Living alongside students in old age: the influence of studentification on older adults' place attachment and wellbeing.

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Abstract

Ageing in place refers to the idea that older adults remain more independent by- and benefit from ageing in a familiar environment. Through years of residence, older adults have developed an intricate attachment to both their home and the neighbourhood. Moreover, older adults maintain their mobility through familiarity with the environment and benefit from informal support provided by the community. However, urban change processes such as studentification can challenge these assumed benefits of ageing in place. Therefore, by building on in-depth interviews with nine older adults residing in a studentified neighbourhood in Groningen, this study aims to answer the question: how does studentification influence older adults' place attachment and wellbeing in the Schildersbuurt in Groningen? The results show that studentification manifests itself in a physical and social deterioration of the neighbourhood. In turn, this negatively influences older adults' emotional and functional attachment to the Schildersbuurt. Moreover, their mental wellbeing is impacted due to stress, frustration, anxiety, insecurity and insomnia. To cope with these negative impacts, older adults employ both accommodative and assimilative coping strategies. Finally, it is argued that educational institutions and the municipality of Groningen should be more assertive in finding durable solutions for studentification-related issues in Groningen.

Keywords: ageing in place, healthy ageing, qualitative research, place attachment, studentification, the Netherlands.

Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction

The proportion of older adults in western countries is growing rapidly, and it is expected that by 2050 a quarter of the population will be 65 years or older (OECD, 2015). Instead of placing older adults into institutional care facilities, western governments have opted for a different and more affordable strategy: ageing in place. Ageing in place refers to the idea that older adults remain more independent by- and benefit from ageing in familiar environments (Rowles, 1993). Instead of receiving formal care from institutional care facilities, older adults benefit from care provided by home-care services, family, friends and neighbours (Gardner, 2011; Buffel & Philipson, 2018). Moreover, older adults have often developed a deep attachment to their homes and their neighbourhood (Buffel et al., 2014). As a result, ageing in place benefits their overall sense of independence and wellbeing (Lager & Van Hoven).

However, ageing in place can also pose a myriad of challenges, such as environmental stress, loneliness or social exclusion (Lager et al., 2019; Buffel et al., 2013; Golant, 2015). In line with this, Buffel and Phillipson (2018) argue that policies concerning ageing in place have been developed in absence of a critical reflection on certain urban change processes. Indeed, research on ageing in changing neighbourhoods has indicated how urban environments can confer stress and contribute to older adults' social exclusion (Philipson, 2007).

One of these urban change processes is studentification. Studentification refers to the distinct physical, social, cultural and economic changes in certain neighbourhoods in university towns (Smith, 2005). Often, studentification is linked to the physical and social downgrading of neighbourhoods, turning them into student enclaves (Smith et al., 2014).

As a result of their transient character, students often fail to get involved in local communities, resulting in a decrease of social cohesion and informal community support (Sage et al., 2012; Hubbard, 2008). For older adults, this could be problematic since they are often dependent on this support. Moreover, over several decades, older adults have often developed a strong and intricate attachment to their home and neighbourhood (Buffel et al., 2014). Hence, just moving out of their neighbourhood is often not an option. Interestingly, hardly any research has explored the impact of studentification on ageing in place, and how it influences their (sense of) wellbeing (Lager & Van Hoven, 2019). Therefore, it is crucial to improve our

understanding of how processes such as studentification influence older adults' experience with ageing in place.

To improve this knowledge, this study will explore the impact of studentification in the Schildersbuurt in Groningen. Groningen is a medium-sized city with a population of around 230.000 (Statistics Netherlands, 2021). The city is home to several higher education institutions, of which the University of Groningen and Hanze University are the largest. With a student population of over 35.000, Groningen is the youngest city in the Netherlands (Hochstenbach et al., 2020). Even though this young, educated population is beneficial for the city's economy and lively atmosphere, it has also caused an abundance of issues in several of its neighbourhoods (DvhN, 2021a; Rauws & Meelker, 2019). One of these neighbourhoods with student-related issues is the Schildersbuurt.

The Schildersbuurt is a pre-war neighbourhood built predominantly around the first two decades of the 20th century (Figure 1). In 2020, the Schildersbuurt had a population of 5596, of which 10% were older adults (65+) and 34% were students (Statistics Groningen, 2021a). This proportion of students is more than double the city average of 14% students (Statistics Groningen, 2021b). The Schildersbuurt used to be a neighbourhood for the middle-class and
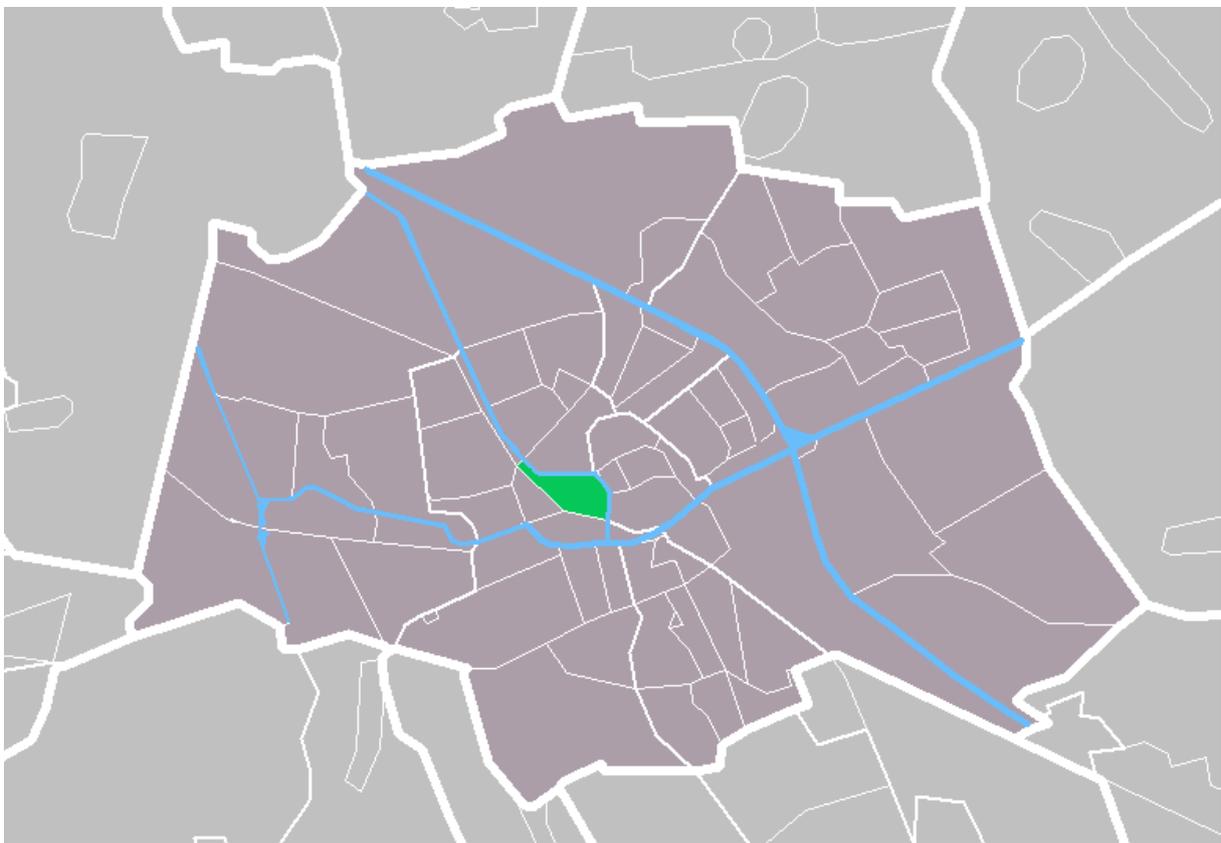

Figure 1. Location of Schildersbuurt in Groningen (source: Statistics Netherlands, 2006)

upper-middle-class. It was built in the early 20th century to accommodate the growing number of employees associated with the university (Schilderswijk, 2021a). As a result, the houses are generally large, and the late 19th and early 20th-century architecture is expressed through tall and lavishly decorated facades with an abundance of arches and detailed columns. Consequently, the majority of structures in the Schildersbuurt are protected (Monuments, 2021; Figure 2). Even though there are some municipal and national monuments, the majority of buildings are labelled as '*beeldbepalend pand*' or '*karakteristiek pand*', roughly translated to 'iconic building'. This is a municipal protection status that only protects the facades, based on cultural and historic characteristics (Heritage Groningen, 2021).
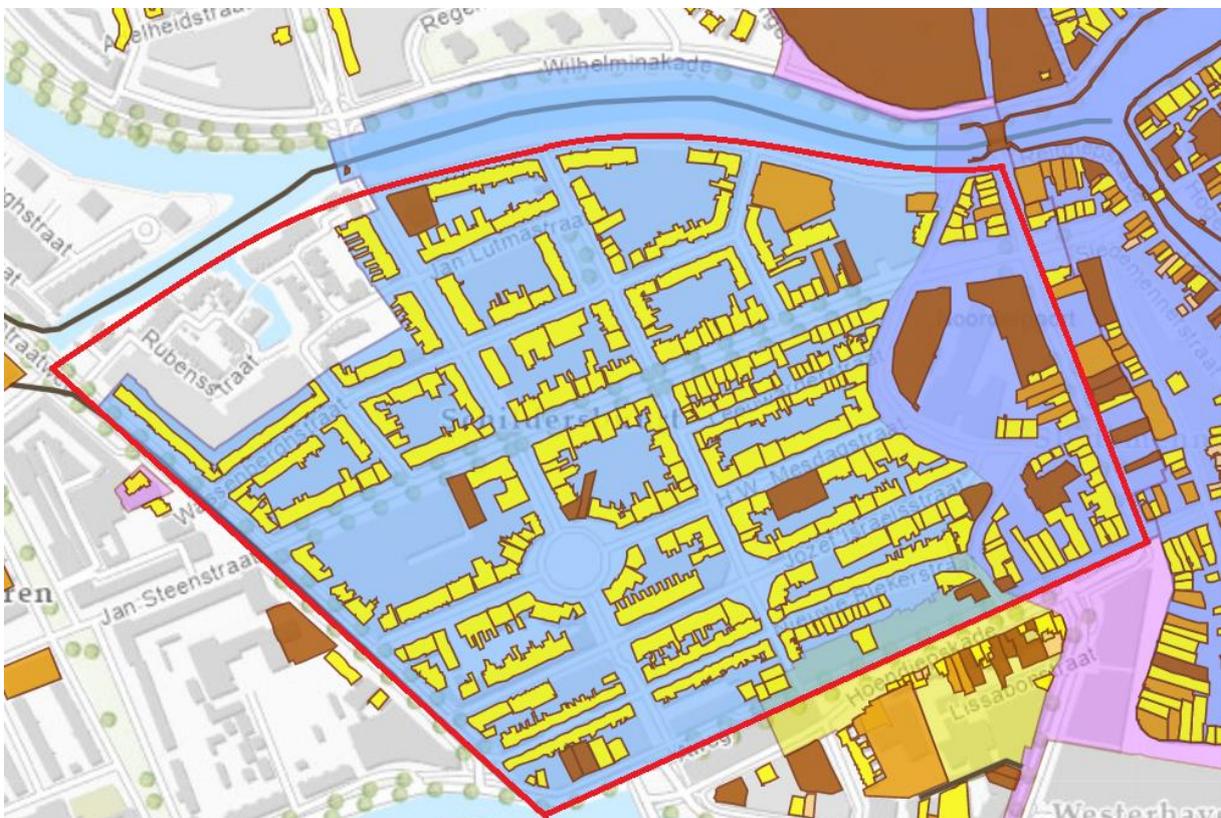
Figure 2. Iconic buildings in the Schildersbuurt in yellow, municipal and national monuments in brown (source: Monuments, 2021)

