income.” (idem)
3. “Support communities and families to develop support systems which ensure that frail older persons receive the long-term care they need.” (idem)
4. “Invest in young people today by promoting healthy habits, and ensuring education and employment opportunities, access to health services, and social security coverage.” (idem)
5. “Support international and national efforts to develop comparative research on ageing, and ensure that (...) data and evidence from this research are available to inform policymaking.” (idem)
6. “Mainstream ageing into all gender policies and gender into ageing policies.” (idem)
7. “Ensure inclusion of ageing and the needs of older persons in all national development policies and programmes.” (idem)
8. “Ensure inclusion of ageing and the needs of older persons in national humanitarian response, climate change mitigation and adaptation plans.” (idem)
9. “Ensure that ageing issues are adequately reflected in the post-2015 development agenda.” (idem)
10. “Develop a new rights-based culture of ageing and a change of mindset and societal attitudes towards ageing and older persons, from welfare recipients to active, contributing members of society.” (idem)

On the European level, the European Commission states that the policy response to the Ageing Society should comprise strong reformations to improve the cost-effectiveness of care. Also the earlier formulated strategies for sustainable growth (decided by the Stockholm European Council in 2001) need to be followed. These strategies include, among others, a raise of the employment rate and “reforming pension, health care and longterm care systems” (EC, 2012b, p. 46).

The EU-Ageing Report particularly focuses on the pension policies and recommends to first reduce the “generosity of public pension schemes”, to improve the financial sustainability of these programs in the Ageing Society (EC, 2012b, p. 41). Second, it is recommended to raise the retirement age and to link this age to increases in the life expectancy. A third recommendation is to restrict the access to early retirement schemes. The European Commission points out that member states which already reformed their pension system (e.g. “France, Greece, Italy, Czech Republic and Spain” [EC, 2012b, p. 41]) were able to sharply reduce the projected increase in the

public expenditure for pensions. In other words, more European people are recommended to stay professionally active until later age, to relieve the weight on the pensions and social security systems (Hershey, Henkens & Dalen, 2010).

Together with the reformations in the pensions and other care systems, “additional measures that enable higher employment rates of older workers” (EC, 2012b, p. 34) and higher labour productivity may be required. The British research body ‘City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development’ has presented key recommendations to raise the employment rate and to address the impact of the Ageing Society, based on the ageing data from the United Nations and the European Union (Shamash, 2011, p.1). It focuses on the reintegration of the people who have left the labour market, the retention of workers and their adaptation to the evolving demands on the labour market. To reintegrate the people in the labour market, improved care options for children and elderly and additional training are required. To retain older workers on the labour market, it is recommended to “restrict options for early retirement, and push standard retirement ages back” (Shamash, 2011, p. 4), develop family friendly working conditions (e.g. flexible hours to accommodate care tasks, home office, etcetera), provide social and monetary incentives for older people who remain professionally active full time, and offer lifelong learning-opportunities to adapt to the changing working environments of the Ageing Society.

Although the recommendations to cope with the implications of the Ageing Society on the labour market are urgent, their implementation is not straightforward. Illustrations are legio: the European Commission had suggested linking the retirement age to the life expectancy, for instance with the last ten to fifteen years of life as retirement period, as a possible solution for the sustainability of the pension system. In practice, by 2012 merely seven member states of the European Union had linked their retirement age to the life expectancy (EC, 2012b, p. 41)⁹.

Various demographic experts criticize the lacking sense of urgency regarding the implementation of measures to address the implications of the Ageing Society. Based on his experiences in Japan where the Ageing Society has already further evolved than in Europe, Florian Coulmas, director of the German Institute for Japan-studies in Tokyo, notes that Europe does not realize yet what it means that its population keeps growing older. Coulmas presumes that for many, the approaching Ageing Society is so abstract, that they do not consider its implications, neither on the personal or the state level (Coulmas, 2012). Demographic expert Reiner Klingholz hence warns for political objectives that are “absolutely over-dimensioned with hollow statements

⁹ Following countries had linked their retirement age to the life expectancy: Spain, Italy, Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece and the Netherlands.

that fit in the program of every political party: create possibilities, develop potentials, ensure growth and prosperity” (Klingholz, 2012, p. 25).

Ageing researcher Niejahr has plead as early as a decennium ago, on a more profane level, for a more realistic attitude towards ageing and its implications: “Almost all rentners say in surveys that they feel significantly younger than they are. One could think of that as a sign of vitality –or as a sign of collective delusion. Everybody wants to *get* old, but nobody wants to *be* old” (Niejahr, 2004, p. 16). Ageing expert James Vaupel summons to harmonize the life course with the increasing life expectancy: organizing a break in the professional career to take care of the children, and then work longer than the current retirement age prescribes: “We condense our working life in the time period in which we can have and raise children. When we are just sixty years old, we retire and enjoy for decennia the social payments of young parents, who have to take care of their children simultaneously.” (Vaupel, as cited in Niejahr, 2004, p. 50) Klingholz (2012) finally calls policy makers to urgently acknowledge the great social and financial implications of the Ageing Society. He calls for straightforward actions:

Massively sinking population rates, the ageing of the current work force, an immigration that is restricted to the unavoidable, and a simultaneous reduction of the debts: that leads to a sum without a solution. However, when we do nothing, the situation will only get worse and it will make future solutions more expensive or even impossible. (Klingholz, 2012, p. 25)

2.3 Belgian Ageing Society

After outlining the global and European stand of the Ageing Society, this section zooms in on the Ageing Society in Belgium. Firstly, data concerning the Belgian population ageing are presented, following the three ageing-determining factors life expectancy, fertility and migration. Then the current and future age structure of the Belgian population is discussed. Finally, the projected implications of the Ageing Society for the Belgian age-related public expenditure (pension, public health, long-term care and education) are laid out.

2.3.1 Belgian population ageing: fertility, life expectancy and migration.

Life expectancy: accelerating the Belgian population ageing.

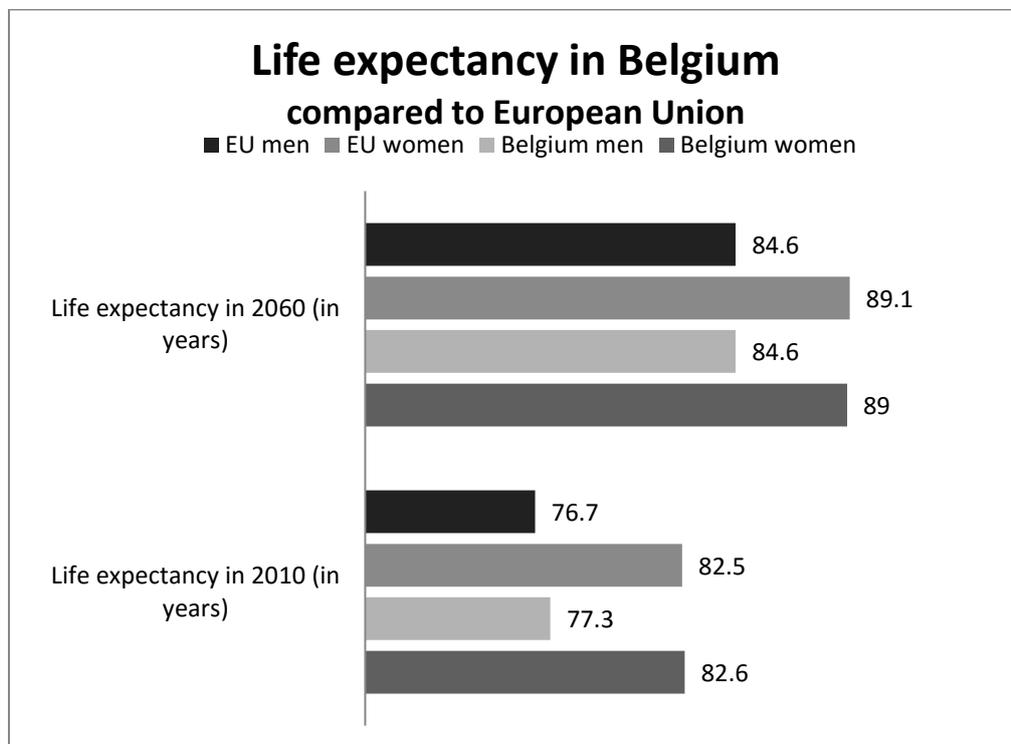


Figure 3 Life expectancy in Belgium and the European Union.

Source: European Commission, 2012b, p. 25.

In Belgium (and also in the greater European Union) the life expectancy is projected to increase with circa 6-7 years between 2010 and 2060. This acts as an accelerating factor for the Ageing Society. For women, the life expectancy remains slightly higher than for men. However, as the life expectancy for men increases faster, the life expectancies for both sexes move towards each other in the future.

Concretely, the Belgian life expectancy for women is projected to increase with 6.4 year over the period 2010-2060 (from 82.6 years in 2010 to 89.0 years in 2060), hereby reflecting the European tendency (increasing with 6.5 year from 82.5 years in 2010 to 89.1 years in 2060). The Belgian male life expectancy rises as well, with 7.3 year between 2010 and 2060 (from 77.3 years in 2010 to 84.6 years in 2060); which also echoes the European evolution (male life expectancy in EU increases with 7.9 year between 2010 and 2060, from 76.7 years in 2010 to 84.6 years in 2060).

Fertility: softening the Belgian population ageing.

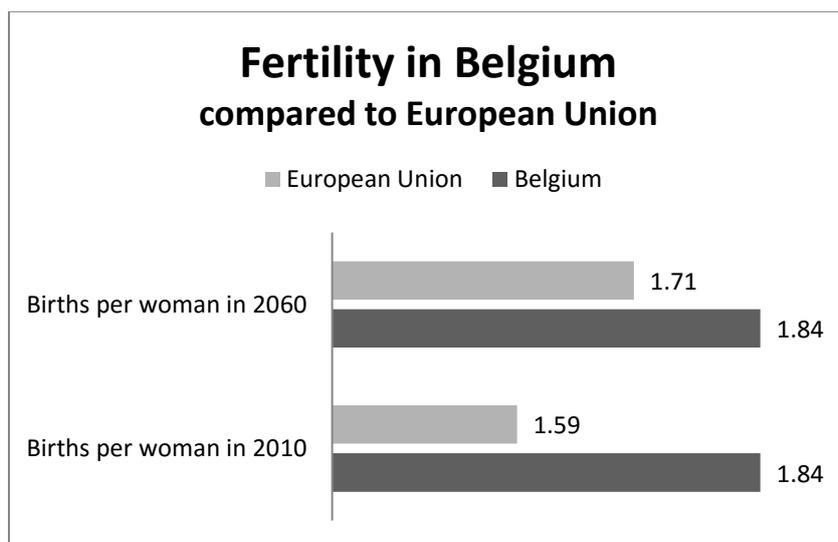


Figure 4 Fertility in Belgium and the European Union.

Source: European Commission, 2012b, p. 24.

The Belgian fertility rate was in 2010 relatively high with an average of 1.84 births per woman over her lifetime, and this was projected to remain stable until 2060. This moderately high fertility rate has a softening effect on the ageing of the Belgian society. Although the fertility rate in the greater European Union rises slightly over the period 2010-2060 (from 1.59 births/woman to 1.71 births/woman), it clearly stays under the fertility rate in Belgium. Therefore, the fertility rate has a more softening effect on the Ageing Society in Belgium than in the rest of the European Union.

Migration: temporarily softening the Belgian population ageing.

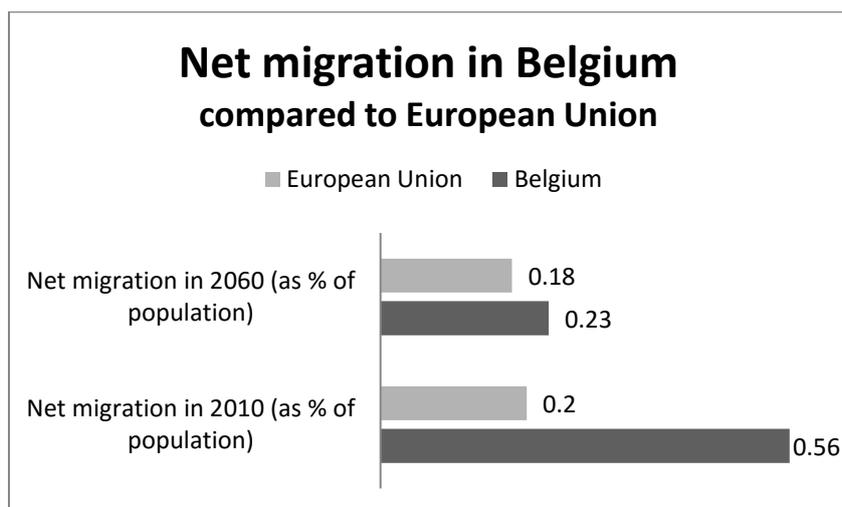


Figure 5 Net migration in Belgium and the European Union.

Source: European Commission, 2012b, p. 25, 381.

According to the projections of the European Commission (EC, 2012b, p. 25 & 381), Belgium had already relatively large migration flows in 2010 which softened the ageing of the Belgian population. Over the future decennia, the Belgian net migration quotient was projected to strongly decline, moving closer towards the EU-net migration quotient. However, given the great and largely unexpected refugee streams arriving in Europe since 2015, the migration projections may lose their accuracy –although this is for obvious reasons impossible to directly evaluate at this point in time and will need to be evaluated later.

2.3.2 Age structure of the Belgian population.

For insight in the age structure in Belgium, the four Ageing Society-indicators should be considered: “median age, proportion of persons aged 65 and over, proportion of persons aged 80 and over and old age dependency ratio” (Lanzieri, 2011, p. 1). The table below provides an overview of these (current and projected) values for Belgium, and compares them to the situation in the European Union. The evolution shows that Belgium has to date an older population than the rest of the European Union, but a slowing ageing process (meaning that the other European countries are projected to have an older population than Belgium in the future).

Indicators for Ageing Society	Where	Point in time			
		1990	2010	2060	Difference between 2010 -2060
I. Median age	Belgium	36.2 years	40.9 years	43.7 years	+2.8 years
	EU	35 years	40 years	48 years	+8 years
II. Proportion of persons 65+	Belgium	14.8%	17.2%	25.5%	+8.3 p.p.
	EU	13%	16%	29%	+13 p.p.
III. Proportion of persons 80+	Belgium	3.5%	4.9%	9.9%	+5.0 p.p.
	EU	3%	4%	12%	+8 p.p.
IV. Old age dependency ratio	Belgium	22.1%	29%	49%	+20 p.p.
	EU	19%	28%	58%	+30 p.p.

Table 2 Indicators for the Ageing Society in Belgium and the European Union.

Source: Lanzieri, 2011, p. 1-9.

With regard to the median age (Ageing Society-indicator I), the Belgian median age was in 1990 higher than the European median age. This signifies that the population in Belgium comprised a larger share of older persons than the European Union-average. The European median age is however increasing faster than the Belgian median age. Therefore, the European population will in the future comprise a larger share of older people than the Belgian population. This becomes particularly visible in the development of the shares of persons aged 65 years and over and 80 years and over (Ageing Society-indicators II and III). In 1990, these Belgian shares were higher

than the shares in the European Union; but the European shares rise faster. Towards 2060, the older persons (over 65 and 80 years old) will on average represent a larger population part in the European Union than they do in Belgium. The evolution of Belgium currently having an older population but a slower ageing process than the rest of the European Union, is also visible in the old age dependency ratio (Ageing Society-indicator IV). In 1990, the old age dependency ratio was higher in Belgium than in the European Union (22.1% vs 19%). In 2010 however, the old age dependency ratios were approximately similar in Belgium and the European Union (29% vs 28%), and towards 2060 the old age dependency ratio will be clearly lower in Belgium than in the European Union (49% vs 58%).

Over the time horizon to 2060 the European Union-population is not projected to become much larger -with a mere 3% population growth- but instead much older, and the share of people in working age will decrease. Belgium on the contrary, is projected to have a large 24% population growth¹⁰. Therefore, the share of older people weights in Belgium somewhat less on the old age dependency ratio than in the other EU-countries (see table above). The Belgian combination of a strong population growth and a moderately-paced population ageing also leads to a slightly smaller decrease in the number of people in working age (15-64 years)¹¹ than in the rest of the European Union. These changes in the age structure affect the old age dependency ratio (see graphic below), and are expected to lead to expenditure challenges.

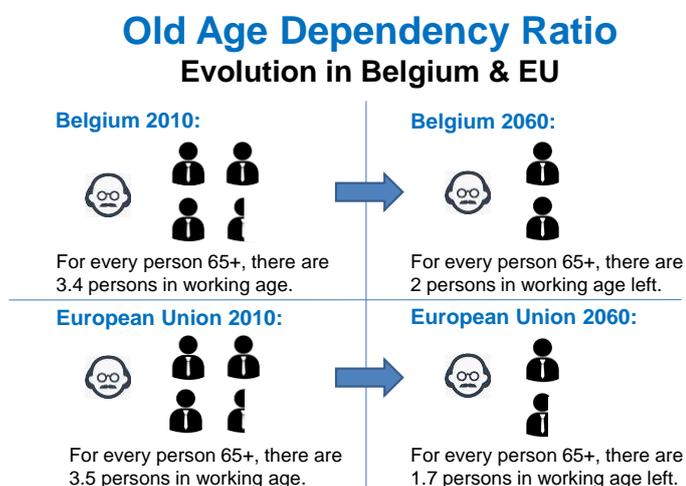


Figure 6 Old age dependency ratio in Belgium and the European Union.

Source: European Commission, 2012b (graphic: ktn).

¹⁰ Projected population growth in Belgium (2010-2060): from 10.900.000 to 13.500.000 persons (European Commission, 2012b).

¹¹ The share of people in working age (15-64 years) diminishes in Belgium from 65.9% to 58.2% of the total population between 2010-2060. In the European Union, this share diminishes stronger from 67% to 56.2% between 2010-2060. Consequently, the share of people in working age will be smaller in the EU than in Belgium (European Commission, 2012).

2.3.3 Implications of the Ageing Society for the Belgian public expenditure.

The ageing of the population and the forthcoming retirement of the babyboom generation is posing a major challenge on the sustainability of the public expenditure in all European Union-member states, also Belgium. This expenditure is referred to as ‘strictly-age-related expenditure’ and includes the expenditure for “pensions, health care, long-term care and education” (EC, 2015b, p. 3). For Belgium, the increase in the strictly age-related expenditure is projected at 9.2 p.p of GDP (2010-2060); hence more than twice the EU-average (EC, 2012b, p. 35; see figure below). On average the strictly age-related expenditure in the EU-countries is projected to increase by 4.1 p.p. of the GDP between 2010 and 2060. Following the European Commission, Belgium therefore urgently needs to address the forthcoming financial issues through changes – the European Commission refers to them as “a modernization” (EC, 2012b, p. 306)- in the social expenditure systems.

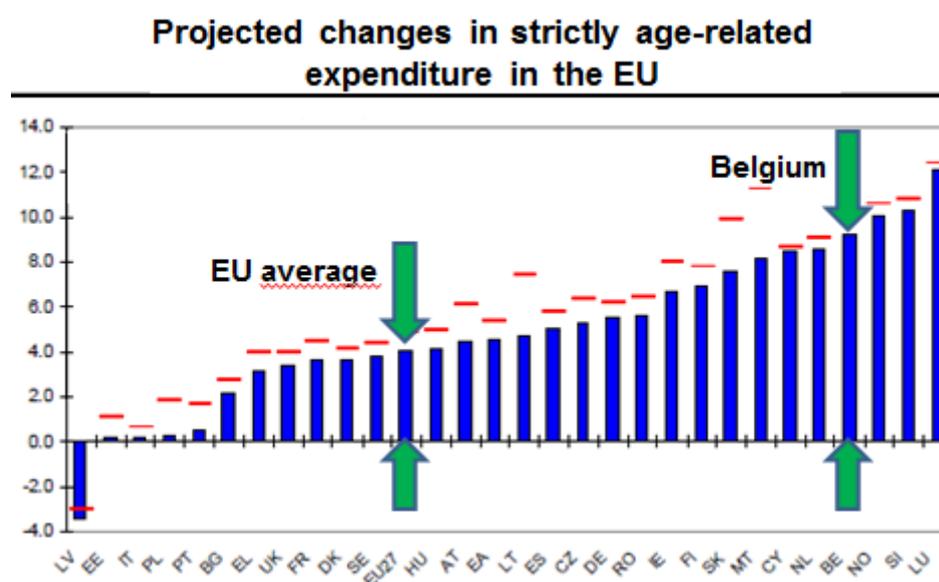


Figure 7 Projected changes in strictly age-related expenditure in the European Union, in p.p. of GDP (2010-2060).
Source: European Commission, 2012b, p. 35.

Implications for the Belgian public pension expenditure.

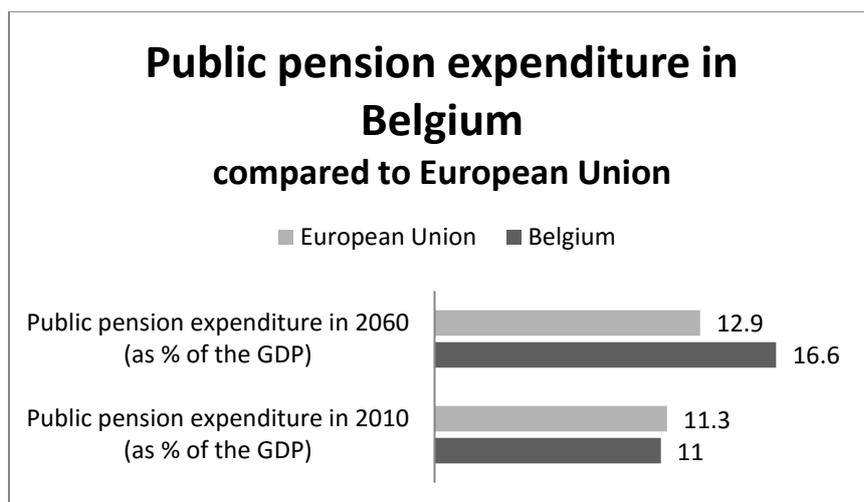


Figure 8 Public pension expenditure in Belgium and the European Union (2010-2060).

Source: European Commission, 2012b.

The increase in the pension expenditure is in Belgium, due to an older population, considerably stronger than the EU-average. In 2010, the Belgian public pension expenditure still matched the average EU-level (resp. 11.0% vs 11.3%), but by 2060 the Belgian public pension expenditure is projected to increase to 16.6% of GDP, whereas the EU-average in 2060 is projected to be at 12.9% of GDP, as shown in the figure above.

Not only is the Belgian public pension expenditure projected to increase more, it is also projected to have a different timing: the expenditure will rise sooner in Belgium than in other European countries. For the current decennium 2010-2020, the European Commission (2012, p. 384) projected a Belgian raise in the public pension expenditure by 2 p.p. of the GDP, which is an increase of 19%. This is in clear contrast to most other European countries, where the public pension expenditure is projected to remain stable or even fall during the current decennium.

Implications for the Belgian public health expenditure.

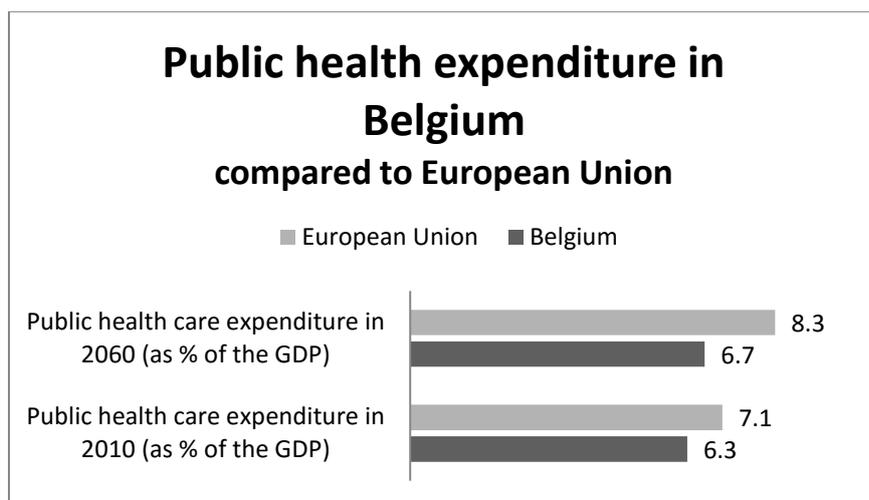


Figure 9 Public health expenditure in Belgium and the European Union (2010-2060).

Source: European Commission, 2012b.

The Belgian expenditure for public health care was in 2010 slightly lower than the European average (resp. 6.3% vs 7.1% of GDP). Towards 2060, the Belgian expenditure on public health care is projected to increase faintly to 6.7% of GDP, while the European average augments somewhat stronger to 8.3% of GDP. The Belgian expenditure on public health is hence projected to remain under the European average, as can be taken from the figure above.

Implications for the Belgian long-term care expenditure.

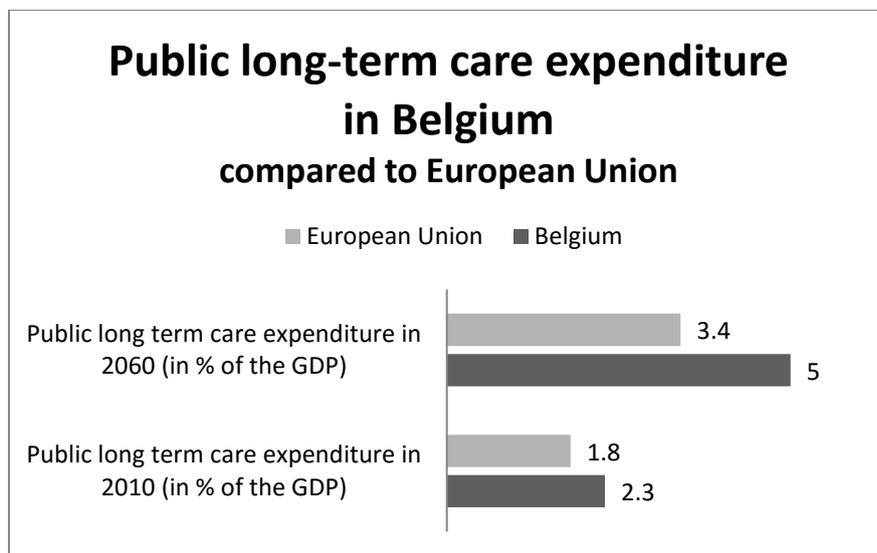


Figure 10 Public long-term care expenditure in Belgium and the European Union (2010-2060).

Source: European Commission, 2012b.

“Long-term care refers to care for older people, chronic patients and people with disabilities lasting more than 2 years.” (Abma & Baur, 2015, p. 2328) In the Ageing Society, there is

generally a great increase in the expenditure for long-term care: although long-term care can be required by persons of any age, it is more often required by older persons (EC, 2012b, p. 40).

In Belgium, the expenditure for long term care will double in the period 2010-2060 (from 2.3% to 5.0% of GDP); while altogether occupying a much greater share of the GDP than the European average (which evolves from 1.8% to 3.4% of GDP), as is visible in the figure above.

Implications for the Belgian education expenditure.

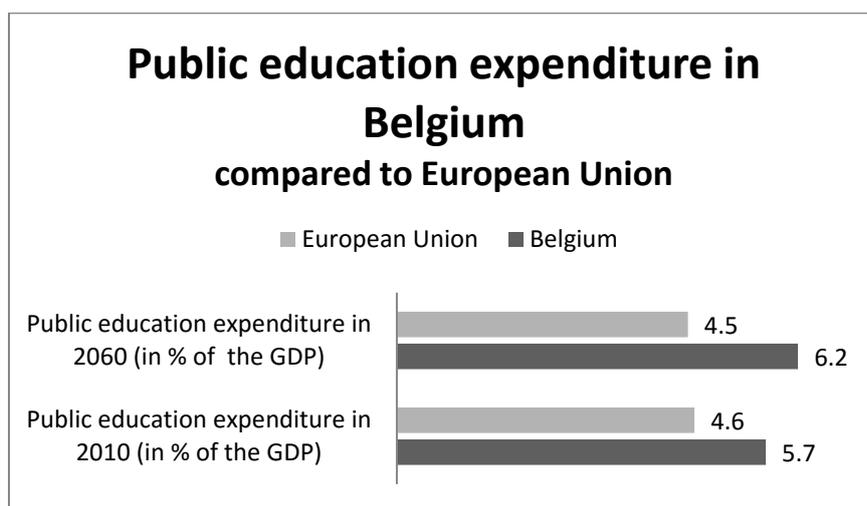


Figure 11 Public education expenditure in Belgium and the European Union (2010-2060).

Source: European Commission, 2012b.

As the ageing of the population will lead to a diminishing number of people in the classic school age, it could be expected that the expenditure for education would diminish as well. This is nevertheless not the case, as shown in the figure above. The European Commission states on the contrary that if the education system wants to improve itself as prescribed by the EU2020 education targets, its budget needs to rise. The Belgian expenditure for education is projected to increase (from 5.7% to 6.2% of GDP), with education thus absorbing a greater share than the European average. The European projections however show that the public education expenditure remains almost stable in the European Union over the period 2010-2060 (from 4.6% to 4.5% of GDP).

2.4 Ageing in the Media

The previous part of the chapter has focused on the demographic situation in the Ageing Society, the upcoming challenges and suggested policy responses, both on the international as the Belgian level. This second part of the chapter extends the focus and depicts how the Ageing Society has been covered in the media: which perspectives are chosen, which emphases are laid? This literature overview allows insights in the media image of the Ageing Society that the public is confronted with.

'*Amour*', a French-Austrian-German film about an elderly couple that will do everything to preserve the love they shared before the wife got dementia, won the prestigious Golden Palm award at the film festival in Cannes in 2012. A year later, '*Amour*' also won an Oscar and a Golden Globe award for the best not-English-speaking film. In 2015, the American film '*Still Alice*' about a professor who is confronted with a dementia-diagnosis, won an Oscar and a Golden Globe. The book '*The 100-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared*' (Jonasson, 2012) described the bittersweet adventures of a centenarian who suddenly decides to leave the elderly home where he lives –and became an instant international bestseller, additionally adapted for the screen in 2013. In the German documentary '*Vergiss mein nicht*' ('Forget me not') (2013), a son tells the disarmingly honest life story of his mother who has ever bigger gaps in her memory. Also in the Flemish/Dutch-speaking region, Belgium and the Netherlands, various prize-winning authors recently wrote books about the ageing process or death of people they loved, e.g. the Belgian authors Tom Lanoye and Erwin Mortier about their mothers in respectively '*Sprakeloos*' ('Speechless', 2009) and '*Gestameld liedboek*' ('Stammered song book', 2011), or the Dutch writer Connie Palmen about the illness and death of her husband in '*Logboek van een onbarmhartig jaar*' ('Logbook of a merciless year', 2011). The German Helga Rohra travels the world to talk about her life with a gradually reclining memory, after she was diagnosed with dementia at age 54. These could seem like loose elements in a few Western countries, but they may also point to a greater tendency: the ageing of the Western society, with its various implications, is evolving from a topic for statisticians and scientists to a topic that is considered interesting for the popular culture and the broader public as well.

Also within academia, research field of the Ageing Society has been widened. The Ageing Society has dominantly been investigated in terms of its impact in various societal realms, e.g. the effect on the economy, the allocation of public resources, the living accommodation of the elderly, the impact on the social security systems, etcetera.

Relatively new, however, is the academic interest in the media representation of the Ageing Society. Davidson (2013) found that although there is a reasonable amount of research findings concerning the media representations of older persons, little attention has been paid to the representations of the population ageing. Whereas the portrayal of *older people* has traditionally been an important topic in media research, the portrayal of the *Ageing Society* has only emerged as a research topic lately (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2011). While the classic research concentrated on how media covered the elderly, the recent research of the representation of the Ageing Society investigates how media cover the population ageing and its implications for all age groups in society –for old and young. In other words, media research regarding 'older people' focused on

one age group, while the media research regarding the ‘Ageing Society’ concentrates on a demographic phenomenon in society which involves all age groups.

The remainder of this chapter first provides an overview of the international representation of older people in media (in 2.4.1) before shifting the focus to the emerging field of the representation of the Ageing Society (in 2.4.2). Special attention hereby goes to a media study with a comparable objective as this thesis: the study of Lundgren and Ljuslinder (2011 & 2012) which investigated how the Ageing Society was covered in three Swedish newspapers over a period of several years.

2.4.1 Older people in the media.

Older people ‘don’t go out much’, they ‘chew funny’, are ‘all wrinkled and short’, or even ‘have heart attacks and die’. These were “the frank and blunt answers that Jantz et al. got in their now classic study, when they asked preschool children to describe aged people” (Jantz et al., 1976; as cited in Torben-Nielsen, 2013, p. 55). The answers of the children do not stand alone though. The portrayal of older people in media is often remarkably similar –albeit mostly in less blunt terms. The term ‘older people’ refers here to common people, men and women, over 65 years old. It does not refer to persons who are known for reasons other than their age, but who happen to be over 65 years old (e.g. the former American president Bill Clinton).

Decennia of research about the presentation of older people in media leave little doubt: media often describe older people in stereotypes, and most of these are less than positive (e.g. Martin, 2009; Fealy & McNamara, 2009; Ainsworth & Hardy, 2007; Midwinter, 1991; as cited in Davidson, 2013; Seefeldt, 1984; Seefeldt et al. 1977; Jantz et al., 1976). Very often, older people are rendered invisible in the media, leading Robinson and Skill (1995) to coin the term ‘invisible generation’. Especially older women are consistently portrayed less frequently and in a “less positive light” than the male equivalents (Martin, 2009, p. 17). The German journalist Frank Schirmacher provocatively noted: “A five year old American girl without grandparents, does not know that a woman can be more than 45 years old, because they do not appear on television. Or when they appear, then as witches.” (as cited in Niejahr, 2004, p. 163)

There is a persistent stereotyping and underrepresentation of older persons in the media, as numerous studies have demonstrated (e.g. Milner, Van Norman, Milner, 2011; Robinson et al. 2007; Lauzen & Dozier 2005). These studies investigated the representation of older people in a variety of media; e.g. newspapers, television, films, advertisements, etcetera. The findings remained quite similar over the years and over the different media: older people are rarely represented, and if so, often in a negative way. Although older people form a significant part of the population in most Western countries, the media representation of them is extremely low in

comparison (Martin, 2009, p. 9). An American study (Robinson & Skill, 1995) suggested that less than three percent of the personalities in prime time television were judged to be over 65 years, although people over 55 years formed at that time around twenty percent of the population.

The situation in print media is similar: older people receive little coverage (Fealy & McNamara, 2009). Newspapers publish few articles about older persons, seldom discuss intergenerational topics and do not dedicate much editorials to older people, whereby especially older women are virtually invisible. Tabloid newspapers often feature sensationalist headlines which convey a negative view of ageing (Murphy, 2004). When reporting about older people, media often apply stereotypes. Some “are positive, e.g. the perfect grandparent or the golden ager; but most are considered negative, e.g. the victim, the impaired, the depressed” (Torben-Nielsen, 2014, 3th al.; also similar in Martin, 2009; Fealy & McNamara, 2009). The older people get, the more negative are the stereotypes attached to them; in other words, the media image of 85 year old persons is worse than the image of 65 year olds. However, “if younger people have a positive, benevolent image of older people, they are more inclined to interact with them” (Torben-Nielsen, 2014, 3. al.; also in Martin, 2009).

