Chapter 6
Conclusions
6.1 Introduction
This thesis contributes to a more sustained engagement with the relationship between ageing and place in human geography. The aim of this thesis is to provide an understanding of the elements that play a role in the subjective dimensions of ageing in place. In particular, the focus is on the neighbourhood as a place of ageing. Focusing on the neighbourhood can be seen in the light of ageing in place policies and a growing body of research that stresses the importance of the physical and social infrastructure of the neighbourhood for older adults’ quality of life. To gain insight into the subjective dimensions of ageing in place, in-depth interviews and walking interviews were conducted with older adults in three urban neighbourhoods in the city of Groningen, the Netherlands. In examining the elements that influence how older adults’ experiences of everyday life in their neighbourhood come into being, I drew on relational thinking.

In the remainder of this chapter, an overview of the main findings is first provided along two main themes: the first theme considers ageing in place from a relational perspective, the second focuses on older adults’ experiences of everyday life in relation to policy assumptions. Following this, reflections on researching ageing in place and future research directions are provided.

6.2 Ageing in place: a relational perspective
This thesis considers ageing in place from a relational perspective. I found that the elements listed below play an important role in the “entwined becomings” (Schwanen et al., 2012, p. 2) of older adults’ experiences of everyday life in their neighbourhood. For the purpose of analysis, these elements are grouped according to the four organising principles of everyday life (self, others, place and time) that were used in this thesis to examine the subjective dimensions of ageing in place:

- **Self**
  - Older adults’ engagement with their neighbourhood over the life course

- **Others**
  - Younger and older neighbourhood residents
  - Societal perceptions of old age

- **Place**
  - Neighbourhood design
  - Elements in the built environment

- **Time**
  - Everyday rhythms of ageing in the neighbourhood
  - Sense of time

In the remainder of this section, the connections between these elements are addressed whilst drawing on the various themes that were discussed in Chapters 2 to 5. These are the discontinuities of ageing in place in relation to neighbourhood transitions (Chapter 2), the meaning of local social contacts (Chapter 3), everyday practices (Chapters 2 and 4) and the daily temporal orderings of ageing in place (Chapter 5).
In Chapter 2, the relational approach adopted for this research is set out in relation to understanding the impact of neighbourhood transitions on older adults’ sense of belonging. In existing approaches to the relationship between older adults and place, people and place are generally treated as separate entities that either fit or do not fit together depending on whether older adults possess the competences required to adapt to change (Ziegler, 2012). A relational approach goes beyond understanding the person-environment relationship in terms of ‘fit’ or adaptation to place (see Lawton, 1977) and understands people and places as being produced in relation to each other (e.g. Duff, 2010; Law, 1999). In this chapter, this approach is used to examine how older people who are living in a former working-class neighbourhood, now in the process of urban renewal, experience and negotiate neighbourhood transitions in everyday life. It has been suggested that older adults who have lived in their neighbourhood for a long time may experience problems with adapting to their changing surroundings as new norms and practices evolve that make them feel ‘out of place’ (Milligan et al., 2005; Rowles and Watkins, 2003). However, my research indicates that older people actively rework their routines in everyday places and interactions in order to maintain a sense of familiarity and predictability in such times of change. The respondents’ long-term residency and time spent in the neighbourhood proved to be a resource when dealing with change, as the working-class ‘insideness’ they had developed over the years conferred a sense of continuity, belonging and attachment. They not only retained a sense of belonging for themselves, they did so for other residents through giving shape to neighbourhood change. For instance, one of my respondents had been able to preserve a piece of the Oosterpark’s physical heritage as an artwork that was embedded in the wall of a new building. Such findings indicate that the relationship between a changing neighbourhood and its older residents is not unidirectional but reciprocal in nature.

