Buffel, T., Handler, S. & Phillipson, C. (eds). (2018). *Age-friendly Cities and Communities: A Global Perspective.* UK: Policy Press, 312pp. ISBN-978-1-4473-3131-5

Reviewed by Datin Jacqueline Wong [1]

The endorsement to create a supportive environment for older people, encouraged discussions on age-friendly cities and communities by influential international organisations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations (UN). In this regards, *Age-friendly Cities and Communities*: *A Global Perspective* is an important and timely book since it provides a comprehensive view of developing urban environments designed to improve the lives of older persons and ways in which they themselves can be involved in the co-production of age-friendly policies and practices. In this book, the authors made use of a cross-section of approaches namely social policy, sociology, urban planning and architecture.

This edited volume gathers critical assessments from leading international researchers of the problems and potentials of designing environments that benefit citizens of all ages. Part of the Ageing in a Global Context series, the book highlights new approaches in involving older people in the design of cities. It also tackles social inequality and promote community empowerment.

The book is divided into three parts: The first part which consists of four chapters, links the background to the age-friendly cities and communities with theory and development. Inequalities and exclusion of older persons are addressed. This is followed by an overview of the contributing factors that have led to the development of age-friendly cities and communities. Moreover, through a range of theoretical perspective the link between 'community' and 'age-friendliness' is also discussed. The last chapter of this part identifies two key challenges that limit the success and effectiveness of age-friendly cities and communities.

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The second part of the book consisting of five chapters, provides case studies from Europe (Belgium, Germany, Ireland), Asia (Hong Kong), with learning lessons from Japan, Korea, Thailand, Singapore, China and case studies from Australia. The chapter on the case study from Australia provides a review and comparison of age-friendly cities and communities initiatives from Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra.

The last part, also of five chapters, starts by exploring the 'capability' approach in design while responding directly to the lived-experiences of old people. Following this, the authors identifies new and creative ways as an answer to the limitations that presently exists in age-friendly cities and communities. It also describes the evolution of the age-friendly Manchester programme and explores UK government ageing policies whereby we also read about the age-friendliness for the lives of older people with sight loss within English urban and rural communities. Finally, the book concludes by the presentation of a 10-point Manifesto for change. This draws on arguments and perspectives developed by the authors of this edited volume.

The reviewer has identified three 'gaps' in the book. First, most of the perspectives focused on the urban setting and relatively little was said about building sustainable and friendly neighbourhoods for older people living in rural, or remote areas. The focus on cities is understandable as more than half of the world's population are now living in urban areas. However, the perspectives also give rise to suggestions that older people of remote or rural community areas have different ageing pathways and experiences to the general population. To better understand the condition and predicaments of these older people, and the different challenges posed for smaller local authorities, more research and discussion on building and managing an age-friendly environment in such areas are needed too.

Second, although the perspectives concede that older people's ability to participate may be compromised by a lack of social recognition, so far there has been limited exploration of effective ways to deal with individual differences and values in modern communities that have become increasingly diverse and complex, especially in Asia and the Asia Pacific regions. Because communities involve both the creation of solidarity between groups, in some there are 'boundaries', and there are where frail older people remain 'unseen' in cities by the wider community, it is necessary for policymakers and local authorities to understand that social inclusion is integral and to achieve a balance between enhancing social engagement and protecting individual diversity. There is a need for increased discussion of strategies and practices that ensure not only build but also services and products to meet the specific needs and life situations of older people.

Finally, much of the perspectives are descriptive. It provided information about initiatives prompted by recognition of the importance of supportive public policy, environments and services. These covered a range of approaches to fostering age-friendly cities and communities. However, there has been limited documentation of results of the effectiveness of specific approaches, or evaluation of the impact of specific processes, or the outcomes on older people's lives. Infrastructure and services alone are not enough. Just as important is helping the public understand how ageing is not a disease but a biological process. Also, it's

important to note, that there are no easy solutions. Meaningful support is important, especially when a large proportion of older people are taking care of their older parents too.

The need for cities to better cater to older people in planning has to take into the consideration how the built environment affects their quality of life in terms of physical connectivity, cognitive and social health. Concern and issues of loneliness, sickness and employment. Even as cities are redesigning to become more age-friendly, it may cause unintended consequences such as segregation and stigma. No one approach fits all. Future developments of age-friendly cities and communities would benefit from a broader base of evidence and suggest evaluation of process and outcomes for future research attention, and further discussion which will provide further important information and insights on policies, planning, sustainability, and more. Ageing is everyone's concern. We will all get old, one day. The key is to build a community which realises that ageing concerns everyone.

This book is relevant to scholars not only in the field of social gerontology and social policy but also for those involved in public health, urban design and housing. It is also an invaluable resource for policy makers, urban planners, service providers, practitioners and older persons themselves.