

LEISURE AND THE SENSE OF PLACE OF OLDER ADULTS IN LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES IN BRAZIL AND THE UK

LAZER E SENSO DE LUGAR DE IDOSOS EM COMUNIDADES DE BAIXA RENDA NO BRASIL E NO REINO UNIDO

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Resumo

Leisure plays a key role in supporting psychological, social and emotional well-being in later life. This paper aims to explore the relationship between leisure, place and income from the perspectives of older adults in the UK and Brazil and how older adults' participation in leisure supports the development of sense of place within their communities. The data presented in the paper was gathered through a case study approach involving three cities in Brazil (Pelotas, Belo Horizonte e Brasília) and three in the UK (Edinburgh, Manchester and Glasgow). The findings draw upon qualitative data collected through the following research methods: face-to-face interviews, go-along interviews and photo diaries. The results have shown the low-income neighbourhoods studied both in Brazil and the UK are likely to have less leisure opportunities which tend to be provided by facilities such as CRAS (Reference Centre for Social Assistance) and communities centres. The lack of leisure opportunities particularly in low-income areas can negatively impact on the way older adults experience the sense of place within their neighbourhoods.

Keywords: leisure, sense of place, income, older adults.

Resumo

O lazer desempenha um papel fundamental no apoio ao bem-estar psicológico, social e emocional na velhice. Este artigo tem como objetivo explorar a relação entre lazer, lugar e renda a partir das perspectivas de idosos no Reino Unido e no Brasil e como a participação dos idosos no lazer apoia o desenvolvimento do senso de lugar dentro de suas comunidades. Os dados apresentados no artigo foram coletados por meio de uma abordagem de estudo de caso envolvendo três cidades no Brasil (Pelotas, Belo Horizonte e Brasília) e três no Reino Unido (Edimburgo, Manchester e Glasgow). Os achados baseiam-se em dados qualitativos coletados por meio dos seguintes métodos de pesquisa: entrevistas cara a cara, entrevistas caminhadas e diários fotográficos. Os resultados mostraram que os bairros de baixa renda estudados tanto no Brasil quanto no Reino Unido tendem a ter menos oportunidades de lazer que passam a

ser oferecidas por equipamentos como o CRAS (Centro de Referência de Assistência Social) e centros comunitários. A falta de oportunidades de lazer, principalmente em áreas de baixa renda, pode impactar negativamente na forma como os idosos vivenciam o senso de lugar em seus bairros.

Palavras-chave: lazer, senso de lugar, renda, idosos.

Introduction

Although the World Health Organization (2020) admits that the pandemic may reflect on the life expectancy of the world population, it highlights that people are living longer and healthier lives. This trend is observed globally and leads to the phenomenon of population ageing. In the UK and Brazil this change in population demographic profile has generated new challenges in how best to design urban environments that support access to the city, promoting everyday social engagement and healthy urban living for older people.

One of the major urban planning challenges linked to ageing lies in the fact that ageing is often accompanied by a decline in the physical and cognitive abilities of older adults, changes in their living arrangements, the advent of retirement, which can weaken social ties (PAPALIA et al., 2009) and the loss of social supports. In this context, contemporary urban cities can present many barriers to accessing social, economic and civic opportunities, being perceived as 'hostile' and 'unfriendly' by older adults. In response to this, the ageing-in-place agenda has become an important theme in redefining policy for older people. Ageing in place understands that older adults' preferred environment in which to age is in their community, where they can remain active, engaged, socially integrated and independent (PLACEAGE, 2019).

Nevertheless, it must be recognized that, in addition to physical factors, the social, psychological and emotional ties that people have with their community can also contribute to a more inclusive environment for ageing, especially through strengthening a sense of place. A strong sense of place results from having access to supports for active participation, opportunities to build and sustain social networks, and assuming a meaningful role in the community. In contrast a feeling of displacement or 'placelessness' (RELPH, 1976) is associated with alienation, isolation and loneliness, often resulting in adverse health and well-being outcomes, particularly amongst vulnerable older adults. Therefore, the creation of age friendly urban environments that support sense of place is integral to successful ageing ensuring that older adults can continue to make a positive contribution in old age, delaying the need for institutional care and reducing health and social care costs (PLACEAGE, 2019).

