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The Manchester Urban Ageing Research Group

MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester
Institute for Collaborative
Research on Ageing

SPATIAL JUSTICE AND THE RIGHT TO AN AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

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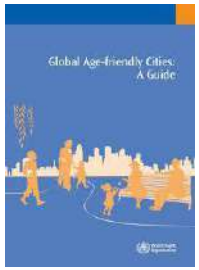
Overview

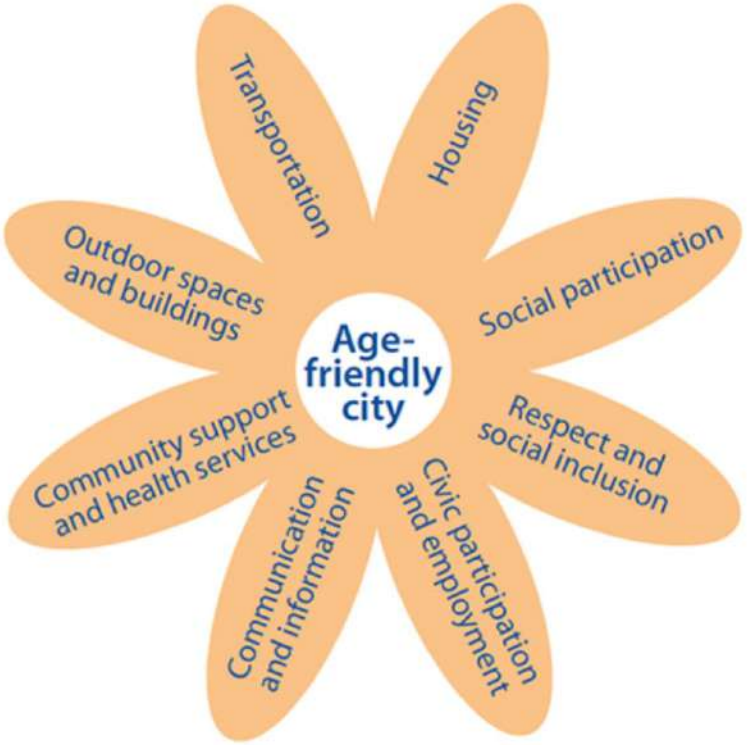
- Background to creating age-friendly cities & communities (AFCC)
- **Why should we be concerned with age-friendly cities & communities**
- Key achievements of the age-friendly movement
- **Challenges for age-friendly policy and practice**
- Spatial justice and the right to an age-friendly community
- **A manifesto to progress the age-friendly movement**



