



Ageing, Mobility and the City: Objects, Infrastructures and Practices in Everyday Assemblages of Civic Spaces in East London

Theodora Bowering¹ 

Received: 12 May 2018 / Accepted: 15 January 2019 / Published online: 29 January 2019
© The Author(s) 2019

Abstract

This article considers how older people inhabit cities in the UK, looking specifically at how everyday practices of mobility intersect with the formation of assemblages of spaces and activities. In turn, this work interrogates the parallels, convergences and divergences of these mobility practices with experiences and measures of resilience and marginalisation. This prompts questions on the role of a diversity of civic spaces in the everyday experience of ageing – including streets, squares, transport infrastructures and community centres – in the constitution of the city and the need for social, political and spatial accessibility for older people. How older people experience urban environments has been investigated within ageing studies, however, this research is yet to be properly linked to urban and architectural fields. Practices of mobility are key concepts and indicators of the accessibility of urban life, revealing the heterogeneous ways in which older people are engaged with and excluded from the city. Offering links between urban and ageing studies, the field of transport studies addresses ways that older people engage with the infrastructures, spaces and practices of buses, cars and trains. The study of seventy-five year old Elizabeth, living in the relatively isolated urban environment of Beckton in the London Borough of Newham, traces how changing assemblages of mobility infrastructures impact her everyday life as she accesses, contests and is excluded from urban spaces and practices. The variety of ethnographic and visual methods used, derived from architectural methods, in the study of Elizabeth and her mobility practices open up a deeper understanding of urban ageing.

Keywords Ageing studies · Urban studies · Cities · Architecture · Mobility · Assemblage

✉ Theodora Bowering
tfb24@cam.ac.uk

¹ Centre for Urban Conflicts Research, Department of Architecture, University of Cambridge, 1-5 Scroope Terrace, Cambridge CB2 1PX, UK

Introduction

Current research in ageing studies recognises the importance of investigations of ageing in cities in the UK (Phillipson 2007; Buffel et al. 2012, 2018; Handler 2014a, b; Fitzgerald and Caro 2014; Buffel and Phillipson 2016, 2018), however, there is a need for stronger links between ageing, architectural and urban studies. These debates also need to engage with questions around the political nature of processes of ageing and the development of cities, especially in the face of continuing neoliberal policies and austerity measures (Buffel and Phillipson 2016). While architectural and planning disciplines have investigated typologies of care, hospitals and housing (Verderber 2000; Worpole 2009; Feddersen and Lütke 2009; DCLG et al. 2009; Farrelly 2014; Simpson 2015; DWELL 2016; Park and Porteus 2018), and recognise the importance of access to civic spaces, there is still a need to understand the complexities of older people's everyday assemblages of civic spaces in greater depth. Additionally, while urban studies has dealt extensively with questions of accessibility, mobility and visibility in cities (Sennett 1977; Jacobs 1993; Arendt 1998; Kaufmann 2002; Amin 2006; Urry 2007; Hall 2012; Minton 2012; Cresswell 2013; Pullan and Baillie 2013; Sassen 2014; Amin and Thrift 2016) there is a need to question the absence of research on ageing.

In order to begin to address these lacunae, this research investigates how older people inhabit cities in the UK, looking specifically at how everyday practices and infrastructures of mobility (Musselwhite and Haddad 2010; Schwanen and Páez 2010; Rosso et al. 2011; Schwanen and Ziegler 2011; Nordbakke 2013; Nordbakke and Schwanen 2014; Green et al. 2014) intersect with the continual assemblage of spaces and activities. These questions are explored through theoretical frameworks on the everyday (de Certeau 1984; Felski 1999; Sheringham 2006; Lefebvre 2014) and assemblage thinking (Brenner et al. 2011; McFarlane 2011a, b; Tonkiss 2011; Storper and Scott 2016; Lieto 2017) enabling an engagement beyond a static or singular reading of the city or typology of space, to allow for a more open and encompassing reading of ageing and the urban realm. These frameworks are focused on the ongoing ethnographic study of a seventy-five-year-old woman, living in the relatively isolated urban environment of Beckton in the London Borough of Newham. Elizabeth, whose name has been anonymised, and I met on over fifteen occasions over an eighteen-month period during which we traced how her changing assemblage of mobility infrastructures impact her everyday life as she accesses, avoids, contests and is excluded from urban spaces and practices. The variety of ethnographic and visual methods used, derived from architectural methods, open up a deeper understanding of the spatiality and materiality of urban ageing. The depth of understanding made possible by such a study allows aggregate quantitative findings on questions of mobility and urban space to be contextualised in a more complex and nuanced narrative of daily life.

Researching Ageing and the City Today

The Urban in Ageing Studies

Ageing is a process, and while it is highly heterogenous, there is commonality in older people's connections with and experiences of the spatial environments they inhabit

(Lawton 1977; Smith 2009; Schwarz 2012). These processes also have a relationship with and are dependent upon civic spaces and the city (Buffel et al. 2012; Peace 2013; Buffel and Phillipson 2016). In the UK, Buffel and Phillipson offer a sociological critique of the World Health Organization (WHO 2007) ‘age-friendly’ cities (AFC) research, situating social gerontological findings within the broader context of debates around globalisation, austerity measures and the ‘right to the city’, stating that ‘integrating the study of population ageing with that of urban studies is crucial to understanding both the limits and the potential of age-friendly communities’ (Buffel and Phillipson 2016, p.96). Buffel and Phillipson ultimately argue for the engagement of older people in the development of cities in order to make them more age friendly in the context of changing demographics. Access to high-quality public space is also a key recommendation in supporting older people experiencing forms of exclusion, since ‘higher levels of social and cultural participation [were found] among older people who had access to facilities such as corner shops, pubs, cafés, libraries and parks’ (Buffel et al. 2012, p.604). Additionally, the variety of cultural, social and economic opportunities are far greater in cities, which can be especially supportive for older migrants in forming cultural communities (Phillipson 2007).

Key UK-based bodies representing the interests of older people – including the Institute for Longevity Research (ILC-UK) and Age UK – foster debate on social and political issues of pensions and care, but are yet to fully engage with broader debates on the spatial aspects of cities. While ageing studies scholars, and by extension policy makers, particularly those working with the AFC framework, demonstrate the importance of civic spaces in supporting older people and the need for their civic participation, they are yet to understand in any significant depth how older people actually use civic spaces. As such, there is more work that needs to be done before the requirements of an ‘age-friendly’ city or the implications of such an endeavour can be properly assessed, especially in light of the UK’s ongoing neoliberal policies and increasing austerity measures (Buffel and Phillipson 2016). Equally, claims for the participation of older people in civic processes can often be more easily made than fulfilled, with the most socio-economically weak members of society having the least agency in comparison to governments, corporations and wealthier individuals (Golant 2014; Rémillard-Boilard 2018).

The Architectural Response to Ageing

Considering a critical architectural approach, there is a need to transcend current limitations in the UK debate about older people in architectural and planning discourses. Urban design and housing strategies within these discourses, such as the UK government’s Lifetime Homes and Neighbourhoods initiatives (Bevan and Croucher 2011), Housing Our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) (DCLG et al. 2009) and Housing LIN (Park and Porteus 2018) recognise the importance of access to civic spaces, however, they largely present the challenges in broad technical and regulatory terms. Additionally, a small and slowly growing number of co-housing projects in the UK are offering alternative opportunities for the support of older people. However, the small scale, long timescales and financial and political hurdles involved pose serious challenges to their scalability (Killock 2014; Scanlon and Arrigoitia 2015). So, whilst these efforts have raised awareness about the ageing phenomenon, they are ‘yet to be properly assessed in the context of the complexities and contradictions that

beset modern cities, especially those that arise from accelerated global social and economic change' (Buffel et al. 2012, p.598).

Studies from architecture and urbanism disciplines in the UK have focused on typological studies of the controlled and medicalised environments of care homes and hospitals and top-down planning strategies, which lack engagement with urban debates on the everyday use of civic spaces (Verderber 2000; Worpole 2009; Feddersen and Lüdtke 2009). The limits of the current architectural response in the UK are also demonstrated by the minimal available research from the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) (RIBA 2013, 2014), the omission of projects for older people in the RIBA Design Awards (RIBA 2018), and the absence of UK projects in key architectural design publications (Farrelly 2014; Murray 2018). Sophie Handler's 'An Alternative Age-Friendly Handbook' (Handler 2014b) offers an important challenge to spatial practitioners to engage with the age-friendly cities framework, seeing it as 'a useful conceptual landscape within which architects, designers, artists (creative urban practitioners) might explore ideas and practices around ageing and the city... [that extend] design thinking and practice on ageing beyond the more familiar and literally contained preoccupations of standard design 'responses' to ageing (focused on interior residential settings)' (Handler 2014b, p.16–17). One project, a contemporary almshouse in South London by Witherford Watson Mann Architects, is exceptional in celebrating an engagement with the civic through a communal space sited on its street edge, as opposed to being set back in an attempt to 'protect' its residents (Fig. 1). A rendering even shows its ordinary London street context, including a pizza shop, off licence and a diversity of people (Fig. 2). This makes a refreshing change from the dominant images of controlled environments for older people with the finishes of a generic hotel, what Augé would call 'non-places', where 'a person entering the space of non-place is relieved of his usual determinants. He becomes no more than what he does or experiences in the role of passenger, consumer or driver' (Augé 1995, p.83). Whilst design regulations are an important component of architecture and planning, they are only one strategy that needs to be addressed. This paper calls for addressing the absence of critical scholarly explorations within architecture discourses and on the role of civic spaces in fostering urban resilience, and highlights the need to productively engage with the multidisciplinary and political challenges of cities and growing ageing populations.

