

## Spatial stories: lived mobilities of elderly women



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## Summary

Since the early 1990s, older age has taken an important place in public discourse. Traditional hegemonic images of older age as a process of decline has been supplemented with those of colourful active ageing. The ageing of Western countries' population will dramatically increase the number for senior citizens in the coming decades. The individual ageing processes does not follow a predetermined pattern. However, literature on older people's experience of ageing has tended to see it through a health perspective only interested in coping strategies following a loss of mobility or the declining body. Literature on ageing and place has treated different entities of space as different from each other. This thesis started with pointing to two gaps in the existing literature on the spatial dimension of elderly women's construction of age: 1) the able-bodied older woman's experience of lived mobility has been overlooked and 2) space has either been treated as static or as discrete spaces next to each other. Concerning the first criticism, the literature, when addressing the spatial component of age, has focused either on the spatial distribution of elderly or the coping strategies in the face of declining mobility and a shrinking of potential action space. The health perspective has dominated the research and seen elderly bodies through the lens of the bio-medical model of ageing. Regarding the second criticism, space has been considered either as a container in which things happen or as discrete spaces next to each other. The fluid nature of space needs to be addressed.

The aim of the thesis has been to explore the mutual embeddedness of mobility and identity. This has been by addressing elderly women's lived mobilities through the construction and negotiation of age identities. It was explored through three research questions:

1. How do elderly women's concepts of age influence identity construction?
2. How do elderly women negotiate their age identities?
3. How do elderly women select and negotiate social, spatial and temporal situations?

The design of the research has been a mix of in-depth interviews, go-alongs and ethnographic data (observations and photographs) collected by the researcher. The qualitative approach was chosen due to the emphasis on the elderly women's experiences. In total six elderly women living in Edinburgh were interviewed. From these, three took part in one go-along each. The data collected were rich in detail on how the elderly women construct and negotiate their aged identities. Additionally, the interviews also yielded detailed information about the women's emotional reaction to different situations and people. As the body-centric phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty forms the epistemological basis for the current research, the purpose of the interview was to gather detailed information about the women's experience of situations and construction of identity. The way they formulated themselves was also considered important. The transcribed interviews were analysed with MAXQDA in an iterative way where the code structure emerged as the coding went on.

The two first research questions were addressed in the first analysis chapter. Firstly, the elderly women's formation of identity were found to be in an interplay between internal and external factors. Not feeling old were found to be linked with a good overall health level, a

positive mindset and having an active life with different activities on the schedule for every week. Concerning the exterior, the women compared themselves to others, deciding whether they were similar or different. When comparing themselves to their peers, a positive comparison for them would strengthen their identity as being young for their age. In the interplay between the interior and the exterior, the women gave primacy to their self-identity (internal) over the body (external). They were aware of their age and how they looked, but claimed that their personal age, felt age, was different from their chronological age. A feeling of oldness and sorrow would appear when they encountered physical limits or a decline in physical ability. But the internal and the external were also positively reinforced through that by not feeling old, the women have more energy and can do more, which reinforce their not feeling old. Secondly, the women negotiated their age identities by manipulating the body through exercise, diet and the use of non-human agents, such as clothes and make-up. The negotiation is a process of double mirroring where the women are confronted with their own reflection in an actual, physical mirror and reminded of their age, and they are also mirroring themselves through other people's perception and behaviour towards them. The aim of negotiating the body was found to be a means for the women to match up others' perception of them with how they viewed themselves. This chapter showed that identity is fluid and relational.

The third research question was addressed in the second analysis chapter. Elderly women don't have a passive interaction with their environment. The attributes of social, spatial and temporal situations shape the elderly women's experience of and relation to spaces and places. Spatial attributes means the materiality of a situation, which include the topography of a place and the buildings present. The constellation of these factors had different connotation for the women. Familiarity and a sense of belonging to a place lead to spatial confidence, while emotions of fear and anxiety lead to spatial avoidance. Temporality was mainly associated with the presence of darkness which elicited emotions of apprehension and anxiety due to the cultural semantics of it. Darkness could be negotiated by the use of public transport and staying in crowded areas. The social dimension included the women comparing themselves to the people present in the space, which elicited an emotion or a connotation (based in biography), from which a choice about whether to engage was made. Different dimensions can reinforce each other. The materiality of a place is perceived as either good or bad due to the reputation of that place and her perception of the people present. Path choices were both decided beforehand (places they avoid) or negotiated while on the move (in encountering). This chapter showed how identities are contextual and continually renegotiated. Mobility performance is the result of this negotiation becoming visible through path and transport mode choices.

Research is needed to explore the situatedness of masculinities in older age. These are intricately linked to femininities and the research is needed in order to compare the ageing experience for men and women. The insights from this thesis can be used in public transport and city planning. With the increasing numbers of senior citizens in the years to come, planning is a means to promote participation in public life for all.

## Acknowledgements

Of the theses I've read, most people write about how much they loved the process of writing their thesis and being able to really deepen their knowledge of subject. And I did too...sometimes. Most of the time I dreaded working on it because it had turned into an enormous mountain with an unreachable summit, which never came closer no matter how much literature I read and how many words I wrote. In this process, my supervisor Martin Dijst always managed to relight my enthusiasm and excitement about the project. For that, he deserves a warm thank you. But I hold the greatest gratitude to him for putting up with me through a process of struggle, delays and self-deprecation. His belief that I could do it, his constructive comments and calm, but strict demeanor helped me greatly even though he was unavailable for the final stages of the process. I express my great appreciation to Bas Spierings who stepped in at the final approach toward the finish line with a pair of fresh eyes and agreed to evaluate my work even though he already had many other people's work to evaluate as well. I also wish to thank Dick Ettema for agreeing to be the second reader of this thesis on quite short notice.

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This process has taken me to different places and cities, meeting many people and gaining a lot of knowledge. As I've explored the embodied lives and lived mobility of older women, I've become more aware of my own perceptions and negotiations. Funnily enough, I now see old ladies everywhere and I'm grateful for their presence in urban space while feeling quite prepared myself.

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Theoretical framework.....	7
2.1 Time geography.....	7
2.1.1 Criticism of time geography.....	8
2.1.2 Seeing the world through the eyes of mobility.....	11
2.1.3 Power and ageism.....	13
2.1.4 Example of social construction: the multiple meanings of a road sign .....	14
2.2 Identity formation.....	15
2.2.1 Age identity.....	16
2.3 Phenomenology of perception.....	17
2.4 Conclusion: Lived mobilities and situated experience.....	18
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	20
3.1 Respondent recruitment .....	20
3.2 Overview over respondent attributes.....	23
3.2.1 Overview over respondents' activity patterns.....	23
3.3 Data collection.....	25
3.3.1 Qualitative interview.....	25
3.3.2 Go-along.....	26
3.3.3 Observations and photographic material.....	27
3.4 Analysis.....	27
Chapter 4: Analysis – Identity .....	29
4.1 'Age ain't nothing but a number': being old vs. feeling /looking old.....	29
4.1.1 Interior: 'I don't feel old' (all women).....	29
4.1.2 Exterior: 'I think I look pretty good for my age' (Helen, age 70).....	35
4.1.3 Interior and exterior: interplay or dichotomy?.....	37
4.2 Negotiating the perception of old age.....	39
4.2.1 Exercise & diet.....	39
4.2.2 Non-human agents .....	40
4.3 Being caught up by age: 'Gosh, I must look old to them' (Alice, age 78).....	45
4.4 Discussion.....	47
Chapter 5: Analysis – Selecting and negotiating spaces.....	49
5.1 Personal attributes influencing mobility performance.....	49
5.1.1 Being a woman.....	49
5.1.2 Being older.....	50
5.2 Spatial & temporal dimensions.....	51
5.2.1 Known spaces vs. unknown spaces.....	53
5.2.2 Time of day – decides where, how to go and with whom.....	55
5.3 Social dimension: 'I wouldn't want to sort of look totally out of place' (Helen, age 70).....	58
5.3.1 Crowds.....	59
5.3.2 Presumed peers.....	62
5.3.3 Younger people.....	64
5.3.4 Men.....	68

5.3.5 Class and education.....	70
5.4 Several dimensions.....	71
5.5 Discussion.....	72
Chapter 6: Conclusions.....	74
6.1 Synthesis and contributions.....	75
6.2 Reflections on research and implications for further study.....	76
6.2.1 Academic implications.....	77
6.2.2 Societal implications.....	78
Reference list.....	80
Appendix 1: Code tree.....	87
Appendix 2: Interview guide.....	88

## List of tables and figures

### Tables

Table 3.1: Summary of respondent attributes

### Figures

Figure 1.1: Conceptual model

Figure 2.1: Time-space paths and bundles

Figure 2.2: Expanded conceptual model

### Pictures

Picture 2.1: Mind the elderly road sign

Picture 4.1: Reserved seats for elderly and disabled on Edinburgh buses

Picture 5.1: Water of Leith walkway, detail

Picture 5.2: Junction Bridge

Picture 5.3: Crowds on Princes Street seen from Carlton Hill

Picture 5.4: Princes Street road works

Picture 5.5: Princes Street road works, street level

Picture 5.6: Princes Street road works, street level

Picture 5.7: Older women and younger men with hoodies

Picture 5.8: Waiting for the bus while standing in shed

## Chapter 1: Introduction

How do you imagine your life will look like when you grow old? How do you think you'll react to growing older? The population of Western European countries is getting older by the decade, owing to the current decline in fertility and increased life expectancy compared to earlier times (United Nations, 2010). The younger generations currently in the work force are being outnumbered by those known as the baby boomers, the large cohorts born after World War 2, who are due to retire within the next 10 years<sup>1</sup>. Looking at Europe as a whole, in 2030 the fraction of the population over 60 years of age will be 30,8%. In 2050 the fraction will be 38,8%, which is a strong increase in only 20 years<sup>2</sup> (United Nations, 2008). Since the early 1990s there has been much focus on this impending wave of elderly in our societies, both for the good and for the bad. The United Nations (UN) declared 1999 to be the 'International Year of Older Persons'. They established the United Nations Programme on Ageing, whose mission is to facilitate and promote a society for all ages<sup>3</sup>. In addition, The World Health Organization (WHO) has many programmes concerning ageing and the elderly, for example the WHO Age-Friendly Environments Programme, which promotes inclusive and accessible urban environments facilitating active ageing<sup>4</sup>.

Even though we all have in common that we'll grow older, the process itself is a highly individual and relational one. How we understand and interpret this process depends on where we are, what we do and how we do it. It also depends on other people and social networks (Del Casino, 2009). According to critical gerontological research, ageing should be conceptualised as a process complicated by the everyday social and spatial practises of categories, such as 'old age' and 'elderly' (Del Casino, 2009; Katz, 2003). But what does 'old' and 'elderly' mean? In the Western world there are multiple 'images of ageing' that put forth public representations of older people (Featherstone & Hepworth, 2005). The bio-medical model of ageing, which focuses on the biological aspects of the ageing process, has had a strong societal position in the Western world. By pathologising older age, these images of decline and frailty have, and still do, reinforce ageist social prejudices (Powell & Longino, 2001). Scholars theorise that old age has been devalued because retirement leads to a reduced status in a production oriented society (Milligan, Bingley & Gatrell, 2005). Others have pointed out the contemporary society's obsession with youthfulness, portraying older bodies as being 'over the hill', 'past the expiration date' and 'not valuable' (Featherstone & Hepworth, 2005). The ageist perspective is derogative because it does not allow for individual experiences of ageing. Ageing cannot be reduced to processes of physical decline as if these happened in a bodily vacuum sealed off from the social contexts in which people live (Milligan, Bingley & Gatrell, 2005).

With increasing life expectancy rates and retirement no longer being the beginning of the end, another image of ageing has emerged. 'The Third Age' aims to name the time after retirement

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<sup>1</sup> The actual time span is dependent on the national retirement ages of European countries.

<sup>2</sup> Estimates are based on a low expected fertility rate.

<sup>3</sup> UN Programme on Ageing: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/society.html> Retrieved: 22.01.09

<sup>4</sup> WHO Age-Friendly Environments Programme: [http://www.who.int/ageing/age\\_friendly\\_cities/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/ageing/age_friendly_cities/en/index.html) Retrieved: 26.10.10

when seniors can live their lives as they please and decide for themselves what is meaningful apart from work and raising children (Weiss & Bass, 2002). Seniors can expect to live in good health for at least a decade after retirement (Johnson, 1998), and the thesis of active ageing puts forth identities built on consumption. A senior has the freedom, time and money to focus on self-development, which has given life to the 'grey economy' (Biggs, 2003). Consequently, images of a monochrome old age of dependency and frailty are complemented by those of opportunities for colourful and joyful active ageing.

However, these two images simply categorise the elderly either in a negative or a positive way. Such a dualism doesn't allow for the diversity and fluidity in elderly identities. Contrary to chronological age, 'subjective age' is a multidimensional concept that indicates how old a person feels and which age group they identify themselves with (Kleinspehn-Ammerlahn et al. 2008). There are many factors influencing a person's subjective age, but scholars seem to agree that health variables explain the most (see Kleinspehn-Ammerlahn et al. 2008 for a review). Age is a key variable to our understanding of life and it should be acknowledged in the same way that class and gender are in most social analyses. Furthermore, as has been mentioned above, age is a socially constructed variable and our understanding and experience of it is as important as the variable itself.

Concepts of age also have important spatial ramifications (Harper & Laws, 1995). Early research focused on the residential location and spatial distribution of the elderly (Golant, 1972; 1984; see Andrews & Phillips, 2005 for a review of geographical gerontology). These forged the way for geographical gerontology as a separate discipline. However, they drew on insights from spatial science and favoured quantitative methods. Mobility was seen as secondary to the locations. Another early contribution comes from humanistic geographers. Rowles (1978) was one of the first to use qualitative research methods in building a framework for older persons' environmental experience. While previous studies had a more structural focus, Rowles studied the older persons themselves. He claimed that with older age comes a shrinking of the individual's physical action space, which lead him to ask whether older people are prisoners of space. Feminist and postmodern scholars have critiqued both spatial scientists and humanistic geographers for not conceptualising and contextualising ageing and space. They claim, respectively, that people have been reduced to the movement of their bodies and space has been treated as a container in which things happen. Rather, space itself is an important factor in the identification of oneself or others as old (Hardill, 2009). Laws (1994) contends that the experience of being old varies according to one's environment. It actively affects ageing because age relations are constituted in, mediated by and constrained by space.

Literature on ageing and place/space has treated different entities of space as separate from each other. Laws (1994; 1997a) claimed that old age is being peripheralised through the formation of and proliferation of age-segregated environments, such as retirement communities, retirement homes and nursing homes. Literature on sense of place and ageing have focused on the home and its role in older age as, on one hand, a site of independence and resistance, and on the other hand, a place that changes identity owing to the introduction of home-based care (Kearns & Andrews, 2005; Mowl, Pain & Talbot, 2000). A lot of the research on ageing and place has a health focus (see Andrews et al. 2007 for a review on health in geographical gerontology). This health geography tends to focus on the frail and declining body and explore which consequences this has for the individual. Also, research on the meaning and experience of ageing has tended to focus on

this in relation to places most specific for older age: retirement homes, nursing care facilities and senior centres. The bio-medical model of ageing has therefore had a prominent position in how the literature has viewed the elderly.

Previous studies still leave two things that need to be addressed; the able-bodied elderly's experience, and the continuity and relativity of space in the ageing experience. First, when always equating old age with declining health and focusing on various coping strategies, important issues are bypassed. It is vital to understand bodily experience in order to understand people's relationships with physical and social environments (Longhurst, 1997). When bodily experience only becomes interesting after the body has mechanically begun to break down, the result is a static understanding of the ageing experience. Likewise, on the other side of the spectrum, 'active ageing' sees older bodies as mobile, fit and active, which is just another static image. Looking at the world of the elderly through either of these windows masks the important process of embodiment. Our bodily subjectivity structures our experience of the world. Embodiment is a multisensuous way of perceiving the world (Davidson & Milligan, 2004). We, as 'body-subjects' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), are embedded in the social world and our identity is mediated through the process of embodiment (Hockey & James, 2003). Our identity is always becoming and never final or settled. Identity is a process between social space, human agency and the body. The result is an internal-external dialectic where our personal identity is formed in the crossing between our sense of self, other's perception of us (for example ageist prejudices) and how we think others perceive us (Jenkins, 2004). This process is then also relative to time-space, which is meaningful, people in those time-spaces and our emotions connected to different time-spaces. This is the process of our whole 'being-in-the-world' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). For the elderly this means that the concept of the body transcends static images. It leaves room for different types of bodies because they are understood differently relative to space and its different dimensions (i.e. geographical, temporal and social). Also, elderly people, as competent, creative actors, are able to negotiate their identity through manipulation of the body (i.e. ways of thinking (emotions), exercise, clothes).

This thesis will focus on elderly women because the female body is culturally more stigmatised in the ageing process (i.e. 'the double standard of ageing') (Sontag, 1972). This is because women's bodies are more heavily scrutinised and criticised if they don't fit into the Western world's ideal of a slim, toned, fit and well groomed female body. These types of bodies are represented in all types of media outlets and have a monopoly on beauty at the cost of displaying a variety of bodies. Additionally, in a culture obsessed with youth, ageing bodies are not appreciated. Specifically, women's ageing bodies are reviled and ridiculed while older men are considered to age like fine wine. Women are then hit by two criticisms, instead of the men's one. These stereotypes and social construction of age are results of the models of ageing addressed above.

Second, the literature has compartmentalised space and addressed only one situation at a time. Rather, space is sequential and subject to internal flows (Dijst, 2009). It is sequential because of what we, as humans, bring with us. We do not enter situations as blank canvases thanks to our past experiences and feelings from all other spaces, all of which are brought with us into a new situation/space and that influences our experience of the present space. This temporal-path dimension of space is of particular importance to the elderly because they have a temporally more extended memory than people in other age categories (Schwanen & Páez, 2010). It is this 'baggage' that interacts with and through which elderly people perceive everyday space. Pred

(1981) conceptualised this in his 'life path – daily path dialectic', which states that the details of everyday life are rooted in the past through biography.

Space is subject to internal flows through that it's dynamic and formed by interaction. There is no such thing as one space, like a container, in which things happen. Space is dynamic because it's actively produced by the act of moving. We, as actors, enter and exit different spaces, performing and creating it in the meeting point of our path and the paths of other people and objects. These practices of mobility animate and co-produce spaces, places and landscapes. As such, space is always becoming and is never finite. This means that space is dynamic and we must always consider the fluid nature of it. Mobility and space are intricately woven together in that mobility is the dynamic equivalent of meaningful space (i.e. place) (Cresswell, 2006). Furthermore, space is formed by interaction in that it's actively produced by social practises and is at the same time the producer of these social practises (Dyck & Kearns, 2006). This makes space meaningful and saturated with place, as place is considered meaningful segments of space (Cresswell, 2006). Place is filled with meaning and power, which we experience through sensory perception (sight, sound, touch, taste and smell). The interaction inside a situation and the emotions we attach to it alters our mobility performance, meaning how we interpret situations through our biography, our choices regarding destination and path and transport mode choice. Addressing space, we must always account for the fluid nature of it. Addressing mobility, we must take into account the spatio-temporal situation. Cresswell and Merriman (2011) even suggest that we should treat place or landscape as ongoing processes of 'spacing', 'placing' and 'landscaping' through which the world is shaped and formed, rather than as settings, surfaces or contained spaces through and across which people and things move. In order to grasp how mobility is experienced, this thesis will explore the lived mobilities of elderly women.

Lived mobility denotes unique mobility experiences and performances. It's imbued with movement, meaning, practise and potential (Cresswell & Uteng, 2008). The unique mobility experiences are embodied, contextual and situated. Research has explored how different characteristics of a person influence mobility. Studies in transport geography focusing on how gender shapes mobility has found gender differences in space-time constraints due to women's longer commute to work and household responsibilities, all of which fixes more of their time (Kwan, 2000). Studies addressing the work commute are not easily adapted to fit neither the movement, nor the mobility of older women because they are for the most part outside the work arena. Furthermore, age has not been addressed extensively in mobility research apart from being defined as a brute fact and then analysing older people's travel patterns (see Schwanen & Páez, 2010 for an overview), such as the phenomenon of 'retirement migration' (Warnes, 2009). Differences in mobility patterns based on gender and age have treated age only in the absolute dimension, as a measurement. They haven't addressed the relative and relational aspect of age in order to promatise the experience of mobility and creativity in mobility performance.

However, some literature has linked mobility and identity through establishing a connection between transport modal choice and social identity (Thomsen, 2001; Lassen & Jensen, 2003). Modal choice is used as an 'identity prop' (Lassen & Jensen, 2003: 7) in order to confirm a view of self and it also takes part in forming identity. Research on older people and car use also suggest this connection. Car use 'is an expression of, and means towards, independence, autonomy, spontaneity, control and competence, which all enhances their wellbeing' (Schwanen & Páez, 2010: 593). Modal choice does reflect the connection between expression of identity and mobility,

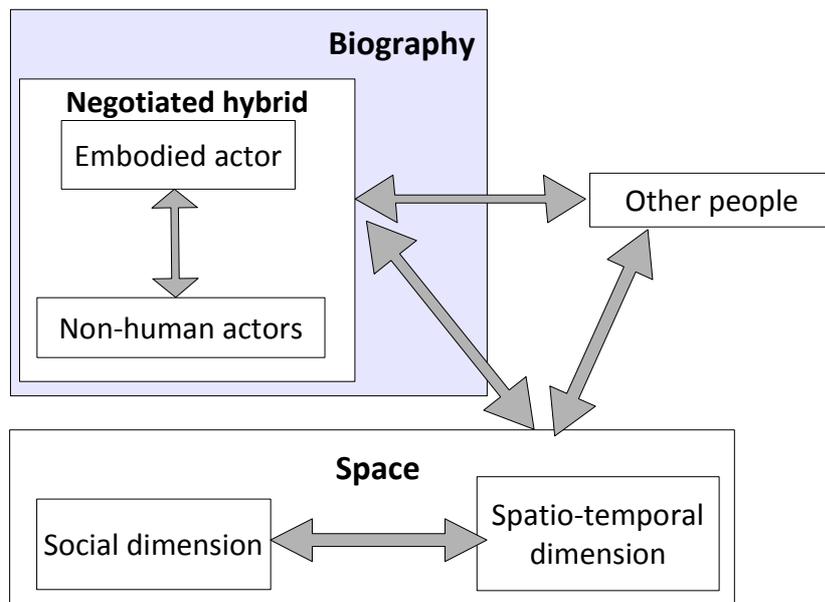
but less how space is experienced and negotiated. Mobile, embodied practices are central to how we experience the world (Cresswell & Merriman, 2011). Everyday life is a mixture of diverse and differentially produced and articulated forms, each combining time and space in a unique way (Burkitt, 2004: 211). The experience of it is multidimensional and characterised by all manner of practical adaptation (Hubbard, 2006). This 'negotiation in motion' (Jensen, 2010) denotes the social interaction made in a mobile space of norms, values and power. For example, 'the daily mobility of older people also evolves in relation with their social representations' (Lord, Després & Ramadier, 2011: 53). This means that by moving through space, elderly women are confronted with a plethora of impressions – stereotypes, expectations, ageism, etc. However, they are able to use talk, gesture and bodily movement to open up 'pockets of interaction' over which they have control and can assert themselves, however faintly (Thrift, 2006: 103). This dynamic of expressing identity while on the move is the basis for this thesis. The literature has not explored in depth the mutual embeddedness of identity and mobility.

Specifically, the aim of this thesis is to explore the mutual embeddedness of mobility and identity. This will be done by addressing elderly women's lived mobilities through the construction and negotiation of age identities. This will be explored through three research questions:

1. How do elderly women's concepts of age influence identity construction?
2. How do elderly women negotiate their age identities?
3. How do elderly women select and negotiate social, spatial and temporal situations?

The relationship between these different aspects is illustrated in figure 1.1 below. Embodied actors don't enter the social arena naked but as negotiated hybrids, which are then confronted with other people's perceptions, attributes and stereotypes. At the same time, the negotiated hybrid is also confronted with the attributes of place (or meaningful space), interpreted through past experiences and provoking an emotional response, which alters mobility performance. Identity is formed by this interaction between the negotiated hybrid, other people and dimensions of place. These dimensions interact with one another and the composite is experienced through the person's biography. The negotiation of identity also alters mobility performance regarding destination, path and transport mode choice.

Figure 1.1: Conceptual model



Source: own work

The data has mainly been collected through interviews with elderly Scottish women living in Edinburgh. Edinburgh was chosen thanks because of a few factors. Firstly, the city has realized the ever increasing numbers of elderly and has a comprehensive plan for encouraging and including the elderly in social life; 'A City for All Ages: Edinburgh's Plan for Older People'<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, the council publishes annually a list over all the activities available, 'Get up and go', which is vast. As such, there are many specialised activities and tailor made activities fitting different fitness levels and interests. Also, Scotland has a nationwide free bus scheme for the over 60s, which encourages mobility and participation in society. With this foundation, Edinburgh is a good place to probe able-bodied older women's experience.

The following literature chapter will review time geography and its criticisms in order to frame mobility. It will also address key concepts concerning embodiment, the body in the lives of elderly women and the many-faceted concept of 'age'. Finally, the body-centric phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty will be introduced as the underlying epistemology of this thesis. Chapter three details the methodological framework of the qualitative research conducted. Chapters four and five are the analysis chapters. The first chapter addresses the two first research questions. It explores the women's feeling of oldness, their view of their bodies and how they negotiate their bodies while striving for accordance between their own subjective and others' perception of them. Chapter five addresses the last research question by looking at which personal attributes and dimensions of place/space that influence their mobility performance. Finally, chapter six provides a final discussion and conclusion.

