Chapter 34

Advancing Research and Policy on Social Exclusion of Older People: Towards a Coherent and Critical Discourse

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34.1 Introduction

A key starting point for the contributions to this book has been the pressing need to address stagnation in research and policy debates on social exclusion in later life. As noted in recent reviews of the relevant academic literature (Van Regenmortel et al. 2016; Walsh et al. 2017), research relating to social exclusion of older people has been characterised by limitations in conceptual and theoretical development. While there is broad agreement on the different forms of exclusion that serve to reduce well-being in later life, the absence of a body of research that provides a comprehensive account of forms of social exclusion and considers the connections between them has limited the scope of policy makers to develop well-evidenced responses to the multifaceted challenges faced by ageing societies. Drawing on insights generated from the pathbreaking work of the interdisciplinary and international ROSEnet COST Action (CA15122), the chapters of this book reflect different disciplinary perspectives, contrasting methodological approaches, and a wide range of national and international contexts. With its five working groups addressing different domains of exclusion (economic; social; service; community and spatial; and civic) and a focus on the interrelationships between the domains, ROSEnet has been well

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positioned to advance scientific knowledge and methodological rigour in the field of social exclusion. Moreover, ROSEnet's direct engagement with policy and practice stakeholders, including some who have contributed chapters to this book, ensures that the book offers valuable insights aimed at supporting policy development focused on reducing social exclusion in later life. Taken together, the chapters therefore provide the much-needed ideas and empirical evidence that are essential in defining a new agenda for future research on ageing and social exclusion.

In this concluding chapter, we return to the four key objectives that underpinned our choice of topics for the book. These were, in abbreviated form, to: (1) produce a comprehensive analysis of social exclusion of older people; (2) develop cross-national and interdisciplinary perspectives on social exclusion of older adults; (3) institute a dialogue between conceptual and empirical perspectives; and (4) nurture crucial research capacity in the field of social exclusion and ageing. Reflecting these objectives, we use this chapter to draw together some of the major themes emerging from the book's different sections and demonstrate interconnections between the contributing chapters. In this respect, we seek to deepen our understanding of the conceptual framing of social exclusion of older people, noting where gaps in knowledge still remain. Moreover, within the context of the far-reaching impacts of COVID-19 on older people and on the framing of later life, as noted in Chap. 1, we conclude by suggesting ways in which the insights developed in this book can be used as a basis for shaping a new research agenda relating not only to future empirical and conceptual research, but also to policy development in the field of social exclusion in later life.

In the introduction to this book, we identified features of the policy context around ageing and demographic change as playing a role in the lack of progress in debates on social exclusion in later life. This involves the widespread absence of age in equalities debates, the prevailing view of ageing as being a burden on welfare states, the systemic ageism that marks our societies, and a lack of attention to the risks of social exclusion in later life. Equally, research debates have failed to progress in meaningful ways owing to a lack of conceptual clarity about social exclusion and the resulting challenges of operationalising exclusion in empirical studies.

The various contributions to this book emphasise the importance of viewing social exclusion as a relative, dynamic and multidimensional construct. These characteristics are a longstanding feature of work on social exclusion relating to older people, picking up on ideas developed initially in research conducted in the UK (Scharf et al. 2002, 2005; Barnes et al. 2006; Kneale 2012) but subsequently acknowledged more widely (*e.g.* Moffatt and Glasgow 2009; Burns et al. 2012; Scharf and Keating 2012). The evidence presented in the various parts of the book, and aligning to the book's four objectives, emphasises the value of deepening knowledge about specific domains of social exclusion and the interrelationships between them, rather than focusing attention on the broader concept of exclusion. There is a general acceptance in the gerontology literature that the domains of exclusion that have the greatest impact on older people's lives and their well-being relate to individuals' material resources, social relations, access to services, civic and cultural participation, and socio-spatial context (Jehoel-Gijsbers and Vrooman

2008; Van Regenmortel et al. 2016; Walsh et al. 2017). Equally important is the need to improve our knowledge about the most appropriate policy and practice responses to different forms of social exclusion in older-age in order to build inclusive societies and consequently fight negative consequences of old-age social exclusion such as lower quality of life (Bayram et al. 2010), higher rates of depressive symptoms (Tong et al. 2011) and higher suicide rates (Yur'yev et al. 2010). We begin by reviewing the contributions across the different domains of social exclusion before considering the interrelationships between them and the role of policy in tackling risks of exclusion in later life.

