



IC - (21035) - BUILT ENVIRONMENT PERCEPTIONS: HOW OLDER PEOPLE DECODE OUTDOOR PUBLIC SPACES

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Background and objectives

When UN released the “Global Age Friendly Cities: A Guide” in 2007, the concern around ageing people and their needs was evident. As the world ages, the built environment requires special attention in order to assist this growing part of the society. An age-friendly city demands an inclusive design that includes e.g. green spaces, safe pavements and safe pedestrian crossings. Also, mobility in cities and new forms of transport as bicycles and electrical scooters demand the update of urban design guidelines and urban policies.

The goals of this study are to provide an overview of existing literature regarding emotions and perception from older people related to the exterior built environment by mapping these publications according to several criteria.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

For doing so a scoping review was performed using articles in several scientific databases. Searched articles include publications after 2007 (the release of the UN guide) and related to studies involving people at least 60 years old and quantitative analysis methods.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

This review collected evidences from the perceptions of older people when in contact with the outdoor built environment. Studies reported basic emotions (e.g. fear, wellbeing, joy) and, space perceptions (e.g. walkability, accessibility) regarding the built environment as sidewalks, street, gardens, and outside furniture. Our study reinforces the importance to analyse older people perceptions regarding the built environment in an interdisciplinary approach so that architects, urban planners and decision makers have information on what are the design solutions that fit the elderly people needs.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

Considering the challenge to build a smart and inclusive city, where older people can access attractive and safe spaces and are safe from discrimination practices as ageism, this research also connects within the current contemporary pandemic moment, aiming to public spaces appropriation as a space to build social cohesion and provide wellbeing.