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Different types of out-of-home activities and well-being among urban residing old persons with mobility impediments

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Abstract

Independent mobility has been proposed to be a precondition for leading an independent, non-institutionalized life. Supporting independent mobility for the growing senior segment thus has societal importance. The question of how to maintain well-being through mobility in older age is, however, a complex one. The present study explicates this by focusing on how utilitarian and discretionary activities—representing different types out-of-home activities—contribute to well-being, using data from individual interviews with persons aged 80-95, living in Copenhagen, Denmark. Material was structured by the two activity types and we found both to contribute to respondents' well-being by representing different sides of 'being'. Utilitarian activities were important in maintaining independence and fulfilling basal needs, while discretionary activities were of importance for the individual existing in relation to the surroundings. Mobility-related well-being seems to be constructed both through independent separateness and through sense of community. This finding implies that supporting mobility in the sense of mere fulfilment of basal needs may not be enough.

Keywords: mobility impediments, old age, transport, aging in place, utilitarian travel, discretionary travel

1. Introduction

The importance of functionality and independent out-of-home mobility for older persons' well-being has increasingly been emphasized in socio-political discussions and securing and supporting independent mobility for the growing senior segment of the population has received increasing societal attention. Previous scholarship has shown that mobility and the ability to leave the home are essential aspects of the quality of life of older persons, and often connected to psychological well-being, independence, and the sense of being empowered in old age (e.g., Adler & Rottunda, 2006; Farquhar 1995; Fonda et al., 2001; Marottoli et al., 1997; Ragland et al., 2005; Schwanen, Banister & Bowling, 2012; Spinney, Scott & Newbold, 2009; Ziegler & Schwanen, 2011).

The maintenance of independent mobility in old age is in line with the emphasis on Active Ageing (WHO, 2002), the ideal of "successful ageing" (Rowe & Kahn, 1987), as well as with industrialized countries' efforts to manage welfare costs as the population ages. The ability to leave the home is a means to maintain social and physical activities, and epidemiological research has demonstrated these activities as being preconditions for maintaining functional capability and leading an autonomous, non-institutionalised life. (Avlund et al. 2004; Everard et al., 2000; Fratiglioni et al., 2004; Mack et al., 1997; Sabin, 1993) Loss of independence in old age is demonstrably connected with an increase in both private and public costs (Guralnik et al., 2002), and staying active and independent is thus a health matter on both an individual and a societal level.

Nevertheless, the question of how to maintain well-being through mobility in older age is a complex one (cf. Banister & Bowling, 2004; Siren & Hakamies-Blomqvist, 2009). With age, a person's functional abilities as well as social and economic resources and demands change, hence inevitably affecting travel needs, level of mobility, and travel options. It has been proposed that the meanings embedded with mobility and activities –rather than

maintenance of the same absolute level of mobility—contribute to mobility-related well-being in old age (see Musselwhite & Haddad, 2010; Siren & Hakamies-Blomqvist, 2009). That is, certain aspects of mobility and maintaining these may be more important for well-being than the mere maintaining of the level of mobility. Siren and Hakamies-Blomqvist (2009) found that the way mobility contributed to well-being was complex, modified by individual compensation strategies and resources, lifestyles and personal meanings related to mobility. Self-perceived control, relative stability in everyday life activities, and maintaining one's self-perception and identity were important in terms of mobility-related well-being. Musselwhite and Haddad (2010) studied older persons' mobility needs and distinguished between practical/utilitarian needs, social/affective needs, and aesthetic needs and showed that the two latter ones too are important aspects in contributing to well-being.

Neither is independence in relation to mobility a univocal concept. The connotations depend on whether the perspective is that of an individual or society, for example. In their recent paper, Schwanen et al. (2012) point out the fuzziness of the conceptual pair of dependence/independence and the way they are socially constructed and influenced by the prevalent values and paradigms. Further, they found that the older persons' views on dependence/independence are influenced by the ageist discourses that treat dependency as undesirable and stigmatizing and follow (and reproduce) the socially constructed ideal of "good ageing".

These findings on the meanings of mobility resonate with the recent critical discussions of how we should understand the concept of 'successful ageing'. Ageing well or successfully has been a debated issue in gerontology (Torres & Hammarström, 2009) and the critics have pointed out the importance of individuals' own perception of good ageing as opposed to a standardized set of criteria for the conditions that need to be met in order to age well.