Background to the age-friendly approach

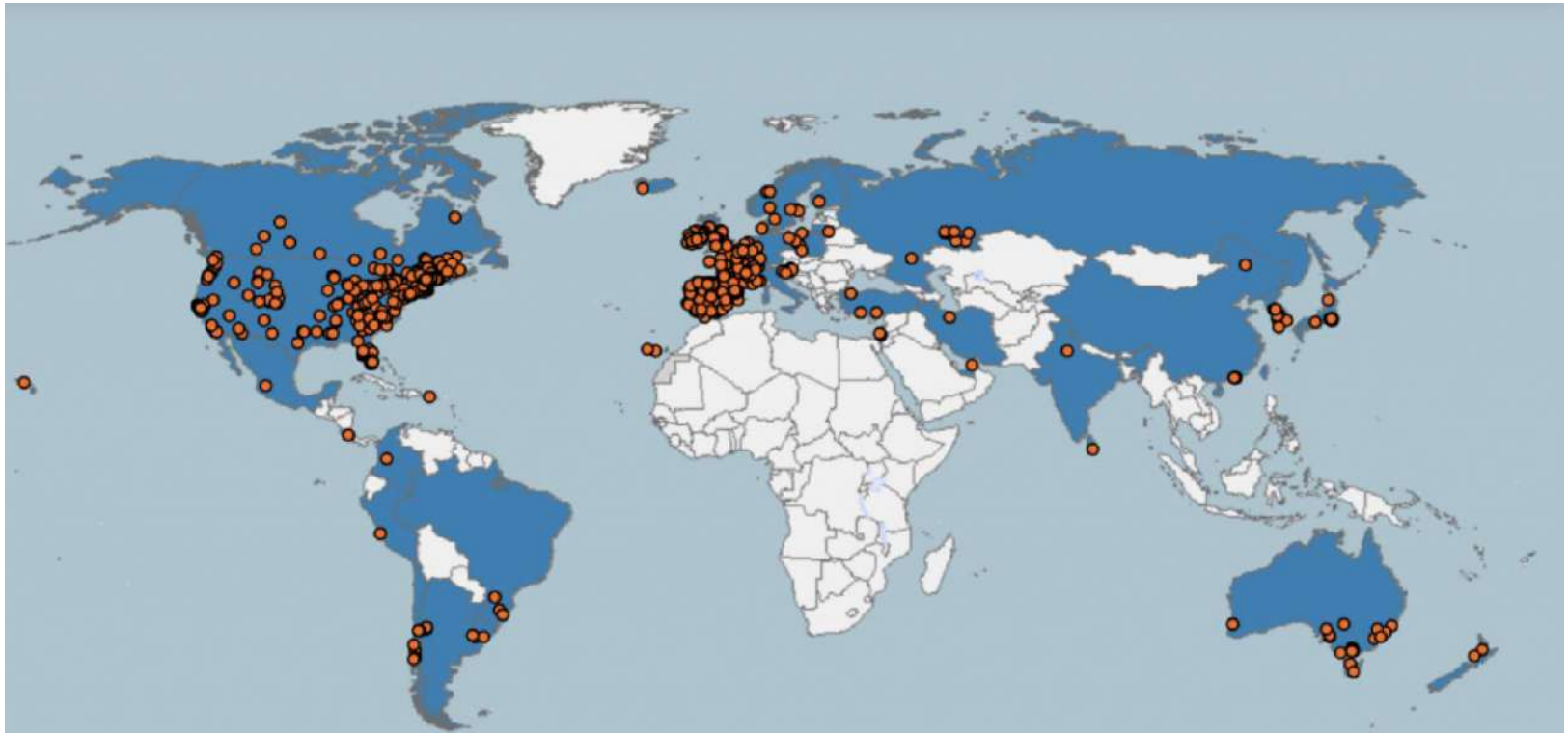
An "age-friendly city" is an **inclusive and accessible community environment** that optimizes opportunities for **health, participation and security** for all people, in order to enhance **quality of life as people age.**

(WHO, 2007)