An Absence of Ageing in Urban Studies

The absence of scholarship, in urban studies, of the experiences of older people in the civic life and spaces of cities is worth questioning. One explanation is that urbanists have typically been inspired by the exclusion of more explicitly polarising groups within the community, such as the homeless and youth. Older people are neither so overtly excluded nor rendered invisible. They do not rise up in the streets to demand their rights to the city or engage in 'anti-social behaviour'. Consequently, urban scholars have not been drawn to the more benign behaviours of older people, resulting in their omission from urban studies. Questions of this lacuna of older people must also consider the reflexive relationship between perceptions of old age within society and the portrayal of older people in media, advertising and popular culture (Gilleard and Higgs 2000, 2010; Gullette 2004; Gilleard 2005; Chivers 2011; Cruikshank 2013). The predominant images seen reinforce notions of invisibility, dependency and exclusion,

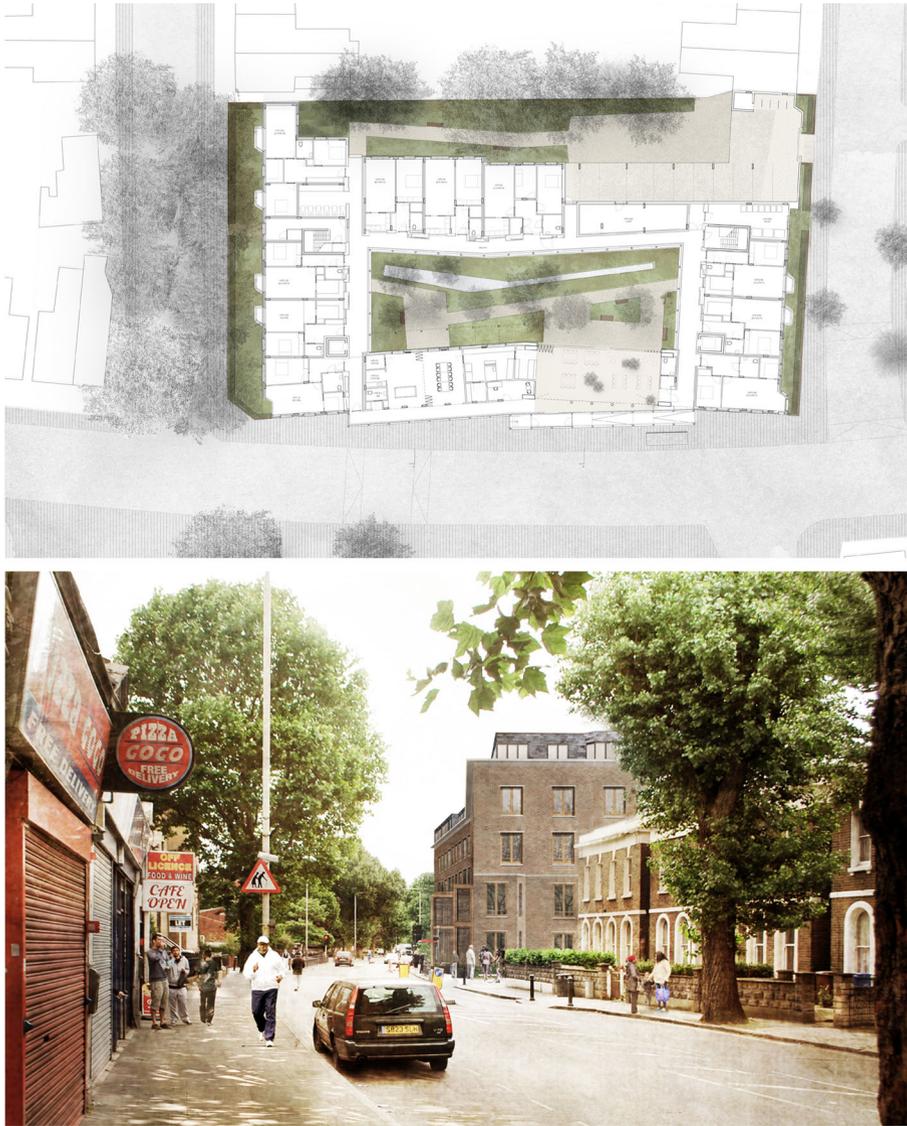


Fig. 1–2 Plan and rendering of the proposed Contemporary Almshouse in Bermondsey, London for United St Saviours Charity by Witherford Watson Mann Architects, showing the building engaging with the street edge as opposed to retreating from the city to ‘protect’ its residents. [Image: Witherford Watson Mann Architects, 2016]

particularly from civic spaces. Whilst an occasional park bench scenario will be seen, very rarely are older people portrayed within civic spaces, engaging with mixed communities or participating in spontaneous, exciting or even dangerous activities. The dominance of these portrayals results in a simplistic representation of ageing and the experiences of old age; simplistic portrayals that support the passive exclusion of older people from the civic spaces of the city. The nature of the marginalisation of older people, being less active and violent, through and within their public image is a key

consideration in the reasoning of why they have escaped the attention of scholars studying cities.

Mobility, Accessibility, and Visibility in the City

Cities and their civic places are the sites of mobility, visibility, sociality and contestation (Sennett 1977; Arendt 1998; Amin and Thrift 2002, 2016; Amin 2008; Madanipour 2009, 2015; Pullan and Baillie 2013; Pullan 2015). Hence, where there is an absence of older people there is a need to question why and whether this is an indication of their active exclusion. Discussions on the role of civic spaces in the constitution of the city demand a questioning of their accessibility and the implications of the exclusion of older people. Arendt has argued that accessibility does not automatically equate to publicness but that civic space must also be useable to all and have a durability that allows it to be inscribed with collective social meaning (Arendt 1998). Within urban discourses, there is recognition that the city no longer represents 'citizenship, the ideal republic, good government, civic behaviour and the ideal public sphere' (Amin 2006, p.1011). No longer the central cultural and political sites they were in Classical Rome or Renaissance Florence, public spaces have been transformed and undermined by urban growth, consumerism and privatisation. Questioning of urban social and spatial histories and the investigation of a diversity of civic spaces, beyond simplistic conceptions of public and private, is essential in articulating the nuances of experiences of older people.

In order to engage with a broader definition of the city, the concept of 'civic space' refers to a range of spaces beyond the more private, controlled and domestic spheres to include the public, shared spaces of streets, shops and markets, bus stops, community centres and public squares. It also includes more semi-private spaces such as churches and corridors, elevators and other communal areas of housing projects. This conception, and the ambition of this paper to study more than a single typology, recognises the integral role of a multitude of civic sites that form and reform as assemblages in the city. These spaces are not just the iconic sites of commerce and culture, but also include more ordinary urban areas that are often overlooked (Paddison and Sharp 2007; Hall 2012). Additionally, these investigations ground theoretical conceptions of space in the everyday praxis of place, with place being enlivened due to its inhabitation by a plurality of people and events (Vesely 2004; Carl 2012; Pullan and Baillie 2013).

The theme of mobility intersects with questions of the accessibility of the city and offers existing bodies of work in both ageing and urban fields, allowing opportunities for bridging these fields. Within urban discourses themes of mobility and visibility are extensively discussed in relation to movement (walking, cycling, skateboarding, parkour), migration and transport, but older people are conspicuously absent (de Certeau 1984; Jacobs 1993; Debord 1994; Borden 2001; Cass et al. 2005; Mould 2009; Spinney 2010; Pinder 2011; Baumann 2016). Theories of mobility in urban studies have become increasingly prominent in the last decade with the coining of the 'new mobilities paradigm' (Urry 2007) identifying mobility as a central theoretical focus (Kaufmann 2002; Urry 2002, 2007; Cresswell 2006, 2010, 2013; Sheller and Urry 2006; Pullan 2013). Focused on the social and political, there is an emphasis on large-scale global mobility practices and capacities and the acceleration of time-space compression with transport and virtual technological developments (Urry 2007).

Within the new mobilities paradigm, the field of transport studies offers a considerable body of research on the importance of mobility to the resilience and wellbeing of older people and a bridge between ageing and urban studies (Musselwhite and Haddad 2010; Schwanen and Páez 2010; Schwanen and Ziegler 2011; Nordbakke and Schwanen 2014; Schwanen et al. 2015). Looking at how their modes of travel develop as they age, there is a clear recognition of changing patterns of mobility in the transition to retirement and growing exclusion and isolation (Church et al. 2000; Rosenbloom 2007, 2010; Green et al. 2014; Berg et al. 2014; Ferrari et al. 2014). Research has also looked at the role of the built environment including transport infrastructure, land use and urban design in the mobility and exclusion of older people (Rosso et al. 2011). The extent of this marginalisation is highly variable and not explained by simple social, economic and spatial relations. For example, it cannot be assumed that living in close proximity to public transport infrastructure will guarantee its use or that being wealthy or having an extended family will prevent experiences of exclusion (Schwanen et al. 2015).

Within the context of this research, the term ‘motility’ offers a more grounded and relational conception of ‘mobility’. Motility considers the capacity of people, information and goods to ‘access and appropriate the capacity for socio-spatial mobility according to their circumstances’ (Kaufmann et al. 2004, p.750). Older people as a heterogeneous population encompass, in their access to systems, services and structures of mobility, a great diversity of degrees of motility. Within the challenging situations presented to many people as they age, personal resourcefulness is also a key consideration. The ‘ingeniousness of the solutions invented and applied’ (Kaufmann 2002, p.103) must be recognised as impacting their access of the city. As such, motility is a factor of marginalisation and needs to be considered in the study of the mobility infrastructures, spaces and practices of older people.