As mentioned, nowadays 34% of the population in the Schildersbuurt are students. The Schildersbuurt is popular with students due to its ideal location between the inner city of Groningen and the campus in the north of the city. Within the Schildersbuurt, all students live amidst the non-student population in housing of multiple occupation (HMO) instead of purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA), such as student-flats.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic started at the beginning of 2020, around a dozen local and regional news reports appeared, emphasizing the impact students have on the non-student population within the Schildersbuurt (DvhN, 2020a; DvhN, 2020b; RTV Noord, 2021). Since bars were closed for several months, more parties were organized at home. Therefore, residents frequently complain about unbearable noise pollution (DvhN, 2021b). Other concerns among residents are the physical deterioration of the Schildersbuurt, manifested in more litter, poorly maintained facades and the destruction of historic interiors (DvhN, 2020c).

Consequently, from the perspective of place attachment, this thesis explores the influence of studentification on older adults' wellbeing in the Schildersbuurt in Groningen. By conducting in-depth interviews with older adults in the Schildersbuurt, the research question this thesis aims to answer is:

"*How does studentification influence older adults' place attachment and wellbeing in the Schildersbuurt in Groningen*?"

To answer this main research question, three sub-questions are formulated:

1. How do older adults develop place attachment and experience ageing in the Schildersbuurt?
2. how do older adults experience the impact of studentification in the Schildersbuurt?
3. What coping strategies do older adults employ to deal with studentification?

This paper is structured as follows: In the next chapter, a theoretical framework will be offered, exploring the concepts ageing in place, place attachment and studentification, and how these concepts relate to each other. In chapter 3, the methodologies of this thesis will be explained. Next, the results of the interviews will be given. This section will discuss how older adults experience ageing in the Schildersbuurt, the impact of students on ageing in place, and finally how older adults cope with studentification. Thereafter, the conclusion will answer the main research question. Finally, a discussion is written, reflecting on this research and its limitations.

Chapter 2. Theoretical framework

This section is divided into three parts. The first part explains the concept of ageing in place, the benefits of ageing in urban environments and the challenges that are associated with it. The second part explains the concept of place attachment, the determinants for developing place attachment and it offers a conceptualization of place attachment in relation to older adults. The last section describes the urban process of studentification and how studentification can influence older adult´s place attachment and wellbeing.

2.1 Ageing in urban environments

2.1.1 Place

In order to understand the concept of ageing in place and place attachment, it is important to explain the concept of place. Whereas space is often seen as a "realm without meaning" (Cresswell, 2004, p. 4), independent of human interference, place is engraved with personal and social experiences and meanings by the people interacting with it (Paasi, 1991). Therefore, Gieryn (2000) argues that places become spaces when we take out the unique gathering of things, meanings and values.

This notion of place has become increasingly important since the 1970s, with academic works written by Tuan (1975) and Relph (1976). They explained how people give meaning to and experience places from an experiential perspective, which came largely as a reaction to the quantitative nature of geography at that time. For example, according to Tuan (1975), we experience a place not just through seeing and hearing, but also through taste, touch and smell.

In line with this, Sampson and Goodrich (2009) write that places are not just physical sites. Instead, they are packed with symbolic meanings, emotional attachments and unique feelings an individual or community holds about that place. Moreover, places are repositories for a complex set of social and cultural constructions (Sampson & Goodrich, 2009). A result is that places become important in people's identity construction since people draw on these socio-cultural processes, symbols and values to describe themselves. In this sense, place is an important factor in people's identity. Moreover, this is not limited to personal identities, but also a sense of shared identity and communal identity construction (Lee et al., 1990). Notions of community *spirit* and community *feeling* accentuate this development of shared identity.

2.1.2 Ageing in place

The proportion of older adults is growing rapidly. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the proportion of older adults in OECD countries will grow from around 18% in 2010 to a quarter of the population in 2050. This phenomenon has brought into focus a need for countries to prepare themselves for an increasing population of older people. Instead of placing them into institutional care facilities, western governments have opted for a different strategy, *ageing in place* (Smith, 2009). Ageing in place refers to the fact that older adults are encouraged to stay in their own home and their own neighbourhood for as long as possible. It is argued that older people remain more independent and benefit from ageing in familiar environments, especially as they become more frail (Rowles, 1993). Indeed, urban environments offer advantages for older adults, such as the provision of medical services, the availability of cultural and leisure facilities or the proximity of stores (Phillipson, 2014). Moreover, social networks and informal neighbourhood support are of great importance in old age (Gardner, 2011; Lager & Van Hoven, 2019; Lager et al., 2015).

Within the process of ageing in place, the neighbourhood is an important social and physical setting, more so than for younger or employed people (Buffel et al., 2012). The reason for this is that older adults spend more time in the neighbourhood, especially after retirement. Additionally, decreasing physical mobility and diminishing physical health also contributes to the fact that more time is spent at home and in the neighbourhood since engaging in activities further away becomes increasingly difficult (Droogleever Fortuijn et al., 2006). Furthermore, neighbourhoods often contain a certain degree of social cohesion, social capital and informal neighbourhood support which are of great value in old age (Lager and van Hoven, 2019; Gardner, 2011). Indeed, besides receiving formal care from institutional care facilities, family and friends, older adults also profit from care provided by neighbours that will act as a supportive community. In the Netherlands, this assumption of neighbourhood support is even implemented with the Social Support Act of 2007, which aimed to shift away from formal care provided by the government to individual and community responsibility (Van der Meer et al., 2008).

Within the neighbourhood, specific sites of significance can be identified that are sometimes referred to as 'third places'. Third places are important places outside the home and work and have several important features (Oldenburg, 1989). Third places are on neutral ground, locals

spend time in them, conversation is the main activity, and the mood is often cheerful (Oldenburg, 1989). Examples of third places can be public parks, street furniture and local businesses such as the bakery or a grocery store.

Moreover, Gardner (2011) describes a special type of third place called 'thresholds'. These are semi-public places such as the front garden, the driveway or balconies. According to Gardner (2011), third places offer extremely valuable interactions for older adults, since these places offered them a sense of pleasure and joy. Consequently, such interactions in third places are important for older adults wellbeing.

2.1.3 Age-friendly cities

To promote ageing in place, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched a new project in 2007 called *Global Age-Friendly Cities*, bringing together cities around the world that were interested in supporting healthy ageing within urban environments (WHO, 2007). Within this project, they included a guide with eight topics that would give a comprehensive overview of the age-friendliness of a city (Figure 3).
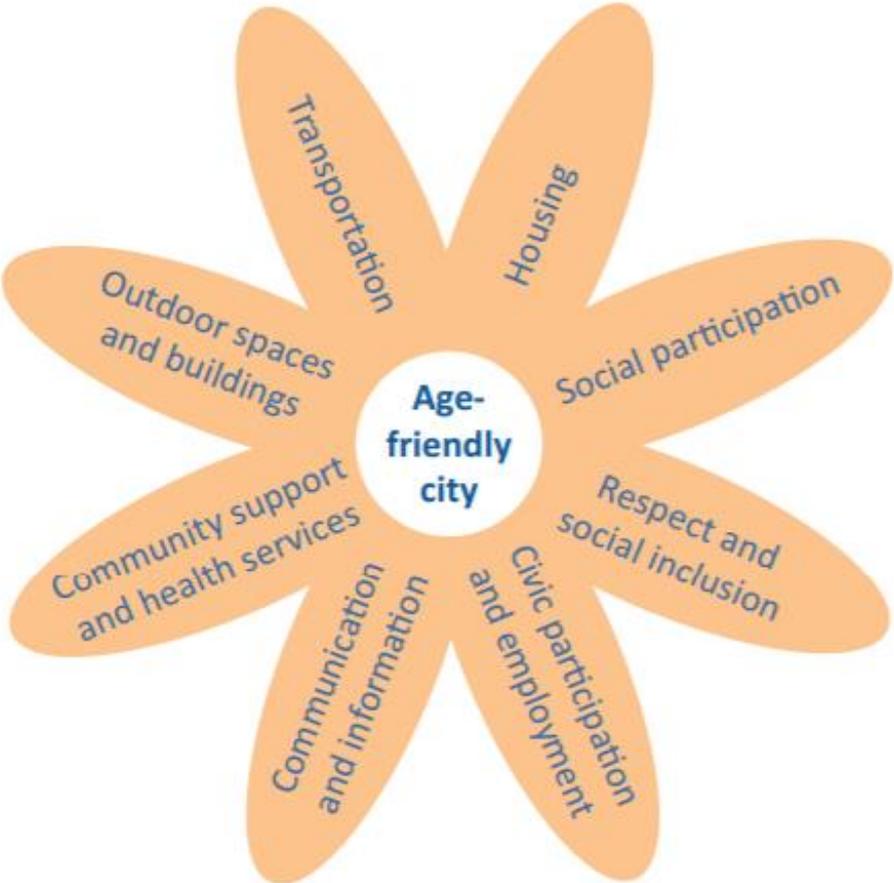

Figure 3. World Health Organization's Age-friendly city topic areas (source: WHO, 2007)

Outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation and housing are the three physical components. According to the WHO (2007), a city's physical environment has a strong impact on older adults' mobility, safety, health and social participation. Next, the three components covering the social environment are social participation, respect and social inclusion, and civic participation and employment. These topics affect older adult's ability to social participation and mental wellbeing. Furthermore, they are concerned with other people's attitudes and behaviour towards older adults. For example, ageism, the ways in which older adults are treated differently from their younger counterparts, can influence their wellbeing (Lager, van Hoven and Huigen, 2015). Finally, communication and information, and community support and health services are concerned with both the social environment, as well as health and social service determinants.

Since the guide's launch in 2007, it is one of the most frequently used tools in assessing the age-friendliness of cities worldwide, even though it has also been criticized for not taking into account urban processes such as gentrification or studentification (Buffel and Phillipson, 2018; Lager & Van Hoven, 2019).

