

13 Does context matter?

Older adults' safety perceptions of neighborhood environments in Sweden

*Vanessa Stjernborg and
Roya Bamzar*

13.1 Introduction

The world is experiencing a demographic shift; as life expectancy increases, so too does the population of older adults. According to the United Nations (2018) this significant shift will have an impact on most sectors of society. Urbanization is another global trend causing major changes in our landscape, such as growing and divided cities, featuring segregation among other things (Ceccato, 2012). The stigmatization of urban areas and neighborhoods is repeatedly associated with insecurity, danger, and crime. One tangible development in urban areas in Sweden, for example, is the growing use of control technologies such as cameras, fences, door codes, and lockers in response to real and/or imagined insecurity in the city (Stjernborg, Tesfahuney & Wretstrand, 2015). Such a development triggers fear of others and of public spaces, and it affects everyday mobility and housing access among other things (England & Simon, 2010; Sandercock, 2005). Images of the city affect everyday geographies, and there is a long tradition of research that investigates the relation between fear and the city (e.g., Bannister & Fyfe, 2001; Ceccato, 2012; England & Simon, 2010; Shirlow & Pain, 2003).

Urbanization and changing demographics also mean that increasing numbers of people will be ageing in urban environments (Burdett & Sudjic, 2008; WHO, 2007), and fear of crime can be an issue of great concern for many older adults (e.g., Ceccato and Bamzar, 2016; Craig, 2018). Older adults, as a group, are often regarded as frail and vulnerable and are often considered to experience higher levels of fear in relation to their victimization (Craig, 2018). However, some researchers criticize the common view associating ageing with poor safety perceptions and point out that this phenomenon can create stereotypes of ageing and people's fearfulness (WHO, 2019a; Bazalgette et al., 2011; Pain, 1997, 1999).

In this chapter, we examine safety perceptions of older adults in two Swedish neighborhoods in different urban contexts: Stockholm and Malmö. This is achieved by reporting the everyday lives of older adults in these neighborhoods, with a special consideration to daily mobility, social participation, fear of crime,

and behavioral responses. An important question is, how does fear affect daily life? The chapter draws upon in-depth data from two case studies, which serve as examples of how daily life may be affected by fear of crime in two different settings. The results point to interesting similarities and also important differences in relation to fear of crime and older adults' responses to that fear.

The chapter begins with a discussion of older adults and fear, in particular fear of crime. It then addresses questions about fear of crime in relation to everyday mobility, mental maps, and social participation. This is followed by a presentation of the two neighborhoods and the methods used. Thereafter, a synthesis of the results from the two cases is presented followed by a discussion about the experienced fear of crime and its possible triggers and its implications for older adults and their everyday mobility.

Older adults and fear of crime

Two decades ago, Pain (1999) called for a more critical approach to age as a demographic characteristic. She refers to age as something largely used by criminologists as a descriptive category; however, we argue here that it is essential to consider that older adults comprise a highly diverse group (e.g., Bazalgette et al., 2011; Pain, 1999). Although it has been shown that older adults often experience higher levels of fear of crime, studies focusing on the underlying mechanisms of such fear are still limited (De Donder et al., 2012), although not absent (e.g., Hanslmaier, Peter, & Kaiser, 2018; De Donder et al., 2012; Bazalgette et al., 2011; De Donder, Verté, & Messelis, 2005; Ziegler & Mitchell, 2003). Bazalgette et al. relate the following:

... older adults are a highly heterogeneous group, therefore we must be wary of studies that feed into or are modelled on stereotypes that over-emphasize the influence of age on people's experiences, without considering their other characteristics. Such stereotypes must be challenged....

(Bazalgette et al., 2011, p. 57)

Older adults are associated with a variety of stereotypical images that affect their lives in different ways and on different levels. There are many "misconceptions, negative attitudes and assumptions about older adults" (WHO, 2019a); for example, older adults are portrayed as weak, fragile and dependent, which creates substantial barriers and limits freedom and the possibility to take control over one's life. Recent studies suggest that stereotypes of older adults have become even more negative in recent years (Levy, 2017).