34.2 Domains of Social Exclusion

The chapters in this book have addressed five domains of exclusion: economic, social, service, civic, and community and spatial exclusion. In relation to the economic domain, Jim Ogg and Michal Myck's introduction in section II (Chap. 2) emphasises the need to move beyond a narrow focus on poverty and pension entitlements in addressing economic and material forms of exclusion in later life. Reflecting a life-course approach, they argue that there is a need to take account of the ways in which circumstances earlier in life strongly influence risks of economic exclusion in older age. These risks are experienced differently according to individuals' social locations and political context, a point developed by Merle Sumil-Laanemaa and colleagues in their analysis of material deprivation of people aged 50 and above in different welfare regimes (Chap. 3). The authors make the key point that risks of economic exclusion vary considerably according to socio-demographic characteristics. While some demographic characteristics increase the risk of exclusion in all welfare regimes, particular subgroups of older people encounter disproportionately high risks of material deprivation in some of the clusters. Sumil-Laanemaa and colleagues suggest that, as ageing populations continue to become more diverse as demographic change continues apace, policy makers will increasingly need to consider how best to respond to the material needs of particular groups of older adults. In Chap. 4, Elke Murdock and colleagues focus on one specific group who experience a heightened risk of economic exclusion in later life. They highlight the impacts of unemployment in the later stages of working life, identifying it as an under-explored feature of debates in exclusion from material and economic resources. Given the potentially severe consequences of late-career unemployment within the context of policy measures aimed at extending working lives and the increasing numbers of older workers in many societies, Murdock and colleagues suggest the need for a stronger focus in research on older unemployed people. Another group whose material circumstances merit closer attention in research and policy are older women who are widowed, divorced or separated. Reflecting on the experiences of this group in Turkey and Serbia, and life-course determinants of low incomes in older-age, Hande Barlin and colleagues place value on social policy measures aimed at reducing risks of poverty (Chap. 5). In the

absence of acquired pension rights, there is an obvious role for the state in providing survivor pensions and other types of income support to older women who experience widowhood, separation or divorce.

Noting the growing focus in gerontological research on issues relating to social relationships in later life, Vanessa Burholt and Marja Aartsen address the domain of exclusion from social relations with reference to older adults' social resources, social connections and social networks (Chap. 6). Drawing on a new conceptual model of exclusion from social relations (Burholt et al. 2019), they identify a range of personal attributes and life experiences associated with this form of exclusion and highlight its impacts on older people's health, well-being and sense of belonging. The conceptual model is grounded in a dynamic, life-course perspective that recognises the ways in which exclusion from social relations varies according to time and place, social norms, cultural values and policies and, hence, across societies. These ideas are developed in the three chapters that follow, illustrating the value of deepening understanding of the eco-bio-psychosocial factors associated with exclusion from social relations in later life. Sofie Van Regenmortel and colleagues (Chap. 7) draw on data from Belgium and rural Britain to demonstrate the presence of exclusion of social relations and at the same time analyse features of exclusion from social relations, showing how this form of exclusion connects to other features of disadvantage. In making a strong case for further cross-national and methodologically comparable research on the subject, the authors point to the need for social policy responses that acknowledge the impact of life-course factors on experiences of exclusion from social relations in older age, while at the same time building and investing in age-friendly and prosperous environments to cultivate social inclusion. In Chap. 8, Deborah Morgan and colleagues explore micro- and macro-level drivers of loneliness, regarded as a key form of exclusion from social relations, and seek to measure changes over time in loneliness rates in a number of European countries. An important feature of the analysis developed in this chapter is the evidence provided to indicate how macro-level drivers, including perceived neighbourhood safety and normative levels of social connectedness, influence loneliness across nations. Although the two-year time frame of the analysis served to limit how much could be said about change over time, the authors hold out hope that future studies can draw on additional waves of data arising from longitudinal studies to provide more robust evidence of the dynamic nature of loneliness in later life. A similar case for longitudinal analysis emerges from Chap. 9, in which Charles Waldegrave and colleagues consider the complex nature of the conflicted, abusive and discriminative relations of older people and their differential exclusionary impacts in five contrasting countries (Norway, Israel, Italy, Finland and New Zealand). The authors expose the influence of discriminatory attitudes in excluding groups of ageing adults or individual older people from opportunities to develop or maintain supportive social relations. Their analysis highlights the need for qualitative studies that can improve understanding of the interconnections between vulnerability, dependency and abuse. The chapter notes the value of an exclusion perspective in terms of understanding non-normative social relations in later life, not least its potential to inform professional practice.

