SEÇÃO: ARTIGO

Researching with older people: an experience in participative mapping and world café techniques

Pesquisando com pessoas idosas: uma experiência com as técnicas de mapeamento participativo e world café

Investigar con personas mayores: una experiencia en tecnicas de mapeo participativo y world café

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Abstract: The multidimensionality of the aging process involves changes in different capacities. The age-friendly cities strategy addressed the need for adaptations in urban spaces that meets the demands of older people's well-being. Thus, the aim of this study was to explore how Participative Mapping and World Café techniques could assist in identifying challenges to the delivery of services and resources to create communities that promote active aging, from the perspectives of older people and stakeholders. The techniques generated co-constructed discussion and shared understandings about the barriers residents face in negotiating and accessing services. Demands associated with the precariousness of local infrastructure, the absence of leisure activities, and a generalized feeling of insecurity in their neighborhoods were recurring themes. The demands led to the conclusion that for healthy aging, the interrelation of objective and subjective factors that take into account the multidimensionality of old age will enable the active participation.

Keywords: age-friendly cities, older people, participative mapping, world café, urban spaces

Resumo: A multidimensionalidade do processo de envelhecimento envolve mudanças em distintas capacidades. A estratégia de cidades amigáveis ao envelhecimento prevê a necessidade de adaptações nos espaços urbanos que atendam às demandas de bem-estar da pessoa idosa. Assim, o objetivo desse estudo foi explorar como as técnicas de Mapeamento Participativo e *World Café* poderiam auxiliar na identificação de desafios para a oferta de serviços e recursos para criar comunidades promotoras de envelhecimento ativo, a partir da perspectiva de idosos e *stakeholders*. As técnicas geraram discussões coconstruídas e entendimentos compartilhados sobre as barreiras enfrentadas ao negociar e acessar os serviços. Demandas associadas à precariedade da infraestrutura local, à ausência de atividades de lazer e a um sentimento generalizado de insegurança foram temas recorrentes. As demandas levaram à conclusão de que para o envelhecimento saudável, a interrelação de fatores objetivos e subjetivos que considerem a multidimensionalidade da velhice possibilitará a participação ativa dessa população.

Palavras-chave: comunidades amigáveis ao envelhecimento, pessoa idosa, mapeamento participativo, world café, espaços urbanos

Resumen: La multidimensionalidad del proceso de envejecimiento implica cambios en diferentes capacidades. La estrategia de ciudades amigables con las personas mayores prevé la necesidad de adaptaciones en los espacios urbanos que respondan a las demandas del bienestar de las personas mayores.

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Así, el objetivo de este estudio fue explorar cómo las técnicas de Mapeo Participativo y World Café podrían ayudar a identificar desafíos para la prestación de servicios y características para crear comunidades que promuevan el envejecimiento activo, desde la perspectiva de las personas mayores y stakeholders. Las técnicas generaron discusiones co-construidas y entendimientos compartidos sobre las barreras que enfrentan los residentes para negociar y acceder a los servicios. Las demandas asociadas a la precariedad de la infraestructura local, la ausencia de actividades de esparcimiento y un sentimiento generalizado de inseguridad en sus barrios fueron temas recurrentes. Las demandas llevaron a la conclusión de que para un envejecimiento saludable, la interrelación de factores objetivos y subjetivos que tienen en cuenta la multi-dimensionalidad de la vejez permitirá la participación activa.

Palabras clave: ciudades amigables con las personas mayores, personas mayores, mapeo participativo, world café, espacios urbanos

The release of the World Health Organization (WHO) "Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide" in 2007 led to a concerted focus on how urban environments can support the quality of life of older people. Since then, the concept of age-friendly communities has expanded as a response to the growing number of persons 65 and over, the increase in life expectancy and the need to create the resources and supports for active ageing (Fitzgerald & Caro, 2014).

