

# HARP: Healthy Ageing in Residential Places

A European Research Area in Ageing 2 (ERA-AGE 2) international project

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A partner project to:

**RE-IMAGINING** LONG-TERM RESIDENTIAL CARE  
an international study of promising practices

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# HARP countries and PIs

## Canada:

Dr. Pat Armstrong  
York University,  
Toronto  
Funded by CIHR



## Sweden:

Dr. Marta Szebehely  
Stockholm University  
Funded by Forte



## United Kingdom:

Dr. Liz Lloyd.  
University of Bristol  
Funded by ESRC



## Norway:

Dr. Mia Vabø  
Norwegian Social  
Research, Oslo  
Project 'Contested  
spaces: Exploring how policy and  
practice shape Norwegian  
nursing homes' funded by Norwegian  
Social Research



# **HARP** research questions

- What constitutes active, healthy ageing for women and men in residential care facilities?
- What conditions support active, healthy ageing for residents and staff, taking gender, context and individual capacities into account in providing long-term residential care?

# Relationship to 'Re-imagining Long-term Residential Care: An International Study on Promising Practices' (**Re-Imagine**) (PI Pat Armstrong)

- A seven year project in six countries: the four Harp countries (Canada, the UK, Sweden, Norway) plus Germany and the United States
- Aim of Re-Imagine: to identify promising practices for thinking about, planning and organising long-term residential care
- **HARP** builds on and complements **Re-Imagine**, focusing on comparative ethnographic case studies

# Re-Imagine: research questions

- What *approaches to care* support long-term care as a viable, desirable and equitable option for individuals, families and caregivers?
- What kinds of *work organization* are most promising in meeting the needs and balance the rights of residents, providers, families and communities?
- What are the promising practices in approaches to *accountability* that nurture care and inspire quality workplace relations in long-term residential facilities?
- What innovative *financing and ownership* models are promising in terms of ensuring equitable access to quality long-term residential care while reducing the offloading of both material and other costs onto workers, employers, families or individuals?

# Re-Imagine: four themes



Information about policies and practices at national levels gathered in **Re-Imagine** → crucial background for analysing ethnographic data in **HARP**

# Point of departure for both **Re-Imagine** and **HARP**

- Seek practices that treat both workers and residents with dignity and respect
- Promote active, healthy ageing for both residents and workers
- Conditions of work are conditions of care
- Understand care as a relationship
- Take differences and equity into account
- Seek positive strategies: search for ideas worth trying
- Entire range of players matters: what works for whom, when, under what conditions
- **Context matters**

# HARP: methodological approach

- Team-based, rapid, site switching ethnographies in (at least) two sites per country – dementia and mixed units
- Mixed teams do one week field visits at each site
- Fresh eyes: researchers from different countries, different disciplines
  - Sociology, social work, gerontology, anthropology, history, gender studies, nursing, medicine, health policy, economics

## **HARP**: methodological approach (continued)

- **Before fieldwork**: ethics approval, site selection, preparing for site visits (presenting the study to residents, staff, family; pre-interviews; ‘package’ for researchers about the setting)
- **On site**: observations, interviews, collecting documents
- 6-12 researchers from all participating countries at each site observing in pairs (one local, one international) from 7 am to midnight
- Individual fieldnotes to be shared by the team
- Interviewing in pairs or alone (sometimes after field visit)
- Team analysis during and immediately after field visit
- **After fieldwork**: report back to sites on preliminary findings

# The **HARP** data

- Altogether 13 full site visits
  - Sweden 2, Norway 3, UK 2, Canada 6 (plus 2 in US and Germany + 8 Norwegian homes in Vabø's 'Contested places')
- Plus 10 'flash visits' (one day visits)
- More than **500 interviews** with residents, family members, care workers, nurses, managers, activity coordinators, kitchen staff, cleaners, volunteers etc.
- Fieldnotes from more than **400 'person days' of observation** made by more than 35 observers; more than **1500 pages**.
- Large number of local documents
- From **Re-Imagine**: national data on legislation, resources, oversight, workforce etc (the context that matters)



# What can fresh eyes bring?

- We noticed different things and found different things promising:
- A Canadian sociologist found silent alarms and wheels on the front legs of dining room chairs promising in a Swedish nursing home, while the quiet and small scale units were perceived as boring
- A Swedish social work researcher did not notice the technologies in the Swedish home but found the small size with peace and quiet promising...
- ... until she visited British homes and found the larger and more lively units focusing more on social activities surprisingly promising



# **But also agreement on what's promising for residents' and staff's healthy ageing**

- Staffing (time to care), training, continuity, division of labour, decision making, knowledge sharing
- Promising practices on food, laundry, music, space, death
- Taking risks versus strict regulation

# Where are we and where are we going?

- Data collection finished; analysis ongoing
- Publications (examples)
  - The meaning of dining. The social organization of food in long-term care, *Food Studies* 2015 (Lowndes, Armstrong, Daly)
  - Resisting regulatory rigidities: lessons from front-line care work, *Studies in Political Economy* 2015 (Baines & Daly)
- Work in progress (examples)
  - Methods book (the entire team)
  - Wash, Wear and Care: Laundry and clothing in the life and labour of nursing homes (Armstrong & Day)
  - Gender regimes in Ontario Nursing Homes: organization, daily work and bodies (Storm, Braedley, Chivers)
  - Interpretations of person-centered dementia care: similar rhetoric, different practices? (Stranz & Sörensdotter)
  - Different contexts, different roles for family in nursing homes (Lloyd & Szebehely)



# Future plans

- Continue to analyse, present and publish
- Continue to give feedback to 'the field'
- New projects building on the **HARP** collaboration and using **HARP** data:
  - Six year research programme funded by Forte 2014-19: 'Individualised care and universal welfare – dilemmas in an era of marketisation' (PI Szebehely, involving Armstrong, Lloyd, Vabø + more)
  - Two year COFAS post-doc funded by Forte 2016-17: 'The logic of care and the logic of audit in residential care for older persons – learning from international comparative research and feminist care theory' (Albert Banerjee from York University to Stockholm University)
  - SSHRC Insight grant : 'Challenging the 'Nursing Home Specter' in the Age of Austerity' (Sally Chivers, Trent University)

# Concluding thoughts about ERA-AGE

- Great opportunity to build and strengthen international collaboration
- Strength of the team-based, rapid, site switching ethnographies:
  - Fresh eyes
  - Learning from each other (junior/senior; between disciplines and jurisdictions)
- The connection to the bigger project **Re-Imagine** crucial
  - For understanding the context
  - For the infra-structure (newsletter, webinars, website, yearly meetings – thanks to Wendy Winters!)
- Website for **Re-Imagine** and **HARP**:  
<http://reltc.apps01.yorku.ca/>