

Aging out of place in Enschede

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Abstract

The combination of aging and migration, two key demographic trends, results in an increasing share of older people with a migration background. While aging policies and research have highlighted the benefits of aging in place, it is not clear how this is experienced by people with a forced migration background. Since forced migration has major implications for place attachment, it is expected that older people with a forced migration background may experience aging *out* of place. Therefore, this research explores how place attachment is impacted by four different dimensions of insiderness: autobiographical, cultural, social, and physical. Five semi-structured interviews were conducted with older people aged 53 and above with a forced migration background living in Enschede, and analysed by applying deductive and inductive coding. Despite the major life disruptions and lost resources because of their forced migration, all interviewees expressed a sense of place attachment in Enschede, fostered by a sense of insiderness. Researchers and policy makers are recommended to take an inclusive approach to aging in place and recognize various challenges and opportunities for heterogeneous aging populations.

Introduction

Two key demographic trends in Europe bring about both immense challenges and opportunities: aging and migration. The combination of these two phenomena means that aging populations are not only growing, but also diversifying, and so are their needs. Academics, health care providers and policy-makers emphasize the importance of ‘aging in place’ as it is said to have a significant positive impact on aging people’s wellbeing and simultaneously prevent costlier residential care (Albers et al., 2021; Buffel et al., 2012; Lager et al., 2012; Rowles, 1983; Wiles et al., 2011). Aging in place implies growing old in a familiar home, environment, or community that offers support, meaning and security to elderly adults (Sadarangani, 2015, p. 110).

However, it is also brought to the attention that aging people are not a homogenous group, and may experience aging in place in different ways (Buffel et al., 2012; Conkova & Lindenburg, 2019; Ryan et al., 2021; Wiles et al., 2011). As such, a growing group of migrants might be aging in place, whilst feeling *out* of place (Sadarangani, 2015).

In 2022, the Netherlands had a population of 5.7 million ‘older’ people (aged 55 and above; De Regt et al., 2022). Within this group, 10% is foreign born and ethnically diverse (see figure 1). The largest groups have predominantly migrated to the Netherlands for work or education opportunities. In addition to labour migrants, there are also sizeable population of asylum migrants that have fled from countries classified as ‘refugee countries,’ including Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Yugoslavia, Soviet Union, and Syria. Notably, older individuals within these asylum migrant groups are relatively young, with an average age between 62 and 65 years, and only in one in ten having reached the age of 75 (ibid). Given the ongoing conflicts in their countries of origin, it is unlikely that most forced migrants will return, suggesting that these groups of people with a forced migration background will continue to grow and age in the coming decade(s).

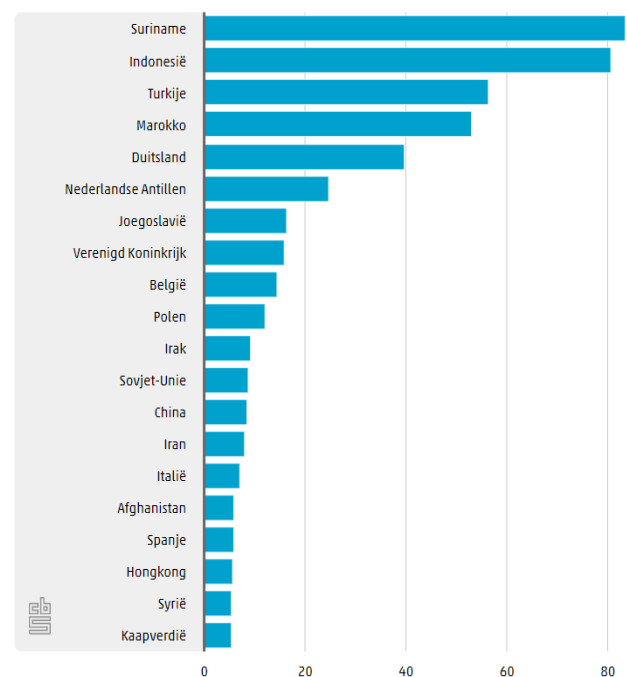


Figure 1: 20 largest groups older migrants, 2019 (De Regt, 2022)

The study of aging migrants in Europe is an under-researched area, with a tendency for scholars and policymakers to focus on native aging populations (Belgiojoso, 2020; Ekoh, 2022; De Regt, 2022; Ryan et al., 2020). Additionally, existing research about aging out of place primarily concerns voluntary migrants (Horn & Schweppe, 2017; Sadarangani, 2015). In the case of the

Netherlands, aging studies have focused on Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese, and Antilleans (Conkova & Lindenburg, 2019; Keijzer et al., 2018 ; Lager et al., 2012) as these are some of the largest aging migrant groups, but studies about the growing group of forced migrants are lacking (De Regt, 2022). Moreover, while some studies and reports have highlighted the double jeopardy of aging migrants, a distinction between different migration trajectories is often overlooked (King et al., 2017). However, it is detrimental to refugee protection to confuse the two groups of migration, because refugees are recognized beneficiaries of internationally endorsed rights (Feller, 2005). For instance, the 1951 Refugee Convention stipulates the responsibility of host countries to create the conditions that enable integration and an acceptance of refugees in the host society (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019, p. 185). At the same time, some scholars also point out a need to go beyond the vulnerability trope, and to recognize how older migrants cope with aging out of place (Ciobanu et al., 2017; King et al., 2017; Kristiansen, 2018). Therefore, this research aims to fill these knowledge gaps, by exploring the experience of older forced migrants expecting to age in place, while recognizing both their vulnerabilities and coping mechanisms.