In considering the domain of service exclusion in later life, Veerle Draulans and Giovanni Lamura use their introduction in section IV to develop a new definition of this form of exclusion (Chap. 10). They define exclusion from services as the “condition (and the processes leading to it) that involves the lack or denial of services in later life, to a larger extent than what might be considered as ‘normal’ for the majority of people, with a negative impact both at individual and societal levels”. This conceptualisation is helpful in contextualising the three substantive chapters that follow, each of which relates to a different type of service that plays a central role in older adults’ opportunities for social integration. In Chap. 11, Florent Cholat and Luca Daconto describe the risks of spatial- and mobility-related exclusion from services that have the potential to affect older people who live in the unique environmental context of mountain areas. A key argument concerns the idea of “reversed” mobilities – the idea that people whose mobility is limited by their residential environment become more reliant on receiving products and services provided by relatives, caregivers or mobile shops in order to overcome the lack or denial of services. The chapter suggests that, by identifying areas potentially exposed to service exclusion as a result of interlinkages between individual and contextual vulnerabilities, research has a major role to play in informing policy innovation. In Chap. 12, Zsuzsa Széman and colleagues also consider factors that shape service exclusion, drawing on examples from the relatively under-researched context of countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the Russian Federation. The particular focus is on home care services, underpinned by a combination of a strong tradition of familisation and a general lack of institutional care facilities. The authors suggest that while home-based care can potentially support more person-centred forms of care in the countries under investigation, some people may experience heightened risks of exclusion from social relations as a result of receiving care in their homes. Consequently, the chapter highlights the need for research that focuses on the cultural contexts in which services are provided to, and accessed by, older people. This is also an argument picked up in Chap. 13. Faced by increasing digitalisation of societies, accessing services online has become a key feature of many countries’ health and care systems. Arianna Poli and colleagues analyse the role of digital technologies in supporting health care provision of older adults. Their work explores key drivers of exclusion from digital health services, demonstrating the interconnections between macro-, meso- and micro- decisions in shaping people’s access to essential services in later life. The authors emphasise the importance of deepening understanding of barriers to the inclusive and equal implementation of digital health services in ageing societies. Responding to the challenges of digitalisation implies creating opportunities to improve health services in ways that can better meet the needs of a diverse older population.

Turning to community and spatial aspects of social exclusion, a consistent feature of chapters in section V is the perspective that national contexts appear to be less central than regional and place-specific contexts in framing experiences of exclusion in later life. Isabelle Tournier and Lucie Vidovičová’s part introduction connects conceptual debates on exclusion with recent developments in the field of