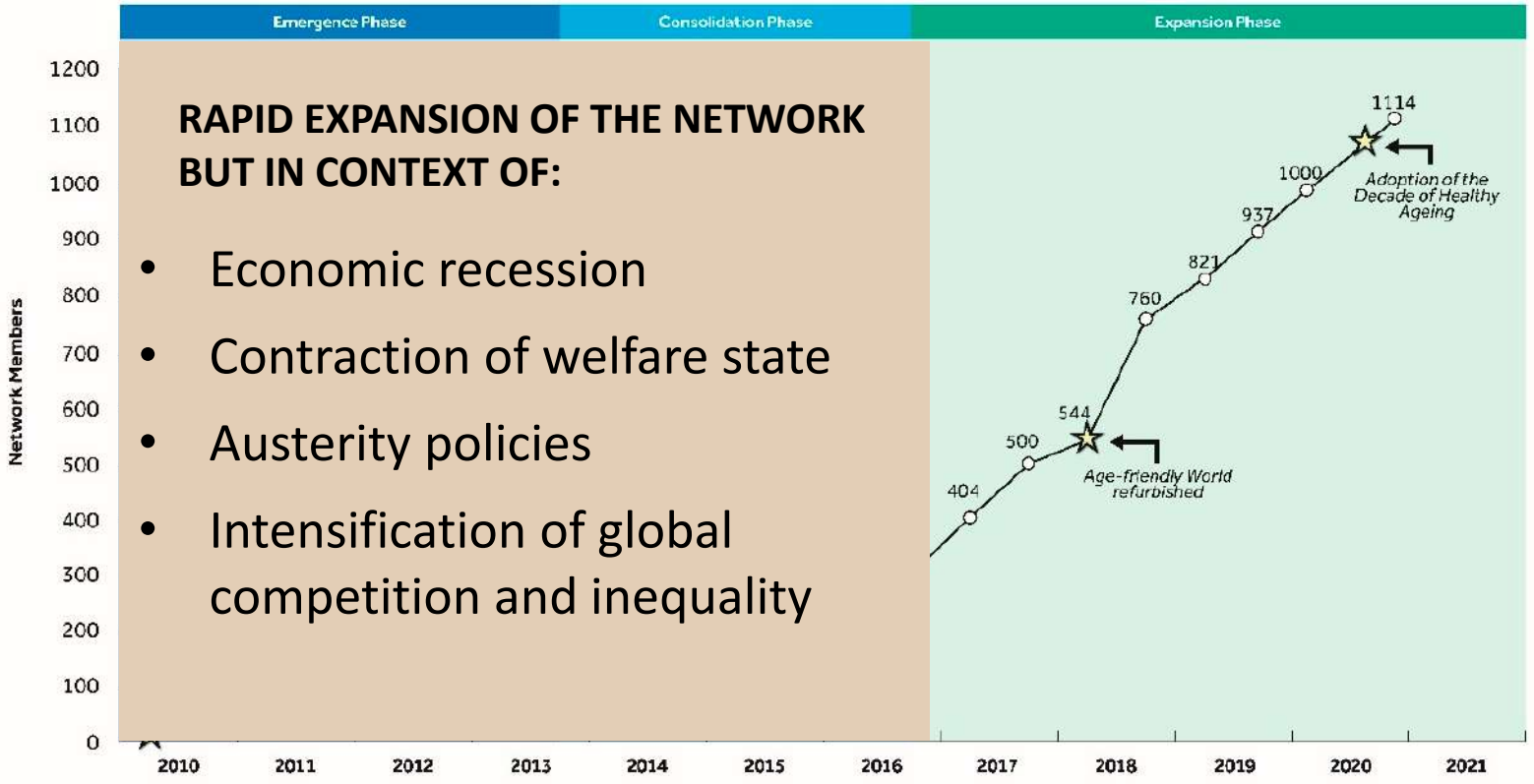
Background to the age-friendly approach

The Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities

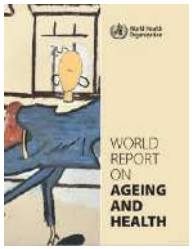


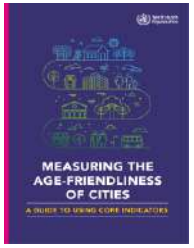
Background to the age-friendly approach

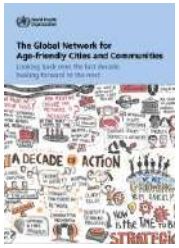
Membership Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities



1400 cities and communities by 2023

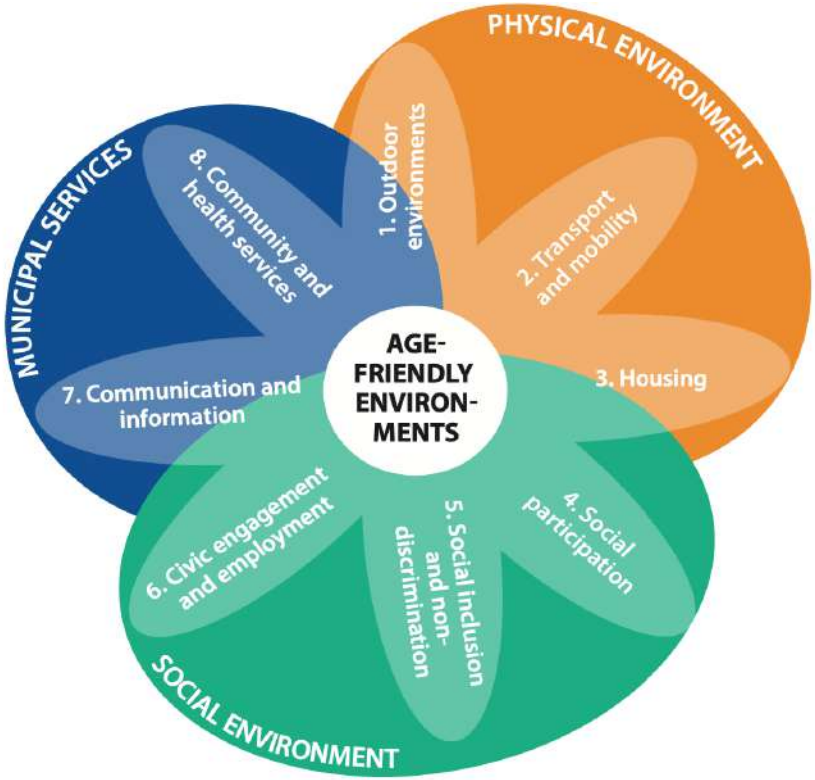






Background to the age-friendly approach

The policy commitment to create more **age-friendly, supportive environments** has become a central element of strategies and action plans for **active and healthy ageing**



Background to the age-friendly approach

Age-friendly Environments

Physical, social and economic environments are important determinants of healthy ageing and powerful influences on the experience of ageing and the opportunities that ageing offers. Age-friendly environments are better places in which to grow, live, work, play and age. They are created by removing physical and social barriers and implementing policies, systems, services, products and technologies that address the social determinants of healthy ageing and enable people, even when they lose capacity, to continue to do the things they value.

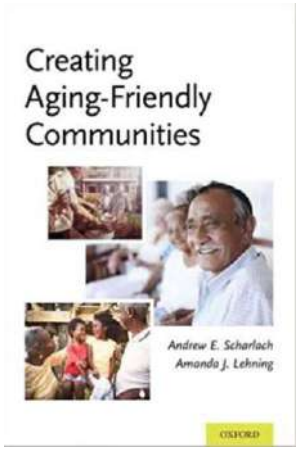
Four areas of action:

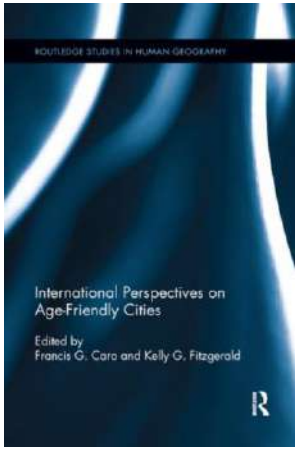
1. Age-friendly environments
2. Combatting ageism
3. Integrated care
4. Long-term care

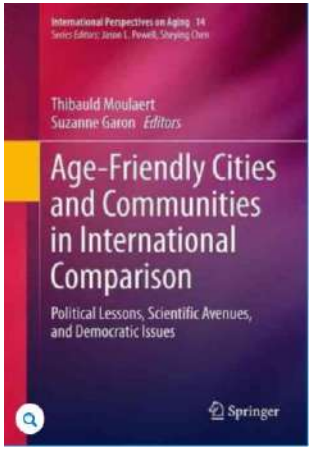
Why should we be concerned with developing age-friendly communities?

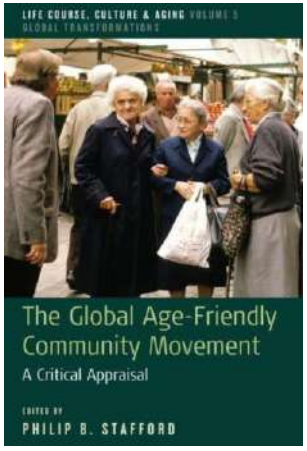
- **Importance of home and neighbourhood** in later life – 80% of time of people aged over 70 is spent in home and immediate locality (Wahl et al., 2012; Peace, 2022)
- Research and policy focus on '**ageing in place**'
- Neighbourhood as a source of **inclusion** (e.g. social connectedness) and **exclusion** (e.g. poverty, crime)
- Opportunities to guarantee **human rights**

