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Chapter 10

From representation to active ageing in a Manchester neighbourhood: Designing the age-friendly city

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Introduction

This chapter explores what it means to use a 'capability' approach to designing an age-friendly city and its potential for offering new ways of designing, producing and occupying physical and social environments that respond directly to the lived experiences of older people. Drawing on an interdisciplinary collaborative research/design project that has informed the development of Manchester's Age-friendly City and Communities (AFCC) programme, it describes a community engaged, urban design research project conducted in the Old Moat area of the city in 2012. The project's aim was to explore the applicability of AFCC design guidance within a specific urban neighbourhood. The chapter focuses on the dynamic

relationship between the research and design elements of the project. It examines how the process of discovering and sharing information about the lived experience of older residents' translates into the development and implementation of age-friendly activities and interventions ('design') intended to make a neighbourhood more appropriate to the needs and desires of its older residents.

Capability, design and active ageing

In urban studies, 'capability' models offer new ways of understanding and engaging with the relationship between cities and individual potential and action (Nussbaum, 2011). They focus on the *abilities* of individuals to influence the wider world around them rather than identifying or representing 'users' of the city according to general categories of disability, race, gender or age. Capability models are at the root of critiques regarding normative, 'universal' or 'inclusive' design approaches to disability and age (Boys, 2016). Such models are central to current conceptions of cities and citizenship in urban studies (Robinson, 2011) and architecture (Rawes, 2013). Moreover, they offer, as this chapter argues, a valuable way of rethinking approaches to age-friendly design. A capability perspective does not consider 'the city' either generally or abstractly 'age-friendly'. Instead, it argues that specific groups of older people in the particular places that they live must not only actually experience a city to be age-friendly but much be *actively instrumental in making this the case*.

In this way, a positive, 'capability' reading of age-friendliness (the distinctive and central feature of the research/design project discussed in this chapter) places the WHO's concept of 'active ageing' at the centre of its relations between research and design activity, the local community and its older residents. Here, as the WHO concept of active ageing suggests, the potential of age-friendliness becomes defined by the *ability* of older people to *influence* and *control,* individually and collectively, the impact of the eight age-friendly domains on their experience of living in the city (see also Chapters 2 and 11).

Capability in an age-friendly Manchester: the case of Old Moat

In 2012, Southway Housing Trust (a community based housing provider and social enterprise that owns and manages half of the stock in the area) commissioned the Age-friendly Old Moat[i] project in partnership with Manchester City Council's Age friendly Manchester' programme (AFM). Led by the PHASE Place-Health Research Group at the Manchester School of Architecture and the Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research into Ageing (MICRA), the project formed part of a broader programme of work undertaken by groups working together with the local authority to align the AFM Ageing Strategy with 'citizenship' or 'capability' conceptions of ageing (Hammond et al., 2012; see also Chapter 12)[ii]. Following conceptual principles and practical design guidance of the WHO AFCC programme, the basic remit of the project was to work with the local community to make the Old Moat neighbourhood more age-friendly. Its two main objectives were: first – via research – to discover what makes the area age-friendly (or not) and how to make it more age-friendly; and, second – via design – to instigate actions and processes to make it more age-friendly.

By using expertise from architecture, urban design, sociology, gerontology and community development, the Age-friendly Old Moat project examined both the social and physical aspects of the neighbourhood, and adopted a capability approach to thinking about the design and development of age-friendly neighbourhoods. Its interdisciplinary research and design team took a multi-faceted approach to community-engaged urban design research in order to explore the dynamic interaction between the social and physical determinants of age-friendliness across the WHO domains (see Chapter 2). Crucially, this approach worked to enable the development of interventions that would increase active ageing, improve individual experiences of age-friendliness and improve resident involvement in

decision-making in the neighbourhood - in an area previously without an enduring, constituted group of residents or tenants of any age.

A central part of the capability approach involved: the co-creation of a neighbourhood 'action plan' together with both residents and institutional stakeholders; increasing resident participation in the project; and improving engagement between residents and city stakeholders (e.g. transport and service providers). The development of an 'action plan' enabled the project team to not only gather information about older residents' lived experiences of the various WHO domains of age-friendliness, it also stimulated a collective debate about the translation of such findings into practical proposals for interventions. In this way, rather than adopting a conventional process of 'consultation', the co-production of this action plan enabled older residents of Old Moat to be active in designing a programme of improvements that responded to their actual experiences of the neighbourhood. A range of resident activities, instigated during the project, continue at the time of writing, and the capability methodologies are now being tested at a larger scale elsewhere in Greater Manchester. The relationship between the capability model, the WHO age-friendly city principles, and work in the Old Moat neighbourhood is summarised in Table 10.1.

