



# Visual and material representations of ageing, space and rhythms in everyday life

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## ABSTRACT

A focus on the materiality within ageing studies brings into focus the material dimensions of space, rhythms and material objects in everyday life. The aim of this paper is to explore meanings around space in the context of the daily lives of people growing older and how materiality is embodied, embedded and performed in the material and social context of our everyday lives. The paper draws on data from the empirical research study *Photographing Everyday Life: Ageing, Lived Experiences, Time and Space* funded by the ESRC, UK. The focus of the project was to explore the significance of the ordinary and day-to-day and focus on the everyday meanings, lived experiences, practical activities, and social contexts in which people in mid-to-later life live their daily lives. The research involved a diverse sample of 62 women and men aged 50 years and over who took photographs of their different daily routines to create a weekly visual diary. The data reveals three interconnecting whilst analytically distinct themes within the materiality of ageing and the spaces around everyday life: (1) Space, materiality and everyday life; (2) Rhythms, routines and materiality; and (3) Social and material connectivity. The paper concludes by highlighting a complex engagement with space, in which participants drew and re-drew boundaries surrounding meanings of space, sometimes within the same interview or even within a discussion of the same photograph. Moreover, a focus on materiality has elicited rich and illuminating accounts of how people in mid-to-later life experience the intersections between ageing, bodies, time and space in their everyday lives.

## Introduction

Ageing studies has increasingly engaged with everyday life (Katz, 2018) in which the emergence and development of cultural gerontology has highlighted the significance of meaning and lived experiences and perspectives of people in later life (Twigg & Martin, 2015a, 2015b). A focus on ageing in daily life highlights the taken-for-granted, the ordinary, the mundane, the day-to-day, the habitual as well as the rhythms, movements and routines of everyday life (Andrews & Grenier, 2018; Gubrium & Holstein, 2000; Katz, 2018). Research on everyday life, moreover, opens up the possibilities of exploring and interconnecting the complexities of the familiar around socio-cultural contexts, materialities and embodiments, and the meanings and negotiations of space for people in mid-to-later life (Katz, 2018). The purpose of this paper is to explore meanings around space in the context of the daily lives of older people and how materiality is embodied, embedded and performed in the material and social context of our everyday lives. The paper draws on data from a research project that used visual diaries and photo-

elicitation of the daily lives of people in mid-to-later life.

The 'spatial turn' has drawn attention to meanings around space and place in the everyday lives of older people (Andrews, Evans, & Wiles, 2013; Peace, 2022). For Peace, space is described as an abstract concept that 'surrounds us with a depth and breadth that may be perceived and mapped as natural landscape in which human action expresses various forms of social space' (Peace, 2022, p.13). Place has also been conceptualised as denoting a location, such as a home or locality, as socially constructed with a sense of boundaries (Peace, 2022). The distinctions between space, as a physical or geographical area, and place as meaningful locations, have, moreover, been used as a means to explore and analyse everyday life (Holland, 2015). However, spaces and places embody meaning, social interactions and movements, and thus their fixity is uncertain. Massey (1994) speaks of the 'throwntogetherness' of place, with people's attachments to place sometimes being quite complex, messy and uncertain. Massey (1994, 2005) conceptualises space and place as a continual and changing process constructed from social relations, relational in nature, in which space and time are intimately

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interconnected. The temporal nature of everyday life thereby intersects with space and place and is experienced through our daily routines and rhythms (Lager, Van Hoven, & Huigen, 2016). Social identities are central and people have different experiences of spaces and places in relation to gender, social class, ethnicity, and ageing and because of the interactions and intersections between these different identity facets.