2.1.4 Challenges for ageing in place

Besides the potential benefits of ageing in place, ageing in urban environments can also pose challenges to older adults. The physical characteristics of some neighbourhoods can result in environmental stress (Smith, 2009). For example, the quality and availability of housing, the absence of curb ramps or busy traffic. These factors could create feelings of vulnerability and insecurity, and ultimately influence their wellbeing (Buffel and Phillipson, 2018; Van der Meer et al, 2007). Moreover, ageing in place sometimes results in feelings of loneliness and social exclusion (Smith, 2009; Buffel and Phillipson, 2018). This is especially the case for older adults with limited community networks or limited social contacts (Scharf & De Jong Gierveld, 2008). Sometimes the transient character of urban environments can interfere with their social participation, and thus influence the accessibility to informal neighbour support (Lager & Van Hoven, 2019).

In sum, the physical and social structures of neighbourhoods can also result in feelings of exclusion and loneliness and can harm on older adult's wellbeing and sense of identity and independence.

2.2 Place attachment

2.2.1 Definition of place attachment

Within this debate on ageing in place and the potential benefits for older adults, a reoccurring concept is that of place attachment (Rowles, 1980; Rowles, 1983; Rowles, 1990; Smith, 2009; Lager & Van Hoven, 2019; Buffel et al., 2014). These academic works underline the benefits of attachment to place concerning the wellbeing of older adults, due to their decreasing mobility and often lifelong experience and memories in a specific place (Lager & Van Hoven, 2019). For example, physical insideness, which will be elaborated upon below, allows older adults to maintain a sense of safety, control and independence (Rowles, 1983).

Already in the sixties of the previous century, Townsend (1963) recognized the importance of place attachment in old age (p.38):

> "*Old people's wish to live independently was reinforced by a deep attachment to their homes .... Home was the old armchair by the hearth, the creaky bedstead, the polished linoleum with its faded pattern, the sideboard with its picture gallery and the lavatory with its broken latch reached through the rain. It embodied a thousand memories and held promise of a thousand contentments. It was an extension of personality*."

Over the years, several definitions and conceptualizations of place attachment have been offered. Hidalgo and Hernández (2001) describe place attachment as the affective link that people establish with specific settings, where they tend to remain for a long time and where they feel comfortable and safe. Thus, they define place attachment as an affective bond between a person and a meaningful place. A more elaborate definition has been offered by Brown and Perkins (1992, p. 284), who argue that place attachment "involves positively experienced bonds, sometimes occurring without awareness, that are developed over time from the behavioural, affective, and cognitive ties between individuals and/or groups and their sociophysical environment." This is the definition that will be used for this study.

Livingston et al. (2010) argue that place attachment can take two forms: functional attachment and emotional attachment. They describe how functional place bonds become stronger when a place meets the needs of an individual to achieve their goals and desired activities. Emotional bonds relate to the feelings and emotions people have with certain places. Emotional bonds form when a place supports a person's self-identity. Indeed, as

mentioned earlier, places are repositories for a complex set of social and cultural constructions (Sampson and Goodrich, 2009). A result is that places become important in people's identity construction, since people draw on these socio-cultural processes, symbols and values to describe themselves. When a place does not support an individual's own identity, it becomes an obstacle to develop an attachment to that place (Smith, 2009).

2.2.2 Determinants of place attachment

Different factors influence the attachment to place, and they can be divided into personal and place characteristics. Place attachment is something that develops over time (Phillipson, 2007; Buffel et al., 2014), which allows an individual to become involved within the community (Rowles, 1983; Sampson & Goodrich, 2009). Consequently, age and length of residence are argued to be the most important personal characteristics influencing place attachment (Gilleard et al., 2007). Longer residence in a neighbourhood allows someone to become integrated in local social networks and become familiar with the physical surroundings (Lager & Van Hoven, 2019). As mentioned, it is these social networks in the neighbourhood that are important in ageing in place.

Place characteristics also influence how attachment to places is developed. Especially physical deterioration is an important factor undermining people's attachment to a place (Livingston et al., 2010). For instance, decreasing quality of buildings or public spaces, cracked pavements, unkempt gardens or increased litter can reduce peoples emotional or functional attachment to that place (Livingston et al., 2010; Lager & Van Hoven, 2019; Buffel et al., 2014).

Older adults' personal characteristics suggest a high level of place attachment, because in general, they have spent a long time in their neighbourhood (Phillipson, 2007). Alternatively, due to mobility limitations, they are especially vulnerable to place characteristics, such as physical deterioration or a lack of services.

2.2.3 Conceptualization of place attachment

As discussed in the previous section, both personal and place characteristics influence people's development of place attachment. Furthermore, the importance of place attachment in, for example, older adult´s wellbeing has been underlined. As a result, scholars have attempted to create one coherent model or framework containing the different dimensions of place attachment.

One of these conceptualizations is Scannell and Gifford's (2010) tripartite organizing framework, which divides place attachment into a person-process-place dimension (Figure 4). Scannell and Gifford (2010) argue that the development of place attachment is dependent on the person, the place and the process. However, since this model does not focus on older adults, this model will be discussed in relation to Rowles' (1983) notion of 'insideness'. After years of ethnographic research on older adults in Appalachia, Rowles (1983) distinguishes between physical, social and autobiographical insideness. According to Rowles (1983), older adults develop these 'types' of insideness through decades of residence in the same place. Consequently, the next section will discuss Scannell and Gifford's (2010) conceptualization of place attachment in relation to Rowles' (1983) notion of insideness.
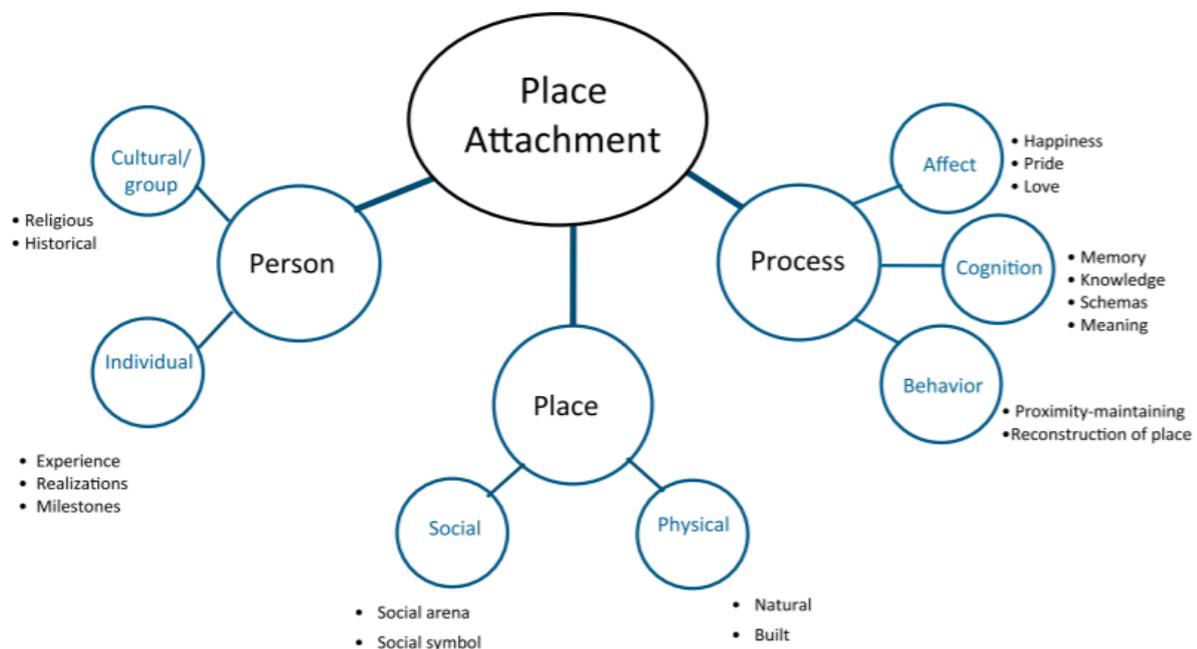
Figure 4. Tripartite organizing framework (source: Scannell & Gifford, 2010).

The 'person' dimension relates to the actor who is attached, which can be either an individual or a group. Often, personal attachment is a result of meaningful experiences and milestones in an environment (Manzo, 2005). For example, the place where you first met your significant other, or the place where your daughter rode her bike for the first time. This suggests that older adults have a strong place attachment since they have often resided in their home for long periods of time, thus having more developed more meaningful experiences and milestones (Buffel et al., 2014; Rowles, 1983).

The 'process' dimension concerns the psychological interactions between a person and a place. These interactions are affect, cognition and behaviour. Affect relates to the emotions a

place evokes, such as happiness, pride or sadness. Cognitive interactions are the memories we have of certain places, or the knowledge about an environment, such as the history of that place. These cognitive elements are often dependent on the amount of time spent in a place, hence they are expected to be stronger in old age. The behavioural component relates to the fact that people who are attached to a place behave accordingly, for example by not moving out. When being separated from such a meaningful place, feelings of homesickness often emerge (Riemer, 2004).

Together, the 'person' and 'process' dimensions correspond with Rowles' (1983) notion of autobiographical insideness. Rowles (1983) argues that in old age, the image we have of ourselves and our sense of identity are inextricably intertwined with the people and places around us. This is a result of the numerous memories and experiences in that place. Hence, our sense of identity is inherently linked to our personal history in places (Rowles, 1993). Therefore, it is difficult to develop autobiographical insideness in new places.

The 'place' dimension, as the name suggests, relates to the object of attachment. In other words, what are we attached to, and what is the nature of that place? Scannell and Gifford (2010) argue that the place dimension is the most important dimension. The place dimension comprises two separate components: the physical, build-up environment and the people residing in that environment.

The physical component of Scannell and Gifford's (2010) 'place' dimension shares similarities with Rowles' (1983) notion of physical insideness. According to Rowles (1983), older adults have developed an in-depth awareness of the physical environment, which is a result of repeatedly traversing that environment. This familiarity with the environment enables them to maintain their mobility in old age, especially when fragility increases (Rowles, 1980).

The social component of the 'place' dimension is connected to Rowles' (1983) notion of social insideness. Social insideness relates to people's tendency to form affection with the social characteristics of a place, such as the integration in the local community with its norms, rules and routines. Through social participation, older adults develop a sense of belonging and attachment to the community (Rowles, 1983). Moreover, through social insideness, older adults enjoy informal support by the community that is increasingly important in old age (Gardner, 2011; Buffel & Philipson, 2018; Smith, 2009).