General Models of difference	*WHO AFCC principles*	*Old Moat project relationships*	*Manchester City Council Ageing Strategy categories*
'Capability' *Relation between city and individual seen as constituting the nature of the city as it is experienced and its capacity as a body*	*'Active-ageing'* *The WHO Age-Friendly City diagram of the determinants of Active-ageing list social, economic, behavioural, personal and physical factors within a wider context of culture and gender* *(WHO 2007: Fig 3)*	*'ACTIVE'* Older residents determining the positioning of benches through the active cultural appropriation of these territories	*'Citizenship'* *E.g* *Neighbourhood and city* *Social capital and participation* *Age-proofing* *Reducing exclusion* *Changing attitudes*
'Social' *Individual is seen as part of a network or community where multiple kinds of relations to others are seen to interact to influence an individual's ability to perform both social and physical functions (not just the relationship between their body and the physical environment)*	*'Age-friendly City'* *The WHO Age-Friendly City topic areas which are determinants of how well an individual age are represented as eight petals making up a flower at the centre of which is the individual experience of an Age-Friendly City* *(WHO 2007: Fig 6)*	*'INVOLVED'* Insights into older resident's lived experience is shared and communicated with a range of stakeholders impacting on understanding and decision making	*'Care'* *E.g* *Customer* *Networks* *Care* *Vulnerable* *Prevention of care provision*
'Environmental' *The relationship between the physical dimensions of a body and the physical environment are seen as primary factors for deciding on or locating 'interventions' designed to improve the experience of the general population of people understood to belong in specific, assigned categories*	*'Disability threshold'* *The WHO guidance explains how changes to the physical environment can lower the threshold at which it becomes inaccessible, especially as people grow older* *(WHO 2007: Fig 4)*	*'REPRESENTED'* Older residents are more or less consulted through a reductive process which then 'stands in' for any further involvement	*'Medical'* *E.g* *Patient* *Individual* *Clinical* *'Frail'* *Prevention of hospital entry* *Health*

Table 10.1 Table showing proposed capability model in relation to the Age-Friendly Old Moat project.

Research and design: from representation to involvement to activity

Building on key principles around active ageing and coproduction, the project presented here defines 'age-friendliness' as both a *collaborative* and a *spatial* enterprise. This means that the ambition to produce urban conditions, amenable to a diverse ageing population, requires the development of highly *collaborative*, cross-disciplinary approaches that build on the active participation of different groups of older people. Moreover, to ensure that these various relationships are sufficiently focused to propose effective interventions, a *spatial* understanding of the locality is also needed. For example, while transport is a city-wide issue which appears to be central to making cities accessible and age-friendly, everyone is affected differently, depending on the journeys they actually desire and are able to make between their private home, their neighbourhood and the activities available to them.

This chapter revisits the Old Moat project and describes the way in which the programme was able to evolve a *capability approach to age-friendly design* as the project moved, firstly, from processes of *representation* (representing the experiences of local residents) to, secondly, processes of *involvement* (actively involving older people in the existing structures of decision-making in the area) to, thirdly, *activity* (enabling, in certain instances, older residents to actively determine the emerging character of their own neighbourhood).

Each of the subsequent three sections describe the project via its distinctive research and design perspectives. These two distinct perspectives are made explicit in order to demonstrate how a capability approach to developing age-friendly neighbourhoods

implies a parallel, situated development of both knowledge (*research*) and action (*design*).

Beyond representation

From a *research* perspective, this section argues that relying on untested representations (by architects or urban designers) of the use of urban spaces – developed independently of the actual lived experiences of its residents – can create misleading assumptions which may frustrate neighbourhood-based interventions. To illustrate this, from a *design* perspective, a traditional intervention that attempted to transform the use of a particular site in the Old Moat estate (the 'gateway') will be discussed to show how such interventions may not necessarily respond to older residents' lived experiences.

Representation and research

As observed above, the 'city' is traditionally represented by architects and urbanists through what can be defined as a 'top-down' processes (see figure 10.1). A typical urban design approach might begin by examining maps of an area in terms of certain components such as 'routes' or 'landmarks', identifying 'key' features of the environment which impact on the users of the city. This kind of analysis, however, is usually undertaken independently of any real exploration of the lived experiences of the residents, or those frequently present, in the neighbourhood. While such processes can be highly instructive, this method predominantly understands the relationships between, for example, housing, services and infrastructure based on an *imagined* (by the designer) rather than actual experience of the area.

In contrast, and following critiques by Boys (2016) and Lawton (Regnier, 1983), the Old Moat project team attempted to develop a more explicit and socially 'involved' approach that focused on how *citizens*, as opposed to professionals, might

interpret their relationship with the environment, both in physical as well as in social terms (White, 2017; see also chapters 11 and 12).

Following Petrescu (2009), DeCerteau (1984) and Robinson (2011), a 'neighbourhood', in this project, is not simply defined as an area on a map, but rather as a territory that can only be produced by those who actually live there, relative to the capabilities that they have to 'produce' that territory. In this respect, the Old Moat approach examines the 'neighbourhood' as the practical involvement of individual capabilities and desires to access and contribute to the resources of the city, rather than as an abstract representation *imagined* by designers.

