Chapter 18
Developing Age-Friendly Communities: New Approaches to Growing Old in Urban Environments

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Developing what has been termed "age-friendly" communities has become a significant issue for social policy, embracing questions ranging across urban as well as rural environments. The reasons for such attention are not hard to discern and will be assessed in some detail in this chapter. In brief, however, they include: first, the complexity of demographic change, with the emergence of a wide spectrum of housing and community needs among those in the 50 plus age group. Second, the pressures affecting different types of localities, with the impact of accelerated urbanization for some and deindustrialization for others. Third, is acceptance of the importance of the physical and social environment as a factor influential in maintaining the quality of life of older people (Wahl and Oswald 2010). Fourth, is the policy debate about what constitutes "good" or "optimal" places to age, as reflected in the work of the World Health Organization (WHO) around "age-friendly" cities, these defined as encouraging: "…active ageing by optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance the quality of life as people age" (WHO 2007:1).

Despite the importance attached to building age-friendly communities the approach itself requires better understanding and elaboration at conceptual and operational levels. Some important and critical questions that might be raised include:

- How does the age-friendly theme link to research covering environmental issues and aging?
- What are the origins of the age-friendly approach within social and public policy?
- How viable is the idea given the extent of change operating within communities?
- What needs to be done to make age-friendly communities a realistic option for older people?
- What are some of the barriers that might be encountered in attempting to implement the policy?

The above questions will be examined in the context of the process of urbanization affecting communities across the world. Population aging and urbanization have in their different ways become the dominant social trends of the twenty-first century, with their interaction raising issues for all types of communities – from the most isolated to the most densely populated. By 2030, two-thirds of the world's population will be residing in cities; by that time the major urban areas of the developed world will have 25% or more of their population people aged 60 and over. Cities and the metropolitan regions of which they are a part are themselves changing. Soja and Kanai (2008:58) use the term "global city region" to refer to a: "…new metropolitan form characterized by sprawling polycentric networks of urban centres clustered around one or more 'historic' urban cores". Such networks vary in size from one million at the lower level to ten million and beyond at the upper, covering well over a billion of the world's residents.

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Accelerated urbanization brings advantages and opportunities of different kinds. Soja and Kanai (2008:68) note the extent to which: "Dense and heterogeneous cities and city regions have become the driving forces of the global economy, generating enormous wealth as well as technological innovation and cultural creativity". Cities are regarded as central to economic development, attracting waves of migrants and supporting new knowledge-based industries (Savage et al. 2003). The rebuilding of many cities – notwithstanding economic recession – provides opportunities for innovations in housing and services suitable for a range of age and income groups (Rogers and Power 2000). However, the extent to which the "new urban age" will produce "age-friendly" communities remains uncertain. Cities produce advantages for older people in respect of easy access to medical services, provision of cultural and leisure facilities, shopping and general necessities for daily living (Katz et al. 2008). However, they are also seen as threatening environments, often creating insecurity and feelings of vulnerability arising from changes to neighborhoods and communities. Assessing the challenge of creating age-friendly communities within urban environments is the central aim of this chapter. The discussion is organized under the following headings:

- What have been the main approaches used by sociologists to understand the impact of physical and social environments on older people?
- What have been the main factors driving the debate on creating age-friendly cities?
- How age-friendly is the urban environment?
- What are the options for improving urban environments for older people?
- What are the restrictions and barriers likely to be encountered implementing an age-friendly policy?

The chapter will conclude with a brief summary of the arguments and provide an assessment of the next stage in the research and policy debate.

Environmental Issues and Aging

The environmental context of aging – and issues relating to place and location in particular – has resurfaced as a major theme within the sociology of aging. Drawing on classic studies from Rosow (1967), Rowles (1978), Lawton (1980), and others, environmental gerontology is presented as developing a systematic approach to understanding the physical and spatial contexts influencing people through the life course (Wahl and Weisman 2003). The theoretical questions examined in this body of work include: the influence of the physical environment on the aging self (Wahl and Lang 2006); the impact of neighborhood characteristics on health and well-being (Krause 2004; Smith 2009); the relationship between place and identity (Rowles 1978; Laws 1997); and the impact of urban change on social networks in later life (Deeg and Thomése 2005; Phillipson et al. 2000). These and related questions have emerged as influential themes within social gerontology, and have stimulated diverse empirical projects with a comparative as well as single-country focus (Phillips et al. 2005; Rodwin and Gusmano 2006). Interest in the effects of the physical and spatial environment has been a long-standing feature of research into aging with studies covering:

- "Integration" vs. "segregation" debates in the field of housing.
- Theoretical models examining person–environment interactions.
- Research on attachment to place and the construction of identity.
- The impact of community and neighborhood change.

