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Cross-National Perspectives on Ageing and Place: Implications for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities

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Conflict of Interest

None.

Abstract

Background and Objectives: The age-friendly cities and communities (AFCC) agenda has led to a range of policy initiatives aimed at supporting ageing-in-place for older people. Whilst there is case study evidence of how people age across urban contexts, there has been little research exploring cross-national understandings of age-friendly places amongst older people. The objective of this paper is to identify the place experiences of older people living across cities and communities in India, Brazil and the UK and to discuss implications for the AFCC agenda.

Research Design and Methods: A total of 300 semi-structured interviews were undertaken with older people across nine cities and 27 communities in India, Brazil and the UK. The data was analysed using thematic analysis undertaken by each national team and then discussed and revised at collaborative workshops with researchers from each of the three country teams.

Results: The data captures the ways in which place is constructed from the perspective of older people drawing upon social, community and cultural dimensions of ageing across diverse urban environments. We explore how older people negotiate place in the context of their everyday life and identify the relational and interconnected ways in which place attachment, belonging and identity is constructed.

Discussion and Implications: Age-friendly interventions need to attend to the changing physical, social and cultural dimensions of ageing and place. Integrated place-making practices are required to support older people to age in the right place across rapidly transforming urban contexts globally.

Keywords

Age-friendly cities and communities; Sense of place; Place attachment; Place identity; Ageing in place

Introduction

Gerontological research has identified the importance of economic, physical and social environments for older people and their centrality in understanding experiences of place (Robertson et al., 2020). In response to this, ageing-in-place has become a dominant policy driver, focused on how we can support older people to live at home in their communities (Wiles et al., 2012). Previous research has identified the home and community as environments which can enable positive outcomes in old age, where independence, participation and engagement can be realised (Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008; Vanleerberghe et al., 2017). However, as Sixsmith and Sixsmith (2008) argue, ageing well in place is not always possible if the home and/or community does not provide the opportunities to sustain a high quality of life in old age. Ageing in the right place, as Golant (2015) suggests is dependent on having the appropriate supports to age well, where the environment or setting needs be conducive to enabling social participation, civic engagement and inclusion.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) age-friendly cities and communities (AFCC) agenda has provided a place-based framework for supporting older people living in urban environments (WHO, 2007). This global development emerged through the involvement of older people based in 33 cities identifying a number of place-based themes that subsequently informed the scale of the network of AFCC alongside a diversity of approaches for developing age-friendly spaces and places (WHO, 2007, 2019). Consequently, the AFCC movement has been a key catalyst for enacting mechanisms to enhance the wellbeing of older people globally, built around shaping services and structures across eight interconnected domains: (1) the built environment; (2) housing; (3) transport; (4) social participation; (5) respect and social inclusion; (6) civic participation and employment; (7) communication; and (8) community support and housing services.

AFCC interventions and initiatives have addressed some of the key physical and functional aspects of place, alongside interventions to enhance social and community wellbeing including social participation and civic engagement (Beard & Montawi, 2015; Buffel & Phillipson, 2018; Lui et al., 2018). In application of the AFCC work, Buffel et al. (2018) identified a number of shortfalls, including the absence of research into experiences of ageing and place within and across local, regional and global contexts, particularly in parts of the world where resources are scarce and older people can encounter significant financial, material, social and other vulnerabilities.

This paper seeks to address that gap, by exploring the relationship between ageing and meanings of place amongst older people in India, Brazil and the UK. We use these experiences to draw out implications for how future AFCC agenda can better integrate the notion of place in age-friendly policy and practice.

Ageing and Place

Much ageing-in-place research has been driven by a model of person-environment fit which compares the person's physical and mental capacity with environmental demands and determines how these impact on the person's ability to perform activities of daily living (Lawton, 1983; Wahl & Weisman, 2003). This work has been influential in bringing the psychological and physical context of the home and neighbourhood to the fore in supporting positive outcomes for older people (Kahana et al., 2003). More recent developments in environmental gerontology have highlighted the interplay between person-environment resources such as experiences, belonging, and agency, lifecourse ageing and positive outcomes in old age, for example identity, wellbeing and autonomy (see Wahl & Oswald, 2010, 2016; Wahl et al, 2012, for a more detailed discussion).