A tendency in gerontology has been to conceptualise space and place as bounded and static (Andrews et al., 2013; Skinner, Andrews, & Cutchin, 2018). Andrews et al. (2013) argue for space and place as a relational concept that is 'highly permeable, fluid and networked' and highlight the concept of 'affect' in which space and place are configured by social relationships, through performance. There has therefore been a move towards how meanings of space and place are configured by our social relationships in which ageing is embodied, embedded and performed in the material and social context of our everyday lives. This also extends to the movements and mobilities of older people in spaces and places they negotiate as part of their daily lives (Andrews & Grenier, 2018; Grenier et al., 2019; van Hoven & Meijering, 2019). Höppner and Urban highlight the concept of "doing age" that 'acts on the assumption that age develops in the form of a social praxis, that is in everyday life interactions between people; that age is performed through social interactions and is thus displayed in performance' (2018, p. 2; see also Wanka & Gallistl, 2018). In this context, meanings of being old in everyday life are negotiated and contested depending on different environments, embodiments and materialities.

Spaces and places and the materiality of age and ageing brings to the fore the ageing body and material environments in everyday life. For Höppner and Urban 'scholars of material gerontology highlight the function of things, technology and spaces within aging processes not with respect to their representative function but rather with respect to the interplay of human bodies and types of non-human materiality' (2018, p.2). The ways that the human and non-human interact in everyday life reveal the limitations and possibilities of older bodies in everyday life. The human and non-human therefore not only focuses attention on how older people negotiate space, place, technologies, things, rhythms, designs, mobilities and environments (Buse, Martin, & Nettleton, 2018; Höppner & Urban, 2018, 2019; Katz, 2018) in everyday life but also make visible the mundane and the often unnoticed features of the materiality of daily life (Buse et al., 2018). Materialities interconnect with socio-cultural contexts and narratives, described as "material-discursive practices" (Barad, 2003, p.818), in which the material and ageing can be seen to interplay in everyday life (Höppner & Urban, 2018). In this context humans and non-humans are relational, as mutual entanglements, that can be observed and mapped as a means to understand more about being older (Höppner & Urban, 2018). As Miller further argues:

[O]bjects are important not because they are evident and physically constrain or enable, but often precisely because we do not 'see' them. The less we are aware of them, the more powerfully they can determine our expectations by setting the scene and ensuring normative behavior, without being open to challenge' (2005, p.5, see also Miller, 2010).

Materialities thereby ground our experiences and perceptions into the rhythms and spaces of our daily routines and make visible and evoke meaning about growing older (Katz, 2018). The materiality of age and ageing thereby opens up novel theoretical and methodological possibilities for researching age and ageing (Höppner & Urban, 2018, 2019; Katz, 2018).

This paper explores how a focus on materiality can elicit rich and illuminating accounts of how people in mid-to-later life interconnect ageing, rhythms and spaces in their everyday lives. Our analysis responds to calls for researchers "to 'look' more closely at the physical dimensions of person-object relations" within people's everyday experiences of ageing (Chapman, 2006, p.208). In particular, we make visible through the use of photo-elicitation methods the ways the material and the human interconnect in everyday life. We draw on data in which participants were invited to photograph their daily lives with the

aim to explore the significance of the ordinary and day-to-day and focus on the everyday meanings, lived experiences, practical activities, and social contexts in which people in mid-to-later life live their daily lives. The visual images portrayed spaces, places, movements, technologies and objects within the daily lives of the participants, their routinised and habitual moments, embodied spaces that are often taken-for-granted. The paper thereby highlights visual portrayals of everyday life that made visible the material representations and meanings around space, place and materiality as people grow older.

### Photographing everyday life

Participants took photographs of their different daily routines to create a weekly visual diary. The research involved a diverse sample of 42 women and 20 men aged between 52 and 81 years. Within the sample there were a range of differing routines, for example, some participants who had retired, others who were in full and part time paid employment, some working as volunteers, and a number of the participants who had a combination of these roles. The recruitment took place in the South of England, via organizations and social groups aimed at people aged 50 years and over, as well as work, social and sports venues. Overall 4471 visual images were taken and interviews lasted for an average of 46 min. Ethical approval was gained from Brunel University London, College of Health and Life Sciences Ethics Committee (Reference 10/04/STF/08).