In Chapter 3, relational thinking was used to inform my understanding of the meaning of local social contacts, and the obstacles to their potential benefits, in the context of ageing in place. This topic was examined through the conceptual lens of social capital. Social capital reflects the ability of individuals and communities to secure benefits from social networks (Portes, 1998). For people who are less mobile, such as older adults, local social capital is thought to be especially important for acquiring social and instrumental support, and thereby as contributing to their health and wellbeing (Gray, 2009). The literature on the relationship between social capital and the health and wellbeing of older people tends to be dominated by a quantitative approach, which I have argued fails to account for the contingent and relational character of local social contacts. By focusing on older adults’ experiences of everyday life, I revealed that a neighbourhood is not an isotropic surface on which the opportunities for developing social capital are evenly distributed. The potential benefits from older adults’ local social contacts
are contingent on the extent to which the neighbourhood design facilitates social encounters, and varies depending on the place of social interaction and the expectations associated with these interactions. Younger neighbours and other older adults in the neighbourhood were most salient in terms of the benefits respondents hoped to derive from interactions with these age groups. For some respondents, the internalisation of society’s ideal of active ageing seemed to impede them in asking younger neighbours for practical support as they thought they would be seen as too active to warrant assistance. Furthermore, this active ideal hindered respondents in benefitting from contacts with other older people who would discuss ‘old people’ topics such as diminishing health and medicine. Together, these findings suggest that older adults’ social capital in their neighbourhood can be considered as a socially negotiated construct that is shaped through the micro-geographies of everyday life.

Older adults’ experiences of everyday life in their neighbourhood come into being through practices (e.g. Eyles, 1989; Skinner et al., 2014) and this is highlighted in Chapters 2 and 4. In these chapters, I refer to this practised nature of everyday experiences as ‘place-making’ (see also Rowles and Watkins, 2003). In Chapter 2, two strands of research into place-making in old age were distinguished: one in which the relationship between older adults and their environment is understood in functional terms (i.e. how places can be helpful in engaging in everyday activities) (see Lawton and Nahemow, 1973; Lawton, 1977); and one which stresses the experiential and affective bonds with places (see Rowles, 1978; Rowles, 1983). In this chapter, I showed that the functional and affective dimensions of place-making are interwoven. For example, the continuation of the informal support and care practices, on which neighbourhood life in the Oosterpark neighbourhood was previously based, acted as both a means through which respondents retained a sense of a community that they were familiar with (affective dimension) and as a resource for providing social and instrumental support to other older adults in the neighbourhood (functional dimension).

In Chapter 4, the focus shifted to one particular everyday practice, the act of walking, in order to understand older adults’ engagement with neighbourhood space. As walking is an important mode of everyday mobility for older people living in densely populated urban neighbourhoods, it is also significant in terms of how it affects experiences of everyday life. To explore the subjective dimensions of older adults’ use of neighbourhood space through walking, I undertook walking interviews. These walking interviews proved to be particularly valuable for eliciting the embodied and emplaced character of place experiences. These notions reflect the idea that experiences stand in relation to the specific place and time in which they come into being and the body’s sensorial and affective engagement with its environment (Elwood and Martin, 2000; Spinney, 2014; Van Hoven, 2011). My research revealed that older adults’ place-making through walk-
ing occurs in the form of routes, and that these routes are informed by, as well as evoke, experiences and feelings. The routes that respondents took were informed by their different engagements with the neighbourhood over the life course, which literally moved them in different directions. For respondents for whom the neighbourhood was their central setting of experience throughout their life course, routes were informed by the need to relive memorable past feelings of neighbourhood social life. The routes of respondents who had been engaged in social networks outside the neighbourhood before their mobility started to decrease were guided, to a large extent, by the need to experience sociability in their proximate environment. However, for my respondents in general, the act of walking in itself evoked feelings of being different because elements in the built environment signified how young and able-bodied people involved in the design and planning of the neighbourhood seemed to be unaware of older residents’ routes and their physical abilities. These findings indicate that everyday practices play an important role in understanding the subjective dimensions of ageing in place, as it is through practices like walking that feelings of belonging and exclusion are reproduced.

