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Neighbourhood walks as place-making in later life

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ABSTRACT

For older people living in densely populated urban neighbourhoods, walking is an important mode of everyday mobility: it allows to engage in neighbourhood social life and can mitigate physiological decline, which is emphasised in healthy ageing discourses. However, walking is also a means through which meanings about the places of one's everyday life are (re)produced and, hence, contributes to feelings of illbeing and wellbeing. In this paper, we provide a phenomenological account of older adults' place-making practices through walking. In examining this topic, we draw on twelve walking interviews with older adults living independently in two urban neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. Our findings reveal that although our respondents developed a sense of 'insideness' through their spatial and social routes and routines, these same routes and routines also acted as exclusionary mechanisms. We argue that these 'meaningful movements', characterised by ambivalence, remain underexposed in healthy ageing discourses. Paying attention to these feelings and experiences would allow for a better understanding of the facilitators and impediments of walking in later life and its effect on social and emotional wellbeing. This paper concludes by providing implications for policy and planning practice in developing age-friendly and walkable neighbourhoods.

Les promenades de quartier comme fabrique des lieux à la vieillesse

Pour les personnes âgées qui vivent dans des quartiers urbains densément peuplés, la marche à pied est un mode de transport important au quotidien: elle permet de participer à la vie sociale du quartier et peut atténuer le déclin physiologique, un phénomène souligné par les discours sur la santé et le vieillissement. Néanmoins, la marche est également un moyen par lequel les lieux quotidiens de chacun sont (re)produits; elle contribue ainsi à créer des sentiments de mal-être et de bien-être. Dans cet article, nous proposons un compte-rendu phénoménologique des pratiques de fabrique des lieux par les personnes âgées à travers la marche. Pour examiner ce sujet, nous nous sommes appuyés sur douze entretiens mobiles avec des personnes âgées vivant de façon autonome dans deux quartiers urbains des Pays-Bas. Bien que nos participants aient développé un sentiment d'« intériorité

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creación de lugares; caminar; entrevistas de acompañamiento; adultos mayores; barrios amigables según la edad

» grâce à leurs routines sociales et leurs itinéraires spatiaux, nos conclusions révèlent que ces mêmes routines et itinéraires produisent aussi des mécanismes d'exclusion. Nous défendons l'idée que ces « mouvements significatifs », caractérisés par une certaine ambivalence, sont encore dans l'ombre au sein des discours sur la santé et le vieillissement. Prêter attention à ces émotions et expériences permettrait une meilleure compréhension des processus de facilitation et des obstacles à la marche pendant la vieillesse et de ses effets sur le bien-être social et émotionnel. Cet article conclue en décrivant les implications en matière de politiques publiques et d'aménagement du territoire pour le développement de quartiers adaptés aux personnes âgées et à la marche à pied.

Caminatas por el vecindario como creación de lugares en la vejez

Para las personas mayores que viven en vecindarios urbanos densamente poblados, caminar es un modo importante de movilidad cotidiana: permite participar en la vida social del vecindario y puede mitigar el deterioro fisiológico, lo que se enfatiza en los discursos de envejecimiento saludable. Sin embargo, caminar también es un medio a través del cual los significados sobre los lugares de la vida cotidiana se (re) producen y, por lo tanto, contribuyen a los sentimientos de enfermedad y bienestar. En este documento, proporcionamos una descripción fenomenológica de las prácticas de creación de lugar de los adultos mayores a través de la caminata. Al examinar este tema, recurrimos a doce entrevistas hechas en caminatas con adultos mayores que viven independientemente en dos vecindarios urbanos de los Países Bajos. Nuestros hallazgos revelan que aunque nuestros entrevistados desarrollaron una sensación de 'pertenencia' a través de sus rutas y rutinas espaciales y sociales, estas mismas rutas y rutinas también actuaron como mecanismos de exclusión. Argumentamos que estos 'movimientos significativos', caracterizados por la ambivalencia, permanecen subexpuestos en los discursos de envejecimiento saludable. Prestar atención a estos sentimientos y experiencias permitiría una mejor comprensión de los elementos facilitadores y los impedimentos para caminar en la edad adulta y su efecto sobre el bienestar social y emocional. Este documento concluye brindando implicaciones para la política y la planificación en el desarrollo de vecindarios amigables y accesibles según la edad.

Introduction

Neighbourhood space is seen as an important resource for the health and wellbeing of older adults who are ageing in place (i.e. ageing in their own home and neighbourhood), especially when a decreasing activity space heightens the value of the neighbourhood for daily living and social interaction (Day, 2008; Hand, Huot, Laliberte Rudman, & Wijekoon, 2017). With diminishing institutionalised resources and older adults' diminishing levels of independence, these local social contacts can become particularly important in securing social, emotional and instrumental support (Buffel et al., 2012). For older adults living in densely populated urban

neighbourhoods, walking may be an important mode of everyday mobility and, hence, can facilitate these contacts (Fobker & Grotz, 2006; Gardner, 2011). In this paper, we consider the meaning of walking practices for older adults¹ living independently in two urban neighbourhoods in the north of the Netherlands.