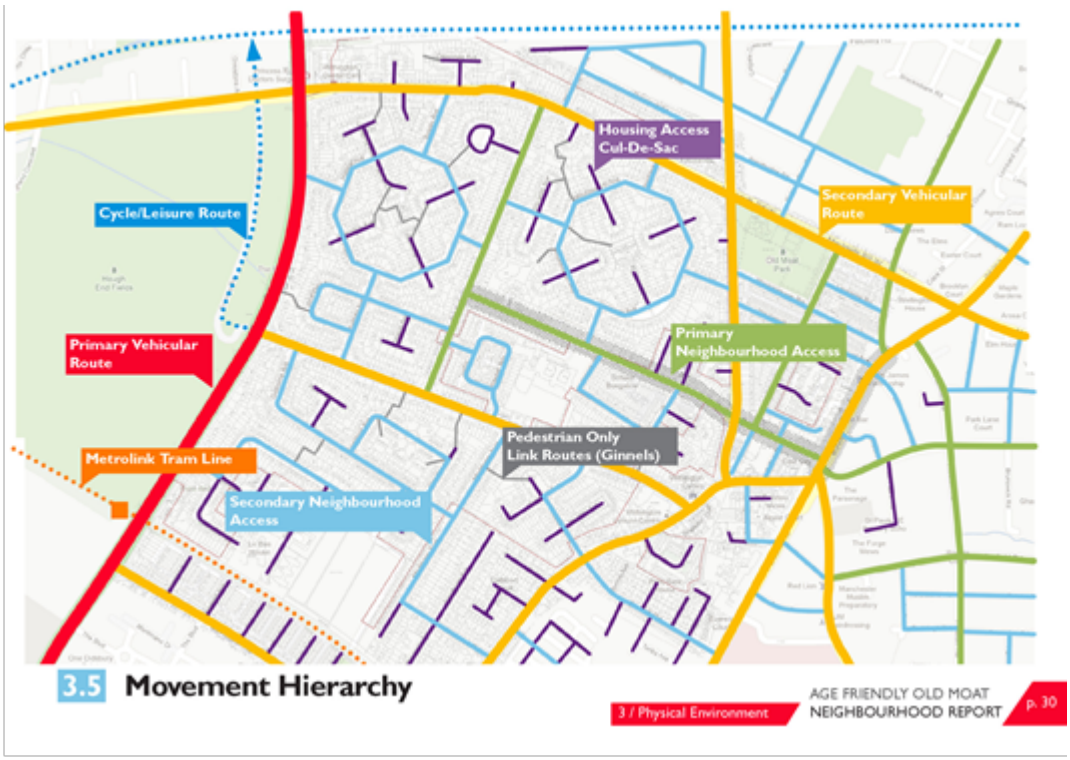

Figure 10.1: Old Moat 'Movement Hierarchy' map following the format of the 'Image of the city' Source Hammond et al.(2012)

Whilst the Old Moat research project started with a typical, formal, desktop analysis of the physical urban environment, this methodology was only used as a starting point from which to begin engagement with residents. The initial desktop analysis followed a traditional representational, 'Image of the City' methodology which

understands the legibility of urban environments by identifying a hierarchy of ‘nodes’, ‘boundaries’, ‘routes’, ‘districts’ and ‘landmarks’ (Lynch, 1960) (See figure 10.1 for an example of the kind of analysis performed). There was a specific presumption made, though, while undertaking this work, that older residents living in Old Moat would travel to Manchester city centre for services, rather than using the smaller, less well-resourced local shopping precinct. This appeared to be a sensible assumption to make at the time, given that the city centre was served by frequent bus routes and was only a short distance away. However, through various engagements and interviews, it became clear that the actual city experienced by older residents of Old Moat was at least, partially, created or defined by their own personal relationship with transport services, location, and their desire to meet with others. Indeed, local older people tended to travel to district centres in surrounding towns rather than into Manchester City Centre. Figure 10.2 shows the difference between the project’s initial assumptions and the key features of the actual reported transport use. This changing understanding of the city space in turn changed the project’s design responses.