Within this context, leisure plays a key role in supporting psychological, social and emotional well-being in later life. Participation in leisure is also known to have a positive impact on resilience, personal growth, purpose and learning in old age. Policy and practice have focused on encouraging more involvement in active forms of leisure in later life, embedded in healthy and active ageing agendas. Research to date has largely focused on perceptions of ageing, definitions of leisure and activity participation. Few studies have explored the role of neighbourhood and place in the leisure lives of older adults, particularly how participation in leisure can shape older adults sense of place (defined in terms of identity, belonging and attachment) in lower income communities. Understanding the intersections between leisure, place and income is important given the need to ensure communities provide supportive environments within which to age, and to establish an evidence base for how leisure can enable deeper attachments to place amongst older adults particularly in lower income communities.

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Within this context, the paper aims to explore the relationship between leisure, place and income from the perspectives of older adults in the UK and Brazil and how older adults' participation in leisure supports the development of sense of place within their communities.

Literature Review

As the population is ageing, there has been discussion on how to support the delivery of age-friendly cities and communities. The subject is not new, in 1978, the United Nations General Assembly convened the first World Assembly on Ageing, generating the *Vienna International Plan of Action on Aging*, which emphasizes mental, social and physical well-being. One of the recommendations was that urban planning must stimulate participation in leisure activities (UNITED NATIONS, 1982).

In 2007, the World Health Organization launched the 'Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide'. This guide promoted an approximation of the ageing population process with urban planning and, it considers that participating in leisure activities 'in the community, as well as with the family' can help 'older people to continue to exercise their competence, to enjoy respect and esteem, and to maintain or establish supportive and caring relationships' (WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, 2007, p. 38).

However, the way in which ageing is perceived and the environment in which older people live has been changing over time. Buffel, Phillipson and Rémillard-Boilard (2019, p. 8) argue that 'doing "age-friendly" work also means recognizing and challenging the wider inequalities and injustices which affect city life' such as increasing social inequalities.

Leisure is considered more than the occupation of time for older people, is linked to satisfaction with life (KELLY et al., 1987). Research has identified the benefits of leisure in old age. Argimon et al. (2006) in a study in the city of Veranópolis, Brazil, investigated the impacts of the diversity of leisure activities on the cognitive abilities of older people. The diversity of leisure options was one of the factors mitigating against a decline in cognitive abilities across language, memory and attention. In a study on the psychological benefits of leisure to the newly retired, Nimrod (2007) established the concepts of essentiality and work-like. According to the author, the idea of essentiality can be understood as participating in a certain leisure activity because it is important in some way. This concept can be linked to 'meeting role expectations' and 'competence and skill development', including a sense of gratification in helping others and a sense of belonging. Meanwhile, the work-like factor refers to the similarities or differences that can be found between leisure activities and work activities prior to retirement.

For the older adult, the maintenance of some structures throughout the life may be essential after retirement. This is the general idea of the Continuity Theory (ATCHLEY, 1989), which is related to the achievement of well-being and satisfaction through the maintenance of activities related to identity and self-esteem. Identity and self-esteem are developed throughout life and, in old age, need to be maintained in response to change, retirement and physical and social losses (PAPALIA et al., 2009). According to Nimrod (2007) the continuity can aid overall life satisfaction, it does not matter how similar current activities are to their previous occupations, as long as a sense of essentiality is maintained. This idea supports the recent study by Ryu and Heo (2018) which suggests that activities considered productive such as volunteering may play a more important role in older people's well-being and health than merely engaging in physical activity.

Seeking to explain the role of leisure in the ageing process, other important theories have emerged. Havighurst (1961) points out two different theories: (i) the activity theory says that well-being, satisfaction and happiness in advanced age depend on maintaining a high level of involvement in activities, highlighting the psychological benefits of leisure; (ii) the disengagement theory which states that there is a general acceptance and desire for disengagement from active life for older people. According to the author, the first one is the most accepted by gerontologists. Over time, gerontology has come to play a positive and full role in old age, indicating that it has challenged the negative associations of old age more broadly. The literature on leisure tends to differentiate activities according to the functional capacities of older people. It is not about an age division, since the ageing process does not happen in the same way for all (PAPALIA et al., 2009).

Kelly, Steinkamp and Kelly (1987) classify leisure for older adults into two types: (i) those based on primary relationships, such as family and close friends. It is a leisure that becomes accessible due to the closeness of relationships, and that continues for most of adult life without significant physical demand; and (ii) of high investment, that requires time, skills and are more likely to produce results of a greater sense of competence and personal appreciation. The authors emphasize that for people over 75 years old, leisure becomes restricted to certain social and geographical environments. Family and home-based activities are especially important to this age group.