The field of housing provided the initial focus for research, with studies in the 1950s and 1960s using this topic to explore arguments around "age integrated" vs. "age segregated" communities (Kleemier 1956; Webber and Osterbind 1960). Such debates reflected competing theories in social

gerontology during this period – notably activity and disengagement theory (see Marshall and Bengtson this volume) – which presented contrasting hypotheses about the degree to which older people wished to remain part of mainstream society (Friis et al. 1968). An additional factor influencing this work, however, was the rapid development of retirement communities – from the 1950s onwards – in Florida, California, and beyond. Such communities raised issues about the advantages of "age dense environments" for older people, especially regarding security, recreational facilities, and access to specialist support (Streib et al. 1986). This work was subsequently extended with researchers, such as (Rosow 1967) and Teaff et al. (1973), examining the benefits for friendship formation and reduced isolation arising from different types of age-mix within public and private housing.

By the 1970s researchers had moved on from focusing on the advantages and advantages of specific housing arrangements or types, to modeling the way in which older people might be influenced by their physical environment. In particular, the Lawton and Nahemow (1973) "press-competence" (PC) model was widely adopted as an approach to understanding person–environment relationships (Schiedt and Norris-Baker 2004; Oswald et al. 2005). The approach taken by the model is that individual behavior and satisfaction are contingent upon the dynamic balance between the demand character of the environment (press) and the individual's ability to deal with that demand (competence). With this approach, those with low competence encountering strong environmental press are more likely to have maladaptive behavior compared with those having high competence encountering weak environmental press where behavior is likely to be positive (Lawton 1980). The PC model, along with its variants (see, for example, Carp and Carp 1984), has been especially influential in examining the extent to which a mismatch between environments and basic needs can undermine emotional well-being and mental health (Kahana 1982). Peace et al. (2007) highlight the extent to which this work has been dominated by studies of age segregated settings (such as in residential homes), with a particular focus on the impact of lack of privacy and control in creating stress-inducing environments.

The person–environment tradition became the dominant paradigm in environmental gerontology in the 1970s and 1980s, and has retained its influence (Wahl and Oswald 2010). Through the 1980s and 1990s, however, further approaches emerged, drawing on perspectives from cultural and human geography and urban sociology (Rowles 1983; Laws 1997; Peace et al. 2007). These raised issues both about the meanings individuals attach to their environment as well as the structural forces affecting communities and neighborhoods. Rowles (e.g. 1978, 1993) has been especially influential on the first of these, applying phenomenological perspectives to an understanding of the impact of environment on self-identity. His work has drawn attention to the way in which attachment to particular places – such as home and neighborhood – accumulate over time, creating what he views as an inherent "body awareness" of the physical configuration of the environment. According to Rowles (1978:163), this has important implications for aging in place as the "lessons learned through repeatedly traversing familiar space facilitate… continued participation in environments which might otherwise have been almost impossible to negotiate". Rowles (1978, 1983) developed the term "insideness" to refer to the different types of attachment that people maintain to their environment. These include the "*physical insideness*" already referred to but also *social insideness* arising from everyday social exchange over long periods and *autobiographical insideness* reflecting the way in which place can become "a landscape of memories" which can assist in the maintenance of identity in old age (Rowles 1983:114).

At the same time, attachment to the environment may itself be compromised by structural changes affecting communities, these undermining the strategies identified by Rowles for maintaining identity in old age. This may be especially the case in urban environments marked by a rapid turnover of people and buildings, and in unpopular urban neighborhoods characterized by low housing demand and abandonment by all but the poorest and least mobile residents (Wacquant 2008). Here, urban sociology drawing on the Chicago School has provided an important intellectual

framework with a range of studies examining problems of aging within inner-city contexts (e.g. Townsend 1957; Birren 1969; Cantor 1975; Stephens 1978; Phillipson et al. 2000; Smith 2009). This work has been extended over recent years, with studies examining the impact of economic recession on inner-city areas (Ogg 2005; Scharf et al. 2002). Such research has been further linked to issues of inequality and racial discrimination affecting minority groups in metropolitan districts (Smith 2009).

