

# PLACE BELONGING MEMORY

## ATTUNING SENSES OF PLACE

- By 2020 urban areas in notionally developed countries are likely to have around 1 in 4 of their populations aged over 60
- Age-Friendly Cities aspire to create an inclusive and accessible environment for all
- Despite these successes, the universal checklist approach of the Age-Friendly guide can be limiting
- There is a large variation in older people's lived experiences which are shaped by a variety of personal, social, cultural, economic, political and economic factors
- In order to begin to address these overlooked factors, councils need to look beyond the Age-Friendly Guide to tune their plans to people and places
- Memory, belonging, attachment and sense of place are increasingly important to older people
- This research mobilises the theoretical ideas of 'relationality' and 'more-than-representational thought' to respond to this gap and to cultivate methods attentive to diverse needs

## SETTING THE SCENE

It is more important than ever for older people to feel a sense of place in our cities. The world's population is ageing: by 2030, for the first time, there will be more over 65s than children under 9. With older urban citizens emblematic of the future, policy-makers have turned their focus to envisioning what a more Age-Friendly City might look like.

Despite the successes of the Age-Friendly City Guide, to become universally applicable, the quirks and individualities of people and their cities are necessarily overlooked. With adherence to these Age-Friendly principles emerging as a badge of civic pride, it is pivotal that we do not forget to look critically at these local specificities.

## WHAT WILL MY RESEARCH DO?

This research will examine relational understandings of place in the context of the Age-Friendly City. Through the development of a participatory methodology, it will draw on recent innovations within more-than-representational and relational thought to develop research attentive to the embodied and habitual nature of

lived experience (Anderson and Harrison, 2010). In developing policy-relevant knowledge that will extend academic debate and methodological innovations, this research will make three principal contributions:

1. Respond to an empirical gap in research on the geographies of ageing. This is vital given the significance placed upon lived experience and relational understandings of place.
2. Develop participatory methods that place older people at the heart of research design and practice, noting that developments in age-appropriate methods have tended to focus on children (Barker and Weller, 2003).
3. Interrogate current policy comprehension of 'age' by accounting for its lived and embodied dimensions.

## HOW WILL I DO IT?

Although this research is interested in understanding the relational experiences of place across Greater Manchester; the town of Bury serves as the starting point for this research. By developing a range of participatory methodologies, the research will accommodate differing needs.

**Group Discussions** will be held to gain insight into the relationship between people and place. Conversation will be stimulated by archival cartographic, videographic and photographic material as well as interactive mind-mapping.

**Photo-Walks and Video** will be used to encourage participants to reflect, think and focus on the unfolding significance of place. Participants will use cameras to capture anything they deem to be significant in relation to their sense of place. Mini-cams will be fitted to capture the on-flow of experience for researcher reflection.

**Packs and Go-Alongs** are for those with limited mobility. A collaboratively assembled pack will be given to participants containing maps, a note pad, a selection of photographs, and a pen to take home and discuss with friends and family. This will provide insight into individual life-course histories.

**Reflective Discussions** will be conducted for participants to share their diverse experiences.

**Collaborative Output** is the goal of this research. A number of possibilities are being explored: the production of a collaborative collage or scrapbook, exhibition, website or memory boxes to donate to a local care home.

## References

- Anderson B. Harrison P (2010). The promise of non-representational theories. Ashgate.  
 Andrews GJ. Chen S. Myers S (2014). The 'taking place' of health and wellbeing: towards nonrepresentational theory. *Social Science and Medicine*, 108 (1), 210-222.  
 Barker J. Weller S (2003). "Is it fun?" Developing children centred research methods. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 23(1/2), 33-58.

