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| Section A | | |
| Institution: University of Manchester | | |
| Unit of Assessment: 21 (Sociology) | | |
| Title of case study: Age-friendly cities: improving the lives of older people in urban communities through research | | |
| Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 1 Nov 2012 – 31 Dec 2019 | | |
| Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit: | | |
| Name: | Role(s) (e.g. job title): | Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: |
| Tine Buffel | Senior Lecturer, Sociology | 2012 – present |
| Chris Phillipson | Professor of Sociology & Social Gerontology | 2012 – present |
| Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 Aug 2013 – 31 Dec 2019 | | |
| Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No | | |
| Section B | | |
| 1. Summary of the impact | | |
| <p>Population ageing poses a significant challenge for modern societies, especially when coupled with increasing urbanisation. Research exploring the relationship between these major social trends by Dr Tine Buffel and Professor Chris Phillipson has yielded impact by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. developing <i>new models</i> for collaborative engagement, leading to increased engagement of older people in shaping policies within their communities in Greater Manchester; 2. shaping <i>policy and practice</i> aimed at improving older people's quality of life through innovative partnerships at the level of local and regional government; 3. influencing the <i>international policy debate</i> on developing age-friendly cities in the Global North and South. | | |
| 2. Underpinning research | | |
| <p>University of Manchester research, led by Dr Tine Buffel and Professor Chris Phillipson, has addressed the adverse impact of <i>social exclusion</i> on older people living in urban areas characterised by multiple deprivation. This work has built upon studies published by Phillipson and colleagues in the early-2000s, based on surveys conducted in inner-city communities (part of the <i>Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Growing Older</i> research programme). The ESRC-funded <i>International Network on Population Ageing and Urbanisation (INPAU) (2012-2015)</i> (PI Phillipson) brought together policymakers and academics from Europe, North America and Asia, to develop new perspectives on the concept of age-friendly cities. The City of Manchester, a major participant in INPAU, was the first UK member of the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities, launched in 2010. Research on ageing and urbanisation has been supported since 2013 by the <i>Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research on Ageing (MICRA)</i>, which co-ordinates research into ageing across the University. Phillipson is a Co-Director of MICRA (2019-continung) and Buffel sits on the Management Board of the Institute.</p> <p>Phillipson was PI of a research project, conducted in the Old Moat neighbourhood of Manchester between 2012 to 2013, commissioned by <i>Southway Housing</i> (in association with Manchester City Council), the biggest social landlord in South Manchester, which set out to test the model of an 'Age-friendly City' developed by the WHO (i). The aim of the study was to develop a plan for improving the social and physical conditions in the area to support its ageing population. The project produced 118 short-and long-term recommendations for improving the neighbourhood, spanning issues such as housing, transport and public spaces [1]. The research contributed to the development of a long-term relationship with Manchester City Council, which has been a partner in a number of funded research projects (e.g., ii, iii).</p> | | |

These early studies were extended by Buffel and Phillipson with a seminal theoretical paper on age-friendly cities [2] which led to the first empirical comparative research project to *demonstrate the multiple risks of exclusion* facing older people living in deprived neighbourhoods in Belgium and the UK, with a particular focus on policies and initiatives that promote active aging in urban contexts [3]. The study identified common barriers to implementing age-friendly policies and initiatives: first, the prevalence of ageist attitudes and stereotypes; second, economic and political barriers; and third, potential limitations associated with the concept of 'age-friendliness'.

Buffel expanded this initial work by demonstrating how involving older people in research could itself *promote social inclusion*. This insight led to a Manchester focused research programme supported by the *European Research Council* (iv). This project involved training older people as *co-researchers* to work with the Manchester research team to investigate the *effects of social isolation*. Buffel found that implementing an 'age-friendly' approach required the close engagement of older people, and that methods drawn from participatory research can advance efforts to engage older residents as leaders and visionaries in identifying features of their neighbourhood in need of improvement [4, 5, 6]. This fundamental insight led to a research programme supported by the ESRC (v) which highlighted opportunities for partnerships between older people and local stakeholders to facilitate community change and social action. This research programme explored how older residents had been affected by population changes associated with gentrification, an aspect largely ignored in the research literature [6]. The research confirmed earlier findings on the need for supporting interventions which promote the 'age-friendliness' of urban communities and the need for devising new interventions at a neighbourhood level, given the current policy emphasis on community-based care [3].