In understanding the person-environment interaction in old age, there has been significant attention afforded to the social and experiential dimension of place and the way older people engage and negotiate their everyday environments (Rowles & Watkins, 2003). These have variously drawn upon concepts of place attachment, identity and belonging to describe the person-place relationship in old age (Gilleard et al., 2007; Woolrych et al, 2019, 2020). *Place attachment* has been defined as the affective, cognitive and behavioural ties that individuals develop with their local environment, accumulated over time and through place-based memories and associations (Brown & Perkins, 1992). *Place identity* has been used to describe the strongly held values (personal, social, community) that people ascribe to places and which are fundamental to development of 'self' (Winterton et al., 2016). *Place belonging* refers to the quality or state of being deeply established and entrenched within the local environment (Preece, 2020).

In extending understandings of place belonging, Relph (1976) characterised the concept of 'insideness', to describe feelings of attachment and involvement in the community. In applying this concept to older people, Rowles (1980) identified place insideness to be an outcome of the inter-related experiences of the *physical* (mastery of the physical environment), *social* (integration with the social fabric of community) and *autobiographical* (place as a reflection of self) dimensions of place. In such conceptualisations, place is seen as negotiated and constructed through an ongoing 'interaction' between the person and their environment, bound up in interpersonal and communal exchanges, actions and meaning which constitutes a fundamental part of 'being in the world' (Casey, 2001).

Further research has highlighted the importance of transformational environments in old age (Rowles & Bernard, 2013) and how everyday settings impact identity in later life (Peace et al, 2005). This had led to an appreciation of the dynamic relationship between

person and place in old age as it is shaped by "continually reintegrating with places and renegotiating meanings and identity in the face of dynamic landscapes of social, political, cultural, and personal change" (Wiles et al., 2012). This positions older people as positive and active agents in navigating and overcoming challenges in relation to changing selves, life circumstances and the environment (Vasara, 2015). In doing so, older people play a significant role in co-constructing home and community (Winterton et al., 2016) where understandings of place are continuously remade and reproduced through social and community practices and processes (Degnen, 2016; Woolrych et al., 2019).

The aim of this paper is to capture meanings of ageing in place across diverse urban, social and cultural contexts, highlighting the ways in which individual and community aspects of place and belonging inform each other in old age, and to discuss what this means for policy and practice regarding AFCC strategy.

Urban Transformations and Age-Friendly Cities and Communities

In meeting the challenges of ageing and urbanisation, cities and communities can provide significant benefits in terms of access to services, cultural and leisure opportunities and necessities for daily living in old age. Yet processes of urbanisation, driven by economic change and globalisation, can also create forms of exclusion and isolation, reinforcing social and spatial inequalities within and across communities, cities and regions (Phillipson, 2012). These inequalities can undermine access to urban infrastructure, creating housing vulnerabilities, and inequities in access to basic supports e.g. water and sanitation. Alongside this, changing lifestyles and mobilities have impacted on intergenerational ties, informal support networks and emerging transnational identities which have influenced perceptions and attachments to place for older people (Phillipson, 2012).

As countries selected for our research, India, Brazil and the UK are undergoing profound social changes driven by the challenges of an ageing population and patterns of urbanisation. In Brazil the proportion of the older population (60+ years) increased from 4.7 per cent in 1960 to 10.8 per cent in 2010 and is expected to reach 29 per cent by 2050 (United Nations, 2015). In India, adults over the age of 60 will comprise 19% of the total population by 2050, or approximately 324 million individuals (Agarwal et al., 2020). In the UK, 18% of the population are aged 65 and over, which is projected to increase to 26% by 2066 (ONS, 2018).

Urbanisation patterns in India, Brazil and the UK have led to spatial inequalities compromising access to resources, services and environments to promote a good quality of life (Agarwal et al., 2020; Turok & Mykhnenko, 2007; Szwarcwald et al., 2016). In Brazil and India, many cities are spreading outwards without provision of services and amenities, and with many older people living in highly vulnerable locations, the quality of the public realm does not always support the well-being of the ageing population (Adlakhar et al., 2020; Woolrych et al., 2020). Meanwhile, processes of urban regeneration and the 'rebranding' (the creating of new images of the city that show how the city has been regenerated) of the inner city have prioritised economic growth and commercial interests, which have challenged place belonging for older people (Buffel et al, 2012; Weil, 2019).