However, many of the opportunities and barriers in the lives of older adults have been shown to be influenced not so much by their age as by personal characteristics (e.g., gender, ethnicity, education, class) or by the broader context of their lives (e.g., De Donder et al., 2005; Pain, 1999). Studies have also found that factors such as marital status, health and disability, living in an urban or deprived area, and reading the newspaper regularly all significantly contribute to

the fear of crime in older age (see Bazalgette et al., 2011, p. 57). Other studies have identified the significance of loneliness, which is a result of the lack of participation in both social and cultural life (De Donder et al., 2005), and low levels of life satisfaction (Hanslmaier, 2013) as contributing to fear of crime in later life. Ziegler and Mitchell (2003, p. 173) state that “‘old age’ per se is not the cause” of the fear of crime.

Charles and Carstensen (2009) found that, in addition to the devastating consequences of isolation and exclusion, social and emotional functioning changes little with age and that the need for social participation, for example, remains the same throughout life. However, Western culture often associates old age with negative qualities, considering it “a time of decline physically and mentally, and of social and spatial withdrawal” (Pain, 1999, p. 3).

Everyday mobilities and the fear of crime

A substantial body of literature has been developed that emphasizes the role context plays on mobility (e.g., Cresswell, 2010; Hanson, 2010). The new mobilities paradigm (Sheller & Urry, 2006), or the mobilities turn (Urry, 2007), arose from the critique of the static view of movement—a critique directed at both social science and at the field of transport planning (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Researchers emphasize the importance of including a wider perspective when studying the everyday mobility of people, which includes “social, cultural, and geographical context—the specifics of place, time and people” (Hanson, 2010, p. 8).

Regarding the specifics of place, older adults often have a strong relation to their home neighborhood (Scharf, Phillipson, & Smith, 2003). However, different settings offer different conditions. For example, some researchers identify older adults in deprived neighborhoods as particularly vulnerable (Phillipson, 2004; Smith, 2009). However, it is important to keep in mind that fear of crime refers to a subjective and “emotional reaction characterized by a sense of danger and anxiety” (Garofalo, 1981, p. 840). There is also a substantial body of literature that shows that the relationship between fear and crime is not necessarily coherent (e.g., Rader, 2017).

Mobility, mental maps and fear of crime

Mobility is shaped by various tangible and intangible factors, some are individual others are contextual. Mental maps can be used to express a person’s individual perceptions of different places and influence our views on where we would or would not like to live and which places we would like to visit or avoid (Gould & White, [1974] 2002). Mass media and public discourses largely contribute to psychological and/or perceived barriers and often support the stigmatization of places (Wacquant, 2007; Rogers & Coaffee, 2005). The news media has also been accused of contributing to the creation of mental and physical boundaries, which strongly influence our mental maps. Individual mental maps

can affect where one goes and lead to avoidance behavior (e.g., Koskela, 1997) and to the adoption of certain mobility strategies, such as taking detours or talking on a mobile phone while walking home.

Four categories of behavioral responses to the fear of crime have been identified: avoidance behavior, protective behavior, behavior and lifestyle adjustments, and participation in relevant collective activities (categories developed by Miethe, compiled and presented in Jackson & Gouseti, 2013). All of these behavioral responses involve restrictions in everyday life and everyday mobility. For example, older adults may avoid using public transport, or they might avoid certain places, neighborhoods, or types of people. Protective behavior includes activities that are thought to prevent crime (e.g., putting up fences) as well as activities aimed at self-protection and safety improvement (e.g., travelling in groups). Behavioral and lifestyle adjustments involve a withdrawal from activities that are considered dangerous, such as visiting bars or using public transport at night. Collective activities include participation in groups, such as neighborhood watch program activities directed at older adults' well-being (Jackson & Gouseti, 2013).