In a similar classification, Janke, Davey and Kleiber (2006) differentiated (i) informal leisure, activities that persist for a long time, such as socializing activities with friends; and (ii) formal leisure, that declines in later life with the ageing body and functional limitations, such as being a member of clubs and organizations. Paillard-Borg et al. (2009) identified a decline in participation rates in challenging activities with increasing age, while passive activities were more popular among the oldest-old.

In a review of literature on leisure activities of older adults, Adams, Leibbrandt, and Moon (2011) concluded that informal social activity influenced well-being the most. In the research of Michèle et al. (2017), with advancing age, a lesser variety of leisure activities was observed, making social activity stand out among older people as a criterion for distinguishing between individuals.

It is noteworthy the role of the social life for older people, especially those who have certain impediments to perform other types of leisure activities. Thus, the literature tends to highlight the informal and passive activities and primary socialization as an important way of engagement for oldest adults. However, it is necessary to mention the tendency to solitary activities. The study of Fernández-Mayoralas et al. (2015) reported that for the oldest people, activities were more indoor than outdoor, more solitary at home (watching television and reading), and more self-reflecting.

Another type of activity present in studies with the older adults are those of compensation. It is the kind of activity that becomes more present in the lives of older people due to their adaptive nature, as a way of maintaining engagement, but in activities that are compatible with the inherent losses to the ageing process. The social activity is highlighted by Kelly, Steinkamp and Kelly (1987) as a type of leisure that can supply the lack of activities that are no longer exercised due to physical decrease. Silverstein and Parker (2002) also pointed out walking as an activity of adaptation to reductions of more vigorous types of exercise. The authors found out that engaging in friendship-type leisure activities was related to highest quality of life and suggested that maximizing activity participation is a kind of compensation for social and physical deficits in later life.

About some specific activities that may fit into the classifications discussed above, Silverstein and Parker (2002) divided leisure activities into: culture - entertainment, productive - personal growth, outdoor - physical, recreation - expressive, friendship, and formal - group. In the research of Paillard-Borg et al. (2009), the most important types of leisure for older people were: mental, social, physical, productive, and recreational. Reading was the most prevalent individual activity and mental activity the most prevalent type, whereas the least prevalent was physical activities.

Adams, Leibbrandt, and Moon (2011) reviewing the literature on leisure activities reported two or three domains: informal, formal and solitary, or productive versus leisure. The domains related with well-being, health or survival included social, leisure, productive, physical, intellectual, service and solitary activities. And, in a more recent study, in 2014, Chang, Wray, and Lin used four main types of leisure activities in their study with older adults: mental, social, physical, and productive.

However, as people get older, the barriers to leisure increases, and the participation in activities is often conditioned on it. Kelly, Steinkamp and Kelly (1987) point out factors that interfere in the choice of leisure activities in the different age groups: (i) attention to the self in midlife (although belatedly); (ii) reduction of parenting commitments and the loss of significant others; (iii) losses related to health, income, mobility, and physical abilities.

Nimrod (2003 apud NIMROD; JANKE, 2012) divides the barriers for older adults' leisure into: (i) cultural-environmental (social isolation, age-related norms, and a lack of companions as a result of their increasing limitations and mortality; (ii) health-related, both physiological (disabilities, chronic illness, or decreased energy) and psychophysiological (concentration or memory problems); (iii) psychological (lower motivation, self-efficacy, and fear); (iv) technical (income, availability of activities, mobility, and time).

Besides old age, according to Paillard-Borg et al. (2009), other factors are correlated with a decreased engagement in leisure activities, such as female gender, low education status, having a poor or limited social network, mental disorders, and physical limitation. Gender is pointed out as determining in the choice of activities: (i) for men: following political and cultural interests, working, practising outdoor activities; (ii) for women: making handcrafts, doing crosswords. The findings ranked older men as more active than women. Adams, Leibbrandt and Moon (2011) also highlighted individual factors as gender or physical functioning and went further by citing contextual variables such as choice, meaning or perceived quality had a significant role in the process of choosing leisure activities.