There were two stages of the research process. First, participants were asked to take photographs that depicted aspects of their daily lives for one week. The approach can be described as participatory as participants were in control of the cameras and made choices about what to photograph (or not). The photographs thereby became a 'visual diary' of a participant's life and portrayed their daily routines across one week. Second, participants took part in a photo-elicitation interview in which the photographs were uploaded onto a laptop computer and acted as both a prompt and a means to promote and focus the conversations. The interviews explored meanings, activities, roles, relationships, space and time as portrayed within the visual diaries. An ethical approach was central to the research. This included attention being given to informed consent, photo-reproduction rights and privacy issues, as well as participants given the right to choose if they wanted all or some of their photographs to be used for data analysis purposes only, rather than publication, as well as if they wished to delete photographs taken.

The process of our analysis allowed for images to have many differing meanings, as "once captured, the meanings of photographs are not, in fact, fixed but their meanings, or what they are claimed to 'represent', are contingent upon who is viewing them and in what context they are received" (Pilcher, Martin, & Williams, 2016, p.684; Martin and Pilcher, 2019). This was notable in the ways space, place and materiality were analysed and portrayed. The interviews were coded and data was analysed using Atlas Ti software as it enabled the incorporation and comparison of visual and textual data. Further details about the methodological and ethical issues can be seen at Pilcher et al. (2016).

### Visual and material portrayals of space and place in everyday life

The visual diaries created by the participants were organised in our analysis into time and routines. The images portrayed were also situated in space and the context of the space is either the focus of the image, or the wider context in which material objects and social relations were photographed. The visual diaries can therefore be viewed as a record of the materiality of the everyday life of the participants, in a specific moment, in a certain space. From the analysis, there were three interconnecting whilst analytically distinct themes around the spaces and materiality of everyday life, namely: (1) Space, materiality and everyday life; (2) Rhythms, routines and materiality; and (3) Social and material connectivity.

## Space, materiality and everyday life

The concepts of public and private space are well documented (Peace, 2013, 2022). In a broad sense public space refers to open, civic and communal space that can more easily be moved or travelled through (Peace, 2013). Private space tends to refer to the domestic, the familial, the intimate and the individualised (Peace, 2013). These distinctions can be translated into well documented dualisms of public / private, work / home, male / female and mind / body (Peace, 2013, 2015, 2022; Williams & Bendelow, 1998). Ageing in everyday life, however, tends to blur these boundaries and can be experienced as more nuanced and complex (Peace, 2022; Pilcher & Martin, 2020).

The data from the visual diaries showed portrayals and meanings around public and private spaces were important and included distinctions between private spaces (such as, the home and garden) and public spaces (such as, work, social spaces, countryside, parks, shops). This included movements between spaces and places and the different ways that participants moved between more public and private spaces through walking, car journeys and public transport (such as, buses, trains and the underground tube). The portrayals of space were however also nuanced, interconnected and complex, for example, more photographs were present of 'public' areas in a home (e.g. lounge, kitchen) than private areas (e.g. bedroom); and some spaces reflected dimensions that can be constructed as both public and private (e.g. gardens, digital spaces, some work spaces). For example, Robert describes how the garden can be experienced as both private and public space:

*No it's really nice just to be able to walk out into it. And it's, well it's kind of strange. I mean its overlooked on all sides, but because it's mainly overlooked by people's bedrooms it's actually, it's quite private and quite peaceful.*

The visual diaries highlighted the significance of boundaries between inside / outside, in particular, there were many images of doors, and looking from the inside to the outside through windows (see Fig. 1). As material objects the images of doors predominately signified meanings and movements around the boundaries of the home (see Fig. 2). This included participants returning to or leaving from their own homes; arriving at the homes of family and friends; expected and unexpected visitors at their own front doors; and for some participants images of the back door that provides access to the garden, outdoor spaces and garages. The door was often described as being a transition into their own space: "That's my front door" (Natasha). The front door was also viewed as a boundary through which friends, family and others can enter into and leave the house:

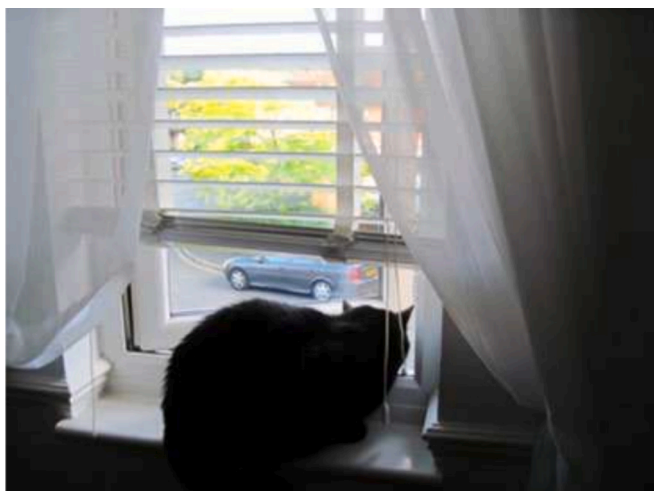


Fig. 1. Image of cat looking outside.



Fig. 2. Image of a front door.

*Oh and that's when the granddaughter arrives. She's putting in her case.*  
(Samuel)

The front door was viewed as a physical and symbolic boundary between the inside, as private and intimate, and the outside as public. Once inside the front door, there was sense of privacy and intimacy that at times contrasted to way participants experienced and performed in more public encounters. Goffman (1959) showed how our presentation of the embodied self can be performed differently depending on whether we are in spatial contexts considered as front or back spaces. In areas that are considered private (back stage), people can often feel more relaxed and less concerned about their embodiment, whilst the arrival of expected or unexpected visitors at the front door can necessitate a more formal and public presentation (front stage) (cf. Peace, 2022):

*"because it's like the big bad world's out there and I can come home and I can either, yes. And that's my front door, which means quite a lot to me because that's actually sanctuary for me, as I say I can hurt like hell but I can take my shoes off and... Actually that's not true, I can't, I was thinking I could take my shoes off and slouch about, but I can't, because people come round and then they catch me. The postman caught me with a hair colour on once. I've never been so embarrassed in my life"*

(Victoria)

The sense of being inside and outside are further experienced by observing through the windows: "yes, that's again my, my view of the area here. That's taken out the window" (Niamh). Participants talked about looking outside and feeling and seeing the weather, the garden, the wildlife, nature, the sky, the locality and people being and moving outside that at times enhanced their sense of wellbeing: "There is, there is a beautiful, all I see is the top of the trees and the sky and it's great" (Niamh). This was often as part of their daily routines:

*I was doing the washing up .... I mean even in the middle of the winter I like looking out. One of the things is we do get lots of birds in the garden*

(Martin)

The meanings around spaces within the home were also complex and constructed depending on the context within the home, in particular, between front and back spaces (Goffman, 1959). There were more



photographs of the lounges or front rooms of the homes than the bedrooms and bathrooms. In the visual diaries most guests to the home were invited into the front stage spaces within the home, with the backstage spaces constructed as more intimate, individualised and private. Within the images mess and dirt was also more likely to be hidden, with more photographs taken after the cleaning and ironing had been completed. The participants also appeared less comfortable in certain public spaces, in particular when other people were present, or when at work as participants felt they had more limited control of their space and time.

What was particularly enlightening in participant's accounts of the intersections between space, materiality and everyday life, however, was the linkage of these themes with the function of the images themselves. The photographs not only *represented* the materiality of everyday life but images are also material objects themselves. In some instances, participants also sought out further physical copies of photographs during the interviews to enhance and 'bring to life' the points they were making about their daily lives via their images on the laptop screen. The materiality of the photo-elicitation interviews combined with the spatial location of interviews was also important – as many interviews were conducted in participant's homes. In some instances, this particular combination unlocked a very particular 'sensoriality' (Pink, 2009) and 'live' (Back & Puwar, 2012) element to the method, in which participants could actively demonstrate – in real time – their embodied experiences of daily life that were depicted in the photographs. One participant, for instance, upon showing Katy (the researcher) photographs of her garden on the laptop, leapt out of her chair at the absurdness of looking at the beauty of the flowers of her garden on the computer screen when we could instead experience the 'liveness' of this beauty ourselves by taking a walk around her garden.