Also mobility is an equivocal concept (see also Metz, 2000). In transport research and planning, it is often understood as mere locomotion, measured as out-of-home trips or journeys. Mobility, or the ability to carry out these trips, is seen as a resource and a gateway to productivity and accessing goods and services (cf. Ziegler & Schwanen, 2011). In this context, older persons' mobility and its importance for well-being are scarcely understood. In planning, increasing focus has been on the importance of facilitating the physical accessibility of public transport and other infrastructures (e.g., Iwarsson et al., 2000; Suen & Sen, 1999; see also Green, Jones & Roberts, 2012), but in general, the complexity of maintaining well-being through mobility is poorly reflected in today's planning or transportation supply for seniors. While some researchers have challenged the view of travel as solely derived from the need of reaching a destination (e.g., Mokhtarian & Salomon, 2001; Mokhtarian, 2005; Urry, 2007), mobility as a component in well-being is still predominately understood as instrumental (Kaiser, 2009; Ziegler and Schwanen, 2011), i.e. something giving access to a destination that then produces well-being.

In the present study, we will further explicate this complex relation between mobility and well-being by focusing on how different types of everyday out-of-home activities (namely, utilitarian and discretionary, c.f., Musselwhite & Shergold, 2013) contribute to experienced well-being. A qualitative approach was chosen, and the general characteristics and meanings older persons construct when describing different out-of-home activities were explored.

In the present study, we defined mobility as activities outside home but also as potential for carrying out these activities (cf., Metz, 2000; Schwanen & Ziegler, 2011). We defined well-being, in the context of the present study, broadly as *subjectively* experienced well-being, comprising different elements, such as affects, life satisfaction, and social engagement (e.g., Diener et al., 1999; Ryff, 1995; see also Bowling & Iliffe, 2006; Reichstadt et al.,

2010). In addition, in our ad-hoc understanding of well-being defined for the purposes of the present study, we captured elements from various theories on ageing, namely the theories on developmental stages (e.g., Bühler, 1933; Erikson, 1980), and models of adjusting to and coping with change (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Pearlin, Nguyen, Schieman & Milkie, 2007).

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Materials

The data in the present study were collected in 11 individual semi-structured interviews with persons aged 80-95 (mean and median age being 87 years), living in urban areas of Copenhagen, Denmark. Our interest in the present study was in older persons in an urban environment, as an increasing share of the population is living and growing old in cities.

The participants were recruited through ads in local newspapers that are delivered to home free of charge and require no subscription. Criteria for recruitment were that the participants were aged 80 and older, and experienced some mobility-related limitations in their daily lives. Persons with mobility limitations were chosen because we were interested in the experience of having limitations in daily mobility with increasing age. As the limitations were defined as experienced and subjective, the functional status of the participants varied to some degree. However, all of them lived independently and had out-of-home activities. Seven of the participants were women and four were men. All of the women and two of the men lived alone.

The interviews were conducted at the participants' homes, and the interviews were semi-structured, depending on each participant's personal style in the interaction. All of the participants were encouraged to talk freely and only few direct questions were addressed to them. However, all the interviews had certain predetermined elements/themes in them (see Table 1). If the different themes were not covered spontaneously in the participants'

accounts, they were brought up by the interviewer. The predetermined themes were the following: (1) *Present activities*: daily travel (how often, which activities, which transport modes, how important these activities are) and mobility barriers and options (which barriers, which unfulfilled mobility needs there are). (2) *Past activities*: differences in daily travel in the (undefined) past and now (what differences and changes there are, which factors the changes are connected with) (3) *Selective Optimization with Compensation* (Baltes & Baltes, 1990): which activities are selected, how the person adjusts to changes in mobility, and which tools and aids are used in everyday out-of-home activities? (4) *Future*: expectations in terms of future changes and problems in mobility.

The length of each interview was approximately 2 hours, and they were taped and transcribed. Interview excerpts in the present article have been translated from Danish into English. In these, the interviewer is indicated by 'E' and the interviewees by 'I'. Excerpts are also provided with a pseudonym followed by interviewee's age. In the excerpts, pauses in conversations are marked with ellipsis.