In sum, place attachment is important in old age since more time is spent at home and in the neighbourhood. Over time, deep and personal connections are established with places that result in autobiographical insideness. Additionally, through familiarity with the environment, physical insideness benefits older adults' mobility and improve their (sense of) independence. Moreover, social insideness enables older adults to enjoy informal community support. Taken together, place attachment allows older adults to remain more independent and improves their wellbeing.

2.3 Studentification

2.3.1 What is studentification?

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, academic works started to appear discussing the social and physical issues in university towns regarding the influx of students in certain neighbourhoods (Chatterton, 2000; Smith, 1999; Rugg et al., 2002). This process is often referred to as studentification. One of the most widely used definitions of studentification, and the one used in this research, is the one proposed by Smith (2005), who writes that studentification is "the distinct social, cultural, economic and physical transformations within university towns, which are associated with the seasonal in-migration of higher education (HE) students" (p. 74). Studentification is often seen as the cause for physical deterioration and the downgrading of social structures in such neighbourhoods (Smith et al., 2014; Lager & Van Hoven, 2019; Sage et al., 2012). As Allinson (2006) points out, academics often use remarkably emotive language to describe this process, such as "invasion", "student ghetto's" and a "devastating effect" on community life.

Before elaborating on the social, cultural, economic and physical transformation of studentified neighbourhoods (Smith, 2005), it is necessary to make a distinction between two noticeably different types of studentification. On the one hand, there is studentification that is manifested in the transformation of terraced housing into houses of multiple occupation (HMO). Within this type of studentification, students live in converted houses amidst the established community. The other type of studentification is the manifestation of purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA), sometimes referred to as 'vertical studentification' (Garmendia et al., 2012). These are high rise buildings, purposively built to accommodate the increasing number of students or to solve issues related to 'horizontal studentification' (Sage

et al., 2013). Since there is no PBSA in the Schildersbuurt, the discussion below focuses on the effect of horizontal studentification on neighbourhoods.

2.3.2 The physical, social, economic and cultural impacts

Studentification is often seen as the cause for the physical deterioration of certain neighbourhoods within university towns. Because of their transient character, students are less concerned about maintaining the physical quality of the neighbourhood. Common complaints in these neighbourhoods are unkempt gardens, overgrown sidewalks, increased littering and dilapidated residential facades (Smith et al., 2014; Lager & Van Hoven, 2019). Moreover, in the British and North-American context, nuisance concerning diminishing parking space and inconsiderate parking is a reoccurring issue (Hubbard, 2008). This issue is different in the Dutch context, where parking complaints are mainly related to bicycles (Lager & Van Hoven, 2019; Rauws & Meelker, 2019). Furthermore, noise pollution is a frequently reoccurring issue within studentified neighbourhoods (Sage et al., 2013; Allinson, 2006).

Studentification also has an impact on the social structures of certain neighbourhoods (Sage et al., 2012). As with the deteriorating quality of the physical environment, the transient character of students is seen as the cause for this change (Bromley, 2006). People in these studentified neighbourhoods experience a decreasing social cohesion, diminishing sense of community and a lower degree of community support (Sage et al., 2013). This is a result of conflicting lifestyles between students and non-student residents.

Next, this different lifestyle of students results in a cultural change in the neighbourhood. This is manifested in a change of amenities. For example, pubs are often converted to themed bars, there is an increase in fast-food restaurants and schools and kindergartens see their class sizes plummet since families move out of the area (Smith, 2005). The new student population has different needs and preferences that clash with the established population. According to Bromley (2006), it is a clash between the early to bed, early to rise and the late-night party culture.

Finally, the economic impact of studentification is ambiguous. Several academics have compared studentification to gentrification, where students are seen as the initial gentrifiers (Smith, 2005; Smith, 2008; Davison, 2009). These neighbourhoods experience an initial improvement of the housing stock by private investors. Consequently, the average housing

price increases and part of the indigenous population is pushed out (Smith, 2008). However, frequently, these newly converted houses are poorly maintained by both the investors and the students. Moreover, due to the socio-physical issues concerning studentification, these neighbourhoods quickly become less attractive for people. As a result, the average housing price often decreases in the long run (Allinson, 2006).

2.3.3 Studentification and ageing in place

Interestingly, hardly any studies have explored the influence of studentification on older adults' wellbeing, place attachment or their experience with ageing in place. Yes, some studies have mentioned how older adults are disproportionally impacted by studentification since they depended on community support (Sage et al., 2012; Allinson, 2006). However, none of these studies focused specifically on place attachment to or ageing in place.

The first study to explore this phenomenon was conducted by Lager and Van Hoven (2019) in their study on studentification and ageing in place in Selwerd, a post-war neighbourhood in Groningen. They found that studentification negatively influences older adults' feelings of residential comfort due to noise pollution, anti-social behaviour and inconsiderate parking. In turn, this influenced people's emotional attachment to the neighbourhood, especially for the population who had resided in the neighbourhood for decades.

In other studies on studentification, that were not specifically focused on older adults, a sense of displacement and loss of attachment and belonging to the neighbourhood has been found (Bromley, 2006). After students took over the neighbourhood, people lost their connection and expressed a sense of displacement. These feelings of displacement and loss of attachment are especially harmful to older adults. Indeed, attachment to place offers older adults a sense of identity and independence (Rowles, 1983; Smith, 2009). Moreover, environmental stress and a decreasing sense of safety caused by studentification have a negative influence on older adults' wellbeing (Buffel et al, 2014). Additionally, the deteriorating physical quality of the neighbourhood due to studentification, such as inconsiderate parking of bicycles, can also hinder their mobility.

Furthermore, older adults are also susceptible to weakening social ties in studentified neighbourhoods. People in studentified neighbourhoods experience a decreasing social cohesion, diminishing sense of community and a lower degree of community support (Sage et

al., 2013). Especially diminishing community support can influence older adults' wellbeing, because the Dutch Social Support Act of 2007 emphasizes the role of the community in supporting older adults (Van der Meer et al., 2008). Since students are less involved in the community, it is less likely that the community provides care to the elderly.

Finally, since hardly any studies have explored studentification in relation to place attachment or ageing in place, it is difficult to predict older adults' coping strategies concerning studentification. Hence, the best way to predict this is by building on Golant (2015), who distinguishes between two different coping strategies employed by older adults concerning neighbourhood change. According to Golant (2015), the first strategy older adults employ is accommodative coping. These are psychological strategies or mind strategies, such as rationalizing students' behaviour. The second strategy is assimilative cooping. These are active measures undertaken by older adults to improve their situation. Examples are confronting students about their behaviour or moving out of the neighbourhood. In their study on studentification and ageing in place, Lager and Van Hoven (2019) found that older adults predominantly employ accommodative coping strategies in order to deal with the changing environment.

In conclusion, there is a limited body of research concerned with the impact of studentification on ageing in place. The existing research by Lager and Van Hoven (2019) suggests that especially older adult's emotional attachment decreases due to studentification. Moreover, increasing environmental stress and a decreasing sense of safety are expected to arise due to studentification. In turn, older adults can employ two coping strategies: accommodative coping or assimilative coping. The only empirical research so far exploring this topic found that older adults predominantly employ accommodative coping strategies (Lager & Van Hoven, 2019.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Qualitative research approach

In this chapter, the research methods of this study will be explained and discussed. To answer the question "how does studentification influence older adult's place attachment and wellbeing in the Schildersbuurt in Groningen?", a qualitative research approach has been applied. The reason to apply a qualitative approach is that qualitative research is concerned with elucidating human environments and human experiences (Winchester & Rofe, 2016). In this case, it offers the researcher the ability to understand older adults' lived experiences within urban environments and the advantages and challenges associated with this.

Especially in this study, a qualitative research approach is appropriate. This study aims to understand older adult's experience with ageing in place in the Schildersbuurt in Groningen and how their attachment to place and wellbeing has been influenced by students. Within place attachment literature, there is a strong focus on the importance of places and how this is experienced by people (Smith, 2009; Livingston et al., 2010, Scannell and Gifford, 2010). Since these experiences with people and places are undeniably subjective, a qualitative approach is most appropriate. Moreover, few studies have explored the phenomenon of studentification in relation to ageing in place (Lager & Van Hoven, 2019). Therefore, a qualitative approach can illuminate topics and trends that have not yet been established within academic literature (Clifford et al., 2016). Finally, qualitative research can uncover and give a voice to underrepresented narratives and stories (Winchester & Rofe, 2016). Within this research, this relates to the voice of older adults residing in a student-dominated neighbourhood. For these reasons, this study follows a qualitative research approach.

To obtain more insights into the relationship between studentification and ageing in place, and the influence it has on older adults' place attachment and wellbeing, a case study approach has been applied. Case studies not only give practical insights into a specific case or unit but also improve our understanding of the broader phenomenon (Baxter, 2016). In this research, a case study approach will not only offer a detailed understanding of how studentification is experienced by older adults in the Schildersbuurt but also helps to understand how urban processes such as studentification influence ageing in place. Hence,

the purpose of this study is not to test existing theories, but rather to expand or elaborate on theories.

3.2 Method of data collection

3.2.1 Semi-structured in-depth interviews

To obtain the necessary data to answer the research questions, semi-structured, in-depth interviews have been conducted. Through its conversational nature, the strength of interviewing is that it allows the researcher to collect a diversity of meanings, opinions, motivations and experiences (Dunn, 2016). In contrast to structured interviews, semi-structured interviews are more conversational and informal, and there is enough room for the participants to discuss topics they feel are important (Hennink et al., 2011). Indeed, as an outside researcher, it is often hard to have a full grasp of the topics that are important to the participants. Thus, allowing them to speak freely will generate interesting and rich data.

Before the in-depth interviews were conducted, an interview guide was designed with a list of primary questions and secondary questions (See appendix 1 for interview guide). However, as mentioned above, this guide wasn't designed to structure the interview but functioned mainly as a tool to make sure all of the necessary topics were discussed. The interview guide consists of introductory questions, key questions and closing questions. The introductory questions served two purposes: they offered important data on the participants' demographics and daily patterns, and they were asked to make the participants feel more comfortable and relaxed (Clifford et al., 2016; Dunn, 2016). The key questions were divided into separate themes. First questions were asked regarding their place attachment. These questions were based on Scannell and Gifford's (2010) conceptualization of place attachment and thus divided into *people, place* and *process* questions. After, questions were formulated about the influence of students in the Schildersbuurt, and how this impacted their attachment and connection to the neighbourhood. Finally, some closing questions were asked to end the interview logically and establish and maintain rapport with the participants (Dunn, 2016)

However, it is important to mention that before and during the interviews, participants were not informed the research concerned the impact of studentification on the neighbourhood. Instead, the researcher explained this study was about their daily life and experiences in the neighbourhood, places that have special meaning to them and their perception of the social

structures in the neighbourhood. This was a conscious decision to not guide the interview in a specific direction. This way, the rigour and trustworthiness of this study have been reinforced (Stratford & Bradshaw, 2016).