An emphasis in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 was on the interplay of self, others and place in the constitution of older adults’ experiences. The role of ‘time’ in older adults’ experiences of everyday life in their neighbourhood was further examined in Chapter 5. In Chapter 3, we had seen that the different daily time geographies of respondents and their younger neighbours was an obstacle to developing local social capital. These daily temporal orderings of ageing in urban neighbourhoods were further explored in Chapter 5. Drawing on Lefebvre’s Rhythmanalysis (2004), I see neighbourhoods as rhythmic ensembles that consist of multiple rhythms (e.g. social, non-human, corporeal, mobile and institutionally inscribed). There is a hierarchy in the everyday local rhythms of neighbourhoods, and the orderings of these rhythms affect how people experience daily life and how they value their own rhythms in relation to those of others (Edensor and Holloway, 2008; Lefebvre, 2004). The findings revealed how the contrasting daily time geographies of the older and the younger residents emphasise the slowness of the rhythms of later life. The rhythms of younger people, and of the respondents’ younger selves, seemed to be valued more highly in respondents’ ranking. In order to counteract the negative connotations they attached to the rhythms of later life, respondents sought ways of making time eventful, and experienced this as a positive thing. The findings indicate that making time eventful (i.e. being busy) relates to the ideal of activity in old age, which implicitly refers to the young, able-bodied and working population with a higher tempo of life.

To conclude, to date “relational thinking has not been highly visible in geographical research on ageing” (Skinner et al., 2014, p. 12) despite it having great potential in conceptualising the relationship between older adults and place. Through thinking
in relational terms, I was able to distinguish the interwovenness and the dynamics of elements that play a role in the subjective dimensions of ageing in place. The value of viewing ageing in place from a relational perspective lies not only in mapping the connections between the elements involved in the co-creation of older adults’ experiences but also, and more so, in showing the significance of these specific connections in how feelings of belonging, exclusion and wellbeing come into being in a neighbourhood space.

6.3 Ageing in place: assumptions and realities
The promotion of ageing in place policies stresses that growing old in one’s own home and neighbourhood is in the best interest of older adults, as they can age within a familiar and predictable environment that is supportive of their social, emotional and instrumental needs (Davies and James, 2011). As such, ageing in place is thought to “positively contribute to an increase in wellbeing, independence, social participation and healthy ageing” (Sixsmith and Sixsmith, 2008, p. 220). In this thesis, I have addressed some of the underlying assumptions of ageing in place policies in light of older adults’ experiences of everyday life in their neighbourhood. The main issues that are covered in this section relate to neighbourhood change, care in the community, mobility and social integration.

Inherent to ageing in place policies is, I argue, a rather static notion of place that overlooks discontinuities in a neighbourhood. Social and physical transformations can turn a neighbourhood into an unfamiliar environment (Reijndorp, 2007). In the Netherlands, many neighbourhoods undergo significant changes as a result of state-led urban renewal strategies. As such, consideration should be given to what discontinuities of place mean to older adults within the notion of ageing in place. By focusing on older adults’ experiences of everyday life in a neighbourhood that is in the process of urban renewal, this static notion of ageing in place is questioned in Chapter 2. The findings showed that the changing character and appearance of the Oosterpark district evoked feelings of nostalgia for a lost community. However, respondents were able to retain a sense of community by actively giving shape to neighbourhood changes by transferring their working-class ‘insideness’ (see Rowles, 1983) to their present lives. This working-class insideness constituted the continuation of social interaction in the street, informal forms of support and care in the neighbourhood and practices of self-organisation. These everyday practices conferred a sense of familiarity and community. However, in contrast to the intergenerational character of past neighbourhood life, respondents’ present experiences of everyday life in the neighbourhood were largely restricted to interactions with older adults and places dominated by other older adults. These findings suggest that although older adults can experience familiarity and continuity despite neighbourhood change, the lack of intergenerational interactions challenge the notion of community care which underlies ageing in place policies (Milligan, 2009). Although older adults
have been identified as important contributors to neighbourhoods through the provision of informal support (see Hardill and Baines, 2009), there eventually comes a time when they themselves require care and support.