<sup>5</sup> A city for all ages: [http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/1456/older\\_people/1055/a\\_city\\_for\\_all\\_ages/1](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/1456/older_people/1055/a_city_for_all_ages/1) Retrieved: 10.08.11

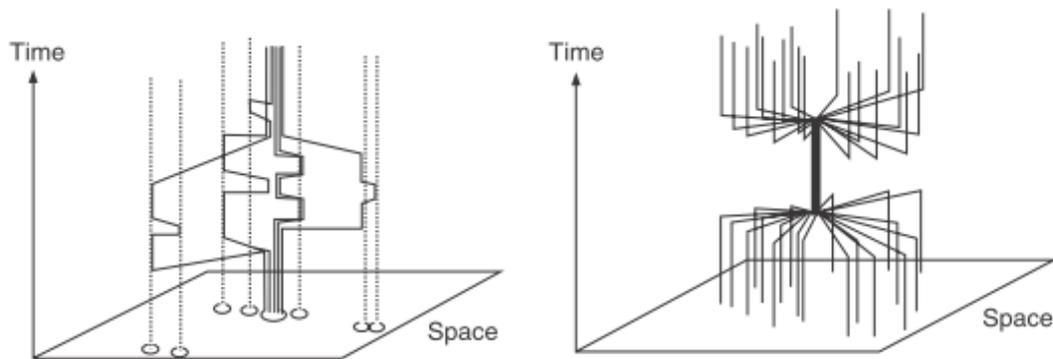
## Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

What is mobility? It involves displacement. It is the act of moving between locations (Cresswell, 2006). However, mobility has a more complex meaning than just simple movement from A to B. This thesis will underline that mobility is influenced by a number of factors. The first part of this chapter will explore how mobility has been conceptualized in human geographical literature by starting with time geography before addressing the criticisms and amending contributions. The importance of these aspects for the mobility of elderly women will be addressed throughout. The following part will address identity formation and specifically the complex concept of 'age identity' before. Then, the epistemology which informs the current thesis will be explained. Finally, the issues above will be discussed and a framework will be established.

### 2.1 Time geography

Mobility can be easily understood by looking at time geography. In introducing it, Torsten Hägerstrand (1970) theorised that all human activity occurs within time-space because of the three assumptions that time-geography is based on. Firstly, space is not only a matter of distance; it's also a provider of room. This means that everything in a certain space battle for room. Secondly, time is limited. At every moment in time, an individual is also located in space. Events are located and connected within time-space blocks that influence each other. Thirdly, human beings are individuals, whose different roles form behaviour to an unbroken sequence of actions. These actions are located in time-space and are described as a path. Time-geography is based on the idea that the life of an individual describes an uninterrupted path through time and across space. Depending on the purpose of the study, the time scale of the paths can vary from day paths to life paths. Different individuals' paths cross each other in stations/bundles, which are activity places, such as the home, an office or a shop. The activities that take place in these stations are called projects and can range from making tea to shopping groceries (Dijst, 2009; Golledge & Stimson, 1997; Hägerstrand, 1973). Figure 2.1 below illustrates the principle of paths and bundles. In the illustration to the left there are several people's paths. The paths illustrate movement in time (horizontal lines) and space (vertical lines). The small circles within the square indicate different stations. For example, the women interviewed for this thesis were asked to talk about their weekly doings. This is their week path and it can be displayed as in figure 2.1 (left). The illustration on the right shows the same thing, but the scale is now a station and not a person's path. The station is located at the thick line in the middle and the paths show people entering and exiting this specific station. This three-dimensional aquarium is good for showing the women's movement in time-space, but not their mobility.

Figure 2.1: Time-space paths and bundles



Source: Dijst 2009: 267

Furthermore, participation in projects is subject to three different types of constraints that shape an individual's path. First, capability constraints incorporate all biological, mental and instrumental constraints. For example, the elderly women interviewed sleep a certain number of hours every night at their home and are dependent on public transportation which orders their travel through time and space. Second, coupling constraints denote the joint activities where people come together in a certain place for a certain time. Several of the women interviewed attended the same dance fitness class once a week. In doing so, their paths converged, but excluded them from meeting other people during that time-space block. Finally, authority constraints regulate the access of individuals to activity places through social rules, laws, financial barriers and power relationships. Examples are business hours, price of admission and curfews (Dijst, 2009). For example, exercise groups for the over 60s are open to the women interviewed, but closed to those of a lower age.

It was hypothesised that by identifying an individual's constraints, it is possible to deduce why this individual would follow one path rather than another (Golledge & Stimson, 1997). The merit of time-geography for the use in this thesis is the idea of mobility seen as a path through time and across space. Some would say that time-geography is merely descriptive, but it does have explanatory value in that it states consequences of different constraints. For example, it can ascertain that an individual is in one place and not another at a specific time. Also, it maps well an individual's opportunities within a prism, meaning the available time window formed by constraints (Dijst, 2009).

However, the activity approach put forth by time-geography is only concerned with the sequencing of activities in time-space and constraints external to the individual. The body is left anonymous in time-geography except for its fundamental biological restrictions, such as indivisibility and having a limited time span. Additionally, time-geography does not account for the dynamism of contexts. There is a limited analysis of stations and characteristics of the spaces themselves influence an individual's mobility performance. Finally, time-geography has no place for an individual's creativity and negotiation of a space. The constraints are seen as absolute and hinder therefore the examination of the creation, selection and negotiation of spaces and paths.

### **2.1.1 Criticism of time geography**

It is vital to understand time-geography's shortcomings because they are important in order to

establish a theory of mobility that incorporates age, gender and the relativity and embeddedness of identity and space. In this section, some notions from other theoretical ideas criticising time-geography will be addressed with the purpose of ending up with a framework for elderly women's mobility.

### **Body, embodiment and emotions**

Rose's (1993) feminist critique of time geography concerns two issues which has implications for how the mobility of elderly women can be conceptualized. Firstly, she points out that time-geography reduces the body to its movement. It focuses on constraints but not the experience of being constrained. An individual's body, or corporeality, does affect how that person experiences the world. The attributes of the body have an impact on one's action space and how other's react to you. A woman's body is different from a man's body and due to the social constrictions/discourses connected to them; men and women are treated differently and have different experiences of mobility. Both the physical attributes of the body and the social constructions connected to it modifies the subjective experience of mobility. This leads to the second part of the critique where Rose claims that there is little discussion about space itself within time-geography. Space is taken for granted as a container in which social life happens. Rose claims that space is not infinite, unbounded and transparent. Rather, it is differentiated by subjectivity and sociality. The result of this two-headed critique is Rose highlights that corporeality influences how space is experienced and space influences subjective experiences and individual mobility.

In her critique, Rose points to the importance of corporeality by highlighting how a woman's body is externally different from that of a man's. This female body is, however, untouched by time. The feminine is static fact and she does not explicitly address age but it is, however, a very visible part of someone's corporeality. Rose's focus on gender, ethnicity, class and sexuality can be translated to become valid for age as well. The ageing process does leave external physical markers, such as wrinkles and grey hair, on people. At the very base, these are just facts and should not be looked at any differently than markers of young age. However, the cultural representations of older age are filled with meaning and connotations that differ from person to person, from culture to culture and from time to time. The Western world has had a history of ageism which portrays older people, especially women, as being less valuable than younger people. Hence, signs of ageing are seen in a decline perspective which is pejorative to the diversity of elderly identities (Featherstone & Hepworth, 2005; Macey, Smith & Watkins, 2003). 'The mere occurrence of physical changes does not explain ageism; it is the meaning we give to these changes that matters' (Calasanti, 2005: 9). For elderly women this means that no situation is neutral due to the interaction between corporeality (gender and age), social images of ageing, other people and time-space. For example, most people would probably raise an eyebrow if they saw an elderly woman buying a skateboard. This is because skateboards are associated with young boys, hip hop music and baggy pants.

Not only is corporeality important, but so are our emotions. Scholars of emotional geography claim that emotions are a vital part of our embodiment because the body is the site of emotional experience and expression. Emotions are not only linked to how we feel about ourselves, but 'they [also] have tangible effects on our surroundings and can shape the very nature and experience of our being-in-the-world' (Davidson & Milligan, 2004: 524). The sense of who we are is continually shaped and reshaped by how we feel, as is our experience of space and place. Understanding emotion and making sense of space are circular in nature which suggests an emotio-spatial hermeneutic where emotions are relational and contextual. Some emotions are

only understandable in the context of particular places and some spaces only make sense when being felt. For example, some spaces may elicit feelings of fear due to their geographic location, people present or the time of day. On a normal day, the same space could produce different emotions when its characteristics change. Also, how we feel about ourselves is mediated by the space we're in, people present and the social context. For example, an elderly woman may feel good about herself when she's at her senior citizen's centre because she's amongst her peers. Likewise, she may feel old and tired when attending an aerobics class dominated by thirty- and fortysomethings. What's more, she may even feel old when going to her senior citizen's centre because she perceives everyone else as old and tired, while she herself is not. The lived experience of older age and emotions is a fluid process rather than a collection of discrete roles (Milligan, Bingley & Gatrell (2005). These processes of identification based on similarity and difference are addressed more thoroughly in a section below.

Contextualisation of emotion has been widely addressed in the literature on women's fear of crime (Valentine, 1989; Koskela, 1997, 1999; Pain, 1997a, 2001b). These advances are also relevant for the study of older women's fear of crime<sup>6</sup>. Fear of crime constantly changes spatial realities and it also has a strong temporal dimension. Places that are dark, isolated and deserted are perceived as dangerous. Specifically, forests, parks and walking paths followed by stations, shopping centres, underpasses, tunnels, bridges and cellars have been identified as the most frightening places. Darkness in the evenings and at night time has the power to change the characteristics and perception of a place that may be perceived as safe during day time. Also, the physical and spatial dimensions cannot be separated from the social dimension of space (Koskela, 1999; Koskela & Pain, 2000). For example, a crowded subway may provoke fear because it's easy for an attacker to hide. Conversely, crowded places at nighttime tend to be perceived as safer than empty, dark ones. With fear comes avoidance and negotiation of space, which has implications for mobility. Koskela (1999) even speaks of a gendered exclusion of women in public space.

Furthermore, on a more positive note perhaps, literature on place identity has linked feelings of at-homeness and rootedness to the level of familiarity and safety perceived. Also, there is a sense of possession and control over space, at-easeness and warmth (Manzo, 2005). The local environment and neighbourhood are meaningful places that to which we are attached. Therefore, an elderly woman may move more freely in her own neighbourhood than other places because it's a familiar place to which she has a positive emotional attachment.

### **Biography and the recursiveness of society and space**

All of the factors above (body, embodiment and emotions) go into shaping a person and their biography, which is central to understanding subjective meanings and experiences. Time-geography does not address the importance of biography because it has a naive view of the human agent as independent of the social setting. Rather, there is a dualism between action and structure (Giddens, 1984). This is a relational view of space, in which space is not viewed as a container for human actions, but both as a product and producer of these (Thrift, 2006). The duality of structure is important for understanding emotional response to situations. For example, the contextualisation of emotion, addressed above, shows that fear is constructed by attributes of

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<sup>6</sup> Early crime surveys in UK and USA found that elderly women had one of the highest levels of fear of crime but that they were one of the groups least likely to become victims. This spurred the 'irrational fear' thesis which has been prevalent in literature and in common conception. However, there is now widespread agreement that the issue has been misrepresented (partly due to survey methodologies) and that elderly women are not more fearful than anyone else (see McCoy et al., 1996; Pain 2001b).

space mediated by past experiences. There is an internal-external dialectic between corporeal action, meaning the interaction with the surrounding environment, and mental activity and intention (Pred, 1981). For example, perceiving a specific place as dangerous (mental activity) may lead to avoiding it by changing one's physical path (corporeal action). Additionally, there is a daily path-life path dialectic, where the whole body of past experiences and emotions travel with us and form the basis for our current experiences and decisions. These will then become the root of our future experiences (Pred, 1981). This is especially salient when researching the elderly because they have a longer past and subsequently larger body of experience to draw upon. Therefore, biography is important in shaping mobility. We interpret and negotiate space and the people in it through our biography and consequently we take part in producing space. This recursiveness between society and space sees people as creative actors capable of negotiating space and mobility. Constraints are also enabling and open up for creativity and opportunity for action. When all of the above criticisms to time-geography are taken into account, it is clear that mobility is more than movement from A to B. The rest of the chapter will elaborate on how mobility itself is a point of departure for analysis.

### **2.1.2 Seeing the world through the eyes of mobility**

In recent years, there has been a turn to mobility as a way of seeing and analysing the world. While the section above treated criticisms to time-geography, this section will take a step further and see how mobility informs everything else.

'Mobility is a way of having a relation to, engaging with and understanding the world *analytically*' (Adey, 2010: xviii). Mobilities are in significant ways ontological and epistemological because they shape how the world is sensed and experienced. The 'new mobilities paradigm' (Sheller & Urry, 2006) confirmed the important place of mobility by pointing out different co-existing mobilities. These multiple mobilities include the physical movement of bodies, objects, and images and virtual movement of ideas, information, bodies and capital. Furthermore, the intersecting movements of people, objects, information and images are fundamental components of social relations and these define and are defined by movement (Burnett & Lucas, 2010). Hence, mobility is more than movement; it is socially produced motion (Cresswell, 2006).

Specifically, Cresswell (2006) states that mobility is understood through three relational points. First, mobility as a brute fact is something that is potentially observable. It's a thing in the world and an empirical reality. This can be found in how the migration- and transport-related literature traditionally has dealt with older age. For example, looking at housing patterns among the elderly clearly documented the phenomenon of retirement migration. This research also explored the motivations and consequences of the migration to and the blossoming of retirement communities, especially in the United States (Warnes, 2009). However, this view on mobility does not explore the experience of moving. Similarly, scholars can model how elderly people move throughout the city by analysing their choice and usage of transport mode (Hanson, 2010).

Second, mobility also means the ideas present about it. Mobility means this and mobility means that. The brute fact of getting from A to B becomes synonymous with freedom, transgression, creativity and life itself. Hanson (2010) claims that the most embraced view of mobility is it's empowering nature. Seen as a resource, more mobility is considered empowering, especially for women, and considered a good thing. Same can be said for older age. Mobile, older women are perceived as more independent and mobility is also the fundamental basis for active ageing. Being active and mobile heightens quality of life and enables participation in society

(Mollenkopf et al., 1997; Webber, Porter & Menec, 2010). For example, living in a suburb and being able to drive in older age is found to make her independent, autonomous, in control, able to live at home and avoid isolation (Lord, Després & Ramadier, 2011). While a change in mobility and motility, for example due to loss of bodily functions, may change her identity (Clarke, 2001), the new mobility paradigm also stresses the creative adaptation to such a decline (Burnett & Lucas, 2010). For example, Rowles' (1978) early research into the geographical experience of older people also put forth examples of creativity and adaptation, such as modifying the route because of road decline and utilising other senses than vision for orientation, with declining physical abilities.

Third, mobility is practised, it is experienced and it is embodied. Mobility is a way of being in the world. Cresswell (2006: 4) continues to say that 'often how we experience mobility and the ways we move are intimately connected to meanings given to mobility through representation'. As such, the three aspects of mobility outlined above are intertwined. Specifically, understanding mobility 'means understanding observable physical movement, the meanings that such movements are encoded with, the experience of practicing these movements and the potential for undertaking these movements' (Cresswell & Uteng, 2008: 2). These all need to be addressed together in their fluid interdependence and not separately. Each of these aspects - movement, meaning, practise and potential – is constructed through narrative, discourse and representation. In the matter of elderly women's mobility, their daily mobility is connected with social images of ageing, their subjective age (which will be outlined below), corporeality, biography and the experience of being mobile. Moreover, mobility is always located and materialised and occurs through mobilisation of locality and rearrangement of the materiality of places (Sheller, 2004 in Sheller & Urry, 2006). The new mobility paradigm highlights the importance of the movement of objects, but actor-network theory confirms the role of objects.

### **The role played by the material world**

We, as humans, are not alone in being on the move. Objects, or non-human actors, are also mobile. Actor-network theory (ANT) studies materials, practises and discourses in which 'power relations are embedded and transported' (Murdoch, 2006:58). ANT outlines a framework for how people and objects interact in space, a sort of 'hybrid geography' (Whatmore, 2002). They are treated as elements of equal value, and cannot be separated from one another. While non-human agents are important, they do lack vital attributes such as the capacity for emotions and reflexivity. Objects are 'immutable mobiles' that are easily carried about and tend to retain their shape. For example, many older people have problems walking under their own steam. Mobility aids, such as sticks, rollators and wheel chairs, support the body of the older person so that they become an extension of it, resulting in a cyborg (Haraway, 1991). The older person's identity and ability to act are changed with the introduction of a mobility aid. For example, she may be perceived as having fulfilled the stereotypes of the frail elderly, but simultaneously is perceived as independent and strong-willed for insisting on walking in the streets even though her body is declining. Furthermore, part of the identity of the object is fluid. It only gains meaning in relation to its carrier. For example, clothes are objects that easily change not only their own identity, but also the perceived identity of its carrier. The same sweater negotiates corporeality with different results for men, women, children and a senior. Hence, the sweater itself is also perceived differently.

These perceptions are closely linked to classifications and predetermined categorisations, which are used to fix identities and expected actions so that it is easier to interpret the world. As has been addressed above, people's biographies colour the way they view the world and expect it

to behave. The same principle is valid here. Other people's biographies determine how they identify and perceive the elderly woman. Also, attributes of space itself are viewed through the glasses of biography. Spaces restrict some behaviour and enable others. Some spaces are more formal and restrict situational behaviour, while other spaces are more fluid and uncertain, opening up for negotiation. Examples vary from situational activity that is very clearly restricted, such as gates hindering entrance and signs saying 'Don't walk on the grass' to situational behaviour that is ordered by vague interpretation of etiquette, such as offering seats to older persons while on the bus. Implied in these forms of etiquette is a sense of the proper. A sense of someone belonging in one place rather than another based on the relation that she has to others (Cresswell, 1996). The expectations of behaviour are a result of classification and position in the social structure. However, most spaces are a mix of these two ideal types, 'spaces of prescription' and 'spaces of negotiation', which opens up for negotiating the seemingly formal. An elderly woman can choose to easily conform to the prescribed and expected behaviour or resist and negotiate it. '(...) All spaces should be seen as complex interrelations between modes of ordering and forms of resistance so that 'the effects of power and resistance are intertwined'.' (Murdoch, 1998: 364). As space is always changing and constantly becoming, forces of prescription order space and time while simultaneously being continually renegotiated.

### **2.1.3 Power and ageism**

With prescription comes power. Prescriptions can be absolute, such as things that are illegal to do or buildings and spaces that are forbidden for the general public. Moreover, prescriptions can be more loosely defined and concern ways of behaving in relation to other people. Such unwritten rules or expectations are social norms which also opens up for negotiation. Power is embedded in prescriptions in that someone had decided that something is wrong to do. Such a prescription then affects people's mobility performance. Power is omni-present. It is an effect that is mediated by space and people's expression of it.

Concerning older women, there are power structures concerning gender and age that affect them directly. Feminist geographers have been the best at discerning the power dynamics between genders. The power-geometry between the men and women is deeply rooted in traditional, social structures promoting patriarchy. Men and women are not the same and they have different bodies (Rose, 1993). Social constructions of men and women's bodies has birthed stereotypes of them that are linked to social construction of age. There is power embedded in these social constructions of age because 'the mere occurrence of physical changes does not explain ageism; it is the meaning we give to these changes that matters' (Calasanti 2005: 9). There are multiple 'images of ageing' (Featherstone & Hepworth, 2005) in the Western world but the bio-medical model has had a hegemonic position and shaped the public representation of older age. It pathologises the body and reduces it to its biological decline of gradual powerlessness and increasing frailty. These images reinforce ageist social prejudices (Powell & Longino, 2001) and may play out as excluding older people, making them feel worthless, and as over helping them, making them feel powerless (Koskela, 1997). Ageism is also expressed through categorisation of older people as old, labelling them with the stereotypes and prejudices of frailty and sedentary lifestyles (Calasanti, 2005). Ageism produces stereotypes and assumptions which have profound implications for the elderly's use of space (Pain, 2001a).

#### **2.1.4 Example of social construction: the multiple meanings of a road sign**

This road sign in picture 2.1 is placed on a quiet, residential street where there are two quite large independent living facilities for the over 60s. The street is located in an outer ward of north-west Edinburgh not far from the Murrayfield sports stadium. The sign is in the shape of a triangle with an outer red frame, which is the international pattern for warning signs. The purpose of the sign is probably to make drivers of cars aware of and pay attention to the possible large numbers of elderly people walking along the street.

*Picture 2.1: Mind the elderly road sign*



*Source: own work*

The image representing elderly people displays a man with a walking stick and a woman, both of whom are bent over as if they have problems walking. This representation gives a very specific portrayal of the elderly as frail, having difficulty walking and in the need of a mobility aid. Question is why there would be a need for such a road traffic sign. For example, there exist signs warning of the location of schools and children crossing the road. This is warranted because young children have not yet fully developed their full depth vision and the ability to judge the speed of oncoming vehicles. Therefore, drivers need to take a larger responsibility and amend their driving behaviour (i.e. speed, overview etc.) to make sure that they are able to avoid accidents. When comparing these two types of signs, it seems that the sign warning about elderly along the road implies that the elderly are also suffering from a lack of spatial awareness and inability to hear or judge oncoming traffic. Given that the sign is in the format of a warning sign, it means that drivers must take a larger responsibility and be extra aware of elderly pedestrians than with adult pedestrians. While the frailty and inability to judge traffic may be true for some of the elderly living in the area, it is not a universal truth for all elderly. The sign embraces the ageist stereotype derived from the bio-medical model's portrayal of older age.

With there being two retirement homes on the street where this sign is located, most of

the elderly living there have probably seen it. How do they experience the sign? One emotional response could be that she can't relate to it and rejects it because she doesn't feel old and therefore considers that the sign doesn't include her. Seeing the sign is being confronted with Western society's traditional view of older people. Another emotional response could be that the confrontation makes her more aware of the markers of old age that she has. While this perhaps is something that she wouldn't normally think about, the sign conjures thoughts of being old. She could then negotiate her body and mind in order to hide the signs of older age so that others won't associate her with the sign. On the other side, the sign could be like an ageist self-fulfilling prophecy, making the women give up and acknowledge that she is indeed like the figures on the sign. Others may even find the sign so uncomfortable that she avoid passing it altogether. As such, it has altered her path choice and influenced her mobility performance. The next section will address the formation of identity and how this is inherently a social process before exploring age identities in later life.

## 2.2 Identity formation

All human identities are by definition social identities, says Jenkins (2004:4-5). He elaborates:

'Identifying ourselves or others is a matter of meaning, and meaning always involves interaction: agreement and disagreement, convention and innovation, communication and negotiation. (...) Identity is our understanding of who we are and who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people's understanding of themselves and of others (which includes us).'

Identity is a process based on an interplay between internal and external definition. First, from an individual's point of view this begins with the body. Individual identification is always embodied. The external comes from both within and the outside. First, group identity is a result of 'collective internal definition'. For example, an elderly woman may identify with other senior citizens by joining a senior citizens' club. Second, categorisation is a result of 'collective external definition'. For example, society has different social constructions of age, which were addressed briefly in the introduction. Among those is the bio-medical model which focuses on the bodily decline in older age. Assessing older women according to this marks them with attributes such as frail, sickly and sedentary. All these processes of definition and identification involve two criteria of comparison between persons or things: similarity and difference. An older woman could try to set herself apart from characteristics she perceives as old by embodying other characteristics such as maintaining a fit and slim body, youthful thinking and being mobile. A process of distancing herself from unwanted attributes (Clarke, 2001). Similarly, she could try to embody the characteristics of someone or something, such as an image, that she wants to be similar to. Also, others may think that the older woman in question is very fit for her age. By using this formulation they set her apart from the image of the frail older person.

The interplay between internal and external factors is an ongoing process in self-identification. In everyday situations, identities are called into question and established or not established (Jenkins, 2004). The elderly woman presents herself in a particular way. That presentation may be accepted (or not), becoming a part of her identity in the eyes of others (or not). The responses that she gets on her presentation influence her self-presentation on a different occasion. This leaves room for the negotiation and manipulation of the body and ways of thinking.

The result is that identities are fluid. Linking it to the meaningful spaces, we are essentially 'flexible constellations of identities-on-the-move' (Sheller, 2004: 49). The next section will treat explore the different facets of age identity in gerontological literature.

### **2.2.1 Age identity**

Our age identity is multifaceted and is shaped by both internal and external factors. The concept of 'subjective age' has been researched in some form or another since the 1950s. Unlike chronological age, subjective age is a multidimensional concept that indicates how old a person feels and which age group they identify themselves with (Kleinspehn-Ammerlahn et al., 2008). This body of research has yielded valuable information into what age people feel throughout their life-course. The seminal work of Kastenbaum et al. (1972) introduced the concept of 'the ages of me', or how older individuals perceived themselves to feel, look, act and desired to be. Their research showed that the bias between personal age (how old a person seems to herself) and chronological age becomes more pronounced with higher chronological age level. Moreover, researchers have consistently found that the majority of older adults report subjective age identities (i.e. the age they feel) that are, on average, 10 to 20 years younger than their chronological ages (Hubley & Russell, 2009). Feeling younger and being satisfied with one's own ageing are positive self-perceptions of ageing. Theoretically, according to Kleinspehn-Ammerlahn et al. (2008), positive self-perceptions of ageing are viewed as indicators of successful ageing and age identity. Furthermore, there is consensus that this serves to sustain levels of social activity and engagement, enhance self-esteem and well-being, and boost biophysiological functioning. Studies that address questions about successful ageing find that of all the variables contributing to personal subjective age, health variables typically explain the greatest proportion of variance, with poorer health being consistently related to feeling older than one's chronological age (Hubley & Russell, 2009). For other variables, such as gender and socio-economic status, different studies have reached conflicting results (see Kleinspehn-Ammerlahn et al. 2008 for an overview).

This self-perception of health is linked to satisfaction with ageing and then to subjective age. Of all the different aspects of health, Benyamini, Leventhal and Leventhal (2003) found that overall functioning (i.e. the ability to be physically active) and vitality (i.e. higher energy and less fatigue) were the core elements that needed to be present for elderly people to assess their own health as good. Hubley and Russell (2009) found that for women, feeling and looking younger than one's age were associated with vitality leading to a better self-reported health. Also, compared to the sampled men, greater satisfaction with one's own health played a role for women instead of physical functioning. It does make sense that poorer health, even something as trivial as not being able to climb the stairs or put up the curtains, may lead to feeling or appearing older. On the other side, it is also plausible that the age one feels might impact how one assesses one's health. As such, it is reasonable to say that the relationship between subjective age and health is likely to be reciprocal.