These moments where the stillness of photography met the 'liveness' and materiality of place, could also be very emotive interactions for both participants and researchers, communicating something substantial about the materiality of ageing in place within the context of the interview encounter itself. As we previously discussed (Pilcher et al., 2016, p.688), photographs can elicit particular emotions in relation to *absence*. For some of our participants, photographs elicited a sadness about when their sense of space or place was about to change – such as moving home, for example. Yet the absence of loved ones – those who were *not* depicted in a participant's images, particularly of images of their home, or of certain objects within their home, and/or depictions of activities that people used to do with a loved one but were now undertaken alone, evoked a very particular material sadness. This was particularly in relation to participants' changing relationships with the objects depicted in their images which were imbued with such an emotional-material value.

To take one example, Jonathan's discussion of his visual diary included many references to objects and the portrayal of activities that he used to do with his wife who had died three years previously. His interview narrative was very moving and there were often moments where inanimate objects would remind him of his wife and how his own relationship to spaces they once frequented together has changed. For instance, he took photographs to show a shopping trip for food at a market (Figs. 3 and 4).

Initially he was animated and excited about shopping for food, exclaiming:

*'Oh yes, yes, yes, yes I do, yes. Cheese and some of the more interesting foods, yes, it's good. And I bought, well we used to shop there for the more exciting meats and things when, because we used to entertain a lot...'*

Yet his tone and demeanor shifted to a state of sadness as he spoke of what his life is like now, stating that *'I find it less interesting on my own'* [to cook], and that now:

*'I can be in the supermarket and see things and I think I can do that. I can cook that. And then when it comes it, it, in the evening and you look at it and think, oh I can't be bothered, and it goes into the freezer...'*

This example not only indicates the ways that meanings of an image can shift, they can be made and re-made in the same image, but also how



Fig. 3. Image of food shopping trip to local market.



Fig. 4. Image of food shopping at local market.

emotions, in this case grief, can shift people's relationships with objects and sensory experiences – in this case the meanings of food, cooking and eating. Time is also important here. Kenny et al., (2019, p.59), in their research into bereavement and care givers, challenge the commonsense temporarily bounded notion of grief, the idea that you have 'a time to grieve, a time to recover'. Rather, they reconceptualise grief as defying linear understandings of time, understanding grief, rather, as 'an enduring affective state' (Kenny et al., (2019, p.58). Jonathan's narrative indicates the enduring nature of grief in everyday life some years after his wife's death, as well as the affective dimensions of this emotive experience. In relation to ageing and later life, Chapman (2006, p.213) writes of the identity shifts in later life that people go through as they may lose a partner and get to grips with the 'shift from partnered person'. Chapman (2006, p.213) highlights the significance of the material and embodied dimensions of people's relationships with objects that belonged to a lost loved one, such as a person's 'special things', and how they may be held on to for their smell and texture. Our research demonstrates the ways that encounters with everyday spaces and objects, in this case, the food stalls on a market, can also have similar embodied and visceral (re)articulations of grief.

With our research, there was also something very particular about the interactions between space, materiality, the everyday and emotions. There were the objects themselves depicted in the image, but images could convey an emptiness of space - of chairs where people once sat, for example. So whilst an object was present within an image, the absence of its inhabitant was what was salient about the image. Interviews could be very emotionally-laden at times, coupled with the fact that we were often in the very *space* – people's home – that is visually depicted and is

evoking these feelings. Thus participant's discussion of the images, combined with the fact that we were sat in the very same home, evoked a very particular emotive materiality in the moment of the interview itself. A quite complex emotional interaction vis-à-vis place, space, and the privateness of grief being witnessed by a relative stranger (the researcher) occurred in these moments. The two-fold materiality of the meanings in the photographs and coupled with the meanings of the 'live' material interaction of the interview, produced a very temporal and embodied experience for both the participants and the researcher, as we navigated the weight of grief that was not only depicted but also felt.