Central to a positive aging in place experience is place attachment, which refers to the bonding between individuals and places. Place attachment can be influenced by various factors (Scannel & Gifford, 2010). Since integration is recognized as an important factor for place attachment for asylum immigrants (Albers et al., 2021), this would suggest that older refugees are less likely to develop place attachment because of age-related constraints to integration. However, this research aims to explore how place attachment can also be influenced by 'insideness,' i.e. the extent to which someone feels that they belong to a place, focusing on (Buffel, 2015).

To investigate the impact of insideness on place attachment, this research takes a qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews. The study's target group of the research is older people aged 55+ with a refugee background, in Enschede. The city of Enschede, a medium-sized Dutch city with a relatively high concentration of people with a refugee background in Enschede (Allecijfers.nl, 2022), has been selected as the place to recruit participants from. By exploring the autobiographical, cultural, social, and physical dimensions of insideness as perceived by the participants, this research aims to answer the central research question: how does perceived insideness impact place attachment for older people (55+) living in Enschede with a refugee background?

Theoretical framework

Place attachment

Place attachment refers to the bonding between individuals and places, and has three different dimensions: person, place and process (Scannel & Gifford, 2010). Firstly, place attachment involves a person or the group that is attached to a certain place (e.g. through personal experiences or historical ties). Secondly, the physical and social characteristics of a place also play a role in place attachment and can contribute to the 'rootedness' or sense of familiarity of a person in a particular place. Lastly, place attachment can also be seen as a process, which can be categorized in affect (emotional bonding), cognition (memories, beliefs, meaning and knowledge), and behaviour (attachment expressed through action, e.g. maintaining closeness to the place) (ibid, p. 3). Accordingly, place attachment in this research also has three dimensions: older settled refugees (group), the city of Enschede (place), place bonding because of perceived insideness (process).

Place attachment has been found to have the following functions: survival and security (when place provides basic necessities such as food and shelter), goal support (when place facilitates a desired activity), temporal continuity (when place preserves or symbolizes memories or connections to the past), and personal continuity (when someone can identify with the place) (Scannel & Gifford, 2010). Additionally, place attachment can improve self-esteem, belonging, and meaning (Albers et al., 2021). Particularly for older people, their own familiar environment can provide senses of independence, autonomy, control, and continuity (Buffel, 2015; Lager et al., 2012). However, these senses may not be experienced by older people with a refugee background if their environment does not feel familiar to them. On the other hand, for vulnerable individuals or groups, place bonds can be more intense because of increased dependence due to reduced physical mobility or limited socioeconomic resources (Scannel & Gifford, 2010, p. 6), suggesting that the characteristics of this study's target group could also intensify their attachment to place.

Conservation of resources

According to Hobfoll's theory of conservation of resources, individuals can experience stress from the threat or actual loss of personal (physical or psychological), material (money and property) and social resources (2001, as cited by Bakker et al., 2013). A fourth type added by Bakker et al. (2013) are cultural resources which include skills, knowledge and beliefs that are related to specific cultural contexts. Because many of these resources cannot be transferred to the host country, refugees are likely to experience post-flight stress (Bakker et al., 2013), and are at increased risks of feeling a sense of placelessness (Buffel, 2015), isolation, alienation,

loneliness (Ekoh, et al., 2022; Kolste et al., 2021), boredom, and even depression (Sadarangani, 2015).

Translocality can serve as a means for immigrations to maintain their social and cultural resources, by sustaining connections with both their origin and host countries simultaneously (Buffel, 2015; Zhou, 2018). Connections with the country of origin can be upheld through corporeal, virtual, or imaginative mobility (Buffel, 2015). Immigrants who engage in corporeal mobility can sustain their ties with their place of origin by traveling forth, while those with limited physical mobility can maintain contact through virtual means or by reminiscing their place of origin by talking or thinking about their place of origin. Additionally, translocality can be perpetuated through the mobility of goods or practices, such as imported foods or the continuation of religious rites (ibid). These sustained connections with the country of origin can foster an emotional attachment to the new place as it provides a bridge between past and present, and enables individuals to shape a sense of belonging (Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2022).

