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From Precarity to Interdependence: The Role of Age-Friendly Communities in Promoting Wellbeing in Excluded Communities

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Abstract

Our cities of 2050 will feature an older population who have experienced a significantly higher level of instability (both social and economic) in their working lives than previous generations. The insecurity of labour markets, prevalence of unprotected tenancies, withdrawal of guaranteed pensions and retrenchment of state functions have the potential to create an older cohort defined by precarity – an uncertainty about their future which negatively impacts their wellbeing and agency, which rely on stability and predictability as the basis of ontological security. This chapter explores the concept and effects of precarity in the context of the World Health Organization's 'Age Friendly Cities and Communities' programme, examined through an analysis of the 'Manchester Age-

Friendly Neighbourhoods' project, a participatory design-research initiative aiming to tackle social isolation. Through a series of case studies, we demonstrate that precarity should not be understood as an individual deficit but the consequence of systemic, multi-dimensional exclusion. By examining the role of 'interdependence' as a potential antithesis of precarity, this chapter seeks to demonstrate the importance of engaging in issues of spatial exclusion and social isolation within the age-friendly movement, and the opportunities to improve wellbeing by creating conditions in which affective relationships can be realised.

Wellbeing in an Age of Precarity

Promoting wellbeing in our future cities involves recognition of two key social trends. First, the impact of demographic changes associated with population ageing; second, the extent to which cohorts entering their 50s, 60s and beyond will have experienced a significantly higher level of social and economic instability in their working lives than previous generations. By 2050 there will be 2.1 billion people aged 60 and over, compared to 926 million people today (UN, 2017). While the majority of this growth will take place in the developing world, there will still be a significant demographic shift in developed countries. In Europe, 34% of the population will be aged 60 and over by 2050, with greater numbers of older people living in urban areas (WHO, 2007). The cohort of older people in 2050 will have had very different lives from those today, reflecting the social and political changes affecting the late-twentieth and early twenty-first century. The chronic social and economic insecurity of modern capitalism has the potential to create an older cohort defined by what has been termed 'precarity', a condition characterised by working lives increasingly shaped by casual labour contracts, unprotected tenancies, withdrawal of guaranteed pensions and reductions of public services (see Cooper & Whyte, 2017; O'Hara, 2015; Standing, 2012). While the current discourse around an emerging precariat has focussed on the challenges facing younger

people (Dannefer & Huang, 2017), the cumulative disadvantage many will have experienced within their working lives will require us to re-examine the opportunities and support that society provides for people in later life.

We do not, however, need to wait until 2050 to see examples of precarity in our older population. The population of cities (notably in the Global North) are getting older and increasingly heterogeneous (Buffel & Phillipson, 2016). Growing inequality and austerity have created and exacerbated conditions of social isolation, spatial exclusion and multiple deprivation, leading to large divergences in wellbeing among different groups of older people. Older people, especially those affected by issues such as migration, homelessness, dementia and gentrification, are already experiencing multi-dimensional insecurity, perpetuated by a social and political context that individualises both risk and responsibility. Experiences of precarity are negatively correlated with current understandings of wellbeing in later life, which rely on stability and predictability as the basis of ontological security (Grenier et al., 2017; Grenier & Phillipson, 2018; Lewis et al., 2015).

This chapter examines the role of what has been termed 'age-friendly cities and communities' in tackling issues faced by older people experiencing precarity in disadvantaged communities, using examples from the 'Manchester Age-Friendly Neighbourhoods' project in Manchester, UK. Building on this work, the chapter will demonstrate the importance of engaging in issues relating to precarity, spatial exclusion and social isolation within the age-friendly movement, and the opportunities to improve wellbeing by creating conditions that address and reduce the increasingly precarious experiences of people in later life.

From Precarity to Interdependence

The study of precarity is widely used to illustrate the vulnerabilities that many people face as a product of social, political and economic instability. Much of this work has focussed on structural inequalities derived from a global market system. Neoliberal politics which promote deregulation of labour markets, regulation of labour unions and global competition for attractive tax conditions (and thus lower social support), have resulted in the erosion of security for an increased number of people in the global north (Standing, 2012). We can already see the ways this is affecting our current older population, through the rationing of social care, withdrawal of public amenities and repositioning of the social security system as a 'hostile environment' (Ryan, 26 April 2018; Streek, 2016).