3.2.2 Recruitment

Since this study concerns older adults residing in the Schildersbuurt in Groningen, criterion sampling is employed (Stratford & Bradshaw, 2016). Participants needed to be 67 years of age or older. The reason for choosing 67 as the lower limit is because, at this moment, this is the official retirement age in the Netherlands. Especially following retirement, the neighbourhood becomes an increasingly important physical setting for daily life since more time is spent around the house and in the neighbourhood (Buffel et al., 2012, Rowles, 1983). Furthermore, since this study is about the influence of studentification on the Schildersbuurt, participants had to live in the Schildersbuurt.

Recruiting participants turned out to be difficult due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The main reason for this is that older adults are a vulnerable demographic within this crisis. Hence, a conscious decision was made to postpone recruitment until the end of April. The rationale was that a large portion of older adults would have been at least partially vaccinated by then, and would be less hesitant to partake in an interview, especially because interviews would preferably be conducted in person.

The first strategy to recruit participants was through contacting gatekeepers (Dunn, 2016), mainly via the neighbourhood council. Thanks to the chair of the council, several participants were recruited, all fitting the requirements. After these interviews, participants were asked whether or not they knew people potentially willing to participate in an interview. As a result of this snowball sampling (Dunn, 2016), two more participants have been found. Finally, friends, family and acquaintances have been asked if they know older adults in the Schildersbuurt. This resulted in two more participants willing to partake in an interview. The researcher was not acquainted with any of the participants before the interviews.

3.2.3 Participants

In the end, eight interviews were conducted (Table 1). The interviews lasted anywhere from 40 minutes to 90 minutes. Seven of these interviews were sit down interviews in the homes

No.	Self-chosen pseudonyms	Age	Sex	Recruitment	Place of residence	Type of interview
1	Vera	80	Female	Neighbourhood association	B3	Sit down
2	Peter	72	Male	Informal network	B3	Online
3	Jac	72	Female	Informal network	C5	Sit down
4	Tramp	72	Female	Neighbourhood association	C4	Sit down
5	Cato	69	Female	Snowballing	C6	Sit down
6	Viola	74	Female	Neighbourhood association	D3	Sit down
7	Kees	75	Male	Neighbourhood association	C1	Sit down
8	Wim & Roos	74 & 75	Male & Female	Snowballing	B3	Sit down

Table 1. Demographics of the participants (source: the researcher)

of the participants and one interview was conducted through online videoconferencing. The age of the participants ranged from 69 until 80 years old. One interview was conducted with a married couple. This resulted in interesting dialogue since both participants could respond to each other's experiences. Moreover, three participants identified as male and the other six identified as female. During the interviews, participants got the option to choose their pseudonyms.

Furthermore, participants' residential location in the neighbourhood influences their experience in the neighbourhood, since some parts of the neighbourhood house more students than others. Therefore, it is important to identify where in the neighbourhood participants live, without jeopardizing their anonymity. Hence, a map with a grid overlay has been created to ensure anonymity, while still giving an indication of what part of the neighbourhood participants live (Figure 5).

Moreover, the locations with the highest density of student houses are indicated on this map in red (Figure 5). Since there is no data available with the locations of student houses in Groningen, these locations are based on participants' stories and the researcher's personal

Figure 5. Map of the Schildersbuurt with a grid overlay, the locations with the highest density of student houses in red (source: the researcher)

observations. For example, front doors with stickers related to student associations, signs with the name of the student house, balconies with towers of beer crates, the number of doorbells per house or the number of cigarette filters on the ground.

Participants in this study live rather dispersed throughout the neighbourhood. Some participants, such as Jac and Tramp, live in parts of the neighbourhood heavily populated by students, while others, such as Kees and Vera, live in areas less populated by students.

3.3 Method of data analysis

After each interview was conducted, a verbatim transcript was written (Hennink et al., 2011). This is a transcript including all the pauses, conversation fillers and laughs. Even though software packages are available to do the transcribing automatically, the researcher decided to transcribe himself. Not only is the person who conducted the interview best placed to reconstruct the interview, but it also serves as a first step in the data analysis process. After the transcripts were written out, they had to be anonymized to protect the anonymity of the participants. For example, obvious identity markers have been removed from the transcripts.

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Next, the researcher has done a thematic analysis by rereading and coding the transcripts (Hennink et al.,). Thematic analysis allows the researcher to find reoccurring themes, but also identify how these themes are interrelated and connected. Especially after the first couple of interviews this is difficult since the research did not have a good grasp on the situation in the Schildersbuurt yet. However, after more interviews were conducted, transcribed and coded, it became clear there are clear connections between different themes. Furthermore, since it is the researcher who decides which themes arise and which themes are important, the subjectivity of this process has to be acknowledged (Dunn, 2016). However, by appropriate and rigorous coding, this subjectivity can be accounted for.

To do this, a codebook has been developed based on the existing literature (See appendix 2 for codebook). These codes are divided into the people, place and process dimension as conceptualized by Scannell and Gifford (2010). Furthermore, codes are based on the expected impact of studentification on the neighbourhood and how studentification impacts older adults life. These codes are the deductive codes (Hennink et al., 2011). However, since this research concerns older adults experience in place, inductive codes have also been added. These are codes that emerged after coding the first two interviews.

This coding process has been facilitated by Atlas.ti. This programme mainly assists in structuring data and enables the researcher to understand the important and reoccurring themes. For example, within Atlas.ti, you can select a code and immediately see what quotations are associated with that code. This helps the researcher to illuminate the dominant narratives across the interviews.

3.4 Ethical considerations and reflection

Every research design requires a critical reflection on ethical considerations associated with that research, especially within a qualitative research approach (Hennink et al., 2011). The next part will discuss topics such as informed consent, confidentiality, harm and the positionality of the researcher.

3.4.1 Informed consent and confidentiality

Before and during the interviews, participants have been informed about the topic of this study through an informed consent form (See appendix 3 for consent form). The first paragraph of this consent form explains the purpose of this research and what kind of

questions they can expect. However, as mentioned, the participants were not informed the research concerns issues related to studentification in order to establish rigour and trustworthiness. Next, participants were made aware of their rights, such as the possibility to pause or cancel the interview at any time they desired. Moreover, participants were informed their participation was completely voluntarily. Finally, the participants were made aware the interview would be recorded. In the end, all participants showed no hesitation and fully participated in the interviews.

Besides properly informing the participants about their participation, they have been guaranteed full confidentiality (Dowling, 2016; Hennink et al., 2011). To do this, participants were given the option to choose their own pseudonym. Moreover, some private details were excluded from some of the quotes to ensure the participants cannot be recognized. Finally, participants' residential location in the neighbourhood is anonymized by using a map with a grid overlay (See Figure 5). By indicating in which grid participants live, some spatial data is collected while still ensuring participants' anonymity.

3.4.2 Harm

Throughout the whole process of data collection, the reduction of harm played a significant role (Clifford et al., 2016). It is important to not expose yourself nor the participant to any harm, albeit physical or social harm (Dowling, 2016). Especially the reduction of physical harm played a significant role in the data collection process for multiple reasons. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the health of participants needed to be ensured, especially because the participants in this research are a vulnerable demographic. To do this, participants were given full decision power on the type of interview they felt safe with. They could choose whether they wanted to do the interview in a sit-down situation, do the interview online or do a walking interview. In the end, seven out of eight participants felt perfectly comfortable conducting the interview at their own home, as long as both researcher and participants kept a minimum distance of 1.5 meters.

Moreover, besides conducting sit-down interviews, the researcher was also interested in going on a walk through the neighbourhood with the participants. Walking interviews can generate rich data about the geographical context of a certain phenomenon (Anderson, 2004). They can evoke feelings of exclusion, belonging or attachment by seeing the effect of certain urban processes in person (Duff, 2010). However, during the data collection period, the

weather conditions were bad, with rain and wind. To minimize harm, a conscious decision was made to not take the participants on a walk. Moreover, several participants also mentioned they did not want to go on a walk because they either felt insecure physically or because they had other plans after the interview.

3.4.3 Positionality

Finally, some comments need to be made concerning the researcher's positionality, since this could influence the results (Clifford et al., 2016; Dowling, 2016). In this research, the relationship between researcher and participant was sometimes sensitive. As the results below will show, some participants' livelihoods are impacted by the large proportion of students in the neighbourhood. In turn, this resulted in strong language when describing the neighbourhood change inflicted by students. Since the researcher is also a student, this could have resulted in an awkward relationship between participant and researcher. However, by distancing himself from the 'type of students' that cause the issues in the neighbourhood, such as disapproving students' behaviour, the researcher minimized friction between researcher and participant, and the relationship between researcher and participant remained friendly and considerate.

Another potential result of this relationship between researcher and participant is that it could have resulted in some participants not feeling comfortable speaking freely (Dowling, 2016). Participants might have been hesitant to speak about their true experiences concerning students in the neighbourhood, due to the researcher being a student himself. However, by using proper verbal and non-verbal communication, such as nodding when participants were speaking about issues related to students, the researcher tried to make the participants feel heard and understood (Clifford et al., 2016).

Chapter 4. Results

4.1 Attachment through people and places

In Scannell and Gifford's (2010) tripartite organizing framework of place attachment, the place dimension is argued to be the most important dimension. It is the object of attachment, comprised of both the built environment as well as the people residing within that environment. In discussing the built environment in the Schildersbuurt, all participants proudly talked about the aesthetic value of the neighbourhood that resulted in emotional attachment (Livingston et al., 2010). The late 19th and early 20th-century architecture resulted in feelings of pride among all participants. Moreover, participants talked about feelings of nostalgia or even melancholy that the appearance of the neighbourhood evokes. When asking Tramp to name two words she relates to the Schildersbuurt, she answered this:

> *"Two words I relate to the Schildersbuurt… Well, a strong feeling of attachment to the neighbourhood and yeah, a certain sense of nostalgia. Sometimes living in these beautiful houses feels a bit like living in the past. They have an appearance as if it isn't the 21st century yet…"* (Tramp, 72).

Additionally, participants like to go on walks through the neighbourhood. Especially since the Covid-19 pandemic started, the majority of them go on small walks to stay fit and retain mobility. These walks are facilitated by physical insideness (Knowles, 1983). Participants often explained in detail the route through the neighbourhood they like to take. This physical insideness allows them to remain more independent. Besides the health benefits of these walks, an underlying motivation for these walks was the appreciation of the architecture. For example, Peter explained that even though he has lived in the neighbourhood for almost 20 years, he enjoys that he can still discover new architectural elements by going on neighbourhood walks:

> *"I think the Schildersbuurt is really beautiful. The HW Mesdagstraat, Jozef Israelstraat, Leeuwarderstraat, I love to go there, I think its very pretty. Maybe it is because I used to be employed in this line of work, that I look at every detail. And the thing is, when you walk, there is a certain 'slowness'. That slowness allows you to see new things you have never seen before in all those years."* (Peter, 72).