2.2. Analysis methods

The material was analysed qualitatively. As the first step, the material was structured by identifying two out-of-home activity types in the data, namely 'utilitarian' and 'discretionary' (see Table 1). The two codes were predetermined based on previous findings on mobility and well-being in old age (e.g., Green et al., 2012; Musselwhite & Haddad, 2010; Siren & Hakamies-Blomqvist, 2009;), the scholarly discussion on travel as a derived demand vs. desired activity in itself (e.g., Mokhtarian & Salomon, 2001; Ziegler and Schwanen, 2011), and our hypothesis that that different types of activities contribute to mobility-related well-being in a different way.

Activities were classified as ‘utilitarian’ if they were everyday activities related, for example, to shopping, various errands, including health related errands (visiting a physician, hospital, physiotherapist or similar), or if they were out-of-home travel activities with an everyday character (general descriptions of using public transport, for example). Activities were classified as discretionary if they were related to leisure, social activities, visiting friends or family, outdoor exercise, professional activities, travelling abroad, and being active in associations and clubs, for example. Consumer studies have identified different types of subjective purposes of given trips (e.g., Zukin 2004; Rintamäki et al., 2006). That is, shopping trips may serve social needs if combined with meeting friends, for example. Also in our material, activities that could be classified as discretionary were sometimes set in the context of a utilitarian activity (typically shopping). In this case, they were always classified as discretionary activities.

In the second step of the analysis, the transcripts were analysed in more detail (see Table 1). A general social constructionist frame was applied, and the material was approached through language use and construction of meanings. We focused on the characteristics of the individual accounts describing the two types of activities. In the analysis, we focused first generally on what characterized the accounts of utilitarian and discretionary activities. Second, we focused more systematically on the following three dimensions: (1) *temporality* –does the interviewee refer to the present, past or future?; (2) *mastery* –how is the activity related to a sense of mastery and how does mastery appear in the account?; (3) *construction of the self* – in the participants’ accounts, is it possible to identify talk that could be interpreted as construction of subjectivity and the self through mobility and out-of-home activities?

These dimensions were primarily chosen in the light of previous literature on mobility and well-being (Musselwhite & Haddad, 2010; Musselwhite & Shergold, 2013; Siren and

Hakamies-Blomqvist, 2009). Temporality was chosen as it forms the greater frame in which the change takes place. Temporality as a theme was facilitated in the interviews by covering past, present and future. Further, the understanding of well-being we adopted in the present paper implies that change and eventual adaptation would play a part in descriptions of well-being. Mastery and construction of self were chosen as analytical dimensions mainly because maintaining the sense of self and autonomy have earlier been found to be essential in the relationship between mobility and well-being (Siren & Hakamies-Blomqvist 2009). Sense of mastery is one of the constructs that have been found to be closely connected to personal coping and adjustment to change, and further to well-being (e.g., Ben-Zur, 2009; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Construction of the self was here understood in social constructivist terms, meaning the process by which, through language, the individual constructs the subjectivity and further, the self (e.g., Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). We assumed, that accounts on daily mobility implying constructions of subjectivity (especially “sense of self”) would indicate meanings that are associated with subjective well-being.

Table 1. Overview of the pre-determined elements in interviews, material structuring and analysis.

Interview elements	Analysis I –structuring the material /predetermined classifications	Analysis II –in depth analysis /predetermined dimensions
Present activities	Utilitarian activities	Account’s general characteristics
Past activities		Temporality
SOC	Discretionary activities	Mastery
Future		Construction of self

2. Results

3.1. Utilitarian Activities

3.1.1. General characteristics of accounts of utilitarian activities

In general, the participants' accounts of utilitarian activities were characterized by four distinguishable themes. These characteristics are presented in Table 2 described in more detail in the following.

Table 2. Overview of the themes characterizing the accounts on utilitarian activities

Characteristic	Examples of discussed issues
Tools and aids in everyday mobility	Use of rolling walker, walking stick or similar when outside home
Conflicts with other road users and struggle of space	Encounters with other road users, showing consideration, who has priority
Receiving help from others	Asking others for rides
Public transport	Accessibility, frequency of service

Discussion around *tools and aids* in connection to utilitarian activities was prominent in the material, and was characterized by certain ambivalence towards the aids. While many of the participants described having had doubts about starting to use a walking stick or a rolling walker, for example, and the stigmatizing effect of using such aids was almost always mentioned in the accounts, the participants in general also expressed their satisfaction with these aids. In the following, this ambivalence is illustrated:

I: Yes, oh yes... There are those daily things and... the only thing that I lack is... I mean I get dizzy and they couldn't tell why that is. And then at the end of it I had to give in to that rolling walker which I hated to even think about.