Martin (2009) also suggested that positive portrayals of older people are especially to be found in advertisements and not in other forms of media. Gantz et al. (1980) argued more than thirty years ago that advertisements project less negative stereotypes because they want to attract (older) audiences and encourage purchases. More recently, and more profane, the Swiss author Karl Lüönd noted:

Depending on the intention, the terms change. When they want something from us, they call us ‘best agers’. When they are among themselves, the dressed-in-black ladies and gentlemen from the communication industry, they speak of ‘grey backs’ or ‘false teeth’. Okay. What is important to know is this: they want only the best of us, that is, our money. (Lüönd, 2012, p. 17)

The identity that media construct for older people often refers to the loss of health. This leads to a portrait in which older people depend on health or/and social services (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2007). Fealy and McNamara (2009) nevertheless argue that older people are extremely heterogeneous with respect to their health and security, social interactions, social and economic circumstances and their general quality of life. Ageing is highly individualized, and therefore not suited for easy stereotyping. Following them, older people are a homogeneous group only when looking at their physical age.

2.4.2 Ageing Society in the media.

Although the demographic phenomenon of the Ageing Society has long been projected in the Western society, its representation in media has not been investigated until relatively recently (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2012). This may be related to the common misconception that the Ageing Society is mostly affecting the older –and not the younger- people. Even today, as the social, economic and financial implications of the Ageing Society for all age groups are becoming tangible (e.g. higher retirement age or increased own responsibility in pensions), studies have shown that European citizens do not have an increased awareness of the forthcoming demographic challenges (EC, 2012b). This suggests that the Ageing Society has not yet passed the “awareness threshold” and “has come to the forefront of public awareness” (Schatz, 2005, p. 19). It may be assumed that such misconceptions and lacking awareness have slowed down not only the public interest in the Ageing Society, but also an earlier research interest in its media representation.

However, over the last decennia the emerging research interest in the media-representations of the Ageing Society has led to growing body of research, constituting an innovative branch in the established research field of media research. Earlier studies which investigated the representation of the Ageing Society in various documents as e.g. magazines or policy papers, commonly found that the Ageing Society was represented as a societal threat, with an emphasis on the great economic costs. This portrait has more than once led to the description “apocalyptic demography” (Roanova, 2006; Gee & Gutman, 2000; Robertson, 1997; Vincent, 1996). Mullan (2002) has argued that pessimistic notions of the population ageing are exaggerated. Yet, Northcott (1994) and McDaniel (1987) indicated as early as two decennia ago that media fuel the idea of the Ageing Society as main cause for the sputtering Western economy.

In 2011, the results of an innovative study that had examined the representation of the Ageing Society in Swedish newspapers were published (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2011 & 2012). This study was the first internationally published study specifically focusing the coverage of the Ageing Society in newspapers. Lundgren and Ljuslinder were well aware of the pioneering character of their study: “We have not found any studies that examine how the concept population ageing has itself been represented in media” (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2011, p. 167). Earlier studies may not have focused particularly on the Ageing Society and rather have considered it as a ‘side aspect’ of their main research topic, or did not specifically study daily newspapers as media source. For their study however, Lundgren and Ljuslinder investigated how the Ageing Society

has been portrayed in three Swedish newspapers¹² over a period of 21 years (1988-2009). They combined quantitative and qualitative research elements to assess how the concept of Ageing Society was represented and constructed in Swedish daily news (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2011, p. 198).

Two suppositions lay at the basis of the study: first, that “media is one of the most important sources of information, especially regarding phenomena that the audience does not have any direct personal experience of” (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2012, p. 41; also similar in e.g. Schudson, 2003; McLuhan 1967); and second, that “media content has an impact on people regarding self-identifications, approaches to other persons and to the way society’s resource allocation is legitimized” (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2012, p. 42; also similar in e.g. Milner, Van Norman & Milner, 2011, p. 27; Lin et al., 2004). Lundgren and Ljuslinder’s (2011, p. 178-179) research results suggest that the Swedish newspaper coverage of the Ageing Society is hegemonized by a political-economy discourse. This generally revolves around cutbacks and budgets. Quotes from experts and statistics create additional credibility and seriousness (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2012, p. 39). The newspaper articles also constitute the Ageing Society as a topic that is dichotomized, e.g. by alluding a clash of young versus old, and emotive, e.g. by evoking anxiety (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2012, p. 41). The concept of the Ageing Society may be considered a ‘floating signifier’, which is “an empty box in which every stakeholder tries to put whatever is on the top of their priority list” (Szulecki et al., 2016, p. 549). Complementary to the ‘floating signifier’, Laclau (1996) also defined the ‘empty signifier’. The latter is “somehow emptied of meaning and made to comprise a range of different elements that it binds together” (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2012, p. 46). In the context of Lundgren and Ljuslinder’s study, the classification of the Ageing Society as a floating signifier refers to their observation that ‘the Ageing Society’ was filled with various –even contradicting- meanings (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2011, p. 179). Put differently, although various persons used the same term (‘Ageing Society’), they all attached different meanings to it.

The present study of the Ageing Society-coverage in the Belgian newspaper *De Standaard* and the study of Lundgren and Ljuslinder share particular parallels in the research approach (both applying an inductive content analysis) and similarities in the findings. Until to date, both studies are the only published studies in Europe examining the coverage of the Ageing Society in newspapers, demonstrating its innovative research character. Moreover, both studies led to findings that suggest similarities in the Ageing Society-coverage in the Belgian- and Swedish

¹² Studied newspapers: Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter and Västerbottens-Kuriren.

examined newspapers, with a focus on the economic and political challenges that this demographic development brings along¹³.

2.4.3 Multidimensionality of media coverage.

Earlier research has suggested that the Ageing Society is often unilaterally presented as ‘problematic’ and as a threat for the welfare. Three distinct approaches may evaluate whether the coverage in the newspaper selected for this study, the Belgian quality newspaper *De Standaard*, provides a similar unilateral, or rather multi-sided and more balanced view of the Ageing Society. The first approach, based on the work of policy researcher Carol Bacchi, concentrates on how the ‘problem’ is represented. The second approach investigates to what extent the coverage addresses the subject in a constructive way; as suggested by the Danish news director Ulrik Haagerup. Finally, the third approach considers in how far various journalistic quality criteria, as listed by media scholar Stephan Russ-Mohl, are present in the coverage. The combination of these approaches serves as basis to assess the multidimensionality of the journalistic coverage of the Ageing Society in *De Standaard*.

Policy researcher Carol Bacchi developed an approach to critically interrogate problem representations, in particular in public policies (Bacchi, 2012; Bacchi, 2009). She hereby starts from the notion that problems and the way they are represented are not ‘fixed’ but instead socially constructed (Partridge, 2012; Bacchi, 2012 & 2009). Bacchi embarks “from the premise that what one proposes to do about something, reveals what one thinks is problematic” (2012, p. 23). For instance, if a drug policy suggests distributing clean needles among the drug users, this indicates that drug use is regarded as a public health problem; if it is however proposed to engage more guards and install cameras, this would suggest that drug use is regarded as a safety problem.

Bacchi has argued that the representation of an issue simultaneously marks a demarcation line, with the borders of the representation limiting what can be talked about as relevant. In other words, what falls outside the coverage is considered non-relevant (Bacchi, 2012, p. 22-23). This affects which aspects of the issue get more attention (the ones represented) and will be addressed, or not (the ones not represented). As such, the representation of an issue has real impact on the life of the affected, since policy proposals in particular create specific understandings of ‘problems’ and therefore influence how these are addressed –or not (Bacchi, 2012, p. 22).

¹³ See ‘Connecting *De Standaard*’s findings with earlier results’ (in section ‘5.4.2 Political-economic Ageing Society as professional-expert issue’) for further elaboration upon the findings and to what extent they display similarities.

Concretely, Bacchi's 'What is the Problem Represented to be'-approach (WPR) consists of a set of questions that critically assess the representation of the problem. Besides questioning which assumptions underpin the particular representation of the situation and how this representation has come about, the approach also explicitly studies what is 'missing' in the representation: "What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the 'silences'?" (Bacchi, 2012, p. 22) Following Bacchi, these questions help identifying the possible limitations in the problem representation (also similar in Gee, 2011, p. 197).

They also enable assessing to what extent the coverage is multi-sided: are various viewpoints represented, or are certain relevant viewpoints absent in the coverage? Is the issue critically approached, or are things left 'unproblematised', or in other words, considered obvious and common sense? The answers to those questions shed light on how uni- or multi-sided the coverage about a certain issue, here the Ageing Society, is.

With regard to the representation of issues in news coverage, Ulrik Haagerup, Executive Director of News at the Danish Broadcasting Corporation, requests in his book 'Constructive News' a nuanced reporting with attention for various topics and viewpoints: "Good reporting looks at the world with both eyes" (Haagerup, 2015, p. 13). Consequently, journalists are prompted to ask themselves whether they convey a reliable depiction in their coverage: "Is there a truth in the accusation that we journalists always only tell about the fly in the soup, without even mentioning the soup itself?", asks Haagerup (2015, p. 49).

In a response to one-dimensional reporting, Haagerup pleads for what he calls 'constructive journalism'; a journalistic approach that aims to show all sides of an issue, not just the problematic ones. This approach, inspired by the 'solutions journalism' of the American journalist David Bornstein and the 'journalism of hope' of the *USA Today*-founder Allen Neuharth, explicitly does not suggest to bring merely good news stories, but inspire for solutions as well. Constructive journalism should investigate how others, worldwide, have experimented with alternative approaches to similar problems, and report which approaches worked or not. "Do not leave out the important stories about (...) the millions of refugees fleeing from the terror in Syria. But report also about those stories which inspire and engage, because they show another side: things that function, people who do extraordinary things to solve important problems. In one word: show the complete picture." (Haagerup, 2015, p. 13)

By showing best practices and examples, the audience will be more engaged in the public debate as well. This debate can be further facilitated by inviting the audience to react via social media and share their experiences and ideas. Eventually, these experiences can also be used in

follow-up coverage, and so increase the audience participation (Haagerup, 2016; in interview with the author).

The concept of constructive news is not uncriticized. One critique is based on the classic journalistic *bon mot* that only ‘bad news’ is ‘good news’, and that there is no place for positive news in the media. Paradoxically, another critique is that the basic concept of constructive journalism is already included in the classic journalistic criteria: what is new, surprising and questions existing opinions and situations, has a good chance of becoming ‘news’, also when it is positive. This would make the ‘constructive approach’ superfluous (Sander, 2015). However, Haagerup argues that news media dominantly concentrate on the negative elements of a situation, leaving little room for other views and leading to a rather unilateral coverage. Such unilateral coverage could lead to concern among the public even if the situation does not give rise to it, argues Haagerup (2015). For instance, extensive crime reporting may lead the public to worry about delinquency, also when crime rates are actually falling (Haagerup 2015; similar in Ghanem, 1996; as cited in McCombs, 2005, p. 547). Similar effects of media coverage on the public opinion have been extensively studied and confirmed by earlier agenda-setting research (McCombs, 2005, p. 547).

An example of how news media can address the coverage of the Ageing Society in a constructive manner has been provided by the Danish television. While Denmark is confronted with the challenges of the Ageing Society as well, a Danish television crew went to the Netherlands to make a news item about an elderly home that experimented with new ways to counter the lack of volunteers. The elderly home obliged the relatives of the residents to engage ‘voluntarily’ for ten hours a week. Haagerup: “We talked about it with the residents, their relatives, experts and so on. (...) Afterwards, a lot of people shared this story on the social media, where it created a great debate. As journalists, we do not say ‘this is the way to go’. Instead, we show the various possibilities.”

Applied to this study, Haagerup’s ‘constructive news’ concept functions as a guideline to assess to what extent the Ageing Society-coverage in *De Standaard* is balanced and has eye for the various viewpoints regarding the population ageing.

As practical guideline in the evaluation of journalistic coverage, media scholar Stephan Russ-Mohl (2003) has developed a catalogue of criteria for journalistic quality, based on what journalists themselves regard as quality standards. The first criterion, topicality, refers to the proximity in time to the news events, while the second criterion, relevancy, is concerned with the meaning and value of the selected topics for the readers. The third criterion is objectivity, which concentrates on values such as neutral language, respect for the facts and a distinct separation

between opinionating – and news articles. Multi-dimensionality, the fourth criterion, refers to the extent in which various perspectives, background information and a variety of sources are provided. The attractiveness, exclusivity and the amount of own investigations are evaluated by the fifth criterion, originality. The sixth criterion, comprehensiveness, is concerned with the understandability of the reporting. Interactivity, the seventh criterion, assesses the interactivity between the newspaper and its readership, whereas finally the eighth criterion, transparency, is concerned with the meta-information, e.g. about the journalistic working process or the coverage context, which is provided to the readers (Russ-Mohl, 2003, p. 335-336).

Together, these journalistic criteria form a concrete tool for considering the quality of the coverage, which is used in the assessment of the Ageing Society-coverage in *De Standaard*.

In sum, what Bacchi's problem representation approach, Haagerup's constructive news approach and Russ-Mohl's news coverage criteria catalogue have in common, is their shared caution against the presumption that given topics are uncontroversial starting points for media coverage. Bacchi (2012, p. 23) as well as Haagerup plead for a critical look at what is 'considered a problem'; e.g. *in casu* of this research, the Ageing Society. Also Russ-Mohl propagates journalistic self-reflection, as journalism otherwise can easily "create its own reality" (2003, p. 58). This process of journalists creating an own, parallel reality, has been provocatively described by Haagerup:

You have a premise about a certain topic and you investigate in such way that this premise is confirmed. You find the right statistics, you interview confirming experts, publish your article and the next day, you look for a politician who wants to bring this concern to the parliament and already you have something to write about again. Nothing of what you have written is wrong, the question is only: is it right in the sense of 'comprehensive'? (Haagerup as cited in Büttner, 2015, p. 5)

The combined problem representation- and constructive news approaches, together with the catalogue of journalistic quality criteria function as a guideline to assess the comprehensiveness and multidimensionality of the coverage of the Ageing Society in *De Standaard*.

2.5 Agenda-setting theory and the transfer of salience

The foregoing reflections about which topics are covered in the media, and how they are covered, are anchored in broader mass communication models by the agenda-setting theory. Agenda-

setting is based on the notion that “media tell people what to think about, based on issues being covered (...) more prominently. By doing so, the media transfer salience to audiences” (Cacciatore et al., 2015, p. 11). As thus one of the agenda-setting theory’s special interests is the salience in the media agenda, the theory lends itself well not only to examine the salience in *De Standaard*’s agenda of the Ageing Society, but also to identify the possible congruencies between *De Standaard* and other outlets, as e.g. the Ageing Society-policy documents of the European Union and the United Nations. The agenda-setting theory hence provides an additional theoretical embedding for the study of how *De Standaard* covers the Ageing Society and what is salient, i.e. which elements are emphasized; as well as for the comparison of the Ageing Society-representation in *De Standaard* and international policy documents.

Legend has it that the germ of agenda-setting theory was laid during an after-work drink, shared between the young assistant journalism professor Maxwell McCombs and a few other junior co-workers, one evening in 1967 in Los Angeles. They had noted that a certain news item – a smaller political scandal- got much less attention in the newspaper Los Angeles Times than in the New York Times. During the discussion that arose, the researchers asked themselves: “Is the impact of an event diminished when a news story receives less prominent play?” (McCombs, 2014, p. ii). The young McCombs concluded to his friend: “If an individual had read a different newspaper that day (...) he or she might have considered the scandal a much more important issue” (in Rogers et al., 1997, p. 228). That very idea of media transferring a notion of what is important to their audiences was the inspiration for the later agenda-setting Chapel Hill-study, and therewith the beginning of the agenda-setting theory (McCombs, 2014, p. iii). The concept of newspapers influencing the outlook of their readers was however not new, and had led the political scientist Bernard Cohen earlier to the *boutade*: “The world will look different to different people, depending on the map that is drawn for them by writers, editors and publishers of the newspapers they read” (Cohen, 1963, p.13; as cited in Rogers & Dearing, 1988, p. 559). McCombs would complement Cohen’s quote with another bald statement: “If the media tell us nothing about a topic or event, then in most cases it simply will not exist on our personal agenda, or in our life space” (McCombs, 1976, p. 3). In other words, “the more attention the media gives to issues, the more likely the public will label these issues as important” (Burke et al., 2016, p. 8).

In 1968, one year after the famed after-work drink, McCombs and his associate Donald Shaw set up their Chapel Hill-study around the question to what extent “the media agenda (...) influenced the public agenda” (Rogers et al., 1997, p. 228). McCombs later remarked that they compared “the focus of attention by the news media (...) with the public’s focus of attention” (McCombs, 2005, p. 544), and found that “those aspects (...) that are prominent in the news, become prominent among the public. (...) A dominant perspective in the news coverage of a topic

is likely to become particularly salient among the public” (McCombs, 2005, p. 543-547). What is a large topic in the media has hence good chances to become a large topic among the public as well. The Chapel Hill-study, so stated agenda-setting theory scholars Everett Rogers, William Hart and James Dearing, has therewith “offered a new way to think about the effects of the mass media” (Rogers et al., 1997, p. 227). Whereas earlier mass communication researchers had mostly investigated the direct influences of media on the audience’s actions and attitudes, the agenda-setting researchers rather indirectly examined “how media news coverage affected an issue’s salience” (Rogers et al., 1997, p. 227).

Ever since, agenda-setting research has developed into a broad academic field with different interpretations and applications of the theory. Gobat et al. (2015, p. 1) observed an “absence of a shared understanding of agenda setting”, while “differences in conceptualizations make it difficult to generalize findings across settings and studies” (idem). Agenda-setting has been classically defined as the process of the mass media influencing what the public thinks is important, and following that line of thought, McQuail has described agenda-setting as a “process of media influence (intended or unintended) by which the relative importance of news events, issues or personages in the public mind are affected by the order of presentation (or relative salience) in news reports” (McQuail, 2005, p. 548). At its basis, agenda-setting is “the transfer of salience from one agenda to another” (McCombs, 2005, p. 553), and agenda-setting research is “concerned with investigating and explaining societal influence” (Rogers & Dearing, 1988, p. 556). Rogers and Dearing moreover identified three elements in this process: the media agenda-setting, the public agenda-setting and the policy agenda-setting, related to the content of the respective agenda. In this context, the concept of ‘agenda’ is defined as the “list of issues and events that are viewed at a point in time as ranked in a hierarchy of importance” (Rogers & Dearing, 1988, p. 565).

As the mass media have diversified immensely over the last decennia, e.g. by the rise of internet news sources, Twitter and other social media, critics have warned that the dispersed public’s attention may complicate traditional agenda-setting theory. Opponents have noted that “today’s information environment is boundless and that media agendas can be highly individualized segments of the media, causing scattered public attention to issues” (Burke et al., 2016, p. 13). However, also before the rise of these new mass media, agenda-setting theory has not been left uncriticized. During its starting years, it has been the subject of critique, most notably so by agenda-setting scholars themselves, in an attempt to strengthen the initial weaknesses of the theory. Some researchers have questioned the “triviality of research questions and findings” (Rogers & Dearing, 1988, p. 557), others have called agenda-setting naïve, confusing and even primitive (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987) and still others observed that “without a

clear definition, the concept of agenda-setting becomes so all-embracing, as to be rendered practically meaningless” (Lang & Lang, 1981, p. 450). Still, agenda-setting research and theory have developed strongly. McCombs distinguishes five stages which have been -often simultaneously- investigated by agenda-setting scholars: the “basic agenda-setting effects”, the “attribute agenda-setting”, the “psychology of agenda-setting effects”, the “sources of the media agenda” and the “consequences of agenda-setting effects” (McCombs, 2005, p. 544-549). Whereas ‘time’ was not integrated yet in the first agenda-setting studies, the development of media coverage and agendas over time has later been integrated in many studies. Rogers et al. (1997, p. 231-233) have noted that agenda-setting research grew towards more longitudinal projects, with greater attention for the individual and the local, and the acknowledgement of many different agendas mutually influencing one another.

Today, agenda-setting scholars distinguish between the first-, second- and third level agenda-setting. The first level discusses, according to Cheng and Chan (2015, p. 1092), “the transfer of issue salience from the media to the public”. The second level “contends that the attributes of the issue emphasized by the media, affect the salience of these attributes in the public opinion” (idem). The third level agenda-setting is newer, setting off in academia around 2010 (Guo et al., 2012, p. 55), and examining the images in the public’s mind, arguing that news media link old and new information in the public’s memory, thus making “these bundles of elements salient in the public’s mind simultaneously” (Guo et al., 2012, p. 55).

2.5.1 The communication of importance

At the heart of agenda-setting theory is the concept of salience. Media salience indicates “the relative importance or significance which the media ascribe to a given issue” (Oppermann & Viehrig, 2016, p. 2). Salience, the perceived importance of an issue, is therefore not a fixed matter: what is seen as important today, is not necessarily what was deemed important last week, or what will be considered important next year. Kiouisis (2004) noted that salience could be transferred by attention, prominence and valence in the media. These may become visible in “the number of news stories devoted to a particular topic”, “the page placement and size of headline” and the “overall positive or negative tone” (McCombs, 2005, p. 550). McCombs observed that when media describe items as important, they transfer this perceived salience to their audience, thus paving the way for the construction of the public opinion. “The media’s emphasis on certain issues, and not other issues, determines which issues we as members of the public think are important”, stated also Rogers et al. (1997, p. 234). Every news topic has various features, some of which are emphasized by the media, while others are rather disregarded. This (non)focus on particular features affects the public’s comprehension of the topic in a process of psychological

sensemaking (Gamson, 1992). Earlier research suggested that “by simply keeping an issue ‘alive’ by reporting about it for some duration, the media may transmit to the public more than just information, but also a subtle message concerning the legitimacy of such an issue” (Rogers & Dearing, 1988, p. 573). In other words, when the media cover a certain topic, the meta-message is that this topic has a certain importance. As such, “media shape public opinion by packaging and rebroadcasting information to a broad audience” (Burke et al., 2016, p. 8).

The transfer of salience, or agenda-setting, is however not always successful: “Agenda-setting does not operate *everywhere*, on *everyone* and *always*”, specified Rogers and Dearing (1988, p. 569; their italics). They refer to three variables that decrease an individual’s acceptance of media salience. First, individuals may not find the news medium credible; second, they may have contradictory evidence –e.g. based on personal knowledge or other media- about the suggested salience of a topic; and third, they may have other news values than the media: “The individual’s reaction (...) might be (...): ‘How could they regard *that* as important news?’” (Rogers & Dearing, 1988, p. 569). On the other hand, the less a person knows about a topic and the more he or she is interested in it, the more he or she will accept the agenda-setting and salience suggested by the media (McCombs, 2005, p. 548). Similarly, Lee (2005) found that the greater their personal involvement and the lesser the knowledge, the more people were receptive for the agenda-setting impact. In sum, “the less direct experience one has with an agenda issue, the more one must rely upon the mass media for information and an interpretation” (Rogers & Dearing, 1988, p. 571).

Yet, why do some news issues have a stronger agenda-setting impact than others? After conducting a meta-review of early agenda-setting theory publications, Rogers and Dearing (1988, p. 566-567) suggested that issues with a great agenda-setting influence had certain characteristics in common: issues with a ‘rapid-onset’ (e.g. an explosion), high-salience and short duration (e.g. a kidnapping), or which were “dramatic and exciting” (Downs, 1972, p. 42) had more media coverage and agenda-setting power than slow-onset, gradually developing events (e.g. a famine), or low-salience events with a long duration (e.g. the evolution of professional occupation rates). This has led to situations in which “media coverage did not correspond to the real-world severity of the (...) item” (Rogers & Dearing, 1988, p. 570). Examples are abundant, for instance the media’s early stop in intense coverage of drug abuse even though the problem still persevered, as was shown by ‘real-world’ indicators, e.g. drug abuse statistics. Real-world indicators are “observable and measurable signs of a social problem that are monitored and conveyed” (Dannevig et al., 2013, p. 492). Important ‘real-world’ news issues which are not present accordingly in the media coverage pose a challenge to agenda-setting scholars. The ‘non agenda-setting process’, as the absence from the media coverage is coined, is notably hard to study, as

scholars can not examine something that is not there. “It is extremely difficult (...) to investigate such a ‘non agenda-setting process’, because of the problem of identifying news events or issues that are not reported by the mass media, which by definition can not be measured” (Rogers & Dearing, 1988, p. 576).

With regard to the directions in which agenda-setting and the transfer of salience takes place, earlier findings have suggested that “public, political, and media agendas mutually influence each other” (Van Dalen et al., 2014, p. 308; also similar in Vliegenthart & Walgrave, 2011; Walgrave et al., 2008). Agenda-setting hence involves multiple, complex responses and shared collaboration. The dominance, and thus the agenda-setting direction, in the constellation of media, public and policy may differ from case to case. Following Rogers and Dearing (1988, p. 577), the stakeholder with the best access to information and knowledge will be more able to transfer his agenda, thus the items and features he considers salient, to the other stakeholders. Earlier findings have shown as well that media coverage can result in political consideration of an issue: “Media coverage (...) leads to political attention. Political actors adopt media issues simply because they are covered” (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006, p. 98). In that sense, the media may partially set the agenda of policy instances as well. The media agenda is, apart from influences from policy and public, also set by “norms and traditions of journalism, the daily interactions among news organizations themselves and the continuous interactions of news organizations with numerous sources and their agendas” (McCombs, 2005, p. 549). This process includes as well “intermedia agenda setting, the influence of the news media on each other. (...) As a result (...) the news agenda (...) is highly homogenous across all the news media” (idem). Still, not every direction of possible agenda-setting has been researched as vividly. Especially the transfer of salience from ‘media to public’ has been investigated, complemented with studies examining the transfer from ‘media to policy’ and from ‘public to policy’. Much less examined however is to what extent the policy agenda influences both the public- and media agenda, noted Rogers & Dearing (1988, p. 583). To this day, also the agenda-setting research in new areas, e.g. “political advertising, conversations, and social media” (McCombs et al., 2014, p. 787), focus mostly on the agenda-setting in the classic direction from media to the public.

In the context of the Ageing Society-coverage in the Belgian newspaper *De Standaard*, the concept of agenda-setting provides a theoretical foundation to compare the newspaper’s agenda regarding the Ageing Society with the broader international Ageing Society-policy agenda of the European Union and the United Nations. It is discussed to what extent the newspaper and policy agendas correspond, and where the congruencies and incompatibilities are. This is used as guideline to identify possible elements which may in comparison be ‘underrepresented’ in *De Standaard*. The agenda-setting concept of real-world indicators is furthermore applied to detect

possible Ageing Society-related issues in the Belgian society, which concern large groups of persons, but which are not featured accordingly prominent in *De Standaard's* coverage of the Ageing Society. Moreover, the agenda-setting theory provides a complementary basis for the notion that media influence the public perception, which corresponds with models and study findings from other media scholars as well (e.g. in Milner, Van Norman & Milner, 2011, p. 27; Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2012, p. 42; Lin et al., 2004).

2.6 Summary

Societies with a rapidly ageing population, a growing share of older persons and a decreasing share of younger persons are called 'Ageing Societies'. The ageing of a society is determined by the future life expectancy, fertility and migration. A country's age structure strongly affects its socio-economic situation, which has an impact on the entire population. Therefore, and against common assumption, the 'Ageing Society' is not only a concern for older people, but instead for all age groups. Although the increase of the median age in Western societies is uncontested, scholars debate about the most suited ways to measure the population ageing. These various measures may lead to different depictions of the demographic situation. To date, the most aged populations are (apart from Japan) situated in Europe. The continent is heading towards a major population ageing. Demographic projections are hence used to identify potential challenges and to create fitting policy responses. The European Union projects the strongest age-related pressure on its member states in the period 2015-2035, when the babyboom generation enters retirement.

Belgium is an Ageing Society and one of the European countries where the population ageing has emerged the earliest. This is signaled by a high median age, a growing proportion of older persons (aged over 65 and over 80) and an increasing old age dependency ratio. Because of this early demographic development, Belgium is currently one of the first countries in Europe where the implications of the Ageing Society are becoming tangible. As a result, the Belgian strictly-age related expenditure is not only projected to increase considerably stronger, but also earlier than in the rest of the European Union. This is e.g. illustrated by the Belgian pension expenditure, which is projected to grow significantly in the current decennium (2010-2020), and which caused the European Commission to urgently recommend Belgium to adapt its social expenditure systems.

For all countries confronted with a strong population ageing, the Ageing Society presents "social, economic and cultural challenges to individuals, families, societies" (UN, 2012a, p. 3). International organizations as the United Nations and the European Union foresee severe challenges for the labour market and the public expenditure. In the European Ageing Societies,

the number of persons in working age is projected to drop over the next decennia, which may oblige workers to remain professionally active until later age. Also, when ever more older persons require age-related support, the public expenditure for pension, health care and long-term care is projected to increase strongly. The allocation of the resources may therefore become –possibly more so than today- the inset of intense political and public debates, also between various age groups. Yet, the United Nations and the European Union emphasize that the Ageing Society should not be merely considered a crisis. Rather, it should be perceived as a development that is projected and can be planned for. When applying fitting response policies, countries may even benefit from the greater share of older people.

The interest in the media representation of the Ageing Society is comparatively young and part of a growing body of literature. The available research results suggest that the Ageing Society is mainly represented in the media as a societal risk and economic problem. Earlier studies have suggested that ‘older people’ are often stereotyped and portrayed in a negative way, if they are featured at all. Although older persons are an important and growing population segment in society, they are not visible accordingly in the media. The public is influenced by media coverage, as earlier studies have shown. Media affect how people see themselves and others, and how they judge the resources distribution. In this realm, agenda-setting research is concerned with how salient elements concur in various agendas and to what extent existing ‘real-world’ issues are (not) represented in media coverage. These aspects from agenda-setting theory are used to discuss the findings concerning the Ageing Society-coverage.

Whether coverage in news media is balanced and multidimensional can be assessed via a combination of approaches. This thesis combines three access points: Bacchi’s theory of problem representation, Haagerup’s constructive news approach, and Russ-Mohl’s catalogue of journalistic quality criteria. These approaches are applied to assess the multidimensionality of the Ageing Society-coverage in the Belgian quality newspaper *De Standaard*.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Questions

To fill the knowledge gap as identified in the literature review and to add to the understanding of the newspaper representation of the Ageing Society, following research questions have been formulated for this study.

Overarching question:

How are the Ageing Society and its implications for the Belgian population represented in the Belgian quality newspaper *De Standaard* (mid 2011- mid 2013)?

Research questions:

- 1) How does *De Standaard* label the Ageing Society?
- 2) Which frames does *De Standaard* apply in the general coverage of the Ageing Society?
- 3) Which subframes does *De Standaard* apply in its coverage of the political and economic aspects of the Ageing Society?
- 4) Which policy recommendations for the political and economic aspects of the Ageing Society are covered in *De Standaard*, which are the sources for these recommendations and who is attributed responsibility?

3.2 Hypotheses

Earlier studies about the use of labels and frames, media coverage in general¹⁴ and the coverage of the Ageing Society in particular, combined with insights from a pilot study about the Ageing Society-coverage of *De Standaard*¹⁵ and knowledge about the Belgian newspaper landscape have led to following hypotheses for the research questions.

3.2.1 Hypotheses for labeling.

Research findings have suggested that the label which is provided to an issue or concept, simultaneously indicates how the latter are defined and interpreted (e.g. in Russ-Mohl, 2003; Tator et al., 1998). The (non)use of an overarching label in various related contexts also provides information about the perceived (non)coherence of these contexts. With regard to the Flemish-

¹⁴ The earlier research about labeling, framing and the role of media coverage is elaborated upon in detail in section '3.4 Text Analysis'.

¹⁵ The pilot study about the Ageing Society-coverage in *De Standaard* was conducted by the author in 2011.

language region in which *De Standaard* is distributed, the word ‘*vergrijzing*’¹⁶ is ubiquitously used to refer to the Ageing Society. This leads to following hypotheses for the first research question (*How does De Standaard label the Ageing Society?*):

- a. The Ageing Society is in *De Standaard* dominantly labeled by term ‘*vergrijzing*’.
- b. *De Standaard*’s dominant use of the label ‘*vergrijzing*’ in different Ageing Society-related contexts makes the coherence between these different contexts explicit.
- c. The Ageing Society is in *De Standaard* seldom labeled via a demographic description (e.g. ‘now that there are ever more elderly people’), instead of via the label *vergrijzing*.

3.2.2 Hypotheses for the general framing of the Ageing Society.

Earlier studies have suggested that the economic, political, welfare and health frames are the most frequently used frames regarding the Ageing Society (Roanova, 2006; Northcott, 1994). When a particular frame is frequently used, this points towards a dominant perspective (e.g. Cantrell Rosas-Moreno, 2010; Fealy & McNamara, 2009; Durrant et al., 2003; Entman, 1993). An earlier study found that the political and economic frames were dominantly used in the newspaper coverage about the Ageing Society (Lundgren and Ljuslinder, 2011). Taking into account the general West-European focus on economic values in society (e.g. Martensson, 2003; as cited in Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2011, p. 179), it is expected that *De Standaard* has ample attention as well for the economic side of the Ageing Society as well. Also, it is expected that the health frame is often applied, as health is a tangible part of every reader’s life and this frame may hence directly attract the reader’s interest. This leads to following hypotheses for the second research question (*Which frames does De Standaard apply in the general coverage of the Ageing Society?*):

- a. Among the various frames in *De Standaard*’s coverage of the Ageing Society, the political frame and economic frame are dominantly used.
- b. The health frame is frequently used as well in *De Standaard*’s coverage of the Ageing Society, if not as often as the political frame or economic frame.

3.2.3 Hypotheses for the political and economic framing of the Ageing Society.

Earlier findings suggest that the economic and political frames regarding the Ageing Society focus on the great forthcoming costs (e.g. in Roanova, 2006; Gee & Gutman, 2000). These frames may also focus on the fear for the sustainability of the welfare systems (e.g. pensions), and

¹⁶ The Flemish term ‘*vergrijzing*’ is a neutral term and is in that sense different to the acoustically similar German term ‘*Vergreisung*’ (English: ‘greying’), which has a clear negative connotation.

the subsequent need for reformations (Klingholz, 2012; Fealy & McNamara, 2009; Rozanova, 2006). Research findings about the burden that familial careproviders, a growing number in the Ageing Society, are confronted with in e.g. the professional context (e.g. Brinda, Rajkumar, Enemark, Attermann & Jacob, 2014; Barrett, Hale & Butler, 2014; Lilly, Robinson, Holtzman & Bottorff, 2012), lead to the expectation that the familial care-provision may be included as well in the political and economic framing of the Ageing Society. This leads to following hypotheses for the third research question (*Which subframes does De Standaard apply in its coverage of the political and economic aspects of the Ageing Society?*): *De Standaard's* political and economic framing of the Ageing Society will include the:

- a. Subframe of the forthcoming costs for the pension system.
- b. Subframe of the changing labour market, with lesser people in working age and presumed decreasing productivity of older employees.
- c. Subframe of the familial careproviders and the professional and social burden they are subjected to.