Considering that the "social person experience transitions that are socially created, socially recognized and socially shared" (Hagestad & Neugarten, 1985:35), across the life course, ageing experiences are influenced by a set of temporal dimensions which are biological, social and historical in nature. The multidimensionality of the aging process involves changes in physical, cognitive and social capacities, which impacts the relationship between the older person, their environments and family contexts (Nieboer & Cramm, 2017). The age-friendly cities strategy explores adaptations to urban environments that meet the demands of older people's physical and social wellbeing. This perspective indicates the need to rethink the planning of urban spaces in order to address the diversity of the ageing process.

The needs and preferences of the older population are diverse, which makes the task of urban environments even more complex. The possibility of participating in the decision-making process with regard to services appropriate to these demands has been considered increasingly essential, both for older adults who want to be heard and influence choices, as well as for policymakers, practitioners and researchers who need to recognize that these voices are important to ensure the well-being of the people (Iwarsson et al., 2019). Enabling this involvement in the planning and implementation of urban spaces is still a challenge. Handler (2014, p. 86) states that older people remain "marginalized in process of urban development" as a result of "an 'underlying ageism' that characterizes much of urban planning process where older people are easily represented as passive victims of urban change. Community based participatory research approaches have as a basic principle underlined need to collaborate alongside older people in the process, encouraging partnership between experts and users, which despite being predicated on an inclusive process, can also create tensions and conflicts (Löfqvist et al., 2019; O'Sullivan, 2018; Sixsmith et al., 2017).

Participatory methods include the user or community in the decision-making process of the research, where they become active participants whose perspective and experiences are taken into account in order to co-create or co-produce solutions (Rémillard-Boilard et al., 2017). Support for bottom-down solutions in ageing research is increasing due to the fact that the experiences of older people are dynamic and diverse and not yet understood by most of those responsible for decision making in society. However, participatory methods offer an opportunity to work alongside older people in order to develop solutions that are grounded in the experiences of older people (Fang et al., 2016; Iwarsson et al., 2019).

Participative Mapping workshops and World Café meetings are amongst these participatory methods that aim to include the targeted population in the development of ageing-in-place project proposals and course of action. Ageing-in--place can be understood as the experience older people have of remaining living in their respective communities and neighborhoods where they have

strong social and affective bonds where people wish to retain a sense of independence and autonomy, and where community involvement can be sustained (Wiles et al., 2011).

Participative Mapping is a research technique that allows the opportunity to understand the daily experiences of community residents through the use of mapping techniques. This can raise awareness of community issues, providing a space for dialogue where participants can be empowered and become active participants in the decision-making process (Corbett, 2009). The World Café technique, proposed by Brown and Isaacs (2001), seeks to encourage collaboration among participants to find solutions according to specific issues that mobilize a group that have some specific issues in common. World Cafes act as the opportunity to resolve conflicts and overcome challenges, by connecting people in an informal environment that encourages exploration of issues significant to the group (Teza et al., 2013).

Participatory research assumes that both the researcher and the participants of the research have control of the narrative of what is being studied and that the latter must be active collaborators in the research process, in which their perceptions, attitudes and representations are on equal terms as to the researcher's knowledge to help guide the process (Gondim, 2003). Participative Mapping and World Café differ from other qualitative techniques, such as focus groups, in that it offers the opportunity for collaborative dialogue to discuss the contents and outcomes of the meetings together with the participants whilst simultaneously searching for solutions to the research questions during the application of the techniques. Thus, it offers the opportunity for the narrative to be co-constructed and the emergent research and proposed interventions are coproduced. Participative Mapping and World Café are aimed at instigating reflections, forming relationships and ensuring dialogue and conversation is an interpretive and meaning-making process, while providing a forum to share knowledge and insights amongst participants, and not only between researchers and participants (Hurley &

Brown, 2009).