The London Borough of Newham as a Context for Ageing

The London Borough of Newham offers a fertile terrain for this study due to intersections of its social and spatial conditions with key themes within urban and ageing debates. These include Newham’s planning and housing legacies, regeneration agenda, high deprivation, population levels and ethnic diversity, as well as it having the third-highest level of income deprivation for older people in the UK (Dunleavy 1981; Bullock 2015; DCLG 2015). Across the borough are a number of key civic nodes with a concentration of transport, commercial and social infrastructure (Fig. 3). Newham is the regeneration frontline to the east of London with extensive development, stemming from the 2012 Olympic Park site and adjacent Westfield Shopping Centre and Stratford City, along what has been coined by Newham Council as the ‘arc of opportunity’ (Newham Council 2010; Duman et al. 2018) (Fig. 4). These and other ‘regeneration’ projects – including Canning Town, Custom House and the Royal Docks – have a dramatic social and spatial impact on their local communities (Hamnett 2003; Minton 2012, 2017; Campkin 2013; Duman et al. 2018), including older people who are often the most invested in their environments, having lived in them the longest. The capacity of older people to take advantage of the opportunities of regeneration are varied, with home owners benefitting from rising property values and remaining

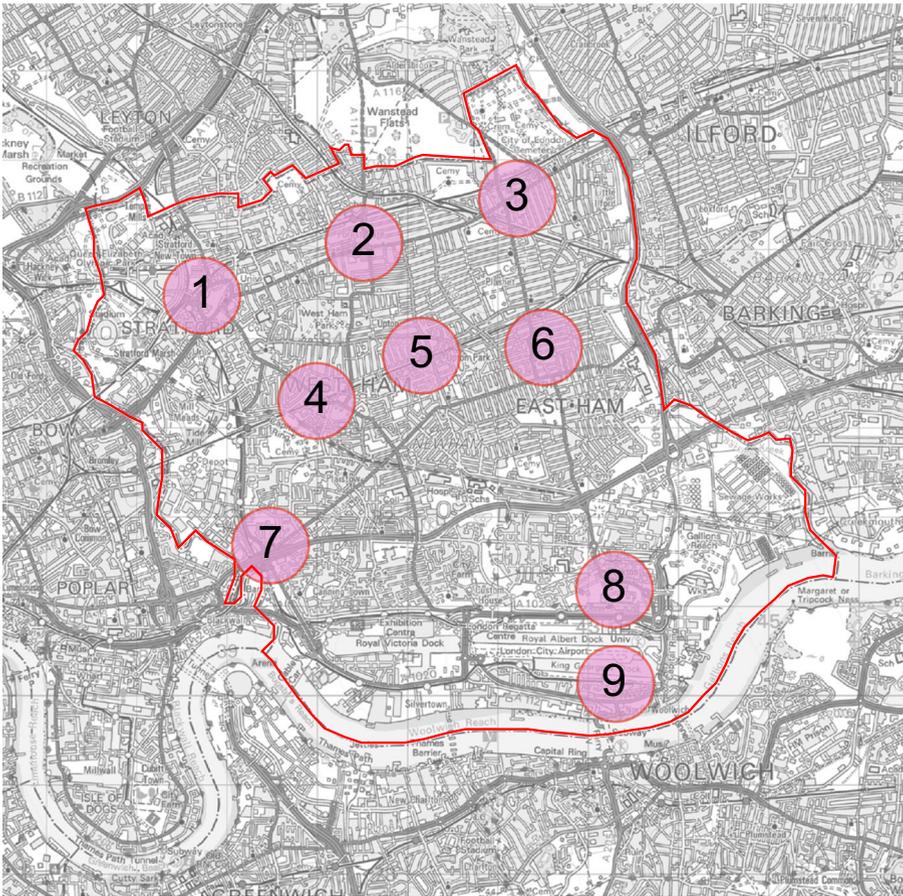


Fig. 3 Key civic nodes (pink) across the London Borough of Newham. 1. Stratford; 2. Forest Gate; 3. Manor Park; 4. Plaistow; 5. Green Street; 6. East Ham; 7. Canning Town; 8. Beckton; 9. North Woolwich [Image: Author, 2018]

residents utilising the improvements to infrastructure. However, it is older residents in social housing and on pension credits that are often the least equipped to move or take advantage of the opportunities of regeneration. One area where this can be seen is Canning Town, where the once large, diverse and affordable Rathbone Market has been replaced by high-rise housing and a small public square with largely empty shop fronts awaiting a wealthier clientele. These issues are highly politicised and must be read within the context of global capitalist trends and national initiatives such as the Localism Act and The Big Society (Bowie 2010; DCLG 2010, 2011; Clarke and Cochrane 2013; Hoolachan 2014). At the local level these agendas are reflected in Newham Council's resilience policies (Newham Council 2011a, b, 2013a, b; LSE Housing and Communities 2014) that are shown to unfairly disadvantage older residents in Newham, who are already among the most marginalised in the community (Kneale 2011; Kneale and Sinclair 2011). The implications of neoliberal planning, austerity measures and calls for resilience are most heavily felt by the most vulnerable, and older people living in contexts like Newham can be most heavily impacted as older

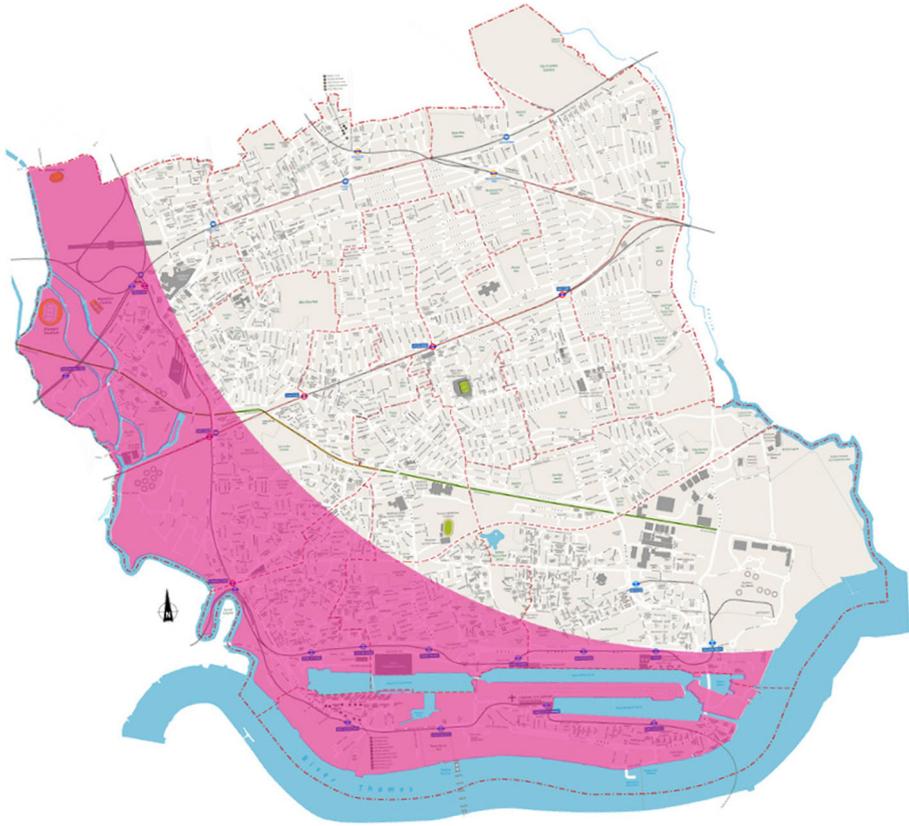


Fig. 4 Newham Council's Arc of Opportunity, in pink, overlaid on a map of East London [Image: <http://albertoduman.wixsite.com/music-masterplanning>]

age becomes an additional burden on pre-existing inequalities and challenges. These factors have long been and are increasingly a part of global cities like London, making the themes and findings of this study relevant to other global city contexts.

Frameworks of Thinking and Methods of Engagement

Investigations, in this study, into the mobility of older people have been conducted within the conceptual frameworks of the everyday and assemblage thinking, compatible due to their reading of the city as indeterminate and fluid in its formations. 'The everyday' is synonymous with the mundane and banal in daily life and offers, as a way of thinking, a counter to the exotic and spectacular. More precise definition, however, is elusive as everyday life is not a fixed process or conception that can be simply aligned with a set of predetermined activities. The everyday is the ground of human existence, made explicit through reflexive processes of repetition that lead to, and reinforce, a familiarity of attitudes and actions. This repetition is not one of sameness; instead, 'the indeterminacy of the everyday' (Sheringham 2006) renders it open and attentive to endless difference. Investigations of everyday life can tend towards the simplistic

binary of negative and positive, each acting to limit readings of the breadth of experiences that constitute daily life; either, through its isolation and articulation, elevating the mundane to the status of the exquisite and poetic, or reducing it to the experience of alienation and dehumanisation (Felski 1999; Sheringham 2006). What is required is a commitment to ‘the complex imbrication of the positive and the negative, alienation and freedom, within the weave of everyday life itself’ (Sheringham 2006, p.11). It is ethnographic studies that necessarily engage with this complex weave of everyday experiences, aligning with architectural methods and offering meaningful observations, analysis and critique as they ground the abstract and bridge disciplinary practices and definitions.

Assemblage thinking offers a conceptual framework for investigations of the dynamic everyday interactions between older people and their social, spatial, material and political urban contexts due to its focus on ‘the spatially processual, relational and generative nature of the city’ (McFarlane 2011b, p.650). Registering the assembling, disassembling and reassembling of multiple civic sites as one ages, as a method of viewing and critiquing a person or community’s changing relationship with the city, demands an opening up to ideas of emergence and becoming that allow for ‘multiple temporalities and possibilities’ (McFarlane 2011a, p.206). Recent key criticisms of the ‘naive objectivism’ (Brenner et al. 2011) and ‘flatness’ (Lieto 2017) of assemblage theory and its plethora of lists (Tonkiss 2011), highlight its failure to ‘distinguish between the significant and the insignificant in urban analysis’ (Storper and Scott 2016, p.1126). However, the risk of over-determination of the agency of people and material objects is best countered by the specificities of context and scale that ethnographic studies, such as this, introduce. The thematic focus of this paper on ageing and mobility within the urban landscape of Newham allows for the identification of assemblages with a hierarchy of objects, bodies and networks that contribute to an understanding of the everyday, ageing and the urban.

As an architect operating from within an architectural department, the questions asked and methods applied are invariably rooted in the spatial practices of the discipline; foregrounding that which is physical, formal and material in the spaces in which everyday interactions and experiences take place. This research began with extensive wanderings across Newham in order to decipher and unfold this complex urban landscape. Qualitative-interpretive methods, including sketching, spatial architectural examinations, site mappings, and photography, together with writing, have been used to observe and critically analyse the varied spatial conditions and phenomena in the field. Over 18 months, a variety of fifteen sessions with Elizabeth allowed for the emergence of a rich case study about everyday life, ageing and mobility in Beckton and Newham. I first encountered Elizabeth at a community centre where she attends a pottery group twice a week. Initially, I asked her to describe a typical day and this then easily expanded into an explanation of her weekly routine and broader life history. Elizabeth and I got to know each other as she generously shared her world with me, inviting me to her home and introducing me to friends and family. During this time numerous qualitative ethnographic methods were developed in order to engage with her mobility, the everyday and her assembling of civic spaces in the city. Interviews were semi-structured and impromptu, with a preference for the ‘go-along method’ that is a hybrid of participant observation and interviewing (Kusenbach 2003). Methods were also explored in a number of contexts, including a pottery group at the community centre,

Elizabeth's apartment and the shared spaces within her sheltered elderly housing block, traveling on a Dial-a-Ride bus, mapping her history in Newham and driving around to visit her various past homes and civic spaces, her church, and a pottery group trip to the Serpentine Gallery and café at Hyde Park. Another way that Elizabeth and the pottery group engaged with their conceptions of 'the city' and how they use their urban environments was through a workshop dedicated to making a plasticine model of 'their' city; each model becoming an assemblage in itself. This experimental workshop was designed to utilise their existing skills and interest in making objects out of clay, but with the softer and more quickly formed plasticine. They began by drawing a mock-up of their designs, thinking through the places they wanted to include (Figs. 5 and 6). Each model became a representation of the individual's image of the city, a formation of past and present mobilities spaces and practices. While each worked on their own, the models were also influenced by the collective discussions and ideas shared during the process. What was included became as informative as what was not. Over this time both Elizabeth and I expanded our conceptions of what the city is and what its spaces mean to Elizabeth and the assemblages of her daily life.