While a structural understanding of precarity can help us to understand how current and future older people might experience a social or economic deficit as a result of precarity, our intention in this chapter is to explore how older people experiencing precarity can improve their lives through collective action. To do this, we turn to Butler's (2004) examination of the ontological condition of precariousness, which she suggests is a fundamental aspect of human life. She argues that this is the case because our lives can never be autonomous, and that we live contingent lives in which we are all '...physically dependent on one another, physically vulnerable to one another' (Butler, 2004, p. 27). Butler (2004) suggests that precarity and precariousness should be understood as discrete concepts: precariousness is a universal insecurity that results from our interdependence, whereas precarity is the unequal distribution of precariousness within different parts of society. Precarity is, therefore, an insecurity that goes beyond wealth distribution or labour market status, and additionally intersects with class, gender and ethnicity.

The transition to a precarious society has widespread effects on individual wellbeing. The ontological security that is offered through social and material stability may be replaced by a state of fear that basic human needs will not be met. By reinforcing individualist competition for a seemingly scarce range of resources, precarity produces mistrust and social conflict, which further undermine a sense of community and belonging that is central to our sense of wellbeing (Neilson, 2015). Butler's (2004) notion of precarity as a consequence of unequal relationships of dependence and interdependence also suggests an interpretation of social isolation as both a form of and contributor to precarity.

Butler (2015) also explores how the experience of precarity can be challenged through different forms of social action. She argues that, 'The opposite of precarity is not security, but, rather, the struggle for an egalitarian social and political order in which a liveable interdependence becomes possible' (p. 69). Central to this is the performative act of assembly, in labour movements, protest and civil society, in which people come together to assert power through collective acts of association. These new forms of collective engagement are predicated on coalitions that build on the difference between actors, rather than seeking homogeneity based on prescriptive identity politics (Butler, 2015).

Age-Friendly Cities as a Response to Precarious Ageing

The call for active citizenship and the collective action that underpins Butler's response to precarity are mirrored in programmes aiming to improve the wellbeing of older people, a group who may experience marginalisation arising from the interaction between globalisation and urban change (Buffel & Phillipson, 2016). The World Health Organization's (WHO) 'Age-friendly Cities' approach is a global initiative that seeks to challenge societal perceptions of ageing as a process of medical decline and social

disengagement. In response, age-friendly initiatives seek to promote the concept of 'active ageing' – opportunities for older people to participate in all areas of society in a way that values the diversity of capabilities older people might have (WHO, 2007). Developing age-friendly communities requires both social and physical changes to communities, to ensure opportunities for meaningful participation of older people in civic society as part of providing opportunities for self-fulfilment (WHO, 2018). We argue that the age-friendly model should be understood as multi-factorial and place-based, engaging with the specific lived experience of actual older people existing in that location in order to address the barriers and opportunities of existing and potential relationships. It recognises the interconnections between aspects of the lived experience as vitally important, calling for coordinated action and partnership working around a shared goal of improving older people's quality of life (Doran & Buffel, 2018; Greenfield, 2018; Scharlach & Lehning, 2013; White & Hammond, 2018).

While the age-friendly movement seeks to address the exclusion of older people from decision-making processes, these forms of exclusion are best viewed as 'intersectional' (King et al., 2019). Risk factors such as poverty, health inequalities, intergenerational conflict or racial tensions all contribute to social exclusion and often are exacerbated in older cohorts. These experiences of social exclusion are personal but they are also spatially concentrated, often in disadvantaged urban communities where the issues facing older people are multiple and interrelated. As a result, the mechanisms for creating age-friendly cities and communities must seek to respond to local opportunities and barriers that prevent participation, acknowledging the heterogeneous needs of older people experiencing social exclusion (Buffel et al., 2013; Ogg, 2005).

The Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC), launched by the WHO in 2010, had attracted over 1000 members by 2020, demonstrating its success in

tapping into a growing interest in ageing within urban policy. There are, however, notable criticisms of the programme, and some have questioned how successful some age-friendly initiatives have been at activating those experiencing precarity, social isolation and spatial exclusion (Gonyea & Hudson, 2015; Greenfield, 2015; Phillipson, 2018). In response, a number of cities have adopted 'place-based' approaches to developing age-friendly cities, engaging with 'whole system' perspectives which promote increased interconnectedness between service institutions and local populations and which are in the process of being enacted on the ground. 'Place' is understood not as a purely material or geographical location, but as the embodied product of interrelations between a person and other bodies (friends, neighbours, institutions) enacted in space. Massey (2005) argues that 'Place' should be more than a representational 'place-holder' for more intense understandings of lived experience in a particular locale and location because space is '...always being made' through the coexistence of heterogeneous relations, which are embedded material practices (p. 9). The relationships of interdependence which determine experiences of precarity therefore include all multiply determining aspects of our lived experience in a place – but moreover they could usefully be seen to constitute the nature of the place where we live.

