

ROSEnet COST ACTION (CA 15122)

REDUCING OLD-AGE SOCIAL EXCLUSION:
COLLABORATIONS IN RESEARCH & POLICY

Old Age Civic Exclusion and the Symbolic Discourses that Underlie it

Prepared by:

Sandra Torres, Ariela Lowenstein, Sigal Naim, Feliciano Villar, Joe Larragy, Anita Preoteasa, Iivi Rivits-Arkonsuo, Anu Leppiman and Päivi Topo

On behalf of the ROSEnet Civic Exclusion Working Group

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Authors list, affiliation and acknowledgements:

Sandra Torres, Uppsala University, Sweden.
Ariela Lowenstein, Haifa University, Israel.
Sigal Naim, Haifa University, Israel.
Feliciano Villar, University of Barcelona, Spain.
Joe Larragy, Maynooth University, Ireland.
Anita Preoteasa, Romanian Academy, Romania.
Iivi Rivits-Arkonsuo, Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia.
Anu Leppiman, Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia.
Päivi Topo, The Age Institute, Finland.

Introduction

This Synthesis Paper has been compiled by the Working Group on Civic Exclusion that is part of the COST-financed Research Network (CA-15122) ‘Reducing Old-age exclusion: Collaborations in Research and Policy’ (ROSEnet). This research network aims to overcome the fragmentation that characterizes research on social exclusion in old age. It aims also to contribute to conceptual innovation on exclusion across the life course and to improve the research-policy disconnect that exists at present in order to make the tackling of social exclusion amongst older people in Europe possible. This Synthesis Paper – as well as the other Synthesis Papers that the Working Groups of ROSEnet have compiled – is therefore meant to give policy makers and practitioners some insight into what research on old-age social exclusion has focused on so far.

The starting point of this Synthesis Paper is the scoping review that the scientific leaders of this COST-action published in 2017 (see Walsh et al. 2017). This means that we have primarily – though not exclusively – relied on the references compiled in the database of research literature on social exclusion in old age (1997-2015) that the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology has put together as an online resource (see Walsh et al. 2016). Worth noting is that the scoping literature review that they have conducted was specifically looking for research “in the gerontological literature since 1997”. This means that research published before 1997 and research published in other disciplinary outlets is not included in neither their scoping review nor in this Synthesis Paper. This is why one of the tasks that ROSEnet has set out for itself entails the compilation and synthesis of research published in other disciplines that have relevance to our understanding of old-age exclusion. Thus, this Synthesis Paper is the first step in a mapping exercise about what research on old-age exclusion focuses on and fails to address.

Worth noting is perhaps that ROSEnet recognizes the variety of definitions of social exclusion that exist in the literature and the different scholarly traditions that underlie them. Despite this, our network regards old-age exclusion as a complex process that

“...involves interchanges between multi-level risk factors, processes and outcomes. Varying in form and degree across the older adult life course, its complexity, impact and prevalence are amplified by old-age vulnerabilities, accumulated disadvantage for some groups, and

constrained opportunities to ameliorate exclusion. Old-age exclusion leads to inequalities in choice and control, resources and relationships, and power and rights in key domains of neighborhood and community; services, amenities and mobility; material and financial resources; social relations; socio-cultural aspects of society; and civic participation. Old-age exclusion implicates states, societies, communities and individuals” (Walsh et al. 2017).

Phrased differently one could say that ROSEnet regards old-age exclusion as a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing outcomes generated by life-long exclusion in different domains, the processes that have led to these outcomes, together with the additional forms of exclusion that emerge in old age. In doing so, we view old-age social exclusion as complex, multidimensional and dynamic, sometimes specific to old age itself but often rooted in other dimensions of exclusion and intersectional patterns established over the life course. For example, while some older people are excluded economically and in terms of social services, they have a social life that cannot be characterized by exclusion. In spite of this, it is often taken for granted that older people are “a vulnerable group, mainly because they risk a reduction in participation in various domains of life through the loss of paid work, a decrease in income and an increase in health problems”. However, “the extent to which this actually occurs and whether it translates into forms of social exclusion is largely an open question” (Jehoel-Gijsbers & Vrooman 2008: 1).