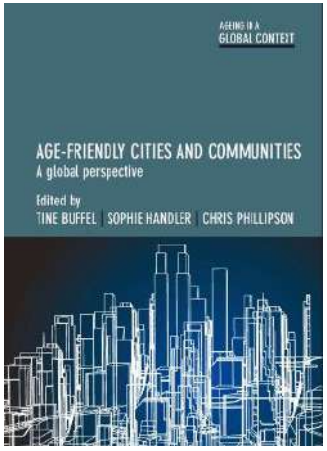
Research influencing the debate around age-friendly cities and communities

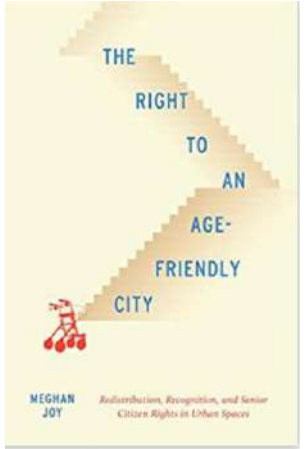












Key achievements of the age-friendly movement

1. **Greater recognition in urban planning of implications of population ageing**

© Ottawa, Canada

Walk audits in neighbourhoods
Improving pedestrian safety
Modifying outdoor environment

Key achievements of the age-friendly movement

2. Greater recognition of the importance of social infrastructure in creating age-friendly communities

© Melville, Australia

Creating social spaces for people with dementia

Key achievements of the age-friendly movement

3. Changing the societal narrative around ageing and combatting ageism

© Guadalajara, Mexico

Campaigns to change people's perception of older people in order to reduce prejudice and discrimination

Key achievements of the age-friendly movement

4. Promoting the central involvement of older people in co-producing research, policy and practice

5. Key achievements of AFM

Models to support ageing in place

- **Village model**: self-governing grassroots organisations, developed with the sole purpose of enabling people to remain in their communities as they age. Leverage community services to support their members. Membership fee. Generally serve younger, healthier, middle-class group.

  200 plus Villages across the USA
- Village to Village Network - Village to Village Network, Inc. (vtvnetwork.org)

Supporting ageing in place

- **Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCS):** community-level initiatives that bring together older adults and diverse stakeholders within a residential area with a large population of older adults to co-ordinate services and facilities, to promote ageing in place. Tend to focus on lower-income groups. Important role for on-site community development worker.
- Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) | Office for the Aging (ny.gov)

Key challenges for the age-friendly movement

Difficulties garnering **political support, leadership and public resources** for AFCC change

Advancing the work during times of **economic austerity, public health crises** and **accelerating inequalities**

Challenges for **organizing and tracking progress** across complex systems, as well as demonstrating impact

(Greenfield and Buffel, 2022)

Key challenges for the age-friendly movement

Strengthening **older people's voices and participation** in decision-making

Empowering marginalized groups to claim and exercise their rights

Recognising diversity and attending to **differences across socio-political conditions** and cultural contexts

(Buffel and Phillipson, 2020)

How should we move forward?

Spatial justice and the right to an age-friendly community

Spatial Justice

- 'an **intentional** and **focused** emphasis on the spatial or **geographical** aspects of justice or injustice… and the fair and equitable **distribution in space** of socially valued resources and the **opportunities to use them**.' **(Soja 2009:2)**

- A focus on urban development but also **redistribution**, the **democratic experience** of cities and **citizen empowerment**
- A spatial justice orientation calls on age-friendly initiatives to attend to how the **social inequalities** among older adults are determined or **shaped by place** and to consider how such initiatives might be able to mitigate or exacerbate place-based inequalities (Greenfield, 2018)

A manifesto to progress age-friendly work

Tackling inequality and increasing diversity

Co-production and the right to an age-friendly community

Strengthening global and multi-sector collaboration and integrating research with policy