Integration

While the concept of integration is subject to debate, it generally refers to the dynamic and multidimensional two-way socialisation process of a minority group, such as refugees, into a dominant or host society (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019; Phillimore, 2020). Integration is distinct from assimilation, because the responsibility does not solely lie with the newcomers, but entails a reciprocal effort from the host society to accommodate the newcomers' needs, and allows the newcomers to preserve a part of their cultural identity rather than completely taking it over.

Esser (2004, as cited in Bakker et al., 2014) distinguishes four dimensions of integration: *Kulturation*, or 'acculturation' (knowledge and skills related to host country), *Platzierung*, or 'placement,' (social status determined by employment, education and housing), *Interaktion*, or 'interaction' (interethnic social contacts) and *Identifikation*, or 'identification' (emotional bonding with the host country). According to Esser (ibid), identification can only be established if the other three dimensions are met. However, for older refugees, it is found to be more challenging to acquire new skills, and less likely to be employed, because of physical and mental aging processes, age-graded societal structures or beliefs about their capacities (Treas & Gubernskaya, 2016). As such, this could mean that it is less likely for them to develop an emotional bond (i.e. place attachment) with their destination city.

As integration is a two-way process, the host society plays a key role in integration as well. Refugee integration opportunities are shaped by opportunity structures: resources, arrangements and pathways that can facilitate or block integration through mechanisms such as inclusion, racism and xenophobia, policy and practice (Phillimore, 2020, p. 1952). These structures vary across different historical, political and geographical contexts (Treas &

Gubernskaya, 2016). As such, the process of (re)gaining resources through integration can be constrained not only by personal factors such as age, but also by environmental factors (Bakker et al., 2013).

Insideness

Insideness refers to the extent that people feel as if they belong in place (Buffel, 2015; Lewis & Buffel, 2020; Woolrych et al., 2020). This feeling of insideness is associated with a sense of inclusion, security, safety, and identity (Buffel, 2015). In contrast, a lack of insideness, or placelessness, is associated with exclusion, loneliness and isolation from community life (Woolrych et al., 2020). As such, the bond between an individual and a place (i.e. place attachment) is likely impacted by the perceived insideness.

Insideness is often categorized into physical, social and autobiographical dimensions (Rowles, 1986, as cited in Buffel, 2015; Woolrych et al., 2020). Physical insideness stems from an intimate familiarity and navigating competence with the physical environment, which can be the house, the neighbourhood or the city. Social insideness refers to the degree of social integration within the environment. Lastly, autobiographical insideness reflects the 'accumulation of experiences in a place that provide a sense of identity' (Buffel, 2015, p. 2).

Insideness is distinct from integration, because it focuses more on the experience of the local environment which becomes increasingly more important for aging people, rather than the integration in society as a whole. Also, insideness does not require all factors that are deemed important for integration to be met, such as employment or education. However, other aspects of integration, such as language skills or interethnic contacts, can be seen as significant variables for insideness, because they facilitate opportunities or resources on the personal and local environmental level.

Conceptual model

This study proposes a conceptual model below (figure 4) to explore the potential influence of aging and forced migration on insiderness, and its subsequent impact on place attachment. Drawing on the extant literature, the model delineates four distinct dimensions of insiderness, namely physical, social, autobiographical, and cultural. Notably, the inclusion of the cultural dimension is informed by the significant role of cultural resources in shaping individuals' attachment to place, as evidenced in prior research.

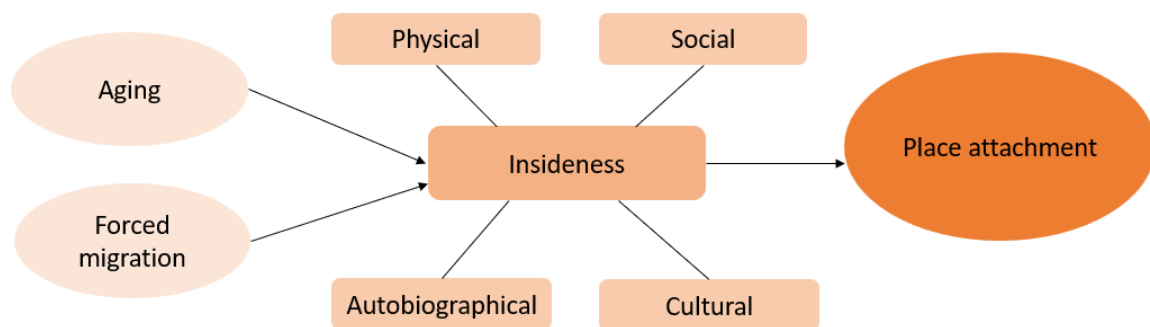


Figure 2: Conceptual model of the impact of aging and forced migration on place attachment

Expectations

Based on the background of the target group and the literature review, it is anticipated that the experience of forced migration has negatively impacted the participants' sense of insiderness. This disruptive life event has likely resulted in a significant loss of resources, a sense of discontinuity, or even a sense of displacement. However, it is expected that the participants have also managed to conserve or (re)gain social and cultural resources that help foster a sense of insiderness, for example by establishing a local social network and actively integrating in the new society. Environmental factors may either hinder or contribute to their sense of insiderness.

