

Fact Sheet

Together
is better!

Dreamlike
Neighbourhood

older people
connect in their
community



Introduction

Shifting the Perspective

“ There, by the side of the road, in the ninety-five degrees afternoon, he saw a woman in her seventies, struggling under the burden of two shopping bags. He tried to relate her plight to his own work as an epidemiologist. ‘If that poor woman had collapsed from heat stroke, we docs would have written the cause of death as heat stroke and not lack of trees and public transportation, poor urban form, and heat-island effects. If she had been killed by a truck going by the cause of death would have been ‘motor vehicle trauma’, and not lack of sidewalks and transit, poor urban planning and failed political leadership. ”

— Richard Jackson in Jeff Speck’s book *Walkable City*¹

We need neighbourhoods that make visible and celebrate – not marginalise – their inhabitants. Neighbourhoods that invite us to connect with each other and to contribute meaningfully. Neighbourhoods that support and enable us – physically and socially – to live and age well and in place.

Our project is dedicated to the wishes and dreams of older people, to understand how they see their lives, their relationships and networks and the places they live in. We support them to come together in neighbourhood groups, to empower and support each other, to find out about their dreams, bring in their talents and to actively shape and co-create their neighbourhoods.

¹ <https://theurbantechnologist.com/2014/07/01/12-simple-technologies-for-cities-that-are-smart-open-and-fair/>
(April 2021)

Defining Dreamlike Neighbourhoods

Context

“For me, a wonderful paradox is that a ‘dreamlike neighbourhood’ would be vibrantly awake – on-fire with creativity and love. Although ephemeral and somewhat magical, the neighbourhood would be really grounded, fused and alive across the worlds of matter, nature and consciousness.”

— Rodd Bond, AGE Platform Europe

Why do we think that older men and women should come together, empower and support each other and co-create their neighbourhoods together?

a) We live longer.

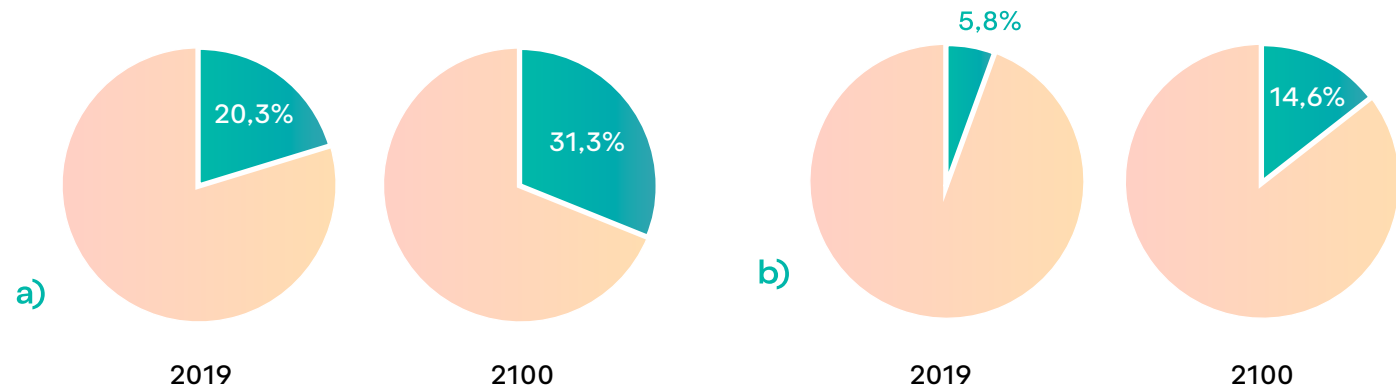
On 1 January 2019, one out of five persons in the European Union was aged 65 or over.² By 2100, almost one-third of Europeans will be 65 or over.

b) The older population is ageing, too.

The group of the “very old” (80 years and older) is growing faster than any other age segment. Between 2019 and 2100, the share of those aged 80 or above, will increase from 5.8 to 14.6 %.³

2 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Population_structure_and_ageing#The_share_of_elderly_people_continues_to_increase

3 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Population_structure_and_ageing#The_share_of_elderly_people_continues_to_increase



Many of us want to “age in place”.