Some authors on ageing also explore the influence of different socioeconomic contexts in the activities of older adults and their leisure. In a recent literature review on the impact of neighborhoods on ageing, it was found a relationship between leisure activities and land use and public transportation. Leisure physical activity was linked to recreational facilities of the environment such as the existence of parks and open spaces (VAN CAUWENBERG et al., 2018). In this sense, Luhmann and Hawkey (2016) warn that in contexts of insufficient income and unqualified physical and social environments, the rates of mobility in the living space of older adults tend to be lower, restricting their options. The mobility in the living space is related to the functional capacity of the older adult to move around, socialize and participate actively in the community. Therefore, it is understood that several factors that build the living environment of the older adult can interfere with their access in leisure activities.

Despite evidence of the influence of the physical, social and economic environment on ageing, few studies address the impact of different contexts on the lives of the older people (BEARD; PETITOT, 2010). Yen, Michael and Perdue (2009) warn that aspects of the neighborhood should be more consistent when studying ageing disparities. The relationship between neighborhood and leisure-time physical activity for the older people (VAN CAUWENBERG et al., 2018) is also insufficiently addressed.

In addition to physical factors linked to income and infrastructure, housing communities tend to be spaces of strong psychological stimulus and sense of place. The sense of place is the social, psychological and emotional bond between people and places (MANZO; PERKINS, 2006) that is the product of support for active participation, construction and maintenance of social networks and a role in the community (SEAMON, 2013).

Methodology

This paper is a result of the research 'Place-Making with Older Adults: Towards Age-Friendly Communities', which was undertaken from 2016 to 2019. It was funded by the Newton Fund and the ESRC and was led by the UK (Heriot-Watt University) and Brazil (Federal University of Pelotas). The aims of the research were to: (i) investigate how sense of place is experienced by older people from different social settings living in diverse neighborhoods in the UK and Brazil; (ii) translate these experiences into designs for age friendly communities that support sense of place; and (iii) better articulate the role of older adults as active placemakers in the design process by involving the community at all stages of the research.

In order to achieve the objectives, a case study approach was chosen and three cities were selected in Brazil (Pelotas, Belo Horizonte and Brasília) and in the UK (Edinburgh, Glasgow and Manchester).

Within each city, three neighborhoods were selected for the study based on income (low, middle and high), population density (60+) and green spaces. In total, 18 neighborhoods were investigated in the UK and Brazil. However, within the context of this study only data from the six low-income neighbourhoods were used, as follows: Pelotas (Navegantes), Belo Horizonte (Aglomerado da Serra) and Brasília (Granja do Torto); Edinburgh (Craigmillar), Glasgow (Easterhouse) and Manchester (Baguley).

The work reported here employs data collected through three methods applied in the first year of the main research: Face-to-face Interviews, Go-Along Interviews and Photo Diaries. The interview is a qualitative method of data collection used to get a deep sense of information, in a more flexible way than quantitative methods (PHELLAS et al., 2012). A purposive sampling approach was used for the study, reflecting a diversity of age (60-69, 70-79, 80+), gender and household composition as factors that influence older adult's sense of place. A recruitment strategy was developed by researchers to access interested groups and community leaders, including neighbourhood recruitment events and advertisements and leaflets published in the city's local newspaper (PLACEAGE, 2019).

The Go-Along interview is also a qualitative method undertaken by researchers who accompany the interviewee for a walk through the neighborhood. Interviewing a participant within their local context allows the researcher to 'walk through' the lived experiences of people in the neighbourhood. Participants' responses to the questions are joined with the researcher's own observations, producing interpretations (CARPIANO, 2009). The itinerary is defined by the interviewee, reflecting everyday place experiences, collecting sensory aspects along with meaning and memories of specific places. In this

study, the recording of the route and the photos were made from a cellular application (Strava), which marked the route traveled, and a recorder, which facilitated the capture of audio data (PLACEAGE, 2019).

The Photo Diaries is another qualitative method based on self-photographing, described by Robert Ziller (NEIVA-SILVA; KOLLER, 2002) as a photographic procedure performed by the research subjects themselves who choose what they want to photograph, the point of view, etc., it creates autonomy in the act of photographing and answering the research question. Then, the set of photographic images is used to break the verbal communication difficulties and talk about the interviewee's experiences (PLACEAGE, 2019). In total, 180 face-to-face interviews, 120 go-along interviews and 60 photo diaries were undertaken both in the UK and Brazil between 2016 and 2017.

The data collected from the low-income neighbourhoods was analyzed thematically by case study area both in Brazil (Pelotas, Belo Horizonte and Brasília) and the UK (Edinburgh, Glasgow and Manchester) and a comparative analysis of the case studies based on the themes that emerged was also conducted cross-nationally to establish similarities and differences in the experiences of older adults across different socio-cultural contexts. The themes that emerged from the analysis of the data were: community centres, green spaces and safety.