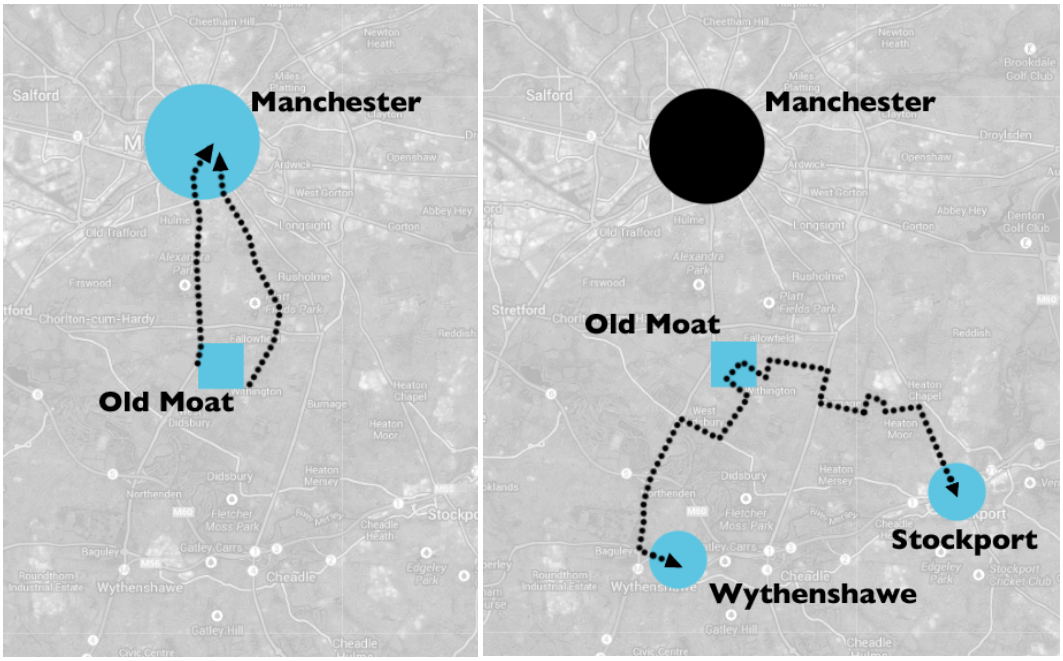

Figure 10.2: Primary transport use for older residents in Old Moat assumed through formal analysis (left) and actual reported transport use.

Representation and design

Shortly before the Old Moat project began, Southway Housing trust had identified a street corner within Old Moat (shown in Figure 10.3) as an important intersection in the neighbourhood. It was described as a 'gateway' to the local estate and had been made subject to a series of environmental improvements. The focus of these landscaping works had been on creating a generally improved perception of the physical environment of the 'gateway', rather than directly attempting to create a space that would be used by groups of people. This intervention was prompted by reasonable (representational) presumptions about the area, in particular a need for benches and a desire to make it feel less 'run down'. These desires and needs were then allied to a programme of 'consultation'.

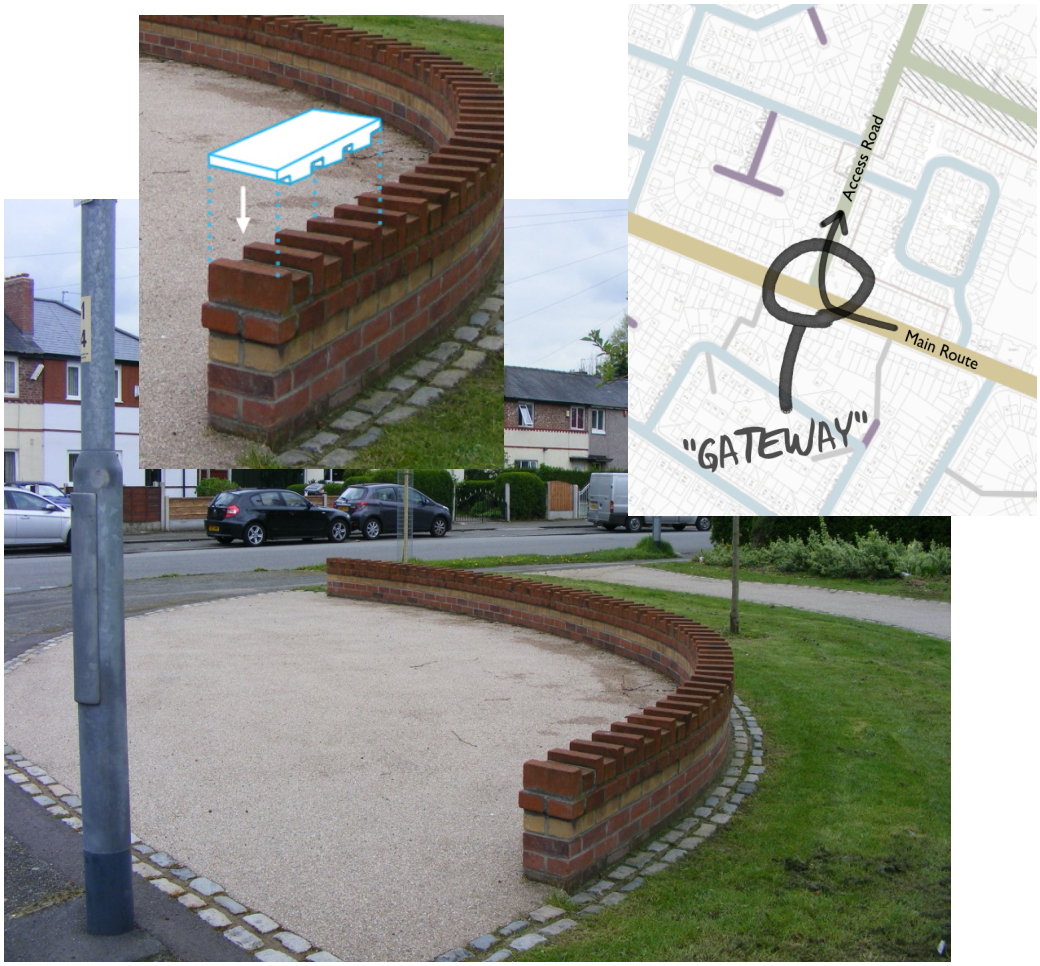

Figure 10.3: Photograph of 'gateway 'with insert map showing it as a junction of 'access' and 'primary' routes and inset diagram showing placing of concrete capping