“Ageing in place“, the concept of living in our homes and communities – as independently as possible – rather than in residential care, avoids costs and make people happier.⁴ Ageing in place is not only favoured by policymakers, but also by many older people themselves as it is linked to

- ☁ **sense of attachment, continuity and social connection** and a
- ☁ **sense of security and familiarity** – with home as a refuge and community as a resource.⁵

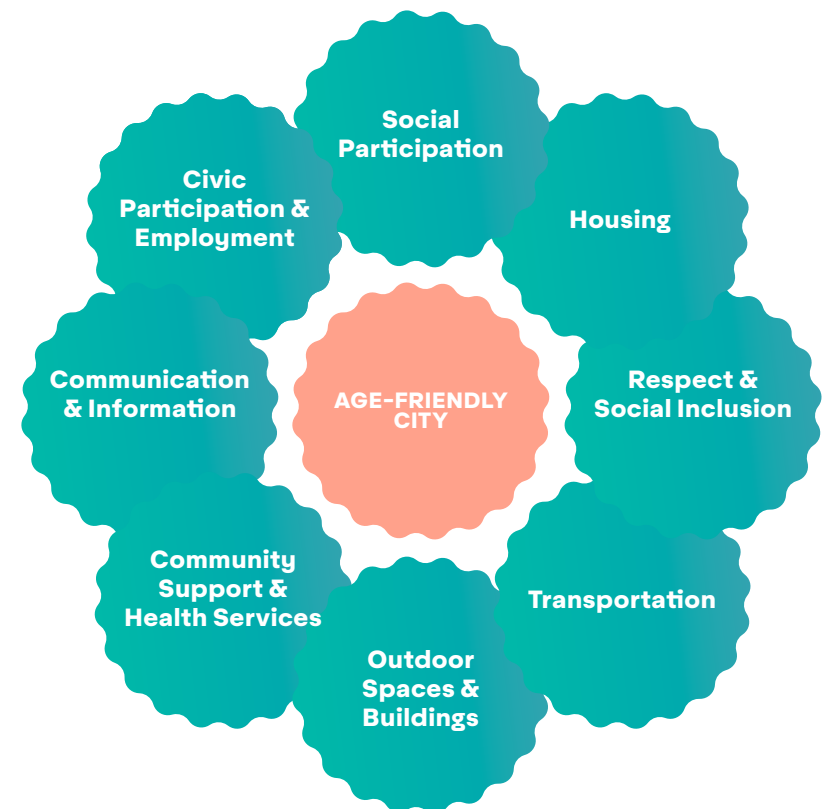
4 Living longer and having a happier life: expected publication of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam: <https://www.zorgvisie.nl/blog/zo-leven-thuiswonende-ouderen-langer-gelukkiger-en-tegen-minder-kosten/> (Dutch only)

5 Janine L. Wiles et al.: The Meaning of “Aging in Place” to Older People, in: *The Gerontologist*, Vol. 52, Issue 3, June 2012, 357–366.

6 World Health Organization: Global Age Friendly Cities: A Guide, Geneva 2007, 9.

What do we need to age in place?

Ageing in place requires places that are ready for the needs of an ageing population. The World Health Organization has suggested a model of age-friendly cities that consists of eight areas:⁶



Attachment and social connection are a relevant resource.

Attachment and social connections in the neighbourhood that are fostered and nourished are a valuable resource in old age: They help to improve the quality of life⁷ of older people, and help them to stay healthy⁸, fight loneliness and live longer.⁹

“Older people need meaningful encounters, interaction with others and reciprocity. They are valuable people who can make a valuable contribution. They can also do something.”

— Mounaim Abdelkhalki, manager housing corporation HaagWonen, NL

Stronger together.

In the *Dreamlike Neighbourhood* project, we support older people to come together, and to empower and support each other. We help them to find and speak out about their aspirations and dreams and to actively shape and co-create their environments.

We asked older people, stakeholders and experts about “dream neighbourhoods”. This is a collection of their answers:



7 Gert Lang et al.: Determinanten der Lebensqualität älterer Frauen: zum Stellenwert der wahrgenommenen Sicherheit und Eingebundenheit, in: SWS-Rundschau, 53, 2013. (German only)

8 See for example: Oliver Hämmig: Soziale Beziehungen und Gesundheit im Kanton Zürich, in: Gesundheitsberichterstattung (Institut für Epidemiologie, Biostatistik und Prävention der Universität Zürich), 2016. (German only)

9 Julianne Holt-Lunstad et al.: Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review, in: PLoS Medicine 7/7, 1–20. (German only)

Project

The Dreamlike Neighbourhoods Approach

“I personally believe that a community life is a basic pillar of democracy. I see the future in small community centres. In the intergenerational ones.”

— Anna H., former nurse, active member of the community centre Neseďím sousedím, CZ

Neighbourhood groups

In the *Dreamlike Neighbourhood* project, we facilitate and support neighbourhood groups for and with older and very old people. In these groups, older and very old people meet regularly and support each other in (re-)detecting and bringing in their talents and dreams. They enable and empower each other to face the challenges of everyday life and to actively contribute to and change their communities.

We either support older people to establish new groups or help existing groups to work on their dream neighbourhoods and approach new target groups. We will nudge exchange and joint activities but the groups themselves will define their purpose, develop activities and ways to support each other.