Worth noting from the start is that the topic of old-age social exclusion has received increasing attention over the past decade. However, some domains of exclusion remain insufficiently conceptualized, challenging our ability to create knowledge of the prevalence of old-age exclusion and impact on the quality of life of older persons. For example, the role that each dimension associated with social exclusion plays in determining whether a person will experience old-age exclusion or not is an area of investigation that begs attention. Of interest in this respect is Scharf & Keating’s (2012) argument that older people that experience exclusion tend to have experienced it for longer periods, which is why they have argued for the need to approach exclusion from a life-course perspective and to better articulate research gaps in exclusion in later life (see also Regenmortel et al., 2016). Worth noting is also that Ferraro et al. (2009) have also shown that older people are disproportionately affected by multiple forms of exclusions (economic, civic, social, social services as well as within the community domains that are often used to discuss this type of exclusion). In the recently completed scoping review mentioned earlier, Walsh et al. (2017) bring attention to the broad and empirically-based conceptual frameworks that have been used in the study of old-age

exclusion (i.e. Scharf et al. 2005; Jehoel-Gijsbers & Vrooman 2008; Walsh et al. 2012 & 2014). They have argued that there are at least five core domains that need to be taken into account when studying old-age exclusion (i.e. economic, social, services, civic rights, and community). These are therefore the five core domains that the COST-action ROSEnet departs from.

As members of the working group on civic exclusion within ROSEnet we have been asked to summarize the state of knowledge on two of the domains of old age social exclusion: civic exclusion and the socio-cultural aspects of exclusion. The scoping review that Walsh et al. (2017) conducted identified three dimensions of socio-cultural aspects of exclusion (identity exclusion; symbolic and discourse exclusion and ageism and age discrimination) and four dimensions of civic exclusion (citizenship; generic civic activities, volunteering and community responsibilities and voting and political participation). In this paper we bring attention to two of the aspects of socio-cultural aspects of old-age exclusion (i.e. symbolic and discourse exclusion and ageism and age discrimination), and three aspects of civic exclusion in old age (i.e. citizenship, volunteering and political participation). Our choice of themes to focus on is prompted by what we deem to be most relevant for policy makers.

Symbolic discourses as a backdrop for old-age social exclusion

The literature that focuses on the importance of symbolic discourses for old-age exclusion focuses on the ways in which narratives and imagery on aging and old age affect the ways in which old age is conceived and approached. Research on the symbolic discourses that make exclusion in old age possible draw attention to the different negative narratives that popular culture feeds us with as far as old age and aging are concerned. These narratives equate the aging body with lack of control and inevitable decline, and regard old age as a stage of life characterized by loss of autonomy and agency (Wilińska & Cedersund 2010). By bringing attention to the ways in which the Third and Fourth Age are depicted in public discourses (and imagery), research on symbolic discourses brings attention to the fact that these discourses have an impact on how we think about the aging process, and how we regard the part of the life-course we refer to as old age (irrespective on when that starts numerically which varies, of course, from context to context). Some of the literature on these symbolic discourses brings attention to the inequalities that some older people experience (irrespective of whether they are rooted in cultural, social or economic sources) (see Walker & Lowenstein

2009). The literature brings also attention to the fact that not all older people can, for example, live up to the wealthy lifestyles that are sometimes used to depict the Third Age (e.g. Irwin 1999). In addition, the literature brings attention to the ways in which narratives about the Fourth age perpetuate the image of aging as a challenging process, and the idea that the aging body is a legitimate source of disgust (e.g. Gilleard & Higgs 2011 and Rudman 2014).