The challenges facing care in the community are further addressed in Chapter 3. In this chapter, I questioned the assumption, inherent in the Dutch Social Support Act, that neighbourhoods will act as supportive communities (i.e. residents will provide instrumental and social support) for their older and more vulnerable residents (Van der Meer et al., 2008). Here, I used the concept of social capital to examine the potential obstacles to, and opportunities for, older adults having local social contacts. Putnam’s conceptualisation of social capital has become highly influential in the policy arena as it stresses the advantages of social networks for the health and wellbeing of older adults, thereby legitimising it as a “no-cost alternative for social welfare provision” (Naughton, 2013, p. 2). Whereas Putnam’s conceptualisation focuses on the outcomes of social capital, I am interested in the mechanisms through which it comes into being in the everyday lives of older adults in the neighbourhood. I identified many obstacles to and, to a lesser extent, opportunities for developing and maintaining meaningful local social contacts. Trusting relationships between older adults and younger residents were hard to establish, at least in part because of the different time-geographies of the two groups and the impediments the older respondents felt to asking younger neighbours for instrumental support. Further, contacts with other older residents did not necessarily prove to be a resource in developing older adults’ social capital. Although contacts with older neighbours were positively valued in terms of the sense of neighbourliness they invoked, contacts with other older residents at meeting places did not always result in meaningful relationships. These findings demonstrate that the reality of care in the community is more complex than generally assumed in ageing in place policies.

Ageing in place policies pose challenges for planning practice in terms of (re)designing neighbourhoods to facilitate the longer independent living of the older population. Enhancing older adults’ independent mobility entails improving the walkability of neighbourhood public spaces. Walkability refers to the quality of a pedestrian space, and has traditionally been seen from a transportation efficiency perspective - using measures such as speed of pedestrian flow (Hutabarat Lo, 2009). Although walkability researchers and planners have recognised the physiological needs of the older person in traversing space, highlighting the importance of resting places and clear signage, the meanings that older people attach to walking in their neighbourhood and the ways in which these meanings shape where and why they walk have received little attention (Andrews et al., 2012; Hockey et al., 2013). In Chapter 4, experiences and feelings of walking in the neighbourhood were examined in order to highlight the subjective dimension of older adults’ use of their neighbourhood. Researchers and policymakers have posited walking as a
means to stay active and healthy in later life, a view shared by the respondents. However, through focusing on older adults’ everyday life, I found that the reasons for walking, and the routes respondents chose to walk, are also informed by the need for sociability and reliving memorable past feelings of neighbourhood social life.

A key element of ageing in place policies is enhancing the social integration of older people into the wider society. In practice, this is realised through improvements in the built environment and social welfare interventions (Gilroy, 2008). However, I would argue that older adults’ social integration also comes about through place as well as through time. In Chapter 5, older adults’ daily rhythms and the ways in which these rhythms contribute to how they experience everyday life in the neighbourhood were examined. The temporal segregation of age groups within the neighbourhood was experienced as a ‘generational divide’. The faster pace of younger residents’ daily lives and their greater mobility provided a negative stress that the respondents ‘were old’ and further emphasised their stasis in the neighbourhood. These results suggest that although ageing in place policies presuppose that older adults will be socially integrated, the daily rhythms of ageing in the neighbourhood can evoke a sense of ‘otherness’.

6.4 Reflections on researching ageing in place

In this section, I reflect on the research methods that I adopted for this research and the ethical considerations and dilemmas that arose concerning these methods. Further, I also reflect on my positionality in relation to the knowledge produced in this thesis concerning the subjective dimensions of ageing in place.