3.2.4 Hypothesis for political and economic policies, responsibility and sources.

Earlier findings have proposed that the political and economic policy recommendations in newspapers for the Ageing Society focused on the building up of resources and the urgent preparation for the forthcoming costs (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2011 & 2012). Other political and economic policies emphasized the anticipation on labour shortages and the reformations of the welfare systems (also e.g. in Shamash, 2011). Responsibility was mainly attributed to politicians and political institutions. The sources for the Ageing Society-coverage included mainly experts, e.g. politicians or researchers (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2011 & 2012). Since Belgium and Sweden are both welfare states, having “a set of policies aiming at socio-economic security and socio-economic equality” (Roller, 1995, p. 166), and both countries share a tradition of strong social security systems, the coverage in *De Standaard* is expected to include similar political and economic policies about the Ageing Society. This leads to following hypotheses for the fourth research question (*Which policy recommendations for the political and economic aspects of the Ageing Society are covered in De Standaard, which are the sources for these recommendations and who is attributed responsibility?*):

- a. The political and economic policies for the Ageing Society in *De Standaard* include the building up of financial resources for the forthcoming age-related costs.
- b. The political and economic policies for the Ageing Society in *De Standaard* include the reformation of the pension system.

- c. Professional experts (e.g. politicians, researchers) dominantly appear in *De Standaard* as source for the political and economic Ageing Society-coverage.
- d. Non-professional experts regarding the Ageing Society do not frequently appear in *De Standaard* as source for the political and economic Ageing Society-coverage.
- e. Responsibility for the political-economic Ageing Society-policies is in *De Standaard* attributed to the greater socio-economic political level, and less to the individual level of the citizens.

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Belgian newspaper *De Standaard*.

This study focuses on the representation of the Ageing Society in the Belgian newspaper *De Standaard* (publisher *Mediahuis*). This newspaper has a distribution area that comprises the entire Flemish-speaking part of Belgium¹⁷. *De Standaard* is a quality newspaper with the characteristics associated with this type of newspaper: a greater focus on hard news topics, longer articles, fewer pictures and a more formal language than tabloids (Carvalho & Burgess, 2005; Dirikx & Gelders, 2010; Esser, 1999; Kurtz, 1993). While all types of newspapers generally have an agenda-setting function for decision makers and readership, quality newspapers typically combine this with a highly educated readership. As this study also aims to identify the Ageing Society-policies suggested in the newspaper, the readership of quality newspapers is especially relevant because it may include opinion leaders who weight on- or criticize such policies.

In the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium there are three quality newspapers: *De Standaard*, *De Morgen* and *De Tijd*. These are ideologically differently situated, with *De Standaard* in the political center, *De Morgen* in the political left and *De Tijd* in the political right. Their historical roots link *De Standaard* to the Christian-Democrat party and the Flemish movement, *De Morgen* to the socialist party and the worker movement and *De Tijd*, as business newspaper, to the enterprises and employer organizations. *De Standaard* has a circulation of 98.008 daily copies, *De Morgen* of 51.915 copies and *De Tijd* of 34.431 copies (CIM, 2015).

Because of its significantly larger circulation, it was decided to focus on *De Standaard*. A substantial and highly educated share of the Flemish newspaper readership reads *De Standaard*, and is hence confronted with this newspaper's representation of the Ageing Society; including

¹⁷ 'Flemish' is the variant of Dutch that is spoken in Belgium, as opposed to the Dutch spoken in the Netherlands. The Flemish-speaking northern part of Belgium, Flanders, has 6.161.600 inhabitants (Algemene Directie Statistiek, 2015).

which aspects are foregrounded, what is considered problematic and which policies and responsibilities are suggested.

3.3.2 Sampling method: random stratified sample with constructed weeks.

This project is concerned with representative data about the coverage of the Ageing Society over the period mid 2011- mid 2013 in *De Standaard*. To this aim, a stratified random sampling method with constructed weeks has been applied. In an extensive sampling test conducted by Riffe, Aust and Lacy (1993), this sampling method was found most suited for newspaper studies to provide representative findings. Although constructed week-sampling is often in the repertoire of quantitative researchers, its representative sample is highly suited as well to be used for further qualitative examination. A ‘constructed week’ consists of seven randomly generated dates within a certain period (e.g. June - September) which all respectively refer to one particular day of the week (Monday, Tuesday, etcetera)¹⁸. Constructed week sampling has been frequently and successfully applied by media scholars in newspaper research (e.g. Cantrell Rosas-Moreno, 2010; Payne, 2009; Fico et al., 2008; Hester & Dougal, 2007; Peng, 2004). What makes the sampling method with stratified constructed weeks more suited for newspaper research than common random sampling, is firstly that it avoids a possible oversampling of a certain weekday; which may in newspapers be connected with a type of content (e.g. science on Wednesday), and secondly, it avoids the impact of one atypical event distorting the representation over the full research period. This could happen with a common random sampling procedure, should many of the randomly chosen dates fall in the same period (Payne, 2009; Riffe et al., 1993). With regard to the sampling ratio, Riffe et al. (1993) consider a sample of two constructed weeks per year the most efficient sampling ratio; although other scholars have also used more constructed weeks to reach richer findings (e.g. Payne, 2009).

In this study the sample comprises six constructed weeks per year, which is more than Riffe et al.’s recommended minimum yet still remains research-economically feasible. To create the constructed weeks, the overall research period has been divided into twelve subperiods of two months. For each of these subperiods (‘strata’) one constructed week was created by randomly selecting one Monday, one Tuesday and so on until a complete ‘constructed week’ was composed. No ‘Sunday’ was included as *De Standaard* does not have a Sunday edition (see Appendix B for the dates of the constructed weeks). By applying this constructed week sampling method, particularly suited to meet the requirements of a newspaper study, and selecting a greater sample

¹⁸ If the newspaper only appears six days a week, then the ‘constructed week’ consists of six days as well.

size than the recommended minimum, the representativeness of the sample in this study is secured.

3.3.3 Research corpus: Ageing Society-articles from *De Standaard*.

The sample includes ‘edited written content’, i.e. content which is written or edited by journalists (see overview in table below). Not included in the sample are reader letters, advertisements and pictures or other visual imagery (e.g. cartoons, graphics) and advertisements. Visual content can not be examined synchronously with the text content, as it requires specific semiotic analyzing methods which are beyond the scope of this research design (e.g. classic semiology of Barthes, 1967; or newer interpretations). Possible reader letters were not included in the sample either since they are not edited content. As for advertisements, earlier studies have suggested that their representation of the Ageing Society and older people is untypically positive. Scholars have argued this uncharacteristically positive image is caused by the advertisements’ main objective to attract potential buyers (Lüönd, 2012; Torben-Nielsen & Russ-Mohl, 2012; Gantz et al., 1980). Because of this bias, advertisements have not been included in the sample either.

Content Types in the Sample		
Content type	Subtype	Definition
Opinionating article	Comment	Brief opinionating article written by the chief editor or a senior journalist of the newsroom, expressing the writer’s views on a current issue. In <i>De Standaard</i> this comment is always published on the second page of the newspaper.
	Internal opinion article	Article expressing an opinion, written by a journalist of the newsroom.
	External opinion article	Article expressing an opinion, written by an external person who is no member of the newsroom.
News article	/	Article elaborating on topical news issues.

Table 3 Content types in the sample.

All paper newspaper editions of *De Standaard* published on the dates of the constructed weeks have been screened for articles covering the Ageing Society. The screening was conducted via the Belgian media search engine GoPress, with a list of search terms related to the Ageing Society that was developed by the author in an earlier pilot study (2011). As the term ‘*vergrijzing*’ is a well-known and widespread term in Flanders, the pilot demonstrated that the majority of articles related to the Ageing Society could be identified by using this search term. However, as some Ageing Society-related articles did not use the term ‘*vergrijzing*’, a list of associated search terms referring to ‘ageing’ and ‘older age’ was developed to identify these remaining Ageing Society-related articles as well (see table below for the complete list of search terms). It should be noted

that the Flemish situation is particular in the sense that there is one generally-used term (*vergrijzing*) to refer to the Ageing Society. A comparison with other language regions, e.g. the German language region, learns that this is not always the case. Consequently, a similar pilot study by the author in a Swiss-German quality newspaper (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*) has demonstrated that more and broader ‘age-connected’ German search terms were needed to identify all Ageing Society-related articles in the Swiss newspaper. In the present study of the Belgian newspaper *De Standaard*, the search terms were sought for in the title, introduction and full-text of the newspaper articles. This search generated 145 hits referring to articles which included one or more of the search terms. Among these 145 hits were various ‘doubles’ (articles containing several search terms and appearing as ‘hit’ each respective time) which have been eliminated. Moreover, not all remaining articles referred to the Ageing Society in Belgium, but instead to the ageing situation in other countries, e.g. Japan or Norway. Such articles were beyond the scope of the main research question; i.e. examining the coverage of Ageing Society and implications for the *Belgian* population. It was therefore assessed whether the generated articles met the relevancy criteria for this study: first, referring to the Ageing Society (demographic phenomenon)¹⁹; second, describing a link between the Ageing Society and the addressed topic(s) in the article, and third, focusing on the Ageing Society in Belgium. All articles meeting the relevancy criteria were directly, without further sampling (e.g. purposeful sampling), included in the sample, leading to a total of 40 unique articles in the sample.

Research Corpus: Composition	
Newspaper	De Standaard
Type newspaper	Quality newspaper
Circulation	98.008 daily copies (2015)
Research period	2 year period (July 2011- June 2013)
Sampling method	Randomly stratified sampling with 12 constructed weeks in total (6 constructed weeks/year)
Content type in sample	Edited written content, various article types
Media search engine	GoPress
Search terms ²⁰ (English translation)	Ageing Society, ageing ²¹ , demented, dementia, pre-pension, pension saving, retirement age, generation

¹⁹ This does not mean that only articles including the broadly-used Flemish term for the Ageing Society (*vergrijzing*) were included in the sample, as also descriptions of the Ageing Society (e.g. ‘the ageing of the population’) could refer to that demographic phenomenon.

²⁰ Original Flemish search terms for Ageing Society (note that some terms are typically Flemish and do not have a literal translation in English): *vergrijzing, vergrijzend, vergrijzende, dement, dementie, brugpensioen, pensioensparen, pensioenleeftijd, generatiekloof, generatieconflict, zilverfonds, voorzorgssparen, geriatrie, geriater, ouderen*.

²¹ Two Flemish grammatical versions of this term were used (‘ageing’: ‘vergrijzend’ and ‘vergrijzende’).

	gap, generation conflict, Silver Fund ²² , precaution saving, geriatrics, geriatric, older people.
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Table 4 Composition of research corpus.

The code book with the inductive coding categories has been developed iteratively during the coding process (see 3.4.2 Content analysis). The selected newspaper articles were coded inductively by a single coder, i.e. the author. This excluded a classic intercoder reliability test, in which the extent to which various coders agree is measured. However, as intercoder reliability is an important indicator for the trustworthiness of the data (e.g. Joyce, 2013, p. 1; Krippendorff, 2004, p. 215), and external coder has re-coded part of the newspaper articles. This allowed comparing coder results and thus the intercoder agreement, which may signpost the trustworthiness.

With regard to the practicalities of the intercoder reliability test, there is little consensus in the literature about the number of content units (articles) which have to be recoded to determine the agreement rates (Joyce, 2013, p. 2; Mouter & Vonk Noordegraaf, 2012, p. 2). Depending on the nature and the size of the research corpus, intercoder reliability test samples have ranged from 0.9 percent of the corpus (for links in tweets; Agarwal et al., 2014, p. 33) to 100 percent (for magazine ads; Joyce, 2013, p. 2). Nevertheless, “ten percent of the complete dataset is an often found guideline. However, for small datasets a higher percentage might be more comfortable.” (De Swert, 2012, p. 2). This study has followed the intercoder reliability test approach of an earlier study with a similar research corpus of journal articles, and which used a great test sample of 64 percent of the total data set (Lombard, Snyder-Duch & Bracken, 2002; Reichert et al., 1999). Having followed this approach with such large sample, this study is clearly situated at the higher part of the intercoder reliability testing array.

Among the various calculation methods to measure the agreement among coders, the most forthright method is the ‘percent agreement’, which allows a transparent interpretation (Joyce, 2013, p. 3). Notwithstanding possible drawbacks of this method (consistent disagreements could go under in the majority of agreements; or possibility to boost the final result by adding irrelevant but unambiguous categories), the percent agreement method is widely applied (Joyce, 2013, p. 3). Therefore, it has also been selected for this study, while addressing the possible drawbacks by paying special attention to potential coding disagreements and using only the original categories.

To interpret the results of the intercoder percent agreement, the general guideline is that “coefficients of .90 or greater are nearly always acceptable, .80 or greater is acceptable in most situations, and .70 may be appropriate in some exploratory studies for some indices” (Neuendorf,

²² The ‘Silver Fund’ (*‘zilverfonds’* in Flemish) refers to a Belgian federal fund that was established to create a financial buffer to help carry the additional costs of the population ageing.

2002, p. 145; as cited in Joyce, 2013, p. 3). In this study, an external coder experienced in social sciences has used the author's code book to recode 60 percent of the newspaper articles from the research corpus. The articles for recoding were selected randomly via an Excel-generated list. The percent agreement with the first coder (i.e. the author) was 84 percent. With this high intercoder agreement, the data of the first coder can be considered trustworthy.

3.4 Text Analysis

3.4.1 Labeling and framing.

Media coverage "is one of the most important sources of information" (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2012, p. 41) about events the public is not directly confronted with. Media coverage hence affects their knowledge of such events and the public perception (e.g. Perse, 2008; Ainsworth & Hardy, 2007; Carvalho & Burgess, 2005; Peng, 2004; Schudson, 2007). The influence of media may transcend the perception level and also play a role in the active decision-making process, as media provide people with information that allows them to make well-reflected decisions (Milner, Van Norman & Milner, 2011, p. 25-26). Although the decisive influence of media on the perceptions and behavior of the audience is broadly acknowledged in media research, it is also an influence which is hard to measure (Russ-Mohl, 2003, p. 21-25).

Mass media direct the attention to a few themes and events which are highlighted. Media scholars refer to such direction of public attention as the agenda setting process, as it simultaneously sets the agenda of the public life. For instance, if a certain topic is in the medial focus of attention, the authorized politician will have to say something about it –and not, for instance, about another topical issue (Russ-Mohl, 2003, p. 22). Russ-Mohl also points out that media therefore belong to a society's socio-cultural framework: they provide the economy, politics and culture with information and therefore also influence the society (2003; p. 31). In the context of the Ageing Society, Milner et al. have noted that "mass media is a critical platform for communicating the meanings and experiences of ageing between generations, and plays a role in shaping the agenda for discussing ageing issues" (Milner, Van Norman & Milner, 2011, p. 26).

Media coverage leans on journalistic mechanisms such as framing and labeling. Both mechanisms are closely related, as the provided label is also tied to the broader frame in which it gets embedded.

Labeling refers to the process of giving names to events and issues, which simultaneously implies "a series of processes which involve decision-making" (Prus, 1975, p. 81). The label is merely the tip of the iceberg as it stands for a complete set of assumptions and ideas, argue Tator et al. (1998,

p. 27). If e.g. a certain event is labeled ‘a financial disaster’, then the broader frame will not focus on the benefits of that event.

Language and labels can dramatize or euphemize a situation. How something is labeled also shows how it is being interpreted (Russ-Mohl, 2003, p. 90). Russ-Mohl (2003, p. 91) remarks as well that the wording of the label often includes a message to the public, albeit hidden below the surface. The label hence actively guides the interpretation and possible reactions of the audience (Torben-Nielsen, 2012). In other words, language does not only depict reality, it also produces reality (Hoffmann, 2016, p. 27).

Examples are legio, and the labeling-process after the suicide attacks on the World Trade Center is an especially illuminating one. Very short after the events, the attackers were labeled ‘terrorists’ or ‘soldiers of god’. This showed that the attacks were not considered as mere criminal deeds but as a declaration of war against the USA –with a religious undertone-, with according implications for the further actions of the American government (Russ-Mohl, 2003, p. 90). Returning to the context of the Ageing Society, the labeling of the Ageing Society as ‘triumph of development’ places the same concept in a very different light than e.g. the label ‘apocalyptic demography’; with obvious implications for its perception (UN, 2012a, p. 3; Milner, Van Norman & Milner, 2011, p. 25-27).

On a more subtle level, the use of a partial *pars pro toto* label (e.g. partial label ‘the increasing life expectancy’ to refer to the broader concept ‘Ageing Society’) may not lead the audience to full insight in the demographic situation. If different (partial) labels are used to refer to various aspects of the same concept, this could suggest that the internal coherence among these various aspects may not be grasped (Tator et al., 1998; Prus, 1975). For instance, when as reference to the Ageing Society the partial label ‘the increasing life expectancy’ is used in the context of the lack of elderly homes, but another partial label –e.g. ‘ever less younger people’- is used when it comes to scarcity on the labour market, it may not be clear that the lacking elderly homes and the challenges on the labour market are both related to the Ageing Society. This unclarity about the concept could make the audience more prone to accept all sorts of claims about the Ageing Society, whether these are correct or not (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2012, p. 40).

The process of framing refers to selecting certain “aspects of a reality and making them more salient in a communicating text” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). A frame is hence a “central organizing principle that holds together and gives coherence and meaning to a diverse array of symbols” (Gamson et al., 1992, p. 384). Journalists commonly use frames to arrange the flow of events, and to transform the raw material into an understandable story. As such, frames are tools to structure reality (Cantrell Rosas-Moreno, 2010; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). “Media frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and,

in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports.” (Gitlin, 1980; as cited in Gamson et al., 1992, p. 384). Journalists tame the large volumes of raw material by applying the available frames of their culture, argues Schudson (2007, p. 254): “They assimilate the new, apparently novel, unique, unprecedented event to the familiar old ways of understanding the world”, e.g. “a car is a horseless carriage. The internet is (...) an information superhighway or an electronic frontier.”

Nevertheless, not any frame is suited for the media. Journalists must not only determine what their story is, they also need to tell it in a way that attracts and keeps the audience. In order to spark interest, the journalist must be aware of the “shared human sympathies as they exist in a given society at a given time” (Schudson, 2007, p. 256). For instance, argues Schudson, newspaper readers may not find a factual comparison between the financial proposals of two politicians very interesting, but a well-chosen frame of fierce competition between those two politicians may make the story of their contrasting financial proposals palatable. This is not to say that news events and their coverage are two different things. The frame may offer a certain shape for the events, but can not change those events:

For most practical purposes, it is reasonable to believe that there are events in the world we can shape, distort, reinterpret, but not fundamentally change. President Kennedy was killed by an assassin. There are lots of ways to read this fact, but none of them restore John F. Kennedy to life. He really died. (Schudson, 2007, p. 257)

Yet, framing does affect the audience’s perception as it highlights one interpretation while understating a less favored one (Rateau et al., 2012; Fealy & McNamara, 2009). Framing a news topic may be a strategy to “identify main causes and responsible agents, make moral judgments, and finally, to suggest policy responses to the event” (Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2008, p. 53-54). Fealy and McNamara note that “particular accounts of reality are presented as the ‘true’ version, so that they implicitly undermine any possible alternative versions” (2009, p. 11). By framing issues in a specific manner, media do not only offer their audience a particular perspective to look at them, they “also suggest which aspects are considered ‘important’ and newsworthy –and which are not” (Torben-Nielsen, 2014, 3 al.; Durrant et al., 2003). As such, media can also “affect the criteria by which individuals judge issues” (Iyengar, 1991, p. 133). This ability of the media is called priming.

Media representations are suggested to impact the audience on three levels (Lin et al., 2004; Ljuslinder, 2002, as cited in Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2011, p. 168). Firstly, media representations influence the audience’s self-image and identification. Secondly, media

representations affect the image that the audience has of other persons. Thirdly, medial frames have an impact on how the resource allocation within a society is legitimized (Ljuslinder, 2002, *idem*). If a frequent frame emphasizes the importance of a particular issue, the audience may tend to accept that more financial resources will flow to this issue in the future.

It should be noted that these forms of media impact on the audience, or the salience transfer from media to public as also described in agenda-setting theory, refer mostly to classic news media constellations. In such constellations the media -e.g. newspapers, radio or television- function as the producers of news, and the public as consumers. The premise that news media affect the audience could be critically assessed by changing the focus to more interactive news media, in which the demarcation between news producers and consumers is less strict. Therefore, various other media theories also consider more interactive forms of journalism which are “emerging next to existing models of hierarchical, top-down storytelling” (Deuze, 2006, p. 72), and whereby the public has a more participating role. The extent to which such participation takes place may range from e.g. approaching a media ombudsman with questions or comments, over composing its own news information regime based on various preferred news websites, to actively engaging in own reporting through citizen media; and various possible levels of participation and news activities between those ends. As Deuze remarks, “everywhere in the news media one can see how journalists are trying to come to terms with their roles as gatekeepers, content managers, and facilitators of connectivity” (Deuze, 2006, p. 71). Agenda-setting scholars have extensively theorized about the rapidly developing interactive media and the changes they bring along for the (research of the) classic news media. “The Internet is the new frontier for research on these traditional agenda-setting effects. (...) The Internet dramatically changed the communication landscape. (...) There are many agendas in the contemporary society”, states agenda-setting ‘founding father’ McCombs (2006, p. 544). This leads to a divers public agenda and a dispersed public focus. Indeed, the internet and its enormous variety of news websites allow for an abundance of available agendas. The main question, argues McCombs, is however to what extent the public also actually visits the news blogs and other news websites. He compares the situation to having cable television, as “most people have access to dozens and dozens of channels, but tend to concentrate their attention on very few” (McCombs, 2006, p. 544). Similarly, McCombs holds that “attention on the Web is more concentrated than in the print world” (*idem*), stating that many news websites are moreover linked to their ‘mother information source’, e.g. a newspaper, television network or magazine. As a result, it would be “hardly surprising to find that online sites present agendas that largely match the agenda of traditional news media, and that the online sites show considerable resemblance to each other” (McCombs, 2006, p. 3). Following McCombs’ line of thought, the great emergence of news websites has not rendered the classic agenda-setting

inutile. Even though there are countless news websites available, it is proposed that many people cherish their few favorite websites and do not often visit other news websites, and that the agendas of many of these news sites are possibly not as different as one would expect at first sight, as they may match the agenda of their mother institute -which could also be an offline news medium. Although highly relevant, these news websites are beyond the scope of the present study. Therefore, their specific situation, challenging some more classic models of media-influence on the public, will not be elaborated upon in further detail in this context.

Media frames are not ‘dead letter’ and have a real impact on attitudes and policies. Therefore, the choice and application of frames often leads to heated discussions. Much criticism on media (and much media studies as well), thrive on the divide between the reality as the author perceives it, and the depiction of that reality in the media (Schudson, 2007, p. 257). Few authors have described this gap and the following misunderstandings between media scholars and journalists as enlightening as Michael Schudson, a social scientist who spent decennia studying media. He suggests that one of the great challenges of media studies is that media scientists “speak a language that journalists mistrust and misunderstand” (Schudson, 1997, p. 7).

(The media scientists) speak of “constructing the news”, of “making the news”, of the “social construction of reality”. Even journalists who are critical of the daily practices of their colleagues and their own organizations find this talk offensive. I have been at several conferences of journalists and social scientists where such language promptly pushed the journalists into a fierce defence of their work, on the familiar ground that they just report the world as they see it, the facts, facts and nothing but the facts, and yes, there’s occasional bias, occasional sensationalism, occasional inaccuracy, but a responsible journalist never, never, never fakes the news. That’s not what we said, the hurt scholars respond. We didn’t say journalists *fake* the news, we said journalists *make* the news.” (Schudson, 1997, p. 7)

When it is being argued that journalists ‘make the news’, it signifies that the journalists’ task is to fit happenings into “comprehensible categories and to narrate them in comprehensible ways, to tame them, to socially reconstruct them, if you will”, Schudson states (2007, p. 253). His understanding of ‘news making’ is therewith similar to what other authors call ‘news framing’ (e.g. Entman, 1993; Cantrell Rosas-Moreno, 2010; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Arguing that a news report is a story is therefore not to degrade it, nor to blame it of being fictional. Instead, it

should alert media scholars and journalists alike “that news, like all public documents, is a constructed reality possessing its own internal validity.” (Tuchman, 1976, p. 97)

A strong frame is one that is so self-evident that it seems natural. Framing is ubiquitous in media coverage, but it is seldom explicit and in most cases nearly invisible, state Gamson et al. (1992, p. 374). As such, they noted a fundamental ambiguity in framing research: although there are various frame levels, little consensus or even guidelines exist about the appropriate frame abstraction level in framing research (1992, p. 385). This unclarity regarding the abstraction level has also been remarked by agenda-setting scholars Rogers and Dearing: “The distinction is often difficult to make, due to the conceptual confusion in the past regarding just what an issue and an event are” (Rogers & Dearing, 1988, p. 566). In an attempt to resolve the conceptual disorientation, Gamson and his colleagues have developed an operational system to recognize and classify these framing levels.

In accordance with Gamson et al.’s frame classification system, this study has distinguished between the smaller ‘event frame’ (level 1; focusing on one event), the larger ‘issue frame’ (level 2; focusing on a larger category of related events) and the overarching ‘issue-transcending frame’ (level 3; used to analyze many different issues). These levels enable making the framing of the Ageing Society explicit, while at the same time identifying the possible connections between single events and greater issues. For instance, a single event such as ‘training for new health care workers’ (level 1) could be connected with a larger issue such as ‘need for more health care professionals’ (level 2), within the broader frame of ‘health of the Ageing Society’ (level 3). The table below provides Gamson et al.’s frame level classification system.

Frame Level Classification System			
Frame level	Name of frame	Description of frame	Example
Level 1: smallest	Event frame	An event frame is a frame that focuses on a single event.	<i>Event:</i> Training for new health care workers
Level 2: larger	Issue frame	An issue frame is a frame that focuses on a greater category of related events.	<i>Issue:</i> Need for more health care professionals
Level 3: largest	Issue-transcending frame	An issue-transcending frame is a broader frame which can be used to analyze many different issues.	<i>Issue-transcending frame:</i> Health in the Ageing Society

Table 5 Frame level classification system.

Source: Gamson et al. (1992) (examples: ktn).

3.4.2 Content analysis.

This present study has applied a qualitative inductive content analysis, allowing to identify new categories in the coverage of the Ageing Society. Apart from its methodological advantages in

this study's setting, the inductive-qualitative approach has a shortcoming as well, which is the lack of information about the frequency of the newly identified categories. Such information would permit to understand which inductively identified categories were dominantly used. Therefore, this study has complemented the qualitative content analysis with an additional assessment of the category frequencies, leading to a more sophisticated 'mixed methods' approach.

Qualitative content analysis is a systematic text research method, distilling an abundance of sentences from those texts into fewer content-related categories. In doing so, qualitative content analysis provides new insights regarding the phenomena observed in the texts (Mayring, 2010 & 2000; Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). The roots of qualitative content analysis date back to the 19th century, when the method was applied to analyze hymns and articles in newspapers and magazines (Harwood & Garry, 2003). Nowadays, qualitative content analysis is often used in fields such as communication and journalism, as well as in business, psychology and sociology. Although qualitative content analysis experienced a steady growth over the last decades, it has also been criticized from various sides (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). The combination of a structured approach and in-depth insights that is often considered the strength of qualitative content analysis, is also the Achilles tendon according to critics. Critics in the quantitative field consider qualitative content analysis simplistic as it does not permit an in-depth statistical analysis; whereas some qualitative researchers on the contrary argue instead that qualitative content analysis is not qualitative enough in nature (Morgan, 1993). Supporters however find in it a content-sensitive method (Krippendorff, 1980), which is "concerned with meanings, intentions, consequences and context" (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007, p. 107) and is flexible regarding research set-up (Harwood & Garry, 2003).

Content analyst Philipp Mayring (2010) states that both the inductive and deductive approach are promising strategies for conducting a qualitative content analysis: While the inductive approach may identify new categories, its deductive counterpart allows a (qualitative) examination of how findings and categories from earlier research are applied in another research corpus. Therefore, the choice for the inductive or deductive strategy in a qualitative content analysis is to a great extent informed by the availability of earlier findings about the research questions at hand, argues Mayring (2010). For the present study of the Ageing Society-coverage in the newspaper *De Standaard* applies that although the possible implications of the Ageing Society, e.g. regarding the economy or the health system, are well-calculated in various policy documents²³, the availability of findings from earlier media studies about the Ageing Society in

²³ See sections '2.2 International Concerns and Recommendations' and '2.3 Belgian Ageing Society'.

newspaper coverage is however particularly restricted; offering mainly the findings from one previous study (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2011 & 2012). With such limited findings from earlier media investigations at hand, the present study has selected the inductive approach for its qualitative content analysis. This methodological choice mirrors the consensus in content analysis literature that the inductive approach is most suited when there is little or only fragmented previous knowledge about the subject available (Harwood & Garry, 2003). Simultaneously, the choice for an inductive approach also signified that no deductive *a priori* categories (e.g. derived from the international Ageing Society-policy documents) have been fed into the content analysis. Instead, the specific content of the newspaper articles has led to the inductive creation of new categories.

The inductive approach moves from the particular to the general and combines specific elements into a general statement. An inductive analysis provides answers to open questions and includes open coding, category building and abstraction; as the researcher has to decide through own interpretation which issues belong to the same category (Mayring, 2010). On a practical level, Elo and Kyngäss (2007) note that the inductive content analysis starts by coding the research corpus with as many codes as is deemed necessary to describe all relevant aspects of the content. During coding, a code book is iteratively developed. When worked through the entire research corpus, the researcher collects all codes and iteratively groups them together into fewer, broader (sub)categories, while adapting the code book accordingly (see table below). Finally, by interpreting and abstracting these categories, the researcher aims to formulate general descriptions of the situation (Elo & Kyngäs 2007, Mayring 2010).

Inductive Category Building		
Specific description in research corpus	Created subcategory	Created main category
“difficulties to move outside” “snow-blindness” “risk of fall” (Elo & Kyngäss, 2007, p. 11)	snow and ice	Threats of northern physical environment
...	darkness	
...	temperature variation	

Table 6 Inductive category building.

Source: Elo & Kyngäss, 2007, p. 111

Mixed methods approach.

Various characteristics of the qualitative content analysis made the method particularly suited to examine the representation of the Ageing Society in *De Standaard*. Its systematic procedure and codebook permitted to work efficiently through considerable text volumes. The flexible research design of the qualitative content analysis allowed to be adjusted specifically to the objectives and research questions. Because the literature review delivered relatively little specific previous

knowledge about the newspaper coverage of the Ageing Society (and hence no categories could be deduced *a priori*), the inductive approach permitted to start examining from the research corpus itself, and to create categories based on the content (for codebook: see Appendix A). This present study hence did not use predetermined categories but pursued a bottom-up approach instead and created the content categories inductively (see also above). A similar approach was moreover applied by Lundgren and Ljuslinder, 2011 & 2012, who examined the Ageing Society-coverage in Swedish newspapers. While a clear advantage of the qualitative inductive content analysis was its ability to identify new categories, a limitation was the absence of information about the frequency of these identified categories, which could inform the researcher about the prevalence of the Ageing Society categories. Elo and Kyngäss (2007) as well as Mayring (2010) have proposed addressing this challenge by complementing the qualitative content analysis with quantitative elements for a more versatile mixed methods approach. Such quantitative elements may provide insights in e.g. the frequency of certain topics or frames, or in the article types in which the topics or frames mostly (or rarely) appear. Quantitative elements thus deliver complementary information about the qualitatively identified content categories.

Therefore, this study applies a mixed method approach and complements the qualitative content analysis with a measurement of the category frequencies. The frequencies of the newly identified Ageing Society categories are assessed by measuring the number of articles in which they occurred. Assessing the number of articles, instead of assessing the number of category occurrences, provides a more unambiguous overview of frequencies: considering how often a category occurred could lead to distortions if the same category occurred repeatedly in one article (and got assessed each time), even though it was the only article in which the category appeared. This could cause the misleading impression that the category was widely used, and not just in one atypical article. By considering the number of articles in which a category occurs, this possible bias is avoided. Finally, for each newspaper article in the sample, the article type (news or opinionating article) has been registered to examine in which article types the Ageing Society was dominantly covered.

3.5 Summary

This thesis examines how the Ageing Society and its implications for the Belgian population are covered in the newspaper *De Standaard*, over the period mid 2011 to mid 2013. It is investigated how the Ageing Society is labeled in *De Standaard* and which general frames are used in the coverage. The study then zooms in on the specific political and economic framing of the Ageing

Society-coverage, and examines which subframes are applied, which policies and sources occur, and who is attributed responsibility for addressing the Ageing Society.

With regard to the hypotheses, firstly, it is expected that the Flemish term ‘*vergrijzing*’²⁴ is the dominantly applied label for the Ageing Society, and that its use in different Ageing Society-related contexts makes the coherence between these contexts explicit. Secondly, it is hypothesized that among the various frames used in the coverage of the Ageing Society, the political and economic frames are dominantly applied, and that the health frame is used frequently as well. Thirdly, it is hypothesized that the political and economic framing of the Ageing Society will include the subframes of the upcoming costs in the pension and care systems, the changing labour market and the burden of the familial careproviders. Fourthly, it is hypothesized that the political and economic policies for the Ageing Society comprise the creation of financial resources for the age-related costs and a reformation of the pension system. Furthermore, it is expected that professional experts occur as central sources, at the cost of the non-professional sources.

Special attention has been dedicated to the labeling and framing, as these mechanisms are used by journalists to structure the raw material into comprehensible media coverage. Media coverage is hence a social construction that displays a processed version of news events. Since media coverage is for most people one of the main sources of information, it affects their knowledge and perception of news events.

To compose a representative research corpus for this study, a random stratified sample with constructed weeks has been created. Earlier sampling studies have demonstrated that this sample type is the most suited and efficient for newspaper research. Included in the sample were Ageing Society-related articles written or edited by journalists. This study conducted an inductive qualitative content analysis, as only limited earlier research findings about the coverage of the Ageing Society-coverage in newspapers were available. The inductive approach hence allowed recognizing new content categories in the coverage of the Ageing Society in *De Standaard*. The identified frames have been arranged to Gamson et al.’s frame classification system. This system differentiates between the smaller ‘event frame’, focusing on one event; the larger ‘issue frame’, focusing on a larger category of related events; and the great ‘issue-transcending frame’, placing these events in an overarching system. To gain insights in the frequency of the newly identified Ageing Society-frames, the number of articles in which they occurred has been assessed, adding a mixed methods element to the research set-up.

²⁴ ‘*Vergrijzing*’ is the Flemish term referring to the Ageing Society.

4 Findings

This chapter provides an overview of the study's empirical findings regarding the coverage of the Ageing Society in *De Standaard*. The presentation of the findings is structured along the research questions, dividing the chapter in two main parts. Part I is concerned with the general coverage of the Ageing Society and elaborates upon the labeling as well as the various frames applied in the coverage of the Ageing Society. Part II focuses specifically on the framing of the political and economic aspects of the Ageing Society. It offers an overview of the political and economic subframes, the sources of the coverage, the policies and the responsibilities attributed for the political and economic implications of the Ageing Society.