In healthy ageing discourses, it is emphasised that walking mitigates physiological decline (e.g. King et al., 2011; Wang & Lee, 2010). However, as well as being a way to stay physically fit, walking is a means through which meanings about the places of one's everyday life are (re)produced and, hence, contributes to feelings of illbeing and well-being (e.g. Pink, 2007; Wunderlich, 2008). Duff pointed out the significance of walking to our sense of place: 'To walk is to be affected by place and to simultaneously contribute to the ongoing co-constitution of self and place' (Duff, 2010, p. 887). As such, walking can be considered a place-making practice (Lee & Ingold, 2006; Pink, 2008; Waitt, Gill, & Head, 2009) and can evoke feelings, such as of social inclusion or exclusion, attachment and a sense of belonging (Duff, 2010; Wunderlich, 2008). Several authors have emphasised older adults' place-making ability in relation to neighbourhood change and life in deprived urban neighbourhoods (e.g. Rowles, 1978; Rowles & Watkins, 2003; Smith, 2009). These studies highlight that older people are not 'passive subjects', as they can practice a sense of belonging in these places (Lager, Van Hoven, & Huigen, 2013).

In this paper, we provide a phenomenological account of older adults' walking practices (see also van Eck & Pijpers, 2017). To study walking as place-making in later life, we chose to conduct walking interviews. A small but growing body of literature highlights the value of mobile methods, such as walking interviews, in gaining insight into the spatiality of older adults' place experiences (e.g. Franke, Winters, McKay, Chaudhury, & Sims-Gould, 2017; Gardner, 2011; Hand et al., 2017; Meijering & Weitkamp, 2016; Tong, Sims-Gould, & McKay, 2016). Walking interviews have become a popular method for exploring the meaning of health in place (e.g. Carpiano, 2009; Sunderland, Bristed, Gudes, Boddy, & Da Silva, 2012) and in understanding senses of place, especially of youth (e.g. Duff, 2010; Trelle & van Hoven, 2010). Walking makes the geographical context of experiences more explicit (Anderson, 2004) and can reveal the role of bodily abilities in the use of a place (e.g. Franke et al., 2017). Recently, several authors have called for more attention for affect in mobile methods to bring to the fore those aspects of experience that 'may escape conscious thought' (i.e. 'experience as pre-personal') (Spinney, 2015). The more 'traditional' phenomenological perspective that we employ in this paper, with its focus on expressed feelings and emotional responses to everyday situations (see also van Eck & Pijpers, 2017), foregrounds ways in which individuals themselves recognise and express the impact of experiences on their lives. These experiences can contribute to improving the walkability of urban neighbourhoods (i.e. the extent to which the built environment encourages people to walk), which tends to be an important feature of age-friendly environments (Menec, Means, Keating, Parkhurst, & Eales, 2011).

This paper explores older adults' experiences of neighbourhood space through walking, by drawing on broader research on the subjective dimensions of ageing in place. In this research, walking interviews were originally used in conjunction with semi-structured interviews to gain a deeper and more detailed understanding of neighbourhood experiences and informed our previous work about ageing in connection to neighbourhood transitions, social capital and everyday rhythms (see Lager et al., 2013;

Lager, Van Hoven, & Huigen, 2015, 2016). We first discuss the different perspectives through which older age and its relation to place and walking have been conceptualised elsewhere. We then discuss walking as a place-making practice. Following this, we introduce the research context and the methodology used. In the analysis, the focus is on older adults' expressed feelings and experiences whilst walking through their neighbourhood.

Older age, place and walking

The relationship between older age and place can be viewed from various angles. One strand of research within the fields of geography and social and environmental gerontology understands this relationship in functional terms (Wiles & Allen, 2010). This strand has its origins within the Ecological Theory of Ageing (ETA), developed by Lawton and colleagues (e.g. Lawton, 1977; Lawton & Nahemow, 1973) and assesses the relationship between personal competences (i.e. physical and mental health) and aspects of the environment which have a demanding character (i.e. environmental press) (Wiles & Allen, 2010). According to this theory, an imbalance between personal competences and environmental press results in a 'misfit', which leads to maladaptive behaviour and negative affect.

The ETA perspective is echoed in the health studies literature that focuses on understanding the facilitators and impediments of walking for older adults (e.g. King et al., 2011; van Cauwenberg et al., 2014; Wang & Lee, 2010). These studies frame walking in later life as a means to prevent chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular problems and diabetes type 2, which are major causes of 'disability' in older adults (Wang & Lee, 2010). It is argued that enhancing the walkability of neighbourhoods through intervening in the built environment (i.e. reducing environmental press) stimulates walking, and thereby promotes healthy ageing and reduces older adults' demand on healthcare resources and services.

Altering the built environment can take away physical barriers, but these measures are insufficient for taking away social and cultural barriers that older people perceive and encounter as pedestrians in outdoor environments (Fang et al., 2016; Phillips, Walford, Hockey, Foreman, & Lewis, 2013). The social model of disability stresses how these barriers are caused by the way society is organised (Wiles & Allen, 2010). Literature on the social and cultural construction of older age in relation to place shows how ageism can limit older adults' participation in society (e.g. Milligan, Bingley, & Gatrell, 2005). For instance, Mowl, Pain, and Talbot (2000) examined how ageist discourses centred on the body influence older adults' use and experience of the home space. They found, particularly for their older male working-class respondents, that the home space was associated with bodily decline as it signified the loss of economic productivity and redundancy. This, in turn, resulted in the need to get out of the house. However, as Chouinard, Hall and Wilton contend, the 'overly social constructionist nature of the social model' can risk denying 'the material and embodied realities of impairment' (2010, p. 3).

