

# The place to be

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# Summary

This dissertation provides insight into how communities can be activated to support older people ageing in place. In addition, this dissertation shows what the concepts of ageing in place and vital communities mean according to the scientific literature, and what relationship can be distinguished between these two concepts. Conducting research into this relationship is important, because it provides insight into whether vital communities have the potential to support older people ageing in place. Various studies with various research methods have been set up to investigate this. First, a systematic literature review in the form of a scoping review was performed on the concept of ageing in place (**Chapter 2**). Second, a scoping review was performed on the concept of vital communities (**Chapter 3**). Third, the hypothesised relationship between vital communities and ageing in place was evaluated by international experts on ageing in place and vital communities (**Chapter 4**). Finally, a method and a quick-scan were developed in a living lab as a tool for initiators to draw up and implement an activation plan (**Chapters 5 and 6**). This section summarises all the studies described in this dissertation.

**Chapter 1** contains a general introduction that describes the demographic developments and, in particular, the impact of ageing on healthcare and on formal and informal support. This shows that there are sufficient reasons to support ageing in place while preserving the quality of life of older people. The concepts of ageing in place and vital communities are explained here. This chapter also describes the aims and design of this dissertation as well as the studies on which it is based. A systematic literature study in the form of a scoping review (**Chapter 2**) identified 34 studies describing the concept of ageing in place. The results of this scoping review identified five main themes. These main themes: place, social networks, support, technology, and personal characteristics of older people, could be named as the factors to enable ageing in place. A second scoping review of the concept of vital communities (**Chapter 3**) identified only six studies on this topic. The results of this second scoping review showed that the conceptualisation of a vital community is based on three dimensions, namely the ‘why’, ‘how’, and ‘what’: the goal of a vital community, the processes behind a vital community, and the typical characteristics of a vital community. The aim of the third study (**Chapter 4**) was to study the supposed relationship between vital communities and ageing in place. This study was carried out using the Delphi method, in two phases. During the first phase, two panel discussions took place to define statements represen-

ting the supposed theoretical relationship between vital communities and ageing in place. The panel discussions were followed by the second phase, using three online Delphi rounds, which aimed to reach consensus among 126 international experts on the theorised relationship between vital communities and ageing in place. The results of this study showed consensus among the experts on aspects that showed a positive contribution regarding the aim of vital communities (quality of life, belonging) and all key themes of ageing in place (place, social networks, support, technology, and personal characteristics). However, the international experts nuanced the theorised relationship with regard to technology. Whether technology contributes to ageing in place depends, according to the experts, on the skills of the older people and the type of technology. The findings of this study imply that vital communities can support older people to age in place for as long as possible while still preserving their quality of life. This third study concludes the theoretical flow of this dissertation.

In the practical flow of this dissertation, a method is developed to activate communities with the aid of design-oriented research (**Chapter 5**). This fourth study aimed to develop a method that supports members of the community (professionals, volunteers, informal caregivers, and older people) in selecting useful strategies and interventions to activate a community to support older people ageing in place. A design-oriented study in a living lab with co-creative techniques was applied to involve as many parties as possible in an iterative and interactive approach to develop the activation method. This study resulted in the creation of the Community Activation Compass, guidance, a quick-scan, and an infographic with a series of development steps, strategies, interventions, and formats, which could support the activation of communities in facilitating ageing in place. During the development of the Community Activation Compass, the participants indicated a need for a quick-scan to map the vitality of the current community. This quick-scan was developed and validated on content and usability by 15 experts (**Chapter 6**).

**Chapter 7** contains the main findings and implications of the studies presented in this dissertation. Methodological considerations with regard to design, the application of living labs, and co-creation are also explained. Theoretical considerations with regard to the vision of ageing in relation to the human dimension, the added value of vital communities compared to other initiatives, and the development of vital communities are also discussed. Finally, the impact is described. In this paragraph, reflection is given on the impact and relevance of the results of this dissertation. This reflection focuses on the main goals of the research, its relevance for science, society, and education, for which target group the results are relevant, and which activities are planned to share the knowledge gained. Finally, recommendations are made for both practice and future research