A Story of Ageing and Mobility in the London Borough of Newham

Introducing Elizabeth

Elizabeth, a seventy-five-year-old woman, has lived in London since the 1960s when she moved from Nigeria with her then husband and the first of her three children. She trained as a nurse and residential social worker for Newham Council, working in numerous health, care and housing institutions. Her levels of motility have evolved with the changing demands and opportunities of family and work; her everyday routines once involved moving across the borough and London, ferrying children around and managing domestic needs whilst also traveling to various work sites. Socially, Elizabeth had an extensive network in London and Nigeria that developed out of her everyday interactions with family, work and church; a network that supported and prompted her to engage with the city through planned and incidental meetings. Elizabeth has lived in five different homes across the borough and now lives on a state pension in a one-bedroom apartment in sheltered elderly housing in Beckton. Whilst still having strong connections to her family and many friends, her network has been reduced, as is common with older age and reduced mobility. For the majority of her life, Elizabeth has had good health and independent mobility, however, she is now unsteady on her feet and uses a wheeled walking frame whenever outside her apartment. She says she would like to go outside on her own, but she has poor balance and eyesight giving her a fear of slippery or uneven ground. Consequently, Elizabeth will not leave her home alone. This loss of independent mobility is one of the major indicators in the transitions of older age and offers a clear point from which to read Elizabeth's changing motility and mobility practices. A deeper reading of Elizabeth's everyday life involved the tracing of her physical body as it travelled across the city, from her home, via past and present assemblages of mobility objects, spaces and practices. This tracing highlighted the changing accessibility of the civic spaces of the city as Elizabeth has



Figs. 5–6 Elizabeth drew multiple iterations of her city as she worked out her ideas before beginning on the plasticine model. [Image: Author, 2017]

aged. It also enabled a distinction between the routine praxis of her everyday and those that are more unusual and spontaneous. These assemblages are neither singular nor fixed and it is the work of this article to engage with their indeterminacy to reveal the continuities, divergences and contradictions in Elizabeth's experiences as she has aged in East London.

Past and Present Assemblages of Mobility Objects

In tracing the everyday mobility practices and spaces of older people there are five main types of travel – corporeal, objects, imaginative, virtual and communicative – that can be used as a framework (Urry 2007). This article is primarily concerned with the ‘corporeal’ and ‘objects’ modes in relation to the movement of older people, the physical spaces they assemble, inhabit and share with others and how these spaces relate to the city. Modes of corporeal travel relevant to a study of the quotidian lives of older people typically include walking, driving and public transport, which continually intersect with objects and infrastructures from the scale of the body to the city. With advancing senescence, material interventions, objects and technologies are incorporated to support mobility and accessibility practices (Simpson 2011). Bodily infrastructural assemblages include bio-technical augmentations of hip replacements, contact lenses, hearing aids and pace makers, and external attachments such as glasses, walking frames and wheelchairs. Large-scale mobility objects and infrastructures – such as cars, taxis, Dial-a-Ride buses, trains and airplanes – develop more spatial capacities through their increased enclosure allowing travel across greater distances and offering opportunities for more shared encounters, increasing their collective social impact. All of these corporeal engagements, material objects and communicative connections can be read as markers, nodes and paths in the assemblages of older people. By tracing these elements, their degrees of permanence and transience, and their impact on the quotidian lived experiences of older people, a deeper understanding of what it means to age in the city can be ascertained.

During our many sessions together, I saw Elizabeth utilise a number of objects and infrastructures in her corporeal modes of mobility. Most essential to her quotidian routine was her wheeled walking frame, which she used whenever leaving her apartment, and the Dial-a-Ride bus that took her to a pottery group at the community centre twice a week and occasional medical appointments. Although I never travelled with Elizabeth to the home of her family or her church in Hackney, the car rides that these visits entailed were also a part of her routine. Hence, her walking frame, the Dial-a-Ride bus and the cars of her family were the core modes of mobility she used in her everyday access of the city. Beyond the routine and banal movements were occasional excursions taken via taxi and hired van, with a wheelchair required for the unknown and more expansive sites. A spontaneous journey was only heard of, and witnessed, once during this time, with the unexpected discovery of an electric trolley in Hyde Park, during a trip to the Serpentine Gallery, that toured the pottery group around the park’s key sites before delivering us to a cafe. This present assemblage of mobility objects becomes more legible when compared to her past assemblage, prior to her recent shift in health and mobility. Elizabeth’s everyday routines once involved regular walks outside of her home on her own and bus trips across Newham and London, as well as annual journeys by airplane to Nigeria to visit family and friends. This changing assemblage of mobility infrastructures was, and continues to be, integral to Elizabeth’s capacity to move beyond the bounds of her home and counter the limitations imposed by her age and health challenges. Even as her mobility has clearly been reduced, each mode supports or enhances a different type of mobility, offering some way of continuing to move about the home and engage with the city.

Embodied Experiences of Spaces of Mobility

The value of embodied experiences of transport infrastructures, as a type of banal public space, in alleviating isolation and loneliness and being a part of the city, are important for older people (Green et al. 2014). Green et al. argue that the bus in particular provides ‘a mundane, yet potentially therapeutic, space: a taken-for-granted part of the city landscape which nonetheless provides a source of potential events, social encounters and opportunities for engagement’ (Green et al. 2014, p.490). Interactions with strangers can be more socially acceptable while travelling and waiting at bus stops, offering an opportunity for exchange, even if simply about the weather. Other transport spaces such as trains, stations, cars and petrol stations are also a particular and oft-overlooked everyday urban experience for older people. Broader urban discussions of spaces of mobilities are evident with arguments about their degrees of relationality (Auge 1995; Urry 2007; Cresswell 2013). Cresswell argues that ‘places and landscapes are continually practised and performed through the movement and enfolding of a myriad of people and things’ (Cresswell 2013, p.7). This is a reaction to theorists, such as Augé (1995), who frame these spaces as having minimal relation to the specific spatial contexts through which they travel. This article challenges Augé’s conceptions to see the potential of buses, Dial-a-Ride buses and other transport spaces for supporting the sociality and civic participation of older people such as Elizabeth.

The role of transport spaces and infrastructures on Elizabeth’s experience, recollection and image of the city are evident in how she has talked of her everyday life and modelled her plasticine city (Figs. 5, 6 and 7). The spatial organisation and orientation of Elizabeth’s sketch drawings and model are clearly set by the main transport routes she uses, with the places she visits placed as objects along the way. The main road on which Elizabeth’s home sits radiates eastwards in blue, bisecting the board and defining the spatial orientation of the assemblage along the east-west axis of Tollgate Road. Elizabeth emphasises the importance of the road in her quotidian routine saying ‘every week I use this route, every week I use this road’. From the eastern end of the model and Tollgate Road Elizabeth then shows her travel diverging towards the North Circular Road and her family, the Community Centre and the pottery group, or Woolwich Ferry, a later addition to the model showing a mode of transport she used occasionally in the past. One can infer the relative importance of Elizabeth’s modes and paths of mobility to her experience and image of the city through comparison with the models of two other members of the pottery group who used more static forms of representation; one showing the city as a series of objects in a field, relationally oriented but not physically connected by transport infrastructures, the other modelling a single image of a building. By comparison with these other models, Elizabeth’s inscription of space with paths and modes of movement, implies the importance of mobility to her embodied experience, reflections and image of her city.

Despite Elizabeth not travelling on the bus anymore, she continues to use it as a way of mentally navigating and describing the city and her past daily routines. Bus numbers are used in conversations and inscribed on her model, becoming a shorthand for the two key routes Elizabeth used to routinely take; the 262 traversing the borough north-west to Stratford and the 300 taking in East Ham, Plaistow and Canning Town. The Beckton Bus Garage used to be a frequent point of interchange on her way to other places in

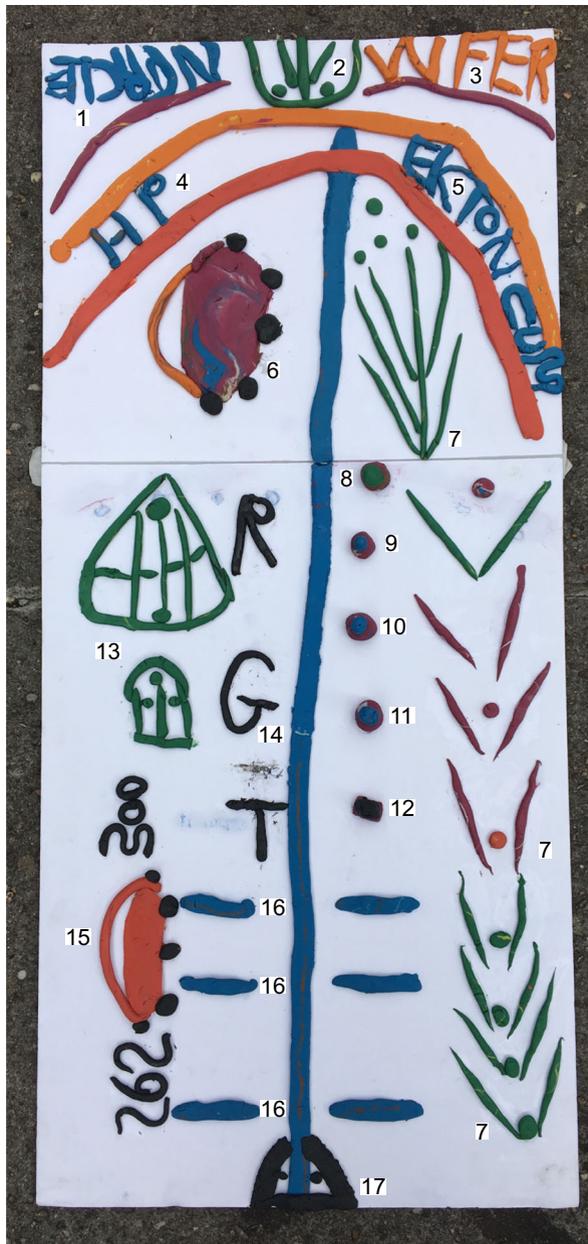


Fig. 7 Elizabeth's plasticine city assemblage made during a workshop at the Community Centre. Through the process of modelling and talking, Elizabeth revealed the spaces, people and activities most prominent in her conception and memories of the city in which she has lived for over 40 years. 1. North Circular Road; 2. London City Airport; 3. Woolwich Ferry; 4. Premier Inn Hotel Restaurant; 5. Community Centre; 6. Bus; 7. Trees; 8. Beckton Bus Garage; 9. Asda Supermarket; 10. Medical Centre; 11. St. Mark's Church; 12. Lidl Supermarket; 13. Houses; 14. Tollgate Road (TGR); 15. Bus Routes 262 and 300; 16. Crossroads; 17. Home [Image: Author, 2017]