It is in these changing urban contexts that an understanding is needed of the ways in which place is constructed in old age and what this means for age-friendly interventions moving forward. In responding to this, we draw upon older people's ageing-in-place experiences captured across diverse cities and communities in India, Brazil and the UK, contributing to the knowledge base around how ageing is constructed and drawing out implications for AFCC.

Methods

This paper reports on findings from a five-year cross-national study in India, Brazil and the UK. The objective of the study was to gain an understanding of how older people construct sense of place with a focus on identifying opportunities, facilitators and barriers to the development of AFCC. We selected three cities in each country as the focus of our research: Delhi, Kolkata, Hyderabad (India); Belo Horizonte, Brasilia, Pelotas (Brazil); and Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh (UK) (see table 1 for profile of selected cities). The selected cities represented diversity in terms of urban density, ageing populations, and life expectancy. These ranged from comparatively denser urban environments in India, yet relatively smaller but rapidly developing ageing populations, to low density populations in some cities e.g. Brasilia in Brazil, alongside longer life expectancy and higher percentages of older populations in some of our UK cities e.g. Edinburgh. Within each of the cities, three communities were selected for qualitative data collection, based on income (low, medium and high), proximity to the city centre and ageing demographics.

The research design utilised multiple qualitative data generation methods, including face-to-face semi-structured interviews, go-along interviews and photo diaries (see project website, PLACE-AGE, 2021). The application of these methods allowed for different interpretations of ageing and place to emerge, for example, through go along interviews we were able to capture sensory aspects of place, whilst photo diaries allowed for everyday experiences of home and community to be documented. In this paper, we present findings from the semi-structured interviews undertaken in India, Brazil and UK. A purposive sampling framework was adopted for the interviews reflecting a diversity in age (60-69, 70-79, 80+) and household composition (living alone, living with a partner and living with a family member). A recruitment strategy was tailored for each community, which included

developing partnerships with key gatekeepers and service providers as well as targeting the inclusion of participants across ethnic and cultural groups.

Academic workshops (n=8) were embedded into the project, bringing together collaborators from India, the UK and Brazil within a transdisciplinary approach to extend theoretical development, achieve methodological innovation, enhance opportunities for coproduction and build skills and capacity across the research teams (Sixsmith et al., 2017) (see table 2 for workshop topics and aims).

A total number of 300 semi-structured interviews were undertaken with older people in: India (n=90; age 60-85; mean age 70, female 30%, male 70%); Brazil (n=108; age 60-92; mean age 73.3; female 66%, male 34%); and the UK (n=102; age 60-94; mean age 72.8; female 73%, male 27%) and these were evenly spread in number across the selected communities. Higher rates of participation amongst females in India was attributed to barriers to social participation amongst women, traditional male decision-making responsibilities within households and lower perceived societal status for women, particularly amongst old age cohorts. Semi-structured interviews investigated how sense of place is negotiated and constructed, everyday perceptions and experiences within the built environment, and the importance of specific social and cultural supports in enabling 'ageing well in the right place' (see Online Supplementary Material 'Interview Agenda'). All interviews were digitally recorded with the permission of participants with an average duration of 53 minutes, transcribed and prepared for full data analysis.

Protocols for reflexive thematic data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019) were drawn up with all international partners, which involved a combination of national team-based analyses followed by international thematic analysis workshops. Initially, each national team member familiarised themselves with a number of interview transcripts (working within their own language context), individually identifying meaning, coding segments of text

(sticking close to the original text and identifying underlying meanings) and then organising codes into patterns of meaning and labelling them. National team members then came coming together to discuss and justify the aggregation of codes, create a coding framework, and develop and refine potential themes. This process was repeated until all transcripts had been analysed. See table 3 for an illustrative example of theme generation.