Not only is age identity dependent on internal factors, external factors are also important. As affirmed above, identity in general is shaped by an internal-external dialectic and so is age identity. Social age involves generally held beliefs and attitudes about the capability of people of different ages and the social and spatial behaviour which is appropriate for them (Pain, 2001a). Ageism is an expression of social age and comes forth through stereotypes and labelling of the aged body and mind. Expectations of age-appropriate behaviour and appearance influence the elderly women's subjective age. For

example, elderly women are expected to dress less provocatively than younger women, which results in longer hem lines, higher neck openings and more sophisticated garments. Also, other's reaction to your appearance and behaviour influence yourself view. Scholars points to the presence of a 'mask of ageing' (Featherstone & Hepworth, 1991), in which the ageing outer self masks an essentially youthful self beneath. They posit that as personal identity is shaped through social interaction, other people interact with the ageing exterior, which ends up creating and aged identity. Other scholars, such as Biggs (in Ballard, Elston & Gabe, 2005: 172), rather assert that this 'social mask' is used to protect the self, deceive others and resist ageist perceptions. The subjective and physical experience of ageing are in unison and the social mask is a way of aligning these. Even though masking theories lately have been argued to contain flaws, they make two important points. Firstly, there may be a mismatch between the exterior and the interior of a person, as addressed above. Secondly, they highlight the use of age-resisting activities, such as the modification of body appearance. This thesis will explore the negotiation of elderly women's age identity in chapter four. The next section will introduce and explore the epistemology which underlies the analysis of the current thesis – phenomenology.

## 2.3 Phenomenology of perception

Phenomenology is a branch within philosophy that attempts to disclose the essential meaning of the human experience. It arises from the reflective analysis of the meaning of the lived world of experience (Ray, 1994). Knowledge and experience are not just a collection of impressions; they actively take part in shaping reality. Experience is always of something and always referring to something beyond the self. Longino and Powell (2009: 378) explains:

'Phenomenologists use the term *reflexivity* to characterize the way in which constituent dimensions serve as both foundation and consequence of all human projects. (...) The task of phenomenology, then, is to make manifest, reflexively, the incessant tangle of action, situation, and reality in the various modes of *being in the world*.'

In this thesis, the epistemology is specifically based on the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. His seminal work 'The Phenomenology of Perception' (1962) puts forth an understanding of phenomenology where the body is in the forefront. His approach opposes the mind-body dualism because he claims that our subjectivity, our experience of ourselves, is not separable from our embodiment. We, as human beings, are a living organism, a body, and can therefore have conscious experiences of the world. We inhabit the world and therefore we are essentially embodied. Our way of 'being-in-the-world' as 'body-subjects' means that we are actively involved in the world around us. The world is not just a container but the sphere of our lives as active, purposive beings. Our consciousness of the world around us is mediated by the sensory system, the brain and our capacities for movement. Hence, the experience of a body-subject must always be from a particular perspective within the world. In part this means being-in-the-social-world; our perspective is not only determined by space and time but also by history and culture (Matthews, 2002).

Looking at experience in this way, its fluid nature comes forth. As a body-subject, an elderly woman is always situated in time-space. This location is not an empty container, it is a space full of meaning (i.e. social codes, norms,), people and memory. The interior mental processes and self-

identities of elderly women dynamically collide and interact with social forces to shape and reshape experience (Longino & Powell, 2009). Gerontological literature has used phenomenology seeking to offer a corrective to the bio-medical model's hegemonic view on the elderly and how they perceive and are being perceived in space. Gerontological phenomenology digs under the surfaces to reveal the meanings and subjective sense of self in order to understand how we conceptualize ageing at a surface level (Longino & Powell, 2009).

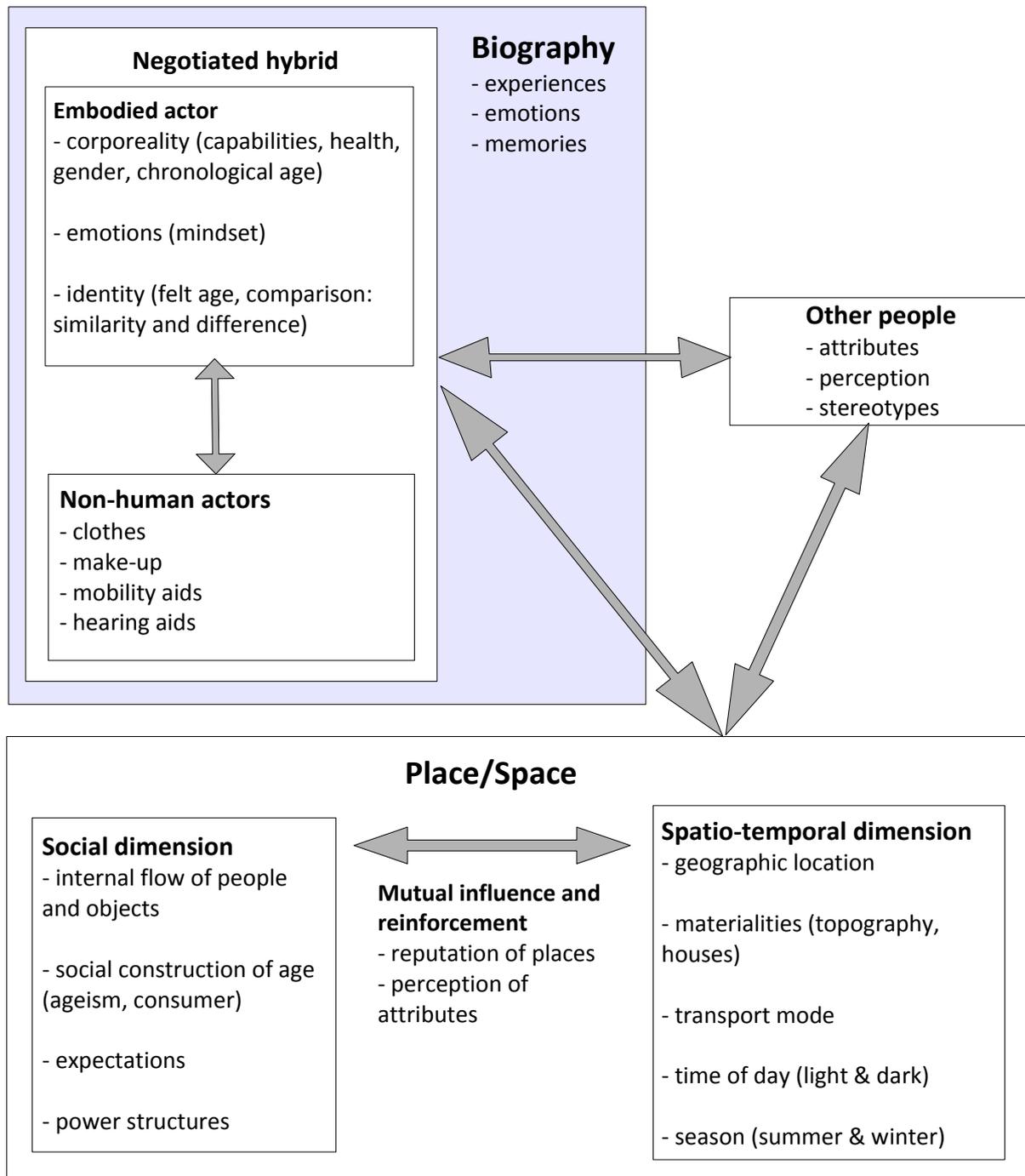
## 2.4 Conclusion: Lived mobilities and situated experience

So far a theoretical framework has been developed, from which elderly women's lived mobility can be analysed. Owing to the emphasis on lived mobilities, this thesis is informed by phenomenology. This means that the elderly women's experiences are the source of knowledge about their lives. As experience and performance are situationally embedded, the elderly women must always negotiate their mobility and identity with the unique socio-spatio-temporal dimensions at hand. Figure 2.1 below outlines an expanded conceptual model which will be used to analyse the lived mobilities of elderly women.

Lived mobilities can be seen as an interplay between the embodied (hybrid) actor, other people's perceptions and attributes of place/space. First, the embodied actor is composite of corporeality, emotions and identity. Corporeality is made up of physical attributes, such as gender, chronological age, health and the physical and mental capabilities she has for participating in the situations she chooses. Emotions reflect the mindset with which she meets the world. Does she have a positive outlook on life? Or a more negative one? How does she feel about getting older? Identity encompasses 'felt age', or subjective age, meaning how old she feels, and the ongoing result of comparing herself to other people and images of ageing. The embodied actor and non-human actors are intertwined and the result is a malleable, hybrid actor. For example, clothes can help an elderly woman to negotiate her body and express herself. Second, all is embedded in her biography, which comprises past experiences, emotions and memories. An elderly woman's current identity and how she negotiates is always rooted in her biography.

Third, this negotiated, hybrid actor is located in the social world and is affected by other people's attributes and perceptions of her, which is interpreted through her biography. She can likewise influence other's perception of her, by negotiating her body through the use of non-human actors. Fourth, place/space is always experienced as mediated through biography and as situated socially and spatio-temporally. The different dimensions of place/space are also intertwined in that they reinforce each other. For example, an urban scene is hardly ever solely defined by only one dimension. A housing estate's bad reputation is not only due to the topography and state of the buildings, but also to the perception of the kind of people living there. The result of all this is an interplay between place/space and the self where experience is situated and relative to the different dimensions of place/space.

Figure 2.2: Expanded conceptual model



Source: own work

The following chapter will outline the methodology of this thesis, before an analysis will be performed in the next two chapters. Chapter four will explore the elderly women's identity and how this is negotiated, while chapter five will explore how the situated experience influences the negotiation of identity.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

With the mobility turn in human geography and other disciplines, there has also been a question whether traditional methods are capable of researching mobile issues. Fincham, McGuinness and Murray (2011) ask how do we research and represent mobile experiences. Is it possible to research mobile issues with static methods? Traditional methods, such as the interview, the focus group and the survey, hold down and dissect mobile phenomena (Büscher, Urry & Witchger, 2011). Responding to this need, there has been a creative surge in order to find means of collecting data that can fully inform our understanding of people's experience of movement through space. However, most mobile methods are rooted in existing, static methods, which have been innovated (Fincham, McGuinness & Murray, 2011). For example, the go-along is a mix between observation and interview on the move (Kusenbach, 2003), walking has been put forth as an elementary way of experiencing space; photographs have been used to explore embodied time-space travel (Latham, 2003). Also, the use of technology, like film cameras (Laurier, 2011) and GPS and RFID (Shoval et al. 2010), has been used to capture people on the move.

The bottom line seems to be the importance of being there, either following the actor in person or removing oneself from the situation through technology in order to be closer. Schwanen and Páez (2010) suggest that a pluralistic approach within a qualitative framework is the best option to capturing, first hand, the embodied practises on the move. The aim of the current thesis is to explore the mutual embeddedness of elderly women's mobility and identity. This will be done by going into how elderly women's conceptualization of age and negotiation of it influence their situated performance. As such, this research will follow a qualitative framework, by using interviews, go-alongs and photographs, because it is better suited for probing a person's experience of mobility and identity. This kind of data can to a certain extent be gathered by using a quantitative method such as a survey, but the aim of this research is for the respondents to use their own words to tell about their experiences. The interest lies in the respondents' point of view, and rich, detailed answers are therefore of interest (Bryman, 2004: 319).

### 3.1 Respondent recruitment

The multitude of elderly women makes it necessary to set some criteria for the selection of respondents. I have followed Bryman (2004) in his recommendation of 'purposive sampling' when doing qualitative research. This means that I have made strategic choices about who to sample based on how relevant specific people are to the research questions. The following criteria were used:

1. *Women from 60 years of age and older.* 60 years is currently the UK retirement age for women and I have therefore chosen this as the lower age limit for the respondents. Society has then categorized these women as retired, which is closely related to being seen as old. Additionally, 60 but also 65 is a common statistical limit for denoting where 'adults' now fall into the box 'elderly'.

2. *Only women of the majority ethnicity, meaning white and Scottish, are eligible.* By omitting other ethnicities, the analysis of the construction of identity will hopefully be able to address 'age' as the important issue and not whether the women are black or Asian. Additionally, by including elderly women from ethnic minorities, the complexity of the data would have increased considerably. Furthermore, language problems might become a factor which would require an interpreter, making the data collection harder (Maynard et al., 2008). Furthermore, when looking at the aim of the thesis, which is to probe into the experiences of elderly women, first-hand data will be lost with the use of an interpreter.
3. *Only able-bodied women are eligible.* The sampling is biased towards able-bodied elderly women because one of the main aspects researched is their experience of their own mobility. Hence, the respondents are in such a physical state that they could make their way around the city if they wanted to. Consequently, dementia patients, elderly women living in nursing homes and other women with a declined health have been omitted.

In order to gain access to women who fit the above criteria, respondents have been recruited from two access points<sup>7</sup> in different parts of the city. This was done in order to increase the chance of getting more respondents. These were two dance classes for pensioners (60+), which were chosen from the 'Get up and Go'-booklet published annually by the Council for the City of Edinburgh. This booklet details activities and opportunities throughout the city offered to the senior citizens. Activities vary from lunch clubs to water aerobics and from walking clubs to pottery classes<sup>8</sup>. Sampling from a dance class is a good idea because, firstly, the class itself is a good gateway for reaching the elderly population. Elderly citizens are quite hard to access unless one goes through an organisation or a centre which organises activities for the elderly. Secondly, I chose to sample from exercise/dance classes over other activities for the elderly both because of the focus on the body, but also the fact that a dance class is a more organised affair where the instructor may act as a gatekeeper. Finally, it is important that the two classes are located in different parts of the city. Föbker and Grotz (2006) researched everyday mobility of elderly people in different urban settings and found that the elderly would prefer to go to leisure activities located in their own neighbourhood. Sampling from dance exercise classes in two different parts of the city avoids recruiting women from the same social networks, as well as hopefully including different types of women.

In accordance with purposive sampling, I chose the dance exercise on the basis of their advertisement in the 'Get up and Go'-booklet. In it, activities are listed according to neighbourhoods and they often specify that it's for senior citizens living there. This helped in finding two classes that were on opposite parts of town. Aiming for a gatekeeper, my first criterion was to only consider classes where a person and not a community centre were listed as who to contact for information. Additionally, I was careful of choosing dance classes that were held on a

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<sup>7</sup> I had initially 3 access points but the 3<sup>rd</sup> fell through. I had put an ad in the 'Centre for the Older Person's Agenda'-newsletter distributed by Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh. It has about 1000 subscribers including senior citizens, groups and organisations. There was an error in the ad itself (not from my side) and I also suspect that the lay-out of the newsletter was part of the reason why I didn't receive any respondents. My reasoning for this access point was that elderly women who subscribe to a newsletter for issues concerning them, will be engaged and more interested in talking to someone who researches their life situation.

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/internet/Council/Campaigns\\_and\\_projects/CEC\\_get\\_up\\_and\\_go\\_2007-08](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/internet/Council/Campaigns_and_projects/CEC_get_up_and_go_2007-08)  
Retrieved: 16.01.09.

weekly basis at a fixed venue. Owing to my assumption that if the class is only held once or twice a month, the consistency of people showing up would be lower than if the club was organised, say, at least once a week. Both of the classes were also chosen because they do not offer transport to participants, as many activities organised by community centres do. Therefore, the women have to arrive there under their own steam.

The first class was chosen because the advertisement stated that it was an exercise class to music for the 60+ and that it was aimed specifically at women. It was the only exercise or dance class in the booklet that had these two criteria simultaneously. My positive experience with this class, which was filled with very social and easy-going women, made me emphasise the social context of the second class. Consequently, I chose it at a later stage due to its complimentary location in the first class and because the advertisement in the 'Get up and Go'-booklet informed me that there would be tea and biscuits served in addition to the dancing. The second class is located in a neighbourhood in the east part of the city, whereas the first class is located in the north-west part of the city. Whereas the first class was more of a choreographed exercise class to music, the second class was rather a social gathering for women to partake in old time sequence dancing and line dancing.

I approached the classes differently, which I think had an impact on my ability to recruit respondents. For the first class I called the instructor who permitted me to come the following week and talk to the women. I talked to her before the class started and she introduced me before I introduced my research. I got 5 volunteers but ended up interviewing only 4 of them because I perceived the 5<sup>th</sup> one to be rather reluctant. She had also informed me that her husband had recently been admitted to the hospital, after which I decided not to schedule an interview because I felt that I would have intruded on an already stressful situation. Unlike the first class, I didn't call in advance when dropping in on the second class. This was done as an experiment because when I sampled the class at a later stage, I realized that their weekly meeting was the very same day. It turned out to be a good decision because the woman who was listed as the contact person had quite severe dementia. In reality, there was a group of another three women who currently organised the weekly classes. Upon arrival, I spoke with them about my purpose of being there and was allowed to hang out for the entirety of the class. I was presented to the rest of the women and then recruited respondents from mingling and talking to the participants about my research. I was able to make two appointments for interviews and one agreement to call a few days later. The woman in question did not want to commit right there and when I called a few days later, she declined to be interviewed because she didn't feel so good that day.

In the end I recruited six (6) elderly women from the two dance classes. Five were interviewed in their own home, while one was interviewed at a café around the corner from the second dance class. I met her there because she lived in a suburb on the opposite side of the city and had to take two buses to get to the dance class. All interviews were conducted during February 2009. Three of the women from the first dance class also participated in individual go-alongs during the first week of March 2009. These were chosen on the basis of the personal connection I felt I had established with them during the interview.

### 3.2 Overview over respondent attributes

Table 3.1 below summarises a selection of respondent attributes. When held up against the sampling criteria, all respondents meet them. Helen is actually Irish, but she has lived in the United Kingdom since her early twenties, and in when Scotland raising her children. She is deemed to qualify because she has lived most of her life in Scotland. All the women are retired and the range in age is good. There are different living situations present, different marital status and type of dwelling. All in all, it's a varied selection of 'ordinary' elderly women. Given that they all live in fairly centrally located areas, it can be hypothesised that none are poor, even though one characterised herself as being working class.

*Table 3.1: Summary of respondent attributes*

Respondent	Age	Neighbourhood	Education	Occupation	Marital status	Type of dwelling	Size	Tenure
Sarah	72	West	Left school at 15	Domestic in hospital, guesthouse	Widow	Sheltered housing, independent living	Small	Renting
Rose	63	North-East (Leith)	Left school at 15	Kindergarden / care for grandchildren	Married	Terraced villa (row house)	2 floors, modest	Own
Jane	64	North-West	Bachelor of Science (as adult)	Speech therapist and librarian	Widow (2 <sup>nd</sup> husband)	Apartment	Big	Own
Helen	70	North-West	1 yr tech college	Civil service	Separated	Apartment	Big	Own
Alice	78	South-West (suburb)	Left at 16	Secretary	Widow	Upper Flat	n/a	Life rent
Mary	83	South	Left at 16	Secretary, self-employed (hotel)	Widow	House (converted coach house)	1 floor, quite small	Own

*Source: own work*

#### 3.2.1 Overview over respondents' activity patterns

It is pertinent to also give some background information about the six interviewed women's normal activity patterns. Although, all the women interviewed do go out very frequently, they attend different activities and do lead quite different lives. Apart from doing grocery shopping and other necessary activities, their week include scheduled activities like walking groups, dance fitness groups, and swimming. This overview over a normal week in their life will show that the women sampled fit the third sampling criteria well. They're all physically mobile and able to freely move throughout the city.

First, Jane (age 64) is a very active retired woman who likes going to the theatre, exhibitions and the cinema, which she will visit weekly or at least every fortnight. Additionally, she'll see some friends for coffee in town and every now and then go to Glasgow to see her daughter. Concerning her weekly errands she confesses that she, in her own words, '(...) I was born to shop for groceries. I don't know what it is but I'm always drawn to various supermarkets.' She goes all over the place to different stores for her fruit and vegetables. Speaking of herself, she says:

So, I'm not in the house a lot, which is great. That's why I retired. (laughs)

Second, Sarah (age 72) is more of a solitary type. She's seldom at home during the weekday mornings but she has a few fixed activities every week, namely the dance fitness group and seeing a friend on Wednesdays with whom she goes to the Ocean Terminal for a coffee, the cinema or just shopping. Also, every Wednesday morning she cleans an older man's house. She did express interest in giving it up but he kept giving her a raise, so she stayed on. She spends the majority of the week in her own company but sees her children and her sister either weekly or every fortnight. In order to get out of the house, she will take the bus to places further away (Dunfermline, St. Andrew's, Gyle, Morningside) but also into to city centre in the morning to walk around and look at the shops. She's fond of wandering around in John Lewis<sup>9</sup> and the adjacent St. James' Centre. Traditionally, she has gone on longer trips once a year either abroad or to northern England and she currently thinking of going to see her son in Australia. With being out most of the day during the week, she prefers to stay in on Sundays watching a DVD or the television.

Sarah (age 72): I do go out. I do like to get out. Ehm, a Sunday I don't go out. I stay in. Because you try to figure out where to do ... do something each day, so when Sunday comes I think, well I'm gonna stay in.

Third, Rose (age 63) is more of a homely type who will keep more to her neighbourhood except for when she goes to the dance fitness class on Tuesdays. This is because she has been in recovery from a serious illness for the last three years and is in the process of regaining her strength. She and her husband have a good relationship with their neighbours and see them quite often. Additionally, her children and grandchildren live close by so she sees them weekly or every fortnight as well. Otherwise, she goes to the city centre now and again and occasionally she will meet up with old friends for a meal and a long chat. Lastly, she'll have odd visits to the botanical garden, the cinema, the theatre and museums, galleries and exhibitions if there's anything of interest. 'There's a lot to do in Edinburgh', she says.

Fourth, Helen (age 70) is very sportive and is probably the one who has the most scheduled activities throughout the week. She'll go to the gym on Monday morning, do the dance fitness class on Tuesday afternoon and on Friday morning she has BodyVive (water aerobics for the 50+), which she attends with a friend. They'll have brunch after the session. Also, on Tuesday morning she meets some friends out for coffee or they'll come to her place. On Wednesdays she normally takes a walk in Holyrood Park, followed by lunch out and some shopping uptown (the city centre). Thursday is family day when one or two of her daughters come over for dinner and they'll drink wine and catch up. On Fridays she may go to the cinema in the evening. On Saturdays she volunteers in the charity shop across the road and therefore prefers to relax in the evening and she usually doesn't go out on those days. Finally, on Sundays she goes for a walk to grab a coffee and read the Sunday papers somewhere. She may also be meeting one of two of her daughters who live in town. If she had any spare time, she would go to museums and galleries on her own.

Fifth, Alice (age 78) is also very active, both in walking groups and the association 'Friends of the Galleries'<sup>10</sup>. The association arranges talks and exhibitions that take place most weeks. Of the three walking groups that she's a member of, two operate on a bi-weekly basis and the last is a monthly event, organised by The National Trust, which only happens during the summer season.

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<sup>9</sup> Large upscale department store.

<sup>10</sup> Friends of the National Galleries of Scotland: <http://www.nationalgalleries.org/supportus/links/3:195/> Retrieved: 11.08.11

Additionally, she enjoys the cinema and the theatre and goes when there's something interesting playing. Consequently, she's occupied several nights a week. During daytime she goes to her sequence dancing club once a week as she has done for the last 16 years. Concerning her regular errands, she tends to do her shopping in the city centre, rather than in the suburb where she lives, which, along with all her other activities, requires her to travel by public transportation.

Finally, Mary (age 83) goes out most mornings until around 16 o'clock, except when she occasionally goes to the theatre. She's a member of one weekly walking club, an outdoor bowling club and a health club, which she visits several times a week for swimming and other classes. During wintertime, she substitutes bowling for an occasional game of curling. Lastly, she's also involved in the U3A (University of the Third Age), where there are organised talks and games every fortnight and a place for the elderly to hang out. Of the six women interviewed for this thesis, Mary is the only one who still drives. She will normally use the car when grocery shopping or going to a friend's house outside of the city centre because she does not like to drive in town.

As can be seen from the above stories, the women interviewed for this thesis are very active and able to be so if they want to. These qualities were emphasised during the sampling process and the subsequent consequence and impact will be discussed in chapter five, the second analysis chapter. However, there is a marked difference in the frequency of non-scheduled activities between summer and winter. In the summer, the women generally spend more time outside. For example, Jane and Rose may take the bus to North Berwick and sit on the beach. Rose will also go on outings with the family in order to spend time with the grandchildren. Sarah takes the bus quite often up to St. Andrew's to take in the scenery. Helen resents staying indoors if it's a really nice day and will save the museum visits for the wintertime. She'd rather take the bus to Portobello and sit on the beach reading a book. In the winter the women keep more to the home and attend mostly just their scheduled activities that take place in a fixed location.

### 3.3 Data collection

The main source of data collection was through interviews with the six elderly women. Also, three of the women took part in a go-along, which supplemented data to from the interviews. Finally, I did a lot of walking and riding the bus while observing elderly women in general. I documented this through taking pictures which will be used to illustrate the women's quotes.

#### **3.3.1 Qualitative interview**

In total six interviews have been held with six different elderly Scottish women. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted from 45 minutes to 1,5 hours. Also, I socialised with the women for a while before and after the interview talking about other things, such as my life, their outlook on the world and family. Owing to the nature of the research questions, the semi-structured interview is the best choice for this thesis. What is important is how the respondent views issues and how she frames, explains and understands behaviour and choices (Bryman, 2004).

All interviews were tape recorded after obtaining consent; however, personal information and biographical data such as address, marital status and tenure were treated before the recorder was turned on. The benefits of taping an interview are vast although a blind reliance on the electronic equipment can be a bad thing. I did not have any electronic malfunctions, nor did any of

the women refuse to be taped. The main benefit is the possibility one has to go back and listen to a specific section over and over again in order to gain a better understanding of what the respondents say. Furthermore, how the respondents phrase themselves and how things are said is important in order to get the full picture of their response. For my purpose, taping turned out to be vital since I'm not a native speaker of English. Although I did understand what my respondents, elderly Scottish women, said, there was always a small portion of information lost. By listening to the recordings several times, it allowed me to examine the details more thoroughly and then gain a better understanding of what they said. In addition, after each interview I wrote down my general impressions about how the women had acted and reacted to different questions.