Results and Discussion

The results presented in this section are organized according to each case study: Pelotas, Belo Horizonte and Brasília in Brazil; and Edinburgh, Glasgow and Manchester in the UK. The themes which were categorized into community centres, green spaces and safety and their relationship with leisure are presented within each case study. Subsequently a comparative discussion of the results from each country is provided by analyzing those themes in the light of the literature.

Brazil

Pelotas

The interviews with older adults reflected on the importance of leisure activities in the local community. Here, there was significant emphasis on leisure activities carried out in the Reference Centre for Social Assistance (*Centro de Referência de Assistência Social* - CRAS) in the Navegantes Neighbourhood. The Centre offers group activities such as handcrafting, chat groups and meals. '*CRAS, where we go for walks, to know things, talk, play, things that are really for older people*' (Female, 64). However, many participants expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of another place that promotes parties, travel and physical activities.

In the neighbourhood, opinions about insecurity were almost unanimous, which can become a barrier to leisure in the community. Other than that, the older adults demonstrate not to engage in leisure activities because the neighbourhood does not offer such opportunities or suitable spaces for them.

Through the go-along interviews it was observed that the older adults in Navegantes know the meeting places of their peers, represented mainly by CRAS and church groups, which promote different activities in weekly meetings such as gymnastics, music, manual work, community garden, and even trips to tourist cities. Older people often participate in these groups, and even those who do not participate know about them.

A large number of photographs highlighted the importance of spaces for contact with nature, as well as areas (patios, gardens, vegetable gardens, etc.) as those supporting leisure and consequently the mental health of the older people (LEE; MAHESWARAN, 2010). The maps with the locations of the older people's homes, which were part of the diaries, show that the public green areas close to the houses have great influence as leisure opportunities and appear in the images and testimonies directly, either for their own use, of family members, adolescents or children, as well as just for contemplation (LONDE; MENDES, 2014).

Belo Horizonte

As for the relationship of people with green spaces, it is very diverse in Serra. One interviewee says that '*there could be more green space because they are cutting, they are deforesting everything*' (Male, 67). At the other end there are those who see in the green areas a threat to health because of rats, cockroaches, insects: '*The mayor should stop these cockroaches, throw venom in those woods, in the streams, right?*' (Male, 83). In relation to the green areas in condominiums, which are collective but not public, there seems to be fragile attempts to create vegetable gardens and gardens, however, one person says: '*The best thing, if people agreed, would be to cement everything, because then you avoid that dirt. Because its complicated. Every time you're going to clean you need to get the people together*' (Female, 62). That is, the collective organization necessary to maintain this type of space is difficult.

Finally, in the context of the spaces and public services of Serra, CRAS (Reference Centre for Social Assistance) deserves special emphasis regarding leisure, because their programs make much more difference in the lives of older residents than one could imagine. For those who have access to them - waiting lines are long - they improve their physical and mental condition, offering support without asking for anything in return (unlike what happens in family networks). In CRAS, for example, there is a program offered by an NGO in partnership with the City Hall, called Active Life. Until recently, the program promoted excursions and other activities outside CRAS facilities, much appreciated by the older adults. Some have reported that, for the first time in their lives, they visited the city of Belo Horizonte beyond their workplaces.

Streets and squares are of functional and restricted use, while CRAS has as intense use as their structure allows. The older adults use the public space because it is necessary for their daily activities, but they do not seem to see it as a possibility of leisure, not even of walks. In this sense, the lack of infrastructure and the steepness of the streets do not seem to encourage staying in public spaces for leisure. On the other hand, the relatively protected CRAS space has a greater demand than it can meet.

With regard to safety, the participants feel safe during weekdays, because there is policing and people on the street, but on holidays and weekends they are afraid to leave home.

Brasília

The need to promote free activities of interest to the older adults (dance and craft classes, among others related to leisure) was highlighted by older adults in Granja do Torto.

The need to create physical space for activities, green spaces and community gardens is defined as a relevant factor for the planning of more age-friendly places that support leisure opportunities. To provide such improvements, the older people consider the need to strengthen community involvement. More specific suggestions aimed at investing in

surveillance mechanisms (ostentatious policing, installation of cameras, for example) were mentioned by residents, which reflect the feeling of insecurity present in the place.