Newham and London, however, as Elizabeth says ‘I don’t go there anymore, because I’m going by Dial-a-Ride with my carer, but I used to go with my shopping trolley and do shopping and come back.’ The Beckton DLR Station and the Woolwich Ferry were less frequented ways of moving around but point to additional modes that Elizabeth no longer uses: ‘when I used to live there before, Storey St., very close, sometimes I go to the ferry, I cross to the other side.’ The numerous transport modes that were once a part of Elizabeth’s repertoire highlight how extensive her loss of mobility has been. Equally important is that these forms of public transport were public and made accessible more than simply their destinations. The spaces of the infrastructures themselves – the bus, the light rail carriage, the bus interchange – as well as the passing views of the city during the journey, all offered a way for Elizabeth to view and engage with the world, even if only fleetingly.

Changing Mobilities and Assemblages of Civic Spaces and Practices in the Home, the Neighbourhood and the City

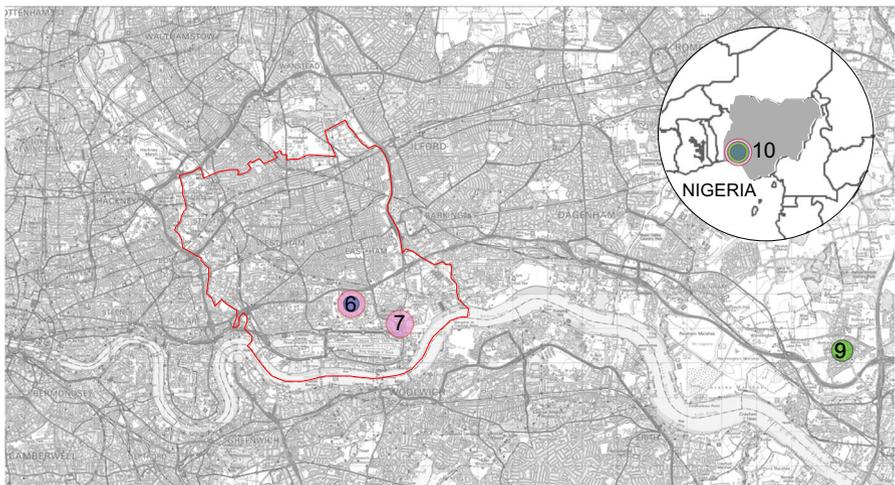
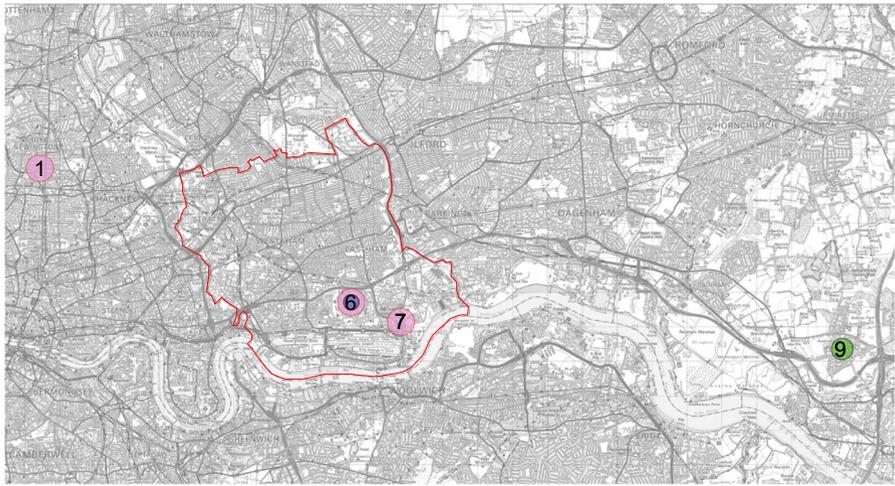
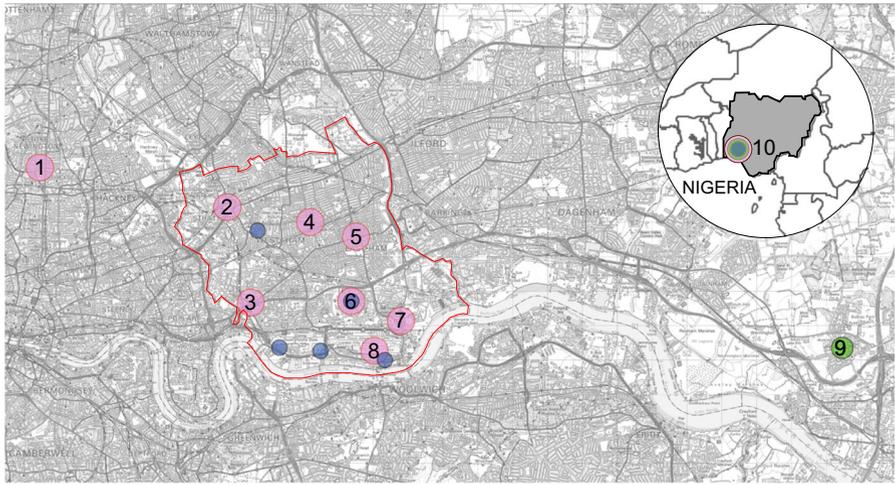
By tracing Elizabeth’s past and present assemblages – through model making, mapping, photographs, a taxi ride around the borough and numerous conversations – a relationship between her changing mobility and her access of everyday urban spaces is revealed. One study shows that people over seventy spend eighty-per-cent of their time in the home (Horgas et al. 1998), pointing to both an attachment to the home for reasons of familiarity and security but also a lack of accessibility of alternative spaces in the city, including civic spaces. Older people are also shown to have a greater attachment to their neighbourhoods than younger people, in part due to the investment of time, but also as a way of maintaining a sense of identity within the context of urban changes (Scharf et al. 2003; Phillipson 2007). This attachment is no less evident in some of the most deprived areas of the UK, where residents are found to have both positive and negative opinions about their locality, although there is great variation in the local conditions. Whilst acknowledging the importance of the home, the domestic and other private spheres of life, this paper looks beyond this realm to address an absence of questioning around the city, the civic realm and how older people move into, through and engage with the shared spaces of the city. From investigations of Elizabeth’s patterns of movement, three maps (Figs. 8, 9 and 10) have been constructed that highlight key moments within Elizabeth’s changing assemblage within recent years. They show the spatial relationship between her home, and significant civic sites within her immediate local area, the broader borough of Newham, London and Nigeria. It is made clear that her reduced mobility, as she has continued to transition through older age, has led to less access of the city and greater isolation.

The first map (Fig. 8) shows the many homes and civic sites across Newham and London that Elizabeth used to access before 2016, when she was independently mobile. Elizabeth’s plasticine assembly and our taxi ride around Newham were fundamental in exploring, identifying and clarifying the specificities of time and space in her social and spatial history. The first place built, in Elizabeth’s plasticine assemblage, was her home, a black triangular form located tight to the western edge of the board. While this research is not focused on the private realm of the home, it is an important and logical anchor for Elizabeth in the tracing of assemblages of everyday spaces and interactions. The boundary between the domestic and the public realms is not so clearly demarcated

in the sheltered elderly housing where Elizabeth has lived in a one-bedroom apartment for the past 11 years. There is a buffer for the block's thirty-five residents, with a communal living area, kitchen and garden acting as shared semi-private spaces. These areas offer residents a reprieve from the privacy of their apartments, an opportunity to engage with others, without the scale of openness and unpredictability of the street outside. These interim spaces are also more accessible to many with restricted mobility due to the broad corridors, handrails and level, carpeted floors. During a visit to Elizabeth's home, a resident who likes to spend time sitting in these shared spaces joined Elizabeth and me for a time. She and Elizabeth talked of the lack of interest from most residents in being sociable, largely preferring to eat alone and watch television in their apartments. This is a common challenge faced in attempts to create community ties and counter isolation and loneliness, relating to what urban theorists write of in more public urban environments where accessibility and use of the commons does not necessarily lead to positive interactions and civic participation (Amin 2008). Regardless of these challenges, many members of Elizabeth's housing unit still choose to engage in communal activities of painting, coffee mornings and gardening. Importantly, it is not simply the management and resident's organisation of these activities that makes them happen. It is also the material and spatial infrastructure of the building – level access, secure entrances, communal spaces – that supports and provokes the mobility of the residents. Through these infrastructures and practices, they are able to venture beyond their private domestic space and engage with the benefits and challenges of being with others.

Continuing to move outwards from the domestic and semi-private space of Elizabeth's sheltered elderly housing block, mobility and the spatial transitions she encounters become increasingly complex and inhibiting. Her housing block offers a hard edge to the street, and none of the internal shared spaces look outwards to offer a view of, or chance for interaction with, life on the street. The entrance is tightly controlled, for reasons of security that are understandable. However, the options for breaking through this threshold – to sit and watch the traffic pass by or take a short walk – are limited by an absence of nearby benches and shelter. Elizabeth is even further restricted by the fact that the ramp at the main entrance to the block is still too steep for her; she prefers to awkwardly climb down the short flight of stairs holding onto the handrail, with an assistant lifting her walking frame down for her. For a time, Elizabeth was able to access the street and convenience store next door on her own using a rear entrance. This route, however, was still very challenging as the two doors at either end of a ramp were not automated and the floor threshold was not flush, requiring careful manoeuvring of her body and walking frame to prop open and pass through the doors. This story shows the limitations of building regulations; that while they are designed to ensure a baseline level of accessibility, this does not guarantee access for all. It must be emphasised here that the reasons for Elizabeth not going out and into the city are not simply due to poor health or a lack of personal motivation. The restrictions are also spatial and structural, and consequently political.

