

## Schedule “Loneliness as a Social Phenomenon: Cross-Cultural Approaches to a Human Condition”

Venue: [Xplanatorium Herrenhausen](#)

Herrenhäuser Str. 5, 30419 Hannover

**Wednesday, June 11**

09:30 – 13:00	Volkswagen Foundation: Joint Program and Lunch
13:00-13:15	<b>Introduction: Differentiating Loneliness and Social Isolation – Interdisciplinary Approaches</b> Aaron Hames, Sachiko Horiguchi, Carolin Fleischer-Heininger, Celia Spoden
13:15 – 14:45	<b>First Session: Conceptual Perspectives on Loneliness</b> <b>Chair: Wolfram Manzenreiter</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Chikako Ozawa-de Silva “The Anatomy of Loneliness and the Phenomenon of a Lonely Society”</li><li>2. Zohar Lederman “Ethics of Loneliness”</li><li>3. Carolin Fleischer-Heininger “Encountering Loneliness in Contemporary Japanese Literature”</li></ol>
14:45 – 15:15	Coffee Break

15:15 – 16:45	<p><b>Second Session: Technological Solutions to Loneliness and Social Isolation</b></p> <p><b>Chair: Felix Spremberg</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Daniel White &amp; Hirofumi Katsuno (presenter) “Modelling Loneliness in Japan: Companion Robot Experiments in Artificial Emotional Intelligence”</li> <li>2. Marit Haldar &amp; Maja Nordtug “Tackling Loneliness Amongst Older People and Homebound Students with Telepresence Technology in Norway”</li> <li>3. Celia Spoden “Avatar Robots as a Solution to Loneliness? Technological Approaches to Overcome Social Isolation from Japan and Germany”</li> </ol>
16:45 – 17:00	Coffee Break
17:00 – 19:00	<p><b>Third Session: Loneliness and Social Isolation in Old Age</b></p> <p><b>Chair: Felix Spremberg</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Heesun Shin and Chihyung Jeon “‘Grandma, Hug Me Tight’: Living with a ‘Robot Grandchild’ in South Korea”</li> <li>2. Cordula Endter “Together Not Alone in Old Age – Digital Innovations for Caring Communities in Rural Areas in Germany”</li> <li>3. Aaron Hames “The Virtues of Analog: Social Life for Older People in Japan”</li> <li>4. Iza Kavedžija “The Spectre of Loneliness: Communities of care and engaged aging in Japan”</li> </ol>
19:00	Dinner

Thursday, June 12	
08:30 – 10:00	<p><b>Fourth Session: Perspectives on Loneliness and Social Isolation from Disability Studies, Psychosocial and Healthcare</b></p> <p><b>Chair: Evelyn Schulz</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Jan Steffens and Thomas Hoffmann “Isolation, Social Development and Disability: A Cultural-historical Approach”</li> <li>2. Sachiko Horiguchi “How Social Workers in Japan, Germany, UK and Sweden Have Been Tackling Social Isolation: Exploring the Relationships Between the Experiences of Social Isolation and Welfare Policies”</li> <li>3. Sebastian Hofstetter “Digital Health Literacy for Burnout and Workplace-Related Social Isolation in Japan: Evaluating Online Resources Using MAPPinfo”</li> </ol>
10:00 – 10:30	Coffee Break
10:30 – 12:00	<p><b>Fifth Session: Bridging Scholarship and Practice – Addressing Loneliness and Social Isolation from a Practitioners Perspectives</b></p> <p>Workshop by Birgit Redlich on “TOGETHER Against the RIGHT. Experiences of Loneliness as a Catalyst for Democratic Distance and Authoritarian Attitudes at Vocational Schools in Germany?”, a project to empower young people from diverse educational or migrational backgrounds in structurally weak areas, who experienced discrimination and loneliness during the coronavirus pandemic. The project is funded as part of the program “Demokratie leben!” by the BMFSFJ, in cooperation between the Adam von Trott Foundation and the Chair of Sociology of Rural Areas at Georg-August-University Göttingen.</p>
12:00 – 13:00	Volkswagen Foundation: Joint Lunch

13:00 – 16:00	<p><b>Field Trip “Growing Older in the Midst of it All – Active On-Site”, Arbeiterwohlfahrt Hannover e.V. List Nord Ost and Anderten</b></p> <p>Introduction by Silke Oppenhausen, team leader social work for older people at the Arbeiterwohlfahrt Hannover e.V. to „Mittendrin älter werden – aktiv vor Ort“ / “Growing Older in the Midst of it All – Active On-Site”, a project addressing loneliness amongst older adults threatened or affected by exclusion from the labor market. The project is funded under the BMFSFJ-program “Strengthening the Participation of Older People – Against Loneliness and Social Isolation” and the European Social Fund Plus</p>
After 16:00	<p><b>Volkswagen Foundation: Joint Activity, Dinner, and Public Event on Loneliness and Social Isolation</b></p> <p><b>16:00-17:00 Panel discussion</b></p> <p><b>17:00-18:00 Exhibition of/by the symposia from the second theme week</b></p> <p><b>18:00-19:00 Dinner</b></p> <p><b>19:00-20:30 Film Screening</b> “Hug Me Tight: A Robot Story”, produced by Heesun Shin and Chihyung Jeon with support from the National Research Foundation of South Korea</p> <p>Introduction by Heesun Shin and Chihyung Jeon</p>

Friday, June 13	
09:00 – 09:30	Comments by Chairs (10 minutes each)
09:30 – 10:30	<p>Working Groups: How Can Societies Become More Inclusive and Reduce Loneliness and Social Isolation?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Identifying social structures that lead to exclusion, social isolation, and feelings of loneliness; how to build inclusive social structures that foster meaningful connections, mutual social support, and a sense of belonging;</li> <li>2) Loneliness and social isolation in different age groups and specific challenges;</li> <li>3) The roles of science, technology, civil society, and politics, and their connections in addressing social isolation and loneliness</li> </ol>
10:30 – 12:00	Roundtable Discussion: Further Cooperation and Dissemination of Results (joint grant proposal, edited volume, online platform with teaching materials)
12:00 – 14:00	Volkswagen Foundation: Joint Closing Remarks, Panel Discussion, and Lunch

#### **Volkswagen Foundation Thematic Week “Tackling Loneliness” Juni 11-13, 2025 – Four Parallel Symposia**

1. Tackling Loneliness among young People in Africa, Prof. Dr. Shuyan Liu, Charité Universitätsmedizin Berlin
2. Loneliness as a Social Phenomenon: Cross-cultural Approaches to a Human Condition, Dr. Celia Spoden & Dr. Carolin Fleischer-Heininger DIJ, Sachiko Horiguchi (Temple University, Japan Campus), Aaron Hames (The Chinese University Hong Kong)
3. The next big Questions on Loneliness: Integrating National and International Perspectives on Research and Policy Priorities, Prof. Dr. Maike Luhmann, Universität Bochum
4. Loneliness in Democracy, Priv.-Doz. Dr. Janosch Schobin, Universität Kassel