Consequently, place-based working seeks to develop collaborations within a specific locality to understand local issues, aspirations and opportunities informed by the lived experiences of those who, through their interactions with others, create places. These approaches attempt to transform the reciprocal relationship between people, society (social environment) and place (physical environment), each of which is subject to potential change over time. As space is relational, place is produced through the social interactions of those who inhabit or operate within a particular locale. In an age-friendly context, the potential of place-based working is to provide a means for personal, social

and emotional fulfilment of older people rather than (just) provide a means of improving physical wellness (Greenfield et al., 2012).

The core feature of place-based working is the creation of a two-way, productive relationship of interdependence between citizens and institutions, where both parties are able to share decision-making and development powers as a means of addressing a common goal. These coalitions of difference that underpin place-based approaches, both within a community of people and between citizens and local institutions, provide the basis of interdependent relationships, which addresses the precarity faced by many older people who are normally excluded from influencing processes of change in their neighbourhood.

This chapter will draw upon three case studies derived from the 'Manchester Age-Friendly Neighbourhoods' programme, which elaborate on three key facets of interdependence and place that highlight the potential for age-friendly neighbourhoods to address experiences of precarity in urban communities. The first examines how interdependence can provide a means of overcoming structural issues that affect the production of place. The second demonstrates how interdependence can increase the capabilities of both actors within a relationship to realise spatial justice. The third shows how creating relationships of interdependence can be an inclusionary practice that addresses the complex, multifaceted forms of marginalisation.

Manchester Age-Friendly Neighbourhoods

The Manchester Age-Friendly Neighbourhoods (MAFN) programme utilises a place-based approach as a means of addressing social inequalities and precarity within four deprived urban communities of Manchester, UK. The initiative was established by Manchester School of Architecture and Southway Housing Trust in 2016 and aims to

work alongside communities of older people to develop four age-friendly neighbourhoods over a four-year period. The programme was funded through the Big Lottery 'Ageing Better' fund, with additional financial support from Manchester City Council's 'Age-Friendly Manchester' team. The programme builds upon a previous pilot study, Age-Friendly Old Moat, developed with the University of Manchester in 2013 (Phillipson et al., 2013; White & Hammond, 2018).

The aim of the MAFN programme is to develop sustainable, resident-led partnerships in each neighbourhood in which older people and local institutions can work together to respond to challenges and opportunities within their neighbourhood. The programme is inspired by the Connected Communities (C2) approach (Durie & Wyatt, 2013), which starts from the critical position that traditional neighbourhood renewal policies have generally failed to address issues of social inclusion or poverty (and often made them worse).¹

Analysis of the C2 approach suggests that processes of cyclical decline in deprived neighbourhoods are the product of weak connectors that create disjointed relationships of interdependence between resident and agency worker, agency and agency, resident and resident. The negative affect of these situations is indicated by the emergence of shared, tacit beliefs that 'nothing can be done' to improve the quality of life of residents in deprived communities. This perpetually limits the possibility of change within agencies, or the development of robust neighbourhood structures that tackle precarity and enable interdependence (Durie & Wyatt, 2007).

The MAFN neighbourhood partnerships are underpinned by a series of activities: creating an action plan, supporting and funding small projects; and creating new relationships between organisations and older people.

Creating an Action Plan

Each partnership within the MAFN programme is centred around a co-produced neighbourhood action plan. Developed through a series of participatory methodologies in collaboration with local residents and institutional partners, the action plan is a spatial representation of older people's lived experiences, providing both robust evidence for action and a catalogue of ideas developed by the community. The plan consists of spatial census data, urban design analysis, neighbourhood survey data and findings from action planning workshops, with a focus on exploring the spatial manifestations of these data sources (Figure 9.1). As of January 2019, the MAFN research team have engaged in 4,800 interactions with local people and institutional partners in creating the four neighbourhood action plans, sharing both experiences of living in those neighbourhoods and ideas about how to make it better for older people.¹



Figure 9.1. Older residents from Hulme and Moss Side taking part in an action planning workshop.