Note: For reasons of readability and comprehension, the frequencies of labels, frames and subframes in this chapter are provided simultaneously in absolute numbers as well as percentages (e.g. '34 out of 40 articles, or 85 percent'). The research findings are illustrated with quotes from newspaper *De Standaard*. For clarity purposes, these quotes are provided in-text in English. The original Flemish versions of the quotes are to be found in Appendix C. Only in section '4.1 General labeling of the Ageing Society', the original Flemish terms are exceptionally provided in-text, because this section is concerned with the precise (Flemish) label choice; the English translation follows immediately between brackets. Throughout the entire chapter, the origins of each quote are provided directly behind it ('article type [news, comment or opinion article]; journalist, year, page'); the full references are to be found in the literature References.

Findings Part I: General Coverage of the Ageing Society

4.1 General labeling of the Ageing Society

The great majority of articles (34 of 40 articles, or 85 percent) refer to the Ageing Society via the label '*vergrijzing*', or a derivate of- or composition with it. The literal English translation of *vergrijzing* is 'greying', and although that may not be the most elegant of terms, it is a neutral Flemish term which expresses neither a positive nor a negative appreciation of the demographical evolution (in that sense, it is also different from the acoustically similar, but negative German term 'Vergreisung'). Through the use of the label *vergrijzing*, *De Standaard*'s references to the Ageing Society are therefore neutral and non-normative. Examples of the label *vergrijzing* can be found in "*aanpak van de vergrijzing*" ('handling of the Ageing Society'; comment; Sturtewagen,

2011, p. 2), or, in a composed label, “*vergrijzingskosten*” (‘costs of the Ageing Society’; news article; De Smet, 2013, p. 7).

As the label *vergrijzing* is not associated with a particular thematic field or stakeholders, it can be applied in a variety of contexts, e.g. health, education, etcetera. The widespread label may also prompt the insight that seemingly independent events such as e.g. the retirement age discussion, the recruitment of more care workers, or the development of new housing concepts are connected as implications of the Ageing Society. The use of the same label *vergrijzing* in the context of such various Ageing Society-implications makes their connectedness explicit to the reader. In most cases, the label *vergrijzing* (‘Ageing Society’) appears without additional definition: it is not further clarified what the Ageing Society is, nor what the determining factors are (life expectancy, fertility and migration). Although readers are thus often confronted with the label, the concept behind it is not being elucidated.

In rare occasions (7 out of 40 articles, or 17 percent), the Ageing Society-articles in *De Standaard* did not employ the label *vergrijzing*, but rather used a ‘descriptive label’ which described the Ageing Society in terms of the changes in a particular field. The descriptive label “a demographic shift” (news article; Lemmens, 2011, p. 1) made e.g. clear reference to the demographic changes. In other articles, the Ageing Society was referred to by its impact on the labour market, e.g. “large generations are retiring and the graduating youngsters are much less numerous” (comment; Tegenbos, 2012, p. 2), or the increasing need for care due to the population ageing, e.g. “the number of older persons needing care is increasing” (opinion article; Vastiau, 2011, p. 23). In contrast to the neutral label *vergrijzing*, these descriptive labels carry in themselves allusions to a context and possible stakeholders; e.g. employers and employees in the labour context, or care workers and patients in the health context. Because descriptive labels situate the Ageing Society in one particular context, they do not make the coherence between the various Ageing Society-related contexts explicit.

4.2 General Framing of the Ageing Society

4.2.1 Frames overview.

The qualitative content analysis has identified two overarching frame types in the coverage of the Ageing Society: first, the ‘thematic frames’, which frame the Ageing Society in the light of particular themes (e.g. economy or health); and second, the ‘normative frames’, which frame the Ageing Society as a challenge or an opportunity for the Belgian society. The normative frames appeared across the various thematic frames. The table below provides an overview of the frames and subframes used in the coverage of the Ageing Society.

General Coverage Ageing Society: Frames Overview Table		
Thematic Frames		
Thematic Main Frames	Definition Main Frames	Thematic Subframes
Ageing Society & Economy	Framing the Ageing Society in the light of its economic implications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implications for the Belgian labour market <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g. lack of younger employees, lifelong learning and reorientation of older employees, importance of being attractive employer • Financial sustainability of the pension system <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g. higher retirement age, early retirement, affordability of pensions • Investments in facilities that accommodate to the population ageing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g. pharmaceutical industry, medical technology, elderly homes
Ageing Society & Politics	Framing the Ageing Society in the light of the political handling of its implications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political handling of the Ageing Society <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g. affected by political interests, European Union-regulations, and/or tensions between the Belgian language regions • Government Budget to address the Ageing Society <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g. possible solutions to handle the (costs of the) Ageing Society, Belgian budgetary deficit
Ageing Society & Health	Framing the Ageing Society in the light of its implications for the public health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implications for Belgian public health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g. medical science and care systems • Care for people with a chronic illness • Care for persons with dementia
Ageing Society & Education	Framing the Ageing Society in the light of the changing educational needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of the Ageing Society on education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g. in high schools, universities and colleges
Ageing Society & Awareness	Framing the Ageing Society in the light of the public awareness about it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public awareness of the Ageing Society • Public awareness of its implications
Normative Frames		
Normative Main Frames	Definition Main Frames	Normative Subframes

Ageing Society as challenge	Framing the Ageing Society as a cause of challenges, cost or problems for the Belgian society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges of the Ageing Society due to the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ projected costs, situated in various fields (e.g. health, education, ...) ○ other (non-financial) demands
Ageing Society as opportunity	Framing the Ageing Society as an opportunity for Belgian society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chances of the Ageing Society for the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ labour market ○ wellbeing of population ○ investment chances

Table 7 Frames overview table.

4.2.2 Frame frequencies and hosting article types.

Not every frame in the coverage of the Ageing Society is used equally often. The frame frequencies have hence been measured, as knowledge about these frequencies (which frames are applied dominantly or not) also helps clarifying how the representation of the Ageing Society is constructed. To distinguish the more frequent frames from the less frequent ones, it has been determined that a certain viewpoint should occur in at least three articles in the sample before it was classified as a ‘frame’. In case it occurred less, it was classified not as a frame but as a smaller ‘view’²⁵ instead.

With regard to the frequencies of the normative frames, the frame of the Ageing Society as a challenge occurred much more (in 21/40 articles or 52 percent) than the frame of the Ageing Society as an opportunity (in 5/40 articles or 12 percent). With regard to the frequencies of the thematic Ageing Society-frames, the political frame (15/40 articles or 37 percent), economic frame (12/40 articles or 30 percent) and health frame (9/40 articles or 22 percent) occurred most often in *De Standaard*’s coverage of the Ageing Society. To a much lesser extent, the educational and awareness frames appeared (resp. in 4/40 articles or 10 percent, and 3/40 articles or 7 percent). Four smaller views on the Ageing Society (i.e. gay, housing, literature and invisibility) appeared too seldom to be classified as a frame.

With regard to the article types in which the various (thematic and normative) frames were used, the findings suggest that most frames occur both in news articles and opinionating articles; and hence not in one article type specifically. Among the thematic Ageing Society-frames, the political and economic frames appeared mainly in news articles, and to a lesser extent in comments and opinion pieces. The health and awareness frames only made their appearance in news articles and not in comments and opinion pieces. The education frame, on the other hand, was equally used in news and opinionating articles. With regard to the normative frames, both the ‘opportunity’ and ‘challenge’ frame occurred more in news articles than in comments and opinion pieces. While the use of a normative frame may be unexpected in presumably neutral news articles, it should be noted that the journalists did not write a personal appreciation of the Ageing Society, but rather selected Ageing Society-challenges or -opportunities as topic, or used sources who stated the population ageing was a threat or a change; resulting in a normative framing of the Ageing Society, either as challenge or opportunity.

²⁵ Obviously it could be argued to make no naming distinction between the more and less frequently used ‘frames’ and ‘views’, and consider the latter as ‘minor frames’. For reasons of clarity however, a naming distinction is made to reflect the clear differences in frequency.

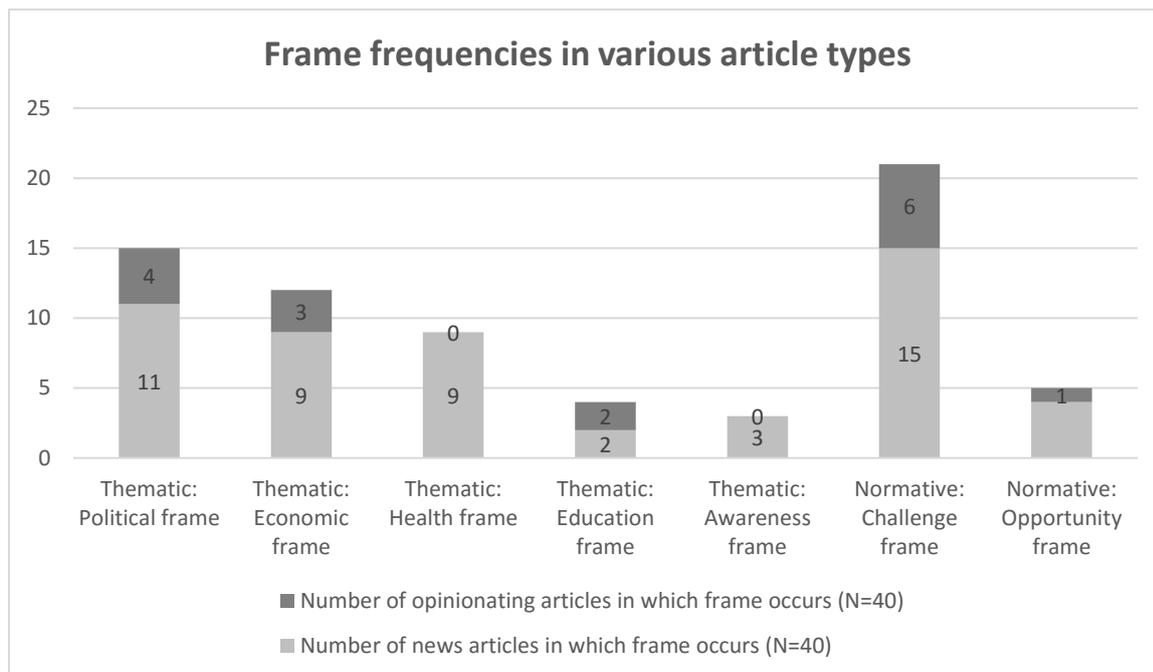


Figure 12 Frame frequencies in various article types.

4.2.3 Thematic framing of the Ageing Society.

Political and economic frames.

As can be taken from the figure above, the political and economic frames are the most frequently used frames in the coverage of the Ageing Society. Since they are closely connected regarding their content content, with political and economic decisions commonly affecting each other, these two frames may be considered a joint ‘political-economic frame’ (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2011, p. 179). This union is confirmed by Rogers and Dearing, who observed a strong political dimension in many news items: “Understandable, in the sense that a great many media news events are political in nature” (Rogers & Dearing, 1988, p. 575). The political-economic framing is extensively elaborated upon in a dedicated section in the second part of this Findings-chapter: ‘Part II: 4.3 Framing of the political and economic aspects of the Ageing Society’.

Health frame.

The health frame in the coverage of the Ageing Society consisted of four subframes: the increasing demand for professional care workers, new care systems, the growing number of chronic patients and the possible augmentation of happiness in later life. The health frame occurred in 9/40 articles or 22 percent. This frame only appeared in news articles, not in opinion articles or comments.

The first subframe covers the health situation of the Ageing Society in the light of the need for more care workers. Ten thousands of new care professionals are demanded in the near future because more older care workers are retiring than young colleagues emerge on the labour market. At the same time, the care demand of the ageing population will increase rapidly (new article, Tegenbos, 2012a, p. 1). By 2020 the babyboom-generation will have reached the age of sixty, and their future need for care is expected to add to the already existing waiting lists for elderly care (news article; Goethals & Justaert, 2012, p. 4). This problematic situation is recognized by the Flemish Minister of Wellbeing, Jo Vandeurzen, who “acknowledges the problems in the elderly care (...). There is not enough capacity and great amounts of money are needed to eliminate the arrears”. (news article; FLE, 2012, p. 5)

In line with this, the second health subframe covers the Ageing Society focusing on new care systems to relieve those waiting lists. Innovation-minister Lieten invests in new and less expensive elderly care systems which must facilitate the wish of many older people to stay at home as long as possible. She “has hence thought of another solution: starting a laboratory that looks for new, cheap and immediately applicable forms of elderly care”. (news article; Goethals & Justaert, 2012, p. 4). Examples are neighbourhood-care, domotica tools, new media possibilities to contact careproviders, or social network sites to support their family.

The third health subframe emphasizes the increasing number of older patients with chronic illnesses due to the ageing of the population. The International Diabetes Federation estimated that in 2030 one out of ten adults worldwide may suffer from diabetes, compared to one out of thirteen in 2011 (news article; AP, 2011, p. 13). Also cancer could become a chronic disease: due to the current medical treatments, many patients do not die from cancer anymore but instead get old with it (news article; Tegenbos, 2012c, p. 7). At the same time, people generally live longer and reach an age where they get age-related diseases, which increases the number of chronic patients once more. “That evolution is partly an effect of the Ageing Society. But it is also one of the causes”, says Jan Heyrman, professor Family Medicine (Catholic University Leuven) (news article; Tegenbos, 2012c, p. 7). Next to the increasing number of people with chronic illnesses, the number of people with chronic pains is increasing as well. An estimated 2.9 million Belgians have chronic pains, causing the Belgian Federal Knowledge Center Health Care to plead for a health care that focuses more on chronic patients (news article; Tegenbos, 2012c, p. 7). Lastly, the number of older people with dementia or memory and behavioral affections is increasing (news article; Gregoor, 2012, p. 57) and will almost double towards 2030, posing the Belgian society for great challenges (news article; Goethals & Justaert, 2012, p. 4).

The fourth health subframe is thematically deviant, and focuses on a possible augmentation in the perceived happiness of older persons. Ageing does not merely have negative

implications for the individual health and care situation of older persons, states the ageing-psychologist Laura Carstensen. Her research shows that although there are physical inconveniences at a higher age, older people focus more on positive emotions, prioritize better and become in that sense happier (news article; NLB, 2012, p. 10). Carstensen states: “Of course our body and our memory function less well when we get older, but our research shows that there are also positive implications. (...) We have learned to deal better with mixed feelings and with misfortune, and become –in the absence of a better word- happier.” (news article; NLB, 2012, p. 10) Nevertheless, this happiness health subframe is rare and does therefore not change the general focus on the increasing medical needs in the framing of the health situation in the Ageing Society.

Education frame.

The less frequent educational frame (in 4/40 articles or 10 percent), which covers the Ageing Society in the light of the changing educational needs, is made up of two subframes: the increasing demand for care education, and the sensibilization of students to adapt to the needs of an ageing population. The educational frame has been equally applied in news articles and comments.

The first educational subframe is related to the previous health frame and focuses on the increasing demand for more professional care workers. Because of this growing need, the political authorities launched a successful campaign to stimulate students for an education in the care sector, which led in 2012 to more first-year nursing students in Flanders than ever before (news article; Tegenbos, 2012a, p. 1). The students’ profile changed as well, as one out of six students was studying at later age. These older students were mostly unemployed persons following the advice to re-orientate to the care sector, or low-educated persons coming from the care sector who seized the opportunity to get a higher education.

The second educational subframe emphasizes the appeal to other study departments as well to prepare their students for the needs of the ageing population. This is e.g. the case for architecture students: “In our Ageing Society, living at home longer and independently is the future. Architects have to think of houses that grow with the wishes and requirements over a lifetime.” (news article; KVVH, 2012, p. 50) Also students from e.g. interior design, occupational therapy and physiotherapy will later be confronted with the wish of an increasing number of older persons to stay at home as long as possible, and need to adapt to this request.

In the comments, the educational frame was used in a plea for an education system engaging all available talents for the scarce labour market of the Ageing Society (comment; Brinckman, 2012, p. 2). Such system needs, among others, various paths to the care sector to increase the number of future professional care workers, as senior journalist Guy Tegenbos wrote:

“Provide different learning tracks to a job or sector. Learning tracks for younger and older people, but for example also for more practically or theoretically oriented persons.” (comment; Tegenbos, 2012b, p. 2)

Awareness frame.

A relatively rare frame in *De Standaard*'s coverage of the Ageing Society (in 3/40 articles or 7 percent) is the ‘awareness of the Ageing Society’, which has been applied only in news articles and not in opinionating articles. This frame covers the Ageing Society focusing on the slow acknowledgement of the Ageing Society’s implications by the broader Belgian society (e.g. citizens, politicians and businesses). European commissioner Viviane Reding stated that the decreasing personnel resources have finally led companies to realize that they must take also female employees into consideration for high positions, to remain competitive (news article; Newsroom²⁶, 2013, p. 62). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned its member states – among which Belgium- for an underestimation of the financial risk of the Ageing Society and the longer life expectancy, and foresaw a heavy burden on the public budget: “The financial risk implied by the longer life expectancy, is probably being underestimated and will weigh heavily on the public finances of the developed countries.” (news article; AFP, 2012, p. 27) The Belgian economist Geert Noels confirmed the underestimation of the financial risk and added that authorities should set aside resources to be able to address the Ageing Society, also in the economic crisis: “Let us not lull ourselves to sleep (...). For every year that we delay the problem, we will pay back double.” (news article; De Smet, 2013c, p. 7)

Rare views: Gay, housing, literature and invisibility.

Apart from the more frequent frames used to cover the Ageing Society, some rare views on the Ageing Society appeared as well (appearance in less than three articles, therefore not classified as ‘frame’; see 4.2.2). These minor views focused on the Ageing Society from the perspective of the gay situation, housing, literature and the invisibility of older people. The gay view described the absence of older lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) role models for the Ageing Society: “LGBT people with grey hair do not appear in the media. Not even in the gay literature or cinema.” (news article; Deknudt, 2012, p. 4) The housing views focused on the forthcoming changes in the living situation of an older population, and made reference to Universal Design: “A contemporary example is the walk-in shower: that is beautiful, practical, maintenance-friendly

²⁶ When no particular journalist or press agency was mentioned as author of the article in the newspaper, the reference ‘Newsroom’ is used in this thesis.

and comfortable for everyone”. (news article; KVH, 2012, p. 50) The literature view discussed the increasing number of books about mourning, and linked that to the Ageing Society: “Every time period gets the literature it deserves (...) That means an overrepresentation of prose that appeals to an ageing population”. (news article; Cloostermans, 2011, p. 8) Finally, the view of the invisibility of older people described how this group stays often unnoticed in the Ageing Society: “Older people (..) are because of the Ageing Society an ever growing group. (...) And yet, we barely pay attention to them”. (news article; Deknudt, 2012, p. 4)

4.2.4 Normative framing of the Ageing Society.

The framing of the Ageing Society as a challenge or a cause for problems and costs occurred in approximately half of the articles covering the Ageing Society (in 21/40 articles or 52 percent). This frame appeared in news articles as well as in opinionating articles. The challenging perspective is well summarized by following extract: “Admit it, when we talk about the Ageing Society, we think indeed of unaffordable pensions, health problems and loneliness.” (news article; NLB, 2012, p. 10)

With regard to the health situation, the challenge frame concentrated on the future lack of professional care workers (comment; Tegenbos, 2012b, p. 2) and the growing number of older persons -which lead to an increasing number of patients suffering from chronic illnesses, including dementia (news article; Smeets, 2012, p. 23). “Because of the ageing of the population, the dementia challenge increases” (news article; Gregoor, 2012, p. 57). Another focus was the growing group of patients suffering from chronic pains: “Especially because of the ageing of the population, the phenomenon is growing spectacularly.” (news article; Smeets, 2012, p. 23)

Regarding the political-economic implications of the Ageing Society, the challenge frame focused on the difficult sustainability of the welfare system; e.g. “The Ageing Society is an enormous challenge for the affordability of the social security” (news article; Newsroom, 2012, p. 38); or “The unaffordability of the pensions concerns many: more and more people are convinced that they will have to take care of their own pension in ten years’ time.” (news article; Newsroom, 2011a, p. 11)

Along the same vein, the challenge frame emphasized that Belgian politicians did not yet install sufficient measures to address the implications of the Ageing Society. This was for instance illustrated in a comment: “And most of all, we show ourselves incapable of installing a far-sighted policy, for instance to cope with the Ageing Society.” (comment; Tegenbos, 2011, p. 2) The costs related to the population ageing are expected to put a heavy burden on the public finances. “In order to create financial space (...) next to the costs that go along with the Ageing Society, authorities (...) will have to dare cutting in their consumption expenses.” (comment; Sturtewagen,

2012, p. 2) Severe cuts in the public expenses were therefore presented as a necessity to cope with the situation (comment; Sturtewagen, 2013a, p. 2).

The framing of the Ageing Society as opportunity occurred rather rarely (in 5/40 articles or 12 percent). Similar to its counterpart, the challenge frame, this opportunity frame appeared both in news articles and opinionating articles. Within the thematic health frame, the opportunity frame focused on new chances for the labour market, as more older people stay professionally active and many new jobs emerge in the expanding care-sector (comment; Tegenbos, 2012b, p. 2).

“Meanwhile, I understand that an older population holds an immense potential. Take for instance the labour market.” (news article; NLB, 2012, p. 10) Also the ‘retirement wave’ at the public authorities is considered a chance to remodel the public sector to more efficient organizations.

“Many bureaucrats are retiring. Why don’t we aim for efficient and performing public authorities?”, asked the entrepreneur Rudi De Kerpel in an opinion article (De Kerpel, 2012, p. 27). The opportunity frame emphasized as well that the Ageing Society provides investors with great possibilities. The pharmaceutical industry, elderly homes, medical technology and all that accommodated to the needs of an ageing population were presented as profitable investments:

“All that older people need to get even older, preferably the most comfortable circumstances, is worth investing in.” (news article; Coppens, 2012, p. 38) Finally, the opportunity frame suggested that the increasing age helped people to focus on their priorities, which enhanced their wellbeing and even happiness (news article; NLB, 2012, p. 10).

Findings Part II: Political-economic Coverage of the Ageing Society

After Part I focused on the findings regarding the labeling and the various frames in the coverage of the Ageing Society, Part II zooms in on the political and economic framing of the Ageing Society. Part II hence presents the findings regarding the political-economic subframes in *De Standaard*, the political-economic policies for the Ageing Society and the persons or instances which are deemed responsible for their implementation.

4.3 Framing of the political and economic aspects of the Ageing Society

The political frame and the economic frame for the Ageing Society are in *De Standaard* content-wise closely connected: economic issues have a strong impact on political decisions, and vice versa. Lundgren and Ljuslinder, who encountered a similar close connection between these frames in their Ageing Society-newspaper study, have therefore argued that the political and economic frames rather form one overarching ‘political-economic frame’ (2011, p. 179). As this reflects the coverage situation in *De Standaard*, Lundgren and Ljuslinder’s approach with the political- and

economic frames presented as one joint ‘political-economic frame’ is followed in the remainder of this thesis.

Within the political-economic framing of in the Ageing Society following five subframes, with respective policy suggestions, have been identified: first, the strengthening of the Belgian Budget for the cost of the Ageing Society (in 4.3.1); second, the challenging preparation for the Ageing Society (4.3.2); third, the impact of the Ageing Society on the pension system (4.3.3); fourth, the impact of the Ageing Society on the labour market (4.3.4) and fifth, the possible investments in Ageing Society-businesses (4.3.5). Similar as in part I, the frequencies of these frames are mentioned both in absolute numbers and percentages. As the total number of articles applying the political-economic frame was 27 (as opposed to 40 articles covering all frames), the frequencies are hence mentioned for this specific article selection, e.g. ‘20 of 27 articles applying the political-economic frame’.

The political-economic framing of the Ageing Society has been schematically presented in a figure, which is, for orientation purposes, found at the beginning of every subframe’s section, with the described subframe highlighted by a dark grey rectangle.

4.3.1 Belgian Budget for the Ageing Society.

Within *De Standaard*’s political-economic framing of the Ageing Society, the first subframe focused on the measures to make the Belgian Budget fit for the forthcoming financial challenges, among which those related to the Ageing Society. This Budget-subframe was, in terms of occurrence frequencies, the most dominant political-economic subframe: it occurred in 11 of the 27 articles applying the political-economic frame of the Ageing Society (or 40 percent). The suggested Budget-improving measures were the continuation of austerity measures, partial loosening of the austerity measures, cooperation between the Belgian federal states and the installation of a debt-brake.

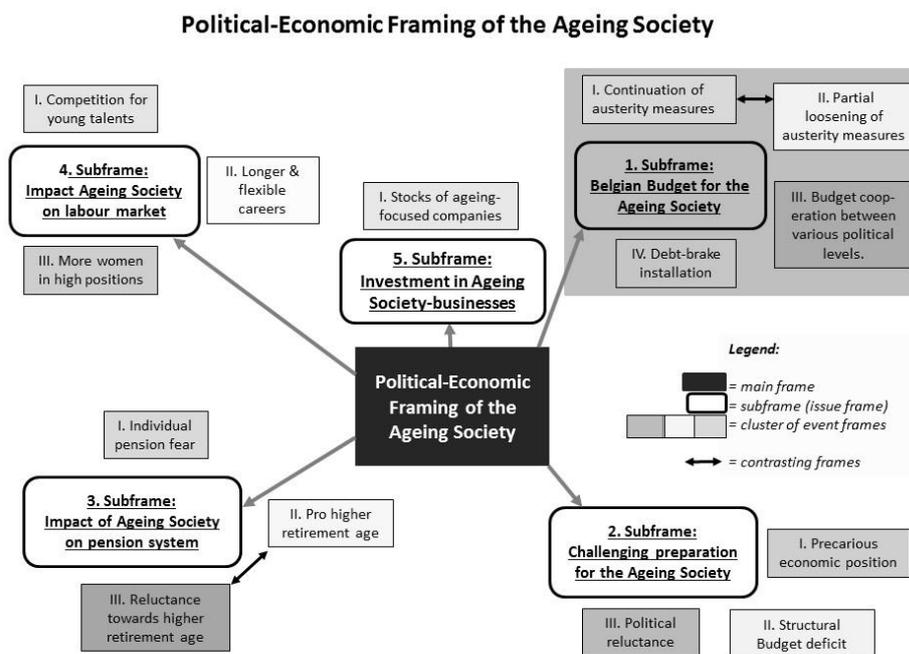


Figure 13 Focus on the Belgian Budget for the Ageing Society.

The first cluster of event frames (see figure) pleads for the continuation of the austerity measures to lower the Belgian deficit and to be able to bear the costs of various topical challenges, among which also the costs of the Ageing Society. “Despite the difficult economic circumstances we have to continue austerity, or we will lose our credibility on the financial markets”, was the guideline of many economists and European policy makers (news article; De Smet, 2013b, p. 6). Also the Belgian High Council of Finances made recommendations along these lines, as the Council argued that a strict saving policy was indispensable, for example for the handling of the Ageing Society: “The High Council of Finances (...) warns that a strict austerity trajectory is absolutely necessary to be able to continue to pay the costs of the Ageing Society.” (news article; Winckelmans, 2012, p. 8). Moreover, the influential Belgian economist Geert Noels warned against the loosening of the austerity program by stating that delaying the structural Budget problems would only make them worse (news article; De Smet, 2013c, p. 6). In a comment, the chief editor of *De Standaard* wrote that ever since the financial crisis, the Budget deficit and the slacking economy had ruined the plans to pay the upcoming costs of the Ageing Society, and this would not improve on the short-term. “This means that we will stand in front of the financial wall years earlier than expected. It is irresponsible to hold out to the population that there will be budgetary breathing space soon.” (comment; Sturtewagen, 2013a, p. 2).

The second cluster of event frames takes an opposite stand while suggesting to partially loosen the austerity measures and to first address various long-term challenges, among which also the Ageing Society. The priority is hence to invest and structurally improve the public finances.

This event frame originated in response to the earlier event frame of the continuation of austerity measures. The Belgian vice-prime minister Laurette Onkelinx was one of the first to suggest leaving the strict austerity trajectory and to invest more in employment measures: “Onkelinx does not want such a hard effort in times of crisis. She wants to allow a greater deficit on the Budget to make more space for the employment measures.” (news article; Winckelmans, 2012, p. 8). Onkelinx’ argumentation -that too much saving measures in a crisis period would not improve the situation- was supported by Belgian economists from various financial institutions. They stated that it was more important to take measures making the Belgian Budget “structurally healthy” (news article; De Smet, 2013a, p. 1), e.g. by addressing the Ageing Society and reforming the labour market. However, this cluster of event frames does not suggest to end the austerity measures as such, but rather to slightly loosen them to be able to invest more at the same time; which should provide some financial room to address the costs of the Ageing Society and other challenges, as e.g. the high unemployment rates and the reorganization of the health- and social systems.

The third cluster of event frames concentrates on the required Budget-cooperation among the various political levels in Belgium. To grasp the context of this frame, it should be noted that as a federal state, Belgium is composed of three Communities (Flemish community, French-speaking community and the German-speaking community) and three Regions (Flemish region, Walloon region and Brussels region). Baeselen has noted that “Belgian federalism has a particular feature that is unique in the world: three Communities and three Regions that partially overlap on the same territory” (Baeselen, 2011, 4th paragraph). Over the last decennium, Belgium has seen several harsh debates between the various Communities and Regions and even discussions about a future separation of Belgium into two different (respectively French- or Flemish speaking) states. Against this backdrop, the –then- future Prime Minister Elio Di Rupo summoned the governments of the various political (Region and Community) levels not to get into financial conflicts of interest about the challenges at hand, such as for instance the Ageing Society: “Our situation is fragile: there is the high Budget deficit, the Ageing Society and there are the European demands. We have to avoid landing in years of conflicts of interests between the various governments.” (news article; Van Impe, 2011, p. 4). However, *De Standaard*’s chief editor found in a comment that the problem of the lacking Budget, the great costs of the Ageing Society and various other nation-wide challenges had not been cracked yet: “There is no way around it: we have to run the harsh discussion about how the financial cuts must be divided. Between the Federation and the federal states, and among the federal states as well.” (comment; Sturtewagen, 2013a, p. 2). In his comment, the chief editor pleaded for immediate negotiations about the division of the necessary

–but unpopular- austerity measures, e.g. to be able to prepare financially for the costs of the Ageing Society.

The fourth and last event frame focused on the installation of a debt-brake and appeared parallel to the discussion about the Belgian Budget deficit and the required resources to address the costs of the Ageing Society. Although the discussion about the Ageing Society-costs was found in various frames which were related to each other (see above), the frame of the debt-brake remained rather isolated and was not associated with other circulating frames. With regard to the installation of the debt-brake, the Belgian political center-party CD&V proposed to revise the Belgian Constitution to restrict the growing debt and oblige future Budgets to have a surplus of at least 0.5 percent. The debt brake could only be released in well-described emergency cases, one of them being the Ageing Society: “Only in case of economic crisis, in emergencies or to take care of the Ageing Society, the debt brake can be slightly released.” (news article; Winckelmans, 2011, p. 7).

Various policy suggestions appeared to strengthen the Belgian Budget in order to carry, among other challenges, the financial implications of the Ageing Society. Two of these policy suggestions seem partially contradictory. On the one hand, it is proposed to set resources aside for the upcoming costs of the Ageing Society (Winckelmans, 2012; De Smet, 2013a; De Smet, 2013c), which fits in the general economic austerity discourse. On the other hand, it is also proposed to instead somewhat loosen those austerity measures and first make the Belgian public finances “structurally healthy”, for instance by primary addressing the Ageing Society (Winckelmans, 2012; De Smet, 2013a). Both policy suggestions, although different, have the same goal of strengthening the Belgian Budget for the upcoming costs, one urgent expense being the Ageing Society. Furthermore, it is suggested that the various political levels in Belgium should cooperate constructively to face common challenges like e.g. the Ageing Society. In particular, the various Regions and Communities are recommended to divide the financial efforts and to avoid conflicts of interest (Sturtewagen, 2013a; Van Impe, 2011). Another suggested policy, albeit rather isolated, is to install a debt brake which would only be loosened in emergencies as e.g. the Ageing Society (Winckelmans, 2011). These Budget-policies are suggested by economists, Belgian politicians, the European Union and the Belgian High Council of Finances. The newspaper’s chief editor has made policy suggestions in his comments as well. They all attribute responsibility for the implementation of these policy suggestions to the Belgian authorities; whereby the federal government and the governments of the various Regions and Communities are explicitly mentioned.

4.3.2 Challenging preparation for the Ageing Society.

The second subframe within the political-economical framing of the Ageing Society focused on the challenging preparation for the Ageing Society. In particular, it concentrated on the various reasons for the delay in the preparation: the precarious economic position and financial crisis, deficits in the Belgian Budget and the political reluctance towards long-term decisions. In terms of frequencies, this preparation-subframe occurred moderately often, in 6/27 political-economic articles (or 22 percent).

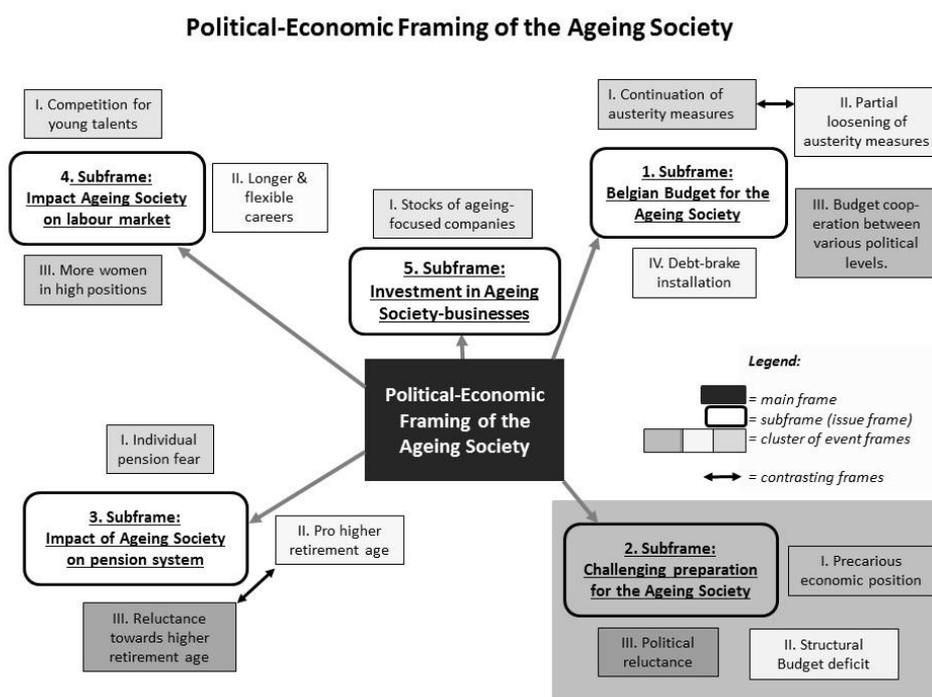


Figure 14 Focus on the challenging preparation for the Ageing Society.

The first cluster of event frames concentrated on Belgium's less than prosperous economic position of the country, which is perceived to hinder the preparation for the Ageing Society. "The financial crisis of the last five years has driven us out of course in the fight to be able to cope with the costs of the Ageing Society" (comment; Sturtewagen, 2013a, p. 2). The high public debt, the long period of financial crisis and a slacking economy are said to slow down the financial preparations for the challenges of the population ageing (comment; Tegenbos, 2011, p. 2; comment; Sturtewagen, 2013a, p. 2).