Some of the literature that focuses on the role that symbolic discourses about aging and old age play urges us to question the suitability of concepts such as active aging, successful aging or healthy aging since these concepts blatantly disregard the realities of disadvantaged older people (e.g. Ranzjin 2010; Rudman 2014; van Dyk 2014). The fact that these concepts are based on ethno-cultural values that stem from highly industrialized Western societies is something that must be taken into account. These concepts (and the ideologies that underlie them) are namely relatively culture-oblivious (Torres 1999). As such, they rhyme well with how aging is regarded in some parts of the world but do not make sense if we want to grasp how other parts of the world regard aging and old age (Torres 2002, 2006a). This is why Torres (2004, 2006b; see also Torres & Karl 2016) has pointed out that as more and more people engage in international migration, the ethno-cultural values that are upheld by the older segments of our populations, and the understandings of successful aging that appeal to them, are becoming more diverse. This is why she has argued that the successful aging paradigm (and the various policy implementation models designed on its base; such as those that the active aging and healthy aging discussions around the world have created) needs to be questioned. In a highly globalized world such as ours, it is extremely problematic to design one-size-fits-all programs especially when their ideological underpinnings only reflect Western and highly industrialized values.

It is important to note that some of the critique that scholars have formulated as far as successful aging, healthy aging and active aging are concerned has entailed the unsuitability of these concepts from an ethical perspective. Holstein (2001), for example, draws attention to the ethical implications of anti-aging medicine (which entails postponing the transition into the fourth age) and argues that the paradigms of active aging, successful aging and healthy aging are partially responsible for the promotion of anti-aging medicine in some settings (see also Timonen 2016). Holstein argues also that women are more affected than men by such paradigms and the anti-aging medicine practices that they have ignited, and urges us therefore to not only be sceptical of them but also to be aware of the gender, class and ethnicity rooted inequalities that these paradigms are bound to augment (cf. Rozanova 2010). Rudman (2014)

analyzes the ways in which narratives on positive aging can influence people nearing retirement to regard the inevitability of the aging process as a risk that they can abate and/or should try to control. As such, these narratives dichotomize the aging process into a third age (associated with autonomy, independence and agency) and a fourth age (associated with the very opposite). In doing so, they make exclusion in old age possible even if inadvertently. Thus, the research on symbolic discourses that regards these discourses as sources of socio-cultural exclusion in old age takes for granted that older people can be marginalized not only because of the fact that old age tends to be associated with an array of negative stereotypes (Sarabia-Cobo & Castanedo Pfeiffer 2015), but also because such stereotypes could affect older people's well-being (Sabik 2014). Worth noting is, however, that although it is not uncommon for scholars to take for granted that negative stereotypes about aging and old age can affect older people's views of themselves, as well as their regard for aging and old age, few researchers have in fact systematically explored how older people regard the array of negative stereotypes that they are surrounded by. This is therefore one of the areas of research that deserves attention.

Ageism as a backdrop for old-age social exclusion

Scholarly discussions about the role that symbolic discourses about aging and old age play in old age social exclusion tend often to allude to ageism (see Butler 1969). Although the concept of ageism was launched several decades ago, researchers have renewed their attention on ageism's consequences over the past decade. This is especially the case in Europe where another COST-Action ISI402 focuses exclusively on ageism (<http://notoageism.com/>); an action which has produced a couple of publications of their own which we encourage our readers to look at. The literature on ageism is not, however, vast. One of the things that characterizes it is that it tends to address ageism within specific contexts. Such as, for example, work (Chiu & Ngan 1999; Duncan 2003), health (Beaulaurier et al. 2014) and policy (Biggs & Kimberley 2013). Some of this literature examines also what ageism can mean in different cultures or countries (e.g. The East in Chi, & Ngan 1999; Australia in Biggs & Kimberley 2013 or the US in Cuddy et al. 2005). Research in this area claims that ageist stereotypes, attitudes and beliefs could affect us all (not just older people) since they can be regarded as prisms through which we could pass judgement on what we experience. The literature warns us that regardless of the different settings in which ageism plays out, the influence is the same: when older people are excluded, their potential contribution to society

is lost. Because of this, some scholars argue that older people's lack of knowledge regarding disease prevention or health management in old age can be understood against the backdrop of the ageism that permeates our societies (Beaulaurier et al. 2014).