Older residents identify basic infrastructure as important in building their sense of place, which is very precarious. They use the health centre not only as a place of care, but of socialization and leisure, because there they have people to talk to and group activities promoted by social entities. When they mention the health centre as a meeting place, they demonstrate the marginalization of this community, where the government does not provide opportunities for inclusion, social participation and leisure.

In relation to public spaces, it was noticed that one can feel safe to walk without being safe to stay. In the case of this low-income neighbourhood, the streets and squares are for functional and restricted use, while CRAS (Reference Centre for Social Assistance) has as much use as its structure allows. The older adults use public space because it is necessary for their daily activities, but they do not see it as a possibility for leisure, not even for walks due to the lack of basic infrastructure such as sidewalks and benches. On the other hand, the CRAS space, relatively protected, has a greater demand than it can serve and is characterized as a community centre in the neighbourhood, where several support groups and leisure activities are carried out to serve the older population.

The UK

Edinburgh

The role of community centres were fundamental to maintaining an active old age and were a consistent theme of the photo diaries. Community places often provided a broad range of activities for older adults including IT training, fitness activities and opportunities for lifelong learning as well as leisure. Local activities and community spaces were a key theme of the photo-diaries. Activities undertaken at community centres and leisure facilities had the potential to improve health and well-being in old age. One participant pointed to the impact of participating in the activities at Thistle Community Centre, in Craigmillar, in terms of improved physical and mental health, as well as a form of reintegration after periods of illness.

Green spaces as those that support leisure had mental well-being benefits, providing an antidote to living in the city. Green spaces also provided places of relaxation and contemplation. The 'feeling' of space and having access to 'countryside-like' space was very important. Green spaces acted as restorative environments of peace and tranquility. For others, green spaces provided the means for community members to come together e.g. through organized walking activities that supported both individual and collective well-being. There was evidence of green spaces such as community gardens providing an opportunity for members of the community to come together as a form of civic participation/opportunities for food security. Community gardens had the potential to increase engagement and reduce social isolation.

Interestingly, perceptions of crime were less prominent in the interviews conducted in the more deprived community of Craigmillar. Negative stigma and associations with areas perceived as being 'more deprived' created a perception of the local community as a 'no go' area, external perceptions which residents strongly resisted:

'Craigmillar has a terrible reputation but I have never once felt threatened... news has been negative towards us. People don't like it. It's an assumption people make. I have never once felt threatened.' (Female, 60).

Glasgow

Issues of crime and safety were identified as key factors impacting ageing-in-place. Fear of crime was a pervasive issue amongst older adults. This still acted as a barrier to many leaving the home [evidence of 'hunkering down' in relation to perceived threats]:

'Pensioners, it doesn't matter where they live, are scared. They go home, they lock their door, they shut their blinds, things like that.' (Male, 62).

Outdoor environments including green spaces were seen as integral to sense of place and leisure. These were experienced across a range of private green spaces (private spaces and community gardens) and public parks. Green spaces acted as restorative spaces for many, providing a form of relaxation and a place to reminisce.

Communities such as Easterhouse which displayed high percentages of 'green space', reported some of the lowest use, with significant amounts of vast open, poorly maintained space not being used by local residents. There, green spaces were seen as under-utilized, lacking any specific programming, therefore providing little in the way of attraction for the local community. Residents discussed the issue of empty spaces in feelings a sense of detachment from the community. Abstract spaces did not create a sense of place for local residents. Meaningful places were those that provided a space for social interaction and engagement and promoted a sense of community/collective identity.

Green spaces also encapsulated community gardens, green spaces organized and ran by the local community. Community gardens enabled people to engage in physical activity, and develop an interest in food security. Green spaces were an opportunity to develop a sense of community pride, scaling up individual garden spaces into forms of civic participation.

For some participants, there was the absence of community places for older adults including community centres and leisure clubs within close proximity. Whilst the availability activities such as computer classes and knitting were widespread, scheduled and programmed activities created a structure that did not suit all older adults.

Manchester

A perception of being unsafe was linked to a sense of vulnerability in urban spaces, dictating the time of day that people would venture out. The feeling of perceived vulnerability was identified however it was less apparent when other people were visible in public spaces.

A barrier in respect of using green spaces for leisure was their ongoing maintenance. Green spaces that were poorly maintained were seen as 'no go' areas, deterring use amongst older adults. Poorly maintained green spaces were likely to act as a deterrent.