Besides the importance of the aesthetic value, the location of the neighbourhood within the city of Groningen turned out to be important for all participants. The Schildersbuurt directly borders the inner city of Groningen and the Noorderplantsoen, a large park. This central location of the neighbourhood within the city allows participants to go everywhere on foot, for example, to do groceries, getting a coffee in town or going to the doctor. This proximity of amenities is one of the advantages of ageing in place (Phillipson, 2014). Ultimately, being able to go everywhere alone gives older adults a sense of independence (Lager & Van Hoven, 2019). This is in line with Vera's answer to the question of why the location of the neighbourhood is so important to her:

> "*Because over here... the doctor is right around the corner, 5 minutes away. You have a lot of stores in the vicinity, the bus stop is close by. You can walk or bike to the central train station. Those things are really important*" (Vera, 80).

Unfortunately, the central location of the neighbourhood also has a downside. All participants were unhappy about the number of stores in the neighbourhood. These local stores disappeared since an increasing number of people would go to supermarkets for all their groceries, instead of going to a speciality store. Especially the people who lived in the neighbourhood the longest explained how they saw local shops disappear over the years, such as a butcher, greengrocer, fish store or a drugstore. Even though the lack of amenities is not experienced as a crucial issue, these third places still offer important opportunities to connect to neighbours (Gardner, 2011). Concerns about this have been expressed since some participants were struggling to establish and maintain social contacts.

Furthermore, within the physical setting of the neighbourhood, one's home is often an important place of attachment in old age (Droogleever Fortuijn et al., 2006; Rowles, 1983; Smith, 2009), especially because more time is spent at home following retirement. Participants in this study support this idea of an intimate relationship between the self and their home, especially the participants that lived in the neighbourhood the longest. Moreover, this connection with their home is facilitated by the rich history of the neighbourhood and its architecture, as explained by Wim:

> "*Well, it is quite a particular house, almost 100 years old. We have a stone here in our facade with the date the first stone was placed. I am quite sentimental about that, that*

it is a special house with a rich history. But also the architecture, almost like Amsterdam School." (Wim, 74).

Moreover, thoroughly knowing their environment and house allows older adults to remain more independent (Rowles, 1993). This not only relates to the neighbourhood level but also regarding older adults' homes. Participants in this study explained how spending decades in the same home results in an in-depth awareness of what the home allows them to do. In line with this, participants have adapted their homes to serve their desires and needs. This allows them to retain more independence. The quote below by Vera demonstrates how knowing her home thoroughly allows her to stay independent:

> "*What's most important is that I have lived here for so long and I really know my house. I am a bit fragile, and before you know it you fall and hurt yourself. So, you know your house, and you know exactly what you can and can't do. For example, the bathtub upstairs, I love taking baths, and I have installed some kind of handle that I can use to get in and out of the bathtub. It is little tricks like that… you can't just learn stuff like that in a new house*" (Vera, 80).

Next, also the social component of the neighbourhood is important in ageing in place. Participants expressed appreciation regarding the diversity of people in the Schildersbuurt. For example, during the interviews, several participants used the words 'mixed' or 'diverse' to describe the Schildersbuurt. For them, this was one of the key factors to not want to live in an institutional care facility since that would result in a detachment from society. They expressed the importance of hearing children play outside, having a talk with their neighbour at the bakery or even seeing students walking through the neighbourhood. By living among all generations, older adults maintain a sense of identity (Buffel et al., 2012). This is expressed well by Peter:

> "*What I really like is… there are several families living around here with young kids. But also students and older people. Everyone lives alongside each other. […] That mix of people, that is what life is. Life is not just older people, or students, or families. Everyone lives alongside each other.*" (Peter, 72).

Moreover, according to the Dutch Social Support Act of 2007, ageing in place is to a certain degree contingent on support provided by the community (Lager & Van Hoven, 2019; Gardner,

2011). This can be anything from help around the house, help with gardening or doing groceries. However, some participants struggle to develop relationships with neighbours. For example, Peter explained how it is difficult to connect with younger neighbours due to contrasting lifestyles and the lack of third places. The participants who did manage to develop relationships with their neighbours expressed gratitude towards these connections. Not only does it result in a remaining sense of independence (Rowles, 1993), but it also created a feeling of safety. For example, as expressed by Viola, being able to contact your neighbours in case of emergency is increasingly important.

> "*I wouldn't want to leave the neighbourhood. We have good contact with our neighbours. We have also made arrangements with some of the neighbours to keep an eye on each other. That is an important thing to have in the neighbourhood when you grow old. Yeah, I am attached to this neighbourhood.*" (Viola, 74

In conclusion, participants in this study feel a strong sense of attachment to the Schildersbuurt. This attachment is facilitated by both the social and physical components of the neighbourhood, as well as an in-depth connection and familiarity with their home. In turn, this allows participants remain a sense of independence in old age. However, for some, it is difficult to develop relationships in the neighbourhood due to the lack of third places and contrasting lifestyles. The next section will elaborate on this.

4.2 Students' impact on the Schildersbuurt

As in other studies on the impact of studentification on neighbourhoods (Smith et al., 2014; Lager & Van Hoven, 2019), participants in this study experience a physical deterioration of the neighbourhood. They explain how you can easily spot which house is inhabited by students due to the poorly maintained facades and the number of cigarette filters on the ground. Additionally, participants all complain about an increasing amount of littering in general in the neighbourhood, especially manifested in empty beer cans, beer caps and trash bags. Furthermore, noise pollution is a reoccurring issue in the Schildersbuurt. Especially since the Covid-19 pandemic started, more parties are organized at home. This results in frustration among older adults since they are confronted with loud music regularly.

"All that music, it is a disaster. We have an agreement within the Schildersbuurt, do not play music outside. And they always say: 'oh well we are not planning on doing that'. It makes me exhausted." (Jac, 72).

Furthermore, the decreasing aesthetic of the built environment is perceived as problematic by the majority of participants. Besides inadequate maintenance, participants are specifically worried about the destruction of historic interiors of newly converted student houses. These are not protected by the current municipal protection status. Seeing iconic fireplaces, stained glass or dividing doors thrown on the streets results in frustration and anxiety. In December 2020, this topic has even been discussed in the Dutch House of Representatives, when Sandra Beckerman, member of parliament for the Socialist Party, expressed concerns to deputy prime minister Kajsa Ollongren (DvhN, 2020c). However, due to the limited protection status of the majority of buildings, real estate developers are allowed to continue this practice.

Similarly, upward extensions (in Dutch *optoppingen*) result in similar feelings of frustration and anxiety. These extensions started around 2014 when the municipality of Groningen decided only 15% of residences in certain streets can be inhabited by students (DvhN, 2014). As a result, by extending houses upwards, real estate developers could increase the number of students per house.

However, these extensions embody a significantly different architectural style that is not in accordance with the early 20th architecture. Consequently, participants' anger was predominantly directed towards the municipality, since they argue the municipality should have been more assertive in protecting the historic character of the Schildersbuurt. This is in line with Woldoff and Weiss' (2018) study on studentification in a college town in the USA. Residents directed their anger and frustration not towards students, but predominantly towards real estate developers and the local government since they feel like they are not being taken seriously. For example, Jac got frustrated when talking about the municipality's mitigation efforts concerning the issues in the neighbourhood:

"I think the people at the municipality are a bunch of weak… So, we have protested a lot, that things are escalating here. And then the municipality initiates another research. […] That is one of those tricks by the municipality, starting a new research. I think have had at least 20 researchers here in the last couple of years." (Jac, 72).

Moreover, participants complain about how students confiscate the public space in the Schildersbuurt, in particular the sidewalks. The main explanation is inconsiderate parking of bicycles, something that has been found in earlier studies on studentification in the Netherlands (Lager & Van Hoven, 2019; Rauws & Meelker, 2019). Since these student houses are inhabited by somewhere between four and twelve students, more bicycles are stalled in the neighbourhood. Consequently, there is no adequate parking space for all these bicycles. Moreover, in the Schildersbuurt, this issue is amplified by the number of picnic tables that have appeared in recent years. These are placed in front of students' houses, further narrowing down the walkable space. Therefore, some participants have argued they actively avoid parts of the neighbourhood. In turn, this negatively influences older adults' functional attachment since the neighbourhood does not allow participants to undertake their desired activities.

> "*When I walk on the streets, there are picnic tables everywhere… all public space is taken over by students, you just can't pass them sometimes. Fortunately, I don't have a walking support, but imagine if you use something like a wheelchair, then I couldn't even go over the sidewalk. Because 1, bicycles are laying around everywhere, and 2, all of the sidewalk is taken over, and that annoys me*". (Viola, 74).

Besides the physical deterioration, participants experience a diminishing sense of community and cohesion in the Schildersbuurt. For some participants, it feels like students and older adults live parallel lives, due to different rhythms, routines and lifestyles. These unsynchronized rhythms result in a generational divide, due to the slowness of rhythms later in life (Lager et al., 2016). Therefore, it is often difficult to establish relationships with younger people and especially students. Some participants explained how they have no contact at all with students. When relationships are established between participants and students, it is often for a short time since students move out after one to three years. This is phenomenon is clearly illustrated by Cato:

> "*Well, I know a girl who lives down there. She even helped me clean the alley yesterday. Sadly, she will move out at the end of the month and then someone else moves in. People move in and out all the time, I hardly know anyone. There is no reason for them to establish a relationship with the older residents.*" (Cato, 69).

This diminishing sense of community puts pressure on informal community support, especially since older people and families move out and students move in. Even though participants in this study are still rather mobile, when fragility increases with time this can become problematic. Furthermore, the limited interactions between students and older adults results in rising social tension, manifested in the urgent letter the neighbourhood association sent to the municipality, signed by 40 inhabitants (DvhN, 2020a). In this letter, the neighbourhood demanded more adequate enforcement concerning noise pollution, littering and better regulations to restore balance in the neighbourhood. Alternatively, from the perspective of students, they experience a sense of inferiority regarding the contemptuous way they are approached by older adults (DvhN, 2021b). Hence, the limited social cohesion in the Schildersbuurt results in increasing tension from both sides.

In turn, the deteriorating quality of the built environment, the obstruction of the sidewalks and the decreasing sense of community result in an overall sense of dispossession among older adults. Participants expressed concerns in regard to 'losing' their neighbourhood. For them, it feels like the municipality does not take them seriously, and instead prefers to attract as many students as possible to fuel the local economy. Moreover, some students' rhetoric amplifies this sense of dispossession, by telling older adults they should not live in a 'student neighbourhood'. The issue here is that for students it does feel like a student neighbourhood since in some parts the student population is over 50% (DvhN, 2020d). Therefore, it can be argued that some parts of the neighbourhood, especially the Jozef Israelstraat and HW Mesdagstraat, have been transformed into a student ghetto or student enclave. This development is infuriating to older adults since they have lived in the Schildersbuurt for decades. With a raising voice, Viola explained how students' rhetoric fuels her anger and sense of dispossession:

> "*Look, at one point students started yelling 'you shouldn't live in a student-neighbourhood'. No, this isn't a student-neighbourhood, this is the Schildersbuurt. And there are a lot of different people living here. But students are taking over now, it makes me angry*." (Viola, 74).