Moreover, the older age is expected to have an impact on perceived insiderness as well. For older people it can be harder to regain personal, material, social, and cultural resources, which hampers a sense of insiderness. Also, they are less likely to feel a sense of autobiographical insiderness, because they may not have experienced many major life events in the new place of residence, and have likely passed more milestones in their country of origin. However, since this research may include people who do not feel old yet, this can mean that they have not experienced older age-related constraints such as reduced mobility or impaired physical health.

Furthermore, the expression of place attachment is expected to vary among participants, with affect, cognition, and behaviour all playing a role. Suggested by the reviewed integration literature, it would be less likely for the target group to develop an emotional bond or a sense of

identification with the host society, if they 'score' lower on acculturation, placement and interaction. However, the insiderness literature suggests that a stronger sense of insiderness may lead to a strong attachment to place, even in absence of full integration. Nonetheless, personal and environmental constraints may also lead to feelings placelessness or a lack of sense of belonging, rather than place attachment.

Methodology

This research employs a qualitative approach to investigate insideness and place attachment. The choice of a qualitative approach is motivated by its ability to provide a deeper understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives, particularly among understudied minority groups such as older refugees, compared to quantitative methods that rely on statistical analyses (Winchester & Rofe, 2016). Semi-structured interviews were employed as the data collection method, allowing for the integration of the four dimensions of insideness and place attachment from the conceptual model, and providing flexibility to explore unexpected responses from participants (Brinkmann, 2020). Being dedicated to conducting valid research, issues of potential social desirability bias and interviewer bias which are associated with the selected data collection method of choice, are critically considered while interpreting the results and drawing conclusion

The target group for this study is defined by individuals aged 55 and above with a refugee background living in Enschede. This age threshold was chosen due to the low average age of older asylum migrants in the Netherlands and to anticipate their expected share in older age groups in the future. Enschede was selected because of the researcher's personal embeddedness in the city, and the relatively high concentration of people with a refugee background (Allecijfers.nl, 2022). The respondents were aimed to be found through purposive sampling, by contacting local NGOs, libraries, faith-based organisations and the researcher's local social network. Because of lack of responses and limited time, convenience and snowball sampling had to be resorted to. Also, a 53 year old woman was included, expecting not much difference with the experience of a 55 year old.

Saturation was reached by conducting five semi-structured interviews, with an average length of 30 minutes. With the verbal consent of the interviewees (see Appendix I and II), the interviews were held and audiotaped at the researcher's home, the participants' home, or over the phone, in English and Dutch. The interview guide integrated autobiographical, social, cultural and physical insideness in more concrete variables (see Appendix III (Dutch) and IV (English)).

Data analysis involved several rounds of coding using AtlasTI, incorporating both deductive and inductive approach. Firstly, initial or 'open' coding was carried out, which is a first cycle open-ended and descriptive approach to coding enabling the possibility to stay open for theoretical directions suggested by the data (Saldaña, 2015, p. 115). Then, these descriptive codes were grouped together under concepts deducted from the theoretical framework, or under new concepts suggested by the data. Applying these concept or 'super' codes enable the transcending of the local and particular of the study to more abstract or generalizable contexts (Saldaña, 2015,

p. 119). Finally, the super codes were grouped into the four different dimensions of insiderness deducted from the conceptual framework, which helped answering the central research question.

Ethical considerations were paramount in this study, using the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity as a guideline. As such, honesty, scrupulousness, transparency, independence, and responsibility were upheld throughout the study. Participants were provided with transparency about the research, their participations rights, confidentiality and anonymity. They were also asked for permission to record the interview and to confirm their permission verbally on record. The interviews were conducted in a comfortable and informal setting, with participants given ample time to formulate their answers and not be pressured to respond to sensitive or difficult questions. The principles of justice, beneficence, and respect were also upheld in the treatment and representation of participants.

Results

Autobiographical insideness

All interviewees left their home country later in life. Therefore, naturally they experienced many major life events in their birth country: growing up there, attaining education, working, marrying, becoming parents. As such, all interviewees continue to feel emotionally attached to their country of origin, as stated by one of the interviewees:

"I am Lebanese. I love my country, that is my motherland. I will always think about it, always, I also did that in the past. It always stays in my mind, I never forget my country, and that I say."

The interviewees missed many different aspects, such as people they know still living there, the climate, the culture, the atmosphere, or the 'old' days. At the same time, they also worry a lot about their countries that are in crisis because of war, hyperinflation and/or drought, and they wonder if they can ever return to their country, just for a visit.:

"I always watch the tv.. and on YouTube.. social media.. always about Syria, yeah. Because you know the situation there."

