**Ageing in Space: ‘Community’ and older adults**

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*Abstract*

In this paper we explore the need for social interaction for older adults by investigating how local and everyday communities are produced by service organisations and experienced by their patrons. We approach the social needs of older adults through the lens of ‘community’, both as a concept and as a lived experience. Our attention to communities of peers and arenas for everyday interaction is discussed in the context of the dominant policy discourse of ‘ageing in place’. In this discourse, ‘place’ is predominantly interpreted as physical infrastructure, with little formal recognition of the importance of the arenas of social everyday interaction for older adults outside the home/family.

Our exploration draws on the empirical study of three organisations in Toronto, Canada and Bergen, Norway that in various ways represent places for the everyday interaction. We discuss how belonging is understood from the perspective of different older groups and how it is facilitated by organisations and services, through the creation of shared, informal social spaces. Even though there is considerable difference in size, aesthetics, target population and geographical ‘impact field’, all three organisations offered their patrons a space for informal social interaction in which they were allowed to claim the space as their own. Our analysis indicates a pronounced need for a diversity of arenas for older adults to interact socially and portrays how these spaces for everyday interaction are created often in addition to, or even in divergence from, the official mission of these organisations, in a form of co-optation by patrons.

*Statements and Declarations*

The research on which this paper draws was funded by the Canadian Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council under Grant Agreement No. PG 895-2018-1013.

The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

All authors contributed to the data collection, analysis and writing of this article.

*Acknowledgments*

We thank colleagues, staff, partners and informants associated with the research project “Imagining Age-Friendly ‘communities within communities’: International Promising Practices” especially Professor Tamara Daly, York University.

Key words: Community, Older Adults, Ageing in Place, Space