environmental gerontology (Chap. 14). In presenting an adapted framework model of life-space locations, ranging from clearly defined indoor spaces to more abstract global and digital spaces, they argue that risks of exclusion require responses from policy and practice at all spatial scales. These ideas frame the three chapters that follow. In Chap. 15, Matthias Drilling and colleagues introduce a new conceptual model of “Age, Space and Exclusion” that accounts for the triangular relationship between materialisations, conceptions and experiences of space in older-age. The “ASE-Triangle” is tested with reference to empirical evidence drawn from studies conducted in Ireland and Cyprus, illustrating the ways in which age, space and exclusion interact in different national and regional contexts. The authors highlight the considerable potential of their model in deepening understandings of spatial and community forms of exclusion, suggesting the potential to refine the model based on evidence collected from contrasting environmental contexts in other countries. The benefits of cross-national comparative frameworks that are attuned to regional variations within nations are also raised by the chapter that follows. In their comparative study, based on analysis of cases from Germany, Ireland and Poland, Anna Urbaniak and colleagues identify a need for researchers to deepen their understanding of the multifaceted connections between place, normative life-course transitions and social exclusion in order to contribute to more appropriate policy responses aimed at reducing exclusion in later life (Chap. 16). In particular, future research should examine more systematically the intersections between major life transitions and features of older people’s neighbourhoods and communities. This would assist in casting light on the role of place in influencing how experiences of social exclusion change over time. Reflecting a longstanding concern in social gerontology with urban and rural places as contexts for ageing, Lucie Vidovičová and colleagues make the point that older people who live in rural areas are often ignored in research and policy (Chap. 17). With examples drawn from different types of rural location in the Czech Republic, Germany and Poland, the authors argue that lack of care provision amounts to a form of place-based social exclusion that is disproportionately experienced by older people in rural communities. Recognising the need for more evidence from other rural contexts, the chapter emphasises the value of developing better coordinated policy responses to place-based exclusion that reflect the diversity of both older adults and rural places. More inclusive policy responses require mutual learning between the different actors that belong to the older adult care sector, including non-governmental organisations, civil society groups and private actors.

Acknowledging that the domain of civic exclusion has historically been the least well-developed component of research on social exclusion in later life, Sandra Torres in section IV contextualises the three chapters that examine this domain by introducing key conceptual features of civic and cultural forms of exclusion (Chap. 18). She addresses the ongoing attention that has been paid to the idea of civic exclusion, noting the many evidence gaps that still remain in terms of its social and political aspects, before focusing attention on the under-developed socio-cultural dimensions of exclusion. She describes these as “the ways in which societal discourses lead not only to the exclusion of older people, but also to neglecting the

complex identities they have, and the variety of circumstances, experiences and needs with which these are associated". Different features of civic and socio-cultural forms of exclusion are considered in the chapters that follow. In Chap. 19, Rodrigo Serrat and colleagues' scoping review of civic engagement in later life deepens our understanding of the construct of civic exclusion and identifies the knowledge gaps that will need to be addressed in future research. Aligning closely with themes raised in other parts of the book, four key dimensions of older people's exclusion from civic engagement merit particular attention: the multidimensionality of civic engagement; the diversity of older populations; the dynamics and experiences of engagement across the life course; and the culturally embedded processes that characterise civic engagement. The focus in Chap. 20 turns to socio-cultural aspects of exclusion from civic activities in older-age. Using evidence from Austria, Vera Gallistl's analysis of changing patterns of cultural consumption as people age emphasises the central influence of socio-economic status on non-participation in forms of culture that many people take for granted. She argues that future research in gerontology should consider older adults' exclusion from cultural practice as a question of both spatial and (cultural) taste marginalisation. According to Gallistl, given how particular groups of older adults experience structural and symbolic forms of marginalisation in late-modern societies, participation and non-participation in culture and the arts should become core themes in social gerontology, and especially in the study of social exclusion in later life. In Chap. 21, Ada Lui Gallassi and Lars Harrysson address a different dimension of civic exclusion. Their chapter connects socio-economic status and the conditions of ageing migrants to civic and broader forms of social exclusion emphasising how these processes influence older migrants' sense of status in a host society. Taking an intersectional approach, and using evidence from Sweden, the authors signal the importance of a future research agenda that takes account of the ways in which features of migrants' working life trajectories interact, leading to forms of symbolic exclusion in a post-work phase of life. The chapter makes a case for policy responses that emphasise individuals' right to work and the access social security entitlements, with equality and anti-discrimination approaches being identified as mechanisms for tackling social exclusion of ageing migrants.