In ensuring older residents' perspectives are central in designing urban settings, the objective of this study was to explore how Participative Mapping workshops and World Café meetings could assist in identifying those services, amenities and features required to create age-friendly communities that promote healthy cities and active aging in a Brazilian context, from the local elderly residents' and stakeholders viewpoint. This research is part of a larger project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) called "Place-Making with Older People: Towards Age-Friendly Communities", conducted from 2016 to 2019, a partnership between Brazilian and UK universities.

Method

The study followed a qualitative and participatory cross-sectional design with older participants from three locations in the city of Brasilia, Brazil's capital. Each neighborhood differed in terms of socioeconomic status (high-, medium- and low-income), urban characteristics and housing density (apartments with and without lifts, and houses), social and urban infrastructure (sanitation, mobility, energy and telecommunication from good to precarious), access to services, green areas and connections between neighbors (emotional proximity close to distant).

Firstly, potential participants were contacted by telephone or while they walked in their neighborhood. Individual interviews were scheduled as the first part of the larger project, conducted in the homes of the participants. This phase sought to explore how the participants expressed attachment to their community with a focus on identifying opportunities, challenges, facilitators and barriers through capturing everyday routines and access to and use of spaces and services. These preliminary data supported the conduction of the workshops and meetings.

Participants

In all, 16 seniors (F = 14; M = 2) participated in the Participative Mapping Workshops. In the World

Café meetings 19 seniors (F = 12; M = 7) participated and although all suitable stakeholders and community representatives were invited, only 5 appeared. The older adult participants were aged between 60 and 88 years.

The procedures followed the parameters of the Resolution 466/12 of the National Council of the Ethics Committee on Research with human beings, under approval number 4.033.823 (CAAE: 70931517.1.1001.5317).

Procedures

Three Participative Mapping workshops were held in Brasília, one in each case study neighborhood and provided an opportunity to bring together participants to share experiences on facilitators and barriers to ageing-in-place. Afternoon coffee and tea were served during Participative Mapping workshops, while participants and facilitators sat around a local map during about 70 minutes in each neighbourhood. The maps, designed by one architect of the team, showed the blocks, streets, commercial area and urban infrastructure present in each neighborhood. Starting from questions about their daily lives, frequent use places, perceived positive and negative aspects in their surroundings, the participants pointed out on the map with post-its and tacks where they experienced challenges and opportunities in respect of ageing in the community.

One World Café meeting was undertaken in each case study neighbourhood and were designed to bring together older people, stakeholders and community representatives. Photographs from earlier stages of the research were selected to contextualize the discussion and offer participants a chance to put themselves in their home environments and reflect on them. These photographs were captured for the composition of photographic diaries in the first phase of the study, in which the participants received a camera to register significant elements of their relationship with the neighborhood.

From the discussions in the Participative Mapping workshops, the main challenges of living and ageing in each neighborhood were highlighted. At the World Café meetings, the themes previously listed were presented to be discussed with older people and stakeholders at each locality in order to co-construct strategies to overcome these challenges. The discussion started from comments on the photos and questions about the themes raised in the mapping workshops. During the World Café workshop, the discussion focused on three main themes previously identified in the Participative Mapping workshops: community infrastructure, safety and security, and involvement in local activities.

The World Café meetings aimed to deepen the topics of greatest relevance and concern to each neighborhood, and to seek solutions to those priority areas with representative members, such as community mayors, building managers, shop owners, who had the potential to intervene in some way to make improvements in the locality. To synthesize the comments from each theme and organize the participants' speeches, cardboards and brushes of various colors were used. As the participants made their statements, they were noted on each of the three cardboard on the table (A2 paper size - 420mm X 594mm).

The contents of each Participative Mapping workshop and World Café meeting were fully recorded and transcribed by the researchers. The content analysis technique (Bardin, 2010) was used to organize and define the categories. To guide the analysis, we sought to identify what key services and amenities are needed to create age-friendly communities with the resources available in each community.