I always started the interviews by asking the women to tell me how a normal week would look like to them in the sense of what they would do and where they would go. This gave me some information that I could later use as examples or ask the women to elaborate upon. I had an interview guide (see Appendix 2) where I had listed some topics that should be addressed during the interview. I also had a few direct questions, where their reaction to the question was as important as the answer. For example, I asked 'Do you feel old?' and for the most part they laughed and thought about it before answering 'No'. In following the phenomenological viewpoint of this thesis, the questions and topics were centred on meaning and analogy. The interview guide was more a list of things I needed to remember to address during the interview than something to strictly adhere to. I followed the flow of the conversation and asked them to elaborate when needed. This gave me valuable insight and I frequently noted down things from one interview in order to remember to bring them up in another.

### **3.3.2 Go-along**

In addition to the six interviews, I held three one go-along each with three of the women. According to Kusenbach (2003), a go-along brings together the strengths of both the interview and the observation. The essence of a go-along, she says, is that as a researcher can '(...) observe their informants' spatial practices *in situ* while accessing their experiences and interpretations at the same time' (2003: 463). This approach was particularly useful for me in order to gain access to the elderly women's experiences of mobility and how this and the contexts shape their identity. While the interviews had given me a lot of valuable information, it was more oriented towards their understanding and framing of things. The go-along gave me an opportunity to probe how they experience different contexts though asking questions while we are in a situation. Kusenbach (2003) lists two types of go-along: the 'contrived go-along' and the 'natural go-along'. In first one, the elderly women will visit unfamiliar spaces, perhaps even spaces that are challenging, while the second one follow the women while they manoeuvre the everyday familiar spaces. I will conduct natural go-alongs because the aim of my thesis is to explore the elderly women's mundane everyday experience of mobility. Kusenbach (2003) emphasise that it is crucial to conduct natural go-alongs in order to gain authenticity.

After all the interviews were done and I had had some time to look into the information collected, I called three of the women to ask if I could tag along for a little bit during a day. These three women were chosen because of the personal contact I had established with them during the first interview. Concerning the go-along, the only things I specified was that it had to be away from the home and it last for a minimum of about an hour. I was careful to observe Kusenbach's (2003) advice that the productive time window for the go-along is one hour to 90 minutes. I went along

with two of the women while they were doing some errands in the city centre and the last one suggested we should go for a hike and then back to her place for lunch. The durations of the go-alongs were one hour, 2,5 hours and five hours, which were decided entirely by the women as I just tagged along with their suggestions about where to go and what to do. The two longer go-alongs included, respectively, a visit to a café and a long lunch. I had a notebook at the ready during the go-alongs, but most of the notes were written down immediately afterwards.

### **3.3.3 Observations and photographic material**

The value of photographs in research is that it a source of much more information than can be written down in the same amount of space. It's highly detailed information of instantaneous moments. I have taken photographs of elderly women on the streets of Edinburgh over the course of two weeks in February and March 2009. These photographs will serve as illustrations to the analysis. The aim of taking photographs, and in one place some film, is to get an insight into where the elderly women are in the dynamics of the urban street. In addition to the photographic material, I walked extensively the streets of Edinburgh observing senior citizens and elderly women in particular. These sessions were my own go-alongs in the area, which gave me a good feel for the city of Edinburgh. During these sessions I also rode the bus at hours where there would be more senior citizens present, i.e. midday. This gave me insight into how the different parts of the city are connected, which was very valuable during the interviews when the women, who were all locals, referenced specific areas or bus lines. I could also connect to any problems or praises that they had about the public transport system through my experience of it.

I mainly took pictures in three areas; Princes Street, Leith and Portobello. Princes Street is the main street of Edinburgh and where most stores are located. It's something like the city's central business district. It marks one part of what's considered down town, the other being the area of the Royal Mile, the castle and the old town. Furthermore, Leith, originally a separate city, is the port of Edinburgh. Because of its history, it works as a town within the city. As such, it's essentially self-sufficient and houses all the shops that one needs. Lastly, Portobello is located directly east of the city centre and is popular because of its long beach and village like atmosphere. Even though it's only a couple of kilometres from the city centre, it feels like a separate little town. The location of Princes Street was chosen because there's always a lot of people present and because of its status as the main street. The other two areas were chosen for their location in relation to Princes Street and for their status as self-sufficient neighbourhood centres. Also, some of the women mentioned Portobello as a place they would go to for relaxation and getting out of the house.

## **3.4 Analysis**

The interviews were fully transcribed except when the conversation became uninteresting, and then I only put down key words. For example, during one interview we started to talk about her cat, which had just walked into the room. Later, the transcriptions, my notes about the interviews and my notes from the go-alongs were coded with the use of a qualitative data analysis programme, MaxQDA<sup>11</sup>. This was done in several instalments. Initial coding focused on organising

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<sup>11</sup> I used both MaxQDA 2007 and MaxQDA 10, which was released in early 2010.

overarching topics and performing a crude content analysis, which led to coding sub-topics. Subsequent coding was done while writing the disposition of the analysis and while writing the analysis chapters themselves (see Appendix 1 for the code tree). Also, I have actively used references to the literature in order to anchor my observations and findings. Hence, the analysis is informed by principles of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1991), but not adhering strictly to them. This makes the process iterative and recursive, which is an advantage for the purpose of this thesis.

The analysis consists of two chapters separated by topic. The observations and findings from the first part of the analysis inform the second part. Throughout, I have had a phenomenological outlook by focusing on how the women experience the world (themselves, others, spaces, places, being on the move etc.). It is especially Maurice Merleau-Ponty's body-centric phenomenology that I use due to the place of the body and embodiment in the lives of elderly women. Photographs taken by me during observations while walking in the streets were used to illustrate topics in the analysis.

## Chapter 4: Analysis – Identity

The first two research questions will be addressed in this chapter through three sections building on each other. Initially, the analysis will probe the relationship between being old and feeling or looking old. Why do the women not feel old? How is it linked to their self-image and body? This interplay between their interior and exterior reinforces the two, either in a positive (more youthful), or negative (older) direction. This section aims to provide an answer to the first research question: 'How do elderly women's concepts of age influence their identity construction?' The second and third sections are aimed at answering the second research question: 'How do elderly women negotiate their age identities?' It will address how they negotiate their body when their own self-image is not perceived the same way by others. Finally, the issues put forward by the analysis will be discussed.

### 4.1 'Age ain't nothing but a number': being old vs. feeling /looking old

'You're only as old as you feel', we say. In chapter two, I addressed Western society's different models of ageing, the biomedical model and that of the Third Age. Following the biomedical model, which traditionally have been the prevalent view of old age and the elderly, old age is characterised by its biological aspects, namely the decline of the body, health and mind. Corresponding images of the elderly entail fragility, negativity, sickness, grey hair and wrinkles. It identifies the mental state of old age as someone having given up or someone perhaps turning into senility and becoming sedentary. On the other side, the Third Age is a result of a consumer society where everyone can create their own identities and spend their time how they please. It paints a positive picture of older age as the second youth with elderly people glowing of vitality and preparedness to do what they have always wanted.

#### 4.1.1 Interior: 'I don't feel old' (all women)

When asked directly, all of the women interviewed firmly said that they do not feel old. But what does this mean? In chapter 2, the concept of 'subjective age' was introduced. Scholars have discovered that health is the most important factor explaining a difference between subjective and chronological age. Good overall functioning and vitality (i.e. higher energy and less fatigue) were proven to make the women feel younger and more independent. While speaking to the women interviewed, it became clear that they don't feel old unless they're faced with a situation in which they're reminded of their age. Also, they talk about their age in a specific way in order to paint a pre-determined image of themselves to others.

#### **Old is the presence of frailty and senility – not old is the absence of the same**

Although feeling old is to a certain extent a matter of choice, there are factors that contribute to this feeling. Jane (age 64) emphasised that 'health has a lot to say whether you feel old or not. One should be happy as long as one is healthy and mobile'. This feeling of being healthy is the pillar in not feeling old. Hurd (1999) speaks of distancing processes where the older women rejected the label of 'old' and the accompanying negative stereotypes. In order to reject these negative

stereotypes, being healthy is vital for staying positive, being mobile and independent. Mary (age 83) gave the following pointed example:

'Yeah, 'cuz one of my friends, she's a year younger and she uses a stick. She doesn't feel confident and I've said to myself: 'And she's given up. She stays in more than ever'. And you sorta lose track of that person because you're keeping going. But I'm not on any medication or anything, so that's a good thing. Hopefully let it last.'

The walking stick, being a symbol of frailty and old age, marks the woman in question as old and frail. This non-human agent, the stick, gets its meaning from the context it's placed in. An elderly person already has a number of external identifiers, such as wrinkles and grey hair. The stick adds to this accumulation of signs and marks the person more clearly. The stick itself is a clear sign that her mobility is limited. The importance of non-humans agents in perception of oldness will be discussed later in this chapter. Mary says that she feels her friend stays in more and has given up. The need for a stick can very likely be the reason for this. The fact that she can no longer get around entirely under her own steam must have been hard to adjust to. Clarke (2001) says that gradual loss of, or a decline in bodily functions, are a sorrow that has a huge impact on both self-esteem and personal identity. Subsequently, not being as mobile anymore, Mary's friend may find it uncomfortable to be seen with a walking stick because she then mirrors other people's perception of her as old. Also, being less fit she may feel insecure in her own abilities and becomes afraid of going out, especially when the weather is bad and there's road works in the centre of Edinburgh making it hard to walk.

When Mary brings up her friend with the stick it is a means of comparing herself with a peer, resulting in her looking good. It is a means of defying her age. Despite her age, she's not on any medication. Despite her age, she keeps going. As such, she marks herself as different from her friend. Jenkins (2004) notes that processes of identification are a comparison either based on similarity or difference. In this case, it's based on difference in order to support Margaret D.s personal identity. Townsend, Godfrey and Denby (2006) researched older people's perceptions of their contemporaries and introduced the term 'villains' for the group of elderly seen as having given up and not living life as fully as possible. The main purpose is to label the 'villains' as 'the others' who do not keep going like you.

Having the opportunity to be mobile and, more importantly, taking advantage of it is very effective for not feeling old. Alice (age 78) says:

'I don't know if I wanna be slowed down. Pretty happy going places, doing things. And that's it, I think really. I used to be a great reader but I don't have time for that now.'

She continues by explaining why she doesn't feel old.

'No. I don't feel old, no. (...) Probably because I'm on the go (...) so much. (...) I don't think we do feel old, you know. Because we do things. That's it. We're not sitting at home.'

Doing things and going places is very important for Alice. Being mobile gives a certain level of independence, both of which are opposite to the frail, sedentary older person. In this sense, mobility is a tool for empowerment and independence, which results in her not feeling old. In the second quote she uses 'we' instead of 'I' to explain why she does not feel old. The use of 'we' can

be an expression of her view of the elderly today compared to that of her youth. Alice is 78 years old and the social images of old age has changed considerably since she was young. Now retired people are almost expected to be on the go if they're physically able to because they have all this spare time to fill. Active ageing is equated with successful ageing, which can be seen in the voluminous offer of activities for the elderly to join<sup>12</sup>.

Although Alice is a very active woman, the first quote highlights an issue I find a little worrying. She says that she used to be a great reader but that she does not have time for such activities now. It makes me wonder whether Alice keeps up her level of activities to prove to herself and others that she is a very fit, older woman. Or perhaps she was exaggerating this level in order to negotiate how I, the interviewer, perceived her. Whatever her intentions, she does have a very positive outlook on life and likes to go out.

Interviewer: 'How do you see yourself?'

Alice (age 78): 'I'm an optimist, I think. And I like going out. I do like going out. (...) And going on coach trips, like to see different places. I go to as many things as I can. (...) I keep busy. And that's since I retired. I've been doing all that since I retired. Once I've joined something, I'm pretty loyal. (chuckles) Some of my friends have sort of gone by on the wayside, you know.'

As with Mary (age 83) above, Alice also compares herself to her friends. Even though some of her friends have become old, or 'gone by on the wayside' as she says, she's determined to keep a bright outlook on life and keep herself busy. She embraces life by joining many activities. As a consequence, this occupation with keeping busy is clearly Alice's strategy not to become and feel old.

Being an optimist is important for feeling content. Jane (age 64) feels very good in her retired life and she even experienced that as she got older, she became more relaxed and content.

Jane (age 64): 'I've got people to see. I feel quite active. I dunno what else to say.. I'm feeling quite cheerful actually most of the time and that's another thing that's just luck. That's just luck really. 'Cuz you could [mimicks death] [die], you know. It isn't that I don't care. As I've got older that's got better actually as well, I think. I don't think you worry about things the same. So much happens to you in your life and you realize that no have no control over most of it, so you just as well gettin' on and enjoying what you can while you can.'

Such an acceptance towards what has happened in her life and having a positive attitude towards the future is often identified by scholars as being vital for enjoying later life. Being independent is empowering, especially in old age. Helen (age 70) equalises her being OK for her age with being independent, both physically and financially.

Interviewer: 'How do you see yourself? What image do you have of yourself?'

Helen (age 70): 'Well, I think I'm OK for my age. I'm quite self sufficient. In some ways I'm quite pleased with myself because I'm not dependent on anybody. I'm financially OK, I own my own flat and I love living in the centre of town (...).'

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<sup>12</sup> In Edinburgh there are a number of activities which cater to the over 50s and over 60s. These are listed in a booklet called 'Get up and Go', which is published annually.

The fact that she is independent is a source of contentment and happiness for her. She is healthy and can take care of herself, hence she is not dependent on anyone. In this way, it is suggested that there is a connection between health, independence, mobility and happiness.

In the last quote, Helen uses the phrase 'being OK for her age' to describe how she perceives herself. What does it mean to be 'OK for my age'? First and foremost, we must ask what her reference category is. 'Her age' doesn't necessarily imply that she only compares herself to 70-year olds, but to people in her age group or in her generation. Academically and statistically, older age is often divided young-old and old-old, and sometimes the oldest old. While the break between the first two groups is often put at 75 years, the last groups normally includes nonagenarians and centenarians. Thus, Helen could be comparing herself to people from the age of 65 to 75. Likewise, her generation would to a certain extent also consist of the same cohort because people in that group were born in the 30s and during the war. Those born after the war are of a different generation. On the other side, she could be comparing herself to the general perception she has of people her age or her friends of the same age.

Rose doesn't see much change between herself now and when she was younger. Compared to other people, she seemingly still has the same image of herself.

Interviewer: 'How do you see yourself in relation to other people?'

Rose (age 63): 'Ahm.. I see myself as being quite outgoing. Just like to know what's going on round about. Generally any of the neighbours just say: 'Hi, how are you doing? What are you getting up to?' And things like that. I see myself as just getting on with everyday life sort of thing, you know. (laughs) What I've been doing for all these years. I don't see much change really.'

This quote shows the importance of biography in defining the felt age. Three years ago, Rose was diagnosed with a serious illness, underwent extensive treatment and is now cured but experiencing some after-effects of the treatment. Being confronted with her own mortality at the age of 60, it is perhaps important for her that things are the same now as they used to be before the illness. Rather than delving too much into how she feels about herself, it is more important to look forward and get on with life.

### **Reinforcing the image of oneself**

The women interviewed did not see themselves as old, nor felt old, they rather identified with being fit, optimistic and independent. In order to convince me of this identity while in conversation, they would use their family and friends to corroborate what they were saying about themselves. Even though they may have an opinion of themselves, it is always made stronger if someone else agrees. I, being between 40 and 60 years younger than the women, did of course form both first and second impressions of them. Some reminded me more of my own grandmother than others. Helen (age 70), who I perceived as very youthful, reinforced this view by saying that:

Helen (age 70): '(...) I do feel a bit pleased with myself because *a lot of my friends at my age*, they can't keep up with me. Even *my daughters* tell me to slow down when I'm out walking with them. So I feel a bit pleased about that.'

Comparing herself to friends her own age and also to her own daughters, reinforces her claim of not being old. She does come across as a fit, independent woman. On an earlier occasion she gave this pointed example:

Helen (age 70): 'Well, *one or two of my friends*, they know I'm quite capable. And usually if they have a problem, they can't hang the curtains or anything, they'll phone me and I'll do it.'

The fact that her friends call her to perform tasks they no longer dare to do, or are fit for, gives Helen a legitimate reason for saying that she does not feel old. At least in her own social circle she is viewed as capable and fit, which reinforces her own identity as such. Likewise, Mary (age 83) answers my question about herself by telling me what her son thinks of her.

Interviewer: 'How do you see yourself? What image do you have of yourself?'

Mary (age 83): 'Well, *my son* always thinks I'm never going to grow old or something. Except when you look in the mirror (laughs). He always says I have the attitude of I'm going to live forever. That's his view of it. I don't sit in and mope, you know.'

Interviewer: 'Is that also how you see yourself? [Margaret D: Yea..] As someone active..'

Mary (age 83): 'Yea. As keep going.'

Interviewer: 'How do you think other people, apart from your son, see you?'

Mary (age 83): 'No, they all think I'm great for my age.' (chuckles)

In this manner, it becomes even clearer than with Helen's quotes that Mary can be seen as mirroring someone else's (her son's) view of her. She identifies with being someone who keeps going just as her son sees her.

It is worth noting that although both Helen and Mary are perceived as youthful by their friends and family, all of these comments relate to their personality and not to how they look. This distinction is a result of their friends and family knowing them. People Helen and Mary don't know will initially only see the exterior, which will produce a different perception of the same women. It is also possible that Helen and Mary will be more affected by, and will consider the perceptions of people they know as more important to them, than those of strangers. Therefore, there may be, firstly, a selection as to whose perceptions they mirror and, secondly, a varying impact of other's differing perceptions. For example, one may care about what friends and family think, but value some of these people's opinions higher than others'. The next section will also deal with the mirror, but in a more literal way.

### **Reminded of old age**

Although the women interviewed do not identify with being old and frail, there are certain situations where they are undoubtedly reminded of their chronological age. As Mary (age 83) mentioned in the dialogue above, her son thinks she's never going to grow old. Her reaction to that was: 'Except when you look in the mirror'. Looking at your face in the mirror right in front of

you it is impossible to ignore it. Your reflected image is a very blunt way of being reminded of your chronological age. Clarke (2001) notes that although most of the women she interviewed were surprised and dismayed by the discrepancy between their personal identity (felt identity) and their reflected images, not all experienced this. As is the case of Rose (age 63) who seems to have a very comfortable relationship with the ageing process.

Rose (age 63): 'No, I don't really feel insecure. I mean, I look in the mirror, but I dunna feel insecure getting' old. I dunna get uptight about.. you know.. the image I see in the mirror. (laughs) I'm past that stage now. Just get on with it'.

Rose says that she's past the stage of getting uptight about what the ageing process is doing to her body and face, which may be the result of her biography. As mention before, Rose has spent the three last years recovering from a serious illness. She suffered some after-effects of the treatment and has had to focus on getting back into shape and take care of her health. She very much has the attitude of 'getting on with it' and I think that's emblematic of what she's gone through. Biography shapes the personality and do play a role in how someone deals with new situations and life in general.

Not only is one's own reflected image a reminder of how one looks, but equally age revealing is the body's reaction to physical work. Jane (age 64) explains:

Interviewer: 'Do you feel old?'

Jane (age 64): 'No. Most of the time, no. But.. my daughter was up in ladders and what have you.. And we decided then to clean her flat and finally we had done as much as you could do. This Sunday she said: 'Mom, we'll not go back because I think we've cleaned enough'. 'Thank god', I said, 'I feel 65'. Everything was soar. I was a bit achy. (...).'

Discovering that she is getting aches and pains from activities that did not use to give her any, is an easy way of feeling older. It is also easy to feel old when sensing that her body is not as strong or flexible as it used to be, or being unable to do something that one's used to be able to do.

Sarah (age 72) does experience feeling old when faced with activities like hanging up the curtains, which she can't do anymore. In the following quote she mentions this, but more importantly she explains how she often avoids talking to her fellow tenants because all they talk about is their declining health. She finds it uncomfortable to be reminded of her chronological age. But first some background information to explain her housing situation. She lives in a sheltered housing complex for those over 55 years of age. However, it is independent living, which means that you have to be able to fully take care of yourself. The difference between this type of complex and a normal apartment block is that the elderly have a security guard at the main door and security alarms in the apartments that they can activate (or sound) when needed. Also, the hairdresser and the doctor come as scheduled every week. The people living in the complex are more or less mobile.

Sarah (age 72): 'Like, I don't see myself as an old woman. Unless yous trying to do something that you used to.. you could do but you cannot do it now, you know. Like, put and hang up your curtains and something like that. No, I don't see myself as real old. That's why when people talk about their health that's when you start to feel "ohhh". Because you don't want to listen to

how people are talking about their health because ... I kinda feel.. it's not that nice. When you're saying 'How are you this morning Barbara?' 'Ah, I never slept well last night..'. You're not really asking that, you're just asking how they're feeling this morning. And that's when you start feeling you're an old woman. I didn't like that. And ... people get out and.. sometimes that's all there is to speak about and I can understand it a wee, but I dunno what to say because that's what makes you feel old. It's a thinking way, you know. You got that club there<sup>13</sup>.. I've only been going since October because... And I find that they're all very nice and nobody's talking about their health or.. it's just everyday conversation. We're only there for an hour. And that's what I like. I don't wanna hear their problems. I just.. Everyday conversation, you know. What they've done in the weekend or something. But no, I don't really find myself old. 'Till you look in the mirror sometimes (chuckles).'

When talking to her fellow tenants, Sarah is of the impression that they tend to bring up their health at one point or another during a conversation. She finds this uncomfortable because she doesn't wish to focus on such issues concerning her. Moreover, by doing this, Sarah marks herself as different from the other people, especially women, in the building. She's not frail and does not wish to get sucked into focussing on the aches and pains she may have. This can be related to the matter dealt with in the first section of this chapter, what it means to feel old. Sarah does not want to talk about her health too much because when she focuses on it, she starts to feel old.

While this chapter so far has dealt with feelings and matters of then inner self and ageing, the following section will address how the women interviewed look at their bodies.

#### **4.1.2 Exterior: 'I think I look pretty good for my age' (Helen, age 70)**

Western cultural ideals of beauty hit women hard, but they hit elderly women double as hard. According to feminist literature, a woman's value has traditionally been associated with her body due to the reproductive and domestic role she has had. As such, the exterior has been more important for women than for men. Since we in the Western world today live in a society obsessed with being youthful, today's beauty ideal is that of a young, toned and thin body. These characteristics are practically impossible for elderly women to achieve. According to Sontag's (1972) 'double standard' of ageing, changes in a woman's physical appearance are often reviled, whereas for men the same changes tend to be appreciated. Previous research by Hurd (2000) showed that elderly women seemed to have internalised the current cultural conceptions of beauty and subsequently described their own bodies in pejorative terms. Clearly, the women she interviewed compared themselves to these stereotypes and made themselves equal to them. The women interviewed for the current thesis displayed views both corresponding with this internalisation and views contradicting it.

On the one hand, there's Helen (age 70) who thinks she doesn't have a bikini figure anymore. She doesn't even think that a 70-year old woman walking around on the beach is a good sight. Whether she is comfortable with her body or not, it is quite clear that she has internalised the cultural norm prescribing that female bodies have to be young, thin and toned in order to be beautiful.

Interviewer: 'How comfortable do you feel in your own skin? How do you feel about your body? You talked earlier a little bit about that you think you're quite fit for your age.'

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<sup>13</sup> The club: the sample from which I recruited her.

Helen (age 70): 'Yeah, my heart and lungs are to put it that way. But, no I don't like the way my body's going. I've got the wings, whatever they're called. Although, for my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday my daughters took me to Stobo castle, it's like a health.. it's a lovely big, old country house. Like a spa. And they thought I looked really good in my swim suit, but you know.. I've got an old body. I've got crapy skin and the saggy bottom and the saggy boobs and things. That, I don't like. Put it that way. But, you know, who would? But I don't dislike it enough to have surgery or anything like that. I do look after my skin. I exfoliate and I do moisturise. I do the best I can. I still got most of my own teeth. But I would prefer if it wasn't getting wrinkly, to put it that way.'

In the above quote it's quite striking how Helen separates the physical outer appearance of her body from the internal functioning of it. To use a metaphor, of a car for example, we could say that she equates her heart and lungs with being well-functioning parts of an engine, while the bodywork is dented and does not reflect the good engine inside. By separating the inside from the outside she can be seen as distancing herself somewhat from her old-looking body. Likewise, Sarah (age 72) seemed uncomfortable with being confronted by her own image. During my go-along with her we strolled through the technology area of John Lewis and stopped in front of a computer with a large screen. I removed a few windows on the screen to expose one which showed what the screen's built-in camera was filming. She was very surprised to see herself on the screen when I pointed to the camera and said: 'That's a camera'. She seemed uncomfortable with seeing herself and moved quickly away from the screen. Both Helen and Sarah seem to be somewhat disconnected from their bodies. At least in Helen's case, it's possible that she feels the ageing process has changed her body in a way that she does not identify with. Featherstone and Hepworth (1991) introduced the term 'mask of ageing' in order to explain this discrepancy where the ageing process is seen as a mask or a disguise concealing the youthful self underneath.

On the other hand, there's Jane (age 64) who displays a relationship to her own body quite the opposite of that of Helen and Sarah with their bodies. As the below quote shows, Jane thinks that with age she has acquired a more relaxed attitude to her own body.

Interviewer: 'I get the impression that you feel fairly comfortable with your own body. You feel comfortable in your own skin?'

Jane (age 64): 'Yes, I do. And again, somehow age is kinda got, I think to do with that. The menopause was funny, I discovered. I didn't quite know.... I knew something was going on. I wasn't comfortable being naked. Not even getting undressed for the bath. I just felt odd.. But then I didn't like myself from top to bottom, inside out for a year or two, but I think that's just a symptom. And now I really don't care either. And I've got friends that's gonna die and I think: 'Damn, yes I'm overweight. So?'. Well, it's true. In the end it doesn't anything and I'm not... You know.. keep people rolling on and there's no danger, I'm not gonna get like that. This is the worst it'll be. It sorta stabilizes as well, I think.'

She points out that she felt more uncomfortable with her body during menopause than what she does now. This is because menopause is the transition, not from one body to another but the changes are so profound that it may seem so. It's interesting to see how she now rather defies the cultural weight ideal by choosing not to let it bother her. She's aware that she's a little overweight, but she doesn't think it's a problem, nor one of the more important things in life. Age has brought with it another set of priorities for her.