Social participation and fear of crime

Social participation is about the involvement in activities that provide interactions with others in society or the community (see Levasseur et al., 2010, p. 2144). There is strong evidence that social cohesion and community participation are important dimensions of neighborhoods, often associated with positive health effects and well-being of the population (e.g., Dupuis-Blanchard, Neufeld, & Strang, 2009; Mendes de Leon, 2005). With age and changing life situations, such as retirement, health conditions, loss of a partner or family members and friends, people's social networks decline (Oh & Kim, 2009). A shrinking network in later life tends to increase the importance of external but local social contacts in the neighborhood (Stjernborg, 2017a; Campbell & Lee, 1992). The neighborhood has also been identified as playing an important role in determining levels of fear of crime, and some studies have found that poor safety perceptions seem to be associated with the lack of social participation in the neighborhood (De Donder et al., 2005). Opportunities for developing social contact within a neighborhood are not, however, evenly distributed (Lager, Van Hoven, & Huigen, 2015). In the next section, we introduce the two neighborhoods and some of their main important characteristics as the background of the analysis.

13.2 Current study

The study districts are two neighborhood areas, Hässelby Gård and Seved, which are located in the two major cities of Sweden, Stockholm and Malmö, respectively. The case of Hässelby Gård includes a sample of older adults living in senior housing (Hässelgården), while in the case of Seved, the researcher followed older adults living in general apartments in the area. Table 13.1 shows the characteristics of the two neighborhoods.

Table 13.1 Characteristics of the two neighborhoods

	<i>Hässelby Gård (in the city of Stockholm)</i>	<i>Seved (in the city of Malmö)</i>
Distance to city center	Neighborhood on the outskirts of Stockholm, 15 km from the city center	Centrally located neighborhood
When most buildings were constructed	1950s	1930s and 1940s
Number of residents	11,300 residents (2017)	4,500 residents (2015)
Older people	Approx. 15 percent of the population	Approx. 8 percent of the population
Land use of neighborhood	Single-family and multi-family housing, mostly rental apartments Centrum shopping area Bar/restaurants ATMs Metro station	Single-family and multi-family housing. Both rental and privately owned apartments. A common square with some services such as shops, a meeting place for people in the neighborhood, and so on Close to public transport/bus
Foreign background	More than 60 percent of the residents	More than 60 percent of the residents
Income levels	Lower than among people who live in Stockholm City in general	Lower than among people who live in Malmö City in general
Elderly fear of crime*	Older population of Hässelby Gård tend to be more fearful than those living in the city center of Stockholm	Residents of Seved tend to be more fearful than those in the district of Södra Innerstaden in general and even more insecure than the average resident of Malmö

Note

* According to Stockholm Municipality (2012) and Stjernborg et al. (2015).

The area in Hässelby Gård, which is a large neighborhood on the outskirts of Stockholm, is close to a metro station and other services. Hässelgården senior housing is located 15 kilometers from Stockholm city center, and it takes 40 minutes for the residents to commute to the central parts of the city by train. The property was built in 1973 and consists of four different blocks of five-story buildings, of which two blocks are rented by older citizens aged 65 years and older. Consequently, those apartments are segregated by age from the other buildings. One block is occupied by students, and the other block is a nursing and care home. Micasa Fastigheter (a subsidiary of Stockholm Stadshus) owns

the housing development. A metro station, a supermarket, and a bank are all within a 500 meter walk from the senior housing. People who are 65 years and older and registered in the City of Stockholm have permission to apply for these apartments. The rental cost of Hässelgården senior housing is among the lowest in Stockholm. There are 119 apartments in this senior housing complex—of which one-third are studio apartments, and two-thirds are two-room apartments. Some of the apartments have been partially adapted to suit the needs of older adults.

