



Anthropology & Aging

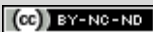
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Book Review

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This European and African researcher-based volume presents ethnographic case studies of ageing and care in diverse rural and urban settings across sub-Saharan Africa. Cases from Ghana, South Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, and Tanzania are represented, the last being the geographical focus of three content chapters out of the seven total. The editors, a social gerontologist (Hoffman) and an anthropologist (Pype), thematically organize their interrogations of care through notions of *space* and *place-making*, and *practice* or *agency*.

For the authors, space or place-making is highlighted in older adults' mobilities surrounding 'home'-based care and its absence (in neglect, abuse, or unavailability), which compels these elderly to move or be moved by others. Depending on cultural and socioeconomic contexts, 'home' here is defined by its constituent members who, as the content chapters show, are different kinds of kin and, increasingly, non-kin ('strangers') in institutionalized care, NGOs, and urban neighborhood community networks. These urban spaces enable new configurations of age-related identity and offer a space-related vantage point on movement between city and countryside, as well as internationally.

Drawing from decades of his path-breaking research, Sjaak van der Geest (Chapter 1) critiques current Ghanaian state policies that rely on unrealistic culturalist models of familial care for older adults. Katrien Pype (Chapter 2) gives a voice to older adults in retirement homes in Kinshasa. These homes enable women without family to embody cultural models of immobility and inauspiciousness and condense a lifetime of actual care-related movement among kin. Many reside there due to intergenerational in-law avoidance taboos or because they lack kin and economic resources. Here, in what is commonly considered a space of inertia in a Western understanding, these older adults can move about, sell wares – featured nicely in a photo of one woman's hand-made dolls (44) – receive evangelist groups, and become media spectacles for charitable politicians. Peter Van Eeuwijk (Chapter 3) explores elder-to-elder care, as an unconventional, but accepted care practice in Tanzania and documents a range of mostly urban caregiving sites like clubs, associational and self-help groups, NGOs, and nursing environments. Brigit Obrist (Chapter 4) contrasts rural and urban sites in Tanzania through an "embodiment perspective" (96) in many detailed, lengthy quotes. She highlights older adult care recipients' self-described maladies and movements into different sites deemed 'home', so caregivers can address their physical and emotional needs.

Practice, as inspired by Sherry Ortner, is the term the editors use to describe care as it emerges among everyday actions and sociocultural ideologies. Their ethnographic cases highlight new or increasing practices of able-bodied older adults caring for frail older adults, rather than

reproducing standard sociocultural models and practices of intergenerational care. They also reiterate the significance of non-kin or 'strangers' care practices and draw attention to the way caregivers and care recipients emphasize bodily dimensions of care practices. Caregivers' physical interventions enable frail older adults to survive, and frail older adults materially and socially cultivate ties with caregivers as well as prepare for their funerals.

Josien De Klerk (Chapter 6) describes the maladies of neglected older adults including Tophista, a rural Haya Tanzanian woman, whose life and wellbeing deteriorated as her intergenerational relations waned. Her grandson gradually withdrew physical care and social interaction, and Tophista, incontinent, infected with chigoe, and stressed, attempted suicide before eventually passing away in a locked room. Mutual dislike and stinginess in dividing her land in customary tenure systems evidenced to others, interviewed by de Klerk and her research assistant, that Tophista had not properly cultivated care relationships in late life and thus partly contributed to her own demise. Emily Freeman (Chapter 5) shows how care practices inform reported embodied age-related identities in Malawi. Older adults who were unable to care for themselves saw themselves losing basic physical autonomy and material ownership, which socially defined adulthood. The inability to continue these practices rendered older adults, in many interviewees' words, "child-like" (131). Jaco Hoffman (Chapter 7) contrasts discourses of care ideals and practicalities among resource-constrained rural South African multi-generational kin networks, to show how such ideals change and are morally renegotiated. He envisions increasing acceptance of institutionalized elder care despite its financial challenges to these kin networks.

The volume is a unique interdisciplinary blend of anthropology and policy studies. The majority of the chapters are substantively ethnographic. The introduction and the conclusion are different in tone and format, representing a policy studies approach. The concluding chapter by Andries Baart, systematically analyzes "discursive formations" (185) about age-related care that emerge from the chapters in a four-page-long table and a graph of four overarching discourses about age-related care. By gathering these insights from the volume in a tool which might be used by policymakers in designing more responsive care communities, Baart responds to the aim of the volume put forward in the introduction: to "examine the extent to which present discourses and policy agendas are reflective of emergent insights on the realities of care" (5), as well as to contribute to making them more reflective. Current interests in care in anthropology and allied fields make this volume timely, and equally relevant for ethnographers of ageing in Africa.