The various strands of research identified above have been especially important in highlighting the influence of environmental change at meso- and microlevels. However, the narrow focus of research within most of the approaches raises problems given the larger-scale forces affecting urban communities. Much of the "integration/segregation" debate was itself applied to a limited range of housing-related issues, drawing on theoretical models now largely discredited within the field. The person–environment perspective remains important but its testing has been confined to institutional or domestic settings and, as with phenomenological approaches, this approach is poorly equipped to deal with change at a macrosociological level. Even research examining problems of older people in urban areas such as inner-cities, while exploring issues about the impact of global change, has yet to incorporate findings into a coherent theoretical model.

At the same time, the need for an approach linking different levels of environmental change is especially urgent given the pressures affecting many of the communities in which older people live. In this chapter, the idea of "age friendly" communities is used as way of exploring macro-, meso- and microlevels of change affecting older people. The next section examines some of the main factors behind the development of this approach.

Developing Age-Friendly Communities

Debates about securing optimum community environments for aging populations emerged from a number of organizations during the 1990s (Evans 2009). The theme of age-friendly communities arose from policy initiatives launched by the WHO. A precursor was the notion of "active ageing" developed during the United Nations' Year of Older People in 1999 and elaborated by the European Union (1999) and the WHO (2002). The idea of maintaining "active ageing" referred to the notion of older people's "continuing participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs, not just the ability to be physically active or to participate in the labour market" (WHO 2002:12). Achieving this was seen as requiring interventions at a number of levels, including maintaining effective supports within the physical and built environment. Here, the WHO (2002) acknowledged that:

Physical environments that are age-friendly can make the difference between independence and dependence for all individuals but are of particular importance for those growing older. For example, older people who live in an unsafe environment or areas with multiple physical barriers are less likely to get out and therefore more prone to isolation, depression, reduced fitness, and increased mobility problems (P. 27).

The theme of age-friendly environments was subsequently applied to urban contexts, with work beginning in 2005 around the theme of "Global Age-friendly Cities". Subsequent work by the WHO, based upon focus groups with older people, caregivers, and service providers, produced a guide and checklist of action points focused on producing an "ideal" city relevant to all age groups. This work concluded that: "It should be normal in an age-friendly city for the natural and built environment to anticipate users with different capacities instead of designing for the mythical 'average' (i.e. young) person. An age-friendly city emphasizes enablement rather than disablement; it is friendly for all ages and not just 'elder-friendly' (WHO 2007:72)."

Such ideas were consistent with new perspectives influencing urban development over the course of the 1990s and early 2000s, notably ideas around "sustainable" (Satterthwaite 1999) and "harmonious cities" (UN-Habitat 2008). The former raised questions about managing urban growth in a manner able to meet the needs of future as well as current generations. The idea of "harmonious" development emphasized values such as "tolerance, fairness, social justice and good governance" (UN-Habitat 2008), these regarded as essential in achieving sustainable development in urban planning. These themes were also influential in the elaboration of ideas associated with "lifetime homes" and "lifetime neighbourhoods" (Department of Community and Local Government 2008; Atlanta Regional Commission 2009), which emerged alongside recognition of the need for more systematic interventions to support population aging at a community level. An additional influence was recognition of the development in many localities of what has been termed "naturally occurring retirement communities" (NORCS), i.e. neighborhoods that, with the migration of younger people, have effectively evolved into communities of older people. The key issue behind the "lifetime" concept was an understanding that effective support for older people within neighborhoods would require a range of interventions linking different parts of the urban system – from housing and the design of streets to transportation and improved accessibility to shops and services (see further below).

Finally, the extent to which environments are "age-friendly" or "hostile" to groups such as older people has been raised in theoretical debates around globalization and its influence on the routines and structures influencing everyday life (Phillipson 2007). One view of the impact of globalization, identified in the research literature, is that it has fragmented and distorted the experience of community and place for older people and other social groups. Rather than the mutual solidarities presented as typical of locality ties in the 1950s and 1960s, community life is now regarded, in the words of Beck (2000), as "unsettled [and] friable". In Bauman's view (2001:47), the present period is best characterized as "times of disengagement": "Gone are most of the steady and solidly dug-in orientation points which suggested a social setting that was more durable, more secure and more reliable than the time-span of an individual life". More generally, some commentators have presented such changes as reflecting the decline of "social capital" or the "disembeddness" of individuals and families from a stable community existence (Putnam 2000; Blokland 2003; Charles et al. 2008).