Source: Authors.

Developing and Funding Small Projects

Each partnership was provided with a resident investment fund to support the development of small projects (usually less than £2,000), which could be used to enact their vision of an age-friendly community. These projects were developed by local residents, with projects supported, reviewed and agreed by a resident-led board in each area. These boards consisted of older people and representatives of institutions and organisations that are active in the area.

Create New Relationships between Organisations and Older People

The purpose of a partnership approach is to enable new relationships and connections to occur, allowing individuals to affect each other in ways not currently possible. The aim is to generate systemic change, in which new relationships between actors are able to change how services are created and delivered. This offers a means of challenging models of dependency that are implicit in the labels that individuals have, such as those between volunteer and user, or provider and customer. This requires agencies and service providers to be open to develop new ways of working (both inter-agency, and with the community), and residents to be organised and engaged (usually through a commonly recognised issue that they want to respond to).

The programme was developed in five Manchester neighbourhoods: Burnage, Moston, Miles Platting, Hulme and Moss Side. Each has contrasting demographic and spatial characteristics, and by various metrics can be described as multiply deprived and

precarious communities. Our focus in this chapter will be the Hulme and Moss Side neighbourhoods, located just south of Manchester’s urban core. Both communities have a relatively young population of 34,189, of which only 12.4% are aged 50 and over (compared to 34.6% in England and Wales). The area has undergone significant change in recent years, with a new university campus and increasing affluent student population moving into the area. A number of demographic characteristics suggest risk factors for a precarity in the neighbourhood’s older population (see Table 9.1).

Table 9.1 Data representing potential precarity risk factors in later life in Hulme and Moss Side, compared to the national average (England and Wales)

	Hulme and Moss Side (%)	England and Wales (%)
Proportion of retired population receiving pension credit support ^a	63.1	14.3
Economic activity: Inactive (50–64) ^b	50.8	33.6
Ethnic group: Black/African/Caribbean/Black British (50+)	35.4	1.6
Main language: Not English (50+)	16.1	4.1
Marital and civil partnership status: Single (never married), separated, divorce or widowed (50+)	69.0	38.7

Long-term health problems or disabilities: Day-to-day activities limited a lot/a little (50+)	52.5	36.8
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Source: Authors.

^A Data from August 2018. Pension credits are a state-funded benefit for retired people on low incomes, available to older people whose normal pension is not enough to support basic living costs (which as of January 2019 is set at £163 per week for single people, and £248 per week for couples).

^B Data from 2011 Census.

Case Study 1: Creating an Age-Friendly 'partnership'

Using interdependence to address structural issues that limit how place is made. Following a series of initial engagement events, led by the research team, which involved hundreds of local residents and community representatives, 22 people agreed to become the founding board members of the Age-Friendly Hulme and Moss Side partnership. These were a broad mix of institutions (e.g. health professionals, council workers, police, university staff), established community 'champions' (e.g. community group volunteers, resident association chairs) and individual residents with no previous experience in civic participation or affiliation to existing groups. A number of situations experienced in the first year of the partnership board highlighted how institutions (including the University) were not engaging with the state of precarity that many older people faced, but demonstrate how actively addressing these conditions provides a means of greater engagement and collaboration. These reaffirm the notion that social

exclusion is a systemic failure rather than an individual deficit, and thus is open to change through the concerted efforts of those within the system.

One of the key challenges faced within the early phases of the project was the conflict between a desire to support socially excluded people to do good in their community, yet still operating within the ethical and legal framework set by our external funders and University finance department. The role of the University in the programme had a fixed four-year timeframe, so the board recognised that a robust and sustainable set of structures and procedures would need to be developed.

In June 2016, the treasurer of the Age-Friendly Hulme and Moss Side partnership board investigated setting up a bank account, initially just for the £2,000 set aside to fund the management of the board. The board approached a number of banks to set up an account, but were turned down due to the poor credit history of some board members. This setback, both in terms of time and confidence, led the board to approach the South Manchester Credit Union, a not-for-profit cooperative that provides accounts and loans for local residents. While there were some inconveniences with this account, it also empowered the board to control their own budget and manage their own finances independently of the University.

Based on these experiences, the board set up mechanisms to support other groups and individuals who had no means of receiving funding. Institutions and voluntary groups on the board agreed to work in partnership with any applicant who needed support, removing a potential barrier that socially excluded people (such as those without bank accounts) from developing projects. Rather than a deficit, actively engaging with issues of precarity helped the board establish a more inclusive approach, which, in turn,

enabled participation from individuals who are shut out of traditional funding mechanisms.