Similarly, Rose (age 63) thinks she's past the stage of getting uptight about becoming older. She claims to not feel insecure about ageing but the last sentence of the quote may point to something more profound.

Interviewer: 'We talked a little about this before. Like how you see.. how comfortable you feel in your own skin. How you feel about yourself. Are there any situations where the way you see yourself or the way you look would make you feel a little insecure?'

Rose (age 63): 'Ahm... No, I don't really feel insecure. I mean, I look in the mirror, but I dunna feel insecure getting' old. I dunna get uptight about.. you know.. the image I see in the mirror. (laughs) I'm past that stage now. Just get on with it.'

The fact that Rose feels she should just get on with it may mean that she thinks there's no value in dwelling on things that she can't change. When you've reached a certain age, why look back and dream about the past? On the other hand, Rose's biography is also a likely reason for her way of thinking. Being confronted with her own mortality at the age of 60 probably changed her priorities and therefore her main goal is to continue getting better and being there for her grandchildren. Rose's story is a good example on how biography influences how someone deals with not only the ageing process, but also challenges and different situations in general.

To sum up, this section has dealt with different ways of relating to and opinions of one's own body in later life. The next section will deal with the relationship between the interior and the exterior in shaping the elderly women's identities.

#### ***4.1.3 Interior and exterior: interplay or dichotomy?***

Clarke (2001) found that the elderly women she had interviewed all distinguished between their inner and outer selves. Specifically, she found that they would give their inner self, or their self-identity, primacy over their bodies. The women were of the opinion that the inner shone out and affected the outer, meaning that oldness was a matter of thought. The analysis in this chapter has also come to the same conclusion. In the first part of this chapter all the women interviewed claimed that they do not feel old. They were aware of their age and how they looked, but they claimed that their personal age (felt age) was different from their chronological age. On the other hand, Clarke (2001) found that the feeling of oldness would only be internalized when the body became sick or it declined. My research showed that this relationship is more complex. The women interviewed considered being in good health the most important factor for not feeling old. Interestingly, the women felt old when they were confronted with the image of themselves or when they were unable to do something they used to be able to. Furthermore, I found that the body has a larger impact on the inner self than what Clarke (2001) described. Not only can the body affect the identity in a positive way, but the relationship between the body and the self is more of an interplay than an opposition. This will be illustrated through Helen's story.

The interplay between the interior and the exterior may lead to the two factors reinforcing each other positively. By not feeling old, the women have more energy and can do more, which again reinforce their not feeling old. Exercise is a very good way of keeping bodily aches and pains back and stay fit longer. Helen (age 70) is an active woman who goes to organised exercise sessions several times a week in addition to having a preference for walking everywhere. I asked her whether exercising has made her more confident when she walks around the city.

Helen (age 70): 'Yes, it has. (...) [Because] (...) I think I feel I could look after myself. For instance, couple of years ago.. There's a little place called Rose Street. At the end of Rose Street there's a little Sainsbury's supermarket. Rose Street was famous there a couple of years ago for pick pockets. And I came out of the shop and I was hungry so I'd bought a banana (....) And I was just sort of unzipping the banana and I just had a hint that somebody was to my left hand side and I realized it was a young man trying to put his hand into my bag. So, I just turned around and I slapped him in the face with the banana (laughs.) And he was... he probably thought this old lady is concentrating on her banana. And he was in so much shock; he was literally bouncing off the doors. I stood and watched him. He was trying all these doors to get into, to get away. He was just in such a state of shock. And I just said: 'In the future, check who you're picking on'. And I stormed off. But I did feel a little bit nervous when I got further down. I thought: 'God, he could have sort of attacked me or done something'. But that would be my reaction, you see. My daughters always say: 'Mum, if they want your bag, give it to them'. 'Not on your nellie', I go, 'You're not getting my bag'. But I suppose one day I will. But I don't see why they should have it. It's mine. So, yes so that was my only.... The only time I've had to stick up for myself. I wouldn't be silly. If I really thought they were.. had a knife or something.'

As someone who's been active her entire life with different activities, but especially hillwalking, this little story illustrates that Helen does think exercise has helped her be as independent as she is today. The story shows that even though she is aware that others may perceive her as being an old woman because of how she looks, she is fit, healthy and able to care of herself. She does not feel old at all and this reinforces her good health and level of independence. Furthermore, being mobile is very important for her.

Helen (age 70): 'So, on the whole, I think for my age I'm not bad, you know. I don't have arthritis. One hip's going a little bit now, so I'm getting worried about that because I think if I couldn't walk I think I would be depressed. However, I'll maybe get that x-rayed. I fell just before I went to China.'

She thinks she would get depressed if she couldn't walk as much as she does now. As such, it is visible that there is also a negative interplay between the mind and the body. Clarke (2001) found that the loss of bodily functions, or decline of such, yielded frustration and a feeling of sorrow for the women it happened to. In the above quote, Helen equates her good mood and positive outlook on life with her good health allowing her to be very mobile. Losing her health, she believes she would be depressed and subsequently become less independent and healthy. In other words, a downward spiral.

Linking identity and ageing, it's essentially an issue of embodiment. The body is continually in a process of becoming. In terms of its biology, cells die, mutate and regenerate (Longino & Powell, 2009). Changes in the body, especially connected to the ageing process, do affect personal identity. Also, feelings about ageing affect the body and how we present ourselves. With there being an interplay between the interior and the exterior, it opens up for the elderly women's creativity. She has a possibility to manipulate and negotiate her body and identity in order to be perceived a certain way. The next section takes will explore how the women interviewed negotiate others' perception of them.

## 4.2 Negotiating the perception of old age

As have been addressed so far during this chapter, the women interviewed have a certain image of themselves, a specific identity, and they like to be perceived accordingly. This means that they do not wish to be lumped together with all other retired people in the group judged as 'old people'. This section will address the strategies they apply in order to negotiate their bodies and portray an image they feel comfortable with. This can be done through exercise and diet, but also with the use of material attributes (non-human agents), such as clothes which are intentionally chosen by the woman in order to camouflage or enhance parts of her body (Tiggemann & Lacey, 2009). The role of other non-human agents, such as the bus pass for seniors and mobility aids, will also be explored.

### 4.2.1 Exercise & diet

One of the most efficient ways of negotiating other people's opinion of oneself is to modify one's physical looks. The women interviewed were all active and attended one or several exercise classes a week. While most claimed it was for health reasons, there is an obvious benefit in that if they stay in good health longer they also appear younger. However, there is another dimension to taking care of one's physical appearance.

Hurd (2000) discovered that many of the women she interviewed seemed to have internalised that weight gain and fatness are personal choices, whereas wrinkles and sagging body parts are a natural part of the ageing process. The women I interviewed were all more preoccupied with their weight than their grey hair. As addressed in the section about the exterior above, both Jane and Rose expressed some discomfort with their body shapes. As mentioned, Rose (age 63) was quite concerned with her weight because she had gained a lot after her serious illness. Therefore she had gone on a diet. During my go-along with her, we ended up going to Marks & Spencer's where she was picking up that day's dinner. When we walked around looking at the food, she made a point of over-dramatically looking away from the sweets while saying: 'Ah, they're off limits'. I suspect this was due to my presence and that she wanted to assure me she was addressing her weight issues.

Similarly, Mary (age 83) goes on a diet every now and then, especially when she's getting ready to go on a cruise, which she does every few years.

Interviewer: 'What do you think of your own body?'

Mary (age 83): 'My own body.. I think it's quite good for my age, yeah. (...) I don't want to get too heavy so I do... I mean, I don't diet like some people. You don't eat this and you don't eat that. (...) But I wouldn't let myself go, you know.'

Interviewer: 'Why is that?'

Mary (age 83): 'When you.. Well, because it's not nice to look fat. (chuckles) Do you think so?'

Interviewer: 'So, is it more for aesthetic reasons or for health reasons?'

Mary (age 83): 'Health reasons. I mean I don't deprive myself of things like that' [points to the éclairs on the table].

Looking at the dialogue above, Jane claims that she watches what she eats because she wants to stay healthy throughout her later life. However, it seems more plausible that she doesn't want to become fat because she thinks it not aesthetically pleasing. This view is in line with Hurd's (2000) findings that weight is a source of much monitoring among elderly women because it can be altered, unlike wrinkles. Moreover, Öberg and Tornstam (2001) theorize that such managing of bodies adhere to hegemonic ideals of thinness and youthfulness. In the eyes of structuration theory, Mary has internalised the consumer society's stereotypes of how older bodies should look.

#### **4.2.2 Non-human agents**

Non-human agents are material attributes that only make sense in relation to its carrier. They become embodied in the person and have an influence on the production of identity. In some ways it can even be spoken of an 'extended corporeality' where the result is a hybrid identity. In this section the issue of clothing will be addressed as well as the bus pass for seniors. While the choice of clothes and the act of dressing clearly represents intentional behaviour (Tiggemann & Lacey, 2009), the bus pas serves to identify those over 60 to the people on the bus and those at the bus stop. Specifically, with clothes the women can portray themselves however they like, whereas the act of getting a bus pas means they have accepted being a part of the group 'older people'. Conversely, mobility aids are a group of involuntary non-human agents that indisputably marks the user. A stick, rollator or wheel chair especially combined with bio-medical characteristics of old age marks, perhaps stigmatises, that person as being old. The difference between mobility aids and clothes is that the former cannot be used to portray a younger identity because using it is not optional.

#### **Clothes: 'I'm pretty good at hiding the bad bits' (Helen, age 70)**

Regardless of age, clothes represent an important part of women's appearance management (Tiggemann & Lacey, 2009). Guy & Banim (2000) argue that women have a dynamic relationship with their clothes that can be divided into three co-existing views of the self; 'The woman I want to be', 'The woman I fear I could be' and 'The woman I am most of the time'. Consequently, these views illustrate women's attempts to produce a satisfying image as they engage with clothes to create, reveal and conceal aspects of their personality. Helen (age 70) uses clothes as a means of hiding parts of her body.

Helen (age 70): 'I'm quite clever at dressing to hide my faults. My daughters always say that. I know how to choose clothes that hides my, you know, the wrong bits'.

Research conducted by Tiggemann and Lacey (2009) showed that, irrespective of age, high weight and body dissatisfaction was related to the use of clothing for camouflage purposes. Correspondingly, body satisfaction encouraged the use of clothes for self-enhancement. In Helen's case, she's camouflaging the parts of her body that she cares less about in order to portray a better image of herself. In this manner, it can be said that Helen camouflages some parts in a process of general self-enhancement. Clarke, Griffin and Maliha (2009) found that elderly women used clothing strategically to mask or compensate for bodily changes that had occurred over time

as a result of the ageing process.

For Rose (age 63), clothes are a subject of annoyance. Especially shopping for clothes, which does not make her feel good about herself. The problem is that she, according to herself, carries some extra weight right now which makes it harder to find clothes in the correct size. But also, she doesn't think that the market for stylish, suitable clothes for elderly women is large enough.

Interviewer: 'Do you feel old?'

Rose (age 63): 'Ah, I feel old when I'm in the shops. In like in the dress shops. If I go into Marks and Spencer's, I think a lot of the fashion is not for my age.. not for me. I think the fashion is a bit limited for my size. At the moment I feel it's a wee bit limited. It's not too good. (laughs). So I find it difficult to get garments to fit properly. Things that I like, I just find it a bit difficult. Two weeks ago, I tried on about.. I'm not joking.. I tried on about 8 cardigans (laughing). 8 sweaters! Put one on, 'no, that's rubbish', throw it away, put on another one, 'no way, that's horrible', throw that one away. I looked at them all and said: 'Oh, what a mess'. I wish I could into the weight, then I could get smaller sizes and there would be more variety. I just feel..look a bit more.. you know, I wouldna dress as a young... It wouldn't fit me anyway in that young style. A wee bit better for our age group'.

Given the physical differences between young and elderly women, it is likely that they have different approaches to clothing. Not only do clothes serve different purposes, as the quote above from Helen illustrates, but there's also different types of clothes aimed at specific segments of the market. Lurie (1981) highlights that clothes can work as a mask of age through the idea of age-appropriate clothing. For example, young girls and elderly women are encouraged to cover up, one reason is perhaps that they're not supposed to be regarded as sexually desirable. In an example, Lurie (1981) tells how later-life clothing styles tend to be longer, looser and more shapeless than younger adults. In the above quote, Rose is aware of that the shops have younger-looking clothes and clothes for elderly women. Even though she'd like to lose some weight in order to have a wider variety of clothes to choose from, she does not want to dress as a young person.

In their study, Clarke, Griffin and Maliha (2009) found that elderly women preferred clothes with a classic or traditional look. During my interviews and observations, the general impression that I got of elderly women was that they are very nicely dressed. I thought that not only were the elderly women in the city, but also all the women at the clubs I sampled classically and elegantly dressed. Very few were wearing jeans and they generally preferred conservative colours. Sarah (age 72) was one of the few women I met that had a very casual style of dress. As the quote below shows, she seems to have some problems with this.

Interviewer: 'Yeah, do you feel comfortable in your own skin? It can be related to what you said earlier that you don't feel old, but sometimes when you look in the mirror you might see something that other people would say would be old even though you perhaps don't think it yourself.'

Sarah (age 72): 'I've never really thought ... (...) I sometimes wish I could dress nicer. Like, you think sometimes, you look at my daughter off the ..... She says 'Oh, that's too old'. You think clothes are.. Too young, she says, not too old. It's what you like, not what you buy. And she

says: 'Why couldn't you wear that? Look around you. Look at the older women. They dress nice.' (...) I always say, if I had a lot of money I would hire someone to dress me. Because I never know what to buy. I know what I wanna buy, but I feel... if I could go in the house, I could try it on. I don't like going into the shops and trying things. (...) I never go anywhere you need to dress up. I think I just... I wear trousers all the time and I wear flat shoes all the time.'

From the quote it seems that neither Sarah nor her daughter think she dresses like an elderly woman should. As noted earlier, clothes are 'a form of masquerade that is essential to the performance of a socially and a personally acceptable ageing femininity' (Clarke, Griffin and Maliha (2009: 711 - 712). Sarah's daughter expresses a wish that she would dress nicer, which she agrees with. However, it seems that the problem lies in the shopping experience itself. Sarah, like Rose, finds shopping uncomfortable, especially trying on clothes in the dressing room. Sarah does not like this and from the quote it is understood that she would prefer to try the clothes on in the comfort of her own home. Generally, it seems that the whole shopping experience confuses her. In a way, having given up trying to convey a certain image of herself with clothes, Sarah chooses not to enter specific situations.

Although clothes are important for the women, this importance becomes even more visible when they're faced with a situation in which they have to be naked. Above, it was shown that clothes are a way of hiding parts of bodies, a source of frustration and something to be desired. However, when one is naked, it is very difficult to negotiate the body. Helen (age 70) highlights the role of clothes:

Interviewer: 'Are there situations where the way you feel yourself make you feel insecure or uncomfortable?'

Helen (age 70): 'Well, as I say only if I have to strip off, but.. No, otherwise no. I don't think so really. (...).'

Being naked is a source of insecurity for Helen. As mentioned above, she uses clothes as a camouflage. Even though she is fit and healthy, when not having the option of camouflage she becomes vulnerable and insecure.

Jane (age 64) explains this lack of camouflage more explicitly in the dialogue below.

Interviewer: 'Are there situations where you are more aware of yourself than in other situations?'

Jane (age 64): (long pause) '(...) If I was... I think I would need to have another person to make me aware of myself. So, if I was all done up for going out somewhere I would be aware of that. (...) Because I think women are terribly aware of that side of yourself. I don't think I would like to take all my clothes off now. That'll be a non-look of.. be a doctor or what have you. I think I would feel vaguely embarrassed. I never did before, that's another thing. I never really felt embarrassed, 'cuz I just thought: 'Well, doctors are doctors. .you've gotta take your clothes off.'

Interviewer: 'So why do you feel embarrassed now?'

Jane (age 64): “Cuz you’re falling apart slowly! I always say I’m presiding over a ruin. No really, just ‘cuz you have lumps where you didn’t have lumps before. It’s just because your body changes, and again, that’s a kinda societal thing too. I’m not that awful. I mean I’m not really too bad for 65. On the other hand not as good as 25. So I think that’s really when I would feel aware, more aware.’

She points to something important by saying that she would need another person to make her aware of herself. In meeting or simply just by being seen Jane is perceived by other persons. As addressed earlier in this chapter, by being perceived Jane is looking at herself through the eyes of others. For example, she says that she would be aware of being dollied up when meeting other people, which means that she notices how people react to her in a certain way or perhaps differently than they would or have before. She feels embarrassed about her body because it has changed from what it used to be. Even though a doctor probably would not look at her differently or with an agenda, without clothes she's not in charge of negotiating how others perceive her. Although she claims that she's not that bad for 65, she still compares herself to a considerable younger body which only serves to make her uncomfortable being naked in the company of someone else.

### **Bus pass for seniors**

While clothes are material attributes, of which there are unlimited types, models and colours for consciously tailoring an image, the bus pass for seniors does not function in the same way. It is only accessible to those over 60 years of age, and it's voluntary to register for one. When using the pass the carrier has to show it upon entering the bus. Therefore, the pass marks the carrier as being over 60 and makes them available for other people's opinions, attitudes and generalizations towards the elderly. Since its inception in 2006, the Scotland Wide Free Bus Travel for Older and Disabled People has an estimated 950 000 users which make up 80% of those over the age of 60 in Scotland. Take-up of the card is highest in urban areas and lowest in rural areas (Scottish Government, 2009: 9). It is reasonable to think that most people over 60 in Edinburgh do have a bus pas because the bus system is extensive, the card is free to obtain and they have a smaller need for a car in urban areas. Jane (age 64) explains that, even though she's required to show her bus pas upon entering the bus, most bus drivers and others tend to look more at her face than asking for her bus pass. Consequently, the exterior is used to generalize who may have a bus pass.

Jane (age 64): ‘(...) it's silly because you can just say 'check their face', but can get a reduced rate to the cinema and the theatre and things. And your dying for them to: 'Could I see your bus pas, please?'. But they don't! (laughs) I think that's a great thing. It means you can walk there...’

Interviewer: ‘So the driver just looks at you and go: ‘Ah yeah, you have a bus pas...’

Jane (age 64): ‘No need to show, no need to show', when you get on the bus. But for the theatre, they'll say... well no, they don't. But it just says: 'Proof may be required'. It's a Scots comedienne that says: 'Check the kuppin'. It's slang for your face. It makes me laugh hysterically.’ (laughs)

While the bus pass marks the carrier to the world, the carrier has also admitted membership in the group perceived as elderly simply by registering for the bus pass. Even though

they may have acknowledged their chronological age, it does not mean that a carrier of the bus pass for older people identifies with this group. As such, it may be uncomfortable for some carriers of the pass to have others automatically assume that they do have one, and consequently that they are of an age that does not correspond with their personal/felt age. The pass not only identifies those over 60, but it may also carry with it other perceived characteristics. Helen (age 70) expresses that her fear of becoming lazy and fat made her wait some time before registering for the bus pass.

Helen (age 70): 'I walk everywhere if I can. When I was 60 I taking... I had my car up until I was 59. But I gave it up because I couldn't park in the street and if I went to the cinema or the theatre or something I had to go two or three streets away and that defeats the purpose of the car. So, I gave it up in the end. When I turned 60 I purposefully didn't take my bus pas right away 'cuz I thought I'll hop on and off buses and I'll just get lazy and fat. So, I didn't take it for two years. But I don't do that now. I used to do hill walking when I was younger (...). So, I like walking. Just to keep fit. I try an' walk if I can. Edinburgh is quite hilly so I think that keeps me fit because I got quite a slow heart rate and quite low blood pressure for my age. I think it's working.'

Moreover, Jane (age 64) theorized, rather jokingly, that the aim of the bus pass was to create laziness.

Jane (age 64): 'I have a theory of my own. I think they issue the bus pass to the over 60s so you'll take the bus that you used to. Because we used to walk all over. And that'll fill up your arteries and you'll pop off nice and early.' (laughs)

These quotes show that the elderly themselves have prejudices towards the bus pass, which do not coincide with the official aims. One of the government's initial aims for issuing the pass was to improve health by promoting an active lifestyle for the elderly (Scottish Government, 2009). By arranging that the elderly are able to continue a mobile life even in later life, the government also arranges for the elderly to take part in society. By having the bus pass, an elderly woman becomes more independent and mobile. She's able to continue her life and run the errands that she needs to and not be confined to her neighbourhood. Also, when older people are visible on the street, they open up for more to participate. They are claiming a valuable and rightful place in society and on the street and not being segregated into custom spaces for older people, such as retirement communities and nursing homes. However, it must be highlighted that even though the bus pas offers the choice to be mobile, it doesn't mean that all elderly will use it.

### **When material attributes become a necessity**

Whereas both clothes and the bus pass for seniors are material attributes, of which the carriers can choose their type or its presence, mobility aids are a necessity for movement. For the user, mobility aids, such as sticks, rollators and wheel chairs, are vital and its presence cannot be negotiated. The choice is only between using it and being mobile or not using it and being sedentary. As a result, mobility aids mark the user very clearly as different. Although men and women of all ages use mobility aids for various reasons, the external characteristics of ageing accompanied with the use of a mobility aid fulfil the biomedical model's view of old bodies as declining bodies. Therefore, an elderly user of a mobility aid is doubly marked by age.

While none of the women interviewed for this thesis used mobility aids, Alice (age 78) talked about how she perceived her friend who uses a stick. The corresponding quote can be found in the beginning of this chapter. In Alice's opinion, her friend, who's a year younger than her, has sort of given up on life lately because she stays more indoors and feels more insecure. Alice attributes this to when her friend had to start using the stick. With this loss of bodily functions, Alice's friend may feel that her body has betrayed her. Consequently, she does not trust her body to do what it used to be able to and she therefore becomes insecure. This insecurity may manifest itself in a reduced mobility because she's afraid of what could happen to her.

#### 4.3 Being caught up by age: 'Gosh, I must look old to them' (Alice, age 78)

The above sections of this chapter have dealt with how the elderly women interviewed see themselves, feel about ageing and how they negotiate others' perception of them. Even if the women feel good and are comfortable in what they're wearing, they can't have 100% control over how others will perceive them. This last section explores the women's reactions to being confronted with their age by exploring one specific situation where this confrontation is very likely to happen; being offered a seat on the bus.

The buses in Edinburgh are double deckers that have reserved seats for the elderly at the front of the bus on the ground floor (see picture 4.1 below). Additionally, as mentioned above, Scotland has a senior citizen bus pass giving free bus travel throughout the country to everyone from the age of 60. Consequently, there are a lot of senior citizens on the buses. As the bus becomes fuller, it is common courtesy for people to give up their seat to someone they deem needs it more than them, i.e. the disabled, the elderly, pregnant women and perhaps also people with young children and babies. Since this is a very clear example of the contradiction that can arise between personal and social identity, I asked all the women interviewed if they've ever had a seat offered to them.

*Picture 4.1: Reserved seats for elderly and disabled on Edinburgh buses*



*Source: own photo*

Jane (age 64) has both given up her seat and has had seats offered to her.

Interviewer: 'Have you ever had people, like youngsters, give up their seats for you on the bus?'

Jane (age 64): 'Yes! (laughs) Sometimes. Yes, I have. And I'm always gobsmacked. Really. The other day she [woman on bus] offered me one. And I said: 'No, no, I'm honestly getting off in a couple of stops.' 'Oh no, I would not feel right', she said, 'if you were standing'. I said: 'Oh, I must be having a bad day today to receive a seat'. (laughs) It doesn't happen a lot. But I mean people don't, as a rule now, I don't think. I mean, I've gotten up and given a seat to somebody that looked older than me. But, yes it happens.'

She claims not to be offered a seat very often, so this puts her in an interesting position. Some people perceive her as old and warranting a seat, while she herself gives up her seat to people she perceives as older than herself. Moreover, she attributes those seats being offered to her as a result of her having a bad day, i.e. looking tired or not looking good. The woman solves the contradiction by reasoning with themselves that they are having a bad day or showing their age, which becomes even clearer with the next quote.

Interviewer: 'Have you ever experienced that someone, say of my generation or younger, have given up their seats for you at the bus?'

Helen (age 70): 'Yes, I don't like that (laughs). Because then that means I show my age. But at the same time I think they're nice people. But I think: 'Oh, wish'd they'd given it to somebody else. She's old-looking over there.' Yes, I have.. People do that.'

Helen (age 70) struggles with conflicting emotions when being offered a seat. She does not consider herself old-looking when compared to other women on the bus, but at the same time she thinks it's nice that bus riders offer each other seats. But on the whole, she does not like to be offered seats because it means that someone does not perceive her the way she does.

Alice (age 78), on the other hand, has a more relaxed attitude towards being offered seats on the bus.

Interviewer: 'Have you ever experienced that someone have given up their seat for you on the bus?'

Alice (age 78): 'Doesn't happen often but it can happen, yes. [Interviewer: How does that make you feel?] Ahm, I don't mind. I don't mind now. At first you get: 'Gosh, I must look old to them'. To a young person you do. That's what it is, you see. And I used to say that to my husband 'cuz he was going to the hospital to see about his condition. He said: 'Two of them were helping me on to the trolley'. And I said: 'Well, you see what it is. We look old. To the young'. We don't see ourselves as old. You know you are ageing. But to a young person we look old. Probably because you don't want to be old, that's what it is. You'd want to go on as long as you can. I'd like to live until I'm a 100. (laughs) We now have almost answers for that time. But I've said to the boys, my two step sons: 'If I do go gaga, put me in a home but a good one''

She seems to have come to terms with that fact that other people think she looks old. 'I don't mind now', she says, which implies that there was a time when she did, perhaps when she was younger.

She's especially aware that she looks old to a young person. She is aware of her changing looks but she does come across as still feeling like the same woman inside, which becomes clear through her wish of living for many more years to come.

Even when above the age of 80, Mary (age 83) is sometimes uncomfortable with being offered a seat on the bus.

Interviewer: 'Have someone younger ever given up their seat for you on the bus? (...) How does that make you feel?'

Mary (age 83): 'Yes (...), I'm quite happy to have it, but then when it's somebody that I think looks older than me, but maybe that's my imagination (chuckles), I probably don't. I start to say: 'Ah, why is she gettin' up to give me her seat?'. (laughs) So that's the way I look at it. But I probably do look old to other people.'