For the 10 years prior to 2016, Elizabeth's mobility had predominantly included walking, the bus, Dial-a-Ride and lifts in cars with friends and family. Riding around Newham in a taxi offered a way for Elizabeth and me to share a more embodied experience of the borough and the various places of importance to her. In particular, this mode of mobility, and the expansive area we covered, unlocked and clarified her past



◀ **Figs. 8–10** Three maps showing Elizabeth's changing assemblage of civic spaces (large pink circles), homes (small blue circles) and family homes (medium green circles) from pre-2016 (Fig. 8) when she had independent mobility, and from 2016 to 2017 (Fig. 9) and 2018 (Fig. 10) when she was no longer able to leave her home alone. Her visibly reduced access to the city highlights the social and spatial impact of her reduced mobility, while her continuing expansion shows her capacity to adapt. 1. Church in Hackney; 2. Civic sites in Stratford; 3. Civic sites in Canning Town; 4. Civic sites in Green Street; 5. Civic sites in East Ham; 6. Shared spaces in sheltered elderly housing and church in Beckton; 7. Civic sites including community centre in Beckton; 8. Civic sites in North Woolwich; 9. Home of family; 10. Family, friends and civic sites in Nigeria. [Image: Author, 2018]

urban assemblages in greater detail. Initially, we sat down with a map of Newham and plotted the five homes and multiple civic sites she used to access on a regular basis. Orientation to the map was not automatic for Elizabeth and so only a partial picture was gathered, although, this was stitched together with information from our many previous conversations. Two archival photographs of one of her past homes, which had been demolished in the 1990s, acted as an additional trigger for Elizabeth's memories. Seeing the images, her face opened as she visibly travelled back in time remembering in greater detail her eighteenth-floor apartment, neighbours, friends and local places. This connection to the past was even more dramatically visible during our taxi ride. Too unstable to get out along the way, Elizabeth sat in the back seat during the hour-long journey. As we stopped and started at past homes, workplaces, and social and commercial hubs that she had not visited for years, sometimes decades, it became clear how Elizabeth's daily routines used to bring her into contact with numerous nodes of commerce and community – East Ham, Canning Town, Green Street, Stratford – with diverse high streets, goods and people. Elizabeth's movement through and between these spaces, and their quotidian occupation over more than 40 years, transformed them from spaces to places; the ongoing praxis of shopping, working and socialising, as well as simple occupation and observation, inscribed them in her urban assemblage and image of the city. As she enacted her daily life, the connections derived from her independent mobility and ever-evolving array of practices, fostered friendships of varying degrees of intimacy and longevity; from the familiarity of a bus driver or market stall keeper who saved eggs especially for her, to the neighbour who helped carry her bags when an elevator broke. Her stories told of the challenges and joys of marriage and children, transitions in domestic and public routines due to housing demolition or her personal and familial needs, and the routines and pride of work. Serendipitously, our taxi driver was also a long-term resident of the area and joined in the reminiscences, he and Elizabeth talking of the past and sharing their life stories. These were the routine and irregular interactions and connections that through their accessibility forged the urban commons, and Elizabeth's mobility was crucial to her agency in choosing where, when and how she accessed these spaces.

The reduction in Elizabeth's mobility and agency is visible in the dramatic transition to the second map (Figs. 8 and 9) which shows the changes in her assemblage in 2016, when we first met, and 2017, and she was no longer able to move freely around the borough. The contraction of Elizabeth's city is clearly focused on her local neighbourhood of Beckton. This spatial and material reality is also legible in the plasticine model of her city, that includes representations of past and present mobilities infrastructures and spaces, including supermarkets, a medical centre, church, and community centre. Fundamental to the scale of this contraction is the loss of access

to the bus, a core mode of Elizabeth's previous mobility that enabled access to a diversity of shops. Presently in her neighbourhood, '...if you want a shop or anything, have to go to Lidl or Asda. No small shops, only one corner shop'. This is not surprising as the area around her home is predominantly residential and industrial, having only been developed in the 1980s. As such, Beckton lacks the density of people and variety of programme found in other longer-established areas of Newham, such as Green Street and East Ham where Elizabeth used to routinely travel to by bus in order to shop at markets and along high streets. Her exclusion from her neighbourhood goes even further, with even the local supermarkets becoming inaccessible due to her mobility issues: 'I used to go to Lidl and Asda, I don't go on my own now... unless my carer... sometimes I go, yes, but most of the time she goes for me'. Elizabeth also no longer visits the medical centre since the journey was deemed too arduous for her health; 'I don't go, they come to visit me at home, for the past 1 year now, I used to take the bus'. Medical appointments commonly become vital opportunities for older people for social interaction and engagement with others beyond the home (Griffiths 2017). So, while safety precautions are understandable, and mobility and health restrictions are real, the in-home support of carers and health workers also leads to fewer reasons to leave the house and observe and interact with the local area and residents.

Both the Dial-a-Ride bus and the material spatial layout of the community centre are critical to Elizabeth's access, which is the most consistently occupied space away from her home and family and visible across all three maps (Figs. 8, 9 and 10). Elizabeth has been a part of the pottery group for over 11 years, attending two four-hour sessions a week. The single-storey building includes a series of rooms laid out around a central courtyard and glazed corridor. Elizabeth will typically walk, with her frame, from the Dial-a-Ride bus in the carpark, up the entrance ramp and, with assistance to keep them open, through the main doors. Once inside, Elizabeth is confident to move about the centre with autonomy, much like within her housing block. The continuity of support of the pottery instructor and other members is invaluable, and the diversity of the group, which has changed over the years, also brings a variety of interactions. Discussions vary from global and local news to the ordinary challenges of managing life in Newham on a state pension and pension credits, as well as personal stories and memories from daily life. Elizabeth also increases her motility through this group and the space of the community centre as more irregular excursions, such as a trip to the Serpentine Gallery and cafe at Hyde Park, and Christmas and New Year parties at the community centre and the Premier Inn restaurant, are made available to her. The unassuming façade belies the natural light and depth of resources of its interior world; the range of people and groups that gather there, drawn from across Newham and London, are building and supporting communities through numerous planned programmes and incidental interactions. So, to whatever degree Elizabeth chooses to engage with others within the Dial-a-Ride bus and the community centre, these journeys and the spaces they open access to, support her continuity and contestation of her city.

The third and most recent map (Fig. 10) demonstrates how Elizabeth's decline has not been a simple linear progression, as older age is often simplistically portrayed. Instead, these maps reveal the continual expansion and contraction of Elizabeth's world as she adjusts to developments in her capacities and opportunities and resists her marginalisation. Elizabeth's church in Hackney and her family in Essex are the only

regular sites of activity outside of Newham that she visits. However, this access is precarious, being dependent on friends or family collecting and transporting her by car. Prior to 2018, Elizabeth was able to visit her church routinely, however, more recently, this access stopped reducing her mobility. In response, she began visiting a church housed in a school opposite her home, demonstrating her resilience in adapting to change and expanding her city once more. This fluidity is also evident in her global mobility that is also a crucial aspect of Elizabeth's image of her city and her marginalisation as she has aged. Her model and conversations in the pottery group and taxi ride have included the London City Airport, which being an easy five-minute taxi ride from her home is her preferred point of departure when taking her annual trip to visit family and friends in Nigeria. In 2016, however, her health precluded her from flying, and so she was not able to visit Nigeria for 2 years. Whilst Elizabeth regained her international mobility, this physical access to her networks in Nigeria continues to be precarious and predicated on her health being stable. As can be seen in the three maps (Figs. 8, 9 and 10), the overall contraction of her assemblage continues despite moments of expansion within.

Through Elizabeth's story, it has been possible to interrogate, in greater depth, the relationship between everyday mobilities infrastructures and the assembling of civic spaces and practices in East London. Talking, observing and joining with Elizabeth as she travelled with her wheeled walking frame, on the Dial-a-Ride bus, in cars and taxis has allowed for insights into the challenges, complexities and contradictions of ageing in an urban landscape. The mobilities objects and spaces encountered have clearly been integral to Elizabeth resisting her marginalisation from the civic spaces of the city. While simultaneously, infrastructures, such as the entrances to her housing block, act to restrict her movements. By studying, modelling and mapping Elizabeth's practices of assemblage, rather than a single typology or mode of mobility, her ongoing dynamics of expansion and contraction, resistance and marginalisation have been made visible.

Conclusion

Through the ethnographic, visual and architectural exploration of Elizabeth's assemblage of mobility spaces and practices, her changing quotidian movements as she has aged have intersected with key questions around the accessibility of cities. The significant marker of the loss of independent mobility makes clear how the mobility objects and infrastructures that Elizabeth accesses, employs and relies upon are fundamental to her maintaining a continuity of connection with her broader community and the city. The walking frame, Dial-a-Ride bus and car that are her everyday assemblage of mobility aids enable her to access and move around the interior spaces of her housing block, the community centre and homes of her family, supporting her durability of access that Arendt (1998) marks as essential for the formation of social meaning.

The variety and number of sessions – within the pottery group, the plasticine city making, the Dial-a-Ride journey, the mapping and taxi ride, and the group trip to the Serpentine Gallery and Hyde Park – over the course of 18 months allowed for the development of a richer and more nuanced understanding of Elizabeth and her experiences of the city. With more time spent together, in a variety of spaces and engaging in

different activities, Elizabeth's stories developed and became enriched with detail, seemingly becoming more nuanced, rounded and balanced. Elizabeth's life is complex, and it is naïve to imagine it could have been meaningfully comprehended in a single interview. The representations of shifting spatial relationships in Elizabeth's everyday life offer more than a simple and fixed image. The drawings themselves became tools for reflection, correction and expansion of the narrative, for both Elizabeth and myself. Visual and architectural methods allowed for new types of knowledge to emerge; knowledge that would not have been possible through simply talking. This demonstrates the value of longer and more in-depth ethnographic methods that allow time to overcome and move through different stages of knowing someone and revealing and interpreting their stories. Especially in contexts of marginalisation and vulnerability, such as Newham, where older people may have lower levels of education and limited language capacities, these methods can aid in gaining a fuller sense of the complexity of their lives.

