

Shaping Neighborhoods: Older Adult Urban Participation

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ABSTRACT

Participation, a perspective of successful ageing is examined using three age-friendly domains of participation: physical, social and civic participation. Within research on ageing older adults, particularly those in advanced older age, are often positioned as isolated from and lonely in their community and their participation in the community is less often considered. Drawing on a study exploring the experiences of 85+ year olds participating in their inner-city neighborhood, this presentation explores how older adults participate and what participation means to them. Since the aim of this study is to understand community participation of inner-city dwelling older adults this New Zealand study collects data through a semi-structured interview, focused on capturing stories of everyday moments of participation in community life. Data interpretation was guided by phenomenologists, Heidegger and Gadamer. Analysis identified three themes that captured participation as *holding on to the everyday*; *being neighborly*; and *keeping going*. In their everyday community activities, participation was more likely to be limited to the neighborhood. Participants were more likely to be actively creating neighborhoods that meet their needs for social connectedness and inclusion while simultaneously creating a greater neighborhood need for connectedness and engagement. This research adds to the wider literature understanding the factors supporting successful ageing and age-friendly communities. This field is ready to move to co-design intervention studies inclusive of 85+ year olds to support age-friendly neighborhood initiatives and design.

Keywords age-friendly cities, age-friendly neighborhood; hermeneutic phenomenology; inclusiveness; urban