

# Developing age-friendly cities and communities: Perspectives from older adults living in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Manchester

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Ryan Woolrych, PhD [r.d.woolrych@hw.ac.uk](mailto:r.d.woolrych@hw.ac.uk)  
Associate Professor, Urban Studies



# Urbanisation and Ageing

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- By 2030 two-thirds of the population will be living in cities.
- At least a quarter of those urban populations will be aged 60 plus.
- Person-environment fit – ensuring that older adults have the opportunities to participate and use the city.
- Healthy ageing and active ageing.
- Assumption urban areas are positive environments to age.
- Architectural disability – often barriers to social participation largely a result of a poorly designed environment.



# Ageing-in-place

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- **Ageing-in-place:** *the preferred environment to age is at home and in the community.*
- Providing older adults can retain a sense of independence.
- Ability to remain in the home depends on ‘assets and resources’.
- Ageing-in-place becomes more difficult over time with health and physical problems – but largely in response to the environment not meeting their needs.

**Ageing-in-the-[*right*]-place?**

# WHO Age-friendly City domains



- Social participation
- Respect and social inclusion
- Civic participation and employment
- Housing
- Transportation
- Outdoor spaces and public buildings
- Community support and health services
- Communication and information



# The research

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- How can communities and cities be designed to support older adults across the UK and Brazil
- Case study: 6 cities (18 neighbourhoods)
  - UK (Glasgow, Edinburgh and Manchester)
  - Brazil (Pelotas, Brasilia and Belo Horizontes)
- May 2016 – May 2019
- 3 work packages – please see <http://placeage.org/en/>
- Mixed-methods

# Key themes from qualitative findings

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- Urban processes and renewal
- Physical barriers
- Transport and getting around
- Housing shortages / not suitable
- Services and support
- Volunteering
- Transport

# Urban Processes/Renewal

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- Older adults do want to live in the city/urban areas.
- Gentrification/processes of urban renewal.
- Older people feel as if their faces ‘do not fit’ in the construction of the modern city.
- Affordable housing and other pressures.
- City centres seen as scary/older adults apprehensive about using them.



# Physical barriers

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- Lack of stopping places – *“I can’t get from A to B and back again”*.
- Absence of adequate street furniture - benches.
- Street maintenance – fall hazards (sandwich boards, poorly maintained pavements etc.)
- *“Does not matter how many services I’ve got if I can’t get to the end of the street to access those services.”*



# Transport and getting around

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- Free bus pass described as a ‘godsend’ – many people choose not to drive.
- Cycle paths – why not talked about when talking about older adults?
- Respect from service providers is not always evident.
- Role of technology – transport planning website do not cater specifically for older/disabled.

# Housing and inter-generational communities

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- No ‘ghettos for the old’ please.
- Inter-generational communities preferred option.
- Housing ‘within’ the community top priority.  
Evidence of older adults being displaced.
- Lack of funding for formal care – so informal care important.
- Tensions between young and older.
- Role of media – negative press re older adults.



# Participation and engagement

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- Older adults feel that they have a lack of involvement in the decision making
- If they are involved, their views are not acted on
- False assumptions by professionals that older adults are engaged and driving process forward

# Services and supports

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- Community centres – old and non-active older people focused.
- Lifelong learning – supports focused on developing **NEW** skills in old age.
- Need more activities – for the active old.
- *‘I don’t go to xx community centre. It’s not for me. I’m not quite that doolally or round the bend yet.’*



# Volunteering

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- Many can and do volunteer
- Unrewarded and not recognised
- Need more volunteering opportunities
- Older age wrongly framed as period of decline

# Volunteering

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I: Okay and that's like ... is it something that older people can do? Or is it mostly young people?

R: It's mostly retired people because they've got time, because it happens ... it's through the week usually, so it's generally older people who do it.

I: It's like I think there's a pattern, most volunteers are older.

R: Because there's not that much volunteering [that] happens at the weekend, it's usually through the week.

*(Female, age 62)*

# Rights to the City

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Rights to the city – not just ability to navigate in and around a given place but *right to participate in and shape the city?*

New forms of urban citizenship and governance are needed.



# Challenging Existing Practice

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- Old age is not homogenous. Cities are diverse.
- Work with older adults to identify barriers and facilitators to the delivery of AFC – active ageing, social participation and independence.
- Challenge existing principles of urban planning and development that exclude older adults.
- Prototype and design solutions for age-friendly communities.
- Develop recommendations for policymakers and practice.

# Thank you for listening

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Please follow us on Twitter @PlaceAge

...and visit our website <http://placeage.org/en/>

A huge thank you to all the older adults in Brazil and the U.K. who have generously taken part in the study so far