The provision of green spaces for leisure was seen as beneficial to the health and well-being of local residents and planning for green space seen as a key indicator of an age-friendly community. Green spaces included public parks, private garden spaces and community gardens and allotments. A number of older adults appreciated the restorative potential of green spaces, through the sensory aspects of spending time with nature.

Parks also supported physical well-being in terms of exercise and encouraging people to get outdoors. However, the availability of green space in and of itself was insufficient, rather they needed to have leisure opportunities such as activities, events and spaces

which attracted people to those areas otherwise they were less well used.

Discussion

In this section a comparative discussion of the results from each country is provided by analyzing the following themes: community centres, green spaces and safety and their relationship with leisure in the light of the literature. By comparing both countries, similarities and differences in the experiences of older adults across different socio-cultural contexts can be established.

Importance of CRAS in Brazil and Community Centres in the UK

The existence of “third places” such as CRAS in Brazil and community centres in the UK were highlighted by the study as fundamental to maintain an integrated and active old age through leisure. These places represent a source of formal compensatory leisure activities, i.e., a type of leisure that may not have been part of the older person’s life when they were younger, but which gains prominence in their old age, replacing activities and social circles lost throughout life. The nature of leisure offered by these spaces is formal (JANKE; DAVEY; KLEIBER, 2006), respecting schedules, depending on displacement and demanding a certain effort and organization to participate, which was sometimes seen as an inconvenience by older adults.

Hickman (2012) states that third places in deprived neighbourhoods are likely to be better used than their equivalents in more affluent areas, and play a greater role in the lives of their residents. There are some reasons for this: (i) residents of deprived areas are less likely to interact socially in the workplace because they are more likely to be economically inactive and do not have the opportunity, through a range of factors including poor health and low-income, to interact outside the neighbourhood site; and (ii) infrastructure problems of deprived neighbourhoods and a tendency to receive low public investment.

This lack of basic urban infrastructure is portrayed very strongly in the case studies, while the street and public space are perceived only for their functionality, of displacement. The marginalisation of the population living in these neighbourhoods was very clear in one of the case studies in Brazil, where a health care centre was considered a meeting point for the community. Even without any vocation or recreational function, this space ends up supplying much of the community’s need for socialization.

Thus, in the neighbourhoods studied, sometimes the absence or precariousness of spaces dedicated to leisure led to a great appreciation of social structures that do not have a specific focus on leisure, such as CRAS. The Social Assistance Reference Centre (Cras) is considered the gateway to Social Assistance in Brazil, and it promotes the organization and articulation of the units of the social assistance network and other policies, so its location in areas of social vulnerability is strategic (MINISTÉRIO DA CIDADANIA, 2015). Although it represents one of the major sources of leisure in the communities studied, leisure is only one of its lines of action.

Furthermore, many of these structures have important limitations. These restrictions refer to: the limited number of places to participate in activities, which was cited in relation to CRAS; the physical inaccessibility of the buildings for users with different functional levels; the perception that many community centres are exclusive to permanent or “regular” users (HICKMAN, 2012); among other factors. Thus, the leisure offered by them, although essential in the lives of those who have access to it, ends up being insufficient to meet the needs of all.

Positive Aspects of Green Spaces

In the neighbourhoods studied in Brazil and the UK, the spaces in contact with nature (patios, gardens, vegetable gardens, etc.) are perceived by the older adults as a source of mental health, providing an escape from urban life, the possibility of active or passive leisure, or simple contemplation and relaxation.

Unlike places as CRAS and communities centres, green spaces provide a more informal type of leisure that, being available in some proximity to the home, easily inserts itself into the routine, both of the older person and of family members, young people and children, which gives it an interesting intergenerational appeal. Besides, as they are usually open and public spaces, their configuration already implies that they are accessible to everyone.

All these leisure structures should be considered in the leisure system that is offered in the neighbourhood, in order to respect the individual differences of the older adults (PAPALIA et al., 2009) and not overload certain structures.

Green spaces are perceived as enhancers of community cohesion when they are well maintained. However, this study showed that when there is a lack of maintenance, proper programming or even when they are just ‘urban voids’, they can have the opposite effect, generating community detachment and undermining the sense of place. Green areas in less affluent neighbourhoods in both countries demonstrate that their mere existence does not mean that they have a vocation or are ready for community use.

