

Special Session Proposal

Policies and Services for Healthy and Active Ageing: Challenges and Perspectives for the Post-Covid-19 Ageing Society

Mina Akhavan (Politecnico di Milano, Italy; mina.akhavan@polimi.it)

Daniele Crotti (University of Insubria, Italy; daniele.crotti@uninsubria.it)

Elena Maggi (University of Insubria, Italy; elena.maggi@uninsubria.it)

Evangelia Pantelaki (University of Insubria, Italy; e.pantelaki@uninsubria.it)

Federica Rossi (Politecnico di Milano, Italy; federicamaria.rossi@polimi.it)

Our societies are ageing. According to the OECD (2015) survey, ageing societies are facing various issues and challenges regarding their infrastructures and urban development patterns, social isolation and lack of accessibility to fundamental services. Although this trend is not consistent in all EU-28 member states, it is estimated that 28.5% of the European population in 2050 will be aged 65 years or over, compared to the current 19.7% (EUROSTAT, 2020). Moreover, the Covid-19 aftermath has disproportionately affected vulnerable age groups, such as the older adults (we refer to the 65 years and older) (Akhavan et al., 2020). This trend brings about questions regarding their accessibility to fundamental services, such as food, medicine and healthcare.

Some scholars have discussed travel and accessibility as important elements of well-being and quality of life in older adults (Banister and Bowling, 2004), taking into account ageing in place (the neighbourhood environment), social activities and health issues. Making reference to the concept of 'healthy and active ageing', introduced by the World Health Organisation (2002) and promoted by the European commission (2013), it is defined as "the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age" (WHO, 2002). A key determinant of active ageing concerns the 'health and social service systems' and the access to quality primary health care. The Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities was established in 2010 by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2018) as a formal framework that promotes healthy ageing in a range of sectors such as built environment, transport, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication, community support and health services. Furthermore, the Active Ageing Index (European Commission, 2013) is a powerful tool that can help decision makers in appraising the current state of the ageing societies and evaluating the results of their initiatives. Currently, policymakers are facing serious challenges in coordinating strictly related fields (i.e., health, economic and social system). Equally, scholars worldwide from varied disciplines are systematically studying the changes imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic on daily life, to help decision makers in designing tailored policies. Thus, within this context, this special session calls for contributions that follow theoretical perspectives or provide empirical evidence (interdisciplinary approaches are indeed encouraged) in understanding the challenges of an ageing society related to the older adult's issues in mobility and accessibility to services and its impact on their well-being and quality of life. More specifically, the intention is to collect and exchange ideas and discuss findings around the following research questions:

How has the sanitary emergency affected the principal domains of the healthy ageing framework?

How do the ageing generations satisfy their everyday needs with respect to transportation and mobility issues, social participation, housing and maintenance of health state and how this will change in the future?

Considering the current pandemic, what is the role of public policy in responding to the mobility needs of an ageing society, to ensure a healthy and active ageing, and to enhance the well-being of the senior citizens?

What is the importance and role of digital technologies and promoting a digital culture in changing the patterns of mobility and accessibility among the older adults?

The proposed special session continues the following two sessions of the previous years:

‘Policies and Services for Healthy Ageing and Well-being in Later Life’, at 60th ERSA Congress in Bolzano (on-line) (organized by the same group of the current session)

‘Transportation and Mobility in an Ageing Society. Perspectives, Trends and Drivers’, at 59th ERSA Congress in Lyon (organized by Mina Akhavan)

The organizers of this special session are part of the the two projects, financed by the Italian Cariplo Foundation, “HAPPY - Health, Accessibility, Public transport Policies for elderly” (2019-2021) and “MOBILAGE - Mobility and ageing: daily life and welfare supportive networks at the neighbourhood level” (2018-2020).

References

Akhavan, M., Mariotti, I., Rossi, F. (2020). COVID-19 outbreak and the older adults in Italy: two faces of the sociality. RSAI Newsletter, New series 19 - May 2020.

Banister, D., Bowling, A. (2004) Quality of life for the elderly: The transport dimension. Transport Policy, 11(2), 105–115.

European Commission (2013). Introducing the Active Ageing Index: Policy Brief.

EUROSTAT (2020). Ageing Europe-looking at the lives of older people in the EU

OECD (2015). Ageing in Cities; OECD Publishing: Paris, France, 2015; ISBN 9789264231146.

World Health Organization (2018). The Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities: Looking back over the last decade, looking forward to the next.

World Health Organisation (2002). Active Ageing: A Policy Framework. World Health Organisation, Geneva.