From this literature, we can identify new directions for a critical and life-course sensitized approach to social policy. The literature brings namely attention to a variety of methods and approaches to examine ageist attitudes (e.g. the feminist point of view in Carney & Gray 2015) by looking at business cases and diversity policies (e.g. Duncan 2003). Scholars who focus on ageism often argue that the potential of old age, as well as of older people, is not realized to the fullest because of the prevalence of stereotyped discourses and false beliefs about getting old and being old. From a policy-making standpoint, the literature suggests that some policy makers themselves hold questionable perceptions regarding older people and that this needs to be addressed if we are to manage to evolve in our thinking about aging and old age (Biggs & Kimberley 2013). Against this backdrop, it is perhaps understandable that scholars working on ageism worry that the negative stereotypes, attitudes and beliefs about aging and old age will be reinforced as more and more people grow into advanced old age. This is one of the many reasons why they urge policy makers to take into account not only that these stereotypes can have an impact on older people but also that they can impact how the population as a whole views aging and old age. As Duncan (2003) argues: old age is not easily incorporated into policies on equal opportunities in effective ways so raising the awareness of policy makers and practitioners' understandings of ageism should be one of our priorities.

Civic exclusion and citizenship

Moving on to the literature on civic exclusion it seems worth reiterating that there are different angles from which old age social exclusion in the civic sphere can be addressed. Some of these angles have received more attention and that is why we begin this section with the literature on civic exclusion that specifically addresses citizenship. This literature builds on conventional starting points such as Marshallian concepts of citizenship, and post-Marshallian notions of citizenship, which transcend nationality and introduce dimensions of inequality beyond class (especially gender and ethnicity). Research on civic old age exclusion that engages with theories on citizenship ascertains that age itself can become a dimension of difference among older people just like class, gender, ethnicity and sexuality are. These

scholars warn us that the increasing focus on themes of active citizenship and empowerment can be implicitly limited to "third agers" (Laslett 1987) and are, as such, exclusionary of the fourth agers whose aging welfare states are preoccupied with. This is why some of the literature examines the challenges faced when applying the concepts of active citizenship and participative governance to those in deep old age, and their effective exclusion from civic life (Scourfield 2007). In addition, the literature on citizenship and old age exclusion warns of the fact that the assumption that older people will mobilize as "senior power" (e.g. in the context of Social Security and Medicare in the USA) may oversimplify how older people engage with policy related to social exclusion. This is why the notion that there are specific politics of old age in the context of social citizenship and citizen empowerment is one of the areas that have received critical attention by scholars (Street 1997).

Much of the literature on citizenship that has addressed the question of social exclusion in old age also assumes the centrality of work, which can be a factor in excluding older people from this discourse; paradoxically, leaving work aside, the concept of social exclusion is ambiguous in the context of older people as a whole (Craig 2004). From this literature, we learn that the experience of being old is varied and ambivalent in relation to concepts of citizenship and social exclusion and that models of social investment can be exclusionary in the case of retired people. More problematic, however, for many older people, is how cumulative factors can marginalize them, e.g., via a welfare paradox whereby non-take up of additional benefits is greatest among those most in need. A key area is so-called "fourth agers", who may remain residual, viewed as passive and 'inadequate consumers' (Baumann 1998) as is the fact that "third age voices" often speak for the fourth age constituency. The challenge is to enable even the least active, most vulnerable, residential care recipients, or oldest old, to be empowered as citizens. Here, some scholars emphasize the concept of advocacy, e.g., social work. More broadly, variation in income and circumstances differentiates greatly between subsets of older people, with contrasting, even opposed, policy concerns (e.g. on the place of tax relief for private pensions and medical insurance, on the one hand, or funding for means-tested programs such as Medicaid and supplemental income, on the other). Vitality, differentiation of older people's experience of social citizenship follows lines of class, gender and ethnicity, much as in other life stages. Summarily speaking, the literature on old age social exclusion that uses the citizenship lens tends to suggest that there are a variety of risks associated with old age that we must take into account. For example, the fact that so many of our everyday spheres are based on labour market participation is one of

the things that are being questioned, as is the fact that active citizenship discourses tend to speak to constituencies that are mostly affluent, male and white.