Results

Participative Mapping Workshops

The structure of the workshops allowed the social relations and group dynamics of the residents to play out, offering an opportunity to bring people together around a common objective. Residents who had been living in the same neighborhood for decades were able to meet some of their neighbors for the first time during the meeting, and to identify how some of the issues

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they faced related to the experiences of others, therefore allowing shared commonalities and differences within the context of ageing in the neighbourhood to emerge.

The method enabled differences in understandings to be identified between participants from low-income neighborhoods to those from high- and medium-income communities. At the low-income neighbourhood, residents demonstrated having rapport and familiarity with each other. These residents that usually had contact through daily activities, they had already developed a sense of trust and rapport with each other which emerged in the fluid dynamics of conversation and relationality with each other in the workshops. In all three case study, however, there was a low turnout from participants at the workshops, which hindered a more complete overview of all the challenges faced by older people, but which allowed for more focused and concentrated discussion with those who did participate. Another setback from utilizing maps was the difficulty that some participants had in situating their homes and their daily activities on the map.

In the three studied locations a strong theme was the reported isolation of older people, either due to a lack of activities, barriers to access, or perceived insecurity. The fact that, except in the low-income neighbourhood, most of the participants did not know anyone at the meetings, even though they had been living next to each other for decades, emphasizes the absence of everyday contact within the community in the medium and high-income neighbourhoods. Even so, it was evident, during the group discussion, that residents were concerned about their respective neighborhoods, and wanted to do something to improve their environments highlighting the active role that older people often want to place in their community. In the three locations, it was found that at least one of the participants took on the role of leader of the community at some level, whether trying to mobilize their peers, or effectively carrying out actions within the neighborhood.

In the three study sites, as has been evidenced in other research with older adults, the participants were predominantly female. Participants from study cases expressed similar concerns regarding their feelings of insecurity and discontentment with lack of police visibility in their neighborhoods, their demands for more group activities near their homes involving older adults, and a desire for more supportive urban infrastructure (ramps, benches, horizontal and vertical traffic signs) and sidewalk maintenance in places where they usually spend most of their time, like commercial and residential areas. Residents from all case study locals also agreed that urban green areas and parks surrounding or near their homes were a source of great satisfaction and tranquility, that mobilized them in coming together to conserve the area. One substantial divergence from participants in the low-income neighbourhood to those of high and medium-income was those residents lack of access and transportation to the city's resources, such as commerce, health and police services, as well as to sites dedicated to leisure activities. Some reports described sportive activities carried out in previous years in the parking area of the local park, however, the duration of the proposed activities was short due to the low adherence and the inadequacy of the space for the development of appropriate activities, without protection from the sun or rain.

The Participative Mapping Workshops made it possible to quickly comprehend the most frequent barriers older people faced in their daily lives in their neighborhoods. In order to deepen discussion on the most commented issues, three key themes (security, infrastructure and leisure activities) were identified to direct the discussions in the World Café meetings.

World Café Meetings

As in the Participative Mapping workshops, there was a difficulty in recruiting residents, there was also challenges in recruiting stakeholders into the discussion group. Despite the fact that stakeholders were contacted personally and showed themselves to be helpful and accessible when the invitations were delivered, few actually

attended. In the medium-income neighborhood three shop owners were present, in the high-income neighborhood there was the presence of the community mayor and the director and vice director of the local school and, in the low-income neighborhood, the community mayor, the health center team and the local school showed support when being invited, but did not attend. One of the possible justifications for the lack of stakeholder involvement was the time chosen. It was decided to hold the meeting in the afternoon, during business hours, as it was considered a more appropriate time for older people. Another explanation for the low attendance could be the novelty of the technique and inexperience of local stakeholders in responding to community-based decisions to find solutions to local problems, as opposed to more hierarchical approaches to engagement and consultation that often dominate. Due to these factors, each World Café was composed of just one table at which the three listed themes were discussed (security, infrastructure and leisure opportunities) during about 90 minutes in each local.