This case study shows how structural forces, such as the banking system, can influence the production of space. In previous community funding schemes in Hulme and Moss Side, the creation of spatial interventions was limited for those deemed worthy of credit by international banks, rather than those whose ideas and skills might address local needs or aspiration. Prior to the age-friendly partnerships in Hulme and Moss Side, these were not understood by many in the community as a component of place, and thus voluntary and community funding schemes were inaccessible to many in the community. By enabling a more diverse group of people to access financial support, the community are able to activate spaces in ways that were not previously possible. This, in turn, affects the spatial character of the neighbourhood by expanding where activities take place and who has access to these venues. The unequal distribution of insecurity, which undermines people's ability to enact change, is overcome when the barriers faced by people transition from being internal, individual insecurities to commonly understood conditions of precarity. For members of the age-friendly board, the first-hand experiences of financial precarity provided insights into how to achieve urban change, and greater understanding of the measures needed to address the inequalities faced by the most marginalised members of the community.

Case Study 2: New Hope Fellowship Church/Age-Friendly Bus

Relationships of interdependence increase the capabilities of both actors. One of the aims of an age-friendly community is to increase the capabilities of older people to enact change in the locale. In the case of Age-friendly Hulme and Moss Side, one of the key concerns of residents was the relationship between older residents and a small number of larger institutions, including Manchester City Council. In response, the local

age-friendly programme sought to engage in holistic processes that sought to address systemic issues of marginalisation, rather than specific interventions that might just provide a short-term 'fix' to the problem.

An example of a more holistic approach is provided by the St. Georges estate located in the north-west corner of Hulme, which by many metrics can be seen as a community with multiple forms of deprivation. Through the development of the Age-friendly Hulme and Moss Side action plan, we discovered that St. Georges was the part of Hulme with the highest number of older people reporting poor health, the worst access to public transport, the lowest levels of car ownership, and the highest number of older people living alone. The social exclusion experienced in St. Georges was exacerbated by a number of spatial qualities, with the estate located the furthest distance from shops and community facilities, other than a small and expensive corner shop.

The New Hope Fellowship Church is the only social infrastructure in St. Georges, but our research found that it was used infrequently. When we asked a council worker about why more events didn't occur there, they highlighted the lack of an accessible toilet. They noted that they did not want to exclude older people with disabilities, so felt the venue was not appropriate for them to use. Whilst this position is not illogical, the result was simply that an exclusionary position was transferred to another group: from the disabled people to the residents of St Georges. In responses, the research team worked with local St. Georges residents and the New Hope Fellowship church to convert their existing toilet to make it accessible for people with disabilities. The conversion cost £2,000 and was agreed by the Age-Friendly Hulme and Moss Side board in early 2017. The project was successful in encouraging more activity located in St. Georges estate, including IT classes, a dinner club and a ten-week exercise programme, run by the city council. The existing lunch club also has noted increased numbers of older people in

attendance, including two wheelchair users who didn't previously stay for the lunch club (which took place directly after the food bank) because they would be unable to use the facilities.

The marginalisation of St. Georges residents should be understood as the uneven distribution of precarity within space, a process that is informed by both physical environment (location, lack of facilities), and the social relationships which reaffirm these conditions. The physical solution was simple and low cost, but did not previously occur in St. Georges because the social environment perpetuated a series of norms which determined what kinds of spaces events should take place in and the Council services did not individually have the scope to act to address the underlying cause. This case study exposes not just how an altered set of relationships can enact transformative change for a spatially excluded group but how developing interdependence can increase the capabilities of both actors, in this case local residents and the local council. For the council, the relationship was not about handing over power to residents, but mutually increasing each other's power to address the spatial injustices. This is underpinned by reconceptualisation of relationships, from the perceived dependence of older 'service users' to a recognition that interdependence can both expand the field of possible actions for both parties.