The problem isn't the seat being offered but the person offering it because she sometimes perceives this person as being older than her. Even though she is likely fully aware of how she looks like and is not overly surprised when she looks in the mirror, comparing that mental image to a person she sees on a bus is something else. As she says, perhaps her imagination is playing tricks on her because she does know how old she is even though she does not feel old. The bottom line is that she is happy to receive a seat when she feels it's fair. The following, and last, section of this chapter will discuss the issues that have emerged so far.

#### 4.4 Discussion

This chapter has addressed the two first research questions by exploring aspects of elderly women's identities and how they negotiate these in order to be perceived the way they would prefer. It has been put forth that age affects the women but that it does not define them. Through linking ageing and identity, there is an interplay between the interior (what they feel about age) and the exterior (the actual physical changes in older age), which opens up for a negotiation of the body.

Throughout this analysis the idea of the mirror has been present. It has become visible that there is a double mirroring influencing the women's identities and how they negotiate it. The first mirror is the actual physical one in which the women are confronted with their own image. How they perceive and feel about themselves is closely linked with their own views of older age. The women interviewed said that they don't feel old at all until they look at themselves in the mirror. The power of the mirror to objectively reflect what's in front of it, made the women seem to be reminded, more than surprised, by their own reflection. The second mirror is purely metaphorical and highlights how the women interviewed mirror themselves through other people's perception of and behaviour towards them. Already in 1902 American sociologist Charles Horton Cooley's introduced the concept of 'the looking-glass self', which refers to how we assume we appear to other individuals (Newman, 2009). It's through others' reactions towards us that we mirror ourselves and determine our self-worth, Cooley says. In the previous section, the women interviewed were confronted with their own image through being offered a seat on the bus. This affected their own (age)identity and leads to a re-evaluation of it and an attempt to justify why the strangers' perception of them did not coincide with their own.

The women's images of themselves (their identities) and how they think others view them must be seen in relation to each other and also as being mutually influencing. Featherstone and Hepworth (2005: 356) give the following important point to how we experience our identities:

'As human beings, we experience a double aspect to our existence: our embodied identities work through both seeing (subjective perception) and also being seen by others.'

However, seen only from one side, specifically 'the looking-glass self', there's no room for negotiation of and resistance to how we think other's perceive us. By taking into account our own image of ourselves, there's room for negotiation and resistance. The women's use of material attributes and exercise to negotiate their body illustrates how they can respond to other's reactions to them and then negotiate their appearance and demeanour in order to decrease the discrepancy between their identity and other's perception of them. It is important to explore the negotiation because it exemplifies how identities are fluid and relational. The following chapter will explore how they are contextual and situational.

Additionally, who the women compare themselves to say something about who they are. Comparisons are relational and can be based on difference or similarity (Jenkins, 2004). The women mostly compared themselves to their peers and friends their own age because they understand that they're perceived as being similar to them. However, while being perceived as similar, the women were rather making the comparison based on difference. Compared to my peers, I look younger and am more mobile. Throughout the interviews, the women used phrases like 'good for my age' and 'I don't feel old' in order to make the comparison above. By saying 'being good for my age', it implies that she thinks other's look and act older than her. The frequency, by which phrases like this came up during the interviews, was quite high. This could be because the women were trying to convince me, the much younger interviewer, that they were still very much alive and kicking.

Finally, there is an issue that has not been discussed so far in this chapter - the culture aspect. This thesis and its research are not universally transferable. The culture, in which this research is set and from which societal explanations are taken, is limited to the Western world. The data was collected in Edinburgh and the literature used to ground and analyse it have mainly come from an Anglo-American viewpoint with contributions from French, Dutch, Finnish and German scholars. Moreover, the present research is also set in the contemporary, which makes it not only relative to the Western world but specifically to the contemporary Western world. This is because the elderly in the Western world today have a different position in society than they had, say 200 years ago and even 60 years ago. With the introduction and dominance of the biomedical model of ageing, the view of the elderly changed from an image of old and wise to an image of old and senile.

## Chapter 5: Analysis – Selecting and negotiating spaces

The previous chapter addressed the two first research questions through exploring how the elderly women interviewed construct and negotiate their identities. This last analysis chapter will take the findings from the previous chapter and address the third research question: How do the women select and negotiate social, spatial and temporal situations?

At first, it is important to emphasise that elderly women do not have a passive interaction with their environment, but that this relationship influences the spaces they enter into and exit. The last chapter showed that the women negotiate their exteriors in order to be perceived in a manner that corresponds with their own self-image (identity). Moreover, attributes of time-space itself, its materiality and the eventual people present, are also important in the perception and experience and performance of space. Space is both a product and a producer of the social world. As humans we perform space when entering and exiting different situations. This opens up 'pockets of interaction' filled with creativity in shaping and reshaping space and asserting a specific identity. This affects us, the people present and the situation itself.

When asked about their mobility, all the women initially say that they feel confident travelling around. However, when talking about the issue more profoundly, it became clear that they select spaces and negotiate these in order to feel safe, comfortable and confident. This chapter begins by exploring personal attributes that influence the women's mobility performance, before addressing characteristics of spaces that influence how the women interviewed select and negotiate these. The characteristics are divided into two different categories: (1) spatial and temporal dimensions and (2) the social dimension before addressing how different dimensions influence each other.

### 5.1 Personal attributes influencing mobility performance

Not only do spaces have different characteristics which affect the women's mobility performance, the women's own corporeality (and biography) also has an influence. Laws (1997b:49) points out that '(...) both the conceptualization and material construction of bodies (...) make a difference to our experience of places (...). Bodily differences open and close spaces of opportunity (...)'. There are two external attributes all the women interviewed have in common; gender and older age. This section highlights the influence womanhood and older age have on their mobility performance.

#### 5.1.1 *Being a woman*

Feminist literature has emphasised that there is a difference in the experience of space and place between men and women. Specifically, emotions have tangible effects on our surroundings and can shape the very nature and our experience of being-in-the-world (Davidson & Milligan, 2004). The embodiment of a person, inside and outside (corporeality), is linked to a larger socio-spatial dynamic of space and place. For example, the issues of fear and women's fear of crime have been extensively addressed in feminist literature and are seen as an expression of gender oppression and a form of control reproducing traditional views of women's place in society (Pain, 2001b). This notion also reproduces the traditional view of public space as masculine and private space as

feminine. Women do, however, not passively experience space but actively produce, define and reclaim it. Koskela's (1997) research emphasises that women respond to the threat of crime with 'boldness' as well as fear and 'spatial confidence' as well as spatial avoidance.

Jane (age 64) thinks that as a woman you are more aware of your surroundings. She is not fearful, but being attentive is a means of staying in control of her surroundings and ahead of the possibility of something happening. By being in control, she feels safer.

Interviewer: 'How do you experience when you walk around? What kind of experience do you have? Are you aware of other people around you? Like on the bus or in the street.'

Jane (age 64): 'Yes, I think so. I do.. I think that's another reason that I may be feeling fairly OK walking about...at night... When my husband was alive.. I mean, years ago, we would come out somewhere and I would spot something away, far distance. Like a group or an awful drunk man or... And I'd say to him: 'Let's just cross the road'. And I think women are more aware because you have to be. It isn't that I think nothing'll happen but I think I try to spot, in a way, things without being uptight about it. So, when I'm walking around I'm OK. I'm usually OK when I see things and I'm aware of people on the bus. (...).'

Jane makes a point of noting that between her and her husband, she was the one who kept an eye on their surroundings and negotiated them. When she spotted someone who appeared to be a potential threat, she took control over the situation by changing her own location and preventing anything from happening. Koskela (1997) notes that spatial confidence is in some ways based on a woman's social skills in the ability to interpret who is dangerous and who is not. She attributes a part of this to intuition. Her intuition may have told Jane that a group of people outnumbers her and makes her more vulnerable, while a drunken man is not a rational person who knows what he does. Therefore, she avoids meeting them in order to preserve her own safety. However, by acknowledging a drunken man as a possible threat, Jane illustrates the 'power geometry' (Massey, 1993) between men and women in public space and reinforces that men are to be feared.

Although Jane does exhibit spatial confidence, the next quote shows that this is also relative to time and space.

Jane (age 64): 'So, for example last night I walked home. But that was early. The Vagina Monologues was finished quite early, so a ten minute walk home. But I don't feel... I know I've got female friends that are: 'Ohh! You're never going home on your own.' And you think: 'For God's sake, get a life... It's the middle of the city.' (laughs).'

Jane emphasises that it was early in the evening and in the middle of the city. These two factors are vital for her spatial confidence. When it's early in the evening, it's usually not so dark and it's possible for her to maintain an overview and stay in control (see first quote). Additionally, the fact that she singles out 'the middle of the city' as being safe suggests that she finds safety in crowds. Taken together, a space that is light and filled with people is experienced as safer than a dark and empty space. Such spatial and temporal attributes of spaces will be treated further in a following section.

### **5.1.2 Being older**

The women not only have womanhood in common, they're also elderly. Growing older changes

how a person views their surroundings. For example, early research into fear of crime showed that older women were the most fearful, yet having a very low risk of victimisation. Recent studies have modified this assumption through situating older age and showing that in some arenas, such as the home, the elderly do run a risk of becoming victims (see McCoy et al., 1996 and Pain 2001b). Furthermore, there is a series of factors that influence the risk of victimisation. However, during my go-along with Helen (age 70), it became apparent that she had changed her routines in older age in order to negotiate her safety.

Every Wednesday, Helen (age 70) takes a walk down by Holyrood Park and Arthur's Seat which lie adjacent to the Palace of Holyroodhouse at the end of the Royal Mile. This is a very popular leisure site for people living in Edinburgh and it's the city's green lung. Usually she walks with a friend but sometimes she walks alone. During our brief walk around the area she told me that she will only go up the Arthur's Seat if she's accompanied. Otherwise she'll stay on the paths. This is because she prefers to walk where there are more people just in case something would happen when she walks alone. The reason for this is both because of someone possibly attacking her and in case she has an accident (i.e. fall, sprain etc.). Also, the weather would decide whether she'd go to the top. This day it was very foggy and we could not see the top half of the seat. She explained that on a day like this she would not go to the top. Koskela (1997) posits that older women's fear is related to their feeling of vulnerability and helplessness.

Not only does Helen (age 70) negotiate the weather, she also tries to mediate her vulnerability. For our trip that day she had brought with her an umbrella, which was not out of place because the weather was a little unsteady. She then went on to say that it's both for the rain and for protection. 'You can use it so whack somebody, you know. If you need to, I mean. I always bring with me an umbrella' (Helen, age 70). When prompted, she reasoned that she's more wary now because she's aware that she's vulnerable. She understands that she's perceived as being an old, defenceless woman and subsequently she takes precautions. By using the umbrella as a form of weapon for defence, it gives her a feeling of safety. Being a non-human agent, the umbrella also gives a sense of borrowed corporeality, with which she increases her agency.

Furthermore, her understanding of others' perception of her as a frightened old lady was reinforced through her views of how younger people relate to space. During our walk, I asserted that I would and do walk all over Edinburgh at all times of day and I don't think about possible scenarios that may happen. Her response was that young people are not afraid. They don't think about these things. One time, she had even bought her daughters some pepper sprays and other defence gadgets. They rolled their eyes when she told them that she wanted them to carry the spray at all times, just in case. According to her, she then laughed and understood that they saw her as a frightened old lady. It appears that as a woman and as an older person, Helen (age 70) has become more conservative in her mobility performance. The choices she makes relating to path are dependent on presence of company, the weather and time of day. Even though she claims to not feel old, some of her actions question this claim. The next section will address the how the spatial and temporal dimensions influence mobility performance.

## 5.2 Spatial & temporal dimensions

The spatial and temporal dimensions of space refer to two sets of attributes. Spatial attributes are the absolute facts including the geographic location, the materiality of this location (topography and built environment) and the eventual transport mode. Temporal attributes refer to the time of

day (clock-time) and the season or time of year. The numerous constellations of the above factors decide the experience of space and subsequent mobility performance. For example, the city centre of Edinburgh was perceived differently by the women interviewed dependent on the time of day and the specific street. For example, Jane (age 64) talked about how she feels uncomfortable walking along the Water of Leith walkway even in broad daylight.

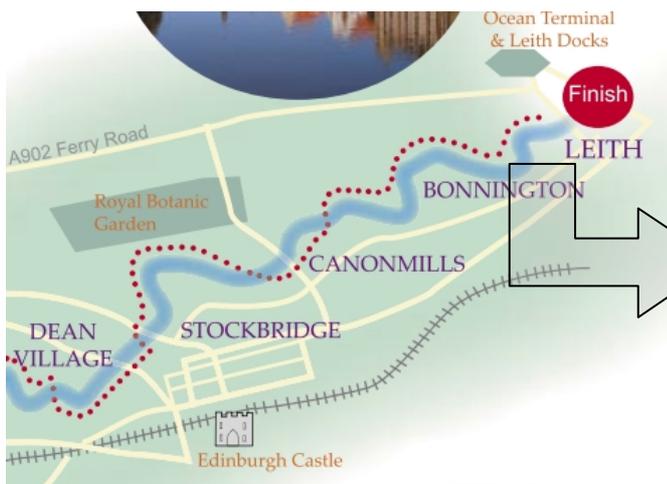
Jane (age 64): 'Honestly, I've never felt unsafe walking about in the streets of the city. I wouldn't like to walk, in the day time even, along would be the Water of Leith walkway. But it's just because it's not totally isolated. Do you know what I mean? It's easy to get to, but it's far enough away for you could get in a few cases there because it's not problem free being there. But otherwise, no I don't feel unsafe at night.'

The Water of Leith walkway follows the river which winds through Edinburgh city centre, ending up in the Firth of Forth by the port in Leith. The total length of the walkway is 20,5 kilometres<sup>14</sup> and during its passing through the centre, it's very close to the central residential areas, often cutting right through. Picture 5.1 shows the walkway's route (dotted line) through Edinburgh city centre. The grey line, the railway, is located between the main street, Princes Street, and the Royal Mile, which starts at Edinburgh castle. This is the area called uptown and it's the city centre. Picture 5.2 shows where the walkway is located in comparison to the normal road by Junction Bridge, which is a busy road with buses and traffic. The arrow marks the location of Junction Bridge on the walkway. What's interesting about picture 5.2, is that all along the banks of the river there are 4-5 storey residential buildings. However, these are located at the same height above the river as the bridge pictured and they are pulled back about 40 metres from the banks of the river. Therefore, the walkway is isolated while being in a central and densely populated area. It is this ambiguity of easy access and relative isolation that makes Jane anxious and unwilling to walk along the walkway. However, it's not just the spatial location and the materiality of it that scares Jane, but the potential of something happening. She implies that there are people there she wouldn't want to meet. Such an intersection and reinforcement of the spatial and social dimensions will be discussed later in this chapter.

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<sup>14</sup> Water of Leith Walkway: <http://www.waterofleith.org.uk/welcome/> Retrieved: 13.07.11

Picture 5.1: Water of Leith Walkway, detail.<sup>15</sup>



Picture 5.2: Junction Bridge<sup>16</sup>

The remaining parts of this section will address the nature of known and unknown spaces in relation to spatial confidence and mobility performance. Then, the temporal dimension will be explored through an analysis of how the time of day influences mobility performance.

### 5.2.1 Known spaces vs. unknown spaces

Koskela's (1997) research showed that women's spatial courage was a product of them knowing their environment and feeling at home there. A familiar environment is attributed to emotions, which detail the space's level of involvement and meaning to the person. The women I've interviewed are all, but one, from Edinburgh. She has, however, lived in the city for half of her adult life and firmly express that it is her home now. All the women express a firm knowledge of the city and a general attitude of confidence when travelling around. For example, Mary (age 83) believes that she knows most of the places in Edinburgh because she has lived there her whole life. She would, though, consult a map if she was not 100% sure of the location of a street.

Interviewer: 'But say you had to go to somewhere in the city, a street or something where you've never been before. How would you get from here to there?'

Mary (age 83): 'Well, I would just look up the... Well, I know which district it would be in. I have bus time tables and I would just look up which buses go if I didn't want to drive there. And, like you, I would look at the street map. But I think know almost all of the places in Edinburgh. I've lived here all my life.'

<sup>15</sup> Source: <http://www.waterofleith.org.uk/storage/downloads/W%20of%20L%20walkway%20map.pdf>  
Retrieved: 30.03.10.

<sup>16</sup> Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/tarr3n/4269205876/> Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike license: Bhachgen. Retrieved: 30.03.10.

Likewise, Alice (age 78) doesn't have any qualms about travelling around Edinburgh. She feels confident because she has a sense of belonging to the city.

Interviewer: 'Do you feel confident when you're travelling around the city?'

Alice (age 78): 'Yes, because it's where I belong. I was born here. I wouldn't do it particularly late at night. Wouldn't be walking about at midnight or anything, you know. (chuckles) I've been know not to get home until eleven or half past but.. nothing's happened so far. Knock on wood. One of my nieces gave me an alarm for my Christmas to use, but I forget to take it with me. And I can't try it because it's a screamer thing or something like that.'

Alice comes from Edinburgh and has lived there her whole life. This sense of belonging and feeling of at-home-ness could be the reason why Alice forgets her safety alarm. She may not see the need for it and its borrowed corporeality, owing to her lack of anxiety when navigating Edinburgh's familiar streets. Her knowledge of and experience of the city has produced a lived space that covers most of the abstract Edinburgh.

Furthermore, not only do already familiar spaces equal a spatial confidence, but taking possession over a previously unknown space also heightens spatial confidence (see Koskela, 1997). Sarah has become more confident in herself and her abilities since she started going to exercise classes. The need for her to find the way to a previously unknown space has increased her spatial confidence.

Interviewer: 'You started exercise in October, right? After you started there, has it changed the way you view yourself?'

Sarah (age 72): 'Well, you feel a bit more confident in yourself when you do things. You've dunnit on your own. (...) I do feel a bit more confidence since I've been going there. And the fact that I went there, I couldna find it and I had to go to the library. I had to ask if she could tell me where to go and gave me the thing for the computer. I spent that day looking for it before I went, you know. Just to make sure that I knew where I was going. Before I wouldna never have done that, went to a library and asked. I would have just come home and said 'Look, I'm not going'. (.....) I just feel a bit more confident.'

Through the achievement of finding the location of the exercise class and making that space known and familiar, Sarah has taken possession over the space. She has produced a lived space from an abstract space (Perera, 2009). Subsequently, her performance of mobility has become more confident.

Sometimes it's not possible to transform an unfamiliar space, for example something as vast as a whole city, into a familiar space. The strategy could then be to take possession over the space by making it manageable. Jane (age 64) has a horror of getting lost and takes charge of an unknown space by taking a taxi to her destination.

Interviewer: 'What do you do when you need to go to an unfamiliar place? A place that you haven't been before.'

Jane (age 64): 'Well, I have got a kinda horror of being lost. I would try and find out, by looking

at a map or doing a Google-thing. But it's easy enough to get to a city. Trains, buses take you there. I then go off at the bus station or train station. I think 9 times out of 10 I just get a taxi. 'Cuz that saves a lot of hassle. And I was doing that when I was younger, so I don't think age has got anything to do with that. But I will study maps for ages, but then it makes no difference when I get there. (laughs) I stood in the middle of Norwich high street a few years back. Somebody was with me and I had the map in my hand. I had to turn it to know which way I went. And in the end I thought: 'Who you kiddin'? Get a taxi'. So, I got a taxi. (laughs). That was fine. I got there, was relaxed. Knew where I was and then I could get back in. That was different. Way to get bits off for the mumps.' [calming the nerves]

By choosing to take a taxi, Jane has realized her personal shortcoming in not being very good at reading maps. As such, she takes charge by relying on another person's level of familiarity with the space in question. Not only does she adapt to the space, the space is itself negotiated through the use of a taxi. While the level of familiarity of a space says something about women's emotional connection to it, the next section will address the temporality of space and how that influences mobility performance.

### **5.2.2 Time of day – decides where, how to go and with whom**

During my interviews, it became clear that the women were generally more inclined to join activities outside the home during the summer than in the winter. Also, they spend more time outdoors in the summer than in the winter. This is of course a result of the summer and spring having a more inviting climate than winter. However, the presence of darkness was, regardless of the time of year, a deciding factor in mobility performance. As the below quotes will show, the time of day decides where and how to go.

Rose (age 63) is quite wary of going out late at night unless she has a purpose, such as an errand or a destination.

Rose (age 63): 'Don't really going out at night a lot. Not unless we're going to some other place to visit and then we get home later. But, don't really go out at night much at all. Just sit out in the yard at night in the summer. Just do that after dinner.'

She prefers sitting in her front yard at night together with her husband. Her preference for being at home could be related to her previous serious illness, from which she is suffering from after effects affecting her ability to walk longer distances. Also, it seems that she doesn't see the value in going out at night unless she has a fixed plan or a destination. Likewise, Mary (age 83) is not so interested in going out after nightfall.

Interviewer: 'Would you go out after dark?'

Mary (age 83): 'I'm not so keen. Well, if I'm going to a theatre show I'll just go out. Yes, and if I'm going to one of those functions at the bowling, I would go out. But I wouldn't go out just to particularly go out, no. It's not too bad. There's plenty of buses here as well.'

Interviewer: 'So as long as there's a bus that could take you home?'

Mary (age 83): 'That's right, yea.'

These two women have in common that they do not go out in the evening unless they have a purpose. Therefore, they would not go for a walk in the evening. However, Mary points out that she would go to a function if she could get home by public transport. In this way she is able to negotiate the evening and her trip home by taking the bus. The bus becomes a means of negotiating situations, and thus avoiding a trip back home in the dark which seems to make her feel uncomfortable or insecure. The bus becomes a sort of safe place on wheels securing a path through the dark.

Similarly, Alice (age 78) also regards public transportation as a means of negotiating her mobility in the evenings.

Interviewer: 'I would assume that some of the places you go, you would return after dark often..?'

Alice (age 78): 'Oh yes, when I go out in the evening. I go out in the evening quite a lot. To talks with the things I'm in. (...) So they're mostly in the evening (...) [and] it's quite often I'm in Princes Street getting a bus home. That's the centre of town, you know. When I mention that to people, they 'ohhh' [makes a worried face]... at night, they wouldn't be out. It doesn't worry me going out in the evening really. But I'm not particularly late if I'm going to these meetings. Probably get home about nine, half past or something. Unless I go in to a café next door with a couple of my friends. You know for that evening. .. I go to a few things on my own. If my friends don't go, well I go. I just would. Some of my friends don't, but I don't mind going out travelling by public transport.'

Although Alice doesn't show any apparent fears about going out after dark, she carefully manages where she goes. She goes to events, meets friends and takes the bus back home. It is apparent that she stays in the city centre and she doesn't feel insecure taking the bus from Princes Street, which is the main street. Perhaps she finds safety in crowds? Koskela (1997) found that women think crowded places are less frightening than empty ones at night. There's safety in crowds because of the feeling that someone will help you if you need it. Likewise, Alice is sceptical towards lonely places. In performance of mobility, she chooses places and situations where she feels safe.

Interviewer: 'Are there places you wouldn't go after dark?'

Alice (age 78): 'Ahm.. Anywhere lonely, rightly enough. I wouldn't take any chances, I don't think. Although usually I live on the top of a hill once I get off the bus. And I do look over my shoulder now and again 'cuz I'm often the only one walking up the hill. Summer it doesn't matter, but in the winter, you know. Dunno what I would do if something happened, mind you. But I'm not afraid to go out in the evening whereas some of my friends don't do it.'

Even if she obviously has reservations about going out after night time, she emphasises several times that she, as opposed to her friends, is not afraid to go out after dark. It almost seems as though this statement has become a sort of mantra for her, as if it is important for her to reinforce her own perception of herself as a 'bold' woman in order to actually be one.

Not only do the women negotiate space by using a bus, some even negotiate the different spaces themselves. Above, Alice singled out lonely places at night time as a place where she felt wary about being. Helen (age 70) also differentiates between places, specifically between her local

environment and the larger city.

Interviewer: 'Do you go out after dark?'

Helen (age 70): 'Well, yes here. If I suddenly decide I need milk or something, I'll do that here in Stockbridge. It feels quite safe here in this area. But no I wouldn't venture very far after dark except on a bus or a taxi or something like that. Certainly not on my own. Not wise really, a bit silly probably.'

Interviewer: 'Perhaps if you were walking with someone else?'

Helen (age 70): 'Oh yes, uptown is OK actually. If I've been to visit somebody over on the other side of the city or something, I don't mind coming home late at night on the buses. And I don't mind walking around uptown 'cuz there's always people around really. Other than three in the morning or something. But 11, 12 at night it's still fairly busy in Edinburgh. Obviously I wouldn't go down, you know, sort of seedy areas or where there's big housing estates and things. These rough.. I wouldn't go there. But on the whole I'm quite brave, I think.'

Helen states that she feels quite safe in Stockbridge, which is the area of Edinburgh she lives in. Keeping in mind the section above dealing with known and unknown spaces, the reason for this could be that her local environment is also what is the most familiar to her. She knows all the streets and has seen all the people before. She has a strong emotional connection to her local environment; therefore nothing becomes strange and unknown. The shops are also close by, which means that she doesn't need to go very far if she realises that she needs to buy something in the evening. The familiarity of the area and the short distances from the home does probably make Helen feel that it's safe there. Additionally, the way she opposes her local environment with the rest of the city strengthens this idea. While she has no problem navigating her local environment after dark, she wouldn't venture further away except when negotiating the rest of the city by taking public transportation or taxis. In this manner, Helen has the same idea of public transport as a mobile safe place as Alice does. Moreover, she points out that it would probably be a bit silly to venture far away from the home at night on her own. Keeping in mind Helen's remarks in an earlier quote, she is aware that she may be perceived as an old woman and therefore this remark can be attributed to that. She thinks it's probably silly for an elderly lady to be wandering about at night time.