In the World Café Meetings, there was a greater number of male participants. The comments of the participants proved to be quite similar to those of the Participative Mapping workshops, however, the proposals for solving the challenges in the areas of security, infrastructure and leisure were able to be explored and unpacked in more detail. Having stakeholder presence in the mapping workshops provided an opportunity to explore gaps in existing service provision.

Proposals for the improvement of security included renovation of old police posts in the high-income neighborhood, creation of communication channels between residents and shop owners to report crimes and better lighting in medium-income neighborhoods, and intensification of policing on the low-income neighborhood. Regarding infrastructure, suggestions of renovations to the sidewalk were made in all three neighborhoods, as well as demands for the installation of urban public equipment, such as accessibility ramps, cycle paths and car locks,

with financial resources from residents, while at the low-income neighborhood the additional suggestion of the implementation of mechanisms for the drainage of rainwater was made. The importance of these modifications lies in facilitating the mobility of residents, in order to promote navigation in the community and the access of the services more effectively.

Lastly, as for the use of public spaces, in all three neighborhoods there were demands for affordable leisure and sports activities in which older people could participate near their homes. To this end, participants at the high and low-income neighborhoods suggested the renovation of unused public spaces in their communities. Additionally, residents of the medium-income neighborhood called for a partnership of the community with private companies in order to maintain playgrounds and other urban public facilities such as community meeting points with gym equipment. These suggestions reflect the interest in environments that promote intergenerational relationships, especially between grandparents and grandchildren.

Most of the participants who attended the workshops were not the same as the ones who were present at the Participative Mapping meetings, however, it was clear that the themes selected from the Participative Mapping discussions were in agreement with the demands presented by participants at the World Café, which made it easier to discuss possible solutions.

Discussion

The Participative Mapping workshops and World Café meetings generated a debate between participants about the barriers residents face in their daily life to access services, in which several of the parameters cited in the age-friendly city (WHO, 2008) were mentioned. Demands associated with the precariousness of local infrastructure, the absence of leisure and sportive activities for older people, and a generalized feeling of insecurity in their neighborhoods were recurring themes among older people in the three study sites and are obstacles that researchers have

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highlighted on the impact on healthy and active ageing (Cozens & Love, 2015; Levasseur et al., 2017; Wiles et al., 2011).

The challenges older adults face in their daily lives vary depending on where they live, their socioeconomical status, the resources available, among other contextual factors which highlight inequities and inequalities in the ageing process. In this sense, different groups and communities will have different needs which the research design must be sensitive to taking into account communities' singularities and demands (Löfqvist et al., 2019). To this end, participatory research allows users to share knowledge and participate on equal terms with researchers by sharing their experiences, on the basis that complex social problems, need to be addressed by all groups and institutions involved (Fang et al., 2016). From this perspective, both methods were applied with the goal to give voice and empower older people, to challenges the top-down delivery of policies and interventions (Martin et al., 2019). The participatory techniques used in this research were applied in a way to complement each other.

The Participative Mapping workshops were a starting point for that collaborative discussion which established the foundation for the discussions. From here it was possible to determine the predominant barriers participants encountered when ageing-in-place. After, World Café meetings served to foster a collaborative learning environment where the themes that emerged from the mappings could be discussed more deeply and together with stakeholders from local institutions that were familiar with the issues that were being debated. This enabled the community, researchers and policymakers and stakeholders to pool resources to find ways to overcome these challenges with strategies that had not been previously thought about.

One example is the network created between residents and local commerce owners in the middle-income neighborhood to help establish a communication line in case robberies were to happen. The setting of the World Café helped promote this cooperation, since neighbors and shop owners were not previously acquainted and did not know other people were going through the same situations as them. Something similar happened during discussions on the theme of infrastructure maintenance in the medium and high-income neighborhoods and of provision of activities for older people in all sites.