"The first time I set my foot in the airplane I thought... when am I going to return to Syria, to at least once see my old street, my old home, my city... when? (...) And I think when can I go to Syria safely, and visit Syria? When, I don't know."

None of the interviewees have lived in their current home for a long time (ranging between three months and six years). Additionally, the interviewees exhibited high residential mobility, having moved between cities, houses and neighbourhoods multiple times. Notwithstanding, the majority of the moves occurred within the same district in Enschede, and perhaps most importantly, within the same city. As such, significant life events occurred in these locations. Migration to and settlement in Enschede was considered a significant milestone for all the interviewees. Those who migrated at a younger age, experienced major life events in Enschede such as marriage, parenthood, and grandparenthood, while those who migrated later in life, took pride in their children's milestones, such as completing education, getting married, becoming parents, finding employment, or purchasing a house. Their lives are here now, they are not expecting or desiring to move again, and they miss the city whenever they temporarily leave. This is for example expressed by one participant:

"Whenever I leave my house or go on a holiday or go to my sister or brothers there in Germany, immediately at the same day I miss my house, I miss my neighbourhood, I miss.. Enschede. I feel it's my home now. (...) I think the apartment I'm living in now, sometimes it came to my mind that maybe my life will end here, haha. I will.. I don't like changes in fact really."

Although the residence time in Enschede varied across the interviewees, all interviewees assigned significant life chapters to both their country of origin, and their current residence.

Cultural insiderness

All interviewees continue to identify with the culture of their country of origin, and see it as a part of their identity that they cannot forget. Also, all interviewees visit either a church or a mosque weekly or every now and then, where they can connect with people from the same religion. Besides this, they also maintain contact with people of the same origin of which many were said to live in the same city or in the region.

However, many of the interviewees feel Dutch at the same time. This was most strongly expressed by the interviewees that lived in the Netherlands for a longer time through having a sense of dual identity, as exemplified by the following quote:

"I came here, and I became Dutch. I live like a brown Dutch. Haha. (...) I don't really feel like a foreigner."

This sense of belonging is also fostered by the sense of inclusion conveyed by Dutch natives:

"They make me feel that I am like them, that I live like them. That I am Dutch too. Not that I'm an immigrant."

Nevertheless, the interviewees also reveal the challenges of navigating cultural differences and the potential for exclusion or discrimination. One participant gave an example of an event in which he felt a sense of exclusion at a party with co-workers, where they forgot to prepare food or drinks for him that did not contain pork or alcohol as this is prohibited by his religion:

"...so I sat and all of them were eating, drinking... I'm only just watching"

Another example of an uncomfortable encounter because of cultural differences was given by another participant:

"When I lived here for 1-2 months, I invited my neighbour and his wife to come drink coffee and tea or to get to know each other. He said: "not necessary." (...) I was shocked. (...) The contact was warmer (in Syria) than here. (...). But here is Europe, reality is different here."

For some interviewees, cultural and a language barriers create a hesitancy in social interactions with Dutch people. For example, one interviewee said:

"I feel regret that I don't have social Dutch contact. (...) Sometimes you don't, I don't understand.. the.. their culture, their attitude, sometimes yeah this is, this makes me a little bit.. not.. hesitated.. makes me hesitate a little, okay? (...) I'm not mixing with them, I don't know why".

Social insidiness

Notably, some participants exhibited prior knowledge of the city of Enschede and chose to relocate there due to the presence of close family members and/or friends. One interviewee did not know anyone yet in Enschede before moving there, but, just like all other participants, established a local social network, including family, friends, acquaintances and casual contact with neighbours. As such, all interviewees expressed satisfaction with their weekly social contact. Additionally, it was found that while some participants anticipate receiving informal care from their family in the future, they were currently providing care to children and grandchildren. Only one interviewee mentioned having less social visits since Covid-19, out of protection for her handicapped daughter.

Furthermore, all interviewees were found to be active members of local social organisations. Many of them do or used to do volunteering work, such as at refugee organisations or at the church. However, some interviewees were unable to continue volunteering due to personal circumstances, such as physical health issues. One interviewee said that as long as he lives, he wants to continue work.

In addition to volunteering, the participants also used to or are taking various classes offered by local organisations, which provided them with opportunities to interact with diverse local individuals while acquiring valuable skills such as the Dutch language, sewing or cycling. Some interviewees also reported visiting the neighbourhood centre to engage in conversations with local residents from diverse backgrounds.

While maintaining a local social network, all interviewees also stay in frequent contact over the phone with family members and friends from their country of origin that either still live there or that have migrated elsewhere.

Physical insidiness

All interviewees experienced a significant shift in their physical environment upon migration to their current location. They reported a lack of resemblance between their current surroundings and those of their country of origin. For example, one interviewee stated:

"...here everything is different. (...) The shops are different, the streets are different. No, there is no resemblance between Syria and here."