A manifesto to progress age-friendly work

Inequality and the age-friendly movement

- Social and ethnic inequalities
- Health inequalities
- Organisational inequalities
- Community and spatial inequalities

Social and ethnic inequalities

- Age-friendly brand has strong profile amongst white communities; less evident among minoritised and marginalised group (Lehning et al., 2017)
- **Need to understand different social and cultural interpretations of what 'age-friendly' might mean**
- How to shape policies around groups with different experiences of social exclusion (Yarker and Buffel, 2022)
- **How to give greater prominence to the impact of racism - which has grown substantially since the AFCC idea was conceived**

Health inequalities

- Do age-friendly initiatives reach out to people with **all types** of health conditions, or are they focused mainly on the "healthy [and] **active aging**" (Golant, 2014)?

- Do AFCC have the capacity to support people considered **"frail"** or those with dementia and associated conditions (Grenier, 2007)?

- Acknowledge the variety of groups for whom age-friendly issues are relevant and the need to build environments that support and reflect **diversity** of ageing populations.

Organisational inequalities

- To date, the movement has drawn upon organizations **already involved** in campaigns on issues affecting older people

- These may have limited connections to organizations representing **ethnic minority groups, LGBTQ+** community, women's groups, and faith-based organizations

- Each organization will be affected by age-related issues **in different ways:** their involvement could make a substantial contribution to creating a more inclusive and representative age-friendly movement

Community and spatial inequalities

- Impact of **neighbourhood level inequalities** on physical and mental health (Greenfield et al., 2018)
- Spatial inequalities in the **structural capacity of neighbourhoods** to develop‘age-friendliness’
- Hollowing out of **social infrastrastructure** (Klinenburg 2018; Yarker, 2022)
- Role of **gentrification** in increasing spatial inequalities (Buffel and Phillipson, 2020; Kern, 2022)

A manifesto to progress age-friendly work

Co-production and the right to an age-friendly community

- The right to full and complete usage of space *and* the right to participate centrally in decision-making (Lefebvre, Harvey)
- Embed AFCC agenda with urban planning agenda as well as public health
- Investigate new ways of securing the participation of older people in regeneration and planning

A manifesto to progress age-friendly work

Strengthen global and multi-sector collaboration and integrate research with policy

- **Strengthen the Global Network and build new partnerships:** importance of collaborating with a range of initiatives ('healthy' /'sustainable' /'smart' … cities)
- Increasing research capacity and interdisciplinary collaboration to build the evidence base
- Expanding research connections and collaboration between researchers across different regions
- Training, mentoring, inspiring

Conclusion: Key questions for age-friendly research, policy and practice to address

- How can age-friendly initiatives drive forward new ideas relating to improving urban environments, for example: developing new forms of **community organization & solidarity**; supporting **inter-generational cohesion**; campaigning on the **climate crisis and urban pollution**?
- How can age-friendly work challenge the wider **inequalities and injustices** which affect city life?
- Cities are viewed as key drivers for economic success – '**the urban renaissance**' – but can they integrate ageing populations as well?

Selected publications

Greenfield, E. and Buffel, T. (2022) **Age-friendly cities and communities: Research to strengthen Policy and Practice,** *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*

Yarker, S. and Buffel, T. (2022) **Involving socially excluded groups in age-friendly programs: The role of neighbourhood-focused and co-production approaches**. *Journal of Aging & Social Policy.*

Van Hoof, J., Marston, H.R., Kazak, J.K. and Buffel, T. (2021) **Ten questions concerning age-friendly cities and communities and the built environment,** *Building and Environment,* 199, 107922

Rémillard-Boilard, S., Buffel, T. and Phillipson, C. (2021) **Developing age-friendly cities and communities: Eleven case studies from around the world**. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*

Buffel, T., Handler, S. and Phillipson, C. (eds) (2018) ***Age-friendly communities: A global perspective***. Bristol: Policy Press.

Buffel, T. and Phillipson, C. (2018) **A manifesto for the age-friendly movement: Developing a new urban agenda**. *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*, 30(2), 173-192.

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The Manchester Urban Ageing Research Group