Although the WHO AFCC Checklist of essential features of an Age Friendly City (WHO 2007a) identifies the provision of benches as a key urban design resource for age-friendly cities, many older people (along with other residents) voting against the provision of benches through the consultation process, fearing that they might attract anti-social behaviour[iii]. The response to the consultation was, therefore, to remove benches from the proposal and change the design of the 'gateway' to low walls specifically designed to discourage sitting. In this instance, traditional

'consultation' restricted the 'involvement' of older residents to the limited power and ability to reject proposals made on their behalf even though those proposals did not necessarily respond to their actual lived experience. To broaden the discussion, it would be worth noting that many local public spaces in Manchester and all around the UK have seen benches removed due to concerns about anti-social behaviour or simply lost through the privatisation of public spaces. Whilst the WHO AFCC guidance recognises the involvement of wider issues such as 'maintenance and security' in the age-friendly nature of a 'bench', design is not typically assumed to have a role in enabling the creation of situations where actual benches can come to be used in actual neighbourhoods (see further below).

Involving older people in locality research and design

The key argument developed in this section is that a capability approach to understanding the age-friendliness of a neighbourhood requires the development of collaborative working. From the *research* perspective, it describes how the project moved to a more participatory 'involved' approach, using a range of spatial and coproduction methodologies to explore the different WHO age-friendly domains (see Chapter 2). From the *design* perspective, this section returns to the 'gateway' site, and describes how older residents came to take ownership of a space that they had previously rejected. Furthermore, it shows how, through the project's 'involved' approach with older residents, the representational understanding of the use of public spaces in the neighbourhood was not just *revised;* rather, it was *reversed*.

Involved research

Although the WHO AFCC guidance lists the eight age-friendly domains as 'interrelated factors' affecting the relative age-friendliness of a city, each of these 'determining' factors represented by each of the eight domains are generally assumed to be related to the work of individual disciplines. This was apparent within the Old Moat project, where there was, at least initially, a common assumption

among the various stakeholders (from planning, transport to public health executives), that architects and urban designers primarily address the domains of 'Housing' and 'Outdoor Space and Buildings' (see also Chapter 11).

To ensure that the project did not limit the discussion of what enables or prevents age-friendliness and active ageing to purely physical or medical needs, however, the project worked explicitly and simultaneously across several of the WHO AFCC domains. This information from each of the domains was then synthesised geographically. This enabled the project to consider the interaction between all aspects of the research (physical environment, statistical, interpersonal and survey data) in the context of the specific urban environment within which it is located. Figure 10.4, for instance, shows how specific issues arising from interpersonal and spatial data sources were recorded on a map dedicated to the domains of 'Outdoor Space and Buildings' and 'Social Participation' for example. This exercise was also undertaken for the other domains.

Figure 10.4: Drawing showing separate recording of issues related to the domains of outdoor space and buildings, and social participation, which are integrated into the action plan. Source: Hammond et al (2012).

This process of synthesising research information was a key feature of the project's research report and its methodological toolkit. It featured in project presentations to stakeholder groups as well as in the project's final executive summary report (Hammond et al. 2012). In this report it is possible to see how the project is broken down into a range of different research approaches that were summarised both in terms of each of the studied domains but also as an integrated 'action plan' map addressing all of the domains.

The project used a range of different research techniques from analysing the 'physical environment' using 'spatial analysis' to conducting 'interpersonal research'. Firstly, analysis of the 'physical environment' involved a survey of the area with plans and sections drawn for every road type, these presented alongside photographs and house type plans to record the character of the physical environment in different parts of the neighbourhood. This allowed for the recorded information to be related at a later stage to the lived experiences of older residents. It also allowed for analysis of different types of public space and non-residential buildings in the area to be recorded in an 'asset mapping' analysis. This provided a 'spatially located' activity schedule: a vital baseline document for discussions about the role that these locations played in the lived experiences of residents and service providers, recording events and issues as well as contact and access information.

Secondly, interpersonal research within the project took on a variety of forms, including street market stalls, organised workshops, focus groups, peer-to-peer interviews and 'participation diaries'. Each of these sources was analysed to identify specific issues related to the various domains. For example, through the medium of structured interviews, questions were asked about transportation, how people moved around the area, where they were going and what activities they undertook (and with

whom). These answers were then related back to the domains of Transport, Outdoor Space and Buildings, Social Participation and Communication. Where answers were relevant to multiple domains they were recorded under each. Where possible, issues were related to precise places and then located on a 'domain map' – a map specific to each age-friendly domain. These domain maps also recorded key issues discovered through spatial data analysis. This involved, for instance, presenting census data to show the location of the poorest, oldest and least mobile older residents relative to the assets identified in the Outdoor Space and Buildings domain. The Transport domain map explored this in terms of existing transport provision while the Social Participation map recorded issues in relation to the same locations from the perspective of social activities.