The literature on civic old-age exclusion and citizenship suggests some topics to address in the future. First, there are several dimensions that serve as the basis for inequality in addition to class – i.e., gender, ethnicity, disability, illness, deep old age, rural isolation, living alone – that restrict social citizenship and civic participation and these need to be addressed. Avenues towards greater inclusion among the oldest, more vulnerable, or institutionalized old, include legislation, standards and regulations, statutory oversight bodies, third sector organizations of older people and professional advocacy and support. One important area is to extend the dimensions of engagement beyond what being an articulated consumer of social or other services entails so that older people can engage more effectively with broader domains of civil, political and community life. Furthermore, it is necessary to address the intersectional nature of exclusion; i.e. that older people are not only old but have a gender, class, ethnicity and an educational background and that these backgrounds can facilitate or limit their civic engagement. This points to the links between the exclusion that is felt by subsets of older people and the shared interests they have with other age groups based on class, ethnicity, gender etc. that continue to affect people as they age but can also pave ways to wider social solidarity.

Civic participation and volunteering

The literature on civic participation and exclusion that has engaged with the idea that volunteering is something older people should engage on has brought attention to the role that neighbourhoods can play in hindering or promoting social participation in small sized cities. (Buffel et al. 2014). Some of this literature questions whether civic involvement is good for older people (e.g. Hirshorn & Settersten 2013) but takes for granted that neighbourhood involvement, frequent contact with neighbours and availability of activities for older people predict civic participation (Buffel et al. 2014). Research in this area also brings attention to the fact that there are dynamic trajectories and a significant degree of variability among individuals, age groups and cohorts. It is not uncommon for scholars working on these issues to argue that discussions about civic participation in old age tend to disregard the heterogeneity that exists when it comes to why and how older people choose to be civically engaged (Hirshorn & Settersten 2013). The literature that looks into civic participation

amongst older migrants specifically, for example, has brought attention to the fact that asset building (and sometimes even labour market participation) are some of the things from which older migrants tend to have been excluded and that this has implications for their civic participation later in life (Yongwoo et al. 2014). Against this backdrop, it is perhaps understandable that scholars have argued that we must take into account the heterogeneity of older people and the ways in which varied social and material circumstances, among different age cohorts, influence patterns of civic participation in old age (Stephens et al. 2015; Walsh et al. 2014).

From all of this it follows that one angle of literature on older people's civic participation that has received some attention is the role that volunteering activities and community involvement can play in reducing exclusion. Some of the literature focusing on these angles has linked volunteering and community involvement patterns to the wider contexts of urban planning, rural communities, local governance processes and the effect of these on ideals of active aging. This literature takes for granted that ensuring older people's full rights as urban citizens is essential to achieving an age friendly city including the right of older people to appropriate urban space, the right to participate in decision-making surrounding the production of urban space and the right to shape strategies for urban planning and regeneration (Buffel et al. 2012). This literature also points out that the increasing number of old people living in cities throughout the world poses specific civic exclusion challenges. Thus, although cities are drivers of national economic and cultural progress, these scholars point out that they can also have a downside for those older people who are outside the labour market (Buffel et al. 2012). The literature suggests, in other words, that if older people are to be regarded as urban citizens we need to make sure that urban planners do not ignore the views and experiences of older people.

Research on older people's civic participation stresses that informal practices underpin many community responses to supporting older people in rural communities. This is one of the reasons why these settings tend to be regarded as supportive. Rural communities can sometimes be more in tune with the set of collective interdependencies, the multiplicity of individual roles and the positions of need in which older people (especially the very old) can find themselves. Thus, the literature on civic activities and volunteering suggests that the informal practices found in rural communities have the potential to address the social exclusion of older people and enhance local aspects of age-friendliness (Walsh et al. 2014). The literature also shows that a focus on individual responsibility for active engagement in

society, which does not take account of individual circumstances or past contributions, can be harmful and can exclude older people who are the most in need of support to participate (e.g. Stephens et al. 2015).