The 2018 volume, *Age-Friendly Cities and Communities: A Global Perspective* [5], emphasised the importance of linking age-friendly interventions with an understanding of urban development and highlighted many of the achievements of age-friendly policies, stimulated by the WHO Global Network. It stressed the need for a global strategy to integrate ageing populations and urban development, one which could respond to the highly unequal contexts experienced by older people in urban as well as rural communities across the world. A key argument concerned the need for a stronger embedding of the age-friendly mission in a citizenship- and rights-based narrative of ageing - one centred on values of equality, community empowerment and spatial justice [5].

3. References to the research

- [1] White, S., Phillipson, C., Aftab, F., & Hammond, M. (2013). Old Moat age-friendly neighbourhoods report. Manchester: Southway Housing Trust.
<https://hummedia.manchester.ac.uk/institutes/micra/OLDMOATREPORT110413.pdf>
- [2] Buffel, T., Phillipson, P., & Scharf, T. (2012). Ageing in urban environments: Developing age-friendly cities. *Critical Social Policy*, 32(4), 597-617. DOI: [10.1177/0261018311430457](https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018311430457)
- [3] Buffel, T., Phillipson, C., & Scharf, T. (2013). Experiences of neighbourhood exclusion and inclusion among older people living in deprived inner-city areas in Belgium and England. *Ageing & Society*, 33(1), 89-109. DOI: [10.1017/S0144686X12000542](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X12000542)
- [4] Buffel, T. (2018) Older Coresearchers Exploring Age-Friendly Communities: An "Insider" Perspective on the Benefits and Challenges of Peer-Research, *The Gerontologist*, 59(3), 538-548. DOI: [10.1093/geront/gnx216](https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnx216)
- [5] Buffel, T. Handler, S. and Phillipson, C. eds. (2018). *Age-friendly cities and communities: A global perspective*, Policy Press: Bristol. ISBN: 978-1447331346
- [6] Buffel, T. & Phillipson, C. (2019). Ageing in a Gentrifying Neighbourhood: Experiences of Community Change in Later Life. *Sociology*, 53(6), 987-1004. DOI: [10.1177/0038038519836848](https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038519836848)

Evidence of research quality: Several of the above outputs were published in highly regarded, peer reviewed journals. This includes one article in a top ranked journal in the field of social gerontology [4]. The article published in *Critical Social Policy* [2] is among the highest

cited articles in the field of urban ageing, with 431 citations in Google Scholar, including citations by the UK government, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and WHO. Citation benchmarking in Scopus shows that this article ranks in the top 1% globally by citations for the field of Social Sciences. Buffel was invited to present this paper at the UN Headquarters New York at the General Assembly's *Open-ended Working Group on Ageing for the purpose of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons* (July 2015). The *Researching Age-Friendly Communities* project led by Buffel (iv) was awarded the *National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement* prize for 'Working in Partnership' (2016).

Key research grants:

- (i) Developing Old Moat as an 'age-friendly' neighbourhood, funded by *Southway Housing Trust*, GBP60,00 (PI Chris Phillipson)
- (ii) *Ambition for Ageing*, sponsored by *The Big Lottery Community Fund* in 2015 onwards, valued at GBP237,000 (PI Chris Phillipson)
- (iii) Developing participatory approaches to care in urban environments, sponsored by *Manchester City Council* 2017 onwards, valued at GBP164,000 (PI Chris Phillipson)
- (iv) Researching age-friendly communities in Manchester: *Intra-European Marie Curie Individual Fellowship*, sponsored by the *European Research Council* 2013-2015, valued at GBP231,281 (PI Tine Buffel)
- (v) Urban ageing and social exclusion: Future Leaders Award, sponsored by the *Economic and Social Research Council UK* 2016-2019, valued at GBP270,000 (PI Tine Buffel)

4. Details of the impact

The foregoing research findings have contributed to policies and strategies produced by local government and NGOs aimed at developing age-friendly cities and communities. This is evidenced through work with Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), the WHO, and the OECD. Impact has occurred at multiple levels, with demonstrably benefits to *local* communities, *regional* authorities, and *national* and *international* organisations.