Each of these maps identified all the issues, or 'determining' factors of relative age-friendliness, relevant to a specific domain. These maps were subsequently brought together into a larger, community-owned 'action plan' as a 'co-produced' product of a longer process of analysis that had taken place through a range of stakeholder workshops. To facilitate these workshops, the domain information was presented in a manner that kept the project's analytical assumptions and findings as explicit and accessible as possible. This enabled them to be analysed both at the time and later by all stakeholders. In this way, each domain map identified key issues both in relation to the places where these issues were found to occur and in relation to any related evidence from the spatial data, interpersonal research or physical environment analysis. Each of the key issues recorded on each domain page were interrogated in terms of evidence supporting its inclusion, possible precedents for dealing with it, the impacts reported or observed and then, finally, actions to be considered in response were suggested for discussion (see figure 10.5).

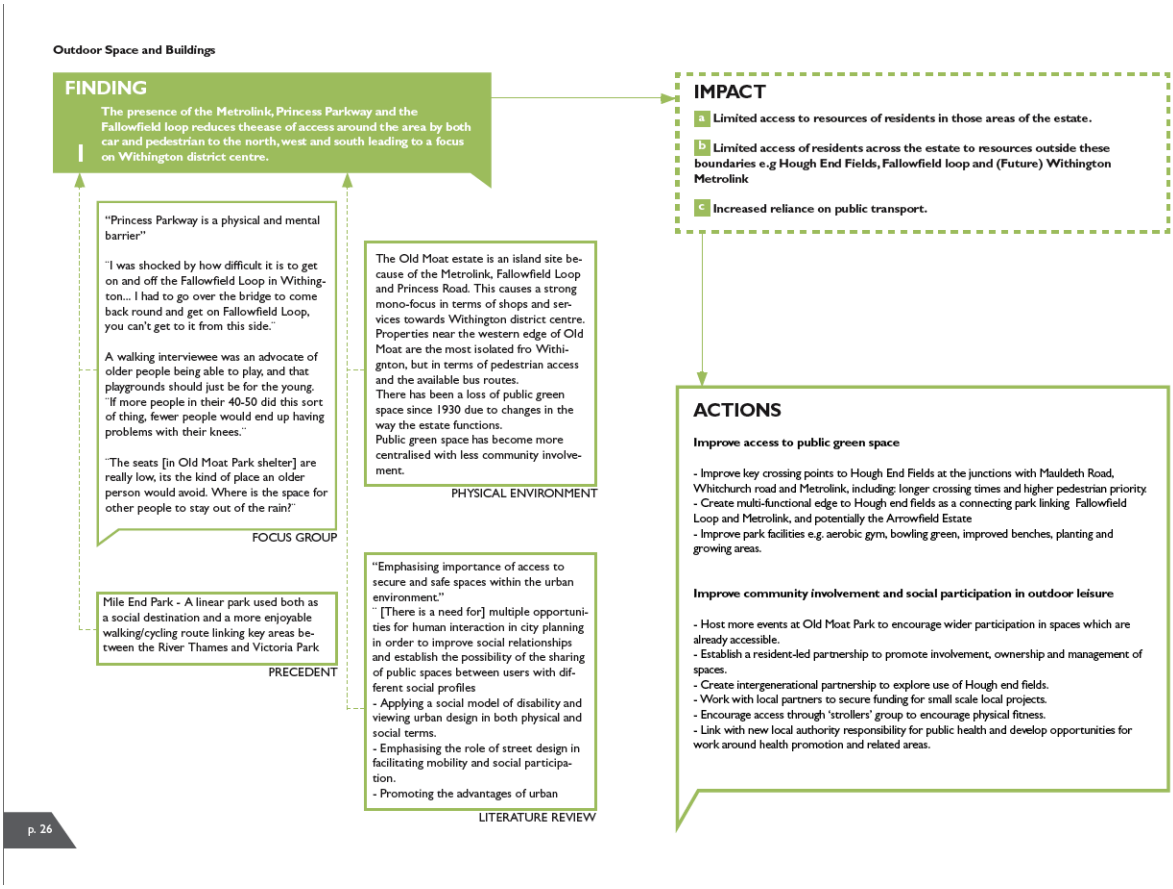

Figure 10.5 Image of action plan page exploring Finding 1 from the Outdoor space and buildings domain. Evidence supports issue identification which is related to evidenced impacts on resident experience and then mapped onto potential actions. Source Hammond et al. (2012)

This approach was a deliberate attempt to retain a decision-making trail so that in the future actions could be evaluated against a specific issue and in relation to evidence identified for a particular intervention. Moreover, the 'spatially located domain analysis' and 'action plan' were tested and developed together with residents and other stakeholders through workshops where emerging themes on the key 'issues' for each of the domains were discussed and agreed; possible responses were explored, and, finally, sets of actual actions were jointly agreed and prioritised.