The international analysis workshops (n=3) were informed by the deliberative dialogue method (Canham et al., 2018) involving the national teams coming together to discuss codes, and refine and finalise the themes across countries. This entailed translating a series of transcripts from India and Brazil into English, pairing researchers up from different countries, and discussing the coding framework supporting each theme. The codes and potential themes were then discussed by all workshop participants to allow for patterns, relationships, interconnections and 'silences' in the datasets to be explored across community, city and national contexts. This process of delving deep into the data was achieved within small group discussions where researchers from each country got together with the codes deriving from national analysis and discussed why each code was important and how it contributed to the developing themes. This enriched understanding of the shared aims of the analysis while highlighting social and cultural similarities and differences and identified silences in the datasets. For example, the role of religion in social participation was very different in each country, with religious observances underpinning experiences of home and community spaces and places in India but being less evidenced as part of social participation in the UK. After the three international analysis workshops had been conducted, a series of online thematic discussions were held to finalise themes and support report and article writing.

Full ethical approval for the project was gained through each of the national lead universities prior to the research commencing. Researchers were all fully briefed and trained

in conducting research with older people where practical and ethical issues were discussed and protocols developed. Written information sheets and consent forms were clearly communicated to older people, with particular care taken for those with low levels of literacy.

Findings

The findings are presented as three themes illustrating the cross-cutting ways in which ageing and sense of place within changing urban, social and cultural contexts is experienced: *place attachment, identity and ageing-in-place; place interdependencies and belonging in old age; and ageing in changing urban places.*

Place Attachment, Identity and Ageing-in-Place

Feelings of place attachment were of central importance to older people's experiences of ageing in the community. In forming a strong sense of attachment, everyday engagements in public spaces (e.g. micro-exchanges and civilities) created a sense of 'knowing place' and 'knowing others'. This provided a strong orientation to place, perceived mastery of the environment and a feeling of being 'looked out for':

> *Everybody knows everybody else. They've got their families here, and they know who they are. I think we feel safer because we know who we know. And we can walk the streets. We feel safe in our own community.* (Female, 82, Edinburgh)

> *I sit here in front [of my house], they [community residents] pass by, they wave at me. They are always looking out for me.... I know everyone, everybody knows me.* (Female, 79, Pelotas).

Strong place attachment was also reflected in the deeply held bonds that older people had developed within the community. Many reflected on their memories and associations of living in the community as an integral part of their place identity, signalling the role of the

physical environment as a storehouse of memories and influential in informing choices of where to age:

> *I have moved to lots of houses but never left the community…I love this place, I have a special feeling for the place. This is my ground, my soul, everything. This is the place for my establishment, my identification in old age…this place is just like a blood relation.* (Male, 78, Kolkata)

In some communities, particularly in India and Brazil, that sense of connection and belonging was formed around cultural and spiritual associations with place, providing a coping support network in old age, whilst encouraging a feeling of safety and security:

> *If we are not involved in a faith, I'll tell you, it's not easy, the importance of faith, to be able to continue, in old age...even though I'm here in a health sense, it's a challenging phase of old age, you need the faith to feel that sense of community.* (Female, 80, Pelotas)

However, there was widespread acknowledgment of the individual, social and cultural challenges in ageing-in-place. In India and Brazil, strong familial ties were being compromised by changing intergenerational relations, which were impacting on perceptions of home:

> *...in those days we had joint families where they used to take care of one another. But these days there is not that same sense of home. Our sons are staying far away so if anything happens to me or my husband, we have to look after each other.* (Female, 70, Hyderabad)

Understandings of ageing-in-place were seen as more than an individual's ability to remain living at home. Having a sense of place was fundamentally linked to the relational and networked ways in which place was negotiated and constructed in later life to inform positive outcomes:

Sense of place is the main thing for me as I get older. Ageing at home suggests to me, 'make me comfortable at home'…but if you don't know anybody anymore and you sit there, how is this creating a sense of community? If push comes to shove, you wouldn't have your network of people and community around you. (Male, 78, Manchester)

In summary, participants reported a deeply embodied unity with place arising from the psychological, emotional and affective ties to communities, revealing their importance in supporting AFCC. Understandings of place were firmly rooted in feelings of 'insideness' that arose from being 'part of' the community, formed through interdependencies with people and place.

