Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: Anglia Ruskin University

Unit of Assessment: UoA 16 Architecture, Built Environment and Planning

Title of case study: Case Study 1: Enhancing national and international spatial planning policies to improve the independence and quality of life for older people

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

We have contributed, nationally and internationally, to a changing approach, content and implementation of planning policy by including the needs of our ageing society in streetscape design, to address the requirements of older people, benefitting their independence, welfare and quality of life. In the UK 23% of the population is projected to be aged over 65 by 2035, according to the Office of National Statistics (2010). Our focus upon the needs of an ageing society has been adopted as part of the skills and knowledge development agenda in sustainable planning through the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI). Tools have been developed, policy informed and reformed, and our findings included in a House of Lords report on assistive technology for older people.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

Previous research revealed that 'ageing in place' – growing older in familiar environments – masks cognitive and physical decline. Little was known about how older people cope in unfamiliar environments. Key findings included the recognition that environmental unfamiliarity arises when familiar places become unfamiliar not only because of cognitive decline but also through urban regeneration, and when older people travel to new places, regardless of the purpose of travel. The research identified positive and negative environmental 'triggers' that affect older people's experience of unfamiliar spaces, allowing interventions to mitigate the effects of negative triggers and augment the positive triggers.

Quantitative and qualitative research methods assessed older people's experiences of unfamiliar environments with adapted quantitative measures of older people's reactions to urban design quality and walkability. Using samples living in the Swansea area, unfamiliar with Colchester in north-east Essex (and vice-versa), the study trialled 'visitors' to each location. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from participants through interviews conducted in conjunction with viewing video images and routes of the familiar and unfamiliar towns, using a 3D virtual environment simulation. A subset of the participants also visited the unfamiliar town centre and met local older residents and the local authority planning and community development staff. The research established that:

- The environment is less stressful and anxiety-inducing for older people when outdoor spaces are designed to be easily navigable and walkable.
- Buildings and landmarks, especially historic structures, are important as navigational aids.
- The input of older people is central to understanding how a sense of place, attractiveness, and meaning in the built environment can be developed. The research shows the relevance of shared memories of events and situations to particular places and buildings.
- Signs are of limited use in unfamiliar and new areas. They are often positioned incorrectly (too high, for example), and lack essential content such as indications of distance or walking time to the destination.
- Gaps exist in planning practitioners' understanding of the inter-related elements of older people's relationships with the built environment. This may impede development of locally-appropriate age-integrated environments, and may be addressed by training and CPD activities.

The research began in 2007 and was carried out at Anglia Ruskin University by Co-Investigator Ann Hockey (Senior Lecturer from 2006), Carlos Jimenez-Bescos (Senior Lecturer from 2008) and Ian Frame (Senior Lecturer from 1977, Reader since 1993).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

The following papers have been published in international peer reviewed journals, and reflect the multi-disciplinary nature and wide applicability of the research.

Hockey, A., Phillips, J. and Walford, N. (2013). 'Planning for an Ageing Society', *Planning Practice and Research*, 28 (5), 527-543. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02697459.2013.820039

Phillips, J.E., Walford, N.S., Hockey, A.E., Foreman, N., Lewis, M. (2013). Older People and Outdoor Environments: Pedestrian anxieties and barriers in the use of familiar and unfamiliar spaces, *Geoforum*, 47, 113–124. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2013.04.002

Phillips, J., Walford, N., and Hockey, A. (2011). 'How do unfamiliar environments convey meaning to older people? Urban dimensions of placelessness and attachment', *International Journal of Ageing and Later Life,* 6 (2), 73–102. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.3384/ijal.1652-8670.116273

Hockey, A. and Spaul, M. (2011). 'Older People in Unfamiliar Environments: Assimilating a Multidisciplinary Literature to a Planning Problem', *Local Economy,* 26*,* 236-245. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0269094211404615

Walford, N., Samarasundera, E., Phillips, J., Hockey, A., and Foreman, N. (2011). 'Older people's navigation of urban areas as pedestrians: measuring quality of the built environment using oral narratives and virtual routes', *Landscape and Urban Planning,* 100 (1-2). 163-168. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2010.12.006

Hockey, A., Jimenez-Bescos, C., Maclean, J., and Spaul, M. (2010). *'*Skills and Knowledge Building for Sustainable Communities', *Town Planning Review,* 81 (5), 523-540. Special edition on Planning for Sustainable Communities. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.3828/tpr.2010.20

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The research has had direct impact on spatial planning through its inclusion in the continuing professional development of planners. A number of meetings have taken place between ARU

researchers and planners, including the East of England branch of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI – see 5.7) to raise awareness and implement policy change. Internationally, the research has informed the Local Government Association of Queensland, Australia, in its Healthy Communities Project (see 5.3).