### Rhythms, routines and materiality

The importance of time, routines, and the rhythm of daily life was also evident in the participant's visual diaries, and their interconnection with space and material objects. Embodied practices and activities often took place on a daily, weekly and monthly basis; further denoted in the context of day and night and through different seasons. Daily routines of the participants were predominately structured around the care of the body, in the context of paid and voluntary work, leisure activities and social connections with family and friends. The visual diaries revealed that certain everyday practices took place at the same time, in the same place. The rhythmic ordering of the day, in which space, place and the body interconnect was therefore central to the everydayness of the participants routines. In particular, routines in the morning were repeated over many days and the participants described how these routines had often been part of their daily life over a prolonged period of time. This included having a drink, eating breakfast, washing and showering, daily bodily practices (such as brushing teeth, shaving, doing makeup), exercise and going on social media. This can be illustrated around key activities from the morning routine: the material objects and spaces often photographed were mugs and cups within the kitchen, and the shower in the bathroom. These intimacies and materialities moreover predominately occurred in more private spaces within home. The preparation for the morning drink and / or breakfast denoted the materiality of the daily routines in relation to space and material objects (Figs. 5 and 6):

*That's something we do. I'm a great one for having rituals. [laughs] I think as you get older this sometimes happens so you always have to have the right mugs for tea in the morning*

(Holly)

*Right so when I go and have a shower I always, we've got radios all over the house by the way.....Yes, it's just music, it's not song, it is just*



Fig. 5. Image of cups and kettle as part of morning routine.



Fig. 6. Image of table in conservatory.

*classical music. And I find that very useful because I spend a lot of time when I'm having a shave and showering just thinking about things*

(Martin)

*Oh that's the radio again. The kitchen radio this time. That's my coffee cup. I have a cup of coffee.*

(Beatrice)

The ordering of the day was mediated through materiality of the spaces within the kitchen interconnected with the materiality of objects and the sensate. It is not only the regularity and repetition of the daily routines but how the experiences are lived, constructed and remembered in the context of the materiality around the care of the body that involves many aspects including the bodily, time, space, objects and the senses of sight, touch and sound. In this context, time and space coexist in everyday life and shape the meanings, flows and experiences of daily routines and practices: rhythms in everyday life (Lager et al., 2016; Lyon, 2019). The concept of rhythms draws on Lefebvre (2004) in which time and space are inextricably interwoven: 'everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm' (Lefebvre, 2004, p.15). The flow and rhythm are seen to derive from daily practices as multiple rhythms and relations between the social, material, bodily, mobilities and movements and the institutional interconnect (Lager et al., 2016). The photographic diaries make visible these rhythms and the ways that the participants experience space, time and materiality in the everydayness of their lives.

Another illustration from the data around the significance of the relations between humans and non-humans in everyday life was signified by the many photographs of pets. The visual diaries were interspersed with images of cats and dogs. The routines of caring for their pet was interwoven with the daily routines of the participants:

*"Everyday. I'm on Facebook, every day... It's quiet. Because my partner was in bed, I was sitting there with my cup of tea, looking at .. before he gets up ... .. And then feed the cat"*

(Annabel)

*Now that's in the evening, we're watching the telly and that's our dog. Watching the telly. I know it's nothing to do with dogs, but that's just our dog watching the telly look. Every night he'll stand by the telly and watch it.*

(Claire)

Pets are central to the daily routines of the participants, with activities at the same time, and often the same place, over many days and often talked about with feeling and a sense of enhanced wellbeing:



*Ah that's my precious dog. Yes, she gets walked every day, and she's a major part of my life*

(Laura)

Pets were considered as 'kin', as part of the family (Charles & Davies, 2008). Pets were not only central to participant's kinship network but also their social networks. Daily routines were constructed and interwoven with the rhythms and mobilities of the pets, but also enhanced the informal social networks of the participants. It was notable that when out on regular dog walks that participants would meet with other walkers and dogs in the locality, connections that are often incidental but important to the sense of space and time:

*Now that's every morning at half past nine I go out with my dogs, religiously and meet people on the way ..... And that is the first gentleman I meet with his dog ..... We don't arrange to meet. If we go, we go, and if we don't... It's not a set thing you know.*

(Patricia)

The patterning of weekly and/or monthly activities tended to be around certain events, that encompasses paid and voluntary work, family connections and engagement with social groups. The ordering and rhythms of everyday life has a different momentum depending on when these occurred in relation to time, and where these took place in the context of public and private space. The experiences and feelings also need to be understood in the context of the movements and mobilities of others in the locality. For example, Annabel who was always active and busy on weekdays, expressed how her area changed over the weekend, that meant that she preferred to stay at home, and mainly watched television:

Annabel: *But no, I'd rather be out and about obviously you know, sort of, but, but as I say, no I hate weekends, because we don't go out at weekends*  
Interviewer: *But why is that?*

Annabel: *Very rarely. Traffic. As soon as you go out of our road onto the main road its bumper to bumper traffic. I live very near DIY stores. They're also the rubbish, where people take their rubbish. The cars are absolutely bumper to bumper as soon as you get out. And then when you go out, you've got to pay, if you got to go somewhere, you've got to pay to park, you know, so mostly the weekends no, we're at home.*

Space and place thereby changed at different times and depended on the multiple activities and rhythms of space, place and the movements of people. The participants therefore had a varied sense of control over space and the ways spaces and places were used could change over the week. The wider atmosphere, environment, locality and weather could further denote the ways the participants experienced and engaged with spaces (Fig. 6):

*Out there yes. In the conservatory. It's nice and light. I watch the birds*

(Mary)

*If the weather is nice we have lunch outside*

(Judith)

The sensate and embodied experiences of everyday life were therefore important. A lens on time and rhythms has moreover enabled us to visualise and understand the daily experiences of space, materiality and place as people grow older.

### Social and material connectivity

The importance of connectivity, that is connections with family, partners, friends and the locality, as well as wider inter/national communities was portrayed in the visual diaries. Connections were shown in shared time and space, such as living together, at social and family events, at paid and voluntary work and with visitors to the home. There were also many digital connections through social networking and emails that can take place in different spaces and times. Social

relationships were therefore interspersed through the photographs and signify the way social and material relations were experienced in the everydayness of life. This included people who lived together or alone, people visiting and staying over, family and friends visiting, and participating in care, work and social activities.

The meanings and experiences around space and social and material relations were constructed depending on context in which meanings and boundaries around space were drawn and redrawn. Some of the participants, for example, described how their roles and relationships were shared in terms of time and space, such as, sharing of daily tasks and activities:

*I was doing the washing up. Again what usually happens is I wash up, Connie wipes up*

(Martin)

For others, whilst activities were not always shared, the sense of the potentiality of someone being there in the same space at the same time provided a sense of security:

*I love it when he's home. We don't do things together much. He'll never take me out or do anything. But it's nice just knowing that he's there, because I don't like being by myself*

(Claire)

Many participants were maintaining and building social and material connections through the use of digital technologies. This included the use of mobile technologies around and on the body and/or digital technologies as material objects within the home:

*And I realised how much of it, also revolved round the computer, which we've set up upstairs. We have a kind of bedroom office, in terms of e-mailing and with the phone next to it, keeping in touch with people. So I suppose somewhere in the day I'd spend at least an hour on the computer, either sending or replying to e-mails or looking up e-mails and there's a great sort of teetering pile of stuff that is either to be read or dealt with.*

(Hannah)

Social relations in space could also be a source of tension and challenge. This could involve different views around mess and dirt, roles and responsibilities, and contested rights about taking up and using space:

*I suppose it's because of my routine I suppose. It's all again is ... well it's always upsetting my routine .... There's not enough room there, in the kitchen. You can see, you've got to get past each other*

(Annabel)

Whilst the drawing and redrawing of boundaries around social and material relations were evident through the visual diaries, this was especially notable when there was limited space, for example, when living in one-bedroom flats and/or with limited access to a garden.