Another strand of research understands the relationship between older age and place from a phenomenological perspective. This perspective highlights how 'bodies actively construct places and are equally shaped by them', thereby turning the body into

a 'subject-body' (Antoninetti & Garrett, 2012, p. 2). Drawing on Merleau-Ponty, van Eck and Pijpers (2017) explain how this 'subject-body' allows for meaningful experiences with the world by employing skills and behaviours which are acquired over time. Rowles' seminal work on the geographical experiences of older people (1978, 1983), shows how meanings of place result from the 'subject-body's' routine practices. These routines have physical, social and autobiographical components, which all contribute to a sense of 'insideness' with a place (Rowles, 1983). 'Insideness' refers to the familiarity with places through habitual use (physical insideness), the familiarity with social norms and rules of behaviour and integration in local social networks (social insideness) and the way in which 'spaces assume meaning as the result of the accumulation in consciousness of events that transpire within them' (autobiographical insideness) (Rowles, 1983; Rowles & Watkins, 2003, p. 79).

The notion of 'insideness' emphasises older adults' place-making ability, as it goes beyond viewing the relationship between older age and place in terms of 'fit'. Older adults are 'continually reintegrating with places and renegotiating meanings and identity' (Wiles, Leibing, Guberman, Reeve, & Allen, 2012, p. 24) in the face of change. For instance, in their research on older adults' independent mobility, Schwanen, Banister, and Bowling (2012) show how one of their respondents Anne, chose to use her tripod to walk around the block as it gave her a sense of independence. These same walks around the block felt exhausting when she used her walking stick. These phenomenological insights regarding older adults' relation with place have, so far, found little resonance in the literature on older adults' walking practices. In the next section, drawing on phenomenological sources, we will elaborate on walking as a place-making practice.

Walking as a place-making practice

Walking is not 'simply inhabiting a pre-configured world', it is a practice through which we make sense of place (Waite et al., 2009, p. 44). Waite et al. (2009) posit that when people and place are understood as 'relationally constituted within processes that are distinctly performative' (p. 44), the practice of walking can be seen as a way through which we actively construct our own identities and make sense of the world around us.

Walking is a sensorial practice. In their study in an Australian nature reserve, Waite et al. (2009) argue that the sensual capacity of the body is essential to create an understanding of the place-making process: the environment must be felt in order to make sense. As Lee and Ingold put it: 'realizations of emotional and environmental conditions through walking ... are processes of lived and embodied experience in which the environment shifts and imprints onto the body, and is at the same time affected by it' (Lee & Ingold, 2006, p. 73). Wunderlich (2008) describes how our internal biological and psychological rhythms and our feeling state in conjunction with external rhythmical events, rhythms of other bodies and the character of the environment becomes embodied in various walking rhythms. Whereas, walking with a particular destination in mind usually involves a steady pace and rhythm, and fosters a sense of continuity, walks for the sake of walking tend to be more varied in these respects and are more conducive to encountering and sensing the environment (Wunderlich, 2008).

The sensorial practice of walking is complicated by its social and cultural contexts (Waite et al., 2009). Edensor argued that walking styles –e.g. cruising, marching, strolling– are informed by ‘various performative norms and values which produce distinct praxes and dispositions’ (2000, p. 81). As an example, one of Middleton’s (2009) respondents positioned himself as a regular and accomplished pedestrian in his local area. To him, running across the road was ‘not dignified’ and belonged to the ‘infrequent walker’. Through performative norms, bodies communicate particular social categories, such as ethnicity, gender or physical ability (Edensor, 2000). Walking can thus also be considered as a boundary making practice through which we assign value to who does or does not belong in a place (Waite et al., 2009).

In considering walking as a place-making practice, Lee and Ingold (2006) argue that ‘the locomotive (or getting around) aspect of walking allows for an understanding of places being created by routes’ (p. 68). These routes are viewed as embodied and imaginative in nature, thereby referring to the role of the body and its senses, and one’s remembered prior encounters (e.g. Crouch, 2001; Degen & Rose, 2012; Pink, 2008). Rowles (1978) provides an interesting example of how the route that one of his participants, ‘Stan’, took was not only shaped by avoiding cracks in the sidewalk, but also by Stan’s nostalgic feelings for the local pubs he used to visit.

The example of the route Stan walked, further shows how feelings can become ‘the movement of the body’ (Lee & Ingold, 2006, p. 71) or, in other words, act as a ‘navigation tool’ (see Duff, 2010). By often walking the same route, a ‘thicker association of the route with the walker’ can come into being, which confers the (re)making of place attachments and experiences (Jones & Evans, 2012; Lee & Ingold, 2006, p. 77). Additionally, Duff (2010) argued, based on a study of young people’s place-making practices in which he accompanied gang members on a walking tour through the city of Vancouver (British Columbia), that it is through the ‘potential of place’, in terms of the feeling states and capacities afforded, that places or routes take on meaning. This is echoed in the work of Middleton (2009) who showed that her respondents did not always choose their walking route to their workplace based on speed and efficiency, but also chose ‘less fast’ routes that reflected their ‘desire for interest and enjoyment’ (p. 1946).

