

Friendly cities with vulnerable groups. A comparative perspective Cuba-Spain

Ciudades amigables con colectivos vulnerables Una perspectiva comparada Cuba-España

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Resumen.

Este artículo se enmarca dentro del Proyecto de Cooperación Internacional "Capacitación en accesibilidad universal para la gestión estratégica del envejecimiento poblacional en la provincia de Villa Clara (Cuba)", financiado por la Consejería de Fomento, Infraestructuras y Ordenación del Territorio de la Junta de Andalucía (2018/2020). Una ciudad amigable con las personas mayores es aquella que alienta el envejecimiento activo poblacional mediante las oportunidades de salud, participación y seguridad. El objetivo de este estudio es poner en valor la importancia de promover ciudades amigables con los colectivos más vulnerables, centrándonos en el de personas mayores, siendo éstas uno de los grupos de población que aparecen referenciados en la Carta Mundial de Derecho a la Ciudad de manera específica como objetos prioritarios de atención. Para ello, se ha llevado a cabo una revisión sistemática de la literatura existente en el tema, realizando una comparativa entre Cuba y España. Como resultados podemos señalar que, si bien existen en ambos países importantes avances, aún queda un largo camino por recorrer. Es necesario seguir desarrollando estrategias de inclusión para evitar las dificultades de acceso e integración de la ciudadanía en general y los colectivos más vulnerables en particular.

Palabras clave: lúdico, ensino, aprendizagem, interação, socialização

Abstract.

This article is part of the International Cooperation Project "Training in universal accessibility for the strategic management of population aging in the province of Villa Clara (Cuba)", funded by the Ministry of Development, Infrastructure and Spatial Planning of the Junta de Andalucía

(2018/2020). A city friendly to older people is one that encourages active population aging through opportunities for health, participation and safety. The objective of this study is to value the importance of promoting cities that are friendly towards the most vulnerable groups, focusing on the elderly, being one of the population groups that are referenced specifically in the World Charter on the Right to the City as priority objects of attention. To do this, a systematic review of the existing literature on the subject has been carried out, making a comparison between Cuba and Spain. As results we can point out that, although there are important advances in both countries, there is still a long way to go. It is necessary to continue developing inclusion strategies to avoