Social Infrastructure:
How shared spaces make communities work

Sophie Yarker, April 2019

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The University of Manchester
Institute for Collaborative
Research on Ageing

About the Author

Sophie Yarker joined the Ambition for Ageing team in September 2018 in the post of Research Fellow. Her role is based in the Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research on Ageing (MICRA) at the University of Manchester. Sophie's role involves bringing academic research on social isolation/co-research into the programme. Her PHD focussed on the nature and extent of local belonging and attachment to place in the context of urban regeneration.

MICRA is a leading research centre carrying out multidisciplinary research into fundamental questions about ageing. Their researchers address fundamental research questions about ageing and society through collaborative research. MICRA is a partner in the Ambition for Ageing programme.

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Introduction

To reduce social isolation for older people we need a diversity of social infrastructure supporting the development and maintenance of different *types* and *levels* of social capital.

Whilst formal community and voluntary organisations have a role to play in this, we should not overlook the importance of the informal third places in neighbourhoods that allow chance social encounters with a diversity of people.

The report argues that:

1. The social infrastructure of our neighbourhoods is vital for reducing social isolation for older people and therefore forms an important part of developing age-friendly neighbourhoods.
2. Different kinds of social infrastructure help support different types and levels of social capital.
3. Strong social ties and bonding capital are important for reducing social isolation for older people but we need to also recognise the value of weak social ties and the need for these connections to be built across groups of social difference (bridging capital).
4. Social infrastructure that support intergenerational and intercultural encounter therefore become increasingly important not only for an individual's level of social connection, but for community cohesion and resilience.
5. Social infrastructure has an additional important role to play in creating spaces for social change and creating an enabling environment for further social participation.
6. Despite its often informal and unintended nature social infrastructure is not naturally occurring and therefore requires direct investment and support.

Image Credit: Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Ambition for Ageing

Ambition for Ageing is a Greater Manchester wide cross-sector partnership, led by GMCVO and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, aimed at creating more age friendly places by connecting communities and people through the creation of relationships, development of existing assets and putting people aged over 50 at the heart of designing the places they live.

Ambition for Ageing is part of Ageing Better, a programme set up by The National Lottery Community Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK. Ageing Better aims to develop creative ways for people aged over 50 to be actively involved in their local communities, helping to combat social isolation and loneliness. It is one of five major programmes set up by The National Lottery Community Fund to test and learn from new approaches to designing services which aim to make people's lives healthier and happier.

> **Social isolation is a term referring to the absence of social contact with other people and is distinct from loneliness which is associated with a subjective perception of feeling lonely.**
> *Box 1*

Older people can be particularly vulnerable to social isolation (see box 1 for a definition), resulting from the loss of friends, family, mobility and income. Research demonstrates a clear link between social isolation and reduced wellbeing for older people. Tackling social isolation through supporting social contact is therefore an important task in allowing people to 'age in place', the policy of encouraging people to remain in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.

Existing research identifies a number of risk factors that increase the likelihood of older people experiencing social isolation (Buffel, et al., 2015). These risk factors were found at both the individual and structural level. However it is factors identified at the community level which provide the focus of this report. Some local communities are more amenable than others to facilitating social interaction for older people. The perceived level of safety, physical barriers and age-segregated living will all have a limiting effect on opportunities to meet and interact with other people. So too does a lack of opportunities for social participation. How we can support spaces of social encounter for older people becomes critical for developing age-friendly neighbourhoods. Therefore, this report identifies how social infrastructure in neighbourhoods can promote social interaction and reduce social isolation for older people.

What is Social Infrastructure?

Ask someone to name the different infrastructure in and around their neighbourhood and they might mention the physical environment such as roads and power lines. They might also give some account of this infrastructure 'going wrong', pot holes for example or power shortages. This reflects the fact that we tend to only really notice infrastructure when it stops working or is absent all together. Social infrastructure, however, is often even more overlooked and taken for granted that its physical counterpart (Klinenberg, 2018a).

Dan Gregory defines social infrastructure as

'the range of activities, organisations and facilities supporting the formation, development and maintenance of social relationships in a community' (2012:11).

Social infrastructure can include community spaces such as village halls and community hubs, public services such as libraries and GP surgeries, public spaces such as parks and squares, as well as commercial spaces such as shops, shopping centres, cafes, banks and post offices.

Such spaces are often referred to as third places drawing on Ray Olderburg' influential book *The Great Good Place* (1989). This defines third places as being any space that has the capacity to facilitate social interaction with others and therefore has the potential to facilitate the building of social capital. It distinguishes these places as being outside of the home (first place), and our place of work (second place), therefore they are third places. *Box 2*

Social infrastructure provides spaces and opportunities for people to have social interactions and build connections (see box 2). Crucially, however, social infrastructure is not the same as social capital (see box 3). Social capital is the extent and form of individual's social networks and relationships. Social infrastructure is the places in which those relationships are formed, providing opportunity for local face-to-face interactions that are, as Klinenberg describes 'the building blocks of all public life'.

Social capital in the form of local contacts has been found to be important factor in the wellbeing of older people as it provides a source of social support that can reduce social isolation and loneliness (Lager et al., 2015), and increase resilience (Bagnall, 2018). To understand more fully how social infrastructure helps reduce social isolation we need a more in-depth analysis of the types of social capital produced and how they work. Mark Granovetter's book, *The Strength of Weak Ties* (1973) made an important contribution to the sociological study of relationships and connections. In addition to 'bridging' and 'bonding' capital he differentiated between 'strong' and 'weak' ties (see box 3), arguing that a combination of both was important as they perform different functions in holding members of society together.

Our understanding of sources of social support for older people has shifted away from a focus solely on families and towards the role of 'personal communities' of friends and neighbours (Phillipson et al., 2001), as a wider array of actors take on a more prominent place in the social networks of older people. Going further, Gray (2009) found that neighbourhood contacts actually had a greater effect in providing support for

There are broadly two forms of social capital. **Bonding capital** refers to the relationships and networks between people who share some form of commonality. **Bridging capital** on the other hand refers to connections made between diverse groups of people.

Within both types of relationships there is the possibility for individuals to develop both strong and weak ties of association and both are important for supporting ageing in place.

Strong ties can be defined as friendships and a relationship that requires a certain amount of effort to maintain.

Weak ties can be thought of more as acquaintances, connections with others without substantial significance. Most people have many more weak ties with others than strong ones. *Box 3*

older people than did being active, partnership status or having had children. Scharf and De Jong Gierveld (2008) concluded that having wider community focused networks led to older people reporting lower levels of loneliness than those with more private and restricted networks. Therefore, we need to pay critical attention to the features of neighbourhoods that support and enable these neighbourhoods-based social contacts, especially those that extend social networks through bridging capital. This is consistent with the 'ageing in place' approach to policy and research which focuses on enabling older people to remain in their chosen homes and communities as long as possible. This moves the focus beyond the home itself to consider the local neighbourhoods in which people age. It is therefore instructive to bring this literature into dialogue with that of social infrastructure and neighbourhood third places.

Typical policy responses to social isolation in older people have been to encourage the joining of clubs and associations in the local area, or volunteering with formal community and voluntary organisations. A substantial body of literature attests to the multiple benefits of membership and volunteering both for older people themselves and the communities to which they contribute. However, volunteering alone is often not enough to protect from more profound social isolation (Nazroo and Matthews, 2012). Equally, a focus on formal social participation through volunteering can overlook inequalities that persist amongst the older population that can undermine their opportunity and capacity to engage in this type of more formal social participation (Ziegler, 2012). Ill-health and restricted mobility for example can present a barrier for many older people, as can financial and economic inequalities. A recent *Centre for Ageing Better* survey reported that those older people who stand to benefit the most from taking part in voluntary pursuits, are actually the least likely to do so (Jopling and Jones, 2018). In other cases, there might be limited opportunities for such social activities in the local area.

Therefore, if we are to promote social participation as a route out of social isolation for older people, we need to develop a broader understanding of what social participation involves. This report argues that this should include the everyday and often mundane informal encounters we have with others in our local neighbourhood and that these need to be valued for their impact on the social capital of older people. For this we need to look to the diversity of social infrastructure that can animate these types of sociability. Community and voluntary sector organisations provide one arena for social contact. This report will also consider the diversity of third places within communities, how they contribute to social capital for older people and therefore the role they play in age-friendly neighbourhoods.

The diversity and range of Social Infrastructure: third places

Klinenberg (2018b), in an important book on the concept of social infrastructure, provides a broad definition reflecting the complexity and diversity of most neighbourhoods. Social infrastructure can be public buildings such as schools and health services, civic buildings, such as libraries, public space such as parks and squares, as well as private and commercial places like shops and cafes.

The community and voluntary sector forms a vital part of social infrastructure for many communities and provide an important source of social capital for many older people. More broadly social science has often looked to membership of associations and clubs as an indicator of an individual's level of social networks and social capital. This measurement can be attributed to Robert Putnam's (2000) influential work where he traced the decline in membership of clubs and associations, bowling clubs were one such example, demonstrated how people in America were more likely to spend their leisure time bowling alone (i.e. pursuing individualised activities in the home) than in a social group with others. Particularly within the ageing in place literature one route to tackling social isolation for older people has been the encouragement to join various locally- based clubs and groups. Formal social participation in this way has been shown to build confidence, enhance skills as well as to improve social connections for older people (Jones, et al., 2016).

However, it is not only the spaces within the formal community and voluntary sector that can generate social capital. Gardner (2011) identifies '*third places,*' understood as a destination space such as a café, a public library or a local shop, as a key site for the informal public life of communities. She then distinguishes these destination spaces from other places she categorises as *'thresholds'* and *'transitory zones'*. *'Thresholds'* are defined as the hybrid semi-public spaces such as lobbies in residential buildings, backyards and balconies. These were found to be important to ageing in place as they provided opportunity for fleeting but regular encounters with neighbours, and a convenient way for older residents to stay connected to their neighbourhood. '*Transitory zones'* were defined by Gardner as the places we pass through during the course of living in a neighbourhood, these providing an opportunity for 'natural' relationships and interaction, natural in this sense being that the interactions were unstructured and informal. These two secondary categories identified by Gardner recognise the potential for informal spaces of social interaction to emerge from the built environment of our neighbourhoods.

Public spaces and routes (as opposed to destination places) offer similar promise of social interaction, providing the right conditions are present. This is best illustrated by Jane Jacob's influential discussion of city sidewalks (1992). Sidewalks (or pavements), as well as other publically accessible routes, are an often taken for granted piece of physical infrastructure in our neighbourhoods, but can also play a vital role in promoting social connections. Jacobs argued that if urban planning was used to create public spaces of mixed use, so that they are used at varying times of the day, by different people and for

different purposes, then our urban communities would be more vibrant and safer places, therefore encouraging social interaction and mutual support.

The term '*eyes on the street'* made famous by Jacobs refers to the informal surveillance of the public spaces in our communities by the same people who use them. This has two functions. Firstly, it can provide a sense of security and safety whilst using those spaces. People know there are others around and may therefore feel less vulnerable. Secondly, the more people feel safe, the more they are likely to use those public spaces and linger in them, therefore adding to the diversity and vibrancy of public life in our neighbourhoods. However, as was found by Lager et al., (2015), it is not just the design of hard infrastructure that make it amenable or otherwise to providing a space for social interaction, the social and economic context of this infrastructure also plays a role. For example, in their study of older community residents in an urban neighbourhood in the Northern Netherlands, Lager et al., found that as many of the younger residents left the area for work every day, the sidewalks and public spaces of the community were often empty through much of the working day. This furthered the sense of isolation felt by many of the older residents and limited the opportunity to meet their neighbours informally and establish even informal social connections.

Other forms of 'hard' infrastructure can also be seen to function as social infrastructure provided it is designed and operates in a way that lends itself to interaction with others. Transit systems, trains, buses and subways are often organised in a way that promotes the efficient circulation of people. Efficiency of this sort tends to be the enemy of social interaction as it keeps people separated and moving. However, taking the same transit route every day for commuters can lead to the development of albeit loose social connections with fellow travellers. Musselwhite (2018) found that older people valued the social interactions they had whilst using public transport just as much as the impact it had on their mobility. This has also been confirmed by other studies into what makes age-friendly communities in Greater Manchester (Phillipson and White, 2013, Doran and Buffel, 2018). Research suggests that using public transport often provides a much needed point of social contact for isolated members of the community.

Characteristics of Social Infrastructure: what makes a third place?

Inclusivity

Oldenburg (1989) identifies several unifying characteristics of the third place starting with their need to be inclusive. This can be a sticking point when it comes to places of commercial enterprise. Such places usually require the visitor to make a purchase in order to be able to stay for any length of time. This may represent a barrier for those older people with limited resources. Even if this financial obstacle can be overcome, the central aim of profit- making often can often result in an unofficial time-limit being placed on how long older people are welcome to stay. The example in New York of a group of older Korean customers being asked to leave a McDonald's restaurant less than an hour after ordering provides one such example (*The Observer*, 15th January 2014).

Urban change and processes of gentrification also present challenges to the maintenance of inclusive social infrastructure in communities. Whilst, on the one hand, the gentrification of an area can result to the proliferation of new commercial establishments that *could* act as third places such as cafes, these are not always inclusive, especially not to older people. Even if the requirement to make a purchase is not a barrier, cultural pressures can often exist for older people in gentrifying neighbourhoods meaning they feel disenfranchised and that certain spaces in their community are not for them.

Whether commercial spaces can be inclusive or not owes in some part to how they are organised and managed. Indeed, Stewart et al. (2015) found that shop keepers played an important role in cultivating the right conditions for social interaction in their store, often taking the lead themselves in making social connections with and between their customers. There is an assumption that these sorts of conditions might be easier to recreate in smaller, independent retailers, with arguably more a connection to the local community and less of an overriding emphasis on satisfying shareholders. However, there are instances in the UK and elsewhere of multinational corporations taking steps to make their retail spaces more sociable and welcoming environments, especially for older people. Slow lanes, for example, have been encouraged in supermarkets so that cashiers are able to serve customers at a gentler pace in order to facilitate conversation (*The Independent*, 22nd November 2016).

Urban regeneration tends to meet the needs of certain age groups at the expense of others (Phillipson, 2007). In the drive to attract families and working age households to cities, older people can often be 'erased' from urban planning and rendered invisible in their own communities (Kelley et al., 2018, Lewis, 2017). This situation is often perpetuated as newer residents disinvest from the social infrastructure important to older people in favour of establishments that fit their own lifestyle. However, this does not preclude the appropriation of urban space as places of social connection for older people. For example, Yarker (2018) found that the redevelopment of the Newcastle Gateshead quayside offered a space of walking and view gazing that allowed older people to reconnect to their community through the ongoing importance of the river Tyne. Therefore, although gentrification presents challenges to the possibility of inclusive third places existing in commercial establishments, there is still opportunity for spaces to exist where older people feel connected within public open spaces. This is something for urban planners to remain mindful of in the re-development of communities (Yarker, 2018).

Being part of the local neighbourhood

Oldenburg (1989) also argues that third places should be a seamless part of everyday life in our communities. This means they should be on neutral ground, somewhere where people are free to come and go as they please. Related to this, third places can be seen to act as a leveller for social and economic status, drawing in a diversity of local people with a focus of talking and conversation without the expectations of any type of prior or specialist knowledge or a certain level of economic resource.

The importance of physical characteristics of third places is worth noting. Oldenburg asserts that they should be local in the sense that they are walkable and accessible. They need to be physically located in their neighbourhoods they are to serve; they need to be accessible on foot in order to facilitate the causal drop-by nature of the interaction that having to drive or take public transport to a venue might undermine, and they need to be culturally and economically accessible for all. In order to create an atmosphere that is welcoming and open, Oldenburg states that third places should, for the most part, be unassuming and unremarkable in their appearance. They should be accessible at extended times of the day so that they are available to members of the community with different schedules and different paid and unpaid working responsibilities. However, these characteristics of unassuming everydayness should not be read as social infrastructure being either a natural or inevitable part of our urban neighbourhoods.

The next section of the report considers how these third places support the development of social connections and the importance of these connections to ageing in place.

How does Social Infrastructure help reduce social isolation for older people?

In her study of social networks for adults ageing in place, Gardner (2011) categorised the different types of social spaces she found based upon the types of relationships they supported. The first type of relationship she identifies are relationships of proximity, such as immediate neighbours and those would could be considered 'regulars' in specific neighbourhood place. Secondly, there are relationships of service such as those working within various parts of our social infrastructure (shop keepers, cashiers, librarians etc.), and thirdly relationships of chance meaning the strangers we come into contact with in third places.

Intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of social characteristics as they apply to a given individual or group, which creates overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination. This term was originally used by Black feminists in the USA to describe the intersections of race, gender and class but provides a useful way of looking at other forms of discrimination too (Equalities Board Report, 2018).
Box 4

This report builds on Gardner's analysis by considering the types of social capital produced, and how this can reduce social isolation for older people the kinds of third places that supports this. In doing so, the report makes the case for the diversity and complexity of social networks needed in a neighbourhood to support ageing in place, and therefore the importance of supporting a diverse system of social infrastructure. The remainder of this section takes a separate look at the kinds of social infrastructure that are good for developing bonding capital, and those that are better suited to bridging capital. In reality, all third spaces have the potential to foster a variety of different types of social capital, however, for ease of discussion and for the purpose of demonstrating the specific needs of older people, the report separates this analysis.

1. Third places of bonding capital – people like me

Third places that are good for producing bonding capital tend to be places that draw together people who share certain characteristics. This might include the social networks within certain members of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities or older people living with a similar form of disability or mobility issue. This is not to say that groups based on a similar social characteristic are a homogenous group. Within each of the groups given as an example, there will be differences of experiences, resource and expectation and it is important that we are mindful of the intersectionality of identity amongst older people (see Box 4 for definition and further discussion in Findings from Equalities Reviews and Visits 2018, The Equalities Board, 2018). However, having a bond of commonality can be of vital importance to a person's social support network, especially as we age.

Social infrastructure that facilitates bonding capital is based around the coming together of people in a community who share something in common. One illustration is provided by faith-based buildings. For example, Mosques, churches or Synagogues all provide spaces for social interaction for those from the same religion. Religious institutions can help protect against loneliness in later life by integrating people into wider networks of social support (Rote et al., 2013). For older people living in neighbourhoods that have undergone significant change, religious buildings can also provide a form of continuity and therefore help maintain connections to local places throughout the life course.

Life stage, and in particular caring for children, can provide another point of commonality around which bonding capital can develop. In addition to their primary focus of childcare, nurseries and children centres have often been praised for their ability to provide social support to parents. This can be done formally through organised events and groups, or informally through organising their operations in such a way that allows parents the opportunity to socialise and get to know one another whilst dropping off and collecting their children. Eleanor Jupp's research around children centres in England found this form of social infrastructure to be crucially important for mothers particularly living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods to build supportive social relationships and to overcome feelings of isolation (2013). To date, much of the research around the social benefits to adults of children centres and nurseries has focused on parents. As grandparents increasingly take on caring roles and become more involved in the daily routines of childcare, the relevance of these spaces for older adults also needs to be considered.

Membership clubs, associations and voluntary organisations, based around some form of common interest or experience, are another important part of our social infrastructure as we age. Benefits to the individual of increased physical and mental wellbeing, social contact and self-efficacy are well-rehearsed. So too are the positive contributions that older volunteers make to the organisations and communities of which they are a part. Although we need to be cautious of viewing voluntary activities as a panacea for ageing well and remain mindful of the unequal capacity for older people to participate in society in this way, organisations offering voluntary opportunities for older people are an important part of our social infrastructure. Social participation through volunteering provides a space for older people to come together with others who are likely to have similar interests, values and experiences. This creates opportunities for social networks to develop, lessening social isolation and providing sources of social support. In her study of community organisations in two 'deprived' neighbourhoods in the Midlands, Jupp (2012: 3035) found that even the most irregular and casual social participation helped develop a sense of 'self' as an active group member for both middle aged and older volunteers. This collective set of experiences with other local residents played a key role in nurturing and supporting others. The informal spaces of care that often emerge from the voluntary pursuits of older people provide a good example of the role of both strong and weak social ties in allowing a person to age in place. Strong ties can emerge through friendships with others that extend beyond the setting of the voluntary activity itself, but many older volunteers benefit from, and are indeed satisfied with weaker ties amongst other volunteers.

The opportunity to meet 'likeminded' people is something that is clearly offered by voluntary pursuits and members of clubs and associations. They bring together people with a common interest, thereby facilitating the formation of bonding social capital amongst individuals. However, depending on the organisation or activity itself, there is scope for bridging capital to emerge between individuals or groups that may have quite different backgrounds. Indeed, we should be cautions of viewing age as being a bonding factor itself, and remain aware of the heterogeneity of older people living within the same local community.

Many of the individual benefits of volunteering for example, as reported by older people, is the chance to meet new social contacts and especially those from backgrounds different to themselves. The next section of the report considers social infrastructure that can lend itself directly to the production and maintenance of bridging capital for older people.

2. Third places of bridging capital – encounter with difference

Bridging capital occurs when diverse individuals or social groups forge networks and relationships *across* different social categories. Assumptions have often been made about older people from some BAME groups as having strong sources social support due to the presence of extended family networks. While this may be the case in some instances, a lack of bridging capital for these older people can make it difficult to make connections outside of their community. This is important because research shows higher levels of bridging capital is importance during periods of crisis. For example, during research with older women from the Bangladeshi community in Greater Manchester, Bagnall (2018) found that although these women had strong support from each other, language barriers and lack of social connections with others outside of this social and ethnic group, meant it became difficult to find out information in their local area or to get help and advice in an emergency (for a similar finding see Phillipson et al., 2003).

The consequences of restricted social networks was demonstrated by Klinenberg's (1999) analysis of death rates amongst older people in Chicago during the 1995 heatwave. His research into two neighbourhoods with similar socio-economic profiles attributed the stark difference in heat-related deaths to the characteristics of social infrastructure in each place. The neighbourhood with the lower death rate had more shops, restaurants, public meeting places and safe open spaces which created more opportunities for residents to meet and interact over the course of their daily life in the community. The social relations generated from this, even those weak associations of recognising a familiar face, lead to more people willing to leave their homes to escape the heat and more residents noticing and checking up on neighbourhoods they hadn't seen for a while. This demonstrates how weak ties of association are important for reducing social isolation as they provide bridges to social worlds we are previously unfamiliar with which in turn allows us to disseminate and get access to information that we might not otherwise have. In short: in Klinenberg's study wider social connections saved lives.

Therefore, bridging capital can be understood as an important route to building more resilient neighbourhoods and individuals with access to a wider diversity of social support

networks. The types of social infrastructure that facilitate this rely on being open to a diversity of people, people who may not have normally have contact with one another. As such these tend to be places that are open to all and that the majority of the community would have the need and opportunity to visit at some point. These can often be places that are not operating with a primary social function.

Public Libraries

Eric Klinenberg (2018b) in his book *Palaces for the People* argues that public libraries are one of the most critical, yet under-valued forms of our social infrastructure. They offer spaces of culture and companionship to all ages but are particularly important for older people and those with limited financial resources. Their open door policy removes any financial barriers, often allowing patrons to stay and use the facilities as long as they wish and their community orientated service works to remove any stigma that might be associated with some activities geared specifically towards older people. This is important for many older adults who do not identify with the ageing agenda. By using the library services themselves (books, newspapers, computers), attending programmed events or, as increasingly seen in the UK, volunteering at the library, older people are presented with multiple opportunities for social contact with those from within their local community, but perhaps outside of their 'usual' circles. Therefore, there is considerable potential for public libraries to support the building of bridging capital by providing an inclusive and neutral environment within communities.

Potential of commercial establishments

In contrast to the open nature of public libraries, commercial spaces such as shops, cafes and pubs, might be thought of as a very different type of resource. They do present a financial barrier to participation and in many cases a cultural one as well. However, commercial spaces do attract a diversity of users and, if accessibly situated, have the potential to draw widely from the local community. If suitably organised, cafes, banks, and local shops have the potential to act as third places of bridging capital where social links and connections can be fostered across the neighbourhood. In their categorisation of third places, Jeffes et al., (2009) distinguish 'Eating, Drinking and Talking' venues from 'Commercial Venues'; however, the characteristics that would lend these venues to becoming third places are broadly the same. Oldenberg, in his book *The Great Good Place* (1989), stipulates that third places must facilitate talking. This need not be in-depth conversations necessarily, but they need to allow people to at least exchange pleasantries, information and to gossip (Stewart et al., 2015) if they so wish. Therefore, as much as profit-making might be the primary aim of commercial spaces, in order to function as a third place, they need to be organised in such a way so as to not be overly efficient and stifle out any possibility of customers and staff engaging in conversation. This is perhaps easier to achieve for local retailers rather than larger corporations. Stewart et al., (2015), in their study of the social relations of adults ageing in place, highlighted the role of neighbourhood

Case Study: Teaching success at the Shenaz hair and beauty salon

Older regulars of the salon desired the knowledge and skills to look after themselves better, maintain a good appearance in later life and generally feel more positive. Coming from a range of different cultures and backgrounds, the group had a variety of self-care requests, and due to limited finger and hand dexterity, there were also requests to learn how to do hand massages that would help ease help joint inflammation.

In response to this, salon owner Shenaz Rahman devised and delivered a course in the form of face to face teaching and group demonstrations over a six week period in three languages; English, Urdu and Gujurati. The informal and familiar setting of the salon and the interactive and relaxed nature of the lessons allowed participants to feel at ease, and friendships began to develop.

As well as improving health and welfare, the confidence and wellbeing of participants increased. Bringing together a range people from different races and age groups who all share a common interest is a powerful dynamic and led to very positive, collaborative interactions which went beyond the sessions themselves.

shops and specifically shopkeepers in providing opportunities for what they conceptualised as civic socialising for older people. They concluded that the interactions that occur within neighbourhood shops, and the social capital produced, can work to sustain the ongoing autonomy of older people in their communities. This social capital may operate as weak ties, but none-the-less provide an important sense of connection and familiarity to older people.

Parks and open public space

The positive impact of access to parks and other green spaces for the wellbeing of urban residents is clearly evidenced within the literature (Bedimo-Rung et al., 2005, Kacynski & Henderson, 2007). This is especially the case for older people who, due to limited mobility or resources, may be more bound to their neighbourhoods. For older people having more green spaces in their living environment has been shown to decrease feelings of loneliness and increase sources of social support through opportunities to develop social ties (Maas, et al., 2009, Bedimo-Rung et al., 2005). Access to public spaces, such as parks, squares and high streets operate as gateways to the outside world for many older people with restricted mobility. They provide opportunities for direct and indirect social contact with other neighbourhood residents of a diversity of ages and cultural backgrounds.

Parks are typical third places for Oldenburg as they are locally accessible and open to all at extended times of the day. Therefore, a park will be used by a diversity of local residents and visitors albeit in differing ways and perhaps different times of the day. For Jane Jacobs (1992) this diversity of use is important in supporting the vibrancy of urban areas and, in turn, sustaining busier public places with more likelihood of social contact. It is this diversity of user that is also important for the development of bridging capital. For example, Neal et al., (2015) suggest that parks in highly diverse areas are important for the convivial encounter across ethnic and cultural difference. In the context of UK cities regions such as Greater Manchester, this could be particularly important for older people living in neighbourhoods that have undergone significant changes in the ethnic diversity

Case Study: Atherton Sensory Garden

Atherton park sensory garden was designed by The Friends of Atherton Park, a group of local residents who have been meeting weekly since 2015.

With the help of Age UK Wigan, plans for the garden were approved and work began in spring 2017. The construction of the garden brought together young and old across the community.

The group levelled pathways, clear out beds and planted a variety of herbs, flowers and grasses which they selected specifically with touch and smell in mind. Four attractive wooden arches and a bespoke bench were installed. By the summer, the sensory garden was completed, and proved popular with higher numbers of older people visiting the garden to exercise, socialize and enjoy the beauty of the setting.

The flat, even paths around the garden mean that the area is now suitable for wheelchair use and other mobility aids, to older people with dementia, and those with limited sight or hearing, widening its appeal and access. The foresight, compassion and hard work on the part of the Friends has together created a true 'living asset' for the community of Atherton.

of the local population. The opportunities provided by parks for older people from different cultural backgrounds to develop even weak social ties with each other can be crucial for maintaining a sense of connection to local areas as we age.

However, it is not only the proximity of these spaces in the local neighbourhood, but the perception older people have of their quality. This is particularly important when considering how to better support social infrastructure. Ward Thompson (2013) concluded from her research that green spaces must be well managed and include facilities such as high quality paths, benches and toilets if they are to be amenable to older people. Local parks must also be perceived as safe places if older people are to visit them (Kazmierczak, 2013). The reverse of this is that poorly maintained parks and other green spaces can actually discourage social behaviour (Bedimo-Rung et al., 2005). This has also been found to be the case for non-green, or 'hard' spaces such as streets, markets and public squares (Dines & Cattell, 2006) with a vast literature in environmental psychology demonstrating that it is the quality of public space, not merely the existence of it that has the most impact on encouraging sociability. Quality features and focal points, such as public art, food outlets, connected pathways and seating, have been identified as influencing social interaction in public space (Bedimo-Rung et al., 2005, Evans, 2003, Semenza, 2003). Again, this is of great importance when thinking about how we can improve our social infrastructure.

In a similar fashion to libraries, parks and other green spaces in neighbourhoods can also be host to more formal social

participation. The 'Friends of' voluntary movement seen across UK parks offers opportunities for older people to engage in gardening related activities near their home and many health and social care programmes will utilise available green space to provide outdoor activities for older people. However, the real value of neighbourhood parks is the opportunity it provides for older people to encounter and develop social ties with a diversity of people living and working in their local neighbourhood. Weak ties were found by Lager et al., (2015) to be highly valued by older people in their study. It gave them a sense of security that people in the neighbourhood were 'watching out' for one another without any overbearing obligations or responsibilities. Lager et al., also make the important point that social contact does not always have to be through communication. The older people in their study placed great value on visual and audio encounters with others in their neighbourhood. Being able to see and hear children playing in the streets for example or being aware of the general everyday life of the neighbourhood form their windows enabled older people to retain a sense of connection to place. The importance of visual links to the neighbourhood and non-obligatory willingness to offer practical and emotional support to neighbours have also been borne out by research into the neighbourhood impacts of people living with dementia (Ward et al., 2018). By highlighting the importance of different types and levels of social capital for older people and it becomes clear that we need social infrastructure that provides spaces of encounter with difference as well as with those we from similar social groups.

Summary

Social capital is vital for older people to maintain a good quality of life whilst ageing in place. As well as the importance of close friends and family, the wider neighbourhood is increasingly becoming an important site for the development and maintenance of networks of social support. In order to promote social contacts and networks, and tackle social isolation, we need to recognise and maintain the diversity of social infrastructure in our neighbourhoods that serve to animate this sociality. The local aspect of this infrastructure becomes increasingly important for older people who experience greater levels of social isolation and have reduced rates of mobility, meaning their relationship to and experiencer of their local environment becomes even more significant.

Different kinds of social infrastructure, and the social interactions they promote, lead to different types of social capital and both weak and strong ties are equally important as we age in place. *Figure one* attempts to summarise the arguments in this review by illustrating which kinds of social infrastructure might be best suited to facilitating and supporting the different types of social capital (*bridging or bonding*) and levels of social connection (*weak or strong ties*). This visualisation represents a starting point in allowing us to recognise the different roles various pieces of social infrastructure have in our neighbourhoods. In reality, all third places have the capacity to foster a multitude of different types of social connections but the analysis presented here is based on a recognition of their differing strengths and opportunities.

Whilst both have a role to play in tackling social isolation for older, people the analysis of neighbourhood third spaces presented here points to the increasing significance of spaces that promote bridging capital. This is because the ability to build social ties- even weak ones- with a diversity of people not only helps older people feel more connected to the places in which they live, but it can also help advance neighbourhood cohesion and the resilience of place.
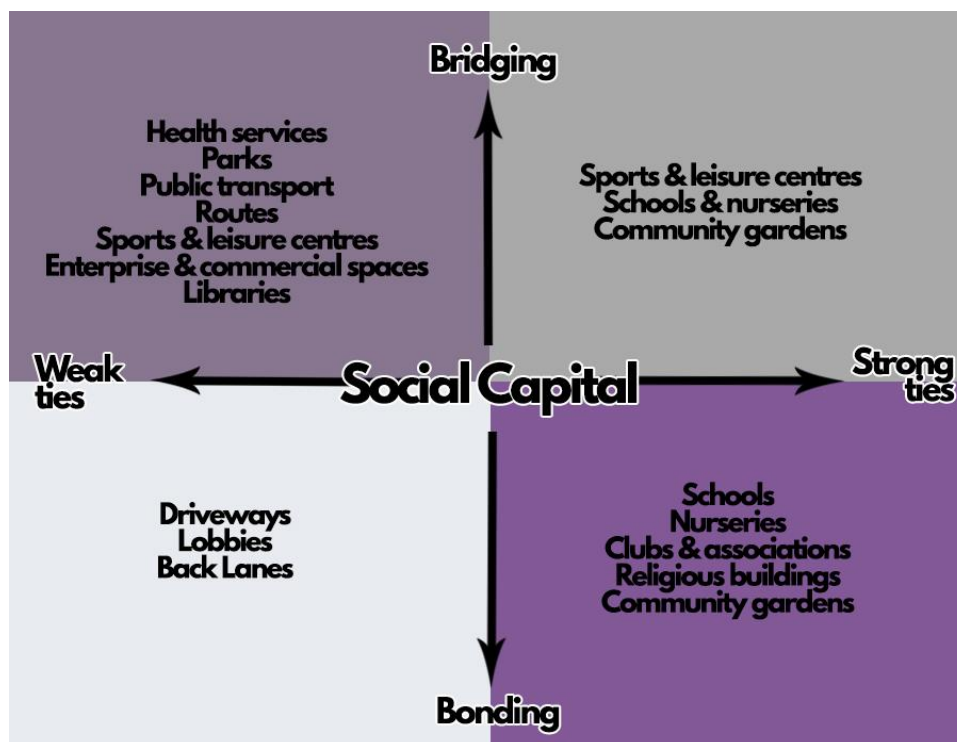

Figure 1. Diagram suggesting which different types of social infrastructure might be best for supporting different types and levels of social capital

Key points:

1. **Importance of bridging social capital.** The importance of third places that offer the opportunity for interaction with those outside our 'usual' social circles, and to meet people from other walks of life. This becomes significant as we look for ways to increase the bridging social capital of older people.

2. **Need to look outside of the traditional community and voluntary sector.** Although participating in formal voluntary organisations and the regular attendance of clubs and associations can and does have a significant impact on wellbeing and levels of social capital for older people, places that do not have socialising as their primary function can nonetheless still offer opportunities for social contact.

3. **Value of weak social ties.** We should not underestimate the importance of spaces that offer the opportunity for chance, irregular and sometimes fleeting social interactions that occur in the more mundane and everyday spaces of social interaction on our doorsteps.

How Social Infrastructure makes a difference in neighbourhoods

This review has demonstrated the importance of social infrastructure at the individual level, showing the different ways social infrastructure can build social capital for older people. The report will now consider the importance of social infrastructure at the *neighbourhood* level. Specifically, it focuses on third spaces that help develop bridging capital for older people in their neighbourhoods. It argues that social infrastructure of this type is important to age-friendly neighbourhoods in three main ways;

1. **More social encounters across difference can increase community cohesion**
2. **Provides the environment for more social participation**
3. **Provides the environment for social change and activism**

Image Credit: Greater Manchester Combined Authority

1. More social encounters across difference: greater community cohesion

Urban communities are characterised by diversity and difference and Hall argues that the capacity to live with this difference is one of the most important questions of the 21st Century (1993). Therefore, how to build and sustain cohesive communities is a central concern of policy and academic research. Gordon Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis states that the best way to reduce prejudice and promote social integration is to bring different groups together. Contact between people from different backgrounds would then enable a sense of knowledge and familiarity between strangers. This simplicity of Allport's hypothesis has been critiqued within the social sciences; however, it does form the basis

for a wealth of academic and policy discussion around what *meaningful* encounters or contacts might look like. Building on this, the report will consider the ways in which different kinds of social infrastructure can facilitate meaningful encounters for older people with those from different backgrounds or experiences to themselves.

This is important because in a recent AfA report, Thorley (2018) found that some older people in Greater Manchester felt marginalised within their neighbourhoods or that they did not 'fit in' with the other social groups amongst whom they were living. There was a clear message in the views of the older people that an age-friendly neighbourhood was one where there were positive social interactions with neighbours and a sense of community cohesion. Conversely, perceptions of demographic changes in neighbourhoods were often found to leave older people feeling like they didn't belong the place they lived. This reminds us that as well as a lack of connection with other people, social isolation can also be experienced as feeling excluded from the place in which you live.

Such feelings of dislocation, exclusion and lack of recognition are borne out by further academic literature. This can be particularly acute for older people living in neighbourhoods that have undergone substantial change with regards to urban regeneration and gentrification. Changes in the demographics of a place (i.e. younger families moving into an area or a shift in ethnic and/ or social class profile) can leave older residents who have lived in the community for some time feeling left behind and overlooked (Phillipson, 2007). This suggests that to build age-friendly neighbourhoods we need to provide third places where older people can feel connected to those around them and that these places need to draw on and attract a diversity of people.

Meaningful encounter

However it is not enough to expect mutual understanding and respect to develop just because people from different backgrounds have contact with each other. Encounters across difference can only be meaningful if it actually changes values for the people involved in a positive and progressive way (Valentine, 2008). So what type of social interactions have the potential for this? And what kinds of social infrastructure can facilitate them? Many academic researchers point to the 'low-level' sociability that occurs in public places, such as opening doors for people, saying hello, and other mundane acts of friendliness repeated over time. These represent an important facet of mutual acknowledgement (Laurier and Philo, 2006, Thrift, 2005). Askins (2016) goes further and urges us to pay attention to the emotions and feelings of encounters between different cultural groups. Based on her research with asylum seekers in the North East of England, she argues that the shared feelings of happiness, fear, frustration and hope can provide potential for more profound social relations.

This type of encounter brings us closer to what Noble (2009) refers to as recognition *with* difference (i.e. *I recognise the similarities and connections between us*) as opposed to recognition *as* difference, whereby differences are recognised and tolerated but still understood to be different or 'other' to ourselves. This reflects an important finding from research carried out by the Equalities Board (EB) for AfA that although there was some

evidence of greater awareness of difference amongst older people involved in the programme, evidence of a depth of understanding, especially around the nature of inequalities between and within different groups, was more limited (EB Report, 2018). Understanding of difference means that people also recognise similarities and connections between themselves and different groups. This is more productive for building cohesive and socially sustainable communities and therefore social infrastructure that can facilitate this type of meaningful contact across difference is crucial.

Academic literature on meaningful contact focuses heavily on interactions between members of different ethnic or religious groups and on how to build inter-cultural relations in diverse communities. The importance of public and civic buildings such as places of worship, education and workplaces has been highlighted alongside more informal third places of parks, public space, shops and libraries in facilitating this type of social contact (see Mayblin et al., 2016). Despite the diversity of social infrastructure considered by the literature in promoting intercultural encounter, an emphasis remains on the importance of shared spaces with a 2001 Home Office report into Community Cohesion warning that separate social infrastructure can often lead to 'many communities operat(ing) on the basis of a series of parallel lives'.

It is important, however, not to over romanticise encounters with difference as inherently positive or for them to be seen as a simple and automatic transition into respect for difference.

Case Study: Rochdale Cultural herb project

This project is a partnership between two local community groups in Rochdale; Petrus Incredible Edible, a community horticulture project for the local homeless, and vulnerable people at risk of becoming homeless, and Apna Ghar, a day centre for South Asian elders.

The project was designed to bring together two very different local community groups who were at risk of social isolation, and experienced poor health and wellbeing. Using common interests of the two groups, specifically the historic medicinal and culinary use of plants, and how to grow them, meaningful connections and interactions were made.

By engaging the services of a medical herbalist, artist and therapeutic horticultural practitioner, the project was able to provide participants with the means to share, and to understand one another's challenges and life experiences.

These interactions helped to dispel cultural barriers and to overcome preconceived ideas about each other's culture, beliefs and life experiences. Members of the two community groups were able to broadened their idea of what 'people like me' meant to them, and thus broke down barriers between people they perceived to be different.

Some encounters with difference can leave attitudes and values unchanged or even hardened and intergroup contact can be stressful for minority groups (Valentine, 2008). Therefore we need to be mindful that the same contact can be read and experienced differently both between and within majority and minority groups. Co-research and participatory ways of working that fully embed an equalities approach throughout become an important route to addressing power imbalances.

Academic literature on meaningful encounters has tended to focus on social interaction between members of different ethnic or racial groups. Both within this literature and outside of it, there is a distinct lack of discussion around neighbourhood-based meaningful encounters across different ages, or indeed other intersections of difference. This, Vanderbeck (2007) suggests, could reflect the extent to which certain kinds of age segregation are viewed as natural, inevitable or unproblematic. This intersectionality needs to be attended to (Pain et al., 2000) and addressed by future research if we are to build age-friendly, inclusive communities.

However there are lessons that can be learned from research on the role of social infrastructure in intercultural encounter that are useful for understanding intergenerational encounter.

- Importance of shared social infrastructure
- Importance of low level sociability
- Importance of these interactions occurring in the everyday spaces of neighbourhoods

Intergenerational encounter

Research into intergenerational issues has tended to be focused on rather particular and quite narrow concerns. For example, much of the discussion is in relation to intergenerational relationships within the family and usually in the context of care offered to older people though such relationships. Where discussion has branched outside of the family, to include intergenerational relationships between friends and neighbours it still tends to be in reference to the care-giving element of the relationship on the part of the younger person. A similarly limited amount of literature exists around the stronger social ties of intergenerational friendships (Elliot O'Dare et al., 2017). Here, it is important to remember that older people are also the givers of care and support as well as the receivers. In addition to the practicalities of care provision, research broadly agrees on the wider benefits to mental and physical wellbeing to older people of intergenerational contact (Thang, 2001). More indirect benefits can also be gained through the building of mutual empathy between different age groups and the challenging of ageist attitudes (Vanderbeck, 2007). On this basis there has been a growing policy interest in *intergenerational practice* (IGP) and, to a lesser extent, intergenerational shared sites (IGSS).

Intergenerational Practice and Designated Shared Space

The Beth Johnson Foundation defines IGP as aiming to bring people from different generations together in purposeful, beneficial activities building on the positive resources that different generations have to offer one another (Granville, 2002). Buffel et al., (2013) add that such activities are aimed at goals which benefit everyone, including the wider community.

Commonly cited examples of IGP tend to be around young children visiting nursing homes, mentoring and tutoring schemes or oral history projects (Granville, 2002). Although the amount of documented assessment and evaluation of these interventions is limited, research has found the benefits to older people to be around increased social activity and ability to deal with vulnerabilities, a renewed sense of worth, reduced social isolation, and skill sharing (MacCallum and Palmer, 2006, MacCallum et al., 2010 and Hatton-Yeo and Batty, 2011). As well as specific programmes and interventions designed to encourage intergenerational encounter, policy has also looked to the role of shared spaces of intergenerational encounter. UK examples include co-locating libraries with children's centres, purposefully designing parks and outdoor space with intergenerational equipment, and co-locating different age-related activities in the same community centre (see Melville and Bernard, 2011).

In recent years, urban design and planning have increasingly turned to a more collaborative approach to facilitating intergenerational encounter (Fincher, 2003, Peattie, 1998, Sandercock, 2003, Fincher and Iveson, 2008). Ammann and Heckenroth (2012) surveyed a number of urban housing developments in Germany that purported to enable different generations to live alongside one another as well as promoting interaction between the generations. Their conclusions provide support for the importance of shared spaces of social interaction within the community. Specifically they found that many models of best practice arose from cooperative efforts of actors from across the neighbourhood.

However, these are examples of designated spaces of intergenerational interaction and whilst they have an important role to play in reducing social isolation and promoting community cohesion there are contradictions and limits to conscious attempts to orchestrate meaningful encounters within institutional spaces (Thang, 2001). Whilst this is helpful in supporting the argument for intergeneration exchanges, there is a lack of research into the more mundane and fleeting types of intergenerational contact that can occur in third spaces.

The need to support informal intergenerational encounters

Third places that draw in a diversity of people from across the neighbourhood (different ages, ethnic and religious backgrounds, social class and experience) provide an important space for meaningful encounter with difference. This can include places such as libraries and parks, but also commercial establishments such as shops and cafes, providing they are organised and managed in such a way as to facilitate social interaction. Although neither a solution nor a quick fix such encounters can be the starting point to overcoming prejudice, mistrust and apprehension towards those who we see as 'different' from ourselves. Overtime this can lead to greater community cohesion.

There is currently a lack of academic research around the more informal spaces of intergenerational interaction that occurs organically through people's everyday lives in place. This is problematic as we have seen in the discussion above that the weak ties of association and bridging capital produced in some third spaces has the potential for reducing social isolation for older people. Therefore a more detailed understanding of how this occurs would be beneficial.

Targeted programmes of intergeneration practice can demand a lot of co-ordination, support and resources (Buffel et al., 2013). In the context of limited resources then this report argues it is prudent to also invest in time and energy in the social infrastructure that already exists in our neighbourhoods that also has an equally important part to play in facilitating integrational encounter. In particular Pain (2005) argues the intergeneration interventions are most likely to be successful are those that take a 'bottom up' participatory approach where members of different generations are involved in the design and implementation of such policies. This supports the co-research approach adopted throughout the AfA programme.

Key points

- Intergenerational contact can have benefits for both older people, by reducing social isolation and increasing a sense of connection to place, and the wider neighbourhood by contributing to community cohesion.
- However, there is a limited amount of academic research on naturally occurring intergenerational encounter in third spaces especially when compared with the wealth of research into everyday intercultural interactions.
- We need to remain mindful of the intersectionality of difference when thinking about meaningful encounters in neighbourhoods

2. More activism: levers of social change

Social infrastructure has an important role to play in local neighbourhoods by providing the space for political discussion, activism and social change. Social contact between neighbours can provide an essential foundation from which to develop more direct forms of civic engagement. This has been referred to as 'micro-publics' by Amin (2002) which, he argues, are better when allowed to emerge organically through everyday social encounter rather than at larger scale engineered events. Nava (2006) also considers the more mundane spaces of shopping centres, and public spaces, as important for the beginnings of social organising, and Bell (2007) points to the role of hospitality establishments as having the possibility to transform urban culture by providing spaces for meeting and discussion which can lead to more transformative social movements.

Sociability of community spaces, chatting, have a cup of tea with someone etc. is just as important as the form formal activities of social participation. This type of social interaction cultivates the capacities of individuals through a growth in confidence and energy over the long term leading to the more active involvement in issues concerning their community. Therefore, social infrastructure can provide important sites and practices of urban activism that is often been overlooked by more traditional activism studies (Jupp, 2012). This is what Gibson-Graham refer to as the 'unwitting, involvement in the practice of collectiveity' (2003: 65) and demonstrates the value of third spaces in communities as the potential sites of transformative politics.

3. More social participation: a more vibrant community and voluntary sector

Good social infrastructure can support a more vibrant community and voluntary sector in our neighbourhoods. Research has found that many older people contribute to their communities informally, through acts of neighbourliness for other residents or infrequently through 'helping out' at community events and organisations. Although these acts are valid contributions in themselves more can be done to remove the barriers to formal voluntary participation for older people. Even in the most vibrant communities there tends to be a heavy reliance on a 'civic core' of individuals, mostly white, wealthy and middle aged. In addition research continues to show that those living on lower incomes, who are less healthy or are from BAME backgrounds are less likely to contribute to their communities with the formal voluntary sector potentially leaving them at greater risk of social isolation.

The local environment is often identified as a barrier to participation in voluntary pursuits in later life. A question then for both the ageing agenda and community development more broadly, is how to create an environment locally that can support and encourage social participation. This is an increasingly important question in the context of an ageing population and austerity where more and more state responsibilities are falling to civil society, responsibilities which are often crucial to ageing in place (health and social care, running civic buildings etc.). Good social infrastructure provides part of the solution by providing spaces of social interaction that can build trust and familiarity between

neighbours. This, as well as providing an informal network of social support in itself for older people, can often represent the first step on the ladder of social participation (Ageing Better Report, 2018). In particular it has been shown that rather than age-specific initiatives that can exacerbate barriers to participation we need to nurture social infrastructure and organisations that provide spaces of intergenerational and intercultural encounter. Indeed Jopling and Jones (2018) call upon businesses and employers to share their assets more to create these third places of encounter. This becomes particularly important in in highly individualised or segregated communities.

Third spaces outside of the community and voluntary sector, such as public services, spaces of commerce and public spaces, are therefore becoming increasingly important for creating the context for further social participation. Recognising the role that social infrastructure has in encouraging further participation in neighbourhoods is vital if we are to 'future proof' the community and voluntary sector and prevent an over reliance on a small 'civic core' of local individuals.

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Conclusion

Any space within a community, whether it be a library, a corner shop or a community hall, is shaped by a wider set of power dynamics and therefore will always be inaccessible to some social groups. Those for whom English is not their first language may feel excluded from libraries for example, or members of the LGBT community may feel uncomfortable in some religious spaces. Equally, many people lack the self-confidence to attend new groups and activities for the first time and therefore there is often a great deal of capacity building work needed to be done by community leaders, and community and voluntary sector workers to make sure people feel comfortable and able to socially participate. Valentine (2008) reminds us also of the inability to separate social encounters and the spaces in which they occur from 'the knotty issue of inequalities' (pp.333). Moreover, we should not assume that all 'public' places are either equally well-resourced or equally accessible. Therefore, we need to remain mindful of the ways in which all spaces are discursively constructed and therefore imbued with power relations (Cresswell, 1996) and continue to actively pursue equalities policies across our social infrastructure in order to address these structural barriers to the use of neighbourhood spaces.

This report has presented some of the academic research and theory around the nature and role of social infrastructure in promoting age-friendly neighbourhoods. It has argued that social infrastructure and providing spaces of social interaction are crucial for reducing social isolation, promoting social participation, community cohesion and providing the starting point for social change. These are impacts we can all benefit from as we age in place. Table 1 summarises the benefits of good social infrastructure both at the individual level in terms of alleviating social isolation for older people, and at the wider neighbourhood level in building age-friendly place.

Summary of benefits of good social infrastructure	
Older People	**Wider Community**
Builds social capital to reduce social isolation	Can enhance social cohesion through the provision of spaces of intercultural and intergenerational exchange
Bridging capital that can enhance resilience	Can enhance the local community and voluntary sector
Can lead to further social participation through community and voluntary sector	Provides space for social change

Table 1

Image Credit: Greater Manchester Combined Authority

The report has moved beyond a discussion of the formal community and voluntary sector and made the case for a greater appreciation of and support for those third places that may not have a social function as their primary remit and that draw on a wide diversity of patrons from across all sections of the neighbourhood. Despite the informal and often unassuming nature of our social infrastructure, it should not be thought of as naturally occurring. It requires investment in time, money and skills from individuals, communities and the state.

Recommendations for enhancing social infrastructure and creating third places

In thinking about how to enhance social infrastructure a good starting point is to return to Oldenburg's characteristics of third places and consider how these points could be further realised by the existing or potential spaces of social encounter in our neighbourhoods.

Oldenburg's (1989) characteristics of third places:

- Welcoming
- Drop- in basis
- Facilitates talking
- Minimal financial barriers
- People do not feel rushed

Box 5

- Open at extended times of the day
- Locally based
- Informal
- Inclusive – equalities and diversity policy

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