



Ageing in communities and territories

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This issue contains papers in British and American English, so some words are spelled differently.



foreword

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Global demographic trends are now well documented, highlighting an unprecedented ageing of the population. In 2022, the number of people aged 65 and above already exceeded 770 million, and will reach over 1.6 billion by 2050. With the numerical growth of these populations, the proportion within the total population will also rise significantly, from 10% to 16% over this period (UN, 2022). At the same time, human populations are becoming massively concentrated in and around cities. With an additional 2.5 billion people expected to live in urban areas by 2050, a host of initiatives are being launched around the world to adapt the way we design and shape our living environments (UN, 2018).

These transformations on a global scale make it even more important for specialists in the field of ageing (sociologists, demographers, epidemiologists, economists, etc.) and those working in the field of spaces and territories (geographers, urban planners, architects, etc.) to take a multidisciplinary approach. Given the sheer scale of the phenomenon, it is essential to bring these different perspectives together at a transnational level.

This special issue of the journal *Retraite et société* is set against this backdrop. It features a selection of international scientific papers that have contributed to the dialogue on the challenges of adapting territories to ageing, some of which are taken from the double thematic issue *Ageing and territories: Demographic challenge, democratic issues* published in 2017 and 2018. These two issues highlighted the diversity of spatial configurations accommodating ageing populations and the resulting multiple experiences of advancing age. In this respect, the challenges of matching demographic dynamics with social responses in terms of spatial planning were at the forefront of the papers. A first concern was the increased attention to national and international mechanisms aimed at shaping the day-to-day living environments of older adults. A second focal point explored the different ways in which the voices of older adults are taken into account as “full citizens”. This is one of the key areas for ageing policies in the 21st century. Following the industrial revolution and the development of the welfare state and social insurance, policies on old age are gradually evolving to incorporate a more holistic approach to advancing age. The aim is to conceive ageing policies as a means to support multiple life paths, placing inclusion, citizenship and health at the heart of the political project. Following in the footsteps of the international benchmarks set by the United Nations and the World Health Organisation, the development of living environments is emerging as a major new challenge for ageing policies.

In keeping with this reflective approach, this issue of the journal features five international scientific papers. It begins with contributions from **Jean-Philippe Viriot Durandal, Thibault Moulart, Marion Scheider-Yilmaz, Suzanne Garon and Mario Paris**, who compare how France and Québec are gradually structuring the way in which the voices of older adults are taken into account. Two levels are studied: institutional schemes for consulting older adults on the one hand, and local implementation of the World Health Organisation’s “Age-Friendly Cities” initiatives on the other. The paper identifies two relatively distinct structuring models. While France has since 1982 organised the recognition of the voices of older adults in a centralised manner, with links between the various levels of political decision-making, the latest reform in 2015 seems to have resulted in a disconnection between the central and local levels, calling into question the ability of older adults to advocate on their own behalf. This phenomenon can also be seen in the management of the “Age-Friendly Cities” programme, which was initially abandoned by the central government but adopted by several towns and local players. For its part, Québec, with the generalisation of its provincial programme in favour of “Age-Friendly Municipalities” has put into place a partnership that is both multi-level (particularly between the provincial and local levels) and multi-sectoral (researchers, political decision-makers, professionals, civil society players and older people themselves), thus developing a configuration close to a genuine interface in favour of the citizenship of older people.

While the Age-Friendly Cities approach is not the only one to focus on the citizenship of older adults, its international scope nevertheless makes it possible to bring together a range of ideas presented by **Tine Buffel, Samuèle Rémillard-Boilard and Chris Phillipson** on the relationship between ageing and urbanisation. This paper sets out a programme of research and public action around the concepts of “age-friendly cities” and “age-friendliness”. The authors briefly outline the origins of the age-friendly cities approach, before delineating the pressures and forms of exclusion experienced by older people in urban areas. After demonstrating the importance of the theme of “attachment

to place” in research, Buffel and her colleagues set out five priorities for their agenda: taking account of changing and complex urban environments (for example, the emergence of “grid cities” in Asia and Africa, or areas affected by climate crises); taking account of older adults, in all their diversity, as actors in the transformation and regeneration of cities; paying attention to the primacy of neighbourhoods and communities; taking account of the relationship between the body and public space, particularly of ageing bodies that are weakened; and finally, taking account of the diversity of ageing ethnic groups and their specific needs.

Although the major interest of this approach in terms of adapting societies to ageing is now indisputable, the need to pay attention to the diversity of socio-spatial morphologies in defining responses to the needs of older populations must also be emphasised. In this respect, it seems that the voices of those most affected – older people – can also provide some original insights. With this in mind, **Sébastien Lord, Paula Negron-Poblete and Michel Després** consider the limitations of a generalised model such as the “Age-Friendly Municipalities” approach in Québec, given the range of morpho-functional characteristics that characterise the territories. Drawing on a typology of urban residential forms based on six Québec administrative regions, the authors mobilise the views of older adults through focus groups with people living in these areas. This applied research sheds light on the different practices and relationships that older adults have with their residential environment, leading the authors to propose a number of issues in terms of regional planning and development.

By observing a specific residential form, **Hervé Marchal** invites us to examine the relationship between ageing populations and the areas in which they live. To do this, he opened the doors of a French suburban neighbourhood in which he carried out fieldwork between 2013 and 2015. Using a range of qualitative data gathered through a series of semi-structured interviews, focus groups and observations, combined with micro-local quantitative data, the author attempts to understand why this suburban neighbourhood, which at first glance is not very conducive to the experience of ageing, is nonetheless “experienced as a village with a soul”. Throughout his analysis, he sets out the identities of the Pruniers neighbourhood, which can represent both “a territory of associative commitments and a place of sociability with multiple scenes” of everyday life. Leaving aside the “over-smooth” notion of space, Marchal draws on these strong identities attributed to the district to demonstrate in an original way the powerful ties that bind residents to their neighbourhood.

Finally, after anchoring the discussions in the heart of Western countries, the issue closes with a paper by **Muriel Sajoux and Enguerran Macia**, who examine the challenges that African countries are meeting in the face of ageing populations. Noting the variability of demographic and economic contexts on the African continent, the authors highlight the importance of combining different levels of observation. Using data from major surveys and supranational organisations with a secondary analysis of qualitative data collected as part of research projects carried out in Senegal, the paper uses different territorial scales to “highlight the way in which territorial disparities influence the variability of ways of ageing in Africa”.

Faced with the global phenomenon of ageing populations, this issue presents a diversity of international experiences, some of which highlight the challenges of involving older adults in the social production of their communities. It is a continuation of the debates initiated by the WHO in the first place, and by the International Study Network on Age, Citizenship and Socio-Economic Integration (Réiactis) since its creation in 2006, and, more recently, at the 6th International Congress of Réiactis in Metz (France). The next highlight will be held in Montreal from 4 to 6 June 2024 at its 7th international conference on *Life courses. Envisaging the plurality of contexts and times*. In this context, we hope to inspire readers to develop or pursue research and practices that are attentive to the plurality of socio-spatial frameworks and the dynamics of population ageing.