This process enabled us to synthesise the analysis across and between domains, exploring the lived experience of different groups of older people relevant to an identified place. It was through this process that the project - via geographical analysis of census data- found that the socio-economic distribution of residents in the area had led to an increase in numbers of the poorest, least mobile and oldest residents living in the most remote part of the estate. Similarly, it was through this process that the project discovered that physical boundaries on the sides of the neighbourhood – a major road next to a non-residential area and the local district centre at its eastern edge – led to a mono-directional access for services. Findings from the focus groups and walking interviews further suggested that local older people tended to travel to larger district centres in surrounding towns rather than into Manchester City Centre.

Taken together, these findings challenged the project's earlier formal, representational assumptions about the relationship between the urban form of the area and the use of the transport infrastructure by residents. With this multi-faceted, interlocking approach, the project team gained insights into the complex reasons for this 'unexpected' behaviour to create positive, collaborative, responses.

Involved design

Following the completion of environmental improvements to the 'gateway' of Old Moat, Southway Housing trust started to recognise that despite rejecting proposals for the installation of benches, older people in the area continued to gather at the 'gateway' which served as a popular stopping place for the 179 bus . Although this service had been designed to stop whenever requested along its route, older residents were responding to the process of readying and waiting by gathering in particular locations. At the 'gateway' site, people were using the walls as seats whilst waiting for the bus. Subsequently, to facilitate these informal sitting gatherings in rhythm with the bus service (see figure 10.3), the housing association arranged for a

flat concrete 'cap' to be placed over the 'castellations' on a section of the low walls (protrusions made of brick which had previously been introduced to prevent people sitting on the walls that look like the defences on top of castle walls). Here, Southway's continued involvement with the residents enabled them to avoid making presumptions through an abstract representation of a situation. Instead, they were now able to respond directly to evidence of the actual spatial practices of residents.

Active research and design

This section shows how the project attempted to go beyond *representation* and *involvement* to create an *active* increase in the capabilities of older people within the neighbourhood. A key feature of an 'active' relationship is that older residents act to produce both knowledge of what makes an area age-(un)friendly as well as what might make it more age-friendly, acting to design and implement actions to achieve those aims. From the *research* perspective, the co-production of an action plan with proposals for interventions that are specific, co-produced and spatialised is discussed. From the *design* perspective, it demonstrates how spaces like the 'gateway' site, which had previously been informally claimed by older people, can become actively produced and formally occupied by the older community.

Active research

The interpersonal research and the urban design analysis revealed that the 179 bus service was viewed as a vital part of the urban 'form' of the area, influencing subsequent proposals for physical improvements discussed at the workshop events. In the first instance, the service was considered important because it intersected the estate, travelling through it, rather than along its boundaries (like the more frequent bus routesinto the city centre). Moreover, the project uncovered several unexpected features of the service, which might be understood as enabling active ageing. Despite, for instance, being a hail and ride service with no designated bus stops to be found along its route, residents, nevertheless, created informal 'nodes' where they

were able to congregate to wait for the bus together. The bus, which only runs hourly, has been shown, in this way, to have taken on a facilitating social role because of its active and regular use by a familiar social group. In this sense, residents can be seen to have independently and creatively produced both the bus and the gathering spaces as social territories.

Active design

The 'gateway' where older residents had previously rejected the provision of benches before the project started, has, along with a series of other spaces along the 179 route and the main pathway into the nearest district centre, now been populated with 'age-friendly' benches – benches which were previously seen as impossible objects in these 'unpossessed' spaces. In four other 'gateway' sites along the route of the 179 (also used by older residents as gathering spaces) 'pocket parks' and benches have been introduced to decentralise public green spaces that are currently relatively inaccessible, as part of a broader range of suggested actions in the final action plan. Other actions have also been related to this route. The pedestrian routeleading into the closest district centre has been prioritised and signposted to support further social interaction and increased mobility. These actions are part of a wide range of actions suggested across the different domains, with over 50 of 114 original items having been implemented (or in the process of being so) at the time of writing.

Active research and design

Understanding the way in which the 'gateway' space had been appropriated by the older residents of Old Moat enabled the project to develop a co-produced action plan that sustained its meaning and relevance over time. The relatively responsive (on the part of the institutional partners) and the relatively passive (the residents made the spaces for waiting indirectly and not in active collaboration with 'the city') interaction of the residents with city institutions in the neighbourhood around the

use of the 'gateway' space became more 'active' as it became more equal. The active engagement of the older residents increased as the process undertaken by Southway Housing Trust became more collaborative. This enabled older residents and Southway Housing Trust to produce shared understandings both of what was needed (in the abstract) and what should actually be done. At the beginning of the process, for instance, residents were asked to volunteer as 'community auditors', alongside a separate group of 'project champions', with members drawn from institutional bodies, service providers and politicians. By the end of the project, the action plan workshop meetings were attended by a much broader range of stakeholders and residents, making decisions together on the type and order of priority of actions to be pursued (see figure 10.6).