The link between globalization and themes associated with rootlessness, mobility, and impermanence have become familiar and might be judged as a factor undermining the development of age-friendly communities. An alternative view, however, would be that many of the changes associated with globalization, and its consequences for urban environments in particular, reinforce the need to rethink the way communities provide support through the life course. This is especially important given evidence about the significance of the physical environment in the lives of older people, as well as evidence from research about its influence on the quality of life in old age. A review of this aspect follows below, together with a survey of research findings on the impact of urbanism on older people.

How Age-Friendly is the Urban Environment?

Pressures and Constraints of Urban Living

Physical environments are significant influences for all age groups, but may be especially important for the old and young with the former becoming increasingly reliant on their immediate community. Wight et al. (2009) suggest that there are good reasons to expect that with increased age there is increased vulnerability to the "press" (see above) of the neighborhood environment. Glass and

Balfour highlight four mechanisms that may be at work: "longer duration of exposure; increased biological, psychological, and cognitive vulnerability; changing patterns of spatial use; and reliance on community sources of integration" (cited in Wight et al. 2009:247). Older people may in fact be especially sensitive to changes to the physical and built environment, given its significance for the maintenance of identity, and because of the length of time spent at home – 80% of the time of those 70 and above according to one study (Horgas et al. 1998).

Older people may experience urban areas as "unfriendly" for a variety of reasons – many of these shared with other age groups but in some cases experienced in a more intense form because of the vulnerabilities associated with age. Brown et al. (2009:235) highlight a number of research findings demonstrating that older adults residing "in physically deteriorated neighborhoods [are more likely] to perceive that social support is less available to them…[in comparison with] elders who reside in better-maintained neighbourhoods". The authors also note the extent to which problems associated with the built environment (such as poor maintenance of buildings, limited access to shops and facilities within the neighborhood) have been shown to increase levels of psychological distress even after controlling for variables such as age, gender, and financial strain. Neighborhoods characterized by high levels of economic and social deprivation may present a particular challenge to older people. This can in part be attributed to the relatively high rates of both personal and property crime that characterize such neighborhoods (Smith 2009). The experience of crime and the fear of being a victim of crime can act as direct barriers to the maintenance of a "normal" daily life for many older people. As a consequence, older people may be less likely – especially in inner-city areas – to leave their homes after dark (Phillipson et al. 2000; Scharf et al. 2002). There may even be some parts of neighborhoods, such as parks and cemeteries, which are effectively out of bounds to older people even during daylight hours (Smith 2009).

Older people may be especially susceptible to problems arising from poor-quality housing (Hunt and McKenna 1992; Department for Communities and Local Government 2008; Brown et al. 2009). In England, 33% of homes occupied by older people fail the official "decent homes standard" (Evans 2009). Particular types of urban housing have been linked to mental health problems in later life. Research in the USA found that elderly residents living in high-rise dwellings were more depressed, had higher rates of psychiatric disorder, and were more socially isolated than those living in detached homes in the community (Husaini et al. 1991). Evandrou (2003) highlights housing problems faced by older people living in Inner London where high density terraced housing damaged during the Second World War was replaced with high-rise flats:

Many of these were erected during (the 1950s) and the 1960s and their tenants have aged with them. Flats that were suitable for people earlier in their life course are no longer suitable for them in later life. Poor communal infrastructure, with lifts that frequently break down, entry phones subject to vandalism and graffiti-ridden communal landings all serve to heighten older people's sense of isolation and exclusion (P. 3).

Studies of older people in inner-city areas have identified the ways in which they can be affected by the side effects of population turnover and pressures on public space (Hannan Foundation 2001; Scharf et al. 2002; Newman 2003; Smith 2009). At the same time, we might also consider the extent to which contemporary urbanization creates extreme pressures on everyday living for certain groups. Klinenberg (2002) examined the 1995 heat wave in Chicago that over 1 month alone killed around 600 people, of whom three-quarters were aged 65 and over. As well as the acute factors that caused such high rates of mortality among the old, the author noted chronic attributes of the urban environment that reduced the quality of life of elderly residents:

In recent years, a number of studies have shown that older people living in violent and deteriorated urban areas tend to be more isolated and afraid of crime than those in more robust regions. Among the mechanisms producing this concentrated fear and isolation in ecologically depleted and politically underserved places are the lack of local commercial venues and service providers to draw people into the streets; barriers to physical mobility, such as broken stairs, crumbling sidewalks, and poor lighting;

the psychological impact of living among signs of disorder; indifferent government agencies who neglect the local infrastructure; and the decrease of trusting and reciprocal relationships in areas with high levels of crime.