1. Developing *new models* for collaborative engagement, leading to increased engagement of older people in shaping policies within their communities

Co-researchers involved in the research [4] (iv) included older people in three south Manchester neighbourhoods: Chorlton, Whalley Range, and Chorlton Park. They produced a guidance document, together with a film, describing their experiences and the impact the research had on their lives, promoting the benefits of involving older people in the development of age-friendly communities [A]. These outputs are now widely used by organisations such as the WHO, the UK Network of Age-Friendly Communities, and organisations across Greater Manchester (GM). Many of the co-researchers have continued to participate in community initiatives following the completion of the project. For example, Elaine Unegbu has become the *Chair of Greater Manchester Older People's Network*, which has over 200 direct members and 50 affiliated organisations.

One key finding from the research was the negative impact of the loss of a much-valued bus route [4]. The co-researchers established a campaign for its reinstatement, which was successfully achieved in 2016 [B]. The campaign demonstrated the need for a local forum to address the needs of older people, and led to the formation of the Age-friendly Whalley Range and Chorlton Steering Group. The actions of this group have resulted in improvements to the physical and social environment, through its *Take a Seat in Whalley Range* initiative. Chris Ricard, Community Development Worker, Whalley Range, states the research has, "*widened the range and increased the effectiveness of activities supporting older people within the neighbourhood*" [B]. She further comments that this has been, "*especially valuable in improving the lives of those experiencing social isolation, demonstrating the possibility of mounting effective local campaigns involving people at risk of social exclusion*" [B].

Members of the community in the Old Moat Neighbourhood of Manchester were also positively affected by improvements to the outdoor environment and opportunities for social participation arising from work to re-design their neighbourhood (i). The coproduced research

led to GBP730,000 being invested in local projects between 2012 and 2018, followed by new initiatives on housing design to assist older tenants, as well as the establishment of a community development post to support social action in the neighbourhood [1]. The Old Moat project has achieved worldwide recognition as best practice in engaging and developing local communities. The international design and engineering firm ARUP released a report, with a media reach of 150,000,000 internationally, promoting the Old Moat project as a case study [C].

Manchester City Council and Manchester Health and Social Care Commissioning funded a programme of work developing neighbourhood-based interventions, with a focus on supporting older people to age well within their communities. The work, led by Phillipson, involved a participatory design with older residents living in low-income neighbourhoods creating and managing their own organisations to support people, including people with mental health problems, older migrants, and people with nutritional needs. The work focused on strengthening social networks, developing training for potential community leaders, and assisting people to 'age in place' within their neighbourhoods. Gareth Smith, a community worker involved with a group of isolated older men, writes, "*Outcomes include the successful lobbying of the local housing provider to provide a permanent home for the group to use, attaining funding to continue to create new social activities and grow the number of attendees and increased positive community relationships between members of the group*" [D].

2. Shaping policy and practice aimed at improving older people's quality of life through innovative partnerships at the level of local and regional government

Phillipson has been on the Executive Board of the GM Ageing Hub since 2017. The Ageing Hub is the body responsible for the development of policies on ageing for the devolved region and has representatives from all statutory and voluntary organisations across GM. Phillipson leads an initiative that draws together academics from across the University, through MICRA, to ensure that its research findings relating to age-friendly work make the greatest impact in policy and practice across the region. Paul McGarry, Assistant Director, GMCA, comments that: "*city agencies have been key partners [in research projects] which have led to policy innovations locally....work in low-income communities [has tested] new models of community organisation and [made] the case for local partners taking action to support the ambition of ageing-in-place*" [E].

Phillipson was the author of the first age-friendly policy strategy for the GM region, which was published in 2017 [F]. In 2018 the WHO designated GM as the UK's first age-friendly city region. The latest GM strategy document explicitly acknowledges MICRA as a key partner, highlighting that: "*The Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research on Ageing (MICRA) at the University of Manchester and the Ageing Hub are working together to make GM a global centre of excellence of on ageing. The mutually beneficial partnership gives the Ageing Hub access to a network of researchers from across the disciplines, whilst academics have the opportunity to reach key policy makers and practitioners with their research*" [G].