In the three Brazilian cities, the appropriation and use of green areas and squares by the older adults are affected by maintenance, especially in low-income neighbourhoods. The maintenance problems in the country are so great that residents often relate these spaces with dirt and source of diseases, as in urban streams with open sewage. These degradation conditions lead to a drop in quality and a loss of functions, whether they are for leisure, social activities or have an environmental role. In addition, these spaces can offer risks to their users, including physical accidents, air, soil and visual pollution, flooding and acts of violence (Gomes and Martin, 2017).

Meanwhile, in the UK, participants revealed a great discontent with urban voids, perceived as waste in communities where the lack of leisure spaces is a reality. Thus, the greening of these lands can be seen as turning a problem into an opportunity to strengthen the neighbourhood’s leisure system (SANCHES; PELLEGRINO, 2016). Indeed, the interviewees themselves often demonstrate a desire to create community gardens to occupy these spaces. Porter and McIlvaine-Newsad (2013) point out that the act of gardening is multifaceted and its outcomes are not only based on leisure, but that it contributes significantly to the success of the garden. The authors approach gardening in green spaces as a factor of environmental justice, which can provide food security in low-income contexts, and social capital, which allows for the sharing of community strengths across different generations and the accommodation of each other’s needs while leisure is experienced. Thus, community gardens appear as a potential leisure activity for intergenerationality that can occupy empty or underutilized urban spaces, reducing perceptions of insecurity.

Lack of Safety or Perceived Vulnerability

Insecurity is often the main reason why older people want to stay at home (NAVARRO et al., 2015), acting as a major deterrent to social integration and leisure activities. The issue of insecurity, unlike the other themes, appeared almost unanimously in certain cities like Pelotas. Even in Brasilia, surveillance mechanisms emerged as suggestions

to strengthen community involvement.

This perception is not only conditioned to the spatial factor, but also to the time factor. For example, in Belo Horizonte, the older people tended to feel unsafe during weekends and holidays, due to the lack of policing in the streets, hindering access to leisure activities common to those who work during the week. In the three Brazilian cities, the lack of security affects and limits not only the spaces but also the leisure hours, many older people are restricted to the proximity of their homes, and do not participate in events and evening activities.

In the UK neighbourhoods studied, fear also acts as an important barrier for older people to leave their homes. However, one distinguishing feature was the emphasis on the fact that sometimes the violent stigma comes more from outside the community precisely because it is deprived. This fact, in a way, makes insecurity less of an issue for residents, and is even seen as one of the reasons why the community remains cohesive. This paradox is in line with the Collective Efficacy and Violence Theory, which explains that sociable coexistence may be greater in suburbs that have the highest crime rates, although they lack recreational areas and public services, including public safety (ZALUAR; RIBEIRO, 2009).

Conclusions

The results of this study have shown the key role played by “third places”, such as CRAS in Brazil and community centres in the UK, in order to ensure formal leisure opportunities for older adults particularly in low-income neighbourhoods. In both countries green spaces were also highlighted as a source of informal leisure that promotes physical and mental well-being whilst enhancing community cohesion and the sense of place. On the other hand, the findings related to lack of safety or perceived vulnerability by older people were identified as negative factors that act as a barrier for the older adults to fully enjoy leisure opportunities, especially in more deprived areas.

Based on the results, the low-income neighbourhoods studied here both in Brazil and the UK are likely to have less leisure opportunities which tend to be provided by facilities such as CRAS and communities centres. Although doing their best to offer activities, they are not able to meet the needs of all. This insufficiency tends to be more noticeable in neighbourhoods where informal leisure structures such as green areas are deficient or poorly maintained. Thus, it is understood that in order for certain recreation structures not to be overloaded and for the individualities of older adults to be respected, there is a need to provide a variety of leisure types in the same neighbourhood that meet more formal or more informal demands, of individuals with different levels of physical ability and independence, and of older adult or intergenerational groups and families.

The lack of leisure opportunities particularly in low-income areas can negatively impact on the way older adults experience the sense of place within their neighbourhoods. Places are more than the built form which means they are also made of sense of place, defined in terms of identity, belonging and attachment, in other words the social, psychological and emotional bonds that people have with their environment (MANZO; PERKINS, 2006).

Leisure can enable deeper attachments to place amongst older adults particularly in lower income communities. However, this study has shown a few barriers for older adults to participate in leisure activities such as poorly maintained green spaces, lack of other “third places” and lack of safety. In order to overcome those barriers, it is important that leisure is fully integrated into the healthy and active ageing agendas so

that older adults' participation in leisure supports the development of sense of place within their communities.

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