The above discussion outlines how walking is inherently a sensorial practice, which is complicated by its social and cultural contexts. It is through walking that we make sense of ourselves and the places we inhabit. Place-making occurs through walking particular routes, which in turn are brought about by our ‘feeling state’ and the ‘potential of place’. In relation to our research, this way of thinking about walking helps to understand how walking in later life constructs a sense of ‘insideness’ in the context of the neighbourhood.

Research context: ageing in urban neighbourhoods

The research from which this article draws was conducted in two neighbourhoods (the Oosterpark and Corpus den Hoorn) in Groningen, a city with 201,270 inhabitants in the north of the Netherlands (Onderzoek en Statistiek Groningen, 2016). Groningen can be considered a typical European city in terms of its high population density (2400 inhabitants per square kilometer) (Onderzoek en Statistiek Groningen, 2016) and its radio-concentric spatial structure. With its relatively flat landscape and high population

density, cycling and walking are common modes of transport for short distances in the Netherlands. Among the older population (65+), trips made on foot increase while bicycle use decreases with age (Jorritsma & Olde Kalter, 2008). Given their compact spatial structures, both the Oosterpark and Corpus den Hoorn can both be considered 'walkable' for older people².

The Oosterpark, a former working-class neighbourhood, dates from the 1930s. It was built for the working-class according to the principles of the garden village. The aim of the garden village was to 'civilise' the working class through the creation of community feeling by building small-scale districts and introducing architectural design and green spaces. From the 1970s onwards, the social composition of the neighbourhood changed as a result of large-scale renovations of pre-war homes. In the following decades the changing social composition led to a decrease in social control and an increase in drug-related crime, through which the neighbourhood deteriorated (van Burik & De Savornin Lohman, 1990). The Oosterpark made national news when riots broke out on New Year's Eve in 1997. During these riots, youths smashed the windows of a local politician's home, raided two houses and pelted the fire brigade with stones. In 1998, a neighbourhood renewal program was set in motion in order to improve the liveability of the Oosterpark.

Corpus den Hoorn was built between 1956 and 1960 as a self-contained neighbourhood, which is a type of neighbourhood built with a centre around which facilities and amenities are located. The spatial structure of the neighbourhood was characterised by the repetitive use of building blocks with predominantly medium- and high-rise buildings. In 2002, a neighbourhood renewal programme was set in motion as the public spaces became 'worn out' and the existing housing stock no longer suited the housing preferences of families. Nowadays, Corpus den Hoorn has a variety of shops that cater for the everyday needs of older residents, including a supermarket, a post office, a pharmacy and an optician. The Oosterpark, in contrast, had two supermarkets at the time of the interviews.

Research methodology: walking with older adults

The go-along is a data collection method in which the researcher participates in the research participants' patterns of movement (e.g. walking, cycling, driving) (Kusenbach, 2018). In 2003, Kusenbach proposed the 'go-along' method as a means to gain access to experiences as they unfold in place, combining the methods of sit-down interviews and participant observation. Through participant observation, the researcher is able to study people in their everyday environment, but these observations do not necessarily reveal people's experiences and feelings (Kusenbach, 2003). Sit-down interviews allow people to talk about their experiences, feelings and practices. However, several authors have argued that the narrative character of sit-down interviews can impede access to the small details of everyday life that play a role in one's sense of place (e.g. Holton & Riley, 2014; Kusenbach, 2003; Trell & van Hoven, 2010), wellbeing and health (Carpiano, 2009; Ettema & Smajic, 2015). To gain insight into these small details of everyday life, walking interviews were conducted in the summer of 2012 and the spring of 2013.

For our broader study on the subjective dimensions of ageing in place, in selecting and recruiting participants, the Dutch retirement age of the time (65) was chosen as the

threshold. The participants, thirty in total, were all white and were living independently (i.e. in their own homes) in one of the two neighbourhoods. They were recruited through senior sounding-board groups³, coffee mornings, a senior computer course, a card club, with the help of an employee from a social service and by snowball sampling. They all received an information sheet about the research project by mail.

Before the walking interviews, participants took part in a semi-structured interview conducted in their own home. The aim of the semi-structured interview was to elicit experiences, feelings and memories of everyday life in their neighbourhood. Following the semi-structured interviews, the participants were asked whether the principal researcher (Debbie Lager) could join them on one of their routine walks in order to obtain a better sense of their everyday life in the neighbourhood. Twelve out of the thirty participated in the walking interviews (see Table 1 for participants' characteristics). The eighteen persons who did not want to participate indicated that they were not very mobile, or fast, and that the researcher should find more mobile participants, even though the researcher assured them that she would adjust to their pace.