The methods adopted in this thesis have contributed to a greater understanding of the subjective dimensions of ageing in place (e.g. Peace et al., 2011; Sixsmith and Sixsmith, 2008; Smith, 2009; Wiles et al., 2012). Insight into the experiences of older people who are ageing in place is particularly relevant in the context of developing ‘age-friendly’ environments. Murray (2015) has recently contended that the experiences of older adults have not been taken into account when it comes to implementing age-friendly policies (see also Hockey et al., 2013). Partly, this has to do with the limited extent to which older people are included in decision-making processes about their local environment (see Buffel et al., 2012; Day, 2010; Hockey et al., 2013). Older people, especially those less ‘active’ and vulnerable, tend to be underrepresented in planning processes and policy and service development. Another factor relates to the challenge facing policymakers in trying to make sense, given the breadth of multidisciplinary literature, of the elements of older people’s spatial experiences that deal with the significance of place in their everyday lives (Hockey et al., 2013).

Given that such issues impede consideration of the subjective dimensions of ageing in place when it comes to the development of age-friendly environments, the use
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of walking interviews in this study proved to be particularly useful in offering a clear articulation of the spatiality of older adults’ relationship with their neighbourhood. By adopting this ‘in place’ method, it became possible to directly link respondents’ experiences to elements in the built environment. In communicating my research beyond academia, through involvement in various public engagement activities, I saw how examples, that had arisen during the walking interviews, of older adults’ experience and use of neighbourhood space turned out to be particularly useful in raising the awareness of policymakers and care professionals as to how people experience place through their everyday routes and routines. In this way, at least to some extent, I was able to extend the knowledge produced for this thesis into other arenas. Further, the empirical data generated from both the in-depth interviews and the walking interviews provided useful input for discussing older adults’ social capital in relation to the realities and complexities of civil society. To this end, I devised a role-play exercise in which the participants of a symposium on care innovations had to seek ways of improving the social capital of a fictive older person ‘Mr Janssen’, while acting as neighbours, children, community centre volunteers and social workers.

 Whilst insight into the elements that play a role in older adults’ experiences of place offers the potential to valorise knowledge, some ethical considerations and dilemmas that arose in the research project also need to be considered. These issues concern the researcher-respondent relationship and how to minimise the potential to cause harm. In trying to make the respondents feel comfortable, I tried to establish an atmosphere that was similar to a friendly conversation in which they would hopefully feel free to express themselves in everyday language and to address topics that were not included in the interview guide. The majority of respondents were pleasantly surprised about the informal character of the interview as they had not expected to be able to ‘just talk’ about their everyday lives. However, my friendly visits also raised expectations of future visits as respondents indicated that I could always drop by for a coffee if I should happen to be in the neighbourhood, thereby hoping to “extend the relationship beyond the boundaries of ‘researcher-respondent’” (Negrini, 2015, p. 76). One of the respondents even bought me a bunch of flowers during a walking interview as she was so happy about me visiting her and showing interest in her stories. As promised, after the interviews, I sent the participants a letter in which I informed them about the results. Further, I sent each of them a Christmas card to thank them for their participation in my project. As I did not have time to visit the respondents again, the question remains as to what extent the letter and Christmas card were appreciated rather than causing disappointment because I had not visited them again. Another ethical concern relates to the potential risks involved for the respondents in conducting the walking interviews. To minimise the risk of injuries or fatigue, respondents were asked to set the route and duration of the walk, and interviews
Chapter 6 were rescheduled in the event of adverse weather conditions. One of the respondents indicated that he preferred to conduct the interview by bike. I was somewhat hesitant as he had previously indicated that he had balance problems but, as he was insistent on using the bicycle, I decided to respect his choice. However, during the interview, he fell off his bike while pointing at a building. Fortunately, he was not injured but this example raises concerns on how to balance minimising the potential for harm that could occur against respecting respondents’ wishes.