However, it has to be acknowledged that the perceived impact of studentification is dependent on participants' residential location within the neighbourhood. Especially Jac, Tramp and Viola live in this part of the neighbourhood that can be identified as a student

ghetto. Therefore, they experience studentification intensely, such as noise pollution every day. Other participants that live further away from this student ghetto experience these effects differently. For example, Kees told me he never experiences issues concerning students and sometimes drinks a beer with them. Moreover, Wim and Roos do not experience any noise pollution or physical deterioration in their street. Instead, they mainly express concerns regarding the general state of the neighbourhood, such as the neighbourhood losing its allure and historic value. When asking Wim to name two words or feelings he associates with the neighbourhoods, this was one of the two answers:

> *"The downfall. The demolition of all that beauty. You cannot say there are just a couple of ugly houses in the Schildersbuurt. It has turned into a fundamental problem, how people treat the neighbourhood."* (Wim, 74).

In conclusion, from the interviews, it has become clear how students leave a mark on the neighbourhood, manifested in increased litter, noise pollution and the obstruction of sidewalks. Moreover, through poor maintenance, upward extensions and destruction of historic interiors, the neighbourhood loses part of its historic and aesthetic value indefinitely. Furthermore, due to a generational divide, participants experience a decreasing sense of community, resulting in increased social tension. In turn, all these impacts of studentification result in a general sense of dispossession and anger among older residents, which is predominantly attributed to the municipality's ineffective regulations and enforcement. This challenges older adults' emotional and physical attachment to the Schildersbuurt. Finally, the perceived impact on studentification is dependent on participants' residential location in the neighbourhood.

4.3 Dealing with studentification

Participants in this study employed a myriad of coping mechanisms, or strategies, to deal with the increasing impact of studentification on the Schildersbuurt. These were both accommodative strategies and assimilative strategies (Golant, 2015). The way participants cope with studentification is contingent on their location in the neighbourhood, as well as their perceived experience with studentification. For example, Tramp and Viola both experience serious consequences as a result of studentification, such as regular noise pollution, littering and mobility issues. However, both reappraised their situation by

explaining they are happy they do not live in other parts of the Schildersbuurt where the situation is worse:

> "*I actually think I am lucky I live here because… Look, if I would have lived in the Jozef Israelstraat the situation would have been different. It is the worse over there. If I may believe the people who live there… well I am happy I don't live there, since they have trouble every evening.*" (Tramp, 72).

This quote illustrates that even though she experiences the negative consequences of studentification, she reappraises her own situation by explaining it could be even worse if she would have lived somewhere else.

Another reoccurring mind strategy employed by participants is rationalizing students' behaviour. One way to do this was explaining how they could relate to students since they used to be students too, or because they had children and grandchildren that used to be students. Moreover, Peter rationalized the situation by explaining he understands students' behaviour since they live in small, expensive rooms. Finally, Kees, Peter and Vera explained how the perceived nuisance by studentification is dependent on your attitude, and how over time they got used to it.

> "*You know what, it is all about your own attitude, whether you get annoyed or not. And it is almost an unsolvable issue…*" (Peter, 72).

Besides these accommodative coping strategies, participants have also employed assimilative coping strategies to deal with studentification. Only one participant considered moving out in the near future, while the majority are actively trying to improve the current situation. For example, as a result of the upward extensions that started in 2014, a separate body of the neighbourhood association was started to fight these extensions more effectively. Another example is the urgent letter the neighbourhood association sent to the municipality in August 2020. Participants in this study strongly supported the association's active measures to improve the situation in the neighbourhood. Instead of just complaining, undertaking action is perceived as a more effective way to solve the issues related to studentification:

> "*All that frustration, of course it's negative. But we are worried, and it is important to use that anxiousness to undertake action by talking to the municipality. That is what the neighbourhood association does. You try to make a change. And in a way there are*

results, but it all goes very slowly and some things you simply cannot change…" (Cato, 69).

Moreover, the majority of participants explained they would confront students about their inappropriate behaviour, by either ringing their doorbell, calling the police or sending a text message. Indeed, there are several WhatsApp groups in the Schildersbuurt, containing both students and non-student residents. This idea was introduced in 2017 as part of a European trial to combat the social issues related to studentification (RTV Noord, 2017). These groups are used by people to alert students, for example when their music was too loud. However, due to the transient nature of students these groups are often outdated and hence inefficient. Consequently, participants in this study preferred confronting students in person if necessary.

Finally, it is important to assess how older adults' wellbeing is impacted by studentification. Through the interviews, it has become clear how their mental and psychological health is impacted by studentification. Participants in this study experience stress, frustration, anxiety, insecurity and insomnia. In turn, this mental and psychological unease results in a decreasing (sense of) wellbeing. This is problematic since ageing in place literature predominantly focuses on the positive impact on older adults wellbeing by ageing in a familiar environment. When talking about confronting students about their noise, Tramp explained how exhausting it can be:

> *"If the weather is nice, I sit on my balcony or in my garden, but because of the noise, I can hardly focus on my book. And then I wonder, should I say something about the noise? Well, it is only 6- or 7 pm, I shouldn't… But you are already annoyed. Next, you have dinner outdoors, but you can barely understand each other because the noise has increased. Then, at around 8 pm, you finally say something about it, and it calms down for a while. But then it becomes louder again, and around 10 pm you wonder if you should say something again. At 11 pm you're so done with it. See? It keeps you busy throughout the whole day and night. And you always think, should I call the police now or later? You see what I mean?"* (Tramp, 72).

This quote demonstrates the insecurity and frustration that is associated with living next to students, especially since stories like the once by Tramp are not a one-time occurrence. Surprisingly, even though these stories are not unique, participants remained a strong

attachment to the neighbourhood. This underlines the importance of attachment to places in people's behaviour. Over time, older adults have established an intricate relationship with both the Schildersbuurt as well as their home. Hence, it is important to find solutions to improve the relationship between students and older adults, especially since the latter is not expected to move out anytime soon.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

This research aims to understand how older adults experience ageing in place in the Schildersbuurt in Groningen, and how their wellbeing and place attachment are impacted by studentification. Due to their personal characteristics, older adults have often developed a strong attachment to both their homes and the neighbourhood (Lager & Van Hoven; Buffel et al., 2014). Moreover, through decades of residence in the same home, it is assumed that older adults remain more independent due to familiarity with the environment and assumed informal care provided by the community (Rowles, 1983; Lager & Van Hoven, 2019).

However, urban change processes such as studentification can interfere with these assumed benefits of ageing in place (Lager & Van Hoven, 2019). Hence, this study aimed to answer the research question: *How does studentification influence older adults' place attachment and wellbeing in the Schildersbuurt in Groningen*? This main research question will be answered by discussing the three sub-questions that have structured the results section.

How do older adults develop place attachment- and experience ageing in the Schildersbuurt?

It has been found that over several decades, all participants have developed a deep connection to the Schildersbuurt. This is facilitated by the aesthetic quality and history of the built environment that resulted in feelings of pride. Moreover, the familiarity they have established with both their home and the neighbourhood has resulted in a sense of independence. These findings do support the assumed benefits of ageing in place literature (Rowles, 1983; Rowles, 1993; Smith, 2009).

How do older adults experience the impact of studentification on the Schildersbuurt?

However, as the second part of the results has illustrated, these perceived benefits of ageing in place are threatened by studentification. All participants in this study started talking about the issues of studentification early in the interview. Participants are worried about the physical deterioration of the Schildersbuurt, such as noise pollution, increased littering and destruction of historic interiors. Moreover, the decreasing social cohesion in the Schildersbuurt challenges the assumed community support that is important in ageing in place (Van der Meer et al., 2008). As a result of these changes, participants' emotional and functional attachment to the Schildersbuurt is affected negatively. Finally, participants argue the municipality of Groningen is responsible for these issues and should be more assertive to improve the situation.

What coping strategies do older adults employ to deal with studentification?

To minimize the impact of studentification on their wellbeing, older adults employ both accommodative and assimilative coping strategies. Especially reappraising their own situation and confronting students are the most common strategies. Nevertheless, studentification significantly impacts participants' mental wellbeing, manifested in stress, frustration, insecurity and insomnia. Moreover, for some, not knowing their neighbours results in a decreased sense of safety. Interestingly, eight out of nine participants did not show any interest in moving out of the neighbourhood.

This research has illustrated how ageing in place can be beneficial for older adults. However, it has also demonstrated how urban processes such as studentification can jeopardize these benefits of ageing in place. This is critical information since the number of older adults is only expected to increase in the future (OECD, 2015), as well as the number of students Groningen (Groningen, 2020). Since it is unlikely that older adults or students will leave the Schildersbuurt in the near future, it is important to find local solutions.

As a starting point, it is crucial for both the University of Groningen and the Hanze University to properly educate students about living in Groningen. Students need to know they are not the only residents in neighbourhoods like the Schildersbuurt, even though it might seem like it sometimes. Furthermore, it is important to start a dialogue between both students and non-student residents. An initiative started by the neighbourhood association called 'gluren bij de buren' (peeking at the neighbours), where people can show each other around their house, sounds promising (Schilderswijk Groningen, 2021b), even though this event was not possible in the last two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, a local mediator, who thoroughly knows the neighbourhood, could assist in establishing this dialogue.

Finally, the municipality of Groningen needs to be more assertive in finding solutions for student-related issues. Participants in this study were not informed the research concerned studentification, yet they all started talking about it spontaneously. This underlines the impact of students on their daily life. A starting point could be to look for options to increase the protection status of certain houses to a municipal monument or subsidizing the proposed mediator. Additionally, a local owner-occupancy clause will terminate the ongoing conversion of family homes into student housing.

This research focuses on the negative impact of studentification on ageing in place. However, future research should focus more on proposed solutions concerning studentification, and the effectiveness of those solutions. The majority of studentification literature is predominantly concerned with identifying the issues instead of focusing on sustainable solutions. It has to be recognized that it is hard to find universal solutions, since these solutions or heavily contingent on the local context.

Moreover, more research should focus on the challenges of ageing in place instead of the benefits. As this study has shown, a deteriorating social and physical environment jeopardizes some of the assumed benefits. However, it is also crucial to explore how, for example, gentrification influences these benefits, since displacement of older adults can be critical due to their attachment to place.