Helpful tools

Our work for and with the groups will be based on the *Dreamlike Neighbourhood Concept and Curriculum*. This framework encourages group participants in developing and expressing their perspectives of supportive neighbourhoods. It provides creative methods and formats that promote interactions, reflection and support.

In our *Dreamlike Neighbourhood Handbook and the Online Resource Kit*, we provide an insight into our project, narrate the experiences we made and provide inspirational examples, practical tools and other helpful resources to build and run *Dreamlike Neighbourhood* groups.

“A dream neighbourhood makes people come out of their isolation, makes them visible. It creates community by taking account of all times: past, present and future times.”

— Meta Kutin, Architect, SLO

Visibility and awareness

With our project, we want to raise awareness on the relevance of supporting communities and ageing well in place. Our tools and activities

- ☁ **inform about the issue,**
- ☁ **give visibility to exciting initiatives and resources and**
- ☁ **inspire and support older people, communities and relevant stakeholders.**

Target groups

With our activities and products, we want to reach out to **older people interested in making meaningful connections and building supportive networks** with other people in their neighbourhood. We think that our project can help to find new and individual ways of expressing views and ideas and to take part in the creation of supporting neighbourhoods. Furthermore, we address **citizens' initiatives, seniors' organisations and stakeholders at various levels** that are interested in innovative approaches regarding our communities.

Find news and
interesting
resources:

www.dreamlike-neighbourhood.eu



Inspirations Learning from Others

We are convinced that learning from each other is not only an important quality of supportive neighbourhood groups. It is also something we want to promote in our project as a whole. To pass on interesting ideas and to inspire, we have collected very different projects and initiatives in the field of supporting neighbourhoods – from high-level strategies to small local initiatives:

“The idea of a supporting neighbourhood has sometimes been lost over the years. We show what resources and potential the neighbourhood has.”

— Senada Bilalic, Caritas of the Archdiocese of Vienna, district work, coordinator of the project Healthy Neighbourhood: Stories and Talents of Diversity, AT

🌐 Italy

The idea of “Social Street” was started by a resident of Via Fondazza, Bologna. He and his family created a Facebook Group for the people living in this street and distributed printed leaflets inviting them to join the group. Two weeks after, 200 people met at an event. The aim of Social Street is to encourage people to get to know each other, establish bonds and carry out collective projects. Today, there are hundreds of Social Streets in various countries.

— www.socialstreet.it



🌐 Austria

The project promotes social support and solidarity among the residents of the 8th district of Vienna. Special emphasis is put on the support of older people as well as residents with dementia and their carers to combat social isolation and loneliness and create a lively caring community. Small projects, activities and meetings bring people living and working in the area together and invite them to contribute new ideas.

— www.achtsamer.at
(German only)

Mindful 8th
Establishing
a Caring
Community in the
8th district
of Vienna



Healthy
Neighbourhood:
Stories and
Talents of
Diversity

🌐 Austria

This project supports the development of strong and lively bonds in two different neighbourhoods by making the talents and stories of their residents visible. Community activities (e. g. storytelling cafés, walks, creative groups) encourage older people to participate and discover hidden resources, skills and knowledge in their neighbourhood. Covid-19 has influenced but not stopped the project, which has developed a range of creative formats to deal with physical distancing.

— www.gesunde-nachbarschaft.at
(German only)

Community centre Kontakt

🌐 Czech Republic

The centre is situated in Liberec. It runs several activities for seniors and rents out the community centre spaces to different senior clubs for free, so they have a place to meet. It organises various workshops. The senior board has 15 members and works as a permanent advisory authority to the community centre director. Seniors bring in their perspectives on life in the city.

— www.ksk-liberec.cz

Břevnovská spojka

🌐 Czech Republic

The project aims to strengthen neighbourhood relations in Břevnov (district of Prague). Various discussions e. g. neighbourhood groups, quality of life in the neighbourhood, involvement in decision-making processes, were initiated. The project is supported by the multi-generational community centre Nesedimsousedim.cz. This centre was initiated by neighbours themselves in order to have their own space.

— www.brevnovskaspojka.cz



🌐 The Netherlands

The Moerwijk Cooperative functions as a residents' organisation of and for the neighbourhood of Moerwijk in the Hague. It facilitates the organisation of fun activities and advocacy there. Every season there are events where local residents can meet each other. This has led to new contacts and a closer neighbourhood, where the neighbours know how to find each other. The residents' organisation is in contact with various organisations in and around Moerwijk, Escamp district and with the municipality of The Hague.

— www.moerwijkcooperatie.nl/projecten-moerwijk

Moerwijk
Cooperative

🌐 The Netherlands

In several Dutch cities, social workers of DOCK support ageing in place of older adults (60+). They cooperate with local organisations to create a strong network of citizens in the neighbourhoods. Older adults are introduced and connected to each other, trainings are provided for volunteers, meeting places are facilitated, joint activities are fostered and information is provided to citizens regarding local activities and choices people can make.