According to Iwarsson et al., (2019), this context-driven way of finding alternatives to overcome environmental barriers is beneficial for both researchers and citizens affected by these barriers, as the outcomes have more relevance, impact, and are already validated by the community and participants, which increases their chances to be implemented and become incorporated within the everyday lives of local people.

The alliance of older residents to overcome shared problems in their neighborhood can also be used to produce positive health outcomes. When they feel responsible for their surroundings, communities strengthen their affective attachment to it, as well as their sense of collective responsibility and identity. Chapin III and Knapp (2015) affirm that as one gets older in a certain place, exchanges of experiences involving significant events links people to places, forming a bond that influences the way people perceive and evaluate the environment around them. This affective dimension helps promote well-being and quality of life, reducing the consequences of urban ills (Perlaviciute & Steg, 2012; Silva & Elali, 2015).

The construction of age-friendly communities has specificities depending on the urban and social context in which it occurs, with different demands arising according to the physical, cultural and socioeconomic reality in which the neighborhood is located (Sixsmith et al., 2017), which was made clear by observing the dynamics of Participative Mapping and World Café sessions in each site. The neighborhoods with greater affluence, for example, felt in a position to demand more actions in order to make the location safer, with a more intense presence of the police force and installation of infrastructure that aims to prevent the occurrence of crimes.

This situation demonstrates the feeling of the low-income residents as if their voices are not heard in the process to address security issues more effectively. In the three locations researched, however, the need for activities and infrastructure was thought necessary to encourage older people to cultivate intergenerational social relationships and to allow the active involvement of this group within the environment.

Final considerations

In general, the workshops were an opportunity for neighbors to get to know each other personally, forming new connections in the neighborhood. Another potentiality of this activity was the use of maps, which, being interactive, helped to guide the discussion. The maps, therefore, acted as useful instruments to anchor the participants' attention around the important aspects of the neighborhood.

The main limitation perceived in the Participative Mapping workshops was the difficulty in recruiting residents. When the invitations were delivered, the residents confirmed their availability to participate, however, not all that confirmed their participation, did show up. The few older adults appeared unaccompanied, and initially participated in the discussion in a reserved manner. This factor of low participation by residents became a point of discussion among participants in the three sites. It was evident that in other types of meetings and events promoted by the community, the presence of older people is scarce in collective activities. The absence of several invited participants was also noted in the World Café workshops, which compelled the discussions to occur with available stakeholders. The political scenario may also have contributed to the low participation. In addition to the proximity of the elections, there was discontent with the poor governmental relationship established in recent years, and a feeling of distrust about the actual possibility of local change.

In addition to the political scenario, other reasons that may have contributed to this low participation would be the perception of the older people that their opinions have little influence on local changes; their limited access to information that circulates in the neighborhood (i.e., e-mail and social media) which, sometimes, are related to collective events; difficulty in circulating in the area; and the fear that this involvement may generate stress due to conflicting situations. In this sense, future studies may use different strategies for recruiting participants to increase involvement. An alternative would be to seek associations with institutions or groups already formed in the neighborhood and even hold workshops in their venues.

The contents of the discussions described in the Participative Mapping Workshops and World Café sessions allowed for co-constructed dialogue on specific themes. In addition, it provides the opportunity to reflect on the specifics to be considered in the construction of proposals for local improvements. The demands of older people for age-friendly communities went beyond their health needs and included the desire for improvements in the social dimension of their daily lives, as well as for more autonomy. As shown in this study, ways to achieve some of these goals can be found through participative research and the empowerment of older people in the process.

The demands for modifications in the maintenance of public spaces, the addition of urban equipment, the creation of community activities, and the need for local mobilization to promote change led to the conclusion that for healthy aging, the interrelationship of objective and subjective factors that consider the multidimensionality of old age will enable the active participation of older people in their neighborhoods. In this context, the use of participatory research methods can become an ally for the identification and forwarding of demands that integrate the heterogeneity of this population and its relations with the place.

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