The route, length, time of day and duration of the walk were determined by the participants who were asked to follow one of their routine walks as far as possible in order to minimise the risk of fatigue or injury and to resemble, as closely as possible, their 'usual' experiences and use of their neighbourhood (see also Tong et al., 2016). The majority of the respondents walked on a daily basis. They indicated that their walks were destination-oriented, including trips to local shops, the bus stop and indoor meeting places. However, as is shown in the next section, these walks were also carried out to stay physically active and to remain engaged with neighbourhood's social life.

For participants' safety and health, the walking interviews were only conducted in good weather conditions (i.e. no snow, ice or rain, and not too cold nor too hot). Admittedly, walks under less favourable weather conditions could have provided additional knowledge on older adults' experiences and, in particular, barriers to traversing neighbourhood space. However, talking while walking and simultaneously navigating the urban environment can already be a challenge for people with balance disorders and visual or mobility impairments (Phillips et al., 2013) without adding adverse weather conditions.

TABLE 1. Characteristics of the participants.

Name	Gender	Age	Length of residence in total	Neighbourhood	Mobility aids
Anna	F	65	45-50	Oosterpark	x
Aaltje ^a	F	66	35-40	Corpus den Hoorn	walker
Greetje	F	67	35-40	Oosterpark	x
Antje	F	68	40-45	Corpus den Hoorn	x
Dirk ^b	M	70	45-50	Oosterpark	x
Marinus	M	71	35-40	Oosterpark	x
Emma ^a	F	74	20-25	Corpus den Hoorn	x
Corrie	F	78	70-75	Oosterpark	x
Steventje	F	78	15-20	Corpus den Hoorn	x
Jantje	F	85	50-55	Corpus den Hoorn	walker
Hendrika	F	86	30-35	Corpus den Hoorn	walker
Petronella	F	87	0-5	Corpus den Hoorn	x

^a Aaltje and Emma are neighbours and were interviewed together

^b The interview with Dirk was conducted while cycling. It would initially be a walk, but he was insistent on using the bicycle. Although this interview did not reveal information about his experiences of walking, the go-along did give insight in how his experiences unfold in his local environment.

The participant-led character of the walks created some insecurity among respondents, who expressed concerns about whether the walk was sufficiently interesting for the researcher and whether they were doing it correctly (see also Tong et al., 2016). In spite of these insecurities, all the respondents seemed to enjoy the walking interview in terms of being able to acquaint the researcher with their neighbourhood and everyday life.

The interviews were audio recorded and the routes were recorded using Google My Tracks, which allowed the researcher to focus on observing the neighbourhood's social and physical realm and to monitor the participants' safety. The route information was used to identify exactly which elements prompted reactions and to gain insight into the spatiality of participants' relationship with their neighbourhood. We chose not to use this spatial information as it was not explicitly discussed in the informed consent procedure how the spatial information in combination with the data from the walking interviews would be used and, thus, our respondents may not have been able to make an informed decision. For the purpose of this paper, we felt that disclosing these routes would not contribute to a better understanding of the felt dimension of walking in neighbourhood space.

The audio recordings were transcribed and coded using qualitative data analysis software (NVivo8) for thematic analysis (see Kitchin & Tate, 2000). The categories of physical, social and autobiographical insideness emerged during the analysis of our data. Within the identified themes, we coded those text elements that signified the embodiment and emplacement of feelings and experiences. Ethical approval for this research was obtained from the ethics committee of the Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen.

Meaningful movements in neighbourhood space

In line with the literature that stresses the health benefits of walking in later life, the majority of the participants indicated that walking was necessary in order to keep active and to prevent 'becoming as stiff as a door' (Corrie, female, 78). In the analysis, we go beyond these narratives of physical activity by discussing the relationship between older age, place and walking from a phenomenological perspective (see also van Eck & Pijpers, 2017). We highlight specific situations that occurred during the walking interviews, which illustrate the physical, social and autobiographical dimensions of walking as a place-making practice in later life.

Walking as feeling othered

A state of physical insideness comes into being through the spatial routines and habits that develop with place over time (Rowles, 1983). As the majority of the respondents resided in their neighbourhood for over a decade, they each had developed their everyday place-making routines, such as walking to the shops or the local senior centre. Being able to carry out these activities independently (i.e. getting around without help provided by other people) in spite of physical limitations, can evoke a sense of wellbeing in later life (Ziegler & Schwanen, 2011). Indeed, all of our respondents indicated that they valued their ability to independently walk through their neighbourhood. Yet, our

analysis also suggests that the built environment of a neighbourhood can make a 'profound statement' on who belongs in place and who does not (Hugman, 1999). This was particularly clear in the walks with two of the oldest participants, Jantje (female, 85) and Hendrika (female, 86), whose place experiences were mediated by the use of a walker. While walking to the shops comprised an important place-making routine for both respondents, the walks also revealed the challenges of negotiating a 'declining' body in relation to the materiality of the neighbourhood. Their reduced level of energy and sense of balance made walking a tiring experience for them, evidenced in their heavy breathing during the walking interview, for example. The physical fatigue acted as their navigation tool (Duff, 2010), which is shown in the following example. Standing in front of the senior apartment block where Hendrika lives, the researcher asked whether she was able to get onto the sidewalk with her walker, as it seemed to require some effort. With both indignation and resignation in her voice, Hendrika answered:

Well, it's okay. You can always walk straight on and cross the road over there [about five metres down the road], but they should have made a dropped kerb here. You are not going to walk over there, because you always have to go in the other direction because the shops are there. It's stupid; they should first consider what kind of people live here and act accordingly.