Despite their high residential mobility, the interviewees were able to establish a sense of familiarity with their environment, particularly on the district level and with the facilities and amenities in it. The interviewees expressed satisfaction with the proximity and accessibility of the amenities and facilities they like to visit, using various modes of transport with ease.

Furthermore, all interviewees felt a sense of safety and tranquillity in their environment, with the exception of one interviewee who expressed concerns about safety at night due to a recently opened rehabilitation centre in her neighbourhood.

Moreover, all interviewees expressed a desire to stay in their current residence permanently, even though they had not lived there for an extended period. One interviewee had mild concerns about the physical accessibility of her house, while the other interviewees lived in age-friendly apartments, for example:

"This is the house for life. Because it's a senior apartment. I'm very happy with this home and I don't think I'll move again."

Discussion

This study sought to investigate the impact of perceived insideness on place attachment among older individuals (55+) with a refugee background residing in Enschede. The findings, based on five interviews, revealed diverse variables of autobiographical, cultural, social, and physical insideness, and their association with place attachment.

The interviewees whom all have lived a relatively short period in their current homes, exhibited a strong sense of autobiographical insideness. While autobiographical insideness is typically associated with a long residence time (Buffel, 2015; Lewis & Buffel, 2020; Woolrych et al., 2020), milestones are also a key factor (ibid). For the interviewees, their migration was a significant life course transition with various implications. Furthermore, their children's milestones were also regarded as significant life events, which can be explained by the 'linked lives' theory which stipulates that an individual's life course is shaped by the interdependence of human relationships (Treas & Gubernskaya). Although they maintain an emotional connection with their country of origin, they desire to stay in their current residences in Enschede to maintain a sense of continuity, because their lives are considered to be in Enschede now.

Cultural insideness was evident in the interviewees' claims of cultural integration and inclusion in the Dutch society, although they occasionally experience cultural and language barriers that hamper their sense of belonging. Moreover, their country of origin remains an important aspect of their identity, and interviewees maintain local ethnic and religious ties, which was said to be facilitated by the ethnic diversity in Enschede. This confirms the importance of local ethnic diversity as an opportunity structure not only for integration (Phillimore, 2020), but also for a sense of cultural insideness as it facilitates a sense of cultural continuity and a conservation of cultural resources related to the country of origin.

Regarding social insideness, all interviewees seemed to be socially integrated in the local environment, who were able to conserve or regain their social network. All interviewees managed to establish a new social network in the city. Notably, pre-migration social ties were conserved because of family reunification in Enschede, and continued and frequent contact over the phone with friends and family members living elsewhere. This highlights the potential impact of migration policies on insideness, in addition to the positive impact on integration (Phillimore, 2020). In contrast, refugees currently receiving a residence permit have no choice in their destination municipality (COA, n.d.), thus potentially causing psychological, social and economic harm to refugees (Phillimore, 2020), showing how timing and context matters for integration (Treas & Gubernskaya, 2016), and specifically for social insideness. Lastly, their involvement in local social organisations confirms that refugees can receive significant help from

MRCOs (2020, p. 1957), but the interviews also reveal how refugees can contribute to these organisations as well through their volunteering efforts.

Lastly, physical insideness was expressed in a dominantly positive way by all interviewees through a sense of safety, familiarity, accessibility, and residential satisfaction. This shows how the environmental context that the refugee is expected to age in matters. Referred to as constraints for regaining lost resources (Bakker et al., 2014) or as opportunity structures for integration (Phillimore, 2020), there are many external factors that may foster or hamper becoming an 'insider'. For example, previous research showed how lack of basic infrastructure and public transport poses a challenge for physical insideness for older adults across India, Brazil, and the United Kingdom (Woolrych et al., 2020), or that refugees tend to be located in more deprived areas (Phillimore, 2020, p. 1953), which hamper a sense of insideness. However, the living environment in Enschede seems to provide ease and safety, and therefore fosters a sense of physical insideness. Therefore, environmental factors may play a larger role than personal factors, which likely makes sense of physical insideness similar between refugees and natives living in the same city.

Conclusion

To conclude, the interviewees' forced migration in later life all interviewees expressed an intimate attachment to their environment. This was reflected by affect (sense of home), cognition (sense of temporal and personal continuity, and sense of identity), and behaviour (planning to stay in Enschede permanently and participating in local initiatives). This shows that, despite not all interviewees fulfilling the requirements for Esser's integration conditions of acculturation and placement (Bakker et al., 2014), because of cultural barriers, language limitations, or not being employed, the interviewees still developed an emotional bond to their local environment. Congruent with Hobfoll's theory of conservation and the cultural addition of Bakker et al. (2014), the interviewees lost personal, material, social, and cultural resources due to their flight. However, the four dimensions of perceived insideness also revealed how they managed to preserve, gain, and regain key social and cultural resources as well, which ultimately foster a sense of place attachment. Also, the interviews showed how translocal ties, as well as local ethnic and religious ties can serve as a way of conserving identity and social and cultural resources while living in an entirely dissimilar context. These translocal ties were maintained through digital and imaginative mobility, but not through physical mobility, which sets them apart from most labour migrants whose countries they left may be more accessible for a visit (Buffel, 2015).