Figure 10. 6: Photograph of Old Moat Action Plan workshop. Source Hammond et al. (2012)

The example of the 'gateway' and the age-friendly 'bench' is important in terms of the actual potential of older residents to actively inhabit and occupy the

neighbourhood. The 'active' status of older residents is here, at least, not just a matter of participation (civic or social) but also a factor of occupation. Bus stops are used and seen as meeting and resting places while buses become opportunities for social congregations to emerge as creative responses to existing transport and public space provision. The formal recognition of the importance of the 179 bus service as a key route for older people (in a process in which they were themselves stakeholders) led to public space projects that responded directly to the actual lived experiences of these older residents.

A series of public spaces along the route of the 179 bus (that coincided with the main pedestrian route through the estate and that led to the area of the district centre most used by older residents) were now viewed as potential resting and socialising places. These formerly static spaces were now seen as linked to the mobile social space of the bus service. Until the Old Moat residents expressed both their civic and social involvement in relation to their locality, using these spaces for these purposes had previously not been seen as possible in these terms. The development of these two kinds of community spaces (mobile and static) might be viewed as an example of the active production or occupation of city spaces by older residents specific to their neighbourhood and particular lived experiences. Being able to produce such formal expressions of territorial rights or claims can be considered an essential act that constitutes older people as *citizens* rather than as customers or patients. Several older people have remained involved across a range of projects and groups in the area, and while there are a variety of reasons for this (not least the continued commitment and energy of Southway Housing), there is evidence that the neighbourhood space as a whole is being produced through the active involvement of older people.

Conclusion

Age-friendly Old Moat offers some preliminary evidence that the parallel processes of community-led research and design can enable the creation of new places or territories for older residents to occupy, and in so doing, support the development of genuinely age-friendly neighbourhoods that increase opportunities for active ageing. This particular analysis suggests that the bar for the definition of active ageing should be set high.

The active involvement of residents in an area, arguably, produces an increase in capability that enables the creative self-definition or production of places or territories. In the 'gateway' example, discussed in this chapter, this means that spaces that could previously only be occupied informally by older people (through the act of gathering together in one place) are now formally claimed (by a physical bench, formalised with the embedded logo of an age-friendly flower and constituted via a formalised relationship with relevant City institutions). In such cases, the age-friendly design 'problem' is not a problem that relates to the supply of benches, nor even their form or location. The actual age-friendly issue here is an issue to do with the capability of older people to influence the type of seating provided; to gain the opportunity to use them; and to express sufficient ownership over the city spaces in which they exist in order to have them maintained and protected.

Without an explicit conceptualisation of age-friendly design in the WHO AFCC guidance as a practice founded on the development of *capabilities* for active ageing, there remains an underlying assumption that 'representational' or medical models of design activities still apply as the basic principles of age-friendly design. This implies in turn that social interaction and community participation are seen as independent of both built spaces and age-friendly design practice. There is a need, therefore, to extend the WHO ambition for age-friendly social policy into the realm of age-friendly design so that the essential process of resident engagement in both understanding and producing age-friendly cities is not ignored.

In this way, following the AFCC recommendations for social policy, age-friendly design should also be considered as a ‘bottom-up participatory approach’ involving ‘older people in analysing and expressing their situation to inform government policies." (WHO 2007:7). By considering the social and physical dimensions of the Old Moat area in terms of older peoples’ actual capability to analyse and express their situation, it is possible to see the way in which older residents, both through the research and design processes, have been empowered to produce and occupy physical and social environments that are able to respond to their ageing experiences. ‘Active’, in this sense, may be most productively understood as the multi-faceted capability to produce, control and occupy urban spaces.

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[i] Old Moat is a politically defined area (electoral ward) of Manchester City. The area has around 14,000 people with about 13% of its population over 55 years old. While this is well below the Manchester average (circa 20%), a large student / younger population, concentrated around the district centre on the eastern edge, leads to much higher percentages of older people to the west, reaching 40% in some parts. In UK terms, there are high levels of deprivation and life limiting illnesses as well as low life expectancy.

[ii] This work represents one of a series of projects undertaken at the Manchester School of Architecture (MSA) that address spatial inclusion, in part through the pedagogy of its post-graduate architecture programme (White 2014). MSA over a ten year period, using community-engaged architectural research techniques, has developed partnerships with city stakeholders alongside direct engagement with local residents to explore the role of space and place in public health.

[iii] Anti-social behaviour 'fears' variously involve these spaces being occupied by people who locate themselves there to drink alcohol and who may be homeless, or younger people who may congregate for informal social activities involving noise or damage such as graffiti or skateboarding.