Civic exclusion and political participation

The literature on social exclusion in old age that addresses voting and political participation takes for granted that older people may face a particularly intense degree of social exclusion in political issues, and that social engagement, anti-discrimination (ageist) attitudes and active aging will be more easily accomplished if older people increase their political participation. Civic engagement (including political participation) is regarded (in this scholarship) as a contributory factor both to individual well-being and health (Gele & Harsløf 2012), and to gains in social cohesion and social capital. Worth noting from the start is that research on political participation has shown that older people have a higher inclination to vote, but less inclination to participate in non-institutionalized activities. Of interest is also that research has also shown that older people who participate in other active-aging activities are also more prone to be politically involved (Nygård & Jakobsson 2013; Serrat et al. 2015). However, the profile of older people as political beings is changing, and future older segments of our populations are not only likely to display a more multi-faceted political behaviour (in terms of types of political involvement, for example), but are also more likely to engage in non-institutionalized activities as well (Nygård & Jakobsson 2013). Worth noting is also that this literature has consistently shown that educational and financial resources, as well as social capital, have a strong effect on political behaviours (e.g. voting) and on involvement in political organizations.

An important issue is therefore how variation in older people's political participation is shaped by the heterogeneity of the older population in terms of labour market status, occupational class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, health status, need for assistance with personal and domestic care, life experience, etc. (Barnes 2005). Studies of political participation and civic engagement in the general population tend to assign older people to a single identity category (again illustrating the influence of identity exclusion) as though they constitute a distinct 'public' for the purpose of political participation. This is problematic. Phrased differently one could say that the literature on political participation and civic engagement points often to the fact that older people come in all shapes and forms even

though political parties and policy makers engaged in efforts to increase older people's political participation seem to disregard this very fact. Additionally, this literature argues that while some older people may favour certain types of participation (such as, for example, institutionalized political participation including voting or joining trade unions and political parties), others may prefer non-institutionalized political participation (such as joining social movements and campaigns, spontaneous activities, protests, boycotts or lobbying) (see Nygård & Jakobsson 2013).

The literature on political participation and civic engagement that focuses on older people and social movements also points out that the spectrum of political activities in which older people can engage, and the variations in how older people engage with such movements is larger than we often seem to take for granted. Some scholars (e.g. Serrat et al. 2015) argue, however, that participating in different types of political organizations requires different levels of resources and may entail different types of commitments. There is, in other words, great diversity in terms of the opportunities for, and barriers to, political participation that older people experience even if research in this area has yet to grasp this diversity, let alone engage in studies to explore it. The literature shows us, however, that the barriers to political participation (and barriers to retention in political organizations) could be characterized in a threefold manner: a) means-related barriers (e.g. health, time, knowledge, as in Postle et al. 2005) - are the most frequently identified type of barrier; b) motives-related barriers (e.g. lack of interest, low perception of utility) and c) opportunity/context-related barriers (e.g. lack of suitable organizations, lack of information). The question that begs to be asked is, of course, how each of these barriers affect different groups of older people; a question that has received very limited attention. All in all, the literature on voting and political participation that has addressed the question of old-age exclusion can be described in two distinctive ways. First, we have the research that deals with the obstacles to participation that older people experience and secondly, we have the research that brings attention to the particular problems that specific segments of the older population may experience (such as LGBT people, immigrants, dependent and disabled people or people living in nursing homes). Research on obstacles to political participation tends to focus on predictors of participation and non-participation and tends to use large samples (e.g. Serrat et al. 2015; Nygård, & Jakobsson 2013). In contrast, research that brings attention to the reasons that older people have to participate, or abstain from participating in political activities, tends to use smaller and purposely collected samples (often using qualitative methods) (e.g. Bosquet et al. 2015; Gele & Harsløf 2012; Raymond &

Grenier 2013; Postle et al. 2005; Harrison 1999). This means that there are limits to what we can learn from the research on political participation in old age that is available at the moment (as is the case for all other areas of civic exclusion that we have alluded to so far).

Concluding Remarks

This Synthesis Paper has offered a glimpse at the variety of topics that have received attention in the scholarly literature on old-age exclusion that has focused on socio-cultural aspects of exclusion and civic ones. Before we summarize the take-home messages of the previous sections, it seems necessary to point out that only 60 peer-reviewed articles in Walsh et al (2017) scoping review address the socio-cultural angle (this can be compared to the 90 articles that focused on services, amenities and mobility, the 72 articles they reviewed on material and financial resources and the 60 articles on social relations that were also included in their review). A mere 19 articles address the civic dimension. This Synthesis Paper is, in other words, based on the domains of old-age exclusion that have received the least attention out of the six domains that their scoping review have identified.