The second event frame, presented by the influential Belgian economist Geert Noels, focused on the notion that the deficit in the Belgian Budget, which also prevents an adequate preparation for the Ageing Society, is not a conjunctural but instead a structural problem. "It is about a structural deficit." (news article; De Smet, 2013c, p. 7). As Noels also states that the costs

of the Ageing Society will be even higher as assumed before, he concludes that the Belgian Budget deficit must be addressed immediately.

The third cluster of event frames concentrated on the reservations of politicians towards resolutions that prove their value particularly on the longer term, as e.g. those decisions necessary to address the Ageing Society. In various comments, journalists from *De Standaard* refer to the perceived political incapability to take a far-sighted stand: “Most of all, we show ourselves incapable of installing a far-sighted policy, for instance to cope with the Ageing Society.” (comment; Tegenbos, 2011, p. 2). Also the supposed political unwillingness to take decisions whose beneficial effects may only be experienced after the own political legislature is thematized. “It is against their nature: to move things when, in the best case, only their successors will be able to reap the fruits of it.” (comment; Sturtewagen, 2012, p. 2). In a reaction, the Flemish minister of Wellbeing Jo Vandeurzen stated nevertheless that politicians are acting on the longer term, e.g. to prepare for the Ageing Society. Vandeurzen states that “politicians are perfectly capable to look further than the borders of one legislature. After all, there is an Ageing Society-Commission? (...) On all levels, the Ageing Society is being prepared.” (news article; FLE, 2012, p. 5).

With regard to the policy suggestions for the challenging preparation of the Ageing Society, it could be argued that this preparation is perceived as lagging behind. In the coverage of *De Standaard*, the Belgian politicians are attributed responsibility for these slacking preparations. Various sources, e.g. the policy think tank Itinera, journalists and economists, summon the politicians to take immediate actions. Several comments in *De Standaard* point out that many politicians appear hesitant to take unpopular decisions when the electoral benefits may only be reaped by their successors. Therefore, the *De Standaard*'s chief editor directs politicians in a comment to take sharp decisions, should these be advantageous for the Belgian society on the long term (comment; Sturtewagen, 2012, p. 2). The think tank Itinera criticizes the indecisive politics as well, and insinuates that the politicians are incapable of thinking over the boundaries of their own legislature (news article; FLE, 2012, p. 5). Also the Belgian economist and professor Geert Peersman has expressed himself along these lines (opinion article; Peersman, 2013, p. 38).

4.3.3 Impact of the Ageing Society on the pension system.

The third political-economic subframe focused on the sustainability of the pension system in the Ageing Society. Within this pension-subframe, three smaller event frames were distinguished: first, the citizens' individual fear for their own pension, second, the political conviction that the retirement age needs to be raised and third, the reluctance against such higher retirement age. The pension-subframe appeared in 8/27 political-economic articles (or 29 percent).

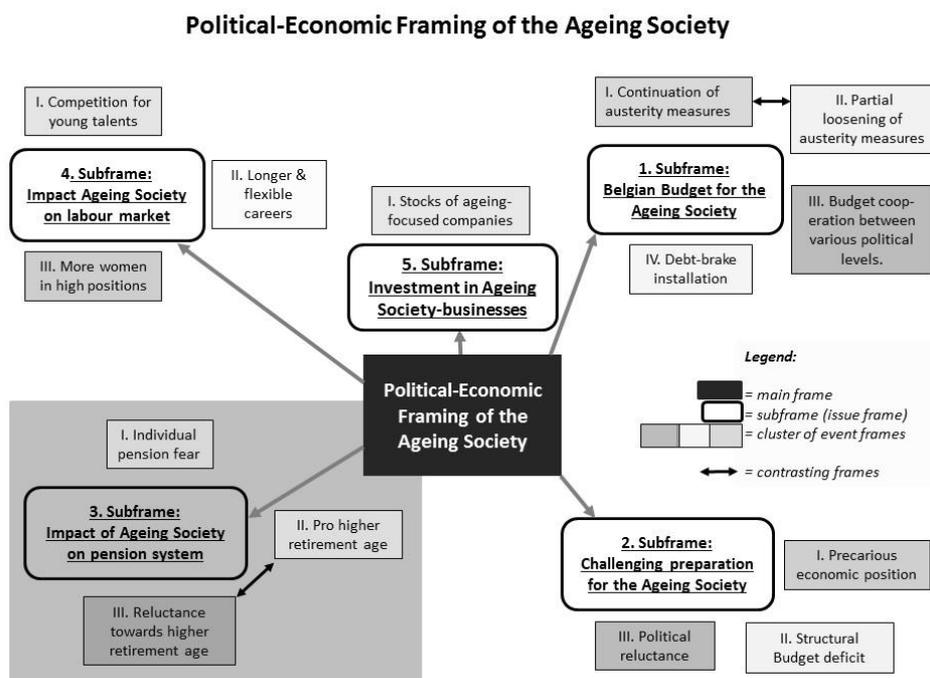


Figure 15 Focus on the Ageing Society's impact on the pension system.

This first cluster of pension-event frames is centered around the individual citizen's fear for his future pension. "More and more (Flemish, ktn) people are convinced that they will have to arrange for their own pension in ten years' time (...). And the Ageing Society, which particularly takes place in Flanders and less in Wallonia and Brussels, only feeds that fear." (news article; Newsroom, 2011a, p. 11) More than six out of ten Flemish-speaking Belgians fear for the affordability of the pensions and the population ageing intensifies their fear, suggested a Flemish government-ordered study. Although traditionally many Belgians have opted for an early retirement before the official retirement age, this has changed over the last years. Since 2011, the number of early retirements has been declining. In the coverage of *De Standaard*, two main reasons are mentioned. On the one hand has the Generation Pact, a set of government measures from 2005 to encourage people to work until later age, tightened the access to early retirement: "The Generation Pact, which sharpened the criteria for early retirement, is finally bearing fruit." (news article; Lemmens, 2011, p. 1). On the other hand has the attitude among employees shifted as well, from considering an early retirement the 'usual' situation, towards an acceptance of working at later age. "In former times, people found the early retirement normal. Now we realize that we will have to work longer." (news article; Lemmens, 2011, p. 1). These two factors may have stimulated the individual citizen to reflect upon the own retirement age and later pension situation.

The following cluster of event frames emphasizes the importance of working longer for the sustainability of the pension system. Currently the European Union (EU) recommends Belgium and the other EU-member states to reform their pension system, e.g. by connecting the retirement age to the life expectancy (news article; Newsroom, 2012a, p. 38). This European recommendation is in line with the perspective of the International Monetary Fund, which also proposes to work longer: “The IMF wants the duration of the active life to be prolonged, so that it comes more into proportion again with the total duration of life.” (*De Standaard*, news article; AFP, 2012, p. 27). Such recommendations are particularly important for Belgium, as it is one of the first European countries where the implications of the Ageing Society are becoming tangible, e.g. by the rapidly declining ratio of working persons and retirees, which strongly affects the pension system. “Don’t forget that the generation which enters the labour market now, will not even be in the middle of its professional career when the number of retirees that it will have to maintain will have grown with a third.” (news article; Coppens, 2012, p. 38). Because of the urgency of the situation and to avoid that its pension-recommendations may be simply ignored, the European Union wants to oblige its member states in the future to reform their pension system: “What we must not have, are recommendations with which everybody afterwards does whatever he wants. (European President, ktn) Van Rompuy finds it better to oblige such reformations.” (news article; Newsroom, 2012, p. 38). A comment nevertheless remarks that in Belgium, many citizens and politicians assume it impossible to reach a consensus about a pension reform among the present Belgian political levels. Their expectation is that a pension reform will only be possible after a further state reform with more authority for the various Federal States: “When post-politician Frank Vandenbroucke said (...) that in 2014 we don’t need a state reform but a pension reform, the question whether the second would be even possible without the first immediately emerged.” (opinion article; Sturtewagen, 2013b, p. 44). Professor Vandenbroucke himself however clearly stated that the pension reform should have the first priority over a possible state reform.

Various reservations towards a higher retirement age are highlighted in the last cluster of event frames. One reservation refers to a political reluctance: although the European Union has been increasing the pressure on Belgium to raise its retirement age (currently at 65 years), the political parties in the Belgian government have not taken steps yet to implement this European recommendation; “Not a single Belgian government party is asking to increase the legal retirement age.” (news article; Newsroom, 2012, p. 38). The other reservation is more psychological. Ageing-psychologist Laura Carstensen suggested that a free choice for the own retirement age could be more effective to reach a longer career than an obliged (higher) retirement age: “Instead of the obliged retirement ages, I believe in a free choice. Make sure that employees

are able to continue working if they want to, and you will be surprised how many people make that choice.” (news article; NLB, 2012, p. 10).

In the light of the policy suggestions for the pension system, it is suggested in *De Standaard's* coverage of the Ageing Society that the pension system needs a thorough reform with a raise of the retirement age, to relieve the financial pressure (e.g. Sturtewagen, 2013b, p. 44; AFP, 2012, p. 27). The European Union, the International Monetary Fund and a former Belgian politician all recommended a higher retirement age. The European Union even announced that these recommendations will become obligations in the future. A contrasting policy recommendation is not to raise the obligatory retirement age, but to provide employees with the opportunity to continue working after the official retirement age, should they wish to do so. A psychology-professor suggests this would lead to more flexible and longer professional careers, which she also considered beneficial for the pension system (NLB, 2012, p. 10). Regarding the responsibility for implementing these policy suggestions, the main accountable for the reformation of the Belgian pension system is the Belgian government, due to its authority to raise the retirement age. Also the European Union holds responsibility, because of its recommendations –and future obligations- for its member states regarding the pension reforms. Additionally, in the scenario of an individually chosen retirement age, especially the employees are attributed responsibility, for their choice to stay in or leave the professional labour market after the classic retirement age.

4.3.4 Impact of Ageing Society on the labour market.

The fourth political-economic subframe concentrated on the Ageing Society's implications for the labour market. This frame was divided into three clusters: the competition for young talents, flexible and longer careers and the rise of women to higher professional positions. This labour market-subframe appeared in 7/27 political-economic articles (or 26 percent).

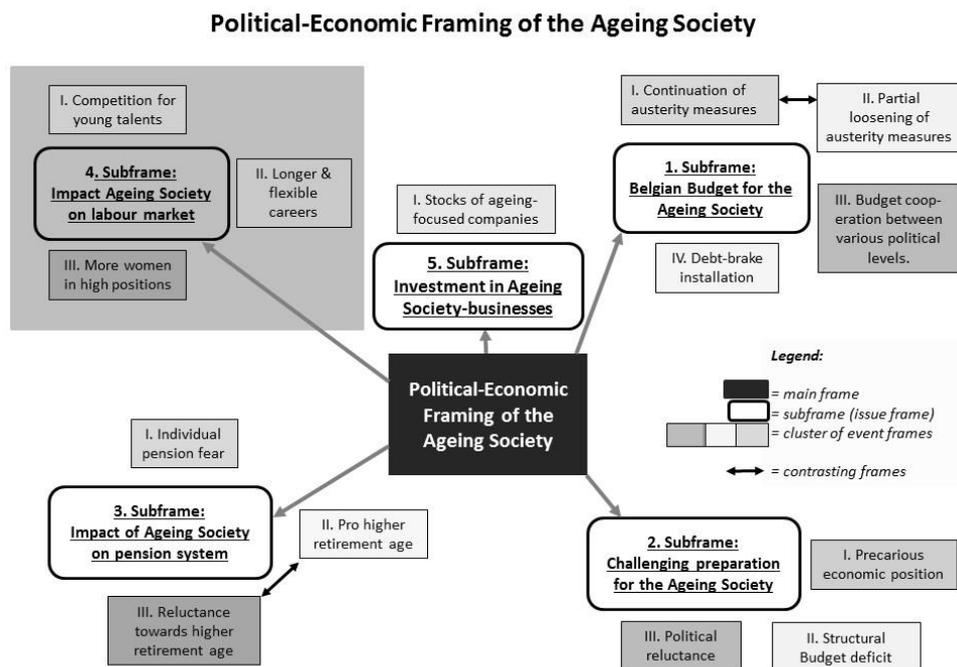


Figure 16 Focus on the Ageing Society's impact on the labour market.

The focus in the first cluster of event frames is on the projected scarcity of young workers in the decennia to come. In an ageing population, large generations of older employees retire and leave the labour market, whereas the number of younger persons entering the labour market is decreasing. Although this evolution is currently still concealed by the economic crisis, a comment-article foresees a fierce future competition for the available young employees: “The war for talent is no fairytale, but is already fully raging.” (comment; Tegenbos, 2012b, p. 2). As a consequence, individual companies and employment sectors must be attractive to be able to recruit the younger employees: “If the labour market evolves like this, (...) they will be fought over. If they have somehow studied.” (idem). The care sector is mentioned as a successful example of a sector that has been working on its attractiveness, with higher salaries and image campaigns.

The second labour market-cluster concentrates on the longer professional careers in the Ageing Society, and hence partly overlaps with the (previous) frame of the pension system. A first event frame pleads in the light of the increasing life expectancy for a corresponding longer professional career (see also 4.3.3). Therefore, employers should also recruit people at later age (comment; Tegenbos, 2012b, p. 2). A second event frame focuses on the more frequent sick leave of older workers. This may be connected with the increasing number of chronic pain patients: one out of five of these pain patients can not work anymore, and the ones who can, have to take sick leave two times as often. “An estimated 2.9 million Belgians have chronic pains. (...)”

Especially due to the proceeding Ageing Society, this phenomenon is growing spectacularly.” (news article; Smeets, 2012, p. 23) A third event frame specifies that many employees may re-orientate during those longer professional careers. Persons with a low education and hence fewer working opportunities may retrain if there are possibilities in another professional sector: “The Ageing Society brings along enormous challenges. Why don’t we see that as an opportunity to offer lowly educated persons an interesting and challenging job?” (opinion article; De Kerpel, 2012, p. 27). Highly educated persons may want to develop their career by moving to another field. Given the longer period that one spends working, it is argued that such professional flexibility should be welcomed (comment; Tegenbos, 2012b, p. 2).

The third labour market-cluster focuses on the notion that the foreseen scarcity of younger workers forces companies to consider all available candidates for vacancies. Concretely, also women have to be taken into account for high positions. To ensure this is done, the European Commission has obliged European companies to increase the proportion of female members in their boards of directors to 40 percent within the next eight years: “Pressure via regulation is efficient. The companies finally realize that who wants to remain competitive in an ageing society, can not afford to ignore female talents.” (news article; Newsroom, 2013, p. 62).

In the context of the policy suggestions for the impact of the Ageing Society on the labour market, workers should be encouraged to continue working at later age, states *De Standaard’s* chief editor in a comment article (Sturtewagen, 2013c, p. 2). Employers are recommended to allow for professional redirections and to recruit employees at later age as well. Moreover, companies and professional sectors should enhance their attractiveness to be able to hire the rarer younger workers, is argued in another comment article (Tegenbos 2012b, p. 2). A Belgian entrepreneur proposed to use the changing professional environment in the Ageing Society to create appealing jobs for people with a lower education as well (De Kerpel, 2012, p. 27). Finally, it is noted that companies will have to welcome also women at high positions and the European Union is hence obliging companies, in Belgium and the other European member states, to increase the proportion of women in their board of directors (Newsroom, 2013, p. 62). The recommendations for the Ageing Society labour market in *De Standaard* stem from the European Union, a psychologist and an entrepreneur, and senior journalists from *De Standaard* (the latter in comment articles). Responsibility for the implementation is attributed to the Belgian government²⁷, which should encourage people to work longer, and to the employers and professional sectors, which should enhance their attractiveness.

²⁷ This broad reference to the Belgian government, and which specific persons or instances could be included, is discussed in Chapter 5.

4.3.5 Investment in Ageing Society-businesses.

The fifth and last political-economic subframe focused on the investment opportunities related to the Ageing Society. This frame was with its appearance in 2/27 political-economic articles (or 7 percent) a marginal frame.

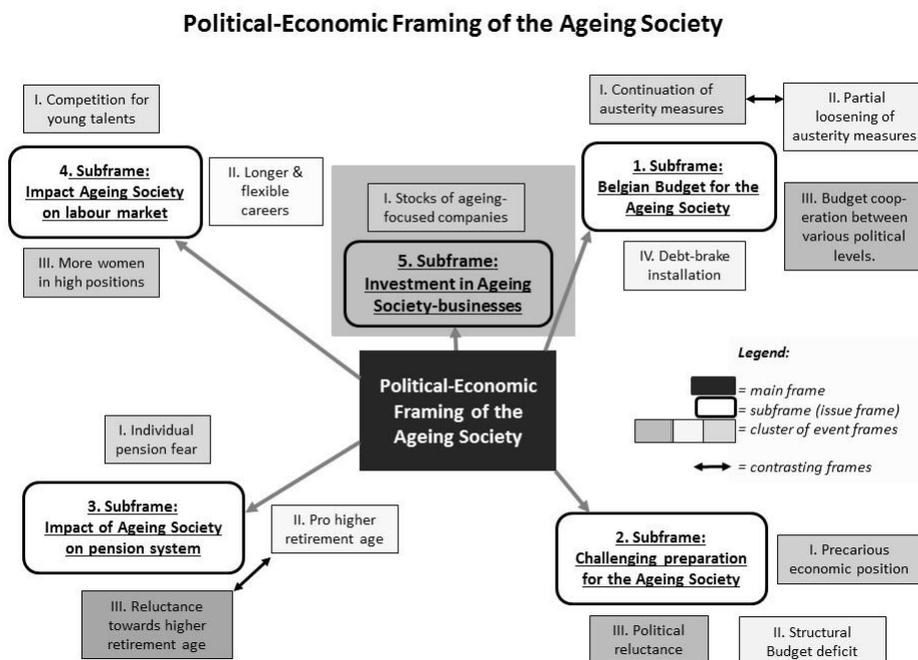


Figure 17 Focus on the investment in Ageing Society-businesses.

The Ageing Society brings along specific opportunities for stock investors. Elderly homes, the pharmaceutical industry, medical technology and everything that older persons need to grow even older in the best possible comfort, is worth investing in, asset managers argue: “Investing in the Ageing Society is investing in the future” (news article; Coppens, 2012, p. 38). This was confirmed by the smallcap-fund of the British fund manager Threadneedle, which had been reaching large returns for years by investing in Ageing Society-related businesses (new article; Reyns, 2012, p. 38).

With regard to the policy suggestions concerning the investment in Ageing Society-businesses, fund managers recommend to profit from the demographic evolution and to invest in businesses related to the needs of the Ageing Society, e.g. pharmaceuticals or elderly homes. Their recommendation is directed towards private stock investors.

4.4 Summary

The newspaper *De Standaard* has mostly used the neutral, well-known label ‘*vergrijzing*’ to refer to the Ageing Society; however without providing an additional definition or explanation for this demographic phenomenon. The connectedness of the various Ageing Society-implications in different contexts was made tangible by the recurrent use of the label ‘*vergrijzing*’ as signpost.

In the coverage of the Ageing Society, both normative and thematic frames have been identified. With regard to the normative frames, a ‘challenge frame’ as well as an ‘opportunity frame’ appeared; the first framing the Ageing Society as a cause for costs and problems, the second framing the Ageing Society as a chance as well. The ‘challenge-frame’ was clearly more prominent than the opportunity frame. Both normative frames appeared across the various Ageing Society-topics. Besides the normative frames, various thematic frames have been identified; the most frequent thematic frames were the political-, economic- and health frames. To a much lesser extent, the educational frame and the awareness frame were used as well to cover the Ageing Society. The health frame focused on the growing need for professional care workers, new care systems, the increasing number of chronic patients and the potential rise in happiness at higher age. The emphasis in the Ageing Society-education frame was on the growing demand for care education and the acknowledgement that students in various studies should be trained to adapt to the requirements of an ageing population. The awareness frame highlighted the slowly increasing awareness in the Belgian society of the implications which the Ageing Society will bring along.

The political and economic frames have been applied most frequently in the coverage of the Ageing Society. Because of their strong mutual connection, these frames have been analyzed together as a joint political-economic frame. This joint frame consisted of various subframes: the strengthening of the Belgian Budget for the costs of the Ageing Society, the challenging preparation for the implications of the Ageing Society, the impact of the Ageing Society on the pension system and the labour market, and the investment opportunities in Ageing Society-related businesses. The political-economic policy suggestions mainly focused on preparing the required budget for the implications of the Ageing Society. The Belgian government was mostly attributed responsibility for implementing those policy suggestions.

5 Discussion

This chapter reflects upon the findings regarding the coverage of the Ageing Society in *De Standaard*. The chapter is organized along the research questions and has hence, for reasons of clarity and completeness, a similar structure as the previous chapter. Besides the Ageing Society-items which were identified in *De Standaard*, this chapter also elaborates upon other Ageing Society-related issues which remained underrepresented in *De Standaard*, even though real-world indicators suggested they concern large groups of people in Belgium. The findings from *De Standaard* are brought into connection with previous research findings and established theoretical concepts. Moreover, it has been assessed to what extent the Ageing Society-agenda of *De Standaard* and international Ageing Society-policy documents of the United Nations and the European Union show congruencies. Finally, recommendations for a multidimensional Ageing Society-media coverage have been formulated based on the theoretical insights and the present research findings. The chapter ends with an answer to the research questions and a conclusion.

5.1 Discussing the labeling of the Ageing Society

5.1.1 Evaluation of the hypotheses for the labeling.

De Standaard dominantly referred to the Ageing Society via the label ‘*vergrijzing*’²⁸ (confirmation of hypothesis a). By consistently using this same label in various Ageing Society-related contexts, the greater coherence among them was made explicit (confirmation of hypothesis b). In some cases *De Standaard* labeled the Ageing Society with a description (confirmation of hypothesis c). When descriptions were used as label, they situated the Ageing Society in a demographic, labour or care context.

Evaluation of Hypotheses for Research Question 1: How does <i>De Standaard</i> label the Ageing Society?	
Status	Hypothesis
Confirmed	a. The Ageing Society is in <i>De Standaard</i> dominantly labeled by term ‘ <i>vergrijzing</i> ’.
Confirmed	b. <i>De Standaard</i> ’s dominant use of the label ‘ <i>vergrijzing</i> ’ in different Ageing Society-related contexts makes the coherence between these different contexts explicit.
Confirmed	c. The Ageing Society is in <i>De Standaard</i> seldom labeled via a demographic description (e.g. ‘now that there are ever more elderly people’), instead of via the label <i>vergrijzing</i> .

Table 8 Evaluation of the hypotheses for research question 1.

²⁸ The Flemish ‘*vergrijzing*’ is a neutral word, contrarily to the acoustically similar, but negative German word ‘*Vergreisung*’.

5.1.2 Ageing Society as common sense and discursive argument.

In most articles, the label ‘*vergrijzing*’ was used as reference to the Ageing Society. This widespread use of the same recurrent label connected the various implications of the population ageing under the signpost of the Ageing Society²⁹. This confirms Cohen’s findings about the ‘connecting function’ of the press: “the press functions (...) like the bloodstream in the human body (...) by linking up all the widely-scattered parts, putting them in touch with each other” (Cohen, 1965, p. 196; as cited in in Rogers & Dearing, 1988, p. 577). Nevertheless, to be able to link all the widely-scattered parts, such as the wide-ranged implications of the Ageing Society, one recurrent label is necessary. As *De Standaard* nevertheless used the label ‘Ageing Society’ mostly without any further defining or explanation, it may however be questioned whether the label fully clarified the concept, or whether the Ageing Society would remain to a certain extent unclear, with its causes and implications in various contexts. It should therefore be noted that the widespread use of the unexplained label ‘*vergrijzing*’ may not lead readers to a deeper understanding of how the Ageing Society is defined, what its causes are, or how it is causally connected to the implications it is claimed to have. Lundgren and Ljuslinder (2011) found a similar use of the term Ageing Society without clear definition or explanation in their study of the Ageing Society in three Swedish newspapers. This led them to suggest that the concept of the Ageing Society was used as if it were “naturalised” (2011a, p. 172), thus treated as ‘common sense’ and hence not requiring any explanation. They also noted that “when consequences were mentioned, they were often stated without explanations as if they were incontrovertible and unquestionable” (2011a, p. 172). In *De Standaard* a similar practice takes place. The Ageing Society is connected, however without clear explanation, to a variety of implications; e.g. to diabetes: “In 2030 one out of ten adults worldwide could have diabetes. (...) An important reason for that increase is the Ageing Society.” (*De Standaard*³⁰, news article; AP, 2011, p. 13). The Ageing Society is also brought into connection with cancer, e.g. “As a result of the Ageing Society, more and more older people are confronted with cancer” (*De Standaard*, news article; Beel, 2012, p. 12); or to chronic pain: “Approximately 2.9 million Belgians suffer from chronic pain. (...) This phenomenon grows spectacularly, especially because of the increasing Ageing Society.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Smeets, 2012, p. 23). The concept of the Ageing

²⁹ To comprehend the importance of such recurrent label, it suffices to look at a context that lacks such a label, as e.g. Switzerland. The Swiss media label the Ageing Society heterogeneously; sometimes ‘*demografischer Wandel*’ (demographic change), sometimes ‘*(Über)Alterung der Bevölkerung*’ ([over]ageing of the population), in rare cases ‘*Vergreisung*’ (greying), or still other labels. These varying labels make it harder to realize that all topics addressed under the various labels are implications of the same demographic development.

³⁰ To clearly distinguish between the quotes from academic literature and from the newspaper *De Standaard*, the quotes from *De Standaard* are in this chapter additionally indicated by a reference to the newspaper between brackets.

Society is thus ascribed explanatory value, even though it is not always explained. By not making explicit how the said implications are causally linked to the Ageing Society, these implications may appear as indisputable.

An additional effect of the use of the label ‘Ageing Society’ without additional explanation is that it allows the concept to function as a floating signifier, indicating that it “means different things to different people” (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2012, p. 47) and people can give it a particular meaning to fit their perspectives. The use of the Ageing Society as floating signifier enables a connection between those different perspectives; however, in one perspective the ‘Ageing Society’ would refer to meaning X, in another perspective to meaning Y. Bringing this into connection with the agenda-setting theory, it could be stated that floating signifiers function as a linking construction between various agendas. Agendas of stakeholders with different objectives may contain the same term, i.e. ‘Ageing Society’, but these stakeholders fill the term with a different meaning that fits their interpretation and final (political) objective. Supporters of a particular interpretation may also compete for the own interpretation and agenda to reach dominance over the other agendas. This principle is illustrated in *De Standaard* in e.g. the opposing perspectives regarding the continuation or partial loosening of the economic austerity measures. Supporters of the continuation of austerity measures appealed to the Ageing Society as one of the underlying reasons: “Moreover, a strict austerity trajectory is absolutely necessary to remain able to pay the costs of the Ageing Society” (*De Standaard*, news article; Winckelmans, 2012, p. 8); or “The costs of the Ageing Society threaten to derail even more strongly than was assumed earlier. Not economizing now is ostrich policy.” (*De Standaard*, news article; De Smet, 2013c, p. 6) Opponents of the strict austerity measures however also call on the Ageing Society, now as reason to partially loosen them: “All economists emphasize that it is much more important to implement measures which will make the public finance structurally healthy, such as the addressing of the Ageing Society and the reformation of the labour market.” (*De Standaard*, news article; De Smet, 2013a, p. 1) It can therefore be argued that representatives of opposing perspectives attempt to enforce their arguments by referring to the concept of the Ageing Society. This corresponds also with Gee’s (2002) earlier finding that the demographic situation has been used to “reconstruct and redefine social problems in ways that fit a political agenda.” (Gee, 2002, p. 750)

In other topics as well ‘the Ageing Society’ was used as decisive argument, e.g. in the argumentation in favor of the creation of more capacity in elderly homes: “To keep up with the Ageing Society, an average of 2.700 new beds in elderly homes per year will be necessary until 2025.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Vanhecke, 2011, p. 8) Nonetheless, it is also mentioned that this increase of capacity could be avoided by making more home care available. This suggests that

‘the Ageing Society-argument’ had been used as overruling platitude for more capacity in elderly homes, even though alternative policy proposals were available as well. This illustrates how in *De Standaard* ‘the Ageing Society’ is used as a discursive argument, which supporters from various (and contrasting) perspectives try to instrumentalize to gain support for their own arguments.

5.2 Discussing the general framing of the Ageing Society

5.2.1 Evaluation of the hypotheses for the general framing.

In its coverage of the Ageing Society, *De Standaard* applied both normative and thematic frames. Two normative frames have been identified: first, ‘the Ageing Society as a challenge’, and second, ‘the Ageing Society as an opportunity’. These normative frames appeared across the various thematic frames; whereby the challenge-frame was dominating the opportunity-frame. Overall, the normative challenge-frame was the most frequent frame; whereas among the thematic frames the political and economic frames were applied the most (partial confirmation of hypothesis a). Among the thematic frames, the health frame was frequently used as well to cover the Ageing Society, if to a slightly lesser extent as the political and economic frames (confirmation of hypothesis b). The joint political-economic frame focused on supporting the Budget for the Ageing Society, the delayed preparation for the Ageing Society-implications, the consequences for the pension and labour systems and the business opportunities. Emphasized in the health frame were the pressing need for more care workers and new care systems, and the increasing number of chronic patients. To a much lesser extent, an educational frame and an awareness frame were applied as well in the coverage of the Ageing Society: the education frame concentrated on the demand for more care students, whereas the awareness frame focused on the ignorance about the implications of the Ageing Society.

Evaluation of Hypotheses for Research Question 2: Which frames does <i>De Standaard</i> apply in the general coverage of the Ageing Society?	
Status	Hypothesis
Partially confirmed	a. Among the various frames in <i>De Standaard</i> 's coverage of the Ageing Society, the political frame and economic frame are dominantly used.
Confirmed	b. The health frame is frequently used as well in <i>De Standaard</i> 's coverage of the Ageing Society, if not as often as the political frame or economic frame.

Table 9 Evaluation of the hypotheses for research question 2.

In this context it may be noted that the media transfer salience to their public, as has been proposed by agenda-setting theory (e.g. Oppermann & Viehrig, 2016; McCombs, 2005 & 1976; McQuail, 2005; Rogers & Dearing, 1988). When media communicate about issues, they transmit -

besides information- also the implicit message that these (aspects of the) issues have some importance (Rogers & Dearing, 1988, p. 573). Subsequently, the media's salience transfer function may lead the public to perceive these issues and aspects as important as well (McCombs, 2005, p. 543). Embarking from the assumption that the most applied frames in media coverage refer to the most salient aspects, it could be argued that in *De Standaard* the challenge-, political-, economic- and health-related aspects of the Ageing Society were the most salient; while the opportunity-, education- or awareness-related aspects were less salient. *De Standaard*'s readership may therefore perceive these same aspects as (less) salient about the Ageing Society. The transfer of salience also corresponds to the concept of priming, which Iyengar (1991, p. 133) has added to agenda-setting theory. Priming refers to the ability of media to influence the criteria which people use when judging issues. More salient aspects are more probable to be considered a 'judging criterion' by the public. In the context of the Ageing Society, this signifies that *De Standaard*'s readership would use political-, economic- or health-related criteria to judge the Ageing Society and its implications for the population (e.g. what are the implications for the health care?), rather than for instance criteria related to education (e.g. what are the implications for the education system?).

5.2.2 Ageing Society as inevitable threat demanding instantaneous measures.

The Ageing Society was in *De Standaard* often framed as a challenge for society. This taps into the established and strong concept of the 'population ageing as problem or threat'. Susan McDaniel (1987, p. 311) described this perspective as early as thirty years ago as an explanatory model for a range of diverse phenomena, such as e.g. increasing health care costs, slow economy growth or a rising tax burden on working people. Ever since, the concept of problematic demography has been widely applied (e.g. Rozanova, 2006; Evans et al., 2001; Gee & Gutman, 2000; Robertson, 1997). Its common argument focuses on the economic costs of the Ageing Society: a decreasing working population has to support a growing retired population, and this situation will eventually cause the social security systems to collapse. Such emphasis on problems instead of possible solutions also fits into the greater 'problem-oriented' journalistic tendency of the last decennia, as Haagerup (2015) noted (similar in Kepplinger, 1998, p. 77). In *De Standaard*, the Ageing Society was presented as particularly problematic for the public budget (e.g. pensions), public health (e.g. lack of careproviders, more chronic illnesses), and the labour market (e.g. less workers). At the same time, the Ageing Society appeared as an inevitable development whose progress could not be controlled; e.g. "the challenge of the Ageing Society had become greater and its impact had come closer" (*De Standaard*, opinion article; Sturtewagen, 2013b, p. 44); or "elderly (...) there are, because of the fast ageing of our society, ever more of them" (*De*

Standaard, news article; Deknudt, 2012, p. 4). The appearance of the Ageing Society as an urgent problem requesting immediate measures allows homogenization among the ones affected: everyone is in the same boat and urgent, united action is required against the ‘common enemy’ of the implications of the population ageing.

the audience is put before an implicit choice: on the one hand, doing nothing and awaiting the population ageing disaster; on the other hand, following the suggested measures, with the effect that a demographic situation is made to naturalise certain political ideas, making them appear administrative, rather than political in character. This is a choice that is not really a choice. (Lundgren and Ljuslinder, 2012, p. 63)

By introducing the actions for the Ageing Society as highly urgent, these may seem beyond the political realm, appearing as necessary measures against an inevitable threat. Regarding the lack of nation-wide initiatives dealing with the Ageing Society, *De Standaard*'s chief editor rhetorically asked: “We are moving towards the crucial question: do we continue to struggle on a sinking boat? Do we find an agreement, and can we finally start baling out? Or will we, every man for himself, try to swim?” (*De Standaard*, opinion article; Sturtewagen, 2013b, p. 44) Similarly, a Flemish entrepreneur suggested in an opinion article transforming the Ageing Society into a chance: “The Ageing Society brings along enormous challenges. (...) Many bureaucrats are retiring. Why don't we aim for efficient and performing public authorities?” (*De Standaard*, opinion article; De Kerpel, 2012, p. 27). These policy proposals for addressing the challenges of the Ageing Society bear a political dimension. Nevertheless, the suggested urgency may rule out in-depth political discussions. The policy proposals therefore seem less political and disputable. Instead they are presented as logic, reasonable measures against a common threat, elevated above discussion.

5.3 Discussing the framing of the political and economic aspects of the Ageing Society

5.3.1 Evaluation of the hypotheses for the political and economic framing.

The joint political-economic frame was the dominant frame in *De Standaard*'s coverage of the Ageing Society. The impact of the Ageing Society on the sustainability of the pension system and the impact on the labour market were identified as subframes (confirmation of hypotheses a&b). Notwithstanding the great number of familial careproviders in Belgium and the possible implications of this care work for their social and professional life, the hypothesis that the situation of familial careproviders would also be a subframe as well was not confirmed (disconfirmation of hypothesis c). Other subframes which were identified in the political-

economic framing of the Ageing Society were the challenges in the timely preparation of the Ageing Society, the strengthening of the Belgian Budget to prepare for the costs of the Ageing Society and the possible investments in Ageing Society-related businesses.