Place Interdependencies and Belonging in Old Age

Place interdependency for many older adults was reflected through the physical, social and cultural activities and engagements that brought people together in communities. The nature of these activities varied, reflecting the importance of diversity of cultural backgrounds when interpreting age-friendliness. For example, in India, these often centred on the importance of religious and spiritual activities through which strong social support networks were oriented around:

One thing which we like here is that each and every resident is very helpful whenever anyone is in need. There is a Gurdwara [a place of assembly and worship] near our house where we have created a group to discuss the issues related to women's once a week. Simultaneously we also do Puja Path [recitation of religious texts], and we have a group of 12 to 15 ladies with us. (Female, 66, Delhi)

In supporting those social and cultural relationships in place, participants reinforced the importance of shared lifestyles and values in the local community, which created a sense of

citizenship and purpose in relation to AFCC. This recognition within the community was important for older people, a validation of their role within the community, as part of a wider sense of 'belonging-in-place':

> *It's the importance of being recognised and valued. Respect yes…but it's people recognising me for the valued role that I can play in the community. That's important to me. My role in society. That's the kind of belonging in the community I am talking about. This is what I can contribute, this is me and this is where I fit.* (Female, 81, Glasgow)

This sense of belonging and 'fit within the community' was also reflected in being able to call upon mutual support networks in the community in old age. These networks provided opportunities for older people to come together, receive the support they need, and to discuss and resolve community-based issues. This shared understanding and co-operation was central to the 'bonding capital' needed to support psychological and mental wellbeing in relation to place:

> *I can say for community…what is needed, is that we have to talk to each other and create bonding…the feeling that if anything happens, then the community is there. If we can support more older people…'if any problem arise you can call me'…it's the psychological or mental supports within the community that are important.* (Female, 69, Kolkata)

The analysis suggests that sense of belonging and insideness in old age is formed through a set of inter-related social, cultural and relational dimensions which are important in understanding what constitutes AFCC across national contexts. Central to feelings of place belonging amongst older people was recognition of their valued role in the community, and the existence of mutual support networks, which reinforced a sense of recognition and identity as key components of ageing in the right place.

Ageing in Changing Urban Places

Everyday urban environments often challenged AFCC, creating barriers to ageing-in-place. In some areas, particularly low-income communities, there was a lack of basic supports e.g. drinking water in India, poor transport connectivity in Brazil, and barriers in the built environment and high crime in all three countries which undermined the basic tenets of age-friendliness. Yet despite aspects of liveability being compromised, older people often retained strong emotional and psychological bonds to the community revealing the protective qualities of having a strong sense of place:

> *I feel attached to this place. However, there is nothing to be liked in Mehrauli. This area does not have basic facilities. There is lack of availability of drinking water. Transport facilities are very poor. If I go outside at night I feel insecure. Now Mehrauli is not a liveable place especially for older people but I still feel attached to the place.* (Male, 60, Delhi)

In other communities, especially in rapidly expanding urban areas in India, some participants reported how changing urban environments, modes of everyday living and a more individualistic approach to life, had compromised the ability for communities to 'come together', thereby eroding their sense of living in a 'shared place':

> *Different groups have come into the community and it's all changed. The people in our community were loving and affectionate. When there was a problem, they came together and solved it. Every individual here now is concerned more about his own life. Nobody is close… we barely know each other. Though we don't belong to the same family, we ought to be like a family as we share the common amenities of a community.* (Male, 84, Hyderabad)

For some, changing urban environments represented potential opportunities for supporting positive roles in old age. Indian and Brazilian participants reflected strongly on changing identities in later life in relation to agency and rapidly transforming urban environments. Individual, social and community resilience and adaptation is clearly indicated here as a route to successful ageing-in-place and essential for AFCC:

> *The population of the Mehruali area is increasing rapidly. Differences have enlarged between younger and older people. Everything is changing with the passage of time... Firstly, I would like to tell older people, the people who are in my age group that we can adapt to these changes. You need to adapt to the community as you get older. Positive adaptation is no bad thing and key to success in old age.* (Male, Delhi, 71)

Forms of urban development and change were a common feature of older people's stories across all locations even if the scale of transformation was radically different. For example, this could relate to the closure of local amenities in the UK, while in India, environmental, social and cultural change related to the privatisation of public space has led to feelings of disconnection from place, undermining ownership and attachment:

> *The Lajpat Nagar area has become commercialized. There has been the illegal encroachment of roads and footpaths and so on. Although it is here in the whole of Delhi but here it is more prevalent. There has been an occupation the streets, claiming occupied pieces of land...it's part of an illegal drive. This is creating problems for older people.* (Male, 71, Delhi)