E: Mm.

I: But I am quite happy about it in daily life because now I can go to places that are close by.

Nelly, 89 years

Many accounts described *conflicts with other road users* and ‘struggle for space’. This included encounters with other road users especially in public transport but also on sidewalks, cycle paths and roads. The interviewees described their experiences of being invisible to others, others’ lack of consideration and the unwritten rules of priority on the streets and when entering public transport. The following illustrates this:

I: (...) I always have my son with me because I can’t get the rolling walker up to the bus by myself and all that...but the worst is when there’s no space. There are baby pushchairs...and they have priority you see.

E: They have priority?

I: Pushchairs have priority over rolling walkers.

Then we stand there waiting for the next bus and hope there aren’t any mothers so we can get onto that.

E: I see.

I: Of course they also have to have the right to be there. And we have the right to be there.

I: Yes, that’s (laughs)...But who is the one to stand there and wait? Is it the one with the rolling walker or the one with the pushchair?

Karla, 89 years

Receiving and accepting help from others in daily activities was also a prominent theme in the accounts of utilitarian activities, and it was especially characterized by the difficulty in accepting help from others. The difficulty was partly due to the fact that the interviewees wanted to manage independently, partly because they did not want to bother others, especially people they know. The following excerpt illustrates both of these aspects:

I: And then I get chauffeured a bit, but that’s not very often.

E: They help you with some things?

I: Not really...well, if I ask them to. My son is kind enough to visit me. He’s very caring.

E: Mm.

I: But he is just so busy...

But uhm...I want to do things myself. That's what I often say to myself. I can manage. When we are going somewhere further away, or to visit someone or it's a special occasion, then they'll pick me up. My grandchildren do that too. When I ask them to.

E: Yes.

I: Sometimes they even come voluntarily.

Ellen, 86 years

Finally, as the participants lived in a city, *public transportation* was often mentioned in connection with utilitarian activities. Public transport was both praised and criticized. The density of the public transport network in Copenhagen, as well as the accessibility and frequency of the recently built metro were seen as contributing to satisfactory travel options. On the other hand, ingress to and egress from buses, lack of space for a rolling walker, and lack of seats were experienced as difficult. Potential conflicts with other users of public transport, as mentioned before, were also seen in these accounts.

3.1.2. Temporality, mastery and the self in accounts of utilitarian activities

The accounts of utilitarian activities tended to be descriptions of the present with only a few references to the past. These references were typically made in connection with describing the change that has occurred in carrying out these activities. As a theme, change was something most of the interviewees referred to in their accounts; descriptions of how the mobility radius for these activities gets smaller with age were prominent. The interviewees described how they have to both prioritize and select their activities: only very necessary activities and activities nearby are maintained in daily life when mobility impediments increase. The interviewees also described being more conscious of mobility and hindrances to it. The following excerpts illustrate the change in daily activities with increasing age:

I: I think many things have become difficult...Earlier, I could do two to three things a day.

And now I can't even do one thing a day. You know, I had a friend and she once said she can do one thing a day and I said "Only one? I can do a lot more" and now I understand what she meant. You know, now I can't do more than one thing in a day any more. It is difficult.

E: And what would that one thing be, for example?

I: The pharmacy, hairdresser, dentist, the hospital where I go at least twice a year because I have diabetes. And to the physician's because of my feet, and ten other things I could mention. And when I renewed my driving licence I had to go to the office and to get my photograph taken and so on and so forth.

Jutte, 81 years

I: And what's, uhm...what I think has happened is that all the limitations begin to occupy more and more so, uhm, so the only things one does outside home are the necessities. Like getting the groceries or visiting the doctor's.

Karla, 89 years

It was clearly of great importance for the interviewees to have a sense of mastery when carrying out basic activities. A sense of mastery was connected to the independence, activity and autonomy experienced; even if the person had notable mobility impediments or the activities as such were limited in their radius or frequency. This is illustrated with the following excerpt:

I: Well, I am just happy to get to Kvickly [the supermarket], uhm, and I do that every day too. I call it therapy.