34.3 Interrelationships Between Domains of Social Exclusion

As noted above, many of the chapters in sections II to VI of this book have already considered ways in which the various domains of social exclusion connect with one other. This demonstrates the value of adopting a dynamic, multidimensional exclusion lens when seeking to understand forms of disadvantage that characterise later life. In section VII, Lena Dahlberg therefore introduces four chapters that consider different types of interrelationship between specific domains of exclusion (Chap. 22). Her contribution is especially valuable in summarising previous research on multidimensionality of exclusion of older people, observing the various

associations that have been identified between most of the domain combinations addressed in different chapters of this book. Drawing on studies across a range of countries, Dahlberg makes the key point that “being excluded on one domain increases the risk of exclusion from another domain”. She identifies particular gaps in relation to longitudinal research that can capture dynamic features of multidimensional exclusion as well as research that considers different country settings. In Chap. 23, Feliciano Villar and colleagues address the experiences of older people who live in long-term care institutions, framing this in terms of their potential risks of exclusion from social relationships, civic participation and socio-cultural life. In Chap. 24, Michal Myck and colleagues analyse the relationship between people’s material circumstances in later life and their risk of exclusion from social relations, operationalised with reference to loneliness. A notable finding from this longitudinal analysis is the strong and significant association between material deprivation and loneliness over time, with material conditions shaping both the degree to which people experience loneliness as well as the likelihood that loneliness will increase over time. Anu Siren’s focus in Chap. 25 is on the role played by transport in older adults’ risks of social exclusion. Her argument is that transport mobility, typically viewed in relation to exclusion from services, affects all domains of social exclusion. As a result, policy responses that fail to tackle the structural dimensions of age-related mobility will fail to achieve the social inclusion of older adults. In Chap. 26, Nilufer Korkmaz-Yaylagul and Ahmet Melik Bas consider homelessness of older adults in relation to multidimensional forms of social exclusion. Drawing on their analysis of current research, they highlight the ways in which homelessness in later life is related in one way or another to all forms of social exclusion. A particular concern of research on this topic has been on exclusion from services, amenities and mobility, presenting key challenges for policy makers tasked with reducing social exclusion of this especially marginalised population of older adults.

34.4 Policy Responses to Social Exclusion in Later Life

A common feature of many of the chapters in sections II to VII of this book is their direct engagement with policy responses directed towards reducing risks of social exclusion experienced by older people. The contributions to section VIII deal explicitly with policy challenges, laying the foundation for a series of actions that, taken together, provide opportunities to promote the social inclusion of ageing adults. The chapters in section VIII provide a more considered analysis of the range of policy issues impacted by and influencing social exclusion in later life than is typical for political and public debates on social inclusion in later life. In Chap. 27, Norah Keating and Maria Cheshire-Allen introduce social exclusion as a values-based policy framework for population ageing and older persons. They identify social exclusion as a “timely and relevant approach to the development of meaningful policy and practice”, necessitating an examination of policy drivers and policy actions. Whilst accepting the importance of a sound evidence base to underpin