The research has been incorporated in training, CPD materials and Professional Development workshops with planners and related built environment professionals from the East of England. A number of workshops have directly resulted from the research. For example, 'Planning for an ageing population' Norfolk and Suffolk planning skills workshop (Norwich, 2010) and Essex planning skills workshop (Chelmsford, 2010) attended by 59 practitioners. Additional content relating to housing design for older people was added to the second event. The research and analysis of quantitative material formed an integral part of the evidence base for the development of the Colchester Better Town Centre Plan adopted by Colchester Borough Council in 2012 (see 5.9).

The research has impact on housing, transport, leisure and urban regeneration policies, with information and good practice from the research disseminated via the project partner website by Older People and Ageing Research and Development Network (OPAN Wales - see 5.5). Practitioners and policy makers from the Welsh Assembly attended the OPAN Policy Forum and seminars in partnership with OPAN. The findings stimulated debate to further progress research impact and contributed to the development of policy documents around mobility, usability and accessibility. This included the 3rd Strategy for Older People in Wales. Additionally, linkages made with the Foundation for Assistive Technology (FAST), throughout the project, led to inclusion of the findings in a House of Lords report on assistive technology for older people (see 5.1).

The OPAN research was further developed through a Knowledge Exchange project ''Care in Business' in conjunction with Swansea University. Assisted Technology plays an increasingly important role in maintaining independence and quality of life for older people. It is seen as part of a solution to the preventative social and health care agenda for policy makers. Our research addressed a number of innovative issues around data collection and visualisation, including the application of information and communication technologies (geographical information system (GIS) based navigational tools and virtualisation) to assist older people's interaction with the built environment. This has led to capacity building in methodological and technical skills for gerontologists using GIS techniques, which has led to new spatial aids, and has been disseminated through major geo-information industry networks such as GeoConnexion (see 5.8).

The reach of this work has extended beyond the UK to include Queensland, Australia (Local Government Association Healthy Communities Project – see 5.3), and Montreal, Canada (Centre Urbanisation Culture Société de l'Institut National de la Recherche Scientifique – see 5.2). By incorporating our research findings in continuing professional development portfolios and networks, impact has been achieved through the raising of awareness of environmental gerontology throughout health and social care professions. Our research team has developed new networks with other disciplines beyond the project. For example, with architects in an environment and gerontology network project; Inclusive Design for Getting Outdoors (I'DGO) and the International Association of People-Environment Studies (IAPS).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Department of Health, House of Lords report on 'Research and development work relating to assistive technology 2009-10'. Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 22 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-and-development-work-relating-to-assistive-technology-2009-10

2. Professeur titulaire, Centre Urbanisation Culture Societe.

3. Local Government Association of Queensland, LGAQ Healthy Communities Project Bulletin, April 2011
    https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CC8QFjAA&url=https%3A%2F%2Flgonline.lgaq.asn.au%2Fc%2Fdocument_library%2Fget_file%3Fuuid%3D42b2cc78ccc459bba74f395a70ed57bb%26groupId%3D10136&ei=KUN6UuOUL4mr7AbMloGQCA&usg=AFQjCNEzLIqZMi6nW6kg1lVzHZOKYYBetw&sig2=jSrhdBmXbBaZZNEqALrz5g

4. UK Clinical Research Network Study Portfolio
    http://public.ukcrn.org.uk/search/StudyDetail.aspx?StudyID=4907

5. OPAN Director – Professor of Gernatology

6. National Senior Living Partners Network (NSLPN), 28 December 2010, "Better Spaces for Older People" http://nslpn.com/blog/category/assisted-living/page/115/

7. Royal Town Planning Institute President (2010). Instrumental in overcoming the issues of an Ageing Society through RTPI events
    http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/559208/19_sept_2013_with_form.pdf

8. GeoConnexion, 'New spatial aid for disabled and elderly'
    http://www.geoconnexion.com/news/new-spatial-aid-for-disabled-and-elderly

9. Planning Policy Manager, Colchester Borough Council.

10. Colchester Borough Council, Older people's use of unfamiliar space (OPUS), New Dynamics of Ageing Findings 4. Available at: www.colchester.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=8325&p=0