Restrictions on daily living, as detailed in the research, were reinforced by degraded public space, a product of abandoned buildings, poor-quality infrastructure, and the loss of local businesses – "institutional disengagement" in the words of Herbert Gans (1972). Such conditions became especially perilous for older people when matched by declines in health and social support networks. Newman (2003) illustrated this in her research on older people in inner-city New York, where she argues that, unlike younger people and families who move in and out of neighborhoods, for older people "the home place sets the tone for their daily lives" (Newman 2003:198).

The structure of the modern city also raises issues for groups such as older people. Mike Davis (2002) highlights the development of a "post-urban metropolis" where traditional central-place functions (culture and sports, government, shopping and administration) are radically dispersed among different locations. Along with this, he points to the emergence of "dead cities" stripped of the functions and activities that contribute to the maintenance of lively and diverse public spaces, or what Jane Jacobs (1961) referred to as the "daily ballet" of city sidewalks safe from "barbarism and fear". In Davis's world, by contrast, pedestrian expeditions become an ordeal for young and old alike in cities dominated by cars. Geographical disparities within urban areas may lead to age-and class-segregated neighborhoods, with significant tensions between the needs of groups at different stages of the life course (Rogers and Power 2000).

Sassen (2001) has identified the way in which large cities concentrate both the leading sectors of global capital, along with a growing share of disadvantaged populations (see also Rodwin and Gusmano 2006). Cities, she argues, have become a strategic terrain for a series of conflicts and contradictions – among which the management and support of vulnerable populations is one of the most acute. In like vein, Wacquant (2008:257) refers to what he terms the appearance of "advanced marginality" within urban areas, with the multiplication of "unstable social positions [with] vulnerable populations at an increasing remove from the middle and upper tiers of the structure of classes and places".

An important question concerns the extent to which the construction of the modern (or late-modern) city as the "site for the new consumerism" (Savage et al. 2003:149) results in social exclusion for groups such as older people. Rodwin, Gusmano, and Butler (2006:7) make the point that while world cities offer extensive cultural and entertainment opportunities, they are expensive places in which to live. They illustrate this point by citing a study of New York City that found that only 1-in-20 older households had sufficient money to take full advantage of the quality of life offered by the city. Comparable data is unavailable for British cities, although a relevant finding from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) for the Social Exclusion Unit was that a larger percentage of older people living in London than in the rest of the country experienced multiple types of poverty and deprivation (ODPM 2006). This is consistent with an analysis of global cities that emphasizes the increasing divergence of the lifestyles and opportunities of wealthy and poor residents, itself a manifestation of growing inequalities linked to social class, ethnicity and, in some respects, age (Gordon and Townsend 2000).

The Benefits of Urban Environments

The pressures associated with urban environments appear to be well documented, and would seem to pose a considerable challenge for implementing an age-friendly approach. On the other hand, the advantages – both existing and potential – of urban areas for supporting aging populations must also be highlighted: First, the resources characteristic of urban economies suggests major opportunities for developing policies of relevance to a more diverse population of older people. Mike Davis

(2002), despite emphasizing the crisis affecting many urban environments, reminds us nonetheless of the facilities they provide, notably in respect of libraries, museums, parks, and communal spaces. He contrasts the "public affluence" of cities with the limits of "privatized consumerism", viewing the former as able to challenge some of the worst excesses associated with the latter. In similar fashion, Smith (2009) points to the cultural and social diversity associated with urban living, with cities able to develop spaces and places associated with different lifestyle choices. Cities can thus present a supportive environment to groups with specialist needs and interests, an aspect that may be especially valued by groups in later life.

Second, even in areas of high economic and social deprivation (such as those in the study by Scharf et al. 2002), older people may report a strong sense of identification with their community. In the Scharf et al. (2002) study of three districts in major cities of the United Kingdom (Liverpool, London and Manchester), three out of four respondents identified positive features about their neighborhood, with most of these commenting on the presence of good neighbors, friends, and family. More than three-quarters of respondents indicated that they had at least one friend in their neighborhood. Of those people with local friends, almost half had a chat or did something with a friend every day.

Third, rather than providing limited social support, urban environments may, as the above would indicate, offer assistance from a wider range of networks as compared with rural areas. Friendship networks, for example, appear to be especially robust in urban communities and may offer an important support mechanism for those who are single or widowed (Phillipson et al. 2000). Urban settings are of particular importance to migrant groups, especially in respect of access to special forms of cultural, social, religious and economic support.