policy, they caution that key policy actors may need to be won over to embrace the values that underpin a reinvigorated focus on social exclusion. These ideas are picked up in the chapters that follow. Taking a global perspective, Patricia Conboy analyses the potential of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to serve as a global framework for addressing multidimensional old-age exclusion (Chap. 28). She identifies a range of processes and barriers associated with national governments' engagement with this global framework, highlighting actions that might reduce older people's risks of social exclusion across the world. In his review of pension policies, Jim Ogg shows how Europe's pension systems are responding to new social risks arising from a rapidly changing political, technological and economic context (Chap. 29). While pension systems act as the principal mechanism for preventing economic exclusion in later life, Ogg emphasises the risk that policy measures, such as those aimed at extending working lives, will typically increase the likelihood that future cohorts of older people will experience economic exclusion. Pension policies, alongside social care policies, are also a core focus of Irina Grigoryeva and colleagues (Chap. 30). Taking the examples of recent policy developments in Russia and Ukraine, they argue that reform measures run the risk of exposing greater numbers of older people to forms of economic and service exclusion. In both countries, low retirement incomes, poor health, and lack of access to services are associated with heightened risks of intense forms of social exclusion in later life. In Chap. 31, John Andersen and colleagues consider policy responses to risks of exclusion faced by residents of nursing homes. Their focus is on older adults' important connections to neighbourhood social relationships, showing how innovation in the design of nursing homes has the potential to improve opportunities for neighbourhood and social engagement of a heterogeneous population of older nursing home residents, including people living with cognitive impairment. In Chap. 32, within the context of policies aimed at digitalising access to public services in Estonia and Finland, Anu Leppiman and colleagues examine some of the contradictions associated with digitalisation for ageing adults. On the one hand, digitalisation has the potential to reduce exclusion of older people by providing access to information and services. On the other hand, given lower levels of digital literacy amongst older people, the shift to digital forms of service provision has the potential to exclude current cohorts of ageing adults. In Chap. 33, Maciej Kucharczyk analyses the potential of the European Pillar of Social Rights to address social exclusion of older people in Europe. The Pillar encompasses a set of social rights and principles aimed at improving the lives of people in Europe by focusing on promoting equality, inclusion and well-being. In line with its rights-based approach, the Pillar has the potential to overcome social policy blockages in many European countries to promote social inclusion of ageing adults.

34.5 Reducing Social Exclusion in Later Life: New Directions for Research and Policy

Taken together, the contributions to this book decisively push forward the current state of knowledge on social exclusion in later life. In response to the book's objectives, presented in Chap. 1, the multinational team of authors provide an insightful and comprehensive account of social exclusion in later life, exploring the multidimensionality of exclusion across different life domains, the interrelationship between these domains, and the involvement of individual and societal/policy levels (objective 1). The wide range of spatial and place-based contexts that underpin the chapters, representing different spatial scales ranging from local to global, as well as the contributions of a variety of scientific disciplines and methodological approaches, represent one of the book's core strengths. Drawing on the work of Walsh et al. (2017) in conceptualising social exclusion in later life, the chapters display a shared understanding of the exclusion construct, its meanings and its various domains (objective 2). In a number of chapters, contributing authors develop new theoretical perspectives that will help to shape future work on domains of exclusion and the relationships between domains. All chapters succeed in linking conceptual and empirical perspectives in a mutually supportive dialogue, deepening awareness of the methodological approaches needed to build the empirical evidence base as well as the conceptual tools that are required to inform future empirical studies (objective 3). The fact that many of the book's chapters have been written jointly by early-stage researchers and mid-career as well as well-established researchers, and by researchers drawn from multiple disciplines and a range of countries, has contributed to building the capacity of the research community to support future work that will extend even further knowledge about social exclusion and ageing (objective 4). Meeting these objectives is vital in moving forward research and policy agendas on the dynamic and multidimensional forms of social exclusion that characterise later life.

Against this background, and reflecting many of the arguments developed by contributors to this book, we conclude by outlining a future agenda for research on old-age social exclusion and for policy aimed at reducing social exclusion in later life. This is a collective task that will require collaboration between all sectors of society – a task made all the more necessary by the wide-ranging impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on older people. To succeed, it will need to engage actors involved in policy making, civil society, service providers and scientific research. There is also a key role to be played by older people, including people with experience of exclusion, and their representative organisations in developing appropriate policy and practice responses. Working across sectors, the different actors will need to demonstrate their shared commitment to tackling social exclusion in later life and to addressing the multiple forms of disadvantage that reduce the well-being of far too many older adults across the world. Where policies are being developed that may impact on older people, they should be evaluated on the basis of their potential intended and unintended consequences in terms of social exclusion risks in later

life. This applies, for example, to the ongoing pension policy and health and social care reforms being introduced in many countries in response to demographic ageing. Reflecting the pervasive nature of ageism and age discrimination in many societies, there is a fundamental need for coordinated responses that address symbolic, culturally embedded forms of social exclusion and engage in challenging negative representations of ageing and later life. These ideas are picked up in the next sections in terms of responses to the multidimensional nature of exclusion in later life, and responses to accumulated disadvantage and risk groups, and to multilevel shocks that are associated with risks of exclusion of older adults.