The investigation and documentation of Elizabeth's mobilities practices has revealed the relative indeterminacy of her everyday; an everyday filled with an array of both positive and negative, marginalising and inclusive instances and processes. Elizabeth's story has shown that the ageing process is not simply one of decline and exclusion from the spaces of the city. The visualisation of three moments within her changing assemblage (Figs. 8, 9 and 10) shows how, within the decline of mobility, there is still a capacity for resistance and the exploration of new modes and spaces of occupation. In interrogating the mobility and visibility of older people within cities, one cannot assume that a retreat from activities and spaces is a simple result of incapacity or exclusion. Spending greater amounts of time within the home and fewer other private and civic spaces, with an increasingly select number of people, can also be a reflection of changing interests and priorities in older age. The concept of 'gerotranscendence' (Tornstam 1997, 2011) emphasises processes of change and development in older age, to counter notions of a fixed ageless self within an ageing body. Research on experiences of gerotranscendence demonstrates the variety of ways that people can both resist and embrace the changes that older age bring. Regardless of the role of personal psychology in Elizabeth's movements, she has still increasingly found the city less accessible as she has aged.

While Elizabeth has spoken of her loneliness and boredom during the many hours in-between programmed activities, it is important to note the positive support offered by the continuity of mobility infrastructures, civic places and activities in Elizabeth's life: the space of the community centre and pottery group for over 10 years; the shared space of the Dial-a-Ride bus and its passengers and drivers who have developed ongoing relationships with Elizabeth; views and experiences of the passing urban landscapes also trigger, alter and reinforce memories built up over more than 50 years; the other residents and workers of the sheltered elderly housing and the common areas they share; and visits to and from family in London and Nigeria. All of these spaces, through their quotidian occupation, have become places imbued with memories and meaning that help Elizabeth to resist her marginalisation. Another important point to note is that the majority of these excursions are prearranged and occur within interior, controlled or private spaces. Rarely is Elizabeth able to observe or engage in more self-initiated, spontaneous, and irregular activities. With her health challenges reducing her

motility, her mobility has been increasingly reduced, clearly limiting her agency in accessing the city.

Importantly, Elizabeth's marginalisation demonstrates how the processes of ageing in everyday life are spatial, material and political and intimately entwined with the accessibility of the city. While built urban infrastructures are governed by laws and guidelines to maximise accessibility, the success of how these spaces operate once translated into the real world is variable. Each transition of level, material, ownership or speed involves a threshold with the potential to create a border to an older person's movement. For Elizabeth, every day involved the negotiation of micro borders – ramps that were too steep to descend, doors that lacked automation or even a holder to aid her ingress and egress. This accessibility is further challenged by the declining funding and quality of public spaces. The impact of a broken pavement or a potholed road is clear to see, however, it is often what is not visible that is more difficult to critique and change. The absence of benches, in an attempt to discourage street drinkers, youths and rough sleepers from occupying public spaces, makes it challenging for older people who need a frequent or occasional rest on their journey. Although, new benches may simply be filled by street drinkers and rough sleepers and not be available for older people or lead to conflict in processes of contestation. Additionally, the absence of public toilets, decommissioned to save money, make those with incontinence issues reluctant to venture away from the security of the home and more structured and private spaces. So, the invisibility of older people becomes a key marker of a need to think more deeply and critically about the impact of research and policy, that is often marked by conflicting agendas, on the conception and development of the city. Through the narrative of Elizabeth and her life in the London Borough of Newham it has been revealed how the tracing of assemblages of ageing bodies, mobilities objects and infrastructures, and civic spaces within the urban realm, offers valuable insights into the levels of motility, mobility and spatial participation of older people in the city.

Acknowledgements This research was financially supported by the Gates Cambridge Trust, Newnham College, the Newton Trust, Kettle's Yard and the Department of Architecture at the University of Cambridge. Thank you to my supervisor Dr. Maximilian Stemberg and the members of the Centre for Urban Conflicts Research and the Department of Architecture for their invaluable support.

Funding This study was funded by the Gates Cambridge Trust, Newnham College, the Newton Trust, the Department of Architecture and Kettle's Yard at the University of Cambridge.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The research involved in this study, particularly in the case study of Elizabeth, was conducted with the knowledge and consent of the participants. It was made clear, through conversations and a formal letter, that the research was a part of a doctoral study and would in the future be used for presentations and publications including journal articles and books.

Conflict of Interest The author declares that they have no conflict of interest.

Open Access This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and

reproduction in any medium, provided you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made.

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

References

- Amin, A. (2006). The Good City. *Urban Studies*, 43, 1009–1023. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980600676717>.
- Amin, A. (2008). Collective culture and urban public space. *City*, 12, 5–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604810801933495>.
- Amin, A., & Thrift, N. (2016). *Seeing like a City*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Amin, A., & Thrift, N. (2002). *Cities: Reimagining the urban*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Arendt, H. (1998). *The human condition* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Auge, M. (1995). *Non-places: Introduction to an anthropology of Supermodernity*. New York: Verso, London.
- Baumann, H. (2016). Enclaves, borders, and everyday movements: Palestinian marginal mobility in East Jerusalem. *Cities*, 59, 173–182. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2015.10.012>.
- Berg, J., Levin, L., Abramsson, M., & Hagberg, J.-E. (2014). Mobility in the transition to retirement – The intertwining of transportation and everyday projects. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 38, 48–54. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2014.05.014>.
- Bevan, M., & Croucher, K. (2011). *Lifetime neighbourhoods*. London: Department for Communities and Local Government.
- Borden, I. (2001). *Skateboarding, space and the City: Architecture and the body*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- Bowie, D. (2010). *Politics, planning and homes in a world city*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Brenner, N., Madden, D. J., & Wachsmuth, D. (2011). Assemblage urbanism and the challenges of critical urban theory. *City*, 15, 225–240. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2011.568717>.
- Buffel, T., Handler, S., & Phillipson, C. (2018). *Age-friendly cities and communities: A global perspective*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Buffel, T., & Phillipson, C. (2016). Can global cities be 'age-friendly cities'? Urban development and ageing populations. *Cities*, 55, 94–100. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2016.03.016>.
- Buffel, T., & Phillipson, C. (2018). A manifesto for the age-friendly movement: Developing a new urban agenda. *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*, 30, 173–192. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08959420.2018.1430414>.
- Buffel, T., Phillipson, C., & Scharf, T. (2012). Ageing in urban environments: Developing "age-friendly" cities. *Critical Social Policy*, 32, 597–617. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018311430457>.
- Bullock, N. (ed) (2015). West ham and the welfare state 1945–70: A suitable case for treatment? In: *Architecture and the welfare state*. Routledge, London, pp 93–109.
- Campkin, B. (2013). *Remaking London: Decline and regeneration in urban culture*. London: I.B.Tauris.
- Carl, P. (2012). City, horizons of involvement, praxis. In: *Common ground: A critical reader*. Marsilio, Venezia.
- Cass, N., Shove, E., & Urry, J. (2005). Social exclusion, mobility and access. *The Sociological Review*, 53, 539–555. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2005.00565.x>.
- Chivers, S. (2011) *The Silvering Screen: Old Age and Disability in Cinema*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
- Church, A., Frost, M., & Sullivan, K. (2000). Transport and social exclusion in London. *Transport Policy*, 7, 195–205. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0967-070X\(00\)00024-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0967-070X(00)00024-X).
- Clarke, N., & Cochrane, A. (2013). Geographies and politics of localism: The localism of the United Kingdom's coalition government. *Political Geography*, 34, 10–23. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2013.03.003>.
- Cresswell, T. (2013). *Geographies of mobilities: practices, spaces, subjects*, reprint edition. Routledge.
- Cresswell, T. (2006). *On the move: Mobility in the modern Western world*. New York: Routledge.
- Cresswell, T. (2010). Towards a politics of mobility. *Environment Plan Society Space*, 28, 17–31. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d11407>.

- Cruikshank, M. (2013) *Learning to Be Old: Gender, Culture and Aging* (3rd ed.). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham.
- DCLG. (2015). *The English indices of deprivation*. London: Department for Communities and Local Government.
- DCLG (2010). Decentralisation and the localism bill. Department for Communities and Local Government.
- DCLG (2011). A plain English guide to the localism bill. Department for Communities and Local Government.
- DCLG, HCA, DoH. (2009). *Housing our ageing population: Panel for innovation (HAPPI)*. London: Department for Communities and Local Government; Department of Health; Homes and Communities Agency.
- de Certeau, M. (1984). *The practice of everyday life* (3rd ed.). California: University of California Press.
- Debord, G. (1994). *The Society of the Spectacle*. New York: Zone Books.
- Duman, A., Hancox, D., James, M., & Minton, A. (2018). *Regeneration songs: Sounds of investment and loss in East London*. London: Repeater.
- Dunleavy, P. (1981). *The politics of mass housing in Britain, 1945–1975: A study of corporate power and professional influence in the welfare state*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- DWELL (2016). Designing with downsizers. In: Des. Well- Environ. Later Life DWELL. <http://dwell.group.shef.ac.uk/downsizing/>. Accessed 31 Oct 2018.
- Farrelly, L. (2014). *Designing for the third age: Architecture redefined for a generation of “active agers.”*. London: John Wiley & Sons.
- Feddersen, E., & Lüdtke, I. (2009). *Living for the elderly: A design manual*. Basel: Birkhäuser GmbH.
- Felski, R. (1999). The invention of everyday life. *New Form*, 39, 15–31.
- Ferrari, L., Berlingerio, M., Calabrese, F., & Reades, J. (2014). Improving the accessibility of urban transportation networks for people with disabilities. *Adv Comput Commun Their Impact Transp Sci Technol*, 45, 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trc.2013.10.005>.
- Fitzgerald, K. G., & Caro, F. G. (2014). An overview of age-friendly cities and communities around the world. *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*, 26, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08959420.2014.860786>.
- Gilleard, C. (2005) *Cultural Approaches to the Ageing Body*. In: Johnson ML, Bengtson VL, Coleman PG, Kirkwood TBL (eds) *The Cambridge Handbook of Age and Ageing*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp 156–164.
- Gilleard, C., & Higgs, P. (2000) *Cultures of Ageing: Self, Citizen and the Body*. Pearson Education Ltd, Essex.
- Gilleard, C., Higgs, P. (2010) Aging without agency: Theorizing the fourth age. *Ageing Ment Health* 14:121–128. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13607860903228762>.
- Golant, S. M. (2014). Age-friendly communities: Are we expecting too much? *Inst Res Public Policy*.
- Green, J., Jones, A., & Roberts, H. (2014). More than a to B: The role of free bus travel for the mobility and wellbeing of older citizens in London. *Ageing and Society*, 34, 472–494. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X12001110>.
- Griffiths, H. (2017). *Social isolation and loneliness in the UK: With a focus on the use of technology to tackle these conditions*. London: Future Cities Catapult.
- Gullette, MM. (2004) *Aged by Culture*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Hall, S. (2012). *City, street and citizen: The measure of the ordinary*. London: Routledge.
- Hamnett, C. (2003). *Unequal city: London in the global arena*. London: Routledge.
- Handler, S. (2014a). *A research and evaluation framework for age-friendly cities*. Manchester: UK Urban Ageing Consortium.
- Handler, S. (2014b). *An alternative age-friendly handbook*. Manchester: The University of Manchester Library.
- Hoolachan, A. (2014). The ‘nature’ of legacy under localism: Fragmentation along the greenway. *Architectural Research Quarterly*, 18, 342–352. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S135913551500007X>.
- Horgas, A. L., Wilms, H.-U., & Baltes, M. M. (1998). Daily life in very old age: Everyday activities as expression of successful living. *The Gerontologist*, 38, 556–568.
- Jacobs, J. (1993). *The death and life of great American cities*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Kaufmann, V. (2002). *Re-thinking mobility: Contemporary sociology*. London: Routledge.
- Kaufmann, V., Bergman, M. M., & Joye, D. (2004). Motility: Mobility as capital. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 28.4, 745–756.
- Killock, J. (2014). *Is cohousing a suitable housing typology for an ageing population within the UK?* London: Royal Institute of British Architects.
- Kneale, D. (2011). *Can localism work for older people in urban environments?* London: International Longevity Centre.