Evaluation of Hypotheses for Research Question 3: Which subframes does <i>De Standaard</i> apply in its coverage of the political and economic aspects of the Ageing Society?	
Status	Hypothesis
Confirmed	a. Subframe of the forthcoming costs for the pension system.
Confirmed	b. Subframe of the changing labour market, with lesser people in working age and presumed decreasing productivity of older employees.
Disconfirmed	c. Subframe of the familial careproviders and the professional and social burden they are subjected to.

Table 10 Evaluation of the hypotheses for research question 3.

5.3.2 Political-economic coverage with strong financial focus.

By frequently applying a political-economic frame in the coverage of the Ageing Society, *De Standaard* established the Ageing Society as a political-economic concern. Often, the implications of the Ageing Society were brought into connection with financial problems. This strong focus on the budgetary implications of the Ageing Society aligns with earlier findings from newspaper coverage studies (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2011, p. 178-179). The great attention for the budget aspect of the Ageing Society is illustrated in following quotes: “Furthermore, a strict austerity trajectory is absolutely necessary to be able to continue to pay the costs of the Ageing Society.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Winckelmans, 2012, p. 8); “And after all, cost estimates have been made? The Ageing Society is being prepared on all levels.” (*De Standaard*, news article; FLE, 2012, p. 5); or “In order to create financial space (...) next to the costs that go along with the Ageing Society, authorities (...) will have to dare cutting down their consumption expenses.” (*De Standaard*, comment; Sturtewagen, 2012, p. 2). Although at first sight it may seem evident that a political-economic frame focuses on financial aspects, there are however many other political-economic aspects that could have been covered more prominently as well; e.g. investments, growth, internationality, environmental approaches or political coalitions. Yet *De Standaard*'s coverage of the Ageing Society, foregrounding financial aspects even if the topic is non-financial in nature, aligns with the increase of ‘economy-focused journalism’ from the last decades (e.g. Martensson, 2003; as cited in Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2011, p. 179). Martensson holds that the political move towards neo-liberalism has steered an increased economization of social phenomena, which is also noticeable in journalism, e.g. in the economization of the Ageing Society.

5.4 Discussing the political-economic policies for the Ageing Society

5.4.1 Evaluation of the hypotheses for the political-economic policies and sources.

The Ageing Society-coverage of *De Standaard* included various political-economic policy suggestions. Regarding the policies for preparing the Belgian Budget for the costs of the Ageing Society, several political and financial experts (e.g. the European Union, the Belgian government and the Belgian High Council of Finances) have advocated the continuation of austerity measures. Meanwhile other experts (e.g. various Belgian banks, financial institutions and the vice-prime minister) recommended a partial loosening of the austerity measures instead (confirmation of hypotheses a&c). For the sustainability and reform of the pension system in the Ageing Society, various professional experts came to word (e.g. the European Union, the International Monetary Fund, Belgian politicians, the chief editor of *De Standaard*, a psychologist) and generally supported, except for the psychologist, a raise in the obligatory retirement age. For the implementation of these policy suggestions, all sources attributed responsibility to the Belgian government. Also the European Union could be considered responsible due to the pension recommendations and obligations it enforces on its member states (confirmation of hypothesis e). Political-economic policy recommendations have been identified as well for three other subframes: the challenging preparation for the Ageing Society, the impact of the Ageing Society on the labour market and the investment opportunities. With regard to the difficult preparation for the Ageing Society, various experts (e.g. Belgian economists, the chief editor of *De Standaard* and the Belgian policy think tank Itinera) attributed responsibility to the Belgian government to take urgent measures in the preparation for the Ageing Society (confirmation of hypothesis e). Concerning the impact of the Ageing Society on the labour market, several professional experts (e.g. representatives from the European Union, entrepreneurs, and journalists from *De Standaard*; confirmation of hypothesis c) recommended individual companies and labour sectors to enhance their attraction for the scarcer young employees, to recruit older persons as well, and to include women in higher professional positions. Finally, regarding the investment in Ageing Society-related businesses, fund managers recommended private stock investors to profit from the demographic changes in the Ageing Society and invest in businesses accommodating to the needs of the growing group of older people. The hypothesis that non-professional experts (e.g. representatives of the work force and older people) would seldom appear as sources in the political-economic coverage of the Ageing Society was confirmed (confirmation of hypothesis d). These non-professional experts were not attributed responsibility for the suggested policies either, as the responsibility was mostly laid on the socio-economic level (confirmation of hypothesis e).

Evaluation of Hypotheses for Research Question 4	
Which policy recommendations for the political and economic aspects of the Ageing Society are covered in <i>De Standaard</i>, which are the sources for these recommendations and who is attributed responsibility?	
Status	Hypothesis
Confirmed	a. The political and economic policies for the Ageing Society in <i>De Standaard</i> include the building up of financial resources for the forthcoming age-related costs.
Confirmed	b. The political and economic policies for the Ageing Society in <i>De Standaard</i> include the reformation of the pension system.
Confirmed	c. Professional experts (e.g. politicians, researchers) dominantly appear in <i>De Standaard</i> as source for the political and economic Ageing Society-coverage.
Confirmed	d. Non-professional experts regarding the Ageing Society do not frequently appear in <i>De Standaard</i> as source for the political and economic Ageing Society-coverage.
Confirmed	e. Responsibility for the political-economic Ageing Society-policies is in <i>De Standaard</i> attributed to the socio-economic political level, and less to the individual level of the citizens.

Table 11 Evaluation of the hypotheses for research question 4.

5.4.2 Political-economic Ageing Society as professional-expert issue.

By mostly using professional experts as sources, *De Standaard* constituted the political-economic dimension of the Ageing Society as an expert topic. These ‘professional experts’ were specialists which had by profession expertise about the situation, such as specialists from financial institutions (e.g. economists from banks, the financial Council or the International Monetary Fund), politicians (from the Belgian and European Union-level) and journalists who took up an informed expert role in opinion articles or comments. Also other sources, e.g. entrepreneurs or scientists, were by their profession experts in this context. By contrast non-professional experts, i.e. persons who are confronted with the implications of the Ageing Society in their everyday life (e.g. by the pressure of the care for their young children and older parents, by assisting an ageing partner/neighbour, by providing unpaid care to a relative with dementia, etcetera) appeared seldom as sources. The Ageing Society-coverage of *De Standaard* thus featured few quotes or testimonials from persons who had no related professional expertise but instead gathered practical expertise with the subject. In effect, with a great part of the coverage dominated by professional experts, the Ageing Society emerged as a phenomenon that especially they have knowledge of (Lundgren and Ljuslinder, 2011, p. 172). The frequent use of expert sources also has an impact on the type of articles which appear. Reliance on professional expert sources leads to articles that focus particularly on specialist knowledge. It does however not lead to articles with personal

storytelling, in which individual, non-expert citizens testify about their experiences with the implications of the Ageing Society.

When the various sources made policy suggestions for the political-economic implications of the Ageing Society, they usually did not regard themselves as those responsible for the implementation of these policies. Instead, they transferred responsibility to other persons (e.g. other politicians) or instances (e.g. the federal government). A rare exception was made by the European president Herman Van Rompuy, who presented a political-economic policy that raised the retirement age in all EU-member states, and simultaneously held himself and his organization responsible for its implementation (*De Standaard*, news article; Newsroom, 2012, p. 38). There may be various reasons for the tendency of transferring the responsibility for the handling of the Ageing Society to others. The most frequent reason is that the source does not belong to the institution that is authorized to implement the suggested policy; e.g. the economist Geert Noels who recommends that the Belgian government saves money for, among other things, the costs of the Ageing Society (in *De Standaard*, news article; De Smet, 2013c, p. 7). Another reason for sources to transfer responsibility to other actors, is that these actors are perceived to handle the challenges of the Ageing Society insufficiently. For instance, former politician Frank Vandenbroucke summoned the Belgian government not to sketch a new state reform, but instead a pension reform in preparation for the Ageing Society (*De Standaard*, opinion article; Sturtewagen, 2013b, p. 44). In such cases, the sources express themselves critically about the existing policies and actors in the context of the Ageing Society.

De Standaard has covered the political-economic dimension of the Ageing Society in news articles as well as in opinionating articles, i.e. comments and opinion articles. Two subframes appeared often in opinionating than in news articles: first, the challenging preparation for the Ageing Society, and second, the competition for young talents on the labour market. The finding that these subframes appeared more frequently in opinionating articles than in news articles suggests that *De Standaard* attributed specific importance to these perspectives and critically assessed the related policies in opinionating articles.

The appearance of a topic in a certain article type influences its perception (an influence which has already been eloquently indicated by McLuhan [1967] in his classic *boutade* ‘the medium is the message’). Appearance in a news article positions the topic as urgent, whereas appearance in an opinionating article positions the topic as important because “the newspaper attributes particular social or political significance” to it (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2011, p. 178; Van Dijk, 1989, p. 236). At the same time, appearance in opinionating articles may also indicate that *De Standaard* attributes a greater importance to these topics than do the usual news sources, e.g. lobbies, politicians or experts. By additionally covering the challenging preparation for the

Ageing Society and the competition for young talents on the labour market in opinionating articles as well, *De Standaard* takes ownership of these issues and shows its critical attitude towards the handling of them. This aligns with the role of opinionating articles, which are not restrained by the assumed objectivity of news articles, and often express a critical opinion about events.

Opinionating articles thus provide not news, but rather a reasoned opinion based on news events (e.g. Onyeka, 2012, p. 3; Russ-Mohl, 2003, p. 71). As such, opinionating articles aim to persuade the readership (Van Dijk, 1989, p. 231); in this case of urgent need for measures to address the Ageing Society, particularly on the labour market.

Authors of opinionating articles may take up an additional role of ‘discloser’ by informing the public about a topic while simultaneously suggesting that this information was already known, but ignored by the political majority (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2012, p. 55). This disclosing-mechanism can be observed in *De Standaard* as well, e.g. in an opinion article that describes why the earlier recommendations the preparations of the Ageing Society remained without political follow-up: “They pleaded (ten years ago, ktn) that the Ageing Society was a great, but not an unsolvable problem. Thorough measures were urgently needed (...). It is a deeply disheartening experience to read that text from 3 January 2004 again, with the knowledge of today. (...) What went wrong?” (*De Standaard*, opinion article; Sturtewagen, 2013b, p. 44). A similar disclosing role is taken up in a comment that informs the readership about the insufficient Belgian public budget for the various upcoming challenges including the Ageing Society, although politicians claim otherwise: “This means that we will stand in front of the financial wall years earlier than expected. It is irresponsible to hold out to the population that there will be budgetary breathing space soon.” (*De Standaard*, comment; Sturtewagen, 2013a, p. 2).

Furthermore, the opinionating articles in *De Standaard* are critical about the slow preparation of the Ageing Society. E.g. “And most of all, we show ourselves incapable of installing a far-sighted policy, for instance to cope with the Ageing Society” (*De Standaard*, comment; Tegenbos, 2011, p. 2); or in an accusation against the politicians: “It is against their nature: to move things when, in the best case, only their successors will be able to reap the fruits.” (*De Standaard*, comment; Sturtewagen, 2012, p. 2). The policy responses to the challenges on the labour market are critically assessed as well; e.g. “The war for talent is no fairytale, but is already fully raging. (...) If the labour market evolves like this, (...) they will be fought over.” (*De Standaard*, comment; Tegenbos, 2012b, p. 2). This ‘war-metaphor’ (‘war’, ‘fully raging’, ‘fought over’) to indicate the gravity of the situation is only found in opinionating articles, although the concerns about the implications of the Ageing Society appear in news articles as well.

The great majority of opinionating articles about the political-economic dimension of the Ageing Society do not explicitly name those responsible for the implementation of the suggested

policies. Instead, the opinionating articles use ‘we’ as subject (e.g. ‘we will have to ...’), or use imperatives (‘create adapted curricula’) or passive constructions (‘it should be done’) instead of explicitly naming agents and attributing responsibility. This lack of responsibility attribution in opinionating articles is particularly noteworthy because the characteristics of the medium allow authors to freely express their opinions and name the persons whom they consider responsible for the (improvement) of the situation. However, since the opinionating articles in *De Standaard* often do not explicitly attribute responsibility to named actors, they remain relatively non-binding. A possible explanation for the rare explicit references to individual persons is that the (political or economic) system as a whole is considered more responsible than a single representative, and that policies are therefore assumed to depend more on a particular constellation of instances and persons, than on one specific individual.

In the rare opinionating articles that make reference to an actor deemed responsible, this is often ‘the government’. Although this may seem like a clear agent at first sight, it is less so in the Belgian context. The Belgian political constellation has a total of six governments (Vlaams Parlement, 2015). A simple reference to ‘the government’ as responsible agent, without making explicit which government and competences are specifically meant, does in the Belgian context not unambiguously mean that clear responsibilities are being attributed.

Connecting *De Standaard*’s findings with earlier results.

In the discussion of *De Standaard*’s Ageing Society-coverage above, an attempt was made to bring the findings into connection with the earlier Ageing Society-coverage study of Lundgren and Ljuslinder (2011 & 2012). Agenda-setting scholars have embraced Bernard Cohen’s premise (1963, p.13; as cited in Rogers & Dearing, 1988, p. 559) that the world will seem different to different persons, depending on the newspaper they read. The findings of the present research and the Swedish study may therefore indicate how the Ageing Society looks to readers of the examined newspapers. Even though the Swedish study included three newspapers, the research goals were similar to the ones from the present study, making it an important benchmark. A main difference in the findings was that the studied Swedish newspapers established the Ageing Society as a dichotomized problem, with e.g. the younger and older generations as opposing groups (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2012, p. 39), whereas this was generally not the case in *De Standaard*’s coverage. However, several other findings have shown similarities. This may be partly due to demographic and social similarities in both countries: Sweden and Belgium share a comparable demographic situation with a relatively old population, and an ageing process which has set off earlier than in most European countries. Also, both countries are welfare states, with social security systems which are now challenged by the demographic developments and the current

retirement of the babyboom generation. Moreover, there is a general trend in journalism to use an economic perspective in the coverage (Martensson, 2003; as cited in Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2011, p. 179), as well as a ‘problem-oriented’ approach (e.g. Haagerup, 2015; also similar in Kepplinger, 1998, p. 77). The dominant Western discourse also considers the Ageing Society problematic and a threat for the welfare (e.g. Rozanova, 2006; Gee & Gutman, 2000; Robertson, 1997; Vincent, 1996). In sum, the country-specific similarities combined with general tendencies in journalism and discourse may clarify why various international newspapers, studied in Sweden and Belgium, show similarities in their Ageing Society-coverage. It could also explain why the Ageing Society, following Cohen’s (1963, p. 13) premise concerning the map drawn by newspapers, may look to some extent similar to the readers of the *De Standaard* and the examined Swedish newspapers.

5.5 What is underrepresented in Ageing Society-coverage

After the previous sections discussed some particular elements of the Ageing Society-coverage, this section provides a critical reflection of significant Ageing Society-related issues which remained underrepresented in *De Standaard*’s coverage. To determine what is underrepresented, reference is made to the theoretical concept of ‘non agenda-setting’. Rogers and Dearing (1988, p. 576) have defined non agenda-setting as the identification of what is *not* present on the agenda of a certain medium; simultaneously stating that this is a notably difficult undertaking, as researchers can by definition not examine what is not there. Nevertheless, an indication of what is underrepresented or ‘missing’ can be provided first by comparing *De Standaard*’s Ageing Society-agenda with Ageing Society-agendas of other instances; and second, by comparing *De Standaard*’s agenda to real-world indicators. Dannevig et al. (2013, p. 492) have described real-world indicators, which are rooted in agenda-setting theory, as measurable indicators about a particular situation. For instance, air pollution statistics function as ‘real-world indicators’ for the air quality. Real-world indicators are useful in identifying what is possibly underrepresented, as they may signalize important issues which are however not present in the coverage. Referring to the previous example, if real-world indicators show that the air quality is a problem in the region, yet the air quality is no topic in the regional newspaper, the issue may hence be underrepresented in that newspaper³¹. Similarly, if real-world indicators suggest that many people are confronted with particular Ageing Society-issues, but these issues are seldom represented in the Ageing Society-coverage of *De Standaard*, it could be argued that they are underrepresented. Rogers and

³¹ The question whether an issue is of interest to a certain medium is always subject to discussion and is assessed by the news values of the medium; e.g. a gossip magazine has other news values than a newspaper.

Dearing (1988, p. 570) have indicated that events with e.g. a long duration or a gradual development appear less in the media than events with a quick onset and short duration. As the Ageing Society is a steadily developing phenomenon with a lengthy duration, it may hence not be an ‘easy publish’-item in journalistic terms; even if the subsequent possible underrepresentation does not fully match the real-world situation. Besides the evaluation with real-world indicators, another way of identifying possibly underrepresented issues is by comparing various ‘agendas’ about the same topic, i.e. the Ageing Society. Therefore, a comparison is made between the Ageing Society-agenda³² of the *De Standaard* and the Ageing Society-agendas of the ageing-policy recommendations from the European Union and the United Nations. This approach allows indicating whether Ageing Society-elements from the international policy agendas are not or seldom present in *De Standaard* and could thus be, in comparison, underrepresented.

This approach is complemented with Carol Bacchi’s theory of problem representation and Ulrik Haagerup’s concept of constructive journalism, which served as additional guidelines to identify what was underrepresented. The politics and policy researcher Carol Bacchi studied how problems are represented, and especially what ‘falls outside’ these representations and is therefore not talked about. She developed a set of questions to find out what is underrepresented³³. Ulrik Haagerup, news director of the Danish Broadcasting Corporation, pleaded for a more balanced news coverage with attention for alternative views on news events. He recommended to look at each topic ‘with both eyes’, covering the challenges as well as the opportunities. Originating from different backgrounds, the approaches of Bacchi and Haagerup thus complement the theoretical concept of non-agenda-setting, and the search for what is underrepresented. The term ‘underrepresentation’ hence refers in this context to the Ageing Society-issues of which the real-world indicators -often academic findings- suggest that they occupy a great number of people, or which are recommended by the policy reports of the United Nations (2012a&b) and the European Union (EC, 2015a&b; EC, 2012a&b), but which are not represented accordingly in *De Standaard*.

5.5.1 Underrepresented topics.

Ageing Society is human-made.

In the coverage of *De Standaard*, the Ageing Society came forth as an inevitable phenomenon. As such, the real-world indicator that the Ageing Society is however human-made and that choices of the population influence it -making it less inevitable-, remained underrepresented in the coverage.

³² Note that in agenda-setting theory the ‘media coverage’ is referred to as ‘media agenda’; this terminology is applied here as well.

³³ For extensive description of Bacchi’s and Haagerup’s approaches, see section ‘2.4.3 Multidimensionality of media coverage’.

Even if the Ageing Society is often considered a problem, placing immense pressure on e.g. the social security systems, only the fewest would want to give up the modern conveniences that contributed to the Ageing Society, such as the increasing technology, better medical care and more hygienic living conditions, birth control or higher education. Therefore, scholars have argued that the Ageing Society is not an ‘inevitable’ phenomenon, but rather a development to which the population has been -and still is- actively contributing (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2011, p. 60-61).

The ageing of the population depends on the future life expectancy, fertility and migration³⁴ (Population Reference Bureau, 2015, 1 al; EC, 2012a, p. 2). In Belgium, the increased life expectancy accelerates the ageing of the population, while the relatively high fertility and net migration currently simultaneously soften the ageing process. Although these factors may seem fixed, the population could still take a certain influence on the population ageing process through the migration; without changes regarding life expectancy and fertility. Via the political voting system, the population could give preference to measures that allow or stimulate the immigration of (young) people to Belgium³⁵. There is however no academic consensus about the efficiency of such immigration policy to counter the effects of population ageing, as it has been argued that immigration does not rejuvenate the population on the long term. As such, it “immigration makes only a marginal difference to the ageing of the population because, in the longer term, immigrants themselves grow old. Larger immigration leads to larger numbers of older people” (McDonald & Kippen, 1999, p. 3). However, independent of whether the population chooses to adopt another immigration policy, the Ageing Society is not something that is happening without any possibility to take action. Subsequently, the implications of the Ageing Society are in that sense not ‘inevitable’ either (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2011). The human-made origins of- and human influence on the Ageing Society have however remained underrepresented in the coverage of *De Standaard*.

Older persons as active contributors to society.

Older persons may not engage (anymore) in professional careers, but numerous studies have suggested they contribute to society in alternative ways. These real-world indicators propose that many still strongly support their children, even if these have left the parents’ house, and take care of the grandchildren (e.g. Perrig-Chiello & Höpflinger, 2008, p. 187). They may also provide

³⁴ See section ‘2.3.1 Belgian population ageing: fertility, life expectancy and migration’.

³⁵ The reverse is of course also possible: e.g. The Swiss population voted against the immigration of foreigners to Switzerland (and against the European free movement of workers) in the ‘*Initiative gegen Masseneinwanderung*’ (Initiative Against Mass Immigration) voting of 9 February 2014; notwithstanding the contrary recommendations from all government parties except the extreme right-wing SVP-party.

intra-familial donations or (early) inheritances (Höpflinger, 2008, p. 250), assist relatives or neighbours, or engage as volunteers in various work activities to name only a few possibilities. However, the strong professional budget-focus in *De Standaard's* coverage of the Ageing Society largely omits these possible contributions of the older population. By emphasizing that “older persons do not contribute to society through paid work” (Lundgren & Ljuslinder, 2011, p. 179), the possible other ways in which they may contribute to society are rendered invisible. Such coverage resonates with the often stereotyped and negative representation of older people in the media (e.g. Martin, 2009; Fealy & McNamara, 2009; Robinson et al. 2007; Lauzen & Dozier 2005). In their Swedish newspaper study, Lundgren and Ljuslinder (2011, p. 179) have noted a comparable financial-centered approach, with little attention for the human capital that older people could add to society. Instead of representing older persons (also) as active ‘contributors’ to society, the Ageing Society-coverage in *De Standaard* often refers to the older population in terms of an economic burden requiring financial support, hence standing at the ‘receiving end’ of society. This image is visible in various articles, e.g. “Although the elderly care will increase strongly over the next years, the goal cannot be to endlessly build new elderly homes. That is unaffordable.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Goethals & Justaert, 2012, p. 4); “According to Vandeurzen, all authority levels will need to invest more strongly in elderly care” (*De Standaard*, news article; FLE, 2012, p. 5); or “The unemployed persons who receive an income from society, need to be (...) summoned to work in, among other areas, the care for elderly.” (*De Standaard*, opinion article; De Kerpel, 2012, p. 27)

Intergenerational connectedness.

The foregoing societal contributions of older persons appear seldom in the coverage of the Ageing Society in *De Standaard*. The subsequent close connectedness between older and younger generations is equally underrepresented. However, studies have delivered numerous real-world indicators suggesting that measures directed towards one generation often impact other generations as well (e.g. Jamison et al., 2013; Torres-Gil & Moga, 2001). An example of the intergenerational interconnectedness can be seen in the investments in the health system, especially efforts to improve the health of children and young people. Such investments generally increase the general health of the entire population: when these younger people grow older, they stay healthy for a longer time. As they consequently also need less (financial) support, various generations benefit from this development (e.g. Jamison et al., 2013, p. 1898; Andersen & Bhattacharya, 2012, p. 1; Jack & Lewis, 2009, p. 1). The younger and older generations in a society function in this context rather like communicating vessels: measures at one side have an

impact on the other side as well. Torres-Gil and Moga (2001) have therefore argued that political measures should be beneficial for all future generations, the younger as well as the older ones.

Another aspect of the intergenerational connectedness is in the changing voting power of the various age groups. The German journalist Frank Schirrmacher (2004) noted that whereas the older generation may be considered a vulnerable group by some (younger) persons, this older generation has –by its sheer number- a great political voting power, which will only grow over the next decennia. This may lead the transition from the disregarded older generation to what Davidson calls ‘the grey power’ (Davidson, 2013). In other words, should older people manage to mobilize their voting power in favor or against certain ideas, they may politically overrule the - less numerous- younger generations. This mechanism may be best applicable in systems with ‘direct democracy’ where people can vote directly pro or contra policy initiatives (as in e.g. Switzerland); and lesser so in indirect democracies, which make up the majority of Western democracies.

Attention for intergenerational connectedness is however rare in *De Standaard*'s coverage of the Ageing Society. When it is covered, then less in terms of a conscious interconnectivity and more in terms of a warning for the changing old age dependency ratio; e.g. “Over the last years, the number of persons over 65 year old has increased so strongly, that there are currently not even four working persons per retiree. In 2025 only three working persons will be left, and another quarter-century later, there will be only two working persons per retiree to keep the economy going and provide an income for the non-active people.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Coppens, 2012, p. 38); or “Large generations are retiring and the graduating younger people are much less numerous”. (*De Standaard*, comment; Tegenbos, 2012b, p. 2)

Moreover, such coverage does not match the renewed ageing-discourse that the United Nations have put forward as a priority in their Ageing Report (UN, 2012a, p. 6); this discourse should reflect a “change of mindset and societal attitudes towards ageing and older persons, from welfare recipients to active, contributing members of society”. The UN’s recommendation for a new discourse about ageing, including the acknowledgement of the societal contribution of the older generation, is hence not yet observable in *De Standaard*'s coverage of the Ageing Society.

Implications of the Ageing Society for individuals.

Besides the obvious biological changes, the ageing process has further implications for the individual, e.g. the transition from the professional life to retirement, or from parent to grandparent. As ever more people reach a higher age, these individual implications occur in the Ageing Society on an increasing scale. Some of these implications are extensively described in *De Standaard*'s coverage of the Ageing Society, such as for instance the pension fears of the

individual citizen³⁶. Other individual implications of the Ageing Society are by contrast rarely represented: e.g. the demanding situation of familial careproviders, the possible age-related social isolation and poverty among older persons³⁷.

The increasing life expectancy enlarges the shared life span of various generations in a family (Höpflinger, Wanner & Lerch, 2008, p. 73). Since ever more older persons are depending on care, an increasing number of relatives try to support them and so become familial careproviders. These are persons who voluntarily and non-professionally take care of their ill partners or (often older) relatives. Currently, real-world indicators suggest that their number in Belgium is between 420.000 and 600.000; signifying that between respectively 1 out of 26 and 1 out of 18 Belgians engages as familial careprovider (Donckier 2015 & 2012; De Coster, Declercq and Van Audenhove, 2007; Jacobs & Lodewijckx, 2004). The growing group of familial careproviders often experiences an enormous pressure when combining their professional job, bringing up children, managing household work and taking care of the relative or partner. The situation is especially demanding when the relative or partner has dementia, which is increasingly the case: an estimated 165.000 people in Belgium suffer to date from dementia, a number which is projected to double towards 2050 (Bergmans, 2015). Various studies have suggested that familial careproviders are more at risk of becoming depressed or falling ill themselves, because of the lasting tension from their social and professional engagements as respectively familial careprovider and employee (e.g. Lilly, Robinson, Holtzman & Bottorff, 2012; Brinda, Rajkumar, Enemark, Attermann & Jacob, 2014; Barrett, Hale & Butler, 2014).

Other individual implications of the Ageing Society which are rarely represented in *De Standaard* are the possible social isolation and poverty of older persons. These implications have a great impact on personal well-being, as social connectedness, financial comfort and health are considered key components in the life quality of older persons (Zaidi, 2014). The living circumstances of older adults, with possible widowhood and the reduction of the well-known social network could lead to social isolation (Dahlberg et al, 2014). Reduced mobility, too, is an obstacle to maintaining social contacts. To date, 16 percent of the Belgians of 65 years or older (thus approximately 1 out of 6 persons of this age group) say they cannot leave their own house due to physical restrictions (Louage, 2014), which affects their social lives as well. Other changing conditions in the life of older persons such as a reduced income, e.g. due to retirement, or changing family structures could prompt poverty at later age (e.g. Kwan & Drolet, 2015;

³⁶ For a detailed description of the coverage the pension fears, see section '4.3.3 Impact of the Ageing Society on the pension system'.

³⁷ As the individual implications of the Ageing Society are broad, there are clearly more implications. This paragraph is therefore by no means exhaustive, but rather restricts itself to some implications which large groups of the Belgian population see themselves confronted with.

Dethier, Pestieau & Ali, 2011). Other, possibly less obvious implications of the Ageing Society on the individual level have recently emerged as well, such as the rise of elderly homes for ageing gays and lesbians, communal living for seniors (Satonobu, 2014) or the increasing wish to organize care abroad, leading to e.g. luxurious elderly homes for Europeans in Asia (Jorio, 2014).

With the possible exception of the latter implications of the Ageing Society, which are to date still rather urban and unusual, the other individual implications affect large groups in the Belgian population, as the foregoing real-world indicators show. As so many Belgians engage as familial careproviders and are hence confronted with an increased risk of health problems and severe challenges in their personal and professional life, their situation could arguably be treated more extensively in the coverage of the Ageing Society. Also the increasing number of Belgians living in a situation where the risk factors for age-related social isolation and poverty are present, could have led to a more frequent coverage. Still, these implications remain rare or underrepresented in the Ageing Society-coverage of *De Standaard*.

In sum, real-world indicators for the Ageing Society have suggested various topics that concern large numbers of people in ageing populations, which are however currently underrepresented in the Ageing Society-coverage of *De Standaard*. The acknowledgement that the Ageing Society is human-made and not passively ‘happening upon us’, the contributions of older people to society in a variety of (possibly non-monetary) ways, the intergenerational connectedness and the notion that measures for one generation affect other generations as well, and various implications of the Ageing Society for individuals, e.g. the increasing number of familial careproviders and their augmented risk on illness and depression, age poverty and social isolation, are topics which are currently underrepresented in *De Standaard*. This overview aims at illustrating, by means of various topical and well-documented issues, that the range of ‘real-world topics’ in the Ageing Society-coverage of *De Standaard* has possibilities for extension.

5.5.2 Underrepresented sources.

The sources which appeared in the political-economic coverage of the Ageing Society were mainly professional experts, while the non-professional experts, common citizens who gathered personal experiences with the implications of the Ageing Society, appeared seldom. A possible reason is that the appearance of professional experts is a typical characteristic of quality newspapers such as *De Standaard*, and the readership expects this professional perspective rather than personal experiences. Another potential explanation is that *De Standaard* mainly covers the Ageing Society when information is delivered externally (e.g. by press releases), and hence relies less on own investigations regarding the Ageing Society. In this scenario, it is clear that professional

experts will more appear in the coverage than non-professional experts, who mostly do not have the means to reach media attention. This dynamic is confirmed by findings of Rogers and Dearing (1988, p. 577), suggesting that the actor with the most access to knowledge will also weight most on the agenda, and is hence able to transfer the issues he considers salient to other agendas. It would have been interesting to examine to what extent the Ageing Society-coverage was reactive -guided by externally delivered information from professionals- or active -guided by own investigations-. However, since *De Standaard* did not explicitly mention the immediate motive for the Ageing Society-articles in its coverage (e.g. external press release, information from communication departments, coverage in other -international- media, own investigations, etc), it was not possible to assess to what extent the coverage was directed by external information or internal investigations from specialized journalists in the own newsroom.

The professional expert sources in the *De Standaard* have proposed Ageing Society-policies situated on a similar expert level. When responsibilities were attributed, then usually to politicians or the Belgian state. The coverage hence established the Ageing Society as a high-level, political concern rather than an individual problem. This also corresponds with a broader and long-standing tendency in newspapers to attribute responsibility for problem-solving to state and politics, and lesser to society as a whole (Keppinger, 1998, p. 77; as cited in Russ-Mohl, 2003, p. 203).

The use of more varied sources in the coverage of the Ageing Society may extent and complement the current reporting. In their Age Report, the United Nations included the following stakeholders for the Ageing Society: governments, private sector, civil society, communities and families (UN, 2012a, p. 6). Except for the governments (politicians) and the private sector (health –and finance specialists) most of these stakeholders are currently underrepresented as sources in the coverage of the Ageing Society. A greater inclusion of these stakeholders as sources could provide additional perspectives to the coverage, leaning on personal experiences: e.g. small and medium enterprises (challenged by a forthcoming lack of younger employees), communities (organizing informal support for older and younger members who assist others) or families (trying to balance their professional careers with the care for various generations of relatives). When such stakeholders are also included as sources, the addressed topics in the Ageing Society-coverage would broaden as well. This could reflect the multidimensional reality of the Ageing Society more accurately than the current focus on the political and professional expert level.

It has also been argued that the coverage of the Ageing Society would benefit from a balance of younger and older sources. This may however be hindered by media and advertisers angling for the favor of the younger public. In a study about the representation of older adults in advertisements and marketing, Thompson (2007) found that the older age group was greatly

invisible and even devalued. Milner, Van Norman and Milner see an explanation in the young staff of advertising and marketing agencies: “Fully 95% of employees in UK agencies are under age 50. (...) With so few professionals over 50, is it surprising that this industry lacks insight into the needs, interests and aspirations of older people, as well as the realities of their daily lives?” (2011, p. 26). Davidson (2013) found that in journalistic newsrooms as well there are ever more younger employees, which may in part explain the tendency to look for sources in the same, younger, age group.

Media scholar Mark Deuze (2015) has stated that the composition of the professional branch of journalists did not fundamentally change over the last decennia. As such, the journalism branch did not keep up with societal developments, and so the greater share of e.g. women and people with a migration background graduating in journalism studies did not translate into a greater participation of these groups in the journalism branch. In order to let journalism better fit the current society and information needs, Deuze suggests a threefold approach based on knowledge, responsibility and representation. First, with regard to knowledge, Deuze underlines the importance of the journalist’s thorough on-topic background knowledge, citing the example of the Ageing Society: “What does the journalist know about (...) how older people participate in our society?” (Deuze, 2015, 19th paragraph). Second, regarding responsibility, Deuze pleads for a social responsibility that leads the public and media scholars to constructively and critically address the journalism branch. Third, concerning representation, Deuze proposes more attention for the way media companies recruit journalists, asking the provocative question “How seriously do we take candidates who are not like ourselves or most of our colleagues?” (Deuze, 2015, 21th paragraph). Simultaneously, the selection of news sources and topics should be a constant topic of critical self-reflection among journalists: “Who is being excluded, which voices are not being heard?” (Deuze, 2015, 21th paragraph).

Following that line of thought, a proposal could be to integrate journalists of 65 years and older -possibly as freelancers- in the newsroom, as their combination of professional journalistic skills and personal ageing experience could enable them to identify aspects which are currently seldom covered. More older sources could potentially lead to a more heterogeneous representation of the immense group of ‘older adults’ as well. In the Ageing Society-coverage, *De Standaard* does not greatly distinguish between the ‘younger old’ (65-79 years) and the ‘oldest old’ (80 years and above). Demographic projections and policies (e.g. Lanzieri, 2011) nevertheless usually distinguish between those groups: they are in very different life phases, may be in different health conditions and have also equally different possibilities and resources. The reliance on more older sources could hence lead to a more varied representation of the growing group of ‘older adults’.

To date, the sources in the coverage of the Ageing Society are mostly people in working age. The United Nations have suggested affirmative measures that challenge age discrimination (UN, 2012a, p. 6). Following this suggestion, quota to increase the number of older adults -similar to quota for women or people with special needs- in the coverage of the Ageing Society could be discussed. Milner, Van Norman and Milner (2011, p. 27) plead for an increase in the prevalence and diversity of older persons in the media as well. Although younger adults may also have the professional competence to discuss ageing and its implications, they do not (yet) have the personal experience of retirement or of being in the third or fourth age. Older adults who have personal experienced knowledge about the individual ageing process may hence provide complementary viewpoints.

