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

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Urbanisation and Ageing

- 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

- **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

• 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

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

- 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

- 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

- 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

- No ‘ghettoes 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

• 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

- 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

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

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

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

- 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

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