In trying to retain a sense of ownership in shaping urban environments, sense of place was strongly connected to having a voice and influence in civic groups and was a strong aspect of what constituted an age-friendly community. There was a recognised need to come together and increase the collective power of older people in order to bring about positive change in the local community:

When you have a problem, there are very few people, you know. When you are alone, it is terrible. You see something wrong, like the trash thrown down, the playground with long grass...Then you call the city hall, they just leave you there. You are no one. While, as an association, at least you will be heard in some instances. (Female, 60 years old, Belo Horizonte)

Yet many older people felt they lacked the political capital, power and decision-making capabilities to shape AFCC in ways they desired:

We are stuck in a political atmosphere here. Interests and decisions are politically inclined...We have tried to ask for things to be changed but our priorities are not necessarily shared. To expect something to change or even thinking about it becomes meaningless because the voice of the older person is not a priority. (Male, 84, Hyderabad)

Changing urban environments had profound impact on the place experiences of older people in our sample and were central to perceptions of age-friendliness. Rapid urban transformation can on the one hand create opportunities for positive change, a re-emergence of place, resilience and a re-constructed sense of self which participants were keen to emphasise. Yet, in doing so, participants also pointed towards the need for a greater voice and inclusion in shaping urban environments in age-friendly ways.

Discussion and Implications

The findings in this paper build upon and raise specific implications for the WHO AFCC agenda. Since 2007, the WHO AFCC agenda has contributed to the development of age-friendly environments globally by informing research, policy and practice initiatives to enhance physical and social spaces and places to support older people. It is important to note that AFCC approaches are evolving rapidly in different global settings and contexts, creating

varied health and social outcomes for older people (Buffel and Phillipson, 2018). In responding to this, Buffel et al. (2018) outlined a 'manifesto for change' in the context of AFCC initiatives, identifying a number of considerations for the international age-friendly movement, which we respond to: urban complexity and challenging inequality; prioritising place in AFCC; embedding place in multi-sectoral collaboration; and participation, citizenship, and rights.

Urban Complexity and Inequality

In acknowledging urban complexity, our paper contributes to counterbalancing the narrative of AFC work that has emerged largely in the Global North with older people's perspectives from a range of diverse cities across the developing world. Whilst our research identified commonalities in some of the ways in which place is experienced across cities and communities, the mechanisms through which place is constructed in old age vary across settings and are influenced significantly by urban transformations, changing mobilities in relation to place, cultural interpretations of age-friendliness and environmental and psycho-social barriers to place participation. At the same time, lack of supports within urban environments such as inadequate access to basic services and infrastructure, compromise place-making for older people, speaking directly to the need to challenge inequality. For example, in our lower income communities in India and Brazil, many lacked access to basic amenities including clean water, shelter, and access to public space. While this could, in part, be counteracted through social and relational networks and the building of individual and more collective community resilience, lack of access to and control within dominant power structures meant that ground-up transformative change at a community level is difficult to achieve. In delivering more inclusive AFCC interventions, there is a need to design supports which recognise the changing contexts of older people's lives in relation to changing urban

environments, which prioritise addressing inequalities and inequities in access to services and community resources for, but more particularly with more vulnerable older adults.

Prioritising Place in AFCC

In extending theoretical understandings of ageing and place, our findings revealed the experiences of older people to be bound up in interconnected and collective cultural and social processes in relation to ageing-in-place. Culturally, the narratives of ageing and place differed across cities, in the everyday ways in which place was constructed and the forms of participation and engagement that older people undertook. Whilst previous literature has emphasised individual and collective narratives around ageing in the community, and the relational aspects of ageing (Andrews et al., 2013; Peace et al., 2011), the intersections between physical, social and cultural associations of place and the differing ways in which older people experience attachment, identity and belonging have not been strongly considered in AFCC interventions. This includes an under-appreciation of the historical significance of place, and how lifetime memories and associations build place meanings in old age. Our research suggests that failing to consider the ways in which the cultural, social and physical aspects of place come together to inform the development of AFCC, particularly in the developing world, are likely to be reductive and fail to address ageing-in-place as it is expressed and lived. Here, the notion of embodied interdependencies and connectedness offers a way towards considering AFCCs in more psycho-social and physical dynamics, whereby deteriorating bodies and health status transform experiences and meanings of place, impacting the sense of place 'insideness'. Understanding AFCC in terms of co-constituted person-place unities is important here (rather than as separate entities affecting each other), mediated through individual re-negotiations and community co-negotiations to achieve balance across the person-place continuum.