Contributions

The in-depth interviews with five older persons with a forced migration background have provided much needed insights in the heterogeneous experiences of aging in place that have been impacted in various ways by their refugee background. In doing so, it highlighted their vulnerabilities in terms of personal and environmental constraints to place attachment, while also recognizing how they manage to conserve and regain significant resources that foster their sense of place attachment. Moreover, it showed how insiderness is an insightful concept to gain insights in one's sense of place attachment, particularly through the four different dimensions proposed in the conceptual model. Furthermore, by zooming in on a particular context, this qualitative study showed how experiences may deviate from broader contexts that may not adequately be captured by larger scale quantitative research.

Limitations

Several limitations need to be considered as well. Firstly, the study failed to include people who shied away from participating in an interview which could be due to the language barrier, resulting in a small sample size and a possibly biased representation. Therefore, it must be considered that interviewees with less personal and cultural resources, may experience a weaker sense of insiderness. Furthermore, the interviews could have been influenced by a social desirability bias; because of the researcher's Dutch background, interviewees may have felt more inclined towards positive statements about their experience in Dutch society. Also, the participants' sense of insiderness may have been influenced by many other factors than their forced migration background and older age, of which some were identified in this research as personal and environmental factors.

Recommendations

Future gerontology research and policy makers should strive for inclusiveness in the theme of aging in place. It is key for policy makers and academics to not overlook the heterogeneous backgrounds of people expected to age in place, to recognize various challenges and opportunities that arise due to age, refugee background, and the local environment. To facilitate the conservation and recovery of their resources, the destination city should be carefully considered when relocating status holders. Furthermore, the conservation of translocal ties should be regarded as a way individuals with a refugee background to deal with traumatic life disruptions, as it provides a sense of continuity and facilitates integration in the new environment.

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Appendix

I. Consent script (Dutch)

Hallo, mijn naam is Lotte Oldejans ik ben studente Sociale Geografie en Planologie aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen. Dit interview is voor mijn scriptie over ouderenmigranten met een vluchtelingenachtergrond en hun binding aan hun leefomgeving. Uw deelname is volledig vrijwillig, u mag terugtrekken uit dit onderzoek wanneer u dat wilt, zonder reden te geven, ook na afloop van het interview. U bent niet verplicht om antwoorden te geven op vragen waarop u geen antwoord wil geven. Na afloop van het interview garandeer ik u anonimiteit en vertrouwelijkheid, en zal ik de opname veilig bewaren tot het afronden van mijn studie in juli. Gaat u akkoord met de deelname en de opname van het interview?

I. Consent script (English)

My name is Lotte Oldejans, I'm a student of Human Geography and Planning at the University of Groningen, and this interview is for my thesis about place attachment of older migrants with a refugee background living in Enschede.

I'm assuring you that your participation is completely voluntary, you can withdraw from the research at any time you want, without giving any reason, even after the interview has taken place. You're not obliged to give answers to questions you don't want to answer. After the interview I guarantee you anonymity and confidentiality, and I will store the record safely, until my studies are completed in July.

Are you okay with the participation and the recording of this interview?

I. Interview guide (Dutch)

- Waar ben je **geboren**?
- Heb je nog ergens anders gewoond in Nederland voordat je naar Enschede bent verhuisd?
- Hoe lang **woon** je al in Enschede?
- Waarom ben je naar Enschede verhuisd?
- **Kende** je al mensen hier toen je hierheen verhuisde?
- **Binnen Enschede** nog verhuisd? Wijken?
- Welke **plekken** bezoek je veel in je dagelijkse leven?
 - Waar kom je elke week?
 - Parken, winkels, pleintjes, of religieuze plekken.
 - Welke plekken bezoek je voor **ontspanning**?
 - Sociaal, tot rust komen, ..
 - Zijn deze plekken **dichtbij**?
 - In je wijk, stad, buiten de stad
 - **Hoe** ga je naar deze plekken toe?
 - Lopen, fietsen, auto, openbaar vervoer
 - Ben je tevreden met de **bereikbaarheid** van de voorzieningen en faciliteiten in je omgeving?
 - En denk je dat deze plekken nog net zo bereikbaar zijn als je ouder wordt?
- Voel je je op je **gemak** en **veilig** in jouw omgeving?
 - Voel je je ook wel eens **niet** op je gemak of onveilig?
- Ken je je **buren** goed?
 - Hebben jullie veel contact met elkaar?
- Heb je veel **vrienden** en **familie** in de buurt wonen?
- Als je **hulp** nodig hebt van vrienden, familie of buren, kun je daar dan makkelijk om vragen?
- Heb je ook veel vrienden en familie die **verder weg** wonen?
 - Heb je alsnog veel contact met ze?
 - Zo ja: hoe onderhoud je het contact?
- Doe je wel eens mee aan **sociale activiteiten** in de buurt?
 - Wijkcentrum, kerk/moskee, vrijwilligerswerk, ...
- Voel je je onderdeel van de **lokale gemeenschap**? Of een andere gemeenschap?
 - Sociale/religieuze/etnische groep
- Ben je **tevreden** met je wekelijkse sociale contact?
 - Hoeveelheid en kwaliteit