Interestingly, Helen (age 70) differentiates the city further. She thinks uptown, the city centre, is safe because there are people there even late at night. Similarly to Alice, Helen sees other people, or crowded areas, as safe at night time. On the other hand, she would never go to areas she perceives as seedy and/or rough. In her opinion housing estates are rough and are to be avoided. Where does this perception come from? Koskela and Pain (2000) highlight that some places are feared because of the reputation they have. Pain's (1997b) research on women's fear of crime in Edinburgh showed that post-war low-income housing estates were widely referred to as dangerous. However, it was only the women who live there who had to negotiate this social danger. Helen doesn't live on a housing estate with council flats, rather she lives in a centrally located area where the majority were born in Scotland, and almost half of the people are young adults and over half work in what is defined as managerial and professional<sup>17</sup>. Consequently,

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/internet/City\\_Living/City\\_facts\\_and\\_figures/Census\\_2001/CEC\\_edinburgh\\_s\\_census](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/internet/City_Living/City_facts_and_figures/Census_2001/CEC_edinburgh_s_census)

Helen's perception of housing estates may be based on the reputation of such places and sensationalist portrayals in the media.

All of the above quotes show that there are various factors, such as womanhood, older age, temporal and spatial aspects that influence the elderly women's mobility performance. These factors are all interconnected and there are also exterior influences, such as the media. The media does influence the image one has of the world. A social production of fear (Koskela, 1997) reproduces public space, or specific places as dangerous. For example, Sarah's (age 72) concerns about going out after dark are a product of her perception of the world.

Interviewer: 'Why wouldn't you go out after nightfall?'

Sarah (age 72): (laughs) 'I don't know.. I think it's .. with what's going on nowadays I think you're a bit wary about going out now. In dark nights but even the light nights are not that very safe either. But I don't think that's the real problem I didn't go out. But I don't think it would keep me in.'

By using the phrase 'With what's going on nowadays', it seems that Sarah is very much influenced by what she has seen or heard. She lives in a sheltered housing complex for the elderly and during the interview she mentioned that there, on several occasions, had been strangers posing as someone else trying to get into the building. There had also been burglaries at another sheltered housing complex down the street. Sarah's experience of these kinds of events may make what she sees in the media hit closer to home, resulting in her wariness.

According to Koskela (1997), the negotiation of fearfulness and 'carefulness' is also a process of managing the self in everyday spaces. This section has treated how the interviewed women's gender, age and perception of darkness guide their mobility performance. In a way, the women's daily spatial practices and choices can be seen as practises of resistance. Koskela points out that women's presence in urban space produce a space that is more available to other women. Likewise, older women's spatial confidence is a manifestation of power. By walking in and using public space (i.e. streets, parks), the elderly women 'write themselves [and the senior citizen in general] onto the street' (Koskela 1997: 316).

This chapter has so far addressed how womanhood and older age affect mobility performance, which role familiarity plays in the space-making process and explored the spatial and temporal attributes influencing the women interviewed. The next section will look at the social dimension of spaces. How do people in spaces influence the women's negotiation and performance of these spaces?

### 5.3 Social dimension: 'I wouldn't want to sort of look totally out of place' (Helen, age 70)

Spatial and temporal attributes aren't the only dimensions of situations. There are people entering and exiting different spaces and situations. These performances of mobility influence each separate actor and her presence also influences all other actors present, as do their presence to her and the situations itself is affected. People influence and are being influenced by spaces, as such, space is inherently social. It affects all in it and they all take part in reproducing the social.

The social nature provokes an emotional response in us, it being fear, attachment, familiarity or any other feeling, which then again has an effect on mobility performance.

Bodies are inscribed with variables such as gender, age, sexual orientation, and ethnicity and by a series of inscriptions that are dependent on types of spaces and places (Longino & Powell, 2009). The social nature of spaces meets these variables differently depending on the people present. As this thesis has emphasised, older people are not a universal category. Ageing is an individual experience and a biological process that is widely interpreted and contested relative to gender, sexuality, geographical location (Del Casino, 2009). Therefore, it is not inherently 'good' or 'bad', but it is the meaning we give to these physical changes that matter.

This section will address the social dimension of space by exploring different groups of people separately. First, the presence of crowds and their effect on mobility performance will be addressed, then the idea of presumed peers, the presence of younger people, men and finally the role of class and education.

### **5.3.1 Crowds**

While the other women did not specifically single out crowds as something they found problematic, Sarah (age 72) did.

Sarah (age 72): 'I spend a lot of time on my own, like... if I go out shopping I like to go on my own 'cuz I think you can look around, take your time.'

Her dislike for crowds could be a result of increased difficulty to navigate the street because the crowd is making it harder for her to get an overview. The more people navigating the same streets, the more complex the interactions may get. Picture 5.3 shows the easternmost part of Princes Street where a crowd can clearly be seen on the pavement on the left side of the road. From my walking the streets of Edinburgh, the amount of people in this picture does resemble an early Saturday afternoon.

Picture 5.3: Crowds on Princes Street seen from Carlton Hill<sup>18</sup>



The interaction of people in city environments can be likened to a ballet, which uncovers interactional mobile patterns, such as 'sliding and evasion' techniques and 'claiming territory' (Jensen, 2010). With this amount of people present in such a tiny space, navigating the street becomes more complex when crowded. This is probably the reason why Sarah prefers browsing the shops at quieter times, which makes the experience of the city less stressful.

At the time of my fieldwork in Edinburgh there were extensive road works in the city centre due to the construction of tramlines<sup>19</sup>. Princes Street was one of the streets heavily affected by this at the time. Not only were the number of lanes for the traffic reduced, the pavement was

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<sup>18</sup> Source: (c) All rights reserved McDaveHamburg – back with a tan  
[http://www.flickr.com/photos/mcdave\\_hamburg/2265226207/in/pool-322620@N20/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/mcdave_hamburg/2265226207/in/pool-322620@N20/)  
Retrieved: 24.04.11

<sup>19</sup> Time line for construction of tram in Edinburgh:  
[http://www.edinburghtrams.com/index.php/story\\_so\\_far/phase/construction/](http://www.edinburghtrams.com/index.php/story_so_far/phase/construction/) Retrieved: 08.08.11

narrowed in some places. This made it even harder to negotiate a path when being crowded. Sarah (age 72) expresses this in the below quote.

Interviewer: 'You try to avoid the crowds?'

Sarah (age 72): 'Aye, I try to avoid the crowds 'cuz I don't like crowds, aye. Ehh, especially the way Princes Street is just now..'

Picture 5.4 shows the extent of the construction work. It's very visible how the flow of the traffic is interrupted by the red and white road blocks. Pictures 5.5 and 5.6 show the road works on street level. It can be clearly seen how it affects the pedestrians, for example when crossing the road (picture 5.5). Picture 5.6 illustrates how the road work blocks completely encapsulate the pavement making it impossible to pass by another pedestrian by slightly stepping out into the street. With people entering and exiting the shops lining the length of Princes Street, there isn't that much space left for pedestrian traffic.

*Picture 5.4: Princes Street road works<sup>20</sup>*



<sup>20</sup> (c) All rights reserved davydubbit <http://www.flickr.com/photos/davydubbit/3965223434/> Retrieved: 24.04.11

*Pictures 5.5 and 5.6: Princes Street road works, street level*



Source: own work

Similarly, Rose (age 63) tries to avoid taking the bus at peak hour. She avoids going to Marks & Spencer<sup>21</sup> right after people get off from work because then the buses will be full. Being retired, she can also run errands in the morning, which she prefers. Her avoidance of crowded buses can probably be attributed to her difficulty of walking longer distances (an effect of a serious illness) and the need to sit down for the ten minute bus ride from Princes Street to her house. During our go-along, she was careful to catch the bus before the afternoon peak hour. We were at Marks & Spencer sometime before 16.00 and beat the after work crowd by a little time.

While the previous section concerning the time of day painted a picture of crowds as something positive, especially during night time and after dark, the present section has treated it as something bad. The materiality of the crowd represents safety during night time but irritation and crowdedness during day time. The sheer number of people present during night time is probably considerably less than during day time, which is probably the reason for the emotions mentioned. This section so far has addressed people as part of a faceless crowd, the rest of this section will explore different attributes of people in spaces, such as age, gender and class.

### **5.3.2 Presumed peers**

As explored in the previous chapter, the women interviewed expressed a discrepancy between how old they feel and how old others and themselves perceive them. This section addresses how this discrepancy comes into play when the women compare themselves to those who are their presumed peers.

Helen (age 70) prefers situations where the people present are not too different from her. When comparing herself to other people, she doesn't consider men to be her peers as the below quite illustrates.

Helen (age 70): 'Likewise, I wouldn't want to... I did start tai-chi once and it was all men and I

<sup>21</sup> Marks & Spencer: department store but also one of the UK's largest grocery store chains

didn't go back to that. I didn't like that so much. I don't like to be that different.'

Even though the men were around her age, chronologically, they may have had nothing in common. Her discomfort with the tai-chi class could be because she was the only woman and felt like an outsider in a room full of men and she didn't count them as her peers. On the other side, she considers all the women in her dance fitness class as her equals even though they range in age from 60 to almost 90. When comparing herself to the other women, feeling equal to them also entails a form of belonging. She highlights the importance of being able to communicate in order to create a good relationship.

Interviewer: 'Why wouldn't you go to an aerobics class with only 30 year olds? Is it differences in how you look?'

Helen (age 70): 'Yes, I suppose. But also.. it may sound a little ridiculous. I like a little bit of banter [teasing/joking], you know.. You saw us across there [at the dance fitness class for women over 60] and we can interact with each other and have a little bit of a laugh or a joke or something.'

As the quote shows, it is important to her that she can have a friendly relationship filled with humour with her peers in order to be comfortable and confident. A mutual understanding between her and the others in the situation is vital for communication and a sense of belonging. In the below quote she recounts an episode where she felt very uncomfortable in the presence of the people she clearly doesn't deem to be her peers.

Helen (age 70): 'I have gotten on the wrong bus occasionally and ended up in out in quite rough housing estates on the outskirts of Edinburgh and that. I did find that a bit scary 'cuz I knew I looked different to everybody else round about. I don't like to.... I'm not self-conscious and I'm not presumptuous enough to think that I stand out in a crowd. But I wouldn't want to. I'm not shy, I'm not agoraphobic, but I wouldn't want to be, say the only white person in the room of black people or something like that. I wouldn't want there to be that much different between me and my surroundings. If you know what I mean?'

Interviewer: 'Why wouldn't you want that?'

Helen (age 70): 'I don't know. I'm quite happy being sort of middle of the road. People would dispute that because I ... I do talk I lot I suppose. People always laugh.'

By comparing herself to the people present at the housing estate, she perceived that she looked different to the people living there. Housing estates in Edinburgh, and over the rest of the UK for that matter, are cheap housing built in the decades after the second world war to provide affordable places to live for a growing population. Among these lower buildings and high rises there have been mainly council flats and they have not stood the test of time. Traditionally, they have been occupied by the poorer segments of the population and those with immigrant background. At the moment, there is a large regeneration project in place that tears these old buildings down and sets up new council housing<sup>22</sup>. Owing to the history and prejudices connected

<sup>22</sup> Edinburgh regeneration projects:

[http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/209/regeneration\\_and\\_town\\_centre\\_management/826/regeneration\\_projects/1](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/209/regeneration_and_town_centre_management/826/regeneration_projects/1) Retrieved: 16.08.11

to these estates, it's understandable that Helen is a little wary of ending up there by mistake. Since she doesn't live close to any of these areas in Edinburgh, nor were there any where she lived in the first half of her adult life, she is not used to that type of environment. These prejudices shine through her singling younger people from the housing estates (will be discussed further in a following section) and black people. The fact that she likes to blend in could be because she feels more able to communicate with and understand people who are, presumably, more like her. She doesn't want to stand out because it seems that she prefers not drawing attention to herself. While Helen has talking about not wanting to be too different, Jane has problems with the company of other elderly women.

Unlike Helen, Jane (age 64) sometimes has problems reconciling with the fact that she doesn't feel she belongs with people perceived as her peers. She explains:

Jane (age 64): 'Sometimes when you're in the company of other elderly women, you think you don't belong there because they seem so old. But then you just have to wrap your mind around it that you do belong there.'

The other elderly women make her aware of herself and Jane seems to be unable to reconcile with the fact that others would perceive her as their peer. In the quote below Jane explores further her notion of not belonging with her presumed peers, highlighting how she negotiates with herself.

Jane (age 64): 'I've got another friend that buys these group tickets for theatre and such and she'll phone me and say: 'Look, do you want to come?'. And it's awful 'cuz I was secondary school with her and she... I don't see her as changed but I think that the women that she's with all look quite old to me. And when I sat down I think: 'I don't belong here'. And then I think: 'Of course you belong here. Of course you do'. But it just feels.. It was the same when I went to the exercise classes first. I looked down and I thought: 'I don't really belong here. 'Cuz I just thought everybody looked quite old. And I thought: 'You're quite old as well'. (laughs). I had to give myself a wee talking to. And then it's changed, the more you speak to people, you see the person and you realize that they're fine for their age.'

This notion of not belonging with people who everyone thinks are your peers can probably be attributed to the discrepancy between how old she feels and how old she is. She explains that she perceives the other women as much older than her even though they perhaps are close to her in chronological age. She negotiates with herself in order to become convinced that she does belong in the company of women who would be considered her peers, due to their similar attributes of ageing, such as grey hair and wrinkles. It's interesting to note that she didn't perceive the woman, who is her childhood friend, to have aged but that she perceives the women she doesn't know to be very old. The idea that knowing someone alters your view of them will be addressed in the following section in relation to younger people.

### **5.3.3 Younger people**

There are social images of all age groups. Just as the elderly are hit with stereotypes concerning behaviour and frail mental faculties from younger generations, the elderly also hold prejudices and stereotypes toward the young (Hopkins & Pain, 2007). Ageism comes from both sides. Recurring at different times during the last century, young people, particularly working-class boys, have been

subject to moral panics<sup>23</sup> constructed around youth subcultures. Such panics focus on their behaviour in public spaces, whether it being crime, disorder, drinking or just their presence (Pain 2001a). In the United Kingdom there is currently a widespread stereotype of younger people as being rude, noisy and aggressive. Their presence in public space has even emerged as a key worry in many public surveys in the UK (Pain 2001a). Helen (age 70) mentioned these 'yobs'<sup>24</sup> as a type of younger people that she didn't feel comfortable with being in the urban environment. During our go-along she talked about these young people with hoodies who just hang around doing nothing. She did not particularly like them and tried to avoid places where they hang out. Picture 5.7 shows two older women and two younger men. There's a marked difference both in clothing and posture between them. While the men look to be relaxed and hanging out while waiting for the green light, the older women look to be holding each other's arms and being more protective of themselves. Whereas it would be wrong to claim that the young men in the photo are yobs, it could be understood if the older women in the photo do think so owing to the men's style of dress being stereotypical for yobs.

*Picture 5.7: Older women and younger men with hoodies*



*Source: own work*

Rose (age 63) also feels nervous around yobs. Her perception of the younger generations is coloured by the media.

Rose (age 63): 'Well, there's so much, you know, you read in the newspapers.. And you just.. you might get a bit anxious. Standing at the bus stops in a crowd. The youngsters and what have you. And you get.. I dunno.. I don't feel.. When I was younger I wouldn't mind walking home at two or three in the morning. I would never do that now. There's no way. No way I would do that now.'

<sup>23</sup> Moral panic: the intensity of feeling expressed in a population about an issue that appears to threaten social order (Cohen, 2002).

<sup>24</sup> Yob: a rude, noisy and aggressive youth. Mid-19<sup>th</sup> century back slang of boy. (Oxford Dictionaries: [http://oxforddictionaries.com/view/entry/m\\_en\\_gb0967030#m\\_en\\_gb0967030](http://oxforddictionaries.com/view/entry/m_en_gb0967030#m_en_gb0967030))

The role of the media should be acknowledged in producing and reproducing the moral panic of youngsters hanging out not doing anything. They make her anxious when she needs to be spatially close to them, for example in the bus shed. Picture 5.8 shows a normal bus shed in Edinburgh and a collection of people waiting for the bus there. There are two older women, one in the purple jacket and the women to her left, with boys and girls who look to be of school age surrounding them. When waiting for the bus, the bus shed occupies a restricted space. Social convention expects someone who is waiting for the bus to stand or sit inside the shed or stand in its near proximity. When there's a lot of people waiting for the bus, each person is afforded a limited personal space. Some people may find it uncomfortable to have strangers in such close proximity. It does seem that the younger people and the darkness of the night time results in Rose being unwilling to be in the city centre at that hour. There is a point to be made that Rose talks about younger people that she probably doesn't know. The following paragraph will address how knowing the younger people in question alters mobility performance.

*Picture 5.8: Waiting for the bus while standing in shed*



*Source: Own work*

Helen (age 70) makes a distinction between younger people that she knows personally and younger people that she doesn't know. This is a factor in her being comfortable or not in a situation. When she's familiar with the younger people, for example her daughters' friends, there doesn't seem to be a need for Helen to think about or negotiate her age and identity because to these people she's Helen and not some random older woman. However, she's more hesitant to enter into a situation where the majority are younger unknown people.

Helen (age 70): 'Yeah, I wouldn't want to be at a party where everybody was in their 20s or 30s and I was.. Although, I do get on very well with my daughters' friends. There all like surrogate daughters, if you'd like. And they're quite happy to have my company and I'm quite happy. But

I've known them since ... some of them since they were 3 or 4 and some of them my daughters met at college and they would come for weekends and things. That's different. But suppose I wouldn't want to go into an aerobics class where they were all 20, 30 and I was the only 70 year old.'

Concerning the younger people, she uses the example of an aerobics class filled with people around 50 years younger than her. It could be theorised that what makes her the most uncomfortable is the materiality of the younger bodies. Compared to hers, theirs are more youthful and probably also fitter looking, which would make her more aware of her own body. Furthermore, she professes to mostly mixing with people around her own age and avoiding situations dominated by people much younger than her.

Interviewer: 'Could it be for example if you feel very different from the people around you? Would that make you more aware for yourself?'

Helen (age 70): 'Yeah, I suppose it would. But then I on the whole don't go into those situations. Really mix with people round about my own age and if I'm in the company of younger people.. like sometimes if one of my daughters friends is having a do or anything, they'll say: 'Oh, invite Bri'. That's me. They'll say to my daughters. Then because I'm in a situation where there a lot of young people and maybe they're sometimes thinking: 'I wonder why she's here. She doesn't quite fit in'. So, I'll sort of draw back and observe for other than.. Yeah, I suppose if I'm out with my own age group I would be more aware of myself. Though I don't dwell on it too much. I don't dwell on my age too much. If I can't hold my own, then I suppose I would.' (long pause)

When she occasionally is in a situation where there are many younger people, she does become aware of herself and the age gap. This is because she thinks that they're wondering why she's in their company. Such thoughts will make her withdraw from engaging too much with the other people present. Consequently, she would probably avoid situations where she isn't feeling too comfortable and being able to communicate with the people present. Conversely, she admits to becoming aware of herself in company of her peers as well. While she's strict about not dwelling on her age, other people will always compare her to who's in her company. When she's out with people in her own age group, a comparison is made regardless of her wanting it or not. "We wear labels that *other* people assign us, with or without our knowledge and/or our consent' (Laws, 1994 in Pain, 2001a: 146).

Labels are also self-prescribed, as the below quote illustrates. In the company of younger co-workers, Alice (age 78) is aware that she's older than most of the people there.

Alice (age 78): 'Every few months I go out with a group. Younger than me but I worked beside them in the office. If they're having a night out, they'll let me know and I go along. And I sometimes feel older there, but they are including me. They don't forget to invite me. I'm pleased that they do invite me. But I realize that I'm older than most, than all of them really.

While she's happy to be included in this group of former co-workers, being with them makes her aware of her older age. They lead separate lives now, which makes it harder to sustain a conversation. Not only is it because Alice is retired and the rest of the group are still working, it could also be because they have completely different reference frames and life paths. The result is that she becomes a lot more passive in the group and in her interaction with the people present.

Again, she has entered into this situation because she knows the people who will be present.

Alice (age 78): Well, maybe in a group that's younger than me, like that. You're not able to converse the same. You'll just listen to them. But they'll ask you how you're getting on and what you're doing. You know, you're still going out as much and they wanna know what you wanna do. But probably I'm listening more to what they're maybe saying to each other.'

While the emotional connection to specific younger people will affect the elderly women's propensity to enter a situation, the purpose of being in a specific situation will also affect how it is experienced.

Interviewer: 'Going back to different situations and stuff. Say, do you feel more aware of yourself when you are in, or less.. Say, when you have the dance class where you're sorta among, let's say, people that are more like you, or in another situation where, say you're the only one who's over 60 or you're the only woman...'

Jane (age 64): 'Maybe the only woman I would feel.. I think.. Only when.. No... Because when I went back to higher education I had to show proof, or evidence of reasons that I was accepted for a degree course. So I had to go to a college. And in the college everybody was 17 or well.. 21 was maybe the top age. And I was 44. And that didn't bother me either and I ended up getting along with... Just saw her yesterday for coffee. We became sorta friends there and she was doing speech therapy too when we went on to Queen Margaret. But that didn't really bother me because I felt I wasn't there to socialize basically. I felt I was there as a student. I didn't mind 'cuz I didn't know them so it didn't matter what they thought. I didn't know them.'

As relayed in the above quote, Jane went back to university in adult age and was put in the same class as much younger people who had just started university. She didn't know the younger people in her class and their opinions didn't bother her because she was not the primarily to make friends. Her purpose of going to university was to gain a new qualification and not to socialise. Jane had a more professional outlook on her time at university and was therefore able to relate to her fellow class mates. Owing to her very clear purpose of being in this university situation, she focused on other things and attributes and she probably would have, had it been a social occasion. The difference in age between younger and older people can be mostly experienced through a generational disparity in the general frame of reference, thanks to biography, and by the older women being confronted with fit and young bodies. The following section will address the role of men in situations.

#### **5.3.4 Men**

While the previous section explored the age aspect in the experience of social situations, this section will address the gender aspect. Jane (age 64) finds it disconcerting to be only women among a company of all men.

Jane (age 64): 'If it was a lot of men I would feel possibly.. just because you're the only woman. That would be a bit off-putting, but I don't think I would mind that otherwise. And when I go to classes and things..'

Being the only woman would make her stand out and perhaps more aware of herself in comparison to the men. Men and women are physically different and the meaning which has traditionally been attached to this, influences the divergence in men and women's experience of space and mobility performance. The gender dynamics produce space that can be, for example, oppressive, respectful, uneasy or in harmony. It seems that Jane considers there would be a certain tension in a situation full of men. This tension makes her uncomfortable, perhaps because she can't relate to the men very well.

As she did with younger people, Helen (age 70) differentiates between men that are younger than her and men her own age. She has no problems talking to younger men, but feels uncomfortable communicating with men she perceives to be around her own age.

Helen (age 70): 'And as I say, in the company of men now.. You see even when I was young I always had male friends. Platonic, but.. because I had three brothers so was used to men. But now I'm a bit more aware of that. I won't... and also I think older men they misconstrue now. My friends say they're desperate. They're looking for someone to look after then in their old age. So, I am more self-conscious if there's a lot of men my own age around. I can happily chat to younger men and I get on fine. But yea, I may be more aware of myself if they're my own age group. 'Cuz I don't wanna give the wrong impression. (...) Men are a bit presumptuous. If you do that [tease them or make jokes], sometimes they think that you're coming on to them.

What lies behind this distinction between men of different ages? She is used to being around men and has perhaps no problems communication with younger men because she thinks they don't see her in a romantic light. Because she is older, she's not a potential partner and the younger men perceive her as being over the hill. This may lead to her feeling more comfortable and safer, so that she opens up. Older men, who do see her in a romantic light, may think she's coming on to them if she's too friendly. This could be attributed to their understanding of gender roles, which was a lot more different when they grew up than in contemporary society. While women today can take an active part without any problems, they were probably more used to women being playing passive and docile part. Therefore, they expect a certain behaviour and interpret other types of behaviour in this light coloured by their life-paths. In a previous section, she described herself as being very talkative and able to make others laugh. Her friendly and open demeanour may be taken the wrong way, as the following quote illustrates.

Helen (age 70): But not just men. I work in the charity shop on Saturday. I talk to people. And also make a point at doing it because a lot of people who work in charity shops, they don't communicate. They're older and they maybe haven't... I've worked in shops, you see. And I've always worked with people more or less. And I like it when people talk to me. But I now have to be careful because couple of years ago a man came in and he was trying on a suit. And because he was a man and he was on his own I said: 'Yes, I think that looks very smart on you. Just move a button a little bit.' And a women came up to me and she said: 'Would you please stop chatting up my husband?' (chuckles) And I went: 'Excuse me, that was not what I was doing. I just thought he was on his own and I thought he would like a bit of feedback about the suit'. So, now I'm a bit hesitant to talk to men when they're on their own. You never know when there's a wife lurking and they for some reason or another think if you talk to their husband you're, you know, ready to run away with them. I'm quite happy on my own. Really I am.'

Helen becomes self-conscious not only around men her own age but even more so around their

wives, which may see her as competition. Her wariness of being misinterpreted by older men and their potential wives has resulted in her more or less avoiding contact with them. Her reason for approaching unknown men comes from her responsibilities in her job, so it's not so likely that this would be a problem outside of her work. All the while, she still seems to shun men her own age in daily life as well. The next section will explore how differences in class and education level influences Alice's experience of situations.

### **5.3.5 Class and education**

While the other women did not explicitly mention class or education level as something they would think about in meeting other people, Alice (age 78) did. When we talked about the sequence dancing class she participated in and the women who attended it, she surprised me by claiming they were all working class. Coming from Norway, where the notion of class is non-existent in the public debate, my instinctive impression of the concept is limited. My academic knowledge of it is larger, but I'm still not too familiar with British class structures. While I had perceived the women to be middle class, Alice would call them working class. Furthermore, owing to her self-definition as being working class, she would be concerned with her own education level compared to that of others in specific situations.

Interviewer: 'A situation where you're different from other people would make you feel more uncomfortable than, say in a situation where you are with people that are more like you? Say at the sequence dancing class, they're all the..'

Alice (age 78): 'All the same, aha. That's right. And from the same kind of background, I think.'

Interviewer: 'I don't know if you're from the same kind of background.'

Alice (age 78): 'Well, I would say working class. I would say that we're all from that. Probably a generation on from our parents, made a step up. I'm the youngest daughter. I had six sisters and one brother. I'm the youngest. But I'm the only one that has worked in an office for so many years. 40 years in an office working. One sister did get into an office. And then she got married and it was the days when you got married and stopped working. So, that's stopped that kind of thing probably. There are some things that come in that I know. [Some people in] The company I'm in that are better educated than myself. (...)'