E: Yes

I: I have to get a pastry for my afternoon coffee and I do that every day. I think it is a sort of therapy...it makes me get up, get dressed and get out, you see.

So I think it's splendid. I'll just stick to that.

(...)

E: Yes... how often do you get out of the apartment usually?

I: Every single day!

E: Really, every day?.

I: Every day! I have to get my piece of pastry every day and it's also that when I get to Kvickly they recognize me now because I go every day and buy my pastry.

Keld, 95 years

The sense of mastery was also connected to the experience of being useful and visible to others, and being involved in things. The interviewees expressed it as being important not to be dependent on others or to be a burden to others. Lack of mastery was experienced as negative, and was often mentioned in connection with using public transport. Of the transport modes, cycling and driving were associated with mastery. Both were transport modes no longer available for many of the interviewees.

The construction of subjectivity /the self in the accounts on utilitarian activities was closely connected to mastery and being able to maintain independence despite the limitations. On the one hand, we could read construction of active subjectivity through accounts on independent everyday activities (regardless how small in radius), such as Keld's account above. On the other hand, we could identify construction of subjectivity and self in the accounts where ambivalence regarding aids and tools and adjusting the self-perception of oneself (i.e., one's identity) as a user of aids and tools (e.g., a rolling walker) was described.

3.2. Discretionary activities

3.2.1. General characteristics of accounts of discretionary activities

Four themes could be identified that characterized the participants' accounts of their discretionary activities. These are presented in Table 3 and described in more detail in the following.

Table 3. Overview of the themes characterizing the accounts on discretionary activities

Characteristic	Examples of discussed issues
Social relations and related activities	Family and friends, organized social activities
Leisure and holiday travel	Accounts on trips abroad, to summer residence
Past working life and the related life phase	Professional roles, everyday life before retirement
Leisure activities, in terms of just getting out and experiencing the world outside the home	Aesthetics of nature

Accounts of *social relations and social activities* were the most prominent theme in the descriptions of discretionary activities. These included descriptions of both social relations with friends, family and spouse, and more organized social involvement, such as membership of associations, boards and clubs, organized exercise, and political involvement. Social activities seemed to serve well-being by giving a sense of belonging and being useful. Several respondents mentioned the effects friends' passing away has had on social activities, as well as the effects physical limitations have on social participation:

I: And that's... really sad I can't do many things any more. I can't take part any longer. But that's just...there's nothing to change that (laughs) but it really is a barrier...going and attending an interesting public lecture or just visiting someone. I can't do that.

E: Hmm.

I: Because I am dependent on the rolling walker.

E: Hmm

I: And I am happy...about the walker. Or it's maybe a bit exaggeration to say I am happy with the rolling walker, but without it I couldn't go anywhere.

But...it would be important to me to get to those places I want to visit. Like, I can no longer visit my son because then I would need to get onto a bus.

Karla, 89 years

Long distance and leisure travel in the sense of both domestic and international vacations was also one of the prominent themes in the accounts of discretionary activities. Many of the interviewees had travelled a lot, as well as spent vacations at a summerhouse. What was characteristic of these descriptions of vacations and leisure travel was that these

activities in large part no longer existed in their lives. There had been a marked change in long distance travel with increasing age. The interviewees experienced travelling by a plane or a bus as difficult and inconvenient. Some of the interviewees expressed a wish to still travel, but many pointed out that they had seen enough of the world and hence had no further desire to travel.

Discussion of *earlier life phases* and past working life was the third emerging theme in the accounts of discretionary activities. Working life had an impact on the daily activities at that time, constructed the interviewees' identity and had an important role in defining who the person was. Many of the activities that were mentioned were connected to the life phase when the interviewee was still working. Retiring was a turning point that had an impact on the activities too. After retirement, the discretionary activities did not necessarily cease, but changed in nature as they were no longer connected with a professional identity and the everyday rhythm created by working life.

Finally, the accounts of discretionary activities were characterized by descriptions of *outdoor activities* and leisure trips, in terms of just getting out of the home. This included especially vivid descriptions of experiencing nature and the beauty of it. It was clear from the accounts that this type of activity had ceased for many of the interviewees, and many expressed longing and unfulfilled mobility needs as they felt it was difficult to substitute these activities.