Haagerup (2016, in interview with author) has noted that the increased interaction with the readership via social media nowadays may not only inspire a public debate about the topics at hand, it could also lead to follow-up coverage with younger and older persons from the audience as sources. Their relevant personal experiences with the Ageing Society could complement the perspectives of the professional-experts. A notorious example of the interaction between newspaper and readership is provided by the British newspaper *The Guardian*, which launched in 2013 its 'Guardian Witness', a platform for user generated content where readers can directly react on articles or make suggestions for new stories (Halliday, 2013). The most relevant reactions lead to publications in the newspaper. Even before launching its platform, *The Guardian* had already invested in an interactive relationship with its readership, most famously so in 2009 by opening the data of thousands of MPs' receipts to its readers and asking them in a crowdsourcing manner to analyze and comment these individual documents, helping the journalists to find the important stories (Roger, 2009). This "greater variety of modes of engagement" (Livingstone, 2003; as cited in Picone, 2016, p. 128) by the readership has opened up exciting new possibilities for media and coverage, with news users claiming "an ever-more important role in the way journalism is shaped" (Picone, Courtois & Paulussen, 2015, p. 35). In this context, Picone et al. also refer to the highly interesting development of journalism in the digital news environment, with audiences moving from classic to digital media platforms; which lies however beyond the scope of the present thesis.

5.5.3 Underrepresented perspectives.

The findings of the present study have suggested an underrepresentation of different perspectives in the coverage of the Ageing Society. Notwithstanding the variety of ageing-related topics³⁸, the

³⁸ See '4.2 General framing of the Ageing Society'.

general perspective remained largely the same: the Ageing Society is problematic, inevitably threatening the welfare with implications that will financially impact everyone. Even when a source expressed another perspective ('the Ageing Society may be beneficial') this was presented within the dominant 'problematic' perspective and so subtly confirming the latter yet again; e.g. "Admit it, when we talk about the Ageing Society, we think indeed of unaffordable pensions, health problems and loneliness (...) but our study shows that there are also positive implications." (*De Standaard*, news article; NLB, 2012, p. 10)

Such general perspectives are what Kuhn called 'paradigms' in his landmark book 'The Structure of Scientific Revolutions', originally published in 1962 and published ageing in a '50th anniversary edition' in 2012. Kuhn was a trained physicist and wrote 'The Structure' mainly about the progressing processes in physics. However, his book has attracted attention far beyond its original context, since the concepts can be applied on all situations in which various perspectives or paradigms compete for dominance. Kuhn has defined paradigms as frameworks for scientific activity, with two crucial characteristics. Successful paradigms are at the one hand clearly different from the previous and therefore attractive, and on the other hand open enough to leave room for further development: "Their achievement was sufficiently unprecedented to attract an enduring group of adherents away from competing modes of scientific activity. Simultaneously, it was sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of problems for the redefined group of practitioners to resolve" (Kuhn, 2012, p. 11). Kuhn described that these paradigms change over time, but that for a certain period, a given paradigm will be dominantly accepted as only valid one. A paradigm shift may start by the discovery of anomalies, leading bold researchers to see a new, rivaling paradigm (Kuhn, 2012, p. 53). The scientific community will probably reject this new paradigm; and partly rightly so, because the young, new paradigm most likely still contains errors. However, if the new paradigm perseveres, the old and new paradigm will exist next to each other for a period. Should the new paradigm persist and incorporate the old and new ideas, a paradigm shift has taken place. Kuhn emphasized that the various paradigms are incommensurable: it is impossible to understand one paradigm through the viewpoints and the terminology of the other.

Kuhn's theory on various paradigms, established and challenging ones, has been applied in a variety of context afterwards. Indeed, Kuhn's theory lends itself to discuss the existing and developing discourses about the Ageing Society as well. In *De Standaard's* coverage of the Ageing Society -and in a broader societal context- two rivaling paradigms presently exist next to each other: first the Ageing Society as threat, and second the Ageing Society as opportunity. To date, the threat-paradigm is dominant, with the opportunity-paradigm being small but persistent. As such, the 'Ageing Society as opportunity'-paradigm is arguably a 'pre-paradigm' or a starting

‘co-paradigm’, terms proposed by the agenda-setting scholars Rogers, Hart and Dearing (1997, p. 226).

Wakeling observed the perseverance of the ‘Ageing Society as opportunity’-perspective and noted that “amid alarmist accounts of these changing demographics, is an increasingly vocal movement towards revising the representation of the global ageing population” (Wakeling, 2013, p. 3). In 2012, an amalgam of experts, such as journal editors, representatives of non-governmental organizations and researchers, published an article in the influential journal *The Lancet*, giving voice to their worry at how “ageing is most often framed in negative terms [that question] whether health services, welfare provision and economic growth are sustainable... Instead of being portrayed as a problem, increased human longevity should be a cause for celebration” (Lloyd-Sherlock et al., 2012, p. 1295). Age-researcher John Vincent has strongly condemned the use of the Ageing Society to fit cost-cutting political views: “I will critique alarmist demography of old age and in particular the selective use of demographic analysis to bolster neo-liberal welfare agendas” (Vincent, n.d., p. 2). Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization, stated that “we first need to change the way we think (...). We need to ‘reinvent’ ageing” (Chan, 2011; as cited in Beard et al., 2011, p. 3). Therewith, Chan made an appeal for a paradigm change in itself.

All paradigms, scientific or non-scientific, change over time. Recent examples of changed paradigms are e.g. the role of women as housewives or working professionals, or global warming as natural or human-made phenomenon. Most probably, in twenty years’ time the dominant perspective about the Ageing Society will differ from today’s. In the meanwhile, it would be enrichening to find in the media well-formulated and argued alternative perspectives to the nowadays dominant ‘problematic Ageing Society’ perspective. In doing so, the coverage would also align more with Haagerup’s ‘constructive news-approach’, suggesting a multifaceted reporting which pays attention to the various sides of a topic, by not ignoring either its challenges nor opportunities.

5.5.4 Congruence Ageing Society-agendas in *De Standaard* and international ageing-policy documents.

What is placed on various agendas and how salience is transferred from one agenda to another, is a particular concern of agenda-setting theory³⁹. Therefore, agenda-setting studies assess to what extent one agenda, usually the media agenda, influences another agenda, usually the public agenda (e.g. Burke et al., 2016; Cacciatore et al., 2015; McCombs, 2005; McQuail, 2005; Rogers

³⁹ See section ‘2.5 Agenda-setting theory and the transfer of salience’.

et al., 1997). As the objective of the present study has been to examine *De Standaard's* coverage of the Ageing Society, observing how *De Standaard's* agenda influenced the public agenda was beyond the scope of the study. Yet the agenda-setting approach of comparing agendas has been particularly valuable to compare the Ageing Society-agenda of *De Standaard* with the agenda of the Ageing Society-policy recommendations from the United Nations (UN, 2012a&b) and the European Union (EC, 2015a&b; EC, 2012a&b). This allowed assessing to what extent these international recommendations were present in *De Standaard's* coverage of the Ageing Society. This approach thus enabled observing the congruence between the Ageing Society-agendas, as well as identifying possible issues that were, in comparison, underrepresented in *De Standaard's* coverage. The comparison of agendas has suggested that the Ageing Society-policy recommendations of the European Union and United Nations (EC, 2015a&b; EC, 2012a&b; UN, 2012a&b) were -to a greater or lesser extent- also present in the Ageing Society-coverage of *De Standaard*.

Highly present in the Ageing Society-agendas of both the EU and UN-recommendations (UN, 2012a, p. 5-6; EC, 2012b, p. 41, 46) and *De Standaard* were the urge for sustainable pension- and health care systems, the required improvements their cost-effectiveness, the suggested raise in retirement age and the need to prepare for the implications of the Ageing Society. Present to some extent in the Ageing Society-coverage of *De Standaard*, however not covering all aspects as proposed by the UN, were the enabling environments for older adults; e.g. personal assistance organized via online tools (UN, 2012a, p. 12). The various Ageing Society-stakeholders as suggested by the UN (2012a, p. 6) were also partially present in *De Standaard* as sources for the Ageing Society-coverage. However, whereas the government and the private sector appeared frequently in *De Standaard*, the communities, families and civil society were less represented⁴⁰. The general raise in employment rate which had been recommended by the EU to address the implications of the Ageing Society (EC, 2012b, p. 46) has also been covered in the *De Standaard*; nevertheless with a focus on the employment rate among the older people (i.e. less early retirements) and less so among the general population. The introduction of gender-aspects in all ageing policies, a concern of the UN (2012a, p. 6), was occasionally present in the coverage of *De Standaard*, particularly emphasizing the position of women on the labour market. Various ageing experts have built on the UN and EU-recommendations to propose further guidelines for addressing the Ageing Society, e.g. the harmonization of the life planning and the increasing life expectancy (e.g. Vaupel, as cited in Niejahr, 2004, p. 50), or lifelong learning to adjust to the changing working environments (Shamash, 2011, p. 4). These guidelines also appeared in *De*

⁴⁰ See section '5.5.2 Underrepresented sources'.

Standaard's Ageing Society-agenda. Furthermore, the tendency to address the Ageing Society “with hollow statements that fit in the program of every political party” (Klingholz, 2012, p. 25), for which demographic expert Reiner Klingholz had warned, could be observed in *De Standaard* as well, as the ‘Ageing Society’ was used by some sources as a ‘floating signifier’⁴¹ to gain support for their respective views.

Some other items from the EU and UN Ageing Society-policy recommendations agenda were indeed present in *De Standaard's* Ageing Society-agenda, although they appeared rather marginally. Among them were the UN-concern regarding the intergenerational connectedness and the subsequent investments in the health-, education- and jobs of younger people (UN, 2012a, p. 6). If the intergenerational connectedness was however covered in *De Standaard*, it was rather as a caution for the changing old age dependency ratio⁴². Also the risk for age poverty, the reduction of which is one of the UN-recommendations (2012a, p. 5) for the Ageing Society, was seldom represented in *De Standaard's* Ageing Society-coverage. Another dimension of the Ageing Society which appeared differently in the EU and UN-recommendations and *De Standaard*, was the view of the ‘Ageing Society as an opportunity’. This perspective was present in *De Standaard*, but was less prominent than the ‘Ageing Society as challenge’-perspective. The EU and the UN yet both emphasized that while challenging, the Ageing Society is not a crisis and could even lead to a longevity dividend in the ageing countries. Moreover, the UN has summoned its member states to adopt another attitude about ageing and older people, recognizing the latter not merely as beneficiaries of e.g. the retirement system, but also as active participants in society. Such unambiguous acknowledgment of the societal participation and contribution of older adults was however not visible yet in *De Standaard*⁴³.

The comparison of the Ageing Society-agendas of *De Standaard* and the UN and EU has been, for reasons of completeness, conducted in both directions. Therefore, it was not only assessed whether the UN and EU-recommendations were present in *De Standaard's* agenda, but also whether the inductively identified Ageing Society-agenda items from *De Standaard* were also present in the EU and UN-policy recommendations agenda. Indeed, examination showed that most Ageing Society-agenda items from *De Standaard* appeared in the EU and UN-recommendations agenda as well. The Ageing Society-items from *De Standaard* which were not present in the EU and UN-recommendations were mainly items related to the specific Belgian situation (e.g. tensions between the language communities) or stakeholders (e.g. national

⁴¹ For the use of the Ageing Society as floating signifier, see section ‘5.1.2 Ageing Society as common sense and discursive argument’.

⁴² See section ‘5.5.1 Underrepresented topics’.

⁴³ See section ‘5.5.1 Underrepresented topics’.

politicians). As the UN and EU operate on a more aggregated, international level, such typically Belgian Ageing Society-items were not to be found in their Ageing Society-policy recommendation agendas.

It may be argued that the Ageing Society-agendas of *De Standaard* and the UN and EU-policy recommendations were to a large extent congruent as they included similar agenda items, whereas the prominence of the items was in some cases clearly different. The greatest congruences between the agendas have been the concerns for the pension- and health care systems. Other EU and UN-recommendations for the Ageing Society were present in *De Standaard* as well, but to a lesser extent. It could therefore be stated that following Ageing Society-items were, in comparison with the priority character they had in the EU and UN-recommendations, underrepresented in *De Standaard*: the broad inclusion of various ageing-stakeholders⁴⁴, the intergenerational connectedness, age poverty and the societal contribution of older adults⁴⁵. Also the perspective of the ‘Ageing Society as opportunity’ was in *De Standaard* in comparison underrepresented⁴⁶.

5.6 Recommendations for future Ageing Society-coverage

5.6.1 Assessment of journalistic quality criteria in *De Standaard*.

When it comes to determining journalistic quality, media scholars are challenged to break down the fluid mass of ‘the coverage’ into tangible aspects which can be assessed regarding their quality (Russ-Mohl, 2003, p. 335). Based on what journalists themselves consider quality standards, Russ-Mohl has developed a catalogue for journalistic quality, including following criteria: topicality, relevance, objectivity, multi-dimensionality, originality, comprehensiveness, interactivity and transparency (2003, p. 335-336). Below, these journalistic quality criteria have been applied to the Ageing Society-coverage of *De Standaard*⁴⁷.

The first criterion for journalistic quality is concerned with the ‘topicality’ or the proximity in time to the news events. This criterion is well fulfilled in *De Standaard*’s coverage of the Ageing Society. The reporting about the Ageing Society follows the course of the related news events, e.g. the need for additional education for care-workers, pension discussions, statements from the European Union about the recommended retirement age, etcetera. Such topical themes are connected to the Ageing Society and covered in news or opinionating articles.

⁴⁴ See section ‘5.5.2 Underrepresented sources’.

⁴⁵ See section ‘5.5.1 Underrepresented topics’.

⁴⁶ See section ‘5.5.3 Underrepresented perspectives’.

⁴⁷ For a detailed description of Russ-Mohl’s journalistic quality criteria, see section ‘2.4.3 Multidimensionality of media coverage’.

The second criterion, ‘relevance’, refers to the significance of the topics for the readership. The topics in the coverage of the Ageing Society are significant for readers (e.g. implications for the labour market or social security systems). It may nevertheless be hard for the individual readers to estimate the implications and the relevance in their own lives. For some topics the meaning for the own situation is clear, e.g. the discussion about the higher retirement age. However for other topics, e.g. the preparation of the Belgian Budget for the costs of the Ageing Society, the relevance for the individual reader would benefit from additional clarification.

The ‘objectivity’ criterion focuses on the respect for facts, the use of neutral language and the clear division between news and opinionating articles. *De Standaard*’s coverage of the Ageing Society meets all these criteria: To the extent of this being assessable by the reader (or researcher), the coverage appears to respect the facts. A neutral terminology is used to label the Ageing Society. The division between the news articles and the opinionating articles is made clear by different placements on the page, or by the announcements for comments or opinion articles.

‘Multi-dimensionality’, the fourth criterion, is concerned with the presence of various perspectives, background information and a variety of sources. The coverage in *De Standaard* does report about numerous and different topics related to the Ageing Society (e.g. implications for the labour market, stock market opportunities, political obstacles, pension discussions). The main perspective is nevertheless mostly the same; namely the Ageing Society as a threat for the welfare. Although some articles also acknowledge the opportunities of the Ageing Society, the problematic perspective is dominant and as such the coverage would benefit from a more balanced mix of perspectives. With regard to the background information, the coverage contextualizes most topics well. For the concept of the ‘Ageing Society’ itself, however little background information or explanation is provided. Rather, the Ageing Society is considered self-evident or common-sense. Various sources are used in the coverage, yet they mostly belong to the professional-expert type (e.g. politicians or researchers). Non-professional expert sources, people who gained personal experiences with the implications of the Ageing Society in their everyday lives, seldom appear in the coverage.

The ‘originality’ criterion focuses on the attractiveness and exclusivity of the coverage, and the amount of own investigation in it. The Ageing Society-coverage in *De Standaard* is written insightfully and as such stimulating and attractive to read. The level of exclusivity (e.g. getting news scoops before other media) can however not be assessed without a comparison to other newspapers, which was not part of this study. Regarding the amount of the journalists’ own investigations for the Ageing Society-coverage, it should be noted that most articles did not mention where the original information derived from (e.g. an external press release or own

research)⁴⁸. As the articles were nevertheless not introduced with a reference to own investigations or as an exclusive series in *De Standaard*, it seemed that the Ageing Society-coverage followed the deliverance of external information, and was not extensively investigated by the journalists of *De Standaard* themselves. Neither did the newspaper consider the Ageing Society a topic for a feuilleton or a dedicated correspondent (which *De Standaard* e.g. had for the topic ‘sugar’). Nonetheless, own journalistic research for the Ageing Society could e.g. investigate how the implications of the Ageing Society are being addressed in other countries and examine whether these approaches are transferable to Belgium. This would be in line with the ‘constructive journalism’-approach from Ulrik Haagerup (2015).

‘Comprehensiveness’, the next criterion, refers to the understandability of the coverage. The coverage of the Ageing Society is written in clear, comprehensible language. The topics are well explained and ‘translated’ to fit the context of a newspaper; e.g. scientific explanations from researchers are transformed into understandable information that suits the medium and the readership.

The criterion ‘interactivity’ considers the interaction between the newspaper and its readers. In *De Standaard*’s coverage of the Ageing Society, no interaction with the readers took place and readers were not actively invited to react or send in their own Ageing Society-experiences, possibly via social media. It should be noted that this study was based on the paper newspaper, and that possible separate, online interaction with the readers (which was not referred to in the paper coverage) was therefore not taken into account⁴⁹. Yet, many newspapers seek the interaction with the audience, and invite readers (in the paper coverage) to react via other (electronic) channels. These newspapers may even use their readership’s reactions and relevant experiences for follow-up coverage.

Finally, the ‘transparency’ criterion refers to the possible insights which are given to the reader regarding the context of the coverage, the journalistic working process and the newsroom. In the coverage of the Ageing Society, little such information was provided to the reader. The original source of information for the articles (e.g. press release) was usually not made transparent, nor the reflections or decisions which had been made in the writing process. It may be questioned, though, whether such transparent meta-information is requested for every article. If there is a specific reason to (not) publish a controversial article or opinion (e.g. in case of a racist belief), or more context is needed to understand the circumstances of the article, such meta-

⁴⁸ Usual information sources are press agencies, press releases, PR-companies, correspondents or other media (Russ-Mohl, 2003, p. 291).

⁴⁹ This study was restricted to paper content edited by journalists, which also excluded possible ‘letters to the editor’.

communication is needed and helpful. It could however be argued that it may become superfluous when applied to all articles.

Summarizing, the table below shows to what extent these quality criteria (Russ-Mohl, 2003, p. 335-336) were met in *De Standaard's* coverage of the Ageing Society.

Journalistic quality criteria in <i>De Standaard's</i> coverage of the Ageing Society		
Quality criterion	Aspects of quality criterion	Criterion met in the coverage
Topicality	Proximity in time	+
Relevancy	Topics are significant for reader	+
	Implications for reader's life are clear	+ / -
Objectivity	Adherence to facts	+
	Use of neutral language	+
	Clear division between news and opinionating articles	+
Multi-dimensionality	Various perspectives	+ / -
	Background information	+ / -
	Variety of sources	+ / -
Originality	Attractive to read	+
	Extent of own investigation	+ / -
Comprehensiveness	Understandability	+
Interactivity	Interaction with the readers	⁵⁰ -
Transparency	Insights into the context of the coverage	-
Legend:		
+ : criterion is met in <i>De Standaard's</i> coverage of the Ageing Society		
- : criterion is not met in <i>De Standaard's</i> coverage of the Ageing Society		
+ / - : criterion is met to some extent, but could be optimized (see section 5.6.1).		

Table 12 Journalistic quality criteria in *De Standaard's* Ageing Society-coverage.

Source journalistic quality criteria: Russ-Mohl, 2003, p. 335.

5.6.2 Journalistic recommendations.

The research findings regarding *De Standaard's* coverage of the Ageing Society and the assessment of the journalistic quality criteria have pointed in the direction of possible improvements for the Ageing Society-coverage. Therefore, seven recommendations for a balanced, multidimensional Ageing Society-coverage in newspapers, and possible also in other news media, have been formulated. The last recommendation ('Own the theme') overarches the other recommendations; since claiming 'ownership' over the Ageing Society theme, by building

⁵⁰ This refers to the interaction with the readership which was initiated in the paper newspaper; see section '5.6.1 Assessment of journalistic quality criteria in *De Standaard*'.

up expertise, engaging in own investigations and creating a network, strengthens the other recommendations as well.

Recommendations for a balanced coverage of the Ageing Society

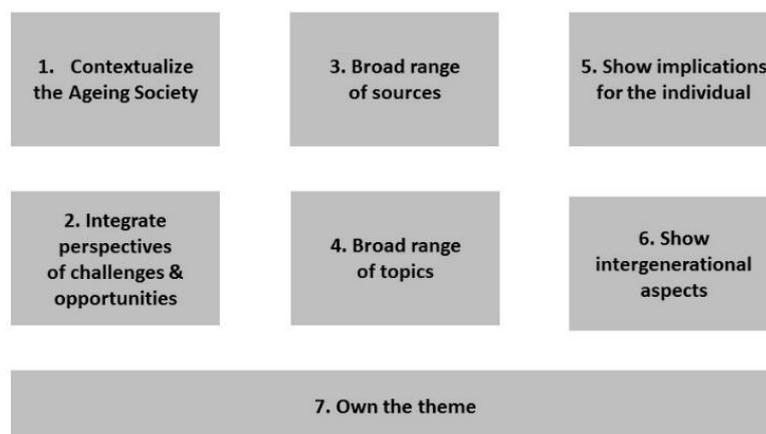


Figure 18 Recommendations for a balanced Ageing Society-coverage.

Every recommendation consists of various suggestions with possible applications and examples for the coverage. A detailed overview is provided in the tables below.

Recommendation 1: Contextualize the Ageing Society.

Recommendation	Possible applications in coverage & examples
<p>Define the Ageing Society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define clearly what is meant by the label ‘Ageing Society’ (<i>‘vergrijzing’</i>). Do not consider the definition and understanding of the concept ‘Ageing Society’ self-evident. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E.g. Add the causes of population ageing (life expectancy, fertility and migration) in a text box.
<p>Explain the Ageing Society’s implications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make the causal connections between the Ageing Society and its presumed implications explicit. This avoids the Ageing Society being ‘hijacked’ by (hidden) agendas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E.g. Add an explanation as to why the Ageing Society is presumed to lead to an increase in the number of chronic patients.
<p>Raise awareness that Ageing Society is taking place now</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify that the population ageing is already taking place to date, not in the far future, and that there are solid demographic projections to foresee the development over the next decennia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E.g. Refer to projections of the European Union or United Nations.

Recommendation 2: Integrate perspectives of challenges and opportunities.

Recommendation	Possible applications in coverage & examples
<p>No ‘good news show’ but no ‘bad news show’ either</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover the Ageing Society as a demographic development with various implications, both challenging and enriching, for the population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E.g. Attention for societal difficulties as well as chances, induced by the ageing of the population.
<p>Economic criterion is not sole criterion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From an economic viewpoint, the Ageing Society brings along many challenges and costs. However, do not solely apply economic criteria to describe (non-economic) Ageing Society-topics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E.g. Health is not only important ‘while sick people cost the society X million euro’. Health is also important because it increases the life quality.

Recommendation 3: Broad range of sources.

Recommendation	Possible applications in coverage & examples
<p>Use both professional and non-professional experts as sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complement the professional-expert-sources (e.g. politicians, researchers) with non-professional experts of the Ageing Society (persons who have gained everyday experience with its implications). • Non-professional experts can supplement the coverage with their personal experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examples of non-professional Ageing Society-experts: familial careproviders, older employees, residents in elderly homes or service apartments, etcetera.
<p>Use both older and younger sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appearance of younger and older sources illustrates that the implications of the population ageing affect all generations –against the common perception that only older people are affected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Combine older and younger sources to broaden the horizon in the coverage of the Ageing Society.
<p>Do not apply age stereotypes to the sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beware of stereotyped representations of older and younger generations. Stating the obvious, both groups are internally heterogeneous. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E.g. not all older people are ‘rich golden agers’ or ‘frail patients’, and not all younger people are ‘angry tax payers’ or ‘loyal careproviders’.
<p>Possibly include journalists aged over 65 in the newsroom</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Older journalists can complement their professional reporting experience with personal experience regarding ageing.

Recommendation 4: Broad range of topics.

Recommendation	Possible applications in coverage & examples
<p>Cover a wide mix of topics related to the Ageing Society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presenting a variety of topics affected by the Ageing Society makes its wide-ranging impact tangible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Topics e.g. housing, education, care, etcetera.
<p>More attention for rarely presented topics which occupy many people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the coverage of events and developments related to the Ageing Society, which occupy a great number of people in the Belgian society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples of topics: poverty and social isolation at later age, familial careproviders and their greater risk of getting ill or depressed themselves; the human-made origins of the Ageing Society and the ways man can take influence on it, etcetera.
<p>More attention for non-financial topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the reporting of Ageing Society-topics which are not (dominantly) measured by their economic and financial effects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples of topics: volunteers safeguarding the functioning of many organizations and institutions (e.g. elderly homes); familial careproviders ensuring that their family members can stay at home; grandparents assisting young parents by taking care with the grandchildren, etcetera.

Recommendations 5: Show implications for the individual.

Recommendation	Possible applications in coverage & examples
<p>Illustrate the implications of the Ageing Society for individuals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complement the reporting about implications at the socio-economic level with implications at the individual level. Illustrate that although the responsibility for handling the Ageing Society is mainly at the level of politicians, it is also to some extent at the level of common citizens and other societal players (e.g. schools, trade unions, careproviders, etcetera). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples of individual implications of the Ageing Society: people working until later age; people studying at later age; adult children having to decide whether their parent moves to an elderly home; people combining their professional job with care for older and younger family members; children who lost their village swimming pool because the resources were allocated to an elderly home; etcetera.
<p>Involve readers in the Ageing Society debate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement more interactivity with the readers regarding the Ageing Society, as they all are familiar with its implications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E.g. Use digital platforms to interact with readers, e.g. regarding opinions, experiences, new topics, etcetera. Use this for new or follow-up coverage.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E.g. Organize a chat-session about the implications of the Ageing Society with an professional expert (similar to existing chat-sessions about taxes or politics), etcetera.
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Recommendation 6: Show intergenerational aspects.

Recommendation	Possible applications in coverage & examples
<p>Demonstrate that older people contribute to Society as well</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older generations receive a lot from society (e.g. pensions), and they also actively contribute to society -however not necessarily in financial terms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E.g. older people may engage in voluntary work; take care of family members or neighbours; donate to their adult children or to good causes; distribute their inheritances; engage as careproviders for other people; etcetera.
<p>Do not play generations off against each other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover viewpoints from various generations for topics that affect them. • Do not portray the various generations as opponents, as this does not do justice to the simultaneously existing intergenerational connectedness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E.g. cover both the wishes and fears from older and younger generations, for instance regarding pensions.

Recommendation 7: Own the theme.

Recommendation	Possible applications in coverage & examples
<p>Claim the Ageing Society theme and build expertise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profile the own news medium as the dominant forerunner in Ageing Society-coverage, more so than other news media. • Claim ‘ownership’ of the Ageing Society theme, build a network of relevant contact persons and be informed about new developments. • Build expertise in the newsroom regarding the Ageing Society. 	<p>Expertise can be demonstrated via e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the appointment of a special correspondent for the Ageing Society (cf existing ‘sugar’ or ‘life and work’ correspondents) - The creation of a ‘theme edition’ or feuilleton about the Ageing Society - The establishment of an Ageing Society column, etcetera
<p>More own journalistic investigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Augment the amount of own Ageing Society-investigations by the newsroom. • Be pro-active and publish own news, be an agenda-setter instead of mainly reacting to external news. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keep in close touch with the own network of Ageing Society-experts. - Investigate international benchmarks and demographic statistics. - Examine whether international approaches could be applied in the Belgian context.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate and cover how others, possibly internationally, have approached (the implications of) the Ageing Society. 	
<p>Check external Ageing Society-information for relevancy and completeness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check whether other problems remain under the radar. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask whether other, more relevant questions should be posed.
<p>Question measures which are presented as ‘common sense’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critically interrogate sources which present urgent measures for the Ageing Society as ‘self-evident’ or ‘common sense’. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E.g. Special attention for measures which are presented as ‘logic’, and thus above (political) discussion.
<p>Extra focus in opinionating articles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use comments and opinion articles to draw additional attention to (implications of) the Ageing Society, or to take a stand. Clearly name the actors which are attributed responsibility. 	<p>Avoid sentence constructions that leave uncertainty about the attribution of responsibility, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> passive constructions (‘it should be done’) imperatives without subject (‘let’s do this’) the undefined ‘we’ (‘we have to...’)

5.7 Answer to the Research Questions

In an attempt to fill the gap in the empirical knowledge about the media representation of the Ageing Society, this study has concerned itself with how the Ageing Society and its implications for the Belgian population were represented in the Belgian quality newspaper *De Standaard*, over the period mid 2011- mid 2013. With regard to the labelling of the Ageing Society (research question 1⁵¹), the findings suggest that *De Standaard* mostly applied the neutral Flemish label ‘*vergrijzing*’, however without further definition or explanation. As such, the concept of the Ageing Society was considered self-evident and common sense; something that readers would understand without additional definition. Because of this definition-vacuum, various ideas could be projected on the Ageing Society. The expression ‘because of the Ageing Society’ has been used as a discursive argument to gain support for contradicting opinions. Linking this to broader field of agenda-setting theory, it could be stated that the floating signifier ‘Ageing Society’ was used as a connecting construction between the agendas of various stakeholders, all containing the same term ‘Ageing Society’; however with a different meaning.

Related to the general framing of the Ageing Society (research question 2⁵²) the findings propose that *De Standaard* particularly applied the thematic political-, economic- and health

⁵¹ Research Question 1: How does *De Standaard* label the Ageing Society?

⁵² Research Question 2: Which frames does *De Standaard* apply in the general coverage of the Ageing Society?

frames in the coverage of the Ageing Society, and to a lesser extent also education- and awareness frames. Across these thematic frames two normative frames appeared; a relatively rare ‘Ageing Society as opportunity’-frame and a dominant ‘Ageing Society as challenge’-frame. Therefore, the Ageing Society was often depicted in *De Standaard* as a challenging threat for the public budget, health and labour market. This threat seemed ‘external’ and inevitable. Because of this perceived inevitability and urgency, the news sources mostly presented the suggested policies for the Ageing Society as required, administrative measures. This could evoke the impression that a thorough political discussion about the suggested Ageing Society-policies is not necessary.

The coverage of the political and economic aspects of the Ageing Society (research question 3⁵³) comprised subframes which focused on the demanding preparations for the implications of the Ageing Society, the solidification of the Budget for the Ageing Society-costs, the effects of the Ageing Society on the pension system and the labour market, and the potential investments in Ageing Society-businesses.

With regard to the policy suggestions for the political and economic aspects of the Ageing Society, the sources and appointed actors (research question 4⁵⁴), the findings suggested that particularly the Belgian government was urgently summoned to prepare for the political-economic implications of the Ageing Society, addressing especially the impact on the Belgian Budget, the pension system and the labour market. As the political and economic frames were the most frequent frames in the coverage of the Ageing Society, *De Standaard* established the Ageing Society dominantly as a political-economic concern, with a strong financial dimension. Sources for the political-economic Ageing Society-coverage were mostly professional experts, often politicians or researchers. The non-professional experts, people without specific professional expertise in ageing but who gained experience with the implications of the Ageing Society in everyday life (e.g. civil society, communities, families) remained underrepresented in the coverage. Because of the prominent appearance of professional expert sources, the Ageing Society may come across as a phenomenon especially experts are knowledgeable about. The sources usually did not consider themselves accountable for the implementation of the Ageing Society-policies they proposed, but instead transferred the responsibility to other people or instances. *De Standaard* critically assessed various policy suggestions for the Ageing Society in opinionating articles, which did however not consistently name the actors deemed responsible for the improvement or implementation of the policies.

⁵³ Research Question 3: Which subframes does *De Standaard* apply in its coverage of the political and economic aspects of the Ageing Society?

⁵⁴ Research Question 4: Which policy recommendations for the political and economic aspects of the Ageing Society are covered in *De Standaard*, which are the sources for these recommendations and who is attributed responsibility?

In addition, the research findings proposed that several topics related to the Ageing Society were seldom represented in the Ageing Society-coverage of *De Standaard*, although they have shown their relevancy by occupying a great number of people in the Belgian society, as was confirmed by real-world indicators, or by being prioritized in the Ageing Society-policy recommendations agenda of the United Nations or the European Union. Examples of such underrepresented topics were the various implications of the Ageing Society for the individual, such as e.g. the demanding situation of familial careproviders, social isolation or poverty at later age; the contributions of older persons to society, the connectedness between the various generations and the human-made element in population ageing. Also, the dominant perspective of the Ageing Society as threat for the welfare excluded other, more opportunity-oriented perspectives.

5.8 Conclusion

“The fact that people don’t die anymore -is that a bad thing?” (Danish news-chef Ulrik Haagerup, 2016, in interview with the author) Better living circumstances and great medical developments have led to a higher life expectancy; contraceptives have given control over fertility. Together with the migration, these values for life expectancy and fertility have led to a fast ageing of the population, and to the current Ageing Society; a society with a growing share of older persons and a decreasing share of younger persons. *De Standaard*’s coverage of the Ageing Society fits the general Western discourse about it, which is largely economy- and finance driven. From this perspective, the Ageing Society is considered a time-bomb under the labour market and the health- and retirement systems, which are bound to collapse under the burden of the growing group of ‘inactive’ and ‘not-contributing’ older adults. Other perspectives, which consider the Ageing Society also an opportunity or even a chance to reap a longevity dividend (which is nevertheless often partly defined in terms of economy and competitive advantages as well), fall outside the dominant discourse and are therefore less present in society, as earlier research has shown.

When studying the history and succession of paradigms in physics, Thomas Kuhn has concluded that paradigms are typically ‘incommensurable’, or impossible to understand from the viewpoint and through the vocabulary of the other. This may be the case for the various paradigms or perspectives on the Ageing Society as well, at least from the established finance-driven perspective. Venturing from this perspective, the Ageing Society could hardly be considered an opportunity, because the demographic evolution in the population defies the carefully constructed systems which are based on a certain proportion of younger (contributing) adults and older (receiving) adults. The ‘Ageing Society as opportunity’-perspective on the other

hand does have eye for such challenges too, but also sees that globally ever more people live longer and healthier, which is deemed a great human achievement, and appreciates the surplus value this growing group of healthy older adults adds to society.

The Ageing Society is both: a major opportunity and a major challenge. Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) stated that “the societies that adapt to this changing demographic can reap a sizeable longevity dividend. But this will not come easily. Above all, we need to be innovative” (as cited in Beard et al., 2011, p. 3). Chan pleaded for a new way of thinking about ageing. This comprises an adapted discourse about the Ageing Society; as also the United Nations have specified in their global priorities. This discourse should not merely emphasize -as habituated- the financial value or loss; instead, it should include all aspects of the situation, and acknowledge the opportunities as well as the challenges. “In case of the Ageing Society, the challenges are clear”, says Ulrik Haagerup, news director of the Danish Broadcasting Corporation (2016, interview with the author), “much more people grow older, they need a pension, need health care, need elderly homes; and nobody wants to pay more taxes. At the same time, many people in their sixties are healthier than ever, they run marathons, have more money than ever before. The fact that people don’t die anymore -is that a bad thing?”