Boundaries around space were further drawn by having certain areas being identifiable as predominately belonging to one member of the household and personalised with objects and photographs. This included computers and desks, aspects of the garden and sheds, and the use of preferred chairs. When living alone participants would also designate certain areas for specific purposes. The space then reflected their identity and often had many purposes, from work, to comfort, to enhancing their connections and memories:

*That's my office with pictures of my sons. So I've got, that's my son is in Australia, that's both my boys and my family. There's just lots of different things. It's a very busy area, but you know, you can see my son in just about everything. I'm not saying that he's the be all and end all but because he's in Australia he means .... that's my office. I've got my printer and my computer and everything else, yes. But it's quite cool. You close the door and you know, everything goes away*

(Victoria)

In this context, social connections of people who lived away or were

no longer present in the home or the locality were incorporated into the material intimacies, memories and experiences of everyday life. Material and social connections were central to the meanings and experiences around space in everyday life. Space was complex as multiple and alternative meanings and narratives were highlighted, for space was continually negotiated, understood and experienced in everyday life.

### Space, materiality and ageing: Concluding comments

Exploring the routines, meanings, and patterns that underpin everyday life has enabled us to make visible how space is portrayed, negotiated, contested and understood as people grow older. Images of space were prevalent throughout the visual diaries of people in mid-to-later life as they photographed their everyday lives. Whilst all the visual images were contextualised in space and place, the nature of space and place in the visual images often appeared to be a taken-for-granted aspect of everyday life (cf. Miller, 2005). Whilst the everyday practices and social relations were discussed by the participants, at times the spaces and places in which the daily routines took place were not. The way space was often taken-for-granted in the everydayness of our lives can therefore at times represent complex analytical and presentational issues. Participants did, however, predominately contextualise the meanings and experiences of everyday life in relation to space and place. People in mid-to-later life further showed a complex engagement with space, in which boundaries around space were drawn and re-drawn, sometimes within the same interview, or at times when talking about the same photograph. As discussed, this was particularly acute where participants discussed the significance of objects that reminded them of people who were no longer present in their lives. Emotive discussions within interviews of the ways in which the materiality of the photographs made visible the absence of lost loved ones, and the material objects depicted within images evoked feelings of grief and sadness at the ways that these items were no longer used or enjoyed in ways that they once were. Spaces within the visual images therefore had no 'fixed' meaning (Massey, 1994), but instead meanings were made and re-made in the moments that spaces were both visually depicted and reflected upon within the interview encounters themselves.

Time and space were interwoven in the daily routines. The rhythms of daily routines shaped everyday life and provided meanings and experiences of everyday practices, social relations, material objects, the sensate, the environment and the atmosphere. The lens of rhythms thereby made visible the ways time and space were lived, constructed, performed, remembered and imagined (cf. Lyon, 2019). A focus on materiality elicited rich and illuminating accounts of how people in mid-to-later life interconnected ageing, bodies, time and spaces in their everyday lives. The use of visual diaries has therefore allowed us to highlight meanings around everyday life, the rhythms and interconnectedness of time and space, that underlie the habitual and routinised everydayness of life as people grow older. The materialities of ageing in everyday life moreover evoked meanings, grounded the experiences and practices of everydayness, and the photographic diaries enabled us to visually map and reveal some aspects of the interconnectedness between the human and non-human, the social and material, the mutual entanglements of everyday life (Höppner & Urban, 2018). So whilst there are limitations to the research, that was created at a certain moment, in a certain place, the use of visual and material methodologies has opened up possibilities for researching the embodiments, rhythms, and materialities of growing older.

### CRedit authorship contribution statement

**Wendy Martin:** Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Katy Pilcher:** Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Methodology, Writing – review & editing.

### Declaration of competing interest

None.

### Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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