— www.dock.nl/aanbod/samen

Samen in
de stad

🌐 Slovenia

The initiator of “Na ploščad”, Damjana Zaviršek, felt she could contribute to the improvement of living in Ruski car, a housing estate located at the edge of Ljubljana. Ruski car used to be prominent but today, major restructuring is necessary. While repairing the esplanade in the estate, ideas for better neighbourhoods are being searched for.

Na ploščad

Portraits Neighbours

Ingrid M. (78 years)

“For me, the neighbourhood is being close, active neighbourhood is love for other humans. It is connected to kindness and respect for others. Neighbourhood means offering my skills when needed and accepting support when I am in need. Perhaps my neighbour needs help with repairing her socks – I know how to do it – or she asks me to go shopping for her. We talk, drink tea together for hours talking about problems. But then I try to lighten up everything with a little bit of esprit and love. That is also neighbourhood, I think.”

After her retirement, **Ingrid M.** helped children with their homework. Now she is active in one of the Viennese seniors' clubs. She has just become a member of the club's seniors' council and organises excursions, readings and concert attendances. She also tries to introduce intergenerational activities to the club.



Henny W. (74 years)

Henny W. is 74 years old and is a retired business-woman. Now she is active as a board member of the Older People's Council of The Hague. This platform of interest groups for older people gives advice to the municipality. Henny W. dreams of a lively neighbourhood with old and young people. She loves it when older people are addressed directly, she wants people to speak with older people, not about them. But the question is: How? It is sometimes complicated to involve older people, to make them want to do something. Perhaps they do not feel like it or they do not think they can do it.



She thinks people should prepare themselves for the time when they are no longer working. Some might think “We are going to travel, do odd jobs, choir etc.” but in the end, they do not act at all after retirement. They are not sufficiently prepared for retirement and become inactive or isolate themselves from society.

Henny W. joined an ukulele club in Scheveningen a few years ago and she loves it: “It is often in small activities where you feel at home.”

Jirka G. (84 years)

“I want to be helpful to others whenever it is possible, but also to myself. I want to live to the fullest and not be stunted.”



Jirka G. (84) worked his whole life in the foreign service. Now retired, he supports the community in many ways, but one of his favourite activities is accordion music. He plays for children at school, for other seniors in the neighbourhood, at social care facilities and day-care centres. He knows how to involve the audience, no matter the age, and spreads positive energy. Last year he was honoured as “Volunteer of the year” in Prague 3 district.

Alojz T. (78 years)

Alojz T. is a retired agricultural engineer and is particularly interested in healthy food production and consumption. Alojz who has been a student of the Slovenian Third Age University for over ten years studying English and computer science is known for his capacity to listen attentively and think creatively.

“I do not like being in the sunlight, but let me say: If I were asked to dream about a neighbourhood I would choose ours though it is on the outskirts of the city. I am used to it and I am on friendly terms with my neighbours. Also our house is small, renovated, functional, aesthetic, so we like it. Speaking in a more abstract way, I think that my dream neighbourhood would be in the centre of the town, with public

buildings around, health, cultural, educational, catering, transport and other services nearby. I think it should be animated to give me the feeling that I am part of community life even when I am at home. Older people need to move closer to the centre of the town. Also a public park would be

nice, with nature, woods and a pond in the middle of the town. One can do whatever one wishes in a public park today: talk, sing, listen, observe, rest – not only on benches – now that the sign Keep of the grass is not there anymore. There are such parks in Ljubljana and we love them.”



Anna H. (65 years)

“I think a community is the most natural grouping after family. It brings mutual support, certainty, usefulness, orientation in a confusing world and that feeling that you belong somewhere.”



Anna H. (65) is a member of several communities. She took part in the creation of a community centre in her neighbourhood and supports its activities. She also is a member of a group in the local parish that supports the inclusion of Syrian refugee families. She founded a community garden that became a place for the neighbourhood.



Imprint

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Austria (Coordination)

queraum. cultural and social research

www.queraum.org

Anita Rappauer & Susanne Dobner

rappauer@queraum.org, dobner@queraum.org

Belgium

AGE Platform Europe

www.age-platform.eu

Ilenia Gheno

ilenia.gheno@age-platform.eu

Czech Republic

Letokruh, z.ú.

www.letokruh.eu

Vlad'ka Dvořáková

vladka@letokruh.eu

Slovenia

Slovenian Third Age University

www.utzo.si

Dušana Findeisen, Urška Majaron

dusanafindeisen1@gmail.com, info@univerzatri.si

The Netherlands

AFedemy, Academy on age-friendly environments in Europe

www.afedemy.eu

Willeke van Staalduinen

willeke@afedemy.eu



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