Case Study 3: Ayeeyo Lunch

Relationships of interdependence can be an inclusionary practice. From the outset of the Age-Friendly Hulme and Moss Side programme, a central concern of the research team was undertaking intense forms of engagement as a mechanism of reaching socially isolated individuals and groups. The circumstances that cause social isolation are, by definition, a factor of the relationships external to the isolated individual. As a result, even targeted acts of inclusion by the research team (with whom genuinely isolated

people have no relationship) are ineffective. Instead, our focus was on fostering a partnership network that was open to difference and actively seeking to expand itself. This process understands social isolation as a product of systemic marginalisation and thus seeks to address it through systemic change. While some communities might be hard to reach for the research team, they are imminently reachable for others within a partnership that is always looking to expand.

An example of this is the older Somali community, who had been identified anecdotally as a significant group at risk of social isolation. None of the members of the age-friendly partnership had any links to the Somali community, and there were no obvious gatekeepers to approach who could help facilitate connections.

In September 2016, the Age-Friendly Moss Side board were contacted by the 'Women Support Group' (WSG). WSG was a small and informal group of younger Somali women who met at a local community centre to provide peer support for each other. The group were mostly first-generation migrants, but had grown up in the UK speaking fluent English. Members of the WSG first heard about the age-friendly programme after having a conversation with a community member who had previously designed and run a community project, funded by the Age-Friendly Hulme and Moss Side partnership. The WSG approached the Age-Friendly Hulme and Moss Side partnership to explore how they might be able to support their parents and grandparents, many of whom were isolated due to language and cultural barriers. Some of the older Somali community lacked documentation, which dissuaded them from seeking support or attending events. Two members of the age-friendly board agreed to meet with a group of older Somali women and the WSG to start developing a project that would address their specific social and cultural needs.

Rather than an accidental engagement reliant on chance encounters, this illustrates the success of the partnership, in which connections, advocacy and responsibility are devolved to all members, thus enabling the programme to engage 'exhaustively' or continually in a way unachievable by top-down processes of more targeted or representational engagement.²

The WSG decided to start a lunch club calling it 'Ayeeyo', which is Somali for 'Grandmother'. Ayeeyo was a weekly lunch club for 10–15 older Somali women, including food and informal socialisation. The sessions were organised by younger Somali women, who also cooked the lunch and drove older residents to the venue. In return, the older residents agreed to teach the younger generation songs and dances as a way of passing on Somali culture. Beyond just a chance to socialise, the Ayeeyo group were founded on a recognition of the unequal distribution of opportunities for older Somali women as a result of systemic barriers within society. One example of this was public health programmes, from which the older Somali women felt excluded. An explicit part of the project proposal was for the WSG to work with local community health professionals to provide an arena for public health initiatives to be communicated. The WSG invited various groups to attend their sessions, translating presentations from professionals from English to Somali. Once established, the group became embedded in the wider programme of work in the neighbourhood, as other members of the partnership had a means of reaching (physically, culturally, linguistically) a community that they would otherwise not have engaged with. For example, a local arts venue approached the group to talk about their programme of events and which might be interesting and appropriate for them, later provided free tickets for the group to attend a number of events.

Ayeeyo Lunch demonstrates the potential of devolved responsibility for engagement, in which the aim of creating social justice for the most socially isolated groups is shared by the local partnership as a whole. Like many projects, the initial participants in Age-Friendly Hulme and Moss Side were the already active citizens who were capable of attending public events. By actively promoting inclusion as a fundamental concept of an age-friendly community and the explicit methodological basis of the partnership, the programme was able to include people as active participants that were several degrees of separation removed from the previously empowered mainstream community institutions.

This case study demonstrates that relationships of interdependence provide a means of generating inclusionary practices that address complex and multifaceted forms of marginalisation. For the older Somali community, their language, gender, legal status and financial resources all influenced their capabilities to interact with others and therefore the capabilities to produce space. Through a systemic focus on inclusion within the project, the MAFN programme was able to identify and support the conditions for transformative interdependence – first between two generations of Somali women, and later between the Somali women and local institutions – which would not have been possible through engagements based on pre-determined interventions. Spatially, the impacts of this are small but significant. A community space that was not previously part of their experience of the neighbourhood is transformed into a space both of sociability and of comfort (for many, the only place where they can remove their hijabs outside of their home) and a space to generate wider forms of interdependence, including with people who could enable them to expand their territories to venues and facilities previously unavailable to them.