Seved is centrally located in the city of Malmö and is close to public transport and city services. Most of the apartments are small, and living in crowded quarters is an ongoing problem. In the past decade Seved has attracted a great deal of negative media coverage. A critical discourse analysis of daily newspaper articles shows that the neighborhood is “predominantly construed as unruly and a place of lawlessness” (Stjernborg et al., 2015, p. 7).

A senior group was followed for almost one and a half years. The senior group is an initiative taken by the municipality to strengthen networking among older adults and to encourage social participation in the neighborhood. An adult education association, the city museum, the city theatre, and the city archives joined in co-operation, which is unique from a Swedish perspective. Around 20 activities were arranged in the same year. The activities are free for older adults and financed through a shared financing arrangement with a limited budget. Examples of activities within the neighborhood were traditional parties in the common square, activities involving children in the area, and city farming. Activities outside the neighborhood included visiting different museums and theatres, guided city tours, Christmas fairs, and barbeques at the beach.

Data and methods

In this chapter, comparative case studies are employed as a method to analyze and synthesize similarities, differences, and patterns across the two cases that focus on the fear of crime among older adults in two different settings in Sweden. Comparative case studies can use both qualitative and quantitative methods to capture similarities and differences among two or more cases that have a common goal of producing knowledge (Goodrick, 2014), which was the case in this study. Table 13.2 shows the characteristics of the older participants in the two cases.

In Hässelgården senior housing, a survey with 43 questions was conducted between June and August 2014. Most of the survey questions were structured, with a few open-ended questions. The questions focused on the older residents' use of space, safety perception, history of victimization, and fear of crime. A pilot test was conducted with six participants to enrich the design of the survey and the questions. Most of the participants declined to participate in face-to-face interviews for different reasons. Overall, 27 of the 56 surveys given were collected (response rate 50 percent); of these, 37 percent were face-to-face interviews and the rest were questionnaires. Some comparisons were also made by using the Stockholm Safety Survey from 2014.

Table 13.2 Characteristics of the participants in the two case studies

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Hässelgården Senior Housing</i>	<i>Seved Senior Group</i>
Gender	Around two-fifths females	A majority were females
Age	Around half of the participants were younger older (65–74) and half older (75–85)	Mixed age (between 60 and 93 years)
Number of people in household	A majority were living in a single-person household	A majority were living in a single-person household
Ethnicity	A majority were native Swedish	A majority were native Swedish
Housing	All participants were living in senior housing	All participants were living in their own apartment
Time of residence	A majority had lived in their apartments less than five years (about one-fifth less than a year)	Most had lived in the neighborhood for many years (some for 20–30 years, and a few had lived there their whole lives)

Outdoor environmental features in the senior housing area and the immediate surroundings were inspected. Features included the presence of a resting area, proper lighting, dark/hidden corners, condition of the entrance area, and overall opportunities for natural surveillance. A multi-method approach was used to investigate the possible association between older adults' safety perceptions, their use of space and mobility, and characteristics of the environment.

In Seved, a qualitative approach was used: the researcher followed both a senior group and staff workers in the area. The senior group consisted of around 40 participants at the time of the study and was continually growing. The empirical material collection started in December 2011 and lasted until April 2013. During this time period, the researcher visited the Seved neighborhood on a regular basis, attended planning and working group meetings, and joined program activities, which required site visits a couple of times per month. The researcher became a familiar face among participants and staff. The empirical material collection ended after saturation (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The empirical material consists of participant observations, including conversations and field notes (carefully taken in a field diary in direct connection with every meeting/activity), and interviews, with the purpose of collecting observations, experiences, and reflections; therefore, it was a substantive sampling (Gold, 1997).

The interviews were conducted after participating in meetings and activities for almost one year. Seven participants were interviewed (six women and one man) through a convenience sample. The interviews were semi-structured, covering background questions about marital status, children, and other similar topics, and overall themes such as activities in everyday life, the neighborhood, social relations and participation, and safety perception. The interviews were

tape recorded and transcribed. Multiple readings of the field diary and interviews were conducted for the analyses.