The MICRA team has had a significant influence on private sector-led urban regeneration in GM. For example, the Northern Gateway, a GBP1,000,000,000 strategic development of seven neighbourhoods in Manchester, delivering 15,000 new homes, has prioritised an 'age-friendly' approach to the design of homes. The City Council in conjunction with the developers behind the scheme has commissioned the MICRA team to develop ideas about how best to integrate the existing neighbourhood with the new development, and how to create an age-integrated community in respect of physical and social infrastructure [H].

3. Influencing the international policy debate on developing age-friendly cities in the Global North and South

The significance of the regional impact is recognised on an international scale. GM achieved a 4* rating (the maximum outcome) from the *European Innovation Partnership for Active and Healthy Ageing*. The bid references the work of Buffel and Phillipson [I, p.24-25]. Elected GM Mayor Andy Burnham represented the UK at the High-Level Forum on the Silver Economy in Helsinki in July 2019, in a session entitled 'Cities Fostering Active and Healthy Ageing' where

he spoke about the social dimensions of ageing, drawing on MICRA's work across the region. Paul McGarry, Assistant Director, GMCA, comments that Buffel and Phillipson "*have played a pivotal role in taking our work onto an international stage through a range of international networks. We have been able to make lasting links with colleagues in North America, New Zealand and Australia in addition to maintaining joint programmes with WHO affiliates and the Eurocities Urban Ageing Working Group*" [E].

Buffel and Phillipson have further engaged with leading international organisations to influence policy and practice pertaining to age-friendly issues. Phillipson was a consultant to OECD in 2015, in connection with its work on *Ageing in Cities*. This report highlighted the work of Manchester as an 'age-friendly city' and the value of the link with MICRA in providing research evidence and support to the city and wider region [J].

The MICRA research team has built a close relationship with the WHO, exerting influence over the direction of policy, especially in terms of highlighting new methods for involving older people in the development of age-friendly communities. In the WHO's *World Report on Ageing and Health* (2015), Buffel's research was cited as an exemplar of good practice when working with older people [K]. Alana Officer, Head of the Demographic Change and Healthy Ageing Unit at the WHO, states that the research represented, "*a significant methodological step forward in developing new models for community engagement*", highlighting "*cost-effective mechanisms for producing informed policy in times of austerity*" [K]. The team also contributed to a report from the WHO entitled *Case Studies for the Health Equity Status Report* (2019), which used Manchester as an example of co-producing policy and research with older people as a guide for policy implementation across the world [K]. Buffel and Phillipson further produced a major report for the WHO (2019) which sets out *policy priorities for age-friendly cities and communities* drawing on 11 case studies of cities and communities from across the world [K]. Officer recognises the contribution of the team in the development of this policy: "*It has been a pleasure to work with MICRA on these case studies. The report and case studies have provided key inputs into the development of the Decade of Healthy Ageing [2020-2030] which was adopted this year by the World Health Assembly, and which is under discussion by the United Nations General Assembly to become a United Nations Decade of Action*" [K].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- [A] Buffel, T. (ed.) 2015. 'Researching Age-Friendly Communities. Stories from Older People as Co-Investigators' <https://bit.ly/3lZqCzs>; Accompanying short film: [Researching Age-Friendly Cities](#) (11,547 views, 60 likes)
- [B] Testimonial from Community Development Worker, Whalley Range. Received November 2020
- [C] ARUP. 2019. Cities Alive: Designing for Ageing Communities. Available at <https://bit.ly/3kaUo3U>
- [D] Email correspondence from Community Worker. Received February 2021.
- [E] Testimonial from Assistant Director of GMCA. Received November 2020
- [F] Phillipson, C. 2017. Developing a Strategy for Age-Friendly Greater Manchester. Available at <https://bit.ly/3lWniVV>
- [G] Greater Manchester Combined Authority. 2018. Greater Manchester Age-Friendly Strategy. Available at <https://bit.ly/370pPt9>
- [H] Lewis, C. *et al.* 2020. Developing age-friendly communities in the Northern Gateway urban regeneration project. Available at <https://bit.ly/35dIVLR>
- [I] European Innovation Partnership for Active and Healthy Ageing bid, 2019. (no online link)
- [J] OECD. 2015. Ageing in Cities. DOI: [10.1787/9789264231160-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264231160-en)
- [K] Testimonial from Head of the Demographic Change and Healthy Ageing Unit, WHO. Received December 2020