Some final reflections on my positionality, and its influence on the knowledge produced in this thesis about the subjective dimensions of ageing in place, are now made. At the start of this research project, my assumptions about older adults were to a large extent informed by ageist stereotyping. For instance, as addressed in Chapter 5, I thought that older people would have all the time in the world for my interviews, simply because they had retired. Further, until the start of the research project, my interactions with older people were limited to contacts with my grandparents. However, the intergenerational research encounters highlighted my misconceptions about older adults. Talking with older people as a researcher rather than a grandchild, changed my outlook on later life as I realised that older people are not solely defined by their role as grandparents. The intergenerational research encounters also had a significant impact on how relational thinking informed the analysis of the interview data as it made me aware of how I and others like me are involved in the creation of older adults’ experiences. For instance, when respondents expressed the desire for lively streets, in which they could occasionally greet someone, I realised that I was an element in them experiencing a lack of liveliness: as a younger working person, I spend most of my time at work and in places outside my neighbourhood. As such, the intergenerational research encounters proved to be a means for reconceptualising older adults’ engagement with place in a relational manner.

6.5 Future research directions
In the introduction of this thesis, it was noted that “the reality [of ageing in place] is not straightforward” (Sixsmith and Sixsmith, 2008, p. 219). Indeed, the findings presented in this thesis indicate that ageing in place is far from straightforward and rather complex given the many factors that co-create older adults’ experiences. This should not be seen as an end to examining the elements through which older adults’ experiences come into being, but as a step towards more nuanced perspectives of ageing in place in both research and policy. I believe that viewing ageing in place from a relational standpoint opens up many new research avenues for bringing about such perspectives. In this section, the focus lies on three themes through which ageing in place could be further conceptualised in a relational vein. These are the intersections of the life-worlds of the young and the old, the local social capital of different groups of older people and the
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First, it would be fruitful to consider how older adults’ feelings of belonging and exclusion come into being in relation to the ways in which the life-worlds of young and old intersect in a neighbourhood space. The results in this thesis suggest that older adults’ feelings of ‘otherness’ and of ‘being old’ come into being, at least in part, through the contrast between theirs and the younger residents’ daily rhythms and mobilities (see Chapters 3 and 5 in particular). To examine further how older adults’ subjectivities are constructed in relation to younger generations, it would be beneficial, as indeed was also recently argued by Murray (2015), to view older people’s mobility experiences from an intergenerational perspective. In exploring how the life-worlds of young and old intersect, the daily rhythms of younger and older residents could be mapped by observing their routines, and where these intersect, in the public neighbourhood spaces (see Nio et al., 2009). Such information could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the social, physical and temporal obstacles to, and opportunities for, meaningful intergenerational encounters in the neighbourhood. Furthermore, the intersections of the life-worlds of the young and the old could be better understood through exploring the role of portable communication and audio devices in shaping experiences of belonging and exclusion. During the interviews, some respondents indicated that the fact that many younger people wore headphones made them less inclined to chat. For instance, when Lenie (female, 75-80) was talking about her weekly train journey, she noted: “you feel lonely, there’s no one who is saying a word because they all have a laptop and headphones or they are busy with their phone”. When people are ‘tuned-out’ from their immediate social environment through such portable devices, the value of their ‘eyes upon the street’, which Jane Jacobs (1961) deemed so important for social control (see Chapter 3), may weaken. In a somewhat similar vein, in the context of the neighbourhood, the use of noisy machines in the maintenance of public green areas, such as leaf blowers and lawnmowers, excludes the possibility of an occasional chat. In researching the ways in which social distancing processes, as experienced by older adults, are influenced by portable devices, inspiration could be drawn from work that seeks to understand how everyday technologies shape experiences of place and people’s connection to others (e.g. Bull, 2000).