Summarily speaking, however, there are some things that can be noted already. First, the gerontological literature on old-age exclusion brings attention to the fact that the negative stereotypes about aging and old age should not go unnoticed since these can have an impact on how aging and old age is experienced and how older people are regarded. The literature is particularly cognizant of the fact that, as more and more people grow into old age, we run the risk of contributing to an environment that is exclusionary of the older segments of our populations if we fail to address these negative narratives. Secondly, scholars that focus on the role that symbolic discourses play in old age social exclusion have brought attention to the fact that the successful aging paradigm (which is the basis for the active and healthy aging policies that have been formulated in the past two decades) needs to be re-thought since it does not capture the heterogeneity of older people. Sociodemographic and ethno-cultural variations are bound to affect not only how older people perceive aging but also how they experience old age and this paradigm fails to recognize this. Thirdly, the literature on civic participation, volunteering and political participation draws attention to the fact that social class, education and ethnicity are all relevant to how people choose to participate, volunteer and participate politically, and that the heterogeneity of older people need to inform research on these areas. Fourthly, the literature tends to problematize some of the taken-for-granted

assumptions that have permeated research into these areas (such as, for example, the assumption that political participation is solely a positive thing, or that policies for the older segments of our populations can address the needs of older people) so a critical lens is needed when designing research on old-age exclusion which focuses on the civic domain.

Thus, there is ample room to investigate these angles further especially considering that the civic dimension is the one that have been investigated in the least conceptually coherent fashion, and that the little research that is available comes from socio-cultural settings that do not encompass the diversity of the older segments of our world's population. In terms of the areas of investigation that deserve the most attention it seems necessary to mention that there seems to be very little research that explicitly asks older people if the array of negative stereotypes about aging and old age that exist in societies all over the world affects them or not, and if so how. The number of potential angles of investigation in terms of civic exclusion are also numerous since so little has in fact been done in this area. The implications that differentiation backgrounds such as class, education, gender, sexuality, income and ethnicity have for how citizenship, volunteering and political participation play out in later life seems to be one of the areas of investigation that deserves the most attention as is the inclusion of the most vulnerable older people in the research that is conducted in these areas. Of particular interest is the fact that so little work on civic exclusion seems to have brought attention to the impact that the migratory life-course has on how old-age exclusion operates (Torres 2012). With regards to this, Walsh et al. (2017) write, for example, that "given new and substantial migration flows occurring within and across world regions, analyses need to be increasingly framed through and age-related exclusionary lens/.../ Such trends raise complex questions in each of the domains that are framed within pre-migration trauma, the ordeal of migration itself, post-migration stressors and competing notions of displacement and security" (ibid: 94). Thus, although research on old-age exclusion that focuses on civic participation is still in its infancy, it is fair to say that in the context of the prevalent age-related burden discourses that are rampant in European and international policy, conceptually coherent research on old-age exclusion that pays attention to the civic angle needs to be further developed. In globalized times such as ours, it makes little sense to disregard the diversity that characterize the older segments of our population when designing research that explores old-age social exclusion which employs the socio-cultural and the civic lens.

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ROSEnet aims to overcome fragmentation and critical gaps in conceptual innovation on old-age exclusion across the life course, in order to address the research-policy disconnect and tackle social exclusion amongst older people in Europe.

Research Objectives

- Synthesise existing knowledge from regional, disciplinary and sectorally disparate dialogues, forming a coherent scientific discourse on old-age exclusion;
- Critically investigate the construction of life-course old-age exclusion across economic, social, service, civic rights, and community/spatial domains;
- Assess the implications of old-age exclusion across the life course within economic, social, service, civic rights, and community/spatial domains;
- Develop new conceptual and theoretical frameworks that can be practically applied in understanding and combating the exclusion of older people in European societies;
- Identify innovative, and implementable, policy and practice for reducing old-age exclusion amongst different groups of older people and in different jurisdictional and regional contexts.

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