Interviewer: '(...) is that a difference you would be aware of and that would make you a little self-conscious?'

Alice (age 78): 'Yes, aha. A wee bit. Watching maybe what I say and how I say it, kind of thing.'

Interviewer: 'Why is that?'

Alice (age 78): 'Well, I think it's because you're not .. you haven't been as well educated. Most of them.. some of the groups I'm in, they've all been at university, you know. It's that kind of thing. Maybe had different experiences from me. But I don't let it show in my behaviour really, but I'm thinking... I think that way. I try to keep my end up as they say.' (chuckles) (...) [I] haven't got the knowledge that they have. That's it. Because I haven't had the education that they

have. So say I'm a bit out of my depth sometimes but I don't... I try not to show it.'

Alice participates in several gallery groups and goes to talks and on guided tours with these. As the last part of the quote shows, she is aware of the difference in education level between her and the others in the group. She left school at 16 and has worked as a secretary in an office her whole professional life. Even though she is perhaps more middle class than expressed in the quote, she still comes from a working class background and this biography seems to have defined her more than where she is currently in life. Therefore, she negotiates her behaviour and the way she speaks in order to fit in. She negotiates her external, perceived identity in order to blend in and be perceived as belonging with the rest of the group. Despite her feeling somewhat uncomfortable about the noticeable difference in education level, she refuses to let it control her participation in the groups. She has decided to be bold and focus on doing things that she enjoys. Compared to the sequence dancing group, the gallery groups serve a different purpose for her.

Alice (age 78): '(...) The dancing group that's a nice, easy thing for conversation. Probably that, ... the galleries for instance, there's lot of people that's been educated that do that. And The National Trust<sup>25</sup> as well kind of thing. But there's lots of ordinary people in it too because they enjoy doing what I like doing. Visiting places, going away for the day. Seeing something different. And there is a quote from somewhere I remember reading: 'Life should be full of new experiences'. And I thought that was quite nice.'

While the sequence dancing group is more like a gathering of friends chatting over tea, her participation in the gallery groups and The National Trust is a means of exploring and learning new things. By actively choosing to participate in such groups, they extend her action space and enrich her experience and performance of daily mobility. It could also be theorised that the inferiority complex she presents in relation to education level is easily negotiated because the gallery groups present a space for learning and discussion. By choosing to participate, Alice enrolls and adopts the group's common interest for art and architecture. The next section will address the interconnectedness of the spatial, temporal and social dimensions and point to places in the present chapter where these have already crossed paths.

## 5.4 Several dimensions

Even though this thesis has addressed different dimensions of place/space separately, in reality they can hardly be seen as being apart. Koskela and Pain (2000) found that the social and the physical aspects of a space are tightly knit together. Their research in Edinburgh and Helsinki showed that women rarely mentioned one (physical) without the other (social). Specifically, the social often offers an explanation to why some places are viewed as more frightening than others. They emphasise that it is meaningless to view the social and the physical as dichotomies. This thesis has not viewed the temporal, spatial and social dimensions as opposed but has addressed them separately for the benefit of a more organised analysis. However, the tightly knit dimensions have crossed into one another during the analysis.

Firstly, in the section exploring spatial attributes of a place, Jane (age 64) singled out the

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<sup>25</sup> The National Trust: a charity which protects and opens up to the public 350 historic houses, gardens and ancient monuments. They also look after forests, beaches, farmland, archeological remains and nature reserves among other things. <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-trust/w-thecharity.htm> Retrieved: 11.08.11

Water of Leith walkway as a place where she would feel uncomfortable being. This was because of its mix of easy access and relative isolation. She was anxious about the people who frequented that part of the walkway and what they could be able to do. Here, the spatial location and the presence of scary people reinforce Jane's perception of it as scary. Without the proper statistics of incidents of crime, it is impossible to say whether it actually is more dangerous to walk alongside the walkway than on the streets surrounding it. Regardless, it's a place that Jane avoids.

Second, in the section exploring how the time of day influence mobility performance, most of the women interviewed had qualms about travelling around the city after dark. Especially, they would avoid empty, dark spaces. This aversion to darkness is socially produced. In a strict physical sense, darkness is the absence of light. In daily language it has, however, connotations such as that of wickedness or evil and concealment. Bringing this to an urban environment, it paints a picture of dangerous spaces where people with dark intentions are hidden. The emotional response to such places are fear, anxiety and uneasiness. The lack of light makes it difficult to have an overview and stay in control, which increases the experienced uneasiness. As such, darkness is perceived as something dangerous and avoidance reproduces this experience.

Third, certain combinations of people and places engender the most anxiety. In the section on presumed peers, Helen (age 70) said she felt very uncomfortable accidentally ending up in a rough housing estate after having entered the wrong bus. The social nature of a place can provoke fear, as can the reputation of such places (Koskela & Pain, 2000). The housing estates have a bad reputation due to the stereotypes of the people living in there. To shortly sum up, the tower blocks and other houses in housing estates were low-cost when built and has not stood the test of time. They are generally occupied by poorer people and immigrants. According to social stereotypes, these people are also criminals. Here the spatial dimension (physical location and the state of the buildings) are enhanced by the social dimension (stereotype) to produce a space that is perceived as dangerous. The media then broadcasts an image of these housing estates and its residents. These social representations are often sensationalised, resulting in a distorted image of younger people. When someone bases their perception if these estates and people mainly on the portrayal in the media, it's a distorted image that is reproduced.

## 5.5 Discussion

'Where we are says a lot about who we are (...) aged identities are not only the product of particular spatialities but (...) they also constitute spaces and places' (Laws, 1997a: 93). Spaces have different age identities, which have implications for those who use them. The women interviewed for this thesis were sampled from exercise classes for women over 60. By going there, they acknowledge their participation in the over 60s age group even though they don't feel old, as the analysis in the previous chapter found. However, owing to the nature of the classes they may also be distancing themselves from negative age identities. Participating in exercise shows that they're healthy, mobile and fit. The more classes they attend, the fitter they are perceived to be and mobile and younger-looking elderly women are not hit as hard by ageist prejudices. The type of older woman who goes to these classes also determine the type of data collected for the analysis in the present chapter. All the women had a general level of fitness not requiring any mobility aids, while some were fitter than other. Therefore, the predominant image portrayed is that of spatially confident and mobile older women.

The chapter has explored how the elderly women select and negotiate spatial, temporal and social situations. It has been explored that the materiality of a place has specific connotations and invoke a set of emotions that alter the experience of it. With feelings of fear and anxiety comes spatial avoidance, with familiarity and feelings of at-homeness comes spatial courage and boldness. The emotions evoked by the materiality of space was also shown to be intricately linked with both the temporal and social dimensions. The presence of darkness had the most severe constraints to mobility resulting in avoidance and staying at home unless specific factors were present. This negotiation was primarily done by taking public transport and avoiding walking in the city alone. Darkness elicited emotions of apprehension and anxiety owing to the cultural semantics of it. Moreover, other people were perceived through their external identifiers, such as age, gender and style of dress. The women then compared themselves to the people present in the space eliciting an emotion or a connotation, from which a choice about whether to engage was made.

All choices made on the basis of interpretation, emotional response and negotiation of identity is what shapes the performance of mobility. The choice of path, including entering and exiting, and transport mode decide how space is experienced. These choices are based on emotions connected with the space, connotations interpreted by biography (previous experiences and emotions) and the negotiation of identity. These choices can be taken beforehand, such as avoiding specific places due to anxiety of materialities or darkness or preferring leisure activities where the other participants are her peers. Or these choices can be made on the move. For example, when traversing a crowded pavement it is necessary for her to constantly amend her path in order to go the flow of people. Furthermore, she can be on her way to a specific destination when the presence of someone or something provokes an emotional response, making her alter her path. The mobility performance is always in negotiation with the specific spatial, temporal and social dimensions at hand.

## Chapter 6: Conclusions

This thesis started with pointing to two gaps in the existing literature on the spatial dimension of elderly women's construction of age: 1) the able-bodied older woman's experience of lived mobility has been overlooked and 2) space has either been treated as static or as discrete spaces next to each other. Concerning the first criticism, the literature, when addressing the spatial component of age, has focused either on the spatial distribution of elderly or the coping strategies in the face of declining mobility and a shrinking of potential action space. The health perspective has dominated the research and seen elderly bodies through the lens of the bio-medical model of ageing. Regarding the second criticism, space has been considered either as a container in which things happen or as discrete spaces next to each other. The fluid nature of space needs to be addressed.

The aim of the thesis has been to explore the mutual embeddedness of mobility and identity. This has been by addressing elderly women's lived mobilities through the construction and negotiation of age identities. It was explored through three research questions:

1. How do elderly women's concepts of age influence identity construction?
2. How do elderly women negotiate their age identities?
3. How do elderly women select and negotiate social, spatial and temporal situations?

The design of the research has been a mix of in-depth interviews, go-alongs and ethnographic data (observations and photographs) collected by the researcher. The qualitative approach was chosen due to the emphasis on the elderly women's experiences. In total six elderly women living in Edinburgh were interviewed. From these, three took part in one go-along each. The data collected were rich in detail on how the elderly women construct and negotiate their aged identities. Additionally, the interviews also yielded detailed information about the women's emotional reaction to different situations and people. As the body-centric phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty forms the epistemological basis for the current research, the purpose of the interview was to gather detailed information about the women's experience of situations and construction of identity. The way they formulated themselves was also considered important. The transcribed interviews were analysed with MAXQDA in an iterative way where the code structure emerged as the coding went on.

The two first research questions were addressed in the first analysis chapter. Firstly, the elderly women's formation of identity were found to be in an interplay between internal and external factors. Not feeling old were found to be linked with a good overall health level, a positive mindset and having an active life with different activities on the schedule for every week. Concerning the exterior, the women compared themselves to others, deciding whether they were similar or different. When comparing themselves to their peers, a positive comparison for them would strengthen their identity as being young for their age. In the interplay between the interior and the exterior, the women gave primacy to their self-identity (internal) over the body (external). They were aware of their age and how they looked, but claimed that their personal age, felt age, was different from their chronological age. A feeling of oldness and sorrow would appear when they encountered physical limits or a decline in physical ability. But the internal and the external

were also positively reinforced through that by not feeling old, the women have more energy and can do more, which reinforce their not feeling old. Secondly, the women negotiated their age identities by manipulating the body through exercise, diet and the use of non-human agents, such as clothes and make-up. The negotiation is a process of double mirroring where the women are confronted with their own reflection in an actual, physical mirror and reminded of their age, and they are also mirroring themselves through other people's perception and behaviour towards them. The aim of negotiating the body was found to be a means for the women to match up others' perception of them with how they viewed themselves. This chapter showed that identity is fluid and relational.

The third research question was addressed in the second analysis chapter. Elderly women don't have a passive interaction with their environment. The attributes of social, spatial and temporal situations shape the elderly women's experience of and relation to spaces and places. Spatial attributes means the materiality of a situation, which include the topography of a place and the buildings present. The constellation of these factors had different connotation for the women. Familiarity and a sense of belonging to a place lead to spatial confidence, while emotions of fear and anxiety lead to spatial avoidance. Temporality was mainly associated with the presence of darkness which elicited emotions of apprehension and anxiety due to the cultural semantics of it. Darkness could be negotiated by the use of public transport and staying in crowded areas. The social dimension included the women comparing themselves to the people present in the space, which elicited an emotion or a connotation (based in biography), from which a choice about whether to engage was made. Different dimensions can reinforce each other. The materiality of a place is perceived as either good or bad due to the reputation of that place and her perception of the people present. Path choices were both decided beforehand (places they avoid) or negotiated while on the move (in encountering). This chapter showed how identities are contextual and continually renegotiated. Mobility performance is the result of this negotiation becoming visible through path and transport mode choices.

## 6.1 Synthesis and contributions

Most research on the older women's experience of space and mobility have been wrought with health and the coping strategies they employ when faced with a loss of mobility. While health does play a role in the negotiation of identity, this thesis has shown the value of exploring able-bodied elderly women's experiences. When sampling to eliminate the health aspect being centre stage, it is possible to grasp the effect of the age variable alone. For someone who is not directly hindered by declining health, there are other things they focus on in relation to their construction and negotiation of age.

This thesis has demonstrated that age is a multidimensional variable. It is both relative, relational, contextual and situational. First, age is relative because there isn't just one age. Yes, we all have a chronological age, which describes how many years we have been alive. Quantitative studies use this to operationalise the age variable in research. This thesis has contended that this view of age is limited in that it assumes a set of common characteristics for all those who share the same chronological age. Rather, there are different ages, such as 'felt age', 'personal age', 'social age', 'desired age' and 'look age'. Subsequently, older women may have many ages which are relative to different aspects and these ages may change. How she feels when getting out of bed in the morning may decide her 'felt age' that day, her 'personal age' is the more stable general area of

the age spectrum where she feel she belongs. These are independent of her chronological age and are therefore often in opposition to it. The three last ages relate to how old she is perceived to be, how old she would like to be and how old she looks. Second, age is relational in the way that older women's experience and construction of it is connected to other people and to non-human agents. It is connected to other people through their behaviour towards and perception of her. She mirrors herself in the response she gets from other people and this forms a basis for renegotiating age identity. Furthermore, age is relational because it is negotiated using objects, such as clothes and make-up. The older women were found to use clothes as a means of hiding parts of their bodies that were defines as 'bad', or showing their chronological age. Also, age is experienced through age-specific objects, such as the bus pas for seniors. In Scotland, all those of the age of 60 are entitled to a pas giving them free travel on all buses in the entire country. By carrying this pas with them, the women were externally identifies as being over a certain age. Third, age is contextual because the interpretation of it is linked with larger social constructions of age. As individuals we understand and interpret age in the context of our cultural glasses. These may show a favourable or negative image of older women, which they have to negotiate. Fourth, age is situational because the expression and experience of it is dependent on where the older women are. '(...) it is through spatialised locatedness that we come to know that we are ageing' (Hockey & James, 2003: 125). By zooming into concrete situations, the older women have demonstrated that the materiality of place/space confronts them with age when they need to alter their path. Older women may have a shrinking confidence in their physical abilities and therefore avoids specific locations and topographies.

Age in all its dimensions is a part of older women's identity. Therefore, identities are also relative, relational, contextual and situational. These fluid identities are constructed and negotiated while on the move. While lived mobility denotes the experience of mobility in that it's constrained and individually experiences owing to gender, age and socio-economic status, mobility performance details the output of the negotiation of mobility. In the course of the analysis, this thesis has demonstrated that mobility is not only experienced, but it is also performed. When older women enter and exit spaces, they make conscious and subconscious interpretations and choices regarding these spaces. All interpretations are rooted in the older woman's biography, meaning the vast corpus of past experiences, emotions and choices, and made sense in relation to it. Spaces and situations also elicit an emotional response ranging from fear to familiarity depending on their materiality. These insights are relative to identity in that processes of identity formation are social in that identifying ourselves is a matter of meaning and with meaning comes always interaction. It's an interplay between who we are and how we perceive the world in its materiality and other people in theirs. The output of a negotiation of identity and all that it entails can be seen in path and transport mode choices. The results of these choices form the basis for mobility performance. This thesis has shown that identity and mobility are embedded through mobility performance.

## 6.2 Reflections on research and implications for further study

The qualitative method chosen for this research fits well with the exploratory nature of it. These choices doesn't allow for a larger generalisation of the findings but it allows me simply to extrapolate and and theorise about mobility experience and performance. Insights from this thesis

are quite broad but may open up new ways of thinking about the mutual embeddedness of mobility and identity.

### **6.2.1 Academic implications**

This thesis has aimed to link mobility and identity by exploring the lived mobilities of elderly women and has included contributions from social gerontology, sociology, social geography, emotional geography, mobility studies and transportation geography. Also, this thesis has aimed to enlighten the importance of 'age' as a variable. While 'age' could mean young age, adolescence, adult age or middle age, this thesis has focused on old age because of its lack of presence in mobility studies. While mobility studies have acknowledged gender differences in mobility, most research has been focused on work-home commuting (Kwan, 2000) and dual-earner households with children (Schwanen, 2007). This kind of focus does not include most elderly women given that they're retired and no longer in the work force. Furthermore, literature on emotions and body image had tended to give an image of elderly women as fearful and out of sync with their bodies. This thesis has shown that the experience of mobility is far more complex. Most research on these topics has in general been seen through feminist glasses.

Therefore, research is needed in order to discover the situatedness of masculinities in older age. While there has been an increased interest in masculinities, older age has largely been ignored. Jackson (1991) claims that the interest in masculinities was born as a response to feminism, which emphasised the importance of intersectionality in social research. Some research has been done on older age and masculinity and it found that old age is contradictory for men. While they traditionally are in a position of power, this disappears with old age. Older men benefit from sexism, but are disadvantaged by ageism (Hearn, 1998). While this 'age of weakness' adopts the bio-medical model's view of ageing, it would be interesting to address how older men construct and negotiate their identities. Which societal images are they exposed to and how do they deal with them? Also, little research has been done on the spatialities of masculinities. Van Hoven and Horschelmann's (2005) edited book 'Space of masculinities' is the only larger contribution and it emphasises the relational formation of masculine identities. When women's social identities have changed it leaves room for different masculinities. As such, femininity and masculinity are closely intertwined. Subsequently, research is needed to compare the ageing experience between men and women.

Secondly, studying mobility challenges the nature of conventional methodologies. Mobility is a complex phenomenon to grasp and the challenge is how do we research and represent mobile experiences? Fincham, McGuinness and Murray (2011) ask whether existing methods, that slow down and freeze experiences, can adequately capture mobile experiences and practises. How can we capture the richness, relativity and complexity of experienced, embodied, situated and contextual mobilities? Travel-time diaries are good for mapping time-space paths but don't shed much light on the negotiation and performance of mobility. Questionnaires and interviews will be able to gain an insight into the formation and negotiation of identity while on the move, but will only be based on the respondents' memories. Ideally, the researcher should be one the move with the respondents following them either by taking part and asking questions while underway (i.e. go-along) or by being more passive and discussing the observations during a follow-up interview. The risk of researcher bias is quite large when the researcher takes such an active part in the respondents' daily lives. Also, it is very costly time- and money-wise to follow a large number of

individuals. Furthermore, there are significant issues regarding the respondents' privacy and anonymity. This thesis used a go-along for collecting mobile data while on the move but this method also has shortcomings. When on a go-along there is so much going on (internal flows of space) and as a researcher you have to know exactly what kind of information you would like collect in order to be able to actually collect it. It is also necessary to reflect on the type of data that it is possible to collect. Will it be able to fully grasp the experience of being mobile? In either case, a go-along must be combined with other types of data collection. For example, a more thorough use of photography where the elderly women themselves take photographs of people and things would give specific issues to talk about during a follow-up interview. The benefits of self-gathering of data should increase the respondents' reflexivity on the spot, allowing them to give a more detailed account of their daily life than they would perhaps initially be able to. As such, the conventional methods, such as interviews and observations, do not fully capture the experience of being on the move. While mobile methods of collecting data are preferred, sometimes it's not physically possible, and a triangulation of data should be used while waiting for the technology to catch up with what kind of data researchers would like to collect.

### **6.2.2 Societal implications**

This thesis has shown that there is a difference between movement and mobility and that, subsequently, the travelling experience is influenced by a multitude of factors shaping and negotiating it. All while laying the foundation for future mobility performance and experiences. This insight should be used for planning purposes, especially in two areas: 1) public transport and 2) urban and town planning.

In order to make cities and towns sustainable, it is important to reduce the amount of inter-urban and intra-urban travelling by personal car. There needs to be a continued emphasis and focus on public transport, which is not only a viable alternative to the car concerning travel times and frequency, but which is also accessible and attractive for all members of society. In Scotland, there is a scheme for free travel on all buses in the whole country for the over 60s. This thesis found that this works well with some modifications for the women interviewed. The presence of darkness and 'yobs' were two things that made the women negotiate or avoid specific spaces. They would prefer there to be buses more often on the evenings so that they don't have to wait too long.

Even though the elderly are a very heterogeneous group, collectively they run the risk of facing severe constraints. Elderly are in the danger zone of being marginalised in public spaces, due to features of the built environment itself. Their needs are running the risk of being sidelined or ignored (Milligan et al. 2005). Day (2008) emphasises that the need to pay attention to elderly people's environments is an environmental equity issue. This is due to the range of biophysical changes that tend to accompany ageing, all of which consequently leaves this cohort especially sensitive to their physical surroundings. For example, everyday mobility is higher in areas where there are basic supply resources and leisure facilities within the residential environment (Föbker & Grotz, 2006), and where there are attractive, pedestrian-friendly walking routes (Booth et al., 2000, Michael, Green & Farquhar, 2006). The planning of age-friendly urban environments is not only an issue of making it easier to navigate public space, it is also an issue of participation in social life. While the diversity of older people's experience of public space is as varied as that of adults, it is important to recognise it. Some elderly have mobility challenges and therefore needs there to be

few spatial barriers, others are very active and rather require there to be activities they would be interested in participating in. With the use of planning tools, it is important to create opportunities for intergenerational meetings, either in public space or at specific locations, which will attempt to counteract ageist attitudes and stereotypes.

Furthermore, older people's geographies have heavily informed policy, which can be seen through the growing body of national and international legislation on age and age discrimination. Maxey (2009) theorises that this is built on two pillars in our society: 1) the post modern embrace of difference and respect for equality and 2) the changing demographic structure of Western societies towards the ageing of the population. Internationally, the UN has started a programme to facilitate a society for all ages. In the UK, The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations came into force on October 1, 2006<sup>26</sup>. This law banned discrimination on the basis of age in the work arena for all under the age of 65. This means the someone can't be fired or not considered for a job on the basis of their age. The problem with this not being extended to those above the age of 65 was the default retirement age that followed. This view of elderly is based on the assumption that all elderly share the same traits and attributes simply because they share the same chronological age. One issue could be that in an ever fast-moving world, with the increasing importance and presence of new information and communication technologies, older workers are perceived as not keeping up with the pace. In reality, some 100 000 people were forced to retire because their employers issued them with a retirement notice when they turned 65. However, the British government has announced this Default Retirement Age is to be scrapped by 2012<sup>27</sup>. With the surge in anti-discrimination legislation, the focus has disproportionately been on the elderly. Once the logic of age-based discrimination is accepted by society, it becomes increasingly difficult to address other forms of ageism, especially that towards younger people. There will probably be renewed calls to reconsider the minimum voting age, age of independence, minimum criminal liability age and at what age young people have the right to an independent income.

No matter how policies, built environments and public transport are constructed in the future, it will be important to create a society for all ages. There will be an ever increasing number of older men and women in the world in the coming decades and their needs must be taken into consideration in the planning process. In order to address their needs wisely, it will therefore become very important to know how older people experience and perform mobility with the social, spatial and temporal dimensions at hand.

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2006/1031/contents/made> Retrieved: 13.08.11

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/latest-news/archive/default-retirement-age-to-be-scrapped/> Retrieved: 13.08.11

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## Appendix 1: Code tree

- Code System [370]
  - Remembering the past [1]
  - Roadworks [2]
  - Mobile phone [4]
    - Disturbing (others) [1]
    - Safety reasons [2]
  - Internet [2]
  - How I see the women [1]
  - Car [5]
  - Have to take bus [1]
  - Edinburgh - good for elderly [1]
  - Negotiating space [1]
    - Going alone [11]
  - Time of day [4]
    - Morning [1]
    - After dark [11]
      - Media [2]
  - Not achieving traits for old age [1]
  - Keeping up activities [10]
  - Home [10]
  - Personal info [6]
  - Attitude towards me [8]
  - Weekly doings [10]
  - Previous health problems [5]
  - Bus pass Positive [10]
  - The future [13]
  - Summertime [7]
  - Spatial awareness [11]
    - Being older [9]
    - Young people [7]
  - Spatial Confidence [12]
    - Class difference - similarity [1]
      - Education [1]
    - Being a woman [6]
    - Unkown destination [6]
    - Cope - creativity [7]
    - Get out - socialize [4]
  - Walking [8]
    - No fear [6]
    - Areas further away from home [1]
    - Areas close to home [4]
  - Negotiating the body [1]
    - Beautification [4]
    - Exercise [17]
    - Bodily regimes [2]
    - Clothes [9]
  - Ability [2]
  - Age - view of respondent [6]
    - Health [6]
    - Body [10]
    - Continue [2]
    - Changed exterior [15]
    - Way of thinking [7]
    - Changed capability [6]
    - Changed mindsets [9]
    - Compare themselves to peers [10]
    - Use biomedical vocabulary [13]
    - Independent [9]
  - Identity [8]
  - Other people [21]

## **Appendix 2: Interview guide**

### **Personal information**

Name, age, address, education, marital status, type of dwelling, tenure

### **Mobility (getting out and about)**

Shopping/errands

Socialising

Transport – *bus pass: do you think the bus pass has an influence on where and how much you travel?*

Alone/together – *what do you prefer and why?*

Times of day – *do you go out after dark? Why, why not? - Are there places you wouldn't go?*

How do you experience walking around/being on the bus? - *X: feel confident, keep an eye on your surroundings, meet strangers eyes, do people pay attention to you (give up their seats on the bus) – Have someone ever given their seat up for you on the bus? - How do you feel about that?*

### **ID: how do you see yourself? (image you have of yourself)**

**How do you think others see you?**

**Do you feel old?**

Do you feel confident when walking around?

Do you venture far from the home? *If not, why not?*

Are there situations where you are more aware of yourself than in other situations? (*dance class vs on the bus/in the street vs in a shop*)

What do you do when you need to go to an unfamiliar place? (*Are there any for you?*)

Alone/together

Times of day – *after dark? Places you wouldn't go?*

### **Body**

How comfortable to you feel in your own skin? - Are there situations where you feel insecure?

What do you think of your body? (to intimate?)

Leisure activities?

- *how long in class? - how long have you been coming to this lunch club? - how long been an activist?*
- *Has it changed how you view yourself? If so, in what way? More confident travelling?*
- *More or less aware of who you are when in dance class or on the street/on the bus?*

### **Identity (see oneself)**

How do you see yourself?

In relation to others? (ID by what is not?)

How do you think others see you?

What is home for you? (*house/apartment, neighbourhood, city*)

Has home changed during your lifetime? / Multiple homes? (nationality)