Fourth, although much of the discussion thus far has emphasized the problems associated with urban living, this environment may also represent advantages for those moving into retirement. Ogg and Bonvalet (2007) make this point when examining residential preferences among the baby-boom generation (those born between 1945 and 1955) living in inner-city London and Paris. They highlight in particular the experience of those who chose to move to the city when starting their careers. Among this group are the "pioneers" of gentrification (i.e. house improvements) within inner-cities who benefited from the rise in property values associated with urban regeneration. Some in this group may well have "second homes" in the county, with dividing their time between the "the city" and "the country" becoming a preferred strategy to leaving the urban environment altogether. The city may thus retain its appeal for those who moved earlier in their lives from provincial towns or rural areas. Conversely, "local inhabitants", who were born in and who have spent most of their life living in and around a particular urban area, may be more divided about the changes affecting their locality. Nonetheless, even among this group, despite concern with changes in the population and the apparent loss of social cohesion, attachment to life in an urban environment appears strong (Ogg and Bonvalet 2007).

Constructing Age-Friendly Communities

Creating a better "fit" between urban environments on the one side and aging populations on the other is assuming some urgency within social policy. The WHO (2007:4) develops the point that "making cities more age-friendly is a necessary and logical response to promote the well-being and contributions of older urban residents and keep cities thriving". Equally, measures to support the inclusion of elderly people within cities must be viewed as a key part of the agenda for creating sustainable and harmonious urban environments. Implementing this agenda will, however, demand radical interventions across urban areas. A number of themes can be identified here:

- First, developing new forms of "urban citizenship" which recognize and support changing social needs across the life course.
- Second, understanding the dilemmas of the urban environment in terms of the changing needs of the body.
- Third, developing an age-friendly approach within the context of lifelong/lifetime communities.
- Fourth, ensuring the engagement of older people in the replanning and regeneration of neighborhoods.

The first argument concerns the need to link the discussion about age-friendly cities to ideas about urban citizenship and rights to the benefits which living in a city brings. Painter (2005), for example, cites the work of Henri Lefebvre, who explored issues relating to citizenship and rights in an urban context (see also Holston 1999; Soja 2010). Lefebvre stressed:

The use-value of the city over its exchange value, emphasizing that citizens have a right to make use of the city, and that it is not just a collection of resources to enable economic activity. The uses of the city by citizens should be seen as valid ends in themselves, not merely as a means to produce economic growth. The right to the city is the right to live a fully urban life, with all the liberating benefits it brings. [Lefebvre] believed the majority of city residents are denied this right because their lives are subordinated to economic pressures – despite being *in* the city, they are not fully *of* the city (P. 9).

This last point applies especially well to older people, who may find that despite having contributed to an urban world in which they have spent most of their life, it may present major obstacles to achieving a fulfilling existence in old age. On the one hand, cities are increasingly viewed as key drivers of a nation's economic and cultural success. On the other hand, the reconstruction of cities is often to the detriment of those outside the labor market, especially those on low incomes (see further below). Achieving recognition of the needs of different generations within cities, and exploiting the potential of the city for groups of whatever age, will be central to implementing an age-friendly approach.

Second, linking "age-friendliness" with "urban citizenship" also draws attention to changing needs associated with age, and in particular recognition of the frailty of the human body. Geographical perspectives on cities assert that "all urban dwellers have to negotiate the city *practically* [author's emphasis], and work through the dilemmas, problems, and possibilities of 'getting by' in the city" (Hubbard 2006:113). And feminist perspectives on the use of urban space highlight the way in which "women's spatial practice is constrained by geographies of violence and fear" (Tonkiss 2005:94–95). Such ideas, and the extent to which older people are to some degree "prisoners of space" (Rowles 1978), are especially relevant to aging in the city – both in global cities undergoing accelerated change and those cities facing deindustrialization. Both contexts raise dilemmas in the context of mental and physical vulnerabilities. Elderly men and women may experience difficulties "creating" space within cities. Global cities raise tensions between a "hyper-mobile" minority and those aging in place; deindustrializing cities (with shrinking populations) create problems arising from the withdrawal of an economic base which can maintain sustainable networks for different social groups. The challenge here then is creating an urban environment that supports the autonomy of the aging body and the equal rights of older people with others to a "share" of urban space. This issue will be especially important to implement at a local level, with a particular focus on improving the quality of urban design and promoting safety and inclusion as key features of urban living.