Embedding Place in Multi-sectoral Collaboration

Third, our findings suggest that AFCC interventions need to reflect the more nuanced and mutually reinforcing ways in which understandings of place and community are negotiated in old age. In arriving at interventions, communities have often been compartmentalised as individual 'settings' in the lives of older people, treating the home, outdoor spaces, community amenities, as fixed and discrete spaces; a criticism that has been noted in the literature (Clark et al., 2020; Lewis & Buffel, 2020). This may undermine the fluid, interconnected and complex ways in which place is experienced, across settings, often in negotiation with various types of social and cultural support networks, in relation to multiple places. Age-friendly interventions need to closely consider the interdependencies between people and place/s and the co-constituted way in which place is developed across different settings. This will require a change in perceptions and approaches, in cultivating new ways of working amongst practitioners, one that sees sense of place as embedded in interdependent and relational ways (physically, socially and culturally), requiring a cross-cutting and integrated place-making approach to AFCC.

Participation, Citizenship and Rights

In terms of participation and engagement, many of our participants identified the importance of representation in the AFCC agenda, identifying the need to challenge power imbalances to ensure the political representation of older people in driving forward AFCC interventions particularly in the developing world. Some participants reflected on how urban transformations may offer significant opportunities to recreate and renegotiate new meaningful roles in old age which cast older people as valued members of society, and to develop forms of active citizenship within their communities. Yet realising these

opportunities requires the structures and supports for older adults to assume productive roles in 'making and re-making' their sense of place within the context of AFCC including through greater involvement in effecting change at a policy and practice level. Whilst there is evidence of successful models of participation and engagement emerging from AFCC in the Global North (Buffel et al, 2016), further work is needed to explore the political, institutional and governance frameworks that are needed across the developing world to ensure the voices of older people are central to influencing and delivering change towards a more inclusive AFCC that recognises the rights of all older adults to age well and challenges patriarchal dominance. This rights based agenda needs to be embedded into city strategies and policy making e.g. through design, implementation and evaluation of AFCC interventions as well as involving older people in shaping what those rights are in the context of rapidly changing urban contexts.

Conclusions

The AFCC agenda is driven by a place-based approach to change focused on supporting ageing-in-place amongst older adults. Whilst this had led to significant initiatives at the individual, community and city level, there has been the absence of cross-cultural and cross-national understandings of place. This study has identified the importance of place in the lives of older adults across diverse cities and communities in India, Brazil and the UK, identifying the interconnected relational, social and cultural connections which support place, identity and belonging in old age and drawn out implications for AFCC. Globally, changing urban contexts have challenged the ways which place is understood, negotiated and produced in the lives of older adults. AFCC policy and practice moving forward needs to be shaped around the complexities of changing places and environments, particularly if they are to have impact on the lives of older people living in communities.

There are some limitations in the work we undertook which highlight the need for further research. We did not, for the purposes of this paper, comparatively analyse experiences across communities and levels of income, although we did specifically consider issues arising within disadvantage communities where resources and services were poor and indicated these in our findings. We also did not explore how experiences of ageing and place differ across subcategories of ageing such as gender, age, health, mobility, marital status, ethnicity and faith, yet recognise that these impact on place experiences, particularly in countries such as India where faith is important in the lived experience of place insideness and provides a context for resilience to ageing.

Lastly, in reflecting on the challenges of cross-national research, this project involved a partnership of twelve academic institutions, bringing together multi-disciplinary expertise (urban planning, gerontology, health and wellbeing, architecture, psychology, social policy) and bridging diverse cultural and language traditions within and across three countries and nine cities. This was particularly complex and challenging when applying methods, and in interpreting the research findings and experiences of ageing in place across contexts. In overcoming this, in our cross-national workshops we engaged in deep discussion on the emergent findings, ensured researchers within countries were in a position to lead on data generation and analysis, to adapt methods in relation to cultural contexts, and to create the space to discuss and share cultural understandings of place which were deeply situated in religion, language and traditions. Here we point to the need for further research to explore working in cross-cultural ways, and to identify implications for theory, method and application in the field of ageing and place.