I: But uhm...I know a person in the same situation as me. She had someone who came and drove her wherever she wanted to go.

E: Yes.

I: And she knew exactly where she wanted to go... In the springtime to see the woods and then again in the fall. That's how it was. And I can really understand it, that's something one can really understand. When it's spring and we wait for the sun...and then in the fall when it's so beautiful and a bit sad at the same time.

It's trips like that I could think of...but like all these bus tours that the church arranges, they always say that they're not recommended for people with physical disabilities.

E: Yes...

I: Yes. And then you know you would be a burden. Others would have to help you. And you try not to ruin the experience for others, right?

Karla, 89 years

3.2.2. Temporality, mastery and the self in accounts of discretionary activities

The accounts of discretionary activities were mostly set in the past and present, with the past being predominant. Only a few references to the future were made. Accounts in the past tense focused on description of activities, especially of leisure type that had been of great personal importance, while accounts in the present tense tended to be characterized by descriptions of the cessation of past activities, barriers, and a longing for past activities. With age, there had been a marked decrease in interviewees' discretionary activities. There was a lot of focus on change in the accounts –including reflections of certain lifestyle activities that it was no longer possible to carry out, descriptions of how physical limitations lead to social limitations, and reflections on adjustment to change. We identified a tendency to cope with change by seeking compensating 'activities' that could be carried out without leaving the home. The interviewees often mentioned that it was important to feel involved in and connected to society. When they no longer had so many out-of-home activities or were no longer involved in politics or social networks, they instead subscribed to papers and magazines, watched TV, or read books. Having visits at home from friends or family more often, or using the telephone or virtual social media (through the internet) to maintain contact was not mentioned in this context, though. We interpret this type of adjustment to reflect a wish to be connected to the surrounding society rather than an attempt to maintain social connections. The following excerpt illustrates how the people coped with change by seeking compensating activities in order to continue to be connected to society:

E: So you go out in the evenings?

I: No, we try to avoid that unless we need to, you know...

E: Unless you need to?

I: It's funny, they have started to have theatre plays starting at five o'clock now.

Not that it would matter to us, but it's funny... Or it depends...no, we don't [get out in the evenings]. If we go to the movies, it's always in the afternoon.

Partly because there are other people and it's light outside. And so on.

And you can combine it with a walk. There's no point in walking when it's dark...and we like to combine and get exercise too, you know, because we like to read a lot. I have this old habit from the time I was working that I read newspapers...I subscribe to three papers. 'Politiken', 'Berlingeren' and 'Weekend Avisen'.

E: I see...

I: And then we get several magazines. I do not know if you noticed, but there is a pile of magazines from previous months I haven't yet had time to read.

E: Mm.

I: And of course a lot of it is something you can just skim through, but sometimes there are articles that have a lot of substance. Now my wife has...I mean we have started to subscribe to 'The Economist'. My wife decided to do that. After the chemo, she felt a need to use her head and read something in English. She used to be really, really good at languages.

Knud, 85 years

In terms of mastery, the accounts implied the importance of maintaining either independent activities or oneself as a person who is 'not a burden to others'. If and when physical capability allowing independent activities had ceased, there was a tendency to choose inactivity rather than dependency on others. Driving a car and often also riding a bicycle were connected to a sense of mastery in interviewees' accounts. Being able to transport oneself independently in a mode that requires mastery of certain skills was a source of well-being for the respondents.

Activities that could be labelled as 'discretionary' seemed overall to be important for interviewees' construction of the self. Being active and in connection with the world could be seen as an important resource in construction of the self. This was also seen in the frequency of reflections on change in the accounts, and the attempts described to compensate for the decreasing outdoor activities with increasing indoor activities that still implied connectedness

with the surrounding world. Many of the interviewees also concluded contemplations on change by stating their satisfaction with things they had had an opportunity to experience so far:

I: And the neighbourhood around the new radio station. I hadn't seen that before. It was really impressive.

E: I see...are there some activities or trips you would like to do if it was easier?

I: Not really... I have seen and gone to so much already. My wife and I, I think we walked something like 20 km every week, at least.