Third, some of the issues associated with the above are being developed through the ideas associated with lifetime communities and neighborhoods. In planning for lifetime neighborhoods Harding (2007:8) suggests the need to consider:

- Accessibility of the built environment.
- Appropriateness of available housing.

- Fostering social capital.
- Location and accessibility of services.
- Creating esthetically pleasing public spaces which promote a sense of place and social cohesion.
- Cross-sectoral integration and planning of services.
- Building intergenerational relationships by shared site usage.
- Better use of information technology.

Work by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) (2009:7) made the point that although mobility begins inside the individual unit or house, it must carry on throughout the entire built environment ". . . from inside the dwelling, down the street, and into the restaurant, theatre or store . . . continuously across the entire urban environment". This argument applies equally to all types of communities – suburban as well as inner and outer city. In relation to suburbs, for example, these have frequently been designed with families and commuters in mind, rather than the specific needs of older people and/or smaller households. There is scope here to explore the urban design implications of a different population mix together with neighborhoods that explicitly have a longer lifespan. Strategic guidance on urban design might be developed further to indicate how "lifelong" adaptability for an aging population can be built into communities from the start (Brook Lyndhurst 2004).

Fourth, a critical issue for an "age-friendly" approach concerns ensuring the involvement of older people in urban regeneration policies. A study in the United Kingdom by Riseborough and Sribjilanin (2000) found that older people were often "invisible" in regeneration policies. The problem here was less the absence of older people in consultations around policies, more an underlying "ageism" which viewed them only as "victims" of neighborhood change. Again, this goes back to the argument from Rowles (1978:216) of the "need to break free from prevailing social attitudes, which have served to alienate the elderly and to install within us a view of their lives as one of inevitable spatial withdrawal". Riseborough and Sribjilanin (2000) make the point that regeneration practice could benefit from the experience of older people, their attachment to their neighborhoods, and their involvement in community organizations. At the same time, there is also a need to develop urban regeneration strategies targeted at different groups within the older population, with awareness, for example, of contrasting issues faced by different ethnic groups, people with particular physical/mental health needs, and those living in areas with poor housing alongside high population turnover.

Obstacles to an Age-Friendly Perspective

Despite the benefits of applying an age-friendly approach, some critical questions also need to be faced to ensure effective implementation of such a policy. At the present time, discussions around age-friendliness have been largely disconnected from the pressures on urban environments in the Global North, where private developers remain the dominant influence on urban planning (Solnit and Schwartzenburg 2003; Minton 2009). The result, according to Harvey (2008:31), is that the "quality of urban life has become a commodity, as has the city itself, in a world where consumerism, tourism, cultural and knowledge-based industries have become major aspects of the urban political economy". Blokland and Savage (2008:38) argue that such processes are leading to a different type of urbanism, one that is "confirming rather than challenging inequalities within cities". The tension here is between the social needs of older people, as an increasingly important constituent of urban populations, and the pressures on public space arising from private ownership. This may lead to a distortion in provision in terms of meeting the needs of competing groups within the urban system (Tonkiss 2005; Minton 2009).

A second important issue concerns applying "age-friendliness" in a way that recognizes the complexity of the urban environment. The techniques for ensuring an age-friendly approach will vary considerably depending on the characteristics of urban change and development. While the trend towards urban living is world-wide, the pattern of urban growth demonstrates huge variation: shrinking city populations in the developed world (Europe especially); and accelerating urbanization in Africa and Asia, with both continents demonstrating a mix of rapidly expanding cities in some cases, declining ones in others (UN-Habitat 2008). "Age-friendliness" will also need to reflect the size of a city: The approach might, for example, be different in Europe where small cities with fewer than 500,000 residents are the norm, as compared with the USA where large urban agglomerations (with populations of between two and five million) are much more common. Securing "age-friendliness" in the context of the rise of "mega-cities" and "hyper-cities" (the latter with populations of 20 million or more) provide another variation. At the same time, processes for developing "age-friendliness" will need radical adaptation given the "slum cities" prevalent in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (UN-Habitat 2008). The bulk of population growth in these continents has taken place largely through the rise of slums, many of these located on the periphery of capital cities (Davis 2006). The problem of reaching older people and migrants who are "ageing in place" and housed in temporary accommodation bereft of basic facilities, underlines the need for new models of intervention which can respond to the highly unequal contexts experienced by the urban elderly across the world.