- Kneale, D., & Sinclair, D. (2011). *Localism and Neighbourhoods for all ages: Is localism sounding a death knell or a wake-up call for creating neighbourhoods for all ages?* London: International Longevity Centre.
- Kusenbach, M. (2003). Street phenomenology: The go-along as ethnographic research tool. *Ethnography*, 4, 455–485. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146613810343007>.
- Lawton, M. P. (1977). The impact of the environment on aging and behavior. In: *Handbook of the psychology of aging*. Van Nostrand, New York, pp 276–301.
- Lefebvre, H. (2014). *Critique of everyday life: The one-volume edition*. London: Verso Books.
- Lieto, L. (2017). How material objects become urban things? *City*, 21, 568–579. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2017.1374782>.
- LSE Housing and Communities (2014). Facing debt: Economic resilience in Newham - CASE report 83. London School of Economics, London.
- Madanipour, A. (2015). Social exclusion and space. In: *The City Reader*, 6th edn. Routledge, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, pp 203–211.
- Madanipour, A. (Ed.). (2009). *Whose public space?: International case studies in Urban Design and development*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- McFarlane, C. (2011a). Assemblage and critical urbanism. *City*, 15, 204–224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2011.568715>.
- McFarlane, C. (2011b). The City as assemblage: Dwelling and urban space. *Environ Plan Soc Space*, 29, 649–671. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d4710>.
- Minton, A. (2012). *Ground control: Fear and happiness in the twenty-first-century city*. London: Penguin.
- Minton, A. (2017). *Big capital: Who is London for?* UK: Penguin.
- Mould, O. (2009). Parkour, the City, the event. *Environ Plan Soc Space*, 27, 738–750. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d11108>.
- Murray, C. (Ed.). (2018). *Architect's journal: Health and wellbeing*. London: EMAP Publishing Ltd.
- Musselwhite, C., & Haddad, H. (2010). Mobility, accessibility and quality of later life. *Qual Ageing Older Adults*, 11, 25–37.
- Newham Council. (2010). *Newham London investment prospectus*. London: Newham Council.
- Newham Council. (2011a). *Community resilience in Newham*. London: Newham Council.
- Newham Council. (2011b). *Quid pro quo, not status quo: Why we need a welfare state that builds resilience*. London: Newham Council.
- Newham Council. (2013a). *Making resilience happen: An update on delivery*. London: Newham Council.
- Newham Council. (2013b). *Building resilience: The evidence base*. London: Newham Council.
- Nordbakke, S. (2013). Capabilities for mobility among urban older women: Barriers, strategies and options. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 26, 166–174. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2012.10.003>.
- Nordbakke, S., & Schwanen, T. (2014). Well-being and mobility: A theoretical framework and literature review focusing on older people. *Mobilities*, 9, 104–129. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2013.784542>.
- Paddison, R., & Sharp, J. (2007). Questioning the end of public space: Reclaiming control of local banal spaces. *Scottish Geographical Journal*, 123, 87–106. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702540701615236>.
- Park, J., & Porteus, J. (2018). *Age-friendly housing: Future design for older people*. London: RIBA Publishing.
- Peace, S. (2013). Social interactions in public places and spaces: A conceptual overview. In: *Environmental gerontology: Making meaningful places in old age*. Springer Publishing, New York.
- Phillipson, C. (2007). The ‘elected’ and the ‘excluded’: Sociological perspectives on the experience of place and community in old age. *Ageing and Society*, 27, 321. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X06005629>.
- Pinder, D. (2011). Errant paths: The poetics and politics of walking. *Environ Plan Soc Space*, 29, 672–692. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d10808>.
- Pullan, W. (2015). Agon in urban conflict: some possibilities. In: *Phenomenologies of the City: Studies in the history and philosophy of architecture*. Routledge, Farnham.
- Pullan, W. (2013). Conflict's tools. Borders, boundaries and mobility in Jerusalem's spatial structures. *Mobilities*, 8, 125–147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2012.750040>.
- Pullan, W., & Baillie, B. (Eds.). (2013). *Locating urban conflicts: Ethnicity, nationalism and the everyday*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rémillard-Boilard, S. (2018) *The development of age-friendly cities and communities*. In: *Age-friendly cities and communities: A global perspective*. Policy Press, Bristol.
- RIBA. (2013). *Silver linings: The active third age and the City*. London: Royal Institute of British Architects.
- RIBA (2014). Research symposium 2014: Design for ageing. In: R. Inst. Br. Archit. <https://www.architecture.com/WhatsOn/November2014/ResearchSymposium2014DesignforAgeing.aspx>. Accessed 13 May 2016.

- RIBA (2018). Awards. In: R. Inst. Br. Archit. <https://www.architecture.com/RIBA/Awards/Awards.aspx>. Accessed 13 May 2016.
- Rosenbloom, S. (2007). Differences in perceptions of driving skills: Older drivers and adult children of older drivers in the United Kingdom. *Transp Res Rec J Transp Res Board*, 2009, 15–22. <https://doi.org/10.3141/2009-03>.
- Rosenbloom, S. (2010). How adult children in the UK and the US view the driving cessation of their parents: Is a policy window opening? *Journal of Transport Geography*, 18, 634–641. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2010.05.003>.
- Rosso, A. L., Auchincloss, A. H., & Michael, Y. L. (2011). The urban built environment and mobility in older adults: A comprehensive review. *J Aging Res*. <https://doi.org/10.4061/2011/816106>.
- Sassen, S. (2014). *Expulsions: Brutality and complexity in the global economy*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Scanlon, K., & Arrigoitia, M. F. (2015). Development of new cohousing: Lessons from a London scheme for the over-50s. *Urban Res Pract*, 8, 106–121. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17535069.2015.1011430>.
- Scharf, T., Phillipson, C., Smith, A. (2003). Older people's perceptions of the neighbourhood: Evidence from socially deprived urban areas. *Sociological Research Online* 8.
- Schwanen, T., Lucas, K., Akyelken, N., et al. (2015). Rethinking the links between social exclusion and transport disadvantage through the lens of social capital. *Transp Res Part Policy Pract*, 74, 123–135. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tra.2015.02.012>.
- Schwanen, T., & Páez, A. (2010). The mobility of older people – An introduction. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 18, 591–595. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2010.06.001>.
- Schwanen, T., & Ziegler, F. (2011). Wellbeing, independence and mobility: An introduction. *Ageing and Society*, 31, 719–733. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X10001467>.
- Schwarz, B. (2012). Environmental gerontology: What now? *Journal of Housing for the Elderly*, 26, 4–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02763893.2012.673374>.
- Sennett, R. (1977). *The fall of public man*. London: Penguin.
- Sheller, M., & Urry, J. (2006). The new Mobilities paradigm. *Environment & Planning A*, 38, 207–226. <https://doi.org/10.1068/a37268>.
- Sheringham, M. (2006). *Everyday life: Theories and practices from surrealism to the present*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Simpson, D. (2015). *Young-old: Urban utopias of an ageing society*. Zürich: Lars Muller Publishers.
- Simpson, D. (2011) Bio-technical arrangements of the aged body. Volume 27:114–115.
- Smith, A. E. (2009). *Ageing in urban neighbourhoods: Place attachment and social exclusion*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Spinney, J. (2010). Performing resistance? Re-Reading practices of urban cycling on London's south Bank. *Environment & Planning A*, 42, 2914–2937. <https://doi.org/10.1068/a43149>.
- Storper, M., & Scott, A. J. (2016). Current debates in urban theory: A critical assessment. *Urban Studies*, 53, 1114–1136. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098016634002>.
- Tonkiss, F. (2011). Template urbanism: Four points about assemblage. *City*, 15, 584–588. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2011.609026>.
- Tomstam, L. (1997). Gerotranscendence: The contemplative dimension of aging. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 11, 143–154. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0890-4065\(97\)90018-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0890-4065(97)90018-9).
- Tomstam, L. (2011). Maturing into Gerotranscendence. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 43, 166–180.
- Urry, J. (2007). *Mobilities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Urry, J. (2002). Mobility and proximity. *Sociology*, 36, 255–274. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038502036002002>.
- Verderber, S. (2000). *Healthcare architecture in an era of radical transformation*. Connecticut: Yale University Press.
- Vesely, D. (2004). *Architecture in the age of divided representation: The question of creativity in the shadow of production*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- WHO (Ed.). (2007). *Global age-friendly cities: A guide*. Geneva: World Health Organization.
- Worpole, K. (2009). *Modern hospice design: The architecture of palliative care*. Abingdon: Routledge.