In establishing a new discourse, the media coverage is of crucial importance. For many people, it is of one of the most important information sources, affecting their personal opinion as well as the public opinion. Agenda-setting theory has moreover shown that media are capable of transferring salience to their public. Therefore, media can contribute by covering the Ageing Society in a balanced, multidimensional way, with a variety of (opposing) sources, a broad range of topics and attention for the chances as well as the difficulties. For WHO-Director Margaret Chan, such new approach is key (Chan as cited in Beard et al., 2011, p. 3): “We first need to change the way we think. (...) We need to ‘reinvent’ ageing”.

The Ageing Society is here to stay. We better learn new ways to speak about it.

Research limitations.

This study has several limitations. Most of all, the study has been restricted to the coverage of the Ageing Society in one medium (newspaper) and one title (*De Standaard*). While the restraints are clear, this choice has simultaneously allowed a more in-depth research than would have been the case with a broader research approach. Examining *De Standaard* allowed insights in the coverage of the most read Belgian quality newspaper, with a circulation of 98.008 daily copies (2015). An international comparison of Ageing Society-coverages would have been highly interesting as well, and therefore the research focus on one country is another clear limitation. Nonetheless, this set-up permitted setting a baseline for further international comparisons. The coverage period at the

first half of the decennium (2011-2013) has been selected to examine the Ageing Society-coverage in a transition period when the first implications of the Ageing Society were becoming tangible for the Belgian population; e.g. with a strong projected increase in the pension expenditure between 2010 and 2020. Yet, a longer publication period and a possible development of the coverage over time would have been most interesting to examine. The researched newspaper content was also limited to edited text content; not included were reader letters, images and advertisements. These have been excluded because of their non-edited nature (reader letters), their need for other -semiotic- analyzing methods (images) and their documented bias in showing untypically positive images of ageing (advertisements). The digital platforms where interaction between news users and journalists take place and coverage may be discussed, commented and suggested, were beyond the scope of this the study, although this field is more than relevant as well.

Suggestions for future research.

Future studies may deepen the knowledge concerning the Ageing Society-media coverage. An extension of the research to other news media (e.g. television, radio, blogs), different outlets (e.g. magazines, advertisements), visual reporting (e.g. pictures, cartoons, graphics), or other language contexts are but a few promising approaches to add to the understanding of the Ageing Society-coverage. Furthermore, it would be interesting to examine more participative and interactive forms of news media, e.g. various digital news platforms, to investigate how the transfer of salience between media and public takes place when the demarcations between news producer and news consumer are less strict. Moreover, a comparison in time (temporal changes in the coverage over a longer period) and place (coverage in various ageing countries) would add another dimension to the research. These elements may enable further reflection on the focus and direction of the Ageing Society-coverage.

Earlier research has suggested that newspapers and other news media affect the self-perception, the perception of others and the allocation of resources. Without additional perception research, one can nevertheless only speculate about the concrete effects of the coverage on the public (Van Dijk, 1989, p. 231). A recommendation for future investigation is hence to examine how the public perceives the Ageing Society-coverage, and in which manner this impacts its view on the various age groups and the addressing of the Ageing Society-implications. Building further on agenda-setting theory, it would be of utmost interest as well to investigate to what extent the media coverage of the Ageing Society succeeds in transferring the salience to the public, and how the importance of issues, as perceived by media and public, compares.

Further research findings will also provide journalists with the data and opportunity for strategic reflection upon the coverage. Moreover, the findings will be relevant for policy makers aiming to conceptualize information campaigns about the implications of the Ageing Society (e.g. the reform of the pension system), while complementing or opposing existing media messages.

As a first step in future research, the investigation will continue with a follow-up study (start autumn 2016, supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation) examining the newspaper coverage of the Ageing Society in Switzerland. Several of the above described research recommendations have been implemented: the study will compare the Ageing Society-coverage in three Swiss newspapers belonging to different newspaper types (quality newspaper, tabloid and free newspaper) over a three-year period. An international comparison with the findings from *De Standaard* is planned as well.

Faced with the rapidly ageing population, will manufacturers move from baby diapers to adult ‘incontinence aids’? Will the walking time at traffic lights be a bit longer, as is already the case in some elderly resorts in Florida? Only time can tell. More importantly, how will the media, and newspapers in particular, cover the Ageing Society and its implications for the population? For the latter question, this thesis has aimed to set a benchmark which may serve as a comparison for future Ageing Society-studies. Hopefully it will inspire other researchers to fill the knowledge gaps and add to the insights about the media coverage of the Ageing Society.

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7 Appendix

Appendix A: Inductive Codebook

Main category	Subcategory	Description	Extract Example
Label	Name	This subcategory refers to the names (single words) that are provided for the phenomenon "Ageing Society".	“de vergrijzing”
	Description	This subcategory refers to the descriptions that are provided for the phenomenon "Ageing Society", e.g. a description of (some of) its causes.	“dat we allemaal steeds ouder worden”
Stakeholders	Actors (suggested responsables for implementation)	This subcategory refers to the actors that are proposed for implementing the suggested actions/policies regarding the Ageing Society.	“de overheid”
	Thematizers (sources)	This subcategory refers to persons/instances that thematize an issue or put in on the agenda; sources.	“Minister Lieten...”
Actions	Actions with actor (responsible)	This subcategory refers to proposed actions that certain actors/responsibles should perform, to address the Ageing Society. The subcategory hence refers to policy suggestions with responsible.	“The government should urgently reform the AHV-system.”
	Actions without actor (responsible)	This subcategory refers to proposed actions (policies), for which however no actor (responsible, person/instance who should perform the action) is indicated. The subcategory hence refers to policy suggestions without responsible.	“De toegang tot ondersteuning bij vergrijzingsproblemen moet vergemakkelijkt worden.”
	Actions with “we” as undetermined actor	This subcategory refers to proposed actions without specified actor, but where a construction with “we” is used: e.g. “We have to focus on ...” The subcategory hence refers to policy suggestions with an undetermined “we” as responsible.	“We moeten inzetten op structurele maatregelen”
Investments in the Ageing Society	/	This category refers to investments in facilities that accommodate to the Ageing Society, e.g. pharmaceutical industry, medical technology, elderly homes, etcetera.	“Bij het beleggen op de beurs ligt onze focus nu op het thema vergrijzing”

Pension	/	This category refers to all pension-related issues in the Ageing Society; except (what is related to) the retirement age (this has own category, see below).	“Mensen vrezen dat ze hun pensioen over tien jaar zelf moeten betalen.”
	Retirement age	This subcategory refers to the changing (higher) retirement age, working longer, longer professional career.	“We moeten manieren vinden om mensen juist tot op hogere leeftijd aan het werk te houden om de vergrijzingskosten onder controle te houden.”
Consequences of Ageing Society for companies	/	This category refers to the implications that the Ageing Society has for (the management of) companies.	“Nu zijn de Raden van Bestuur aan het vervrouwelijken”
Belgian budgetary deficit-problems (politics)	/	This category refers to all issues concerning the Belgian budgetary deficit (begrotingstekort, begrotingproblemen) related to the Ageing Society; except for budgetary solutions (this has own category, see below).	“Het is een grote vergissing om het huidige begrotingstekort als iets conjunctureel te zien. Het gaat om een structureel tekort. Elk jaar dat we het probleem van de vergrijzingskosten uitstellen, betalen we dubbel terug.”
	Solutions for budgetary issues	This subcategory refers to the possible solutions that are mentioned with regard to the Belgian budgetary deficit problems concerning the Ageing Society.	“Op de inefficiënties bij de overheid en het overheidsapparaat kan zeker bezuinigd worden.”
Ageing Society as cost or problem	/	This category refers the Ageing Society as a cause for problems or costs. These costs or problems may be situated in all fields (e.g. education, housing, ...).	“Daarin betoogden ze dat de vergrijzing een groot, maar geen onoplosbaar probleem was.” (problem) “De vergrijzingskosten dreigen nog sterker te ontsporen dan toen werd aangenomen.” (cost)
Ageing Society as opportunity	/	This category refers to the Ageing Society as an opportunity. These opportunities may be situated in all fields (e.g. personal life, labour market, ...).	“dat een oudere bevolking een immens potentieel inhoudt. Neem bijvoorbeeld de arbeidsmarkt.”

Political difficulties with regard to the Ageing Society	Political interests	This subcategory refers to the possible political interests that hinder politicians to address the Ageing Society.	“Een politicus die partijbelangen ondergeschikt maakt aan noodzaak, geraakt onverbiddeijk gemarginaliseerd en wordt uiteindelijk naar de uitgang begeleid.”
	Community tensions	This subcategory refers to the tensions between the various Belgian communities (mainly French- and Flemish speaking) that hinder the addressing of the Ageing Society.	“Toen Frank Vandenbroucke zei dat we in 2014 geen staats hervorming, maar een pensioenhervorming nodig hebben, rees meteen de vraag of het tweede wel kan zonder het eerste.”
	EU-regulations	This subcategory refers to the regulations of the European Union that affect the Belgian handling of the Ageing Society.	“De Belgische overheid kan niet zomaar afwijken van de Europese afspraak.”
Gender and Ageing Society	/	This category refers to gender and/or sexuality aspects that are thematized with regard to the (implications of the) Ageing Society.	“Wie concurrentieel wil blijven in een vergrijzende samenleving, het zich niet kan veroorloven om vrouwelijk talent te negeren”
Medical consequences of Ageing Society	/	This category refers to all implications that the Ageing Society has for health, medical science and care systems; except for the implications for chronic care and dementia (those have own categories, see below).	“Vlaams minister van Innovatie Ingrid Lieten (SP.A) trekt 20 miljoen uit om de zorg voor bejaarden te moderniseren en geneeskunde op maat te stimuleren. Eindeloos rusthuizen bouwen is immers onbetaalbaar.”
	Chronic care	This subcategory refers to the chronic care for older people/patients. Chronic care is simultaneously considered an implications of- and a cause for the population ageing (resp. patients get older; patients do not die from their illness and thus live longer).	“Artsen moeten hun patiënten nu vooral leren leven met hun kwaal. Die evolutie is deels een gevolg van de vergrijzing.”

	Dementia	This subcategory refers to dementia in the context of the Ageing Society.	“Door de veroudering van de bevolking neemt de dementieproblematiek en het aantal oudere mensen met ernstige geheugen- en gedragsproblemen toe.”
Invisible older people	/	This category refers to older people being ‘invisible’ (ignored, not pay sufficient attention to) in the Belgian society.	“Ze waren onzichtbaar in het verleden, maar ze zijn dat vandaag nog altijd.”
Learning and Ageing Society (Education)	/	This category refers to the implications of the Ageing Society for learning institutions (high schools, colleges and universities) and their training and education.	“Omdat er door de vergrijzing een tekort aan verpleegkundigen ontstaat, moeten hogescholen ook openstaan voor mensen die zich op latere leeftijd tot verpleegkundige willen omscholen.”
Housing and the Ageing Society	/	This category refers to the influence of the Ageing Society on the housing/accommodation, and how this can be adapted to the changing needs of its inhabitants.	“De inloepdouche in de modelwoning is een eigentijds voorbeeld: die is mooi, praktisch, onderhoudsvriendelijk en comfortabel voor iedereen.”
Underestimation/ ignoring the Ageing Society	/	This category refers to the underestimation or ignoring of the Ageing Society and/or its implications.	“Het IMF heeft twee aanbevelingen. Ten eerste moeten de lidstaten de omvang van de vergrijzing eindelijk erkennen ...”
Ageing Society and cultural products	/	This category refers to the possible effects of the Ageing Society on cultural products (e.g. books, films, etc.).	“Elke tijd krijgt de literatuur die hij verdient. Dat betekent een oververtegenwoordiging van proza dat appelleert aan een vergrijzende bevolking.”

Appendix B: Composition of the Sample

Division research period into sub-periods.

The total research period (1 July 2011 until 30 June 2013) has been divided into 12 sub-periods of two months each. For each of these sub-periods, one ‘constructed week’ has been created.

- Total research period: 2 years
- Start & end date: 1 July 2011 -30 June 2013
- Number of constructed weeks: 12
- Ratio constructed weeks/calendar weeks: 1/8
- Period covered by each constructed week: 2 months

Sub-period (SP)	Start date	End date
1	1 July 2011	31 August 2011
2	1 September 2011	31 October 2011
3	1 November 2011	31 December 2011
4	1 January 2012	29 February 2012
5	1 March 2012	30 April 2012
6	1 May 2012	30 June 2012
7	1 July 2012	31 August 2012
8	1 September 2012	31 October 2012
9	1 November 2012	31 December 2012
10	1 January 2013	28 February 2013
11	1 March 2013	30 April 2013
12	1 May 2013	30 June 2013

Composing constructed weeks.

For every sub-period, one ‘constructive week’ has been composed. A constructed week must consist of 1 randomly chosen Monday, 1 Tuesday, 1 Wednesday, 1 Thursday, 1 Friday and 1 Saturday (no Sunday, because *De Standaard* has no Sunday-edition).

Constructed weeks for this research.

SP1: July-Aug 2011	Constructed week
Start & End of sub-period: 1-7-11 to 31-8-11	
Days constructed week	Calendar dates for constructed week (randomly selected)
Monday	25 July
Tuesday	9 Aug
Wednesday	6 July
Thursday	11 Aug
Friday	5 Aug
Saturday	13 Aug

SP2: Sept- Oct 2011	Constructed week
Start & end of sub-period: 1-9-11 to 31-10-11	
Days constructed week	Calendar dates for constructed week (randomly selected)
Monday	24 Oct
Tuesday	11 Oct
Wednesday	5 Oct
Thursday	27 Oct
Friday	7 Oct
Saturday	8 Oct

SP3: Nov-Dec 2011	Constructed week
Start & end of sub-period: 1-11-11 to 31-12-11	
Days constructed week	Calendar dates for constructed week (randomly selected)
Monday	26 Dec
Tuesday	15 Nov
Wednesday	7 Dec
Thursday	10 Nov
Friday	18 Nov
Saturday	26 Nov

SP4: Jan-Feb 2012	Constructed week
Start & end of sub-period: 1-1-12 to 29-2-12	
Days constructed week	Calendar dates for constructed week (randomly selected)
Monday	20 Feb
Tuesday	28 Feb
Wednesday	29 Feb
Thursday	2 Feb
Friday	3 Feb
Saturday	14 Jan

SP5: March-April 2012	Constructed week
Start & end of sub-period: 1-3-12 to 30-4-12	
Days constructed week	Calendar dates for constructed week (randomly selected)
Monday	12 Mar
Tuesday	27 Mar
Wednesday	25 April
Thursday	12 April
Friday	27 April
Saturday	31 Mar

SP6: May-June 2012	Constructed week
Start & end of sub-period: 1-5-12 to 30-5-12	
Days constructed week	Calendar dates for constructed week (randomly selected)
Monday	25 June

Tuesday	26 June
Wednesday	9 May
Thursday	17 May
Friday	8 June
Saturday	16 June

SP7: July-Aug 2012	Constructed week
Start & end of sub-period: 1-7-12 to 31-8-12	
Days constructed week	Calendar dates for constructed week (randomly selected)
Monday	6 Aug
Tuesday	17 July
Wednesday	1 Aug
Thursday	16 Aug
Friday	31 Aug
Saturday	4 Aug

SP8: Sept-Oct 2012	Constructed week
Start & end of sub-period: 1-9-12 to 31-10-12	
Days constructed week	Calendar dates for constructed week (randomly selected)
Monday	1 Oct
Tuesday	25 Sept
Wednesday	17 Oct
Thursday	27 Sept
Friday	7 Sept
Saturday	27 Oct

SP9: Nov-Dec 2012	Constructed week
Start & end of sub-period: 1-11-12 to 31-12-12	
Days constructed week	Calendar dates for constructed week (randomly selected)
Monday	10 Dec
Tuesday	27 Nov
Wednesday	12 Dec
Thursday	22 Nov
Friday	7 Dec
Saturday	17 Nov

SP10: Jan-Feb 2013	Constructed week
Start & end of sub-period: 01-01-13 to 28-2-13	
Days constructed week	Calendar dates for constructed week (randomly selected)
Monday	25 Feb
Tuesday	5 Feb
Wednesday	13 Feb
Thursday	28 Feb
Friday	15 Feb
Saturday	26 Jan

SP11: March-April 2013	Constructed week
Start & end of sub-period: 1-3-13 to 30-4-13	
Days constructed week	Calendar dates for constructed week (randomly selected)
Monday	1 April
Tuesday	23 April
Wednesday	3 April
Thursday	7 Mar
Friday	15 Mar
Saturday	13 April

SP12: May-June 2013	Constructed week
Start & end of sub-period: 1-5-13 to 30-6-13	
Days constructed week	Calendar dates for constructed week (randomly selected)
Monday	6 May
Tuesday	28 May
Wednesday	26 June
Thursday	30 May
Friday	17 May
Saturday	11 May

Appendix C: Original Flemish Quotes from *De Standaard*

Quotes from 4.1: General labeling of the Ageing Society.

- “een demografische verschuiving” (*De Standaard*, news article, Lemmens, 2011, p. 1)
- “grote generaties gaan met pensioen en de afstuderende jongeren zijn veel minder talrijk” (*De Standaard*, comment; Tegenbos, 2012, p. 2)
- “het aantal zorgbehoevende ouderen groeit” (*De Standaard*, opinion article; Vastiau, 2011, p. 23)

Quotes from 4.2.3: Thematic Ageing Society-frames.

Health frame.

- (Minister Ingrid Lieten, bevoegd voor Innovatie) “heeft daarom een andere oplossing bedacht: een proeftuin opstarten die naar nieuwe, goedkope en onmiddellijk toepasbare vormen van ouderenzorg zoekt.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Goethals & Justaert, 2012, p. 4)
- (Vlaams minister van Welzijn, Jo Vandeurzen) “erkent de problemen in de ouderenzorg (...). Er zijn te weinig plaatsen en er is handenvol geld nodig om de achterstand weg te werken.” (*De Standaard*, news article; FLE, 2012, p. 5)
- “‘Artsen moeten hun patiënten nu vooral leren leven met hun kwaal’, zegt Jan Heyrman, prof huisartsgeneeskunde (KU Leuven). Die evolutie is deels een gevolg van de vergrijzing. Maar ze is er ook mee oorzaak van.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Tegenbos, 2012c, p. 7)
- “Natuurlijk gaan ons lichaam en ons geheugen minder goed functioneren als we ouder worden, maar uit ons onderzoek blijkt dat er ook positieve gevolgen zijn. (...) We hebben geleerd om beter om te gaan met gemengde gevoelens en tegenslag, en worden - bij gebrek aan een beter woord - gelukkiger.” (*De Standaard*, news article; NLB, 2012, p. 10)

Education frame.

- “In onze vergrijzende maatschappij is langer zelfstandig thuis wonen de toekomst. Architecten moeten woningen bedenken die meegroeien met de wensen en noden in een mensenleven.” (*De Standaard*, news article; KVH, 2012, p. 50)
- “Voorzie in diverse leerwegen naar een beroep of een sector. Leerwegen voor jongeren en ouderen, maar bijvoorbeeld ook voor meer praktisch en meer theoretisch georiënteerde mensen.” (*De Standaard*, comment; Tegenbos, 2012b, p. 2)

Awareness frame.

- “Het financiële risico dat de langere levensverwachting inhoudt, wordt waarschijnlijk onderschat en zal zwaar wegen op de publieke financiën van de ontwikkelde landen.” (*De Standaard*, news article; AFP, 2012, p. 27)
- “Laten we onszelf niet in slaap wiegen (...).Elk jaar dat we het probleem uitstellen, betalen we dubbel terug.” (*De Standaard*, news article; De Smet, 2013c, p. 7)

Rare views: Gay, housing, literature and invisibility.

- “Holebi's met grijze haren verschijnen niet in de media. Zelfs niet in de gayliteratuur of -cinema.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Deknudt, 2012, p. 4)
- “Een eigentijds voorbeeld is de inloopdouche: die is mooi, praktisch, onderhoudsvriendelijk en comfortabel voor iedereen.” (*De Standaard*, news article; KVH, 2012, p. 50)
- “Elke tijd krijgt de literatuur die hij verdient (...). Dat betekent een oververtegenwoordiging van proza dat appelleert aan een vergrijzende bevolking.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Cloostermans, 2011, p. 8)
- “Ouderen (...) ze zijn, door onze snelle vergrijzing, ook steeds met meer. (...) En toch hebben we er amper aandacht voor.” *De Standaard*, news article; Deknudt, 2012, p. 4)

Quotes from 4.2.4: Normative framing of the Ageing Society.

- “Door de veroudering van de bevolking neemt de dementieproblematiek toe.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Gregoor, 2012, p. 57)
- “Vooral door de toenemende vergrijzing groeit het spectaculair”. (*De Standaard*, news article; Smeets, 2012, p. 23)
- “De vergrijzing is een enorme uitdaging voor de betaalbaarheid van de sociale zekerheid.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Newsroom, 2012a, p. 38)
- “Ook de betaalbaarheid van de pensioenen baart velen zorgen: meer en meer mensen zijn ervan overtuigd over tien jaar voor hun eigen pensioen te moeten zorgen.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Newsroom, 2011a, p. 11)
- “Geef toe, als we het over vergrijzing hebben, denken we inderdaad aan onbetaalbare pensioenen, gezondheidsproblemen en eenzaamheid.” (*De Standaard*, news article; NLB, 2012, p. 10)
- “En bovenal tonen we ons niet in staat een vooruitziend beleid te voeren, bijvoorbeeld om de vergrijzing op te vangen.” (*De Standaard*, comment; Tegenbos, 2011, p. 2)

- “Om, naast de kosten die de vergrijzing met zich meebrengt, budgettaire ruimte te creëren (...), zullen de overheden (...) harder moeten durven te hakken in hun consumptie-uitgaven.” (*De Standaard*, comment; Sturtewagen, 2012, p. 2)
- “Ondertussen beseft ik dat een oudere bevolking een immens potentieel inhoudt. Neem bijvoorbeeld de arbeidsmarkt.” (*De Standaard*, news article; NLB, 2012, p. 10)
- “Heel veel ambtenaren gaan met pensioen. Waarom zetten we niet in op een efficiënte en performante overheid?” (*De Standaard*, opinion article; De Kerpel, 2012, p. 27)
- “Alles wat ouderen nodig hebben om nog ouder te kunnen worden, liefst in zo comfortabel mogelijke omstandigheden, is waard om in te beleggen.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Coppens, 2012, p. 38)
- „Uit ons onderzoek blijkt dat er ook positieve gevolgen zijn. (...) zien we onze prioriteiten beter. We focussen meer op positieve emoties.” (*De Standaard*, news article; NLB, 2012, p. 10)

Quotes from 4.3.1: Belgian Budget for the Ageing Society.

- „De Hoge Raad van Financiën (...) waarschuwt dat een strikt besparingstraject absoluut noodzakelijk (is) om de kosten van de vergrijzing te kunnen blijven betalen.“ (*De Standaard*, news article; Winckelmans, 2012, p. 8)
- “Dat betekent dat we jaren vroeger dan voorspeld voor de financiële muur komen te staan. Het is dus onverantwoord om de bevolking voor te houden dat er spoedig budgettaire ruimte komt.” (*De Standaard*, comment; Sturtewagen, 2013a, p. 2)
- “Onkelinx ziet die zware inspanning in crisistijden niet zitten. Zij wil een groter tekort op de begroting toestaan om meer ruimte te houden voor werkgelegenheidsmaatregelen.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Winckelmans, 2012, p. 8)
- “structureel gezond” (*De Standaard*; news article; De Smet, 2013a, p. 1)
- „Onze situatie is fragiel: er is de hoge schuld, de vergrijzing en er zijn de Europese eisen. We moeten vermijden dat we terechtkomen in jaren van belangenconflicten tussen de verschillende regeringen.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Van Impe, 2011, p. 4)
- „Er is geen weg naast: we moeten de harde discussie voeren hoe de besparingen moeten worden verdeeld. Tussen de federatie en de deelstaten en tussen de deelstaten onderling.” (*De Standaard*, comment; Sturtewagen, 2013a, p. 2)
- “Alleen bij economische crisissen, in noodsituaties of om de vergrijzing op te vangen, kan die schuldrem wat gelost worden.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Winckelmans, 2011, p. 7)

Quotes from 4.3.2: Challenging preparation for the Ageing Society.

- „De financiële crisis van de jongste vijf jaar heeft ons zwaar uit koers geslagen in de strijd om de kosten van de vergrijzing aan te kunnen.“ (*De Standaard*, comment; Sturtewagen, 2013a, p. 2)
- „Het gaat om een structureel tekort.“ (*De Standaard*, news article; De Smet, 2013c, p. 7)
- “Bovenal tonen we ons niet in staat een vooruitziend beleid te voeren, bijvoorbeeld om de vergrijzing op te vangen.” (*De Standaard*, comment; Tegenbos, 2011, p. 2)
- “Het is tegen hun natuur: dingen in beweging zetten waarvan in het beste geval alleen hun opvolgers de vruchten zullen plukken.” (*De Standaard*, comment; Sturtewagen, 2012, p. 2)
- “Dat de politiek wel best in staat is om over de grenzen van één legislatuur te denken. Er is toch een vergrijzingscommissie? (...) Op alle niveaus wordt de vergrijzing voorbereid.” (*De Standaard*, news article; FLE, 2012, p. 5).

Quotes from 4.3.3: Impact of the Ageing Society on the pension system.

- „Meer en meer mensen zijn ervan overtuigd over tien jaar voor hun eigen pensioen te moeten zorgen (...). En de vergrijzing, die zich vooral in Vlaanderen voordoet en minder in Wallonië en Brussel, voedt die vrees alleen maar.“ (*De Standaard*, news article; Newsroom, 2011a, p. 11)
- “Werpt het Generatiepact, dat de voorwaarden voor brugpensioen wat verstrengde, eindelijk vruchten af.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Lemmens, 2011, p. 1)
- “Vroeger vond men brugpensioen heel normaal. Nu beseft men dat we langer moeten werken.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Lemmens, 2011, p. 1)
- “Het IMF wil dat de duur van het actieve leven verlengd wordt, zodat die opnieuw meer in verhouding zou staan met de totale levensduur.” (*De Standaard*, news article; AFP, 2012, p. 27).
- “Vergeet niet dat de generatie die nu op de arbeidsmarkt komt, niet eens halfweg haar professionele carrière zal zijn als het aantal gepensioneerden dat ze moet onderhouden met een derde is toegenomen.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Coppens, 2012, p. 38).
- “Wat we niet moeten hebben is aanbevelingen waarbij iedereen vervolgens doet wat hij wil. (Europees President, ktn) Van Rompuy vindt dat het beter is dergelijke hervormingen verplichtend te maken.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Newsroom, 2012, p. 38).
- „Toen de postpoliticus Frank Vandenbroucke (...) zei dat we in 2014 geen staatshervorming maar een pensioenhervorming nodig hebben, rees meteen de vraag of

het tweede wel kan zonder het eerste.” (*De Standaard*, opinion article; Sturtewagen, 2013b, p. 44).

- “Geen enkele Belgische regeringspartij is vragende partij om de wettelijke pensioenleeftijd te verhogen.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Newsroom, 2012, p. 38).
- “In plaats van verplichte pensioenleeftijden, geloof ik in een vrije keuze. Zorg dat werknemers kunnen blijven werken als ze dat willen, en je zult verbaasd zijn hoeveel mensen die keuze maken.” (*De Standaard*, news article; NLB, 2012, p. 10).

Quotes from 4.3.4: Impact of Ageing Society on the labour market.

- “De oorlog om het talent is geen sprookje, maar woedt al volop.” (*De Standaard*, comment; Tegenbos, 2012b, p. 2).
- “Als de arbeidsmarkt zo evolueert (...) zal er om hen gevochten worden. Als ze ietwat gestudeerd hebben.” (*De Standaard*, comment; Tegenbos, 2012b, p. 2).
- “Naar schatting 2.9 miljoen Belgen hebben chronische pijn. (...) Vooral door de toenemende vergrijzing groeit het fenomeen spectaculair.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Smeets, 2012, p. 23).
- “De vergrijzing brengt enorme uitdagingen met zich mee. Waarom zien we daar geen kans in om laaggeschoolden een boeiende en uitdagende job aan te bieden?” (*De Standaard*, opinion article; De Kerpel, 2012, p. 27).
- “Druk via regelgeving is doeltreffend. Het begint bedrijven eindelijk te dagen dat wie concurrentieel wil blijven in een vergrijzende samenleving, het zich niet kan veroorloven om vrouwelijk talent te negeren.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Newsroom, 2013, p. 32).

Quote from 4.3.5: Investment in Ageing Society-businesses.

- “Beleggen in vergrijzing is beleggen in de toekomst.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Coppens, 2012, p. 38).

Quotes from 5.1.2: Ageing Society as common sense and discursive argument.

- “Tegen 2030 kan één op de tien volwassenen wereldwijd diabetes hebben. (...) Een belangrijke oorzaak van de stijging is de vergrijzing.” (*De Standaard*, news article; AP, 2011, p. 13).
- “Naar schatting 2,9 miljoen Belgen hebben chronische pijn. (...) Vooral door de toenemende vergrijzing groeit het fenomeen spectaculair.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Smeets, 2012, p. 23)

- “Als gevolg van de vergrijzing worden almaar meer ouderen met kanker geconfronteerd.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Beel, 2012, p. 12)
- “Bovendien is een strikt besparingstraject absoluut noodzakelijk om de kosten van de vergrijzing te kunnen blijven betalen.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Winckelmans, 2012, p. 8)
- “De vergrijzingskosten dreigen nog sterker te ontsporen dan toen werd aangenomen. (...) Nu niet besparen is struisvogelpolitiek.’ (*De Standaard*, news article; De Smet, 2013c, p. 7)
- “Alle economen benadrukken dat het veel belangrijker is om maatregelen te nemen die de overheidsfinanciën structureel gezond maken, zoals het aanpakken van de vergrijzing en het hervormen van de arbeidsmarkt.” (*De Standaard*, news article; De Smet, 2013a, p. 1)
- “Om de vergrijzing bij te benen, zijn er tot 2025 gemiddeld 2.700 nieuwe rusthuisbedden per jaar nodig.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Vanhecke, 2011, p. 8)

Quotes from 5.2.2: Ageing Society as inevitable threat demanding instantaneous measures.

- “De uitdaging van de vergrijzing was groter geworden en de impact ervan was dichterbij gekomen.” (*De Standaard*, opinion article; Sturtewagen, 2013b, p. 44)
- “Ouderen (...) ze zijn, door onze snelle vergrijzing, ook steeds met meer.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Deknudt, 2012, p. 4)
- “We gaan naar de wezenlijke vraag: blijven we worstelen op een zinkende boot? Vinden we een vergelijk waardoor we eindelijk samen kunnen gaan hopen? Of gaan we het, ieder voor zich, zwemmend proberen?” (*De Standaard*, opinion article; Sturtewagen, 2013b, p. 44)
- “Ook de vergrijzing brengt enorme uitdagingen met zich mee. (...) Heel veel ambtenaren gaan met pensioen. Waarom zetten we niet in op een efficiënte en performante overheid?” (*De Standaard*, opinion article; De Kerpel, 2012, p. 27)

Quotes from 5.3.2: Political-economic coverage with strong financial focus.

- “Bovendien is een strikt besparingstraject absoluut noodzakelijk om de kosten van de vergrijzing te kunnen blijven betalen.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Winckelmans, 2012, p. 8).
- “Om, naast de kosten die de vergrijzing met zich meebrengt, budgettaire ruimte te creëren (...), zullen de overheden (...) harder moeten durven te hakken in hun consumptie-uitgaven.” (*De Standaard*, comment; Sturtewagen, 2012, p. 2)

- “En er zijn toch kostenramingen voor de toekomst gemaakt? Op alle niveaus wordt de vergrijzing voorbereid.” (*De Standaard*, news article; FLE, 2012, p. 5)
- “Om, naast de kosten die de vergrijzing met zich meebrengt, budgettaire ruimte te creëren (...) zullen de overheden (...) harder moeten durven te hakken in hun consumptie-uitgaven.” (*De Standaard*, comment; Sturtewagen, 2012, p. 2)
- “(...) betoogden ze dat de vergrijzing een groot, maar geen onoplosbaar probleem was. Er moesten dringend diepgaande maatregelen komen. (...) Het is een diep ontmoedigende ervaring om, met de kennis van vandaag, de tekst van 3 januari 2004 te herlezen. (...) Wat liep er fout?” (*De Standaard*, opinion article; Sturtewagen, 2013b, p. 44).
- “En bovenal tonen we ons niet in staat een vooruitziend beleid te voeren, bijvoorbeeld om de vergrijzing op te vangen.” (*De Standaard*, comment; Tegenbos, 2011, p. 2)
- “Het is tegen hun natuur: dingen in beweging zetten waarvan in het beste geval alleen hun opvolgers de vruchten zullen plukken.” (*De Standaard*, comment; Sturtewagen, 2012, p. 2)
- “De oorlog om het talent is geen sprookje, maar woedt al volop. (...) Als de arbeidsmarkt zo evolueert (...) zal er om hen gevochten worden.” (*De Standaard*, comment; Tegenbos, 2012b, p. 2).

Quotes from 5.5.1: Underrepresented topics.

- “Grote generaties gaan met pensioen en de afstuderende jongeren zijn veel minder talrijk.” (*De Standaard*, comment; Tegenbos, 2012b, p. 2)
- “De jongste jaren is het aantal 65-plussers zo sterk toegenomen dat tegenover elke gepensioneerde niet eens vier werkenden staan. Tegen 2025 zijn dat er nog maar drie en nog eens een kwarteeuw later zijn er per gepensioneerde nog slechts twee werkenden die de economie draaiende moeten houden en de niet-actieven aan een inkomen moeten helpen.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Coppens, 2012, p. 38)
- “Hoewel de ouderenzorg de komende jaren sterk zal stijgen, kan het niet de bedoeling zijn eindeloos veel rusthuizen bij te bouwen. Dat is onbetaalbaar.” (*De Standaard*, news article; Goethals & Justaert, 2012, p. 4)
- “Volgens Vandeurzen zullen alle overheidsniveaus fors moeten investeren in de ouderenzorg.” (*De Standaard*, news article; FLE, 2012, p. 5)
- “Werklozen die een vergoeding krijgen van de samenleving, moeten (...) ingezet worden om mee te werken in onder meer de zorgverstrekking van ouderen” (*De Standaard*, opinion article; De Kerpel, 2012, p. 27)

Quote from 5.5.3: Underrepresented perspectives.

- “Geef toe, als we het over vergrijzing hebben, denken we inderdaad aan onbetaalbare pensioenen, gezondheidsproblemen en eenzaamheid (...) maar uit ons onderzoek blijkt dat er ook positieve gevolgen zijn.” (*De Standaard*, news article; NLB, 2012, p. 10)