As an everyday routine, the walk to the shopping centre and the badly-placed dropped kerb confronted Hendrika with her bodily 'difference'. Furthermore, this example shows how in later life, 'the potential of place' (Duff, 2010) is determined much more by (in)accessibility than by feeling states and capacities. The 'able-bodied' may unintentionally and unwittingly create obstructing situations and places as they are unaware of older and frail residents' physical abilities.

The following example shows that even for those participants who did not experience obstructions themselves, the mere confrontation with a situation which signifies older adults' invisibility in neighbourhood space can result in similar feelings of not being recognised. Petronella (female, 87), who was not limited by any mobility constraints, pointed with anger and indignation at the inaccessibility of an artwork⁴ (known by residents as the 'watchtower') for older people. This artwork was installed in the neighbourhood of Corpus den Hoorn at the initiative of a group of residents and is supposed to serve as a meeting place for all the neighbourhood residents as well as a place to enjoy the view over the adjacent canal:

Petronella: Look, there is the watchtower. The residents were able to think of something for the neighbourhood and it was paid for by the municipality. But look, the path is very steep and you [young people] can walk up there, but you don't want a watchtower. They made some ridges for going up, but how can you get down again?

Interviewer: I think it would also be difficult to go up there for those who have a walker.

Petronella: It's completely impossible!

Moved by her indignation and anger, Petronella indicated that she did not want to walk to the artwork (then about 50 metres away) and we continued walking and talking about another topic.

While the above two examples show how specific places that were encountered during the walks signify who does not belong, the following example shows how the act of walking itself can become a source of contestation. Due to a chronic illness, Antje (female, 68) sometimes has to use a shared cab (a subsidised travel scheme) when she is in too much pain to walk. During the walking interview, she expressed unease about her use of the shared cab in terms of how other residents might perceive a discrepancy between her active (walking) and dependent (being driven) behaviour:

I realise, now that I'm walking here with you [the researcher], that I still feel guilty about using the shared cab. Then I think, there are people who see me here [and disapprove]. But there are also people who say: "she got a good deal, a shared cab is much cheaper than having a car." I know people in the neighbourhood who think like this. ... I didn't get a deal; I had many reservations about applying for [the shared cab scheme].

This example suggests that, among older adults, there are certain norms and expectations as to how old age should be performed (Edensor, 2000). In this case, there seems to be a rigid dichotomy of being either active and healthy or being ill and dependent in later life. Moving between these categories, as Antje seemingly does, does not appear to match people's expectations of how old age should be performed. Chouinard (1997) explains that the 'absence of visible signs of disability' can be read by people as nondisabled.

Walking for sociability

Lee and Ingold (2006, p. 67) contended that 'walking around is fundamental to the everyday practice of social life'. In later life, walking in the neighbourhood may be particularly important in conferring social life if one's activity space decreases and issues related to health and mobility impede one's use of other modes of mobility, such as the bicycle and the car. Social insideness can be beneficial for receiving informal care and contributes to a sense of belonging and wellbeing (Rowles, 1983). The significance of local contacts for the participants' wellbeing was particularly clear in the exchanges they had with passers-by (see also Gardner, 2011). After, and sometimes during, having a chat with a passer-by, participants would proudly emphasise the sociable character of their walks to the researcher. This is exemplified by a conversation with Antje, a passer-by, and the researcher:

Antje: Hello! I'm doing an interview as an older person in the neighbourhood and she [the researcher] wants to know where I walk.

Passer-by: That's nice.

Antje: He [the passer-by] used to live in the same apartment block as I did. She [the researcher] asks me: 'how do you know this person?' Well, we were neighbours. He had two dogs, and now one dog. How are you doing? [talking to the passer-by]

Passer-by: Good, good. See you, bye!

Antje: See [talking to the researcher], that's how you have a chat. Sometimes I see him here, that's very nice.

The importance of local social contacts seemed to translate into place-making strategies for seeing and meeting other people on a daily basis. To this end, participants would spread the tasks on their to-do list over the course of the week in order to have a reason to walk each day to the shops located on a square, where they could enjoy people's presence and have an occasional chat (see also Day, 2008; Lager et al., 2015). This is exemplified by Jantje (female, 85):

I always go grocery shopping here [supermarket at the square], then I also have a purpose, every day I get some groceries. Then I also meet this woman who is waiting for her taxi and I will sit next to her, which provides us both with some companionship.

In this light, purposive walking, which Wunderlich (2008, p. 131) describes as being of a 'constant rhythmical and rapid pace' and is focused on arrival at a particular destination, acquires a different meaning for older people. Whilst the younger and working population may rush through the public spaces of the neighbourhood in getting from A to B, the need for sociability slowed our participants' pace (see also Gardner, 2011). Their walking rhythms were, furthermore, characterised by stops to engage with other people. As the following excerpt shows, a supermarket checkout can act as a stop to connect with people (see also Gardner, 2011). While queuing at the supermarket checkout, the researcher asked Aaltje whether she knew the staff. Aaltje replied:

I know them ... that's nice when you get older. When you are young, you are busy with your own things, but when you get older it's nice to just have a chat. I think it has to do with getting older. ... My mother always used to say, 'You can smile and greet people, it doesn't cost a thing.' I didn't greet people then [when I was young], I wasn't a fool. But now, I even talk to a blade of grass.