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Table 1. Selected city profiles

Country and City	Total population	Density (people/km²)	Total older adults (aged 60+)	Male/Female (% aged 60+)	Life expectancy
Brazil [a]					
Pelotas	343,651	204	49,794 (15.2%)	39.5%; 60.5%	75.6 years
Belo Horizonte	2,513,451	7,167	299,177 (12.6%)	39.6%; 60.4%	70.5 years
Brasília	2,977,216	445	198,012 (7.7%)	42.6%; 57.4%	77.3 years
United Kingdom [b]					
Manchester	555,741	4,805	71,575 (12.9%)	46.8%; 53.2%	78.3 years
Glasgow	635,640	3,640	119,489 (18.8%)	44.3%; 55.7%	76.1 years
Edinburgh	527,620	2,003	106,916 (20.3%)	45.2%; 54.8%	79.9 years
India [c]					
Delhi	20,571,000	13,862	1,903,000 (9.3%)	51.6%; 48.4%	75.4 years
Hyderabad	10,269,000	15,798	1,129,590 (11.0%)	46.4%; 53.6%	71.8 years
Kolkata	6,112,874	29,660	690,754 (11.3%)	51.0%;49.0%	73.8 years

[a] Source: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (2021). Mid-Year Population Estimates, mid-2016. Retrieved from https://www.ibge.gov.br/

[b] Source: UK Office of National Statistics (2020). Mid-Year Population Estimates, June 2021. Retrieved from https://www.ons.gov.uk/

[c] Source: Census India (2021). Population Projections for India and States, 2011-36. Retrieved from https://censusindia.gov.in/

Table 2. Cross-national workshops

Workshop No.	Topic	Purpose	Outcome
1	Developing sense of place within AFC theory	Co-developing conceptual understandings and application of theory across national contexts	Enhanced understanding of theoretical positions. Emergence of shared theoretical framework
2	Participatory qualitative research	Sharing and co-designing ethical approaches to undertaking participatory and qualitative research	Cross-cultural understandings of ethics as applied to older people. Co-design of participatory framework for the study
3	Shaping methodological tools	Co-designing methods to take into account the different national and cultural contexts in the development of research instruments	Appreciation of the cultural sensitivities to qualitative, visual, and creative methods. Adaptation and development of specific methods
4	Research reflexivity	Sharing research perspectives on collecting data in the field including challenges and opportunities across national contexts	Reflection of role of positionality across research contexts. Practical identification of challenges/opportunities for 'being out in the field'
5	Doing cross national thematic analysis	Approaches to analysis of qualitative research, reading the data and interpretation	Cross-cultural understandings of older people's experiences. Shared coding schema and framework for cross-national analysis
6	Delivering impact and knowledge moblisation	Developing and identifying pathways to impact and dissemination for the research	Knowledge mobilisation plan for co-designing outputs and translating knowledge within and across communities, cities, and countries

Note. AFC = age-friendly community.

Table 3. Illustrative example of theme generation

Codes	Meaning	Quote Examples
Theme: Place familiarity and insideness		
Place insideness – knowing community/mastery	'Staying where you know'. Perceived mastery of the community. Opposite of estrangement	*"The community is known to me. It's about people and places. If I was to move I'd have to go through it all again. The 'I don't know anybody, or I don't feel I belong here'."*
Place familiarity – feeling recognised	Forms of recognition through everyday exchange of civilities with others. Recognised as a person	*"I know each and everyone here. They're very close to me. So, I definitely have a different kind of emotional attachment with the locality and people of the locality. Everybody is known. Every face is known."*
Place familiarity – stability and safety	Place stability. Everyday routines/continuity of place makes me 'feel safe'	*"They say this community is deprived and not safe to walk around. But I do my thing, I keep busy, I know my community. It's that make me feel secure. I can walk around here at 3 in the morning."*
Place insideness – shared lifestyles and values	Shared lifestyles and values within the community. Feeling 'part of' the community	*"There has always been a collective togetherness here. A solidarity. A set of things we all share and show respect to each other. It's being part of something bigger than me as an individual."*