In both studies, the four categories developed by Miethe, and compiled and presented in Jackson and Gouseti (2013), were used as an analytical tool. Findings will be presented in the results showing similarities and differences between the two cases. Themes for discussion in this chapter are daily mobility, social interaction, fear of crime, and behavioral responses.

13.3 Results

Hässelgården senior housing is located in a neighborhood on the outskirts of Stockholm. Most of the older adults that participated in the study were newcomers (Table 13.1). A majority of them are women living alone, and their health status is generally good.

Seved is a centrally located neighborhood close to public transport and city life, and most of the participants have been living in the area for many years. They live both in two-person and single-person households, with a larger share in the latter. Participants' health status is varied; some have functional limitations and use walking aids, while others do not. Some make use of home care service, while others manage everyday life routines themselves.

Daily mobility and social participation

Most of the participants living in Hässelgården senior housing explain that they go out more often during summer, although they are active sometimes during the colder months of the year. Unexpectedly, most of the older adults prefer to go out after 4.00 p.m., when it is dark; this may be explained by the fact that, during those hours, there are more people in the streets, which may make them feel safer. Most of their social activities occur close to home, and on average, they go out once a day to run errands or take a short walk.

Because they belong to a senior group in Seved, older adults are all quite active and strive to go out every day. The municipality is behind this initiative, making an important contribution to promote social participation among older people who otherwise would risk loneliness and exclusion. For some of the participants, the senior group has given "life a new meaning", as one of them explained. Most of the older adults agree that they are out more as a result of being part of the senior group, and therefore they have increased mobility because of a larger social network and more daily activities. Increases in mobility mainly involve walks within the neighborhood with friends from the senior group, walks to the meeting place from home, and trips outside the neighborhood through arranged activities.

Fear of crime

The results show that older adults in Hässelgården display a higher level of fear of crime compared with the older adults living in the same neighborhood or

Table 13.3 Summary of the results of the two cases

<i>Results</i>	<i>Hässelgården Senior Housing</i>	<i>Seved Senior Group</i>
Social participation/ daily mobility	Participants often socialize inside the senior housing. Most participants try to go out every day to do errands or take a short walk	Participants often socialize outside in the neighborhood—taking walks, doing different activities at the local meeting place, and so on. Most participants try to go out every day
Places considered unsafe	Areas that can be regarded as more isolated, for example, the petrol station and bus station	None expressed explicitly, but many of the participants mentioned a street under camera surveillance as an example for not being afraid in the neighborhood (“they even walk on this particular street”)
Behavioral responses – Avoidance behavior	Not going out in the neighborhood at certain times of day when there are fewer people around Not walking or residing in the places declared to be unsafe	Not being out late in the evening, which appeared to be a common strategy for many of the older persons Avoiding places outside the neighborhood such as lively commercial streets in the city center (mentioned by a few of the participants)
– Protective behavior	Staying in the immediate environment around the building, which is surrounded with bushes and other “boundaries” separating the public and private spaces	Crossing the street or choosing another route to avoid, for example, a group of youths who are standing on the pavement Being accompanied by somebody else if going out in the evening
– Behavior and lifestyle adjustments	By choosing a longer route to do the daily shop; the shorter route feels less safe because it passes a bar and there are fewer people around (distance decay strategy)	
– Participation in relevant collective activities	Mainly conducting collective activities close to their living environment	

elsewhere in Stockholm. Around two-fifths of the study participants declare poor levels of perceived safety when they are outside in their own neighborhood. The areas near the petrol station and bus stops are regarded as the most threatening, as both are surrounded by high-rise buildings, desolate streets, and parking lots, which often reflect a lower level of natural surveillance. Compared with the Stockholm Safety Survey results, there are commercial areas near the metro station with many shops in the neighborhood of Hässelby that are regarded as unsafe by the older residents. The same patterns are observed on a city level. A majority of the older adults feel less safe in the city's large shopping and entertainment areas.