Keld, 95 years

4. Discussion

Present study examined how different types of everyday out-of-home activities, namely 'utilitarian' and 'discretionary' activities, contribute to experienced well-being. We analysed individual in-depth interviews conducted with persons aged 80 and older who experienced some mobility limitations in their everyday life.

In general, the accounts of utilitarian activities were characterized by a striving to maintain the basic premises for living an independent life and existing as an individual. The *change* in the radius and frequency of utilitarian activities was in general not portrayed as a problem and the absolute level of mobility and maintaining it in terms of these activities was less important for the participants. Rather, the ability to independently carry out at least a minimum level of the necessary activities, such as grocery shopping and physically getting out of the home, was of great importance. It seemed that the autonomy in terms of mastery and sense of self was constructed through the ability to manage the daily life regardless how limited the activities might be.

The accounts of discretionary activities dealt markedly with change, and acceptance of and adaptation to that process. The interviewees had their own personal ways of dealing with change, and different activities and the related personal meanings required certain ways of

dealing with change. In some circumstances, it meant limiting the physical radius and adjusting the mobility needs accordingly, whereas in others it meant finding compensatory means of maintaining the overt content of the activities. While for utilitarian activities, the maintenance of autonomy –and further well-being—was tied to the internal experience of managing the daily life, for discretionary activities it was more often tied to being autonomous in regard to others (cf., Schwanen et al., 2012). The accounts were characterized by existence in relation to the outside world, that is, other people, institutions and society. The discretionary activities had an important role in individuals' attempts to be part of society in a meaningful way.

The way the two types of activity have implications for well-being, can be seen as representing different sides of 'being': while utilitarian activities are of importance in order to maintain an independent life and to take care of the basal needs, thus serving the sense of separateness and individual existence, the discretionary activities are of importance for the individual existing in relation to the surrounding society, thus serving the sense of belonging. This finding implies that the maintenance of different types of everyday activities serves different sides of the well-being experienced. Further, it strongly indicates that maintenance and external support of mobility understood in the sense of mere fulfillment of basal needs (such as grocery shopping), may not be enough.

In the present study, the qualitative approach allowed us to explore and identify different characteristics in everyday activities of older persons with mobility limitations. In the analysis, we emphasized robustness and trustworthiness. We applied a literature-based frame for the analytical categories. When we examined the issues characterizing the two types of activities, we systematically noted the themes and patterns emerging throughout the material and the categorizations were discussed among the authors.

The interviews proved to be a rich source of material for understanding the role of different types of activities in sustaining well-being in old age. There are however a number of issues to be considered when generalizing the findings. Our particular interest was in ageing in a city with mobility impediments, and the respondents were thus a purposive, small sample. That the respondents themselves responded to an ad and contacted the researchers, implies that despite mobility impediments, they were rather functional with at least social resources. Thus, their experiences on mobility and well-being may be that of urban, rather active persons'. In addition, the participants belong to a cohort that is likely to differ from the younger cohorts of older persons in some aspects. For example, the willingness to accept external help may be greater in the younger cohorts, who are more used to consuming services. . Nevertheless, case studies such as this support knowledge accumulation and analytical generalization (Yin , 1994) and the found characteristics of utilitarian and discretionary activities and their contribution to well-being provide an interesting platform for further investigations and knowledge accumulations in other contexts.

5. Conclusion

So far, the interventions, recommendations, and solutions supporting the independent daily mobility of older persons have predominately targeted the minimum necessities for leading an independent life, that is, daily life without formal external support. The focus has been on the instrumental value of mobility (cf., Kaiser, 2009; Ziegler & Schwanen, 2011) and thus issues such as physical accessibility, universal design, and a dense public transport network. However, we can ask, if these objective criteria for sufficient mobility supply meet the subjective needs. In line with the critical discussion about 'good' or 'successful' ageing (Torres & Hammarström 2009), it may well be that mobility-related well-being is defined differently by society and by older persons themselves (Schwanen & Ziegler, 2011;

Schwanen et al., 2012). The findings of the present study suggest that, while it is important to support general basal mobility and accessibility in order to enable independent life, it is equally important to support specifically activities that strengthen older persons' sense of belonging to society. Mobility-related well-being in old age seems to be constructed through both independent separateness and a sense of community.

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