A third issue concerns linking the debate around environmental change with that concerned with urbanization and population aging. The vulnerability of older people in periods when urban environments are challenged through extremes of temperature has already been highlighted. But other problems may also be cited. Air pollution is a major hazard, especially in newly industrializing countries in the Global South. WHO estimates that more than one billion people in Asia alone are exposed to outdoor air pollutant levels that exceed WHO guidelines, leading to the premature death of half a million people annually. Older people, especially those with chronic health conditions – these exacerbated or caused by environmental degradation – will be among the worst affected in terms of their quality of life. Looking ahead, rising sea levels associated with climate change may bring particular risks for older people living in cities. Fourteen of the world's 19 largest cities are port cities located along a coastline or river delta. In Asia, the dominance of port cities is even greater; 17 of the region's 20 largest cities are coastal or on a river bank or in a delta. Many of the world's most prominent global cities (e.g. Mumbai, Shanghai, New York City) will be among the most exposed to surge-induced flooding in the event of sea level rise (UN-HABITAT 2008:141). The consequences for their substantial populations of elderly and very elderly people are immense, and will require detailed planning and assessment. Older people are especially vulnerable in periods of environmental crisis, with the potential for displacement from their home, from relatives, and services and support (Rodwin and Gusmano 2006). These aspects were clearly demonstrated in crises such as Hurricane Katrina in the USA (Bytheway 2006) and the 2003 heat wave in France (Ogg 2005). In both cases, elderly people were disproportionately affected compared with other age groups, but failed to receive the special help and assistance required. In these instances, environmental disaster undermined the ability of urban areas to respond quickly and effectively to the needs of their elderly habitants.

Conclusion

Securing age-friendly cities remains an important goal for economic and social policy. The future of communities across the world will in large part be determined by the response made to achieving a higher quality of life for their older citizens. A crucial part of this response must lie in creating

supportive environments providing access to a range of facilities and services. However, the research and policy agenda will need to change in at least three ways if this is to be realized: First, the issues raised by developing age-friendly communities within complex urban environments will require a more coherent link between research and policy than has thus far been achieved. Research on environmental aspects of aging has an impressive literature to its name, yet it remains detached from analyzing the impact of powerful global and economic forces transforming the physical and social context of cities. As remedy, this will require closer integration with developments in disciplines such as urban sociology, urban economics, and human geography. Understanding optimum environments for aging must be seen as an interdisciplinary enterprise requiring understanding of the impact on older people of developments such as the changing dynamics of urban poverty; the impact of urban renewal and regeneration; the influence of transnational networks; and changing relations between different class, gender, ethnic, and age-based groups.

Second, in keeping with the approach taken in this chapter, given the rapid changes affecting many urban areas, new approaches to understanding older people's relationship to urban change – and city development in particular – is urgently required. In particular, there is a strong case for more research in "urban ethnography" to capture the disparate experiences of those living in cities that are now experiencing intense global change and that are strongly influenced by complex patterns of migration on the one side and population aging on the other. Sassen (2000:146) pointed to the need for detailed fieldwork as a "necessary step in capturing many aspects of the urban condition" (see also Wacquant 2008); such work will be especially important for understanding the impact of urban growth on groups such as migrants aging in place, single people, and those on low incomes. Urban sociology was founded (through the work of the Chicago School from the 1920s) upon detailed studies of experiences of urban life, particular of disadvantaged and insecure people from different migrant populations. Ethnographies would bring to the surface the attitudes, motivations, and experiences of older people who are "ageing in place" and will deepen our understanding about the way in which cities are changing, and about the positive and negative contributions that the changes have on the quality of daily life in old age.

Thirdly, it might be argued that the benefit of thinking about age-friendliness lies more in its challenge to reassessing the values (and ideals) that might be nurtured within urban communities. From the 1960s onwards, writers such as Jane Jacobs (1961) and Richard Sennett (1970) argued the case for celebrating the diversity of city life. Giradet (1999:424) put forward his vision of the city "as a place of culture and creativity, of conviviality and above all else of sedentary living". In the United Kingdom, Richard Rogers and Anne Power (2000) developed a new approach to urban planning, one calling for a sharing of spaces for the collective good and for a reversal of the drift towards suburbanization. All of these – and similar ideas – are relevant to developing age-friendly cities and arguably need closer integration to the sociology of aging. Thus, despite the many obstacles to implementing this approach, its potential for reminding us of the values to be nurtured for harmonious city living are important and certainly relevant for building communities fit for populations of older people.

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