In Seved, few of the older adults agreed with the unsafe picture of the neighborhood portrayed by the media, which they think is grossly exaggerated. Only one of the residents suggested feeling unsafe when leaving home. This person was new in the group and referred to reports in the news media about the dangers of Seved. However, after being a part of the group for a couple of months, he gradually came to feel safer in the area.

Several seniors in Seved emphasized changes in the residential composition of the resident population and mentioned immigrants as the new neighborhood "problem", and they spoke of how empty apartments led to an influx of families. According to them, this inflow, paired with increased vandalism and other disturbances, gives the impression that it is a low-income neighborhood. Despite this, they claim that overall they feel safe being outdoors in the neighborhood. They often mention that they know people in the area and, for example, regularly meet younger people or people with other cultural backgrounds when they are out in the area.

Behavioral responses

Table 13.3 shows that older adults in both Hässelgården and Seved show signs of behavioral responses due to fear. Older adults in Hässelgården can choose to take a longer route and walk farther to the shops for their daily needs, as they feel safer taking that route even though they could take a shorter one to a closer shopping area. The closer shopping area is associated with bars, which some of the seniors regard as unsafe or risky.

Results from Hässelgården also suggest that safety perceptions follow a distance decay from older adults' homes; they feel safer close to home (such as an entrance or around in garden areas) but less so as the distance increases from these locations. The garden areas are surrounded with bushes, which may discourage strangers from entering the area. The physical design, outdoor furniture, and flower beds create a sense of ownership in clear and specific zones, so residents feel a sense of belonging to this area, an extension of the building. The area includes seating with a clear view of the garden, allowing for social interaction, and it is visible from windows and balconies. Natural surveillance is possible year round because the area is surrounded by low-rise buildings. In the summer, residents gather in the garden weekly to barbeque and socialize.

During this meeting time, they may plan a collective activity, such as watching a movie or exercising. As suggested by Jackson and Gouseti (2013), these collective activities at the entrance ensure safety.

Protective behaviors mentioned by some seniors in Seved include crossing the street or choosing another route if, for example, some young people are standing on the pavement, which might be an indication on the “fear of others” (Sandercock, 2005). They may avoid going out by themselves when they have to go out in the evenings. Avoidance behavior also occurred in that many of the older adults chose not to be out late in the evening (time avoidance).

The older adults in Seved were influenced by the negative media reports. None of them had witnessed anything extraordinary happen on Rasmusgatan (a street that has repeatedly been given negative exposure in mass media), but teenagers and young people are often visible there. Several of them said that they “even walk on Rasmusgatan”, which is a way of emphasizing that despite the risk they express their agency and walk freely in the whole neighborhood.

Several of the older adults also spoke about how other people tell them to be careful, based on what they have heard and read about Seved. They describe this as inconvenient, as they do not agree. Remarkably, some of the Seved residents refer to the fear of being victimized in other places outside the neighborhood based on what they have read in the newspapers, and a few of them avoid those areas, regarding them as too risky (often these are lively commercial streets in the city center).

13.4 Discussion of the results

Results show that older adults in both Hässelgården and Seved expressed behavioral responses due to the perceived risk of being victimized by crime where they live. Older adults described how fear of crime led to avoidance behavior as initially described in previous studies (Koskela, 1997, Jackson & Gouseti, 2013). In the case of Seved, those behaviors mostly meant time avoidance. In the case of Hässelgården, poor safety perceptions led to both time and place avoidance (e.g., feeling compelled to take longer routes for daily shopping, taking detours or avoiding being out in the late evenings). Older adults were influenced by their mental maps of risk (e.g., Koskela, 1997), which affect their everyday mobility in different ways. For the older adults in Hässelgården, fear of crime meant behavior and lifestyle adjustments as well, such as participation in collective activities but mostly restricted to indoors or close to the senior housing.