34.5.1 Responding to Multidimensionality of Social Exclusion in Later Life

From a research perspective, the contributions to this book emphasise the value of further deepening our knowledge of the ways in which different forms of exclusion combine in older people's lives, and of the implications of social exclusion for older adults' health and well-being. Future research should also focus on identifying key causes and drivers of multidimensional exclusion, and how these factors interact with the ageing process to impact on older people's lives. While considerable progress has been made by the research community in developing conceptual frameworks that explain the connections between different forms of exclusion, including by contributors to this book, there is scope to revisit these frameworks in order to identify the type of interventions that might best respond to different forms of exclusion. In relation to the multidimensionality of exclusion in later life, a key task will be to improve the quality of data that can be used to provide evidence across the domains of exclusion and to improve understanding of the connections between different domains. For example, while some domains, such as economic exclusion or exclusion from social relations, can draw on high quality quantitative data collected in longitudinal and cohort studies, other domains are not as well operationalised in major surveys. Equally, numerous qualitative studies have focused on older adults' material or social well-being but have not connected these domains to other forms of exclusion such as socio-cultural or socio-spatial exclusion. There is also a further empirical challenge to be addressed in research on social exclusion in later life. Measures of exclusion need to assess exclusion across multiple areas of older people's lives, such as economic, social relations, services, civic, and community/spatial domains. It is common for empirical studies to measure only one or two of these domains sufficiently well, whilst ignoring others entirely or using single indicators that fail to capture the breadth of the domain in question. Where feasible, in order to assess the links between different forms of exclusion, empirical work should consider the ways in which different exclusion outcomes can combine to generate further disadvantage.

Turning to policy responses, integrating a multidimensional understanding of social exclusion in later life into policy making, at different levels of the political system, would represent a major achievement. This would imply moving away from a narrow focus on ageing in ageing policies (*e.g.* as a health and care concern) and from an equally narrow focus on specific domains of exclusion in poverty policies (*e.g.* economic exclusion). Most notably, there has been a longstanding policy concern with forms of economic disadvantage. Contributions to this book, especially those in section VIII, have demonstrated the need for a more active engagement by policy makers with the full range of issues relevant to social exclusion in later life. In the case of economic exclusion, connecting features of low incomes, limited assets and poor material conditions to other forms of exclusion, whilst also extending the focus to all life stages, has the potential to create coordinated policies that are better suited to the needs of a diverse older population. This aligns with the point made by Norah Keating and Maria Cheshire-Allen in Chap. 27 that there is a strong case to be made for using social exclusion as an integrative policy framework for understanding the interconnections between different policy challenges and the interdependency of a range of policy solutions.

In addition, including in policy making older adults who are themselves experiencing or are at risk of exclusion is key to addressing challenges of social exclusion in later life. Engaging disadvantaged people in policy making not only improves understanding of such individuals' experiences, but it can also strengthen their position and inclusion (Lister 2002, 2007) and, as a result, overcome power imbalances. Despite research that emphasises the impact of political decision making and programmes in the field of poverty and social exclusion (*e.g.* Phillipson and Scharf 2004), too often older adults on low incomes are ignored in poverty programmes (Rissanen and Ylinen 2014). In reforming welfare states, it is important to give voice to people who will be or are affected by these reforms (Henderson and Tickamyer 2008). As Lister (2007, 2008) argues, giving financially excluded older people a voice has the potential to reduce their risk of exclusion.