While the above illustrations highlight respondents' social insideness, this quote by Aaltje also points out the disconnect between the life-worlds of older and younger neighbourhood residents. Elsewhere, we found that our respondents experienced a 'generational divide' in neighbourhood space, at least in part, through the contrast between theirs and the younger residents' daily rhythms and mobilities (Lager et al., 2015, 2016). In this sense, walking the same routes at the same time everyday day, can confer a sense of belonging to a local social network, whilst at the same time these routines confirm their marginalisation from the dynamics of neighbourhood life.

Furthermore, external rhythms and events can disrupt these everyday routes and routines (see also Meijering & Weitkamp, 2016). Most notably, for our participants, this included adverse weather conditions, such as snow and ice in the winter (see also Lager et al., 2016). In the event of these seasonal obstacles, the majority of participants stayed indoors or would limit their neighbourhood walks to the minimum. Such disruptions in daily walking routines highlight obstacles that older adults can face in engaging in neighbourhood space.

A trip down memory lane

Autobiographical insideness can become part of our identity, rooting us in place (Rowles & Watkins, 2003; Smith, 2009). Rapid and intense changes of a place in which meaningful events happened, can threaten our identity (Jones & Evans, 2012). Elsewhere we showed that older adults can also contribute in making a neighbourhood a familiar and predictable place (Lager et al., 2013). In particular, the walking interviews showed the importance of walking through the neighbourhood as a means to retain a sense of autobiographical insideness. Similar to Rowles' (1978) participant Stan, our participants in the Oosterpark planned walks in which their memories of neighbourhood life were embodied, thereby literally taking a trip down memory lane.

By means of taking a trip down memory lane, participants could relive and feel the sense of community that used to be there but which they feel has gone. Walking in the neighbourhood revealed the spatial character of remembering (Degnen, 2005), the lost sense of community, with all the memories being prompted by the sight of houses, buildings, parks and streets. Anna (female, 65), when walking past the canal near her home, remarked:

It was [so] much fun here, everyone knew each other. There were people swimming here in the Van Starckenborgh canal. And people would [bring] a chair [to] the embankment in summer. They would take a thermos with tea and would sit there, and there were youngsters playing football.

Degen and Rose (2012) argued that memories influence the ways in which people experience the built environment and give meaning to places in the present. This also became clear in the accounts of the participants. Greetje (female, 67), for instance, talked a great deal about the 'sense of community' in the street where she used to live and how everyone would just enter each other's houses through the back door instead of ringing the front doorbell. For Greetje, the fences that were put up between the houses some time ago represented the loss of this sense of community. Seeing the fences during the walk, Greetje remarked:

Greetje: They [the housing corporation] put fences between the houses everywhere. It's probably necessary but it does not make it very sociable. I don't like it.

Interviewer: Because you can't go behind all the houses?

Greetje: Yes, with my bicycle I could cycle behind all the houses in the street. I don't know why but that's cosy. Especially in the summer, when you would see people.

Interestingly, the walking interviews also revealed that the participants' walking practices were a way to keep this sense of community alive. The 'trip down memory lane' was not just a one-off event enacted for the researcher, but a result of previous walks which resulted in a deep association with particular places in the neighbourhood (Lee & Ingold, 2006). For instance, Marinus (male, 71) would often get together with neighbourhood friends to visit the street where he used to live. In this street, an accumulation of problems resulted in riots on New Year's Eve 1997, after which Marinus moved to another street in the neighbourhood. Marinus would

visit the street to remember the good times. Standing in this particular street, he remarked:

Marinus: There was so much going on here in this place. ... You ran into each other every day and had a chat. That's the way it was. Later on, it changed. Nothing is left [of that nice atmosphere].

Interviewer: So now that all has disappeared, do you still feel at home when you walk here?

Marinus: Yes I do, I come here often. With my friends, I have a look here and then you start talking about what happened. And then it all comes back, you know, the good times.

This quote illustrates what Degnen (2005) referred to as the practiced nature of memories, which emerge in conversations and, in this instance, also in visiting the place in question. In contrast to Marinus, Greetje tried to avoid the street where she used to live as it was too painful for her to be confronted with the memories of the good contacts she had had with neighbours, something that she no longer experienced. Although the participants did not make these trips down memory lane on a daily basis, they can be seen as a 'conscious writing' (Holton & Riley, 2014, p. 64) of themselves in the history of the neighbourhood, through which they may be able to negotiate a sense of belonging as the neighbourhood changes (Lager et al., 2013).