- Of voel je je ook wel eens eenzaam/alleen?
- Is de **Nederlandse cultuur** anders dan de cultuur waarin je bent opgegroeid?
- Hoe vind je het om **contact** te leggen met Nederlanders?
 - Makkelijk/moeilijk
 - Culturele barrière, taal
 - Nu vergeleken met vroeger
 - Vergeleken met mensen in Enschede die niet in Nederland zijn geboren
 - Voel je je wel eens gediscrimineerd?
- Voel je je nog **verbonden** met de plek waar je vandaan komt?
 - Op welke manier? Hoe?
 - Denk je er nog veel aan, houd je het nieuws in de gaten, praat je er veel over..
 - Mis je [land van herkomst]?
 - Wat mis je het meest?
 - Ken je veel andere [mensen met dezelfde afkomst]?
 - Zijn er elementen in je omgeving die je doen denken aan [land van herkomst]?
 - Is het een belangrijk onderdeel van je identiteit?
- Als je een **boek** zou schrijven over jouw leven in tien hoofdstukken, hoeveel hoofdstukken zouden dan gaan over jouw leven sinds je hier woont?
- Denk je dat je in de **toekomst** nog zou verhuizen?
- Denk je dat jouw **omgeving geschikt** is voor jou om ouder in te worden?
- Denk je dat **ouder worden** anders is in Nederland dan in jouw thuisland?
 - Verzorgingstehuizen, familie, gezondheidszorg, onafhankelijkheid
- Wat is belangrijk voor jou, om '**optimaal**' ouder te worden?
 - Welke dingen in je omgeving **helpen** jou om gelukkig en gezond ouder te worden?
 - Zijn er ook **obstakels** die je verwacht, als je ouder wordt?

II. Interview guide (English)

- Where were you **born**?
- How **long** have you lived in the **Netherlands**?
- Have you **lived anywhere else** in the Netherlands before you moved to Enschede?
- **Why** did you decide to move to **Enschede**?
- Did you already **know people** here before you moved here?
- Have you **moved within Enschede**? Neighbourhoods?
- **How long** have you lived in the place you're living now?
- Which places do you **regularly visit** in the week?

- Do you visit places just for **relaxation**? Like a park for example?
- Are these places **close** to where you live?
- How do you go to these places? (**transport**)
- Are you satisfied with the **accessibility**?
- Do you feel **safe** and **comfortable** in your environment?
 - o Do you ever feel unsafe or uncomfortable?
- Do you know your **neighbours** well? Do you have contact?
- Do you have **family and friends** living **nearby**?
- Do you have friends and family living **further away**?
 - o (How) do you stay in contact with them?
- Do you ever participate in **social activities**?
- Or **religious** activities?
- Are you **satisfied** with your **weekly social contact**?
- Do you think the **Dutch culture** is different than the culture you grew up in?
 - o Can you give an **example**?
- How do you find it to get into **contact** with Dutch people?
 - o Do you ever feel a **cultural barrier**?
 - o has it **changed**?
 - o **Discrimination**?
- Do you still feel **connected** to the place you are from?
 - o In what way? How
 - o Do you think a lot about your country, do you watch the news, talk about it?
- Do you **miss** Syria?
 - o What do you miss the most?
 - o Do you know many **other Syrians** in Enschede
 - o Are there any **elements** you can see in your environment that remind you of Syria? Or is it completely **different**?
 - o Would you like to take something from Syria and place it here?
- Do you **feel at home** in Enschede? Do you feel like an 'Enschedeër'?
- if you would write a **book** about your life until now in ten chapters, how many chapters would you dedicate to your life in the Netherlands?
- Do you see yourself **move out** of your current home in the future?
- Do you expect any challenges in or around your current home, if you would get older?
- Do you think your home and your environment are suitable for older people?
- Do you think getting older is different in Syria compared to in the Netherlands?
 - o If you think about nursery homes, health care or receiving care from children

- What is the most important thing for you when you get older? What will help you become older in a happy and healthy way?

III. Participants' characteristics

Participant	Origin	Age	Gender	Years in NL
1	Lebanon	53	Female	32
2	Yemen/Somalia	55	Female	29
3	Syria	57	Male	10
4	Syria	62	Male	10
5	Syria	69	Male	10

IV. Code book

For better readability, the code book can be opened by clicking on the following link that directs you to the Excel file.

[code book version 2.xlsx](#)