In conclusion, ageing in your own home, a place you are accustomed to and thoroughly know, is what most people desire. To accomplish this, it is important for everyone to be considerate about their environment, and be aware of the diversity of people residing in that environment. Only then can ageing in place be truly beneficial for older adults, because as Vera explained, "just living with old folks is not fun either."

Chapter 6. Discussion

This research aimed to explore how studentification influences older adults' wellbeing and place attachment. To do this, a case study approach was applied to uncover these impacts of studentification in the Schildersbuurt in Groningen. However, throughout the process of this research, it became clear that this impact is inherently dependent on the neighbourhood, participants' residential location in the neighbourhood and the local institutional context. Even though this study has expanded the academic knowledge concerning the peculiarities of studentification and ageing in place, it is impossible to make generalized statements. Therefore, it would have been interesting to conduct a cross-sectional case study (Baxter, 2016), exploring the impact of studentification on ageing in place in multiple neighbourhoods. For example, studying neighbourhoods with different manifestations of studentification (horizontal and vertical), but also historic and newly built neighbourhoods.

Another shortcoming of this research is that the participants in this study are relatively young, and only one participant experienced physical mobility issues. This is problematic since the advantages and disadvantages of ageing in place become stronger when fragility increases (Rowles, 1980; Lager et al., 2016). During the snowball procedure, participants were asked if they knew anyone with the age of 80+ to get more 'old-older' participants. However, none of the participants knew anyone. Alternatively, this can also be a result, since hardly any old-older adults remain in the Schildersbuurt. Moreover, the researcher would have also preferred to interview at least two more participants, to get some more diverse insights and prevent the possibility to be anecdotal.

Finally, for this research, only older adults have been interviewed. However, as mentioned in the conclusion, students and non-students need to start a dialogue to come to an understanding and find solutions. Therefore, it would have been interesting to organize a focus group with older adults, students, a representative of the municipality and a landlord. This way, all stakeholders would have the opportunity to share their views on the issues and discuss possible solutions. Alternatively, separate interviews with these other stakeholders would have also enriched the data of this research.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview guide

Themes	Number	Question
General information		
Demographics	1	What is your age?
Demographics	2	With what gender do you identify?
Residential status	3	Can you indicate on the map in which grid your house is located?
Residential status	4	For how many years have you lived in the Schildersbuurt/your current residence?
Routines	5	Can you roughly describe what a day looks like for you? - Daily activities - Where do you do groceries? - Do you visit friends, family or acquaintances in the neighbourhood? - Do you exercise in the neighbourhood? - Do you go for walks in the neighbourhood? How often?
Place attachment and experience in place		
Place dimension		
Social	6	Can you tell me something about your social network in the Schildersbuurt? - Do you have friends, acquaintances, family, good contact with neighbours? - How often do you meet these people? - For what purposes? (Social activities? Support around the house?)

Social	7	Have you participated in activities organized by the neighbourhood association? If yes: - Which ones? - How did you find out about these activities? - How did you experience these? If no: - Why not? (not aware? Not interested?)
Social	8	What is your opinion on the social ties/cohesion within the neighbourhood? - Positive/negative? Why? - You mentioned you live in the neighbourhood for […] years, how have these social ties developed over the years according to you? Elaborate.
Physical	9	What is your opinion on the quality your house? - What do you like and what do you not like about your current house? - Does it still serve all your needs? - Do you feel like you can remain in your current house for the foreseeable future? Elaborate.
Physical	10	Do you like to go on walks in the neighbourhood? If yes: - Where do you like to go? - Why do you like to go there? What attracts you? - Are there places you avoid? - Why do you avoid these places? - Are there places that you find not attractive in the neighbourhood?

		- Why do you find these places unattractive?
		- How does it make you feel if you do walk through these places?
		If no:
		- Is there a specific reason why you don't go on walks through the neighbourhood?
		- Are there other places you prefer to walk through?
		- Why?
Physical	11	Have you ever experienced some obstacles in the neighbourhood regarding the built environment? - Traffic, parking, curb ramps etc
Physical	12	Have there been moments where you felt unsafe in the neighbourhood? - Why did you feel unsafe? - What did you do about this? - Has this changed your perception on the neighbourhood or wellbeing?
Process dimension		
Affect & Cognitive	13	What kind of feelings or emotions do you associate with the Schildersbuurt? - Could you mention one or two words that come to mind when thinking about the neighbourhood? - Why do you associate these words with the neighbourhood? - Do you think these words will be different when someone will ask the same question 5 years later?
Behaviour	14	Do you think you will consider moving out of the Schildersbuurt in the next 5 years?

		- Why yes/no
Person dimension		
Milestones/experiences	15	You have mentioned you live in the Schildersbuurt for […] years, can you recall some milestones related to the neighbourhood that you have experienced in those years? - Why are these important milestones for you? - Have these milestones influenced your connection to the neighbourhood?
Studentification (to be asked when participants mention students)		
	16	In what ways do the increasing number of students manifest itself in the Schildersbuurt? - Socially - Physically - Culturally - Economic (?)
	17	What is your opinion on the increasing number of students in the Schildersbuurt? - Do you think it is positive or negative? - How has it affected you and your wellbeing? - How has it affected your activities in the neighbourhood?
	18	How do you cope with these phenomena you mentioned? - Do you talk about it with friends, family or acquaintances? - Do you talk about it with people from the neighbourhood association?

		- Do you ever confront the students or call the police?
	19	Have you ever considered moving due to these changes you mentioned? - Why yes/no? - How does that make you feel?
Closing questions		
	25	Are there things you want to mention or talk about that we haven't discussed yet?
	26	Do you have any advice or tips for future interviews?
	27	Do you know any other people who would want to participate in an interview?

Appendix 2. Codebook

Code name	Description of code	Inductive/deductive
Person dimension		
Belonging	Participants argue how they feel a sense of belonging in the neighbourhood	Deductive
Milestones	References to important milestones related to the neighbourhood/home	Deductive
Experiences in place	An experience in the past that resulted in a connection the participant feels with the neighbourhood/home	Deductive
Memories in place	Participants share meaningful memories in regard to the neighbourhood/home	Deductive
Time lived in neighbourhood	Notions on how the amount of time spend in the neighbourhood results in attachment	Deductive
Involvement in neighbourhood	Participants are actively involved in maintaining the quality of the neighbourhood	Inductive
Ageing	Notions made in regard ageing and the limitations associated with this	Inductive
Place dimension		
<u>Social</u>		
Perceived social cohesion	Participants share their opinion on the social ties within the neighbourhood	Deductive
Community support	Notions of support provided by the community	Deductive
Knowing your neighbours	Notions in relation to the participants contacts in the neighbourhood	Deductive
Informal interaction	Interactions in third places that are meaningful and are significant in developing attachment to place	Deductive

Meeting neighbours	References to certain activities undertaken with neighbours that are valuable to the participant	Deductive
Neighbourhood association	Participants argue to participate in activities and information meetings organized by the neighbourhood association	Deductive
Diversity of people	Participants mention how the diversity of demographics in the neighbourhood is important to participants	Inductive
Physical		
Familiarity with environment	Notions regarding their familiarity with the physical structures of the neighbourhood	Deductive
Public space	Notions about quality of public spaces	Deductive
Proximity	Notions about the importance of the location of the neighbourhood being close to the city centre	Inductive
Aesthetic value	References made in regard to the aesthetic value of the neighbourhood that are important in developing attachment	Inductive
Recreational walks	Participants go on small walks through the neighbourhood, to either maintain mobility or just to explore and get some fresh air	Deductive
Home	Participants share their opinion about their home	Deductive
Obstacles	References to obstacles related to the physical structures of the neighbourhood	Deductive
Process dimension		
Affect	References to places that evoke a sense of emotional connection, either positive or negative, such as pride or happiness	Deductive

Cognition	Attachment to place because of an intricate relationship between participant and that place	Deductive
Behaviour	Notions about not wanting to move out of the neighbourhood due to a sense of attachment	Deductive
Impact of studentification		
<u>Physical</u>		
Physical deterioration	Participants mention how the increasing number of students results in a decreasing quality of the built-environment and aesthetics	Deductive
Littering	Notions made in regard to littering by students	Deductive
Parking	Participants mention how inconsiderate parking of bicycles hinders their mobility	Deductive
Noise pollution	Participants mention their experience with noise pollution as a result of the increasing number of students	Deductive
Upward extensions	References to upward extensions of properties that diminishes the aesthetic value	Inductive
<u>Social</u>		
Transience	Notions made about the transient character of students that results in a decreasing sense of community	Deductive
Diminishing community support	Participants mention how students are not concerned with helping out older residents	Deductive
Local contacts	References to people they know have left the neighbourhood due to studentification	Inductive

Safety	References made in regard to the perceived safety in the neighbourhood	Inductive
Anger and frustration	Participants argue how all the issues related to studentification lead to feelings of anger, frustration, irritation, helplessness etc.	Inductive
Cultural		
Time space geographies	References in regard to the different rhythms and patterns of the various demographics in the neighbourhood	Inductive
Lifestyle differences	Participants mention how different lifestyles of older adults and students clash with each other	Deductive
Third places	Participants argue how certain amenities have been substituted for amenities more aimed are students	Deductive
Dispossession	Participants experience a sense of dispossession of the neighbourhood because students take over the neighbourhood	Inductive
Coping mechanisms		
Accommodative coping strategies	Psychological or mind strategies employed by the participant to cope with the increasing number of students	Deductive
Assimilative coping strategies	Active measures undertaken by participants to cope with the increasing number of students	Deductive
Student initiatives	Initiatives taken by students to mitigate the negative impacts imposed by them	Inductive
Role of municipality	Participants make negative comments about the municipality and its role in the student-related issues in the neighbourhood	Inductive

Project developers	Participants argue how powerful project-developers are an important stakeholder in the student-related issues	Inductive
Wellbeing	Participants stress how the issues related to studentification influence their wellbeing	Deductive

Appendix 3. Consent form

Consent form

Thank you for your participation! The aim of this research is the obtain insights in older adults' wellbeing in the Schildersbuurt. In this interview, I will ask you about your experiences regarding the daily life in the neighbourhood, your social life in the neighbourhood and important and meaningful places.

The interview will last for approximately 45 minutes to an hour, and you have the possibility to pause or stop the interview whenever you feel like it. This interview and the results will only be used for research purposes. Moreover, the interview is completely anonymous, and the data will be treated confidentially. Some important points:

- My participation is voluntarily: Yes / No
- I am aware the interview is being recorded: Yes / No
- I give permission that the interview can be used for research purposes: Yes / No
- I am aware about the topic of this research: Yes / No

If you have some questions left, feel free to ask them. If not, I will ask you to write down the date, your name and your signature.

Date: ……… - ……… - ………

Name of participant: Name of the researcher:

……………………………………………   Matthijs Smit

Signature of participant: Signature of the researcher:

………………………………………   ……………………………………………

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