Conclusions and discussion

For older adults living in densely populated urban neighbourhoods, walking is an important mode of everyday mobility and can facilitate local social interactions (Fobker & Grotz, 2006; Gardner, 2011). In this paper, we explored the feelings and experiences that unfold for older adults while walking through their neighbourhood. Drawing on phenomenological work on walking, we considered walking in later life as a place-making practice. Our findings reveal the ambivalent character of walking in neighbourhood space in later life; feelings of 'insideness' coincide with those of marginalisation. While our respondents developed their spatial and social routes and routines, which conferred a sense of independence and belonging to a local social network, these same routes and routines emphasised they did not belong. Our findings complicate the concept of 'insideness'. When using the concept, researchers should be cautious they are not overlooking how spatial routines and habits, the integration in local social networks and attachment to place through length of residence, can also act as exclusionary mechanisms. Therefore, it should not be the question whether older adults feel they do or do not belong in their neighbourhood, but one should ask which situations and contexts induce these ambivalent feelings.

Walking in later life tends to be framed within healthy ageing discourses, which emphasise walking as a way to mitigate physiological decline. Indeed, our respondents recognised the health benefits of their daily walks in the neighbourhood. However, 'meaningful movements' (i.e. the felt dimension of walking), which are characterised by ambivalence, remain underexposed in healthy ageing discourses. Paying attention to these feelings and experiences would allow for a better

understanding of the facilitators and impediments of walking in later life and its effect on social and emotional wellbeing. This implies that researchers cannot solely rely on standardised measures, but also should take older adults' experiences and feelings into consideration. As we have shown, the walks triggered a mix of feelings, including frustration, pride, joy, longing for a sense of community and pain. However, these feelings were not always easy to detect and our respondents may not have expressed all their concerns. An attitude of 'senior coolness', described by Zimmermann and Grebe (2014) as an approach that older adults adopt to maintain their composure in dealing with personal losses and burdens, as well as with ageism, might play a role here. In addition to walks, other methods, such as participatory mapping or photo voice, could provide more insight in older adults' emotional and social wellbeing (see e.g. Fang et al., 2016).

The walking-based knowledge that was obtained in this study, shows that there is no 'one size fits all' approach for incorporating place meanings and attachments. At a policy level, this insight can help inform planners in realising that place sensitivity is important in designing age-friendly neighbourhoods. From a planner's perspective, a built environment may be age-friendly, when it is actually not 'enabling' (Wiles & Allen, 2010). As is shown in the example of Hendrika's frustration with the placement of the dropped kerb, this 'age-friendliness' may not be experienced and felt by older people when age-friendly elements do not fit into their routes and routines. If resting places, such as benches, are placed along residents' routes, they can facilitate these neighbourhood social interactions, thereby satisfying older adults' need 'to feel noticed and be visible in the world' (Gardner, 2011, p. 268). Furthermore, our study shows that consideration should be given to whether there is a need among older residents to retain affective connections with past neighbourhood life. Particularly for neighbourhoods undergoing change, retaining affective connections could instil a sense of continuity and belonging in the face of change, as well as supporting the wellbeing of older adults (Jones & Evans, 2012). This could be taken up in neighbourhood renewal programmes, including for instance 'trips down memory lane' – literal or in another form, such as a photo exhibition or a digital tour – for older residents as well as for those people interested in the history of the particular neighbourhood.

The phenomenological insights this paper provides, can contribute to improving the walkability of urban neighbourhoods (Menec et al., 2011). Traditionally, walkability has been viewed 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 body in traversing space, highlighting the importance of resting places and clear signage (e.g. Phillips et al., 2013; van Cauwenberg et al., 2014), 'the importance of place meanings and attachments for older people's use of space' (Hockey, Phillips, & Walford, 2013, p. 539) has found little resonance in walkability research and decision-making with regard to planning (Andrews, Hall, Evans, & Colls, 2012; Hockey et al., 2013). This study showed that 'walking interviews' constitute a useful tool in obtaining place-specific information on why and where older people walk. This method could become part of the participatory planning practices used in designing age-friendly communities (see e.g. Fang et al., 2016). Wunderlich (2008, p. 138) argued that 'we need to understand and explore walking as a design method in its own right that can inform the theory and

practice of place-design'. We argue that adjusting to older adults' walking rhythms results in greater empathy for this group as well as a better understanding of how the urban environment can be more supportive of their needs (see also Holgersson, 2016). Above all, to gain insight into older adults' place-making practices and their experiences and feelings in relation to their neighbourhood, it is essential to consult them.

Notes

1. The age at which people are labelled as 'older' depends on the social and cultural context. In the case of this research, the Dutch retirement age of the time (65) was chosen as the threshold, as it acts as a societal marker in 'defining' older adults and, from this age on, people are generally likely to spend more time in their home and neighbourhood.
2. One of the indicators on the 'activities of daily living' scale, which is used by doctors to assess whether people are able to live in their own home and neighbourhood, is that one should be able to walk at least 400 metres (Paterson & Warburton, 2010).
3. Senior sounding-board groups were initiated by the municipality of Groningen in neighbourhoods undergoing urban renewal in order to take into account the concerns and needs of older residents in the neighbourhood renewal process.
4. The funding for this project was made available by the 'New Local Agreement' (2007-2014), a collaboration between the municipality and local housing corporations that was aimed at increasing resident participation and social cohesion in the urban renewal neighbourhoods. The Groningen arts centre formed an art committee in which they involved neighbourhood residents.

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