There is a common notion that older adults are more likely than others to express fear and some refer to older adults in deprived areas as particularly vulnerable. This is certainly true for some, but not necessarily all in our areas of study. Despite the reputation of several safety problems in Seved, the neighborhood was overall perceived by senior residents as fairly safe. In Hässelgården, the picture was different. Older adults had their mobility limited by rumors of crime.

According to the World Health Organization, stereotypes of being fearful can exclude and marginalize older adults in their communities (WHO, 2019a, 2019b).

Municipal efforts on behalf of older adults in Sweden are largely based on age-segregated meeting places offering inside activities. Different forms of age-segregated housing have increased as well (e.g., 55-plus living or 65-plus living), often located in the outskirts, which among other things means that more and more older adults are dependent on having sufficient public transport options to be able to continue being active citizens.

Based on stereotypes and the notion that older adults are more fearful than other groups, the participants from Seved should hypothetically experience fear of crime in daily life. They live in a neighborhood often described in the media as “lawless” (Stjernborg, 2017b, 2015) and portrayed as a neighborhood with socio-economic challenges. Yet, findings shows indications that this is not the case. In Seved, despite health and functional limitations, older adults were all active at the time of the study, and a common notion is that “the senior group” has given their lives a new meaning and most certainly also been a contributing factor for place attachment and reducing feelings of fear. Similarly, previous research has highlighted the relationship between place attachment and the fear of crime (e.g., De Donder et al., 2005).

In Hässelgården senior housing, people live in an age-segregated area, which may limit social participation and contacts with other residents in the area. Most of the study participants were also newcomers to the neighborhood. This might be part of the reason why residents in Hässelgården seem to have more behavioral responses to the fear of crime than older adults in Seved senior group. In other words, older adults in Seved had all been living in the area for a long time. They were active (despite functional limitations), went outdoors daily, and knew people in the area. The older adults in Hässelgården generally did not have a large social network in the neighborhood. Despite running daily errands, they often socialized indoors, which can be regarded as their “comfort zone”. In addition, Hässelgården is a larger neighborhood in the outskirts of Stockholm, which may trigger feelings of fear because of distance to basic services. In addition, living in an age-segregated area may partially explain the residents’ fear of crime, given that they may talk, spread the word, or even exaggerate when hearing about someone else’s victimization.

13.5 Conclusion

The aim in discussing these cases has been to contribute to a more in-depth discussion about the role of context in characterizing safety perceptions in later life. The two cases, showing the experiences of older adults in these two different settings and contexts, have served as examples of how daily life may be affected by fear of crime.

Although residents of the two neighborhoods show some similarities in terms of socio-economic/demographic status at the individual and neighborhood levels, the importance of the context (both social and geographical aspects) in the discourse of older adults’ fear of crime cannot be overlooked. Even though the conclusions in this study are exploratory and further studies

are needed to confirm some of the relationships illustrated in this chapter, the meaning of social participation in the neighborhood should be highlighted. In efforts to better meet the needs of older adults and to develop age-friendly neighborhoods, the role of the context of daily life should be further investigated. It is also important that municipalities and other actors understand their roles in supporting a “healthy ageing” (WHO, 2019c). Feelings of fear might lead to restricted daily mobility and can have a negative effect on social participation, which in turn can cause exclusion and lead to more fear.

The example of initiatives that engage older adults (as shown in Seved) illustrates the importance of supporting mobility of older adults from several angles, for healthy ageing, creating opportunities for social participation and creating integrated and vital neighborhoods. However, from a Swedish perspective, such efforts are unusual, and much of the currently routines are grounded on the idea of age-segregated meeting places and age-segregated housing, which might limiting older adults to indoor activities. Nevertheless, since this study is limited in character, future research should be devoted to the role of context for everyday mobility in later life. Equally important are future studies that can assess the effectiveness of initiatives for older adults that enhance social participation locally, everyday mobility and ensure viable and age-friendly cities.

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