Discussion: The Future Age-Friendly City

The case studies presented in this chapter suggest how interventions that support interdependence can address the increased levels of precarity that might develop in urban environments in the future. While the challenges facing cohorts of older people will be significant, this needs to be seen as a call for action, rather than despair. Precarity raises the necessity to develop new models of interdependence: in the home, in the workplace and in the community. From older people's cohousing to workers cooperatives, to age-friendly neighbourhoods and 'village' models, the focus on relationships becomes increasingly vital as a means of maintaining wellbeing in the face of an increasingly isolated, individualistic society (see further Monbiot, 2017). For the age-friendly city, precarity calls for place-based approaches, in which interdependence is fostered not just between the older cohort, but also with the myriad of institutions, agencies and groups who influence the lived experience of the neighbourhood. The importance of the spatial dimension of precarity and precariousness can often be overlooked in both discourse and programmes seeking to address social inequality.

Based on Butler's suggestion that precarity is the unequal distribution of precariousness, the case studies in this chapter demonstrate how this unequal distribution is also inherently and inextricably spatial. For those with bad credit ratings, or those without community facilities, or those whose language and culture exclude them, precarity has a clear impact on the relationships through which space is continually produced, and their capabilities to ensure that changes to their community address their needs and aspirations as older people.

The key aspect we seek to emphasise is that the relationships of interdependence required to enable 'active ageing', 'greater civic participation' or 'reduce social isolation' are not generic, but experiential. A recognition of spatiality is also a recognition of specificity and difference, as they '...force into the imagination a fuller recognition of the

simultaneous coexistence of others with their own trajectories and their own stories to tell' (Massey, 2005, p. 11). The examples from the Manchester Age-Friendly Neighbourhoods project all demonstrate how the relationships between a heterogeneous array of actors can be the catalyst for social change, and that these relationships can be supported to flourish through coordinated, place-based initiatives. This is not to discount the role of design and architectural construction in defining space. The numerous programmes of wholesale 'regeneration' in Hulme and Moss Side were highlighted by many older people as events that have both broken and strengthened relationships within the community. The benefit of a partnership approach, as taken in the MAFN programme, is that it enables the urban institutions which commission, influence or mediate urban development to do so without the need to adopt generic stereotypes about the older population. Rather than awaiting a process of community consultation, the development of enduring, two-way relationships between older people, community groups, institutions and local government should provide the basis for genuine forms of co-production of both the physical and social environment.

At this stage, it is important to recognise that precarity is a product of political decision-making; it should be viewed as a failure of policies that prevent the exploitation of labour and property and marginalise the human rights of some groups (Berardi, 2016; Neilson & Rossiter, 2008). The contradictions between the adoption of the age-friendly concept, on the one hand, and the austerity-driven reduction in public services on the other, are glaring and ripe for critique (McGarry, 2018). In the face of these structural challenges, it is fair to question whether the age-friendly model will become a mere branding exercise for cities, or whether the movement is able to tackle issues such as '...widening inequalities, the impact of climate change, problems of homelessness, and the lack of affordable housing' (Philipson, 2018, p. 7). Herein lies the great potential of

the age-friendly city movement: the opportunity to leverage interdependence and collective action is a route to challenging these wider structural systems. The collective act of assembly is not just a means of managing decline in the face of austerity, but a mechanism by which older people can show how an alternative way is possible, working together to demonstrate the transformative potential of collaborative, rather than competitive, approaches.

To conclude, precarity should not be understood as an individual deficit, but the consequence of systemic, multi-dimensional exclusion; a failure of the social, economic, political and spatial networks through which individuals generate agency. If an age-friendly city is to address the needs of an increasingly older population, interventions need to actively engage with the conditions of precarity, not just the symptoms. Each of the examples in this chapter demonstrates how the conditions of precarity are often hidden and individualised: the structural issues with financial services; experiences of spatial exclusion in certain locations; exclusion from some groups from the civic and voluntary offer of their neighbourhood. The Manchester Age-Friendly Neighbourhoods project shows that through interaction these conditions become explicit, and through interdependence they can be overcome. This requires holistic processes in which residents and institutions are open to affect each other in meaningful ways, working towards common goals through shared practices. Through this, age-friendly programmes can create platforms for co-production based on genuine, two-way relationships between diverse actors, and in doing so creates pathways for socially and spatially excluded older people to realise an equitable and just city.

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¹ These interactions are noted because they are recorded by the MAFN team members. They do not represent unique individuals. Interactions between partners and residents in the area around age-friendly issues and projects have not been possible to track, but would involve much larger numbers of engagement actors (e.g. around 30–40 core members) with each contributing significant numbers of interactions.

² It should be noted that the older Somali community also did not appear on the current census data.