Second, the geographical account of older adults’ social capital provided in this thesis could form a useful starting point for examining how the experiences of neighbourhood social interactions are shaped for various groups of older people. The perspectives on ageing in place offered in this thesis are based on interviews with older adults who were not suffering from mental health impairments and were able to give their informed consent for participating in the research. It was beyond the scope of this study to explore the experiences of everyday life of older adults with, for example, de-
mentia. With regard to the process of deinstitutionalisation and care in the community, it would be particularly interesting to examine the meanings and experiences of local social capital for ‘vulnerable’ older adults. Here, inspiration could be drawn from, for instance, Bredewold’s (2014) work on the meaning of reciprocity in the relationships between people with an intellectual or psychiatric disability and other neighbourhood residents. Her research shows that these relationships can lead to the exploitation of people with intellectual and psychiatric disabilities, and can also negatively impact on the wellbeing of other neighbourhood residents when the people they support do not express their gratitude. Further, the ways in which local social capital develops for different cultural groups of older people requires more attention. What kinds of obstacles to, and opportunities for, meaningful local social interactions do such groups experience; and in what kinds of places does their social capital develop? My work on the everyday geographies of older Antillean migrants living in a senior co-housing community in the Netherlands (see Lager et al., 2012; Meijering and Lager, 2014) offers some suggestions for exploring these issues and also highlights the role that intentional communities can play in building social capital in a neighbourhood.

Finally, another fruitful extension of this study would be to consider older adults’ feelings of belonging and exclusion in light of some of the recent changes in the landscape of ageing in place. During the period of this research project, and still today, care homes have been closed down and demolished in the Netherlands as a consequence of extramuralisation (deinstitutionalisation). This has led both to forced relocations of older people from a care home to a home in a neighbourhood and to those who are ageing in place losing a local facility (since most care homes include a range of small shops, such as a supermarket and hairdresser) and meeting place (ActiZ, 2014). The majority of my respondents visited their local care home for voluntary work, to have a coffee or a meal in the care home’s restaurant or attend a social activity. Some expressed the desire to move into a care home when their health deteriorated and/or their spouse died in order to “experience sociability” (Geertruida, female, 80-85) in their immediate proximity, but were aware that the chances of getting into a care home were nowadays slim. Thus, the closure of care homes can contribute to ageing in place becoming a lonely experience. Further, it may become harder for volunteers and neighbourhood residents to identify whether an older person is in need of support as the care home, as a place of encounter for neighbourhood residents, is disappearing. Besides the effects of these changing spatialities on ageing in place, I believe that the discontinuities in personnel in care sectors and social welfare provision should be given more attention in exploring older adults’ experiences of everyday life in their neighbourhood. The growth of precarious employment systems seems to threaten continuity in service relationships which, as indicated in Chapter 4, can play an important role in older adults’ wellbeing (see also Gardner,
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Most of the respondents who had received household help had witnessed a rapid turnover of domestic workers, with many moving on in less than a year. This was regretted by some respondents, as they had to repeatedly build new relationships. Whilst these discontinuities may negatively impact on older adults’ wellbeing, one should also consider the role of newly emerging local support and care structures in the construction of feelings of belonging and exclusion. The ways in which online care platforms such as the Dutch online care network WeHelpen [we help], initiated by health insurance companies and housing corporations among others to stimulate informal care and neighbourliness, co-construct older adults’ experiences of everyday neighbourhood life warrant attention in exploring the changing landscape of ageing in place.

To conclude, viewing ageing in place from a relational perspective highlights the significance of the ways in which self, others, place and time are entwined in co-creating older adults’ experiences. As ageing in place occurs in place- and time- specific contexts, and will always be somewhat fluid due to changing public perceptions and policies, these four organising principles of everyday life will remain relevant for understanding older adults’ place in society for generations to come. Moreover, such an appreciation of older adults’ experiences points to society having an ethical and political responsibility for promoting the wellbeing of older citizens. More than devising age-friendly policies, this responsibility has to be enacted in the ways in which we all behave in our everyday places and interactions. It is in everyday life that we contribute to each other’s wellbeing, be it through a greeting or an occasional chat while walking on our neighbourhood’s streets.

References


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