34.5.2 Responding to Accumulated Disadvantage and Risk Groups

Reflecting the need to adopt a life-course approach to understand the dynamic nature of social exclusion in later life, as suggested in many contributions to this book, implies a need for future research not only to focus on specific groups at risk of social exclusion but also to consider the ways in which individuals and groups are prone to experiencing the accumulation of disadvantage over time. Social exclusion is best understood as a process that evolves over the course of individuals' lives and the experiences of different birth cohorts. Longitudinal quantitative and qualitative research approaches hold out the promise that researchers can deepen our knowledge of the dynamic relationship between individual life experiences and

group-level factors in generating exclusion in older-age. These approaches can assist in identifying critical points in people's lives where policy and practice responses might be most effective in reducing risks of exclusion later in life. They also engage with challenges arising from increasing digitalisation of societies and changing labour markets that can be associated with the increasingly precarious working lives of key social groups. Where possible, research should focus on the diversity of and intersectionality with old-age, assessing how such factors as age, gender, race and ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, health status, geographic location and their combinations influence old-age social exclusion. This also implies ensuring that key subgroups of ageing adults are sufficiently well represented in empirical studies. Given the importance of spatial dimensions of exclusion in older age, future research will benefit from a stronger focus on the different meanings associated with ageing in place, and the barriers and enablers that apply to diverse groups of older people who live in different place contexts.

For policy, responding to the later life consequences arising from the accumulation of risks across the life course suggests a need to build on awareness of the impact of critical life events and precarious living and working lives on individuals' vulnerability to exclusion in later life to inform the timing and nature of policy and practice interventions. Such interventions should be attuned to the diversity of older populations, individuals' evolving needs, and the nature of the subgroups that they belong to. A strong case exists for targeting policy measures and practice interventions at groups recognised as being at greatest risk of accumulated social exclusion across the life course.

34.5.3 Responding to Multilevel Shocks

As suggested by the authors of numerous chapters in this book, older people can be susceptible to the multifaceted impacts of unanticipated events that alter the broad societal contexts that shape their lives and local environments. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the most obvious example of such a multilevel shock was the period of austerity that affected a number of countries in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 (Ginn 2013; Walsh et al. 2015; Phillipson 2020). Other shocks that demonstrated the interlinkage between macro-, meso- and micro-level consequences for risks of social exclusion in later life were associated with economic downturns, environmental disasters, climate-related events, and conflict situations. However, the experience of COVID-19 provides a textbook example of how an unanticipated crisis cuts across the dimensions of social exclusion to reduce older adults' well-being. While the impact varies across countries and between regions of different nations, the global pandemic has been associated with heightened risks of exclusion from social relations arising from enforced restrictions on older people's social connections (e.g. Berg-Weger and Morley 2020), the increasing potential of economic exclusion as a result of unemployment amongst older workers (e.g. Morrow-Howell et al. 2020), and well-publicised risks of civic and cultural forms of

exclusion linked to overt expressions of ageism and age discrimination (e.g. Ayalon et al. 2020). In the absence of a critical gerontological lens that develops a critique of such forms of exclusion, there is a danger that already marginalised groups of older people are at risk of being left behind as policy makers focus on meeting the needs of younger age groups and people of working age.

34.6 Concluding Remarks

The ideas presented here, and those noted in the individual chapters within this book, are essential as part of a response to the multifaceted challenge of exclusion in later life, but not exhaustive. Demographic ageing is rightly regarded as one of the key achievements of the modern age. Improving understanding of the ways in which ageing interacts with other far-reaching social and economic trends to increase the risks of exclusion faced by older adults around the world continues to be a key task for research on ageing. This is a task that will benefit from the insights of researchers at all career stages. A notable feature of the ROSEnet COST Action was its focus on nurturing research capacity and cross-national collaboration in the field of social exclusion and ageing. This is reflected in the contributions of early-stage researchers to many chapters in this book. Continuing to invest in the development of meaningful partnerships between early-stage researchers and more senior scholars across nations is fundamental to the further development of research on social exclusion in older-age. Responding to the challenge of exclusion also requires concerted action by policymakers and practitioners in all world regions. Our hope is that the different contributions to this book can become part of a necessary response, assisting in developing understanding of multidimensional social exclusion in later life and helping to shape debates around appropriate interventions that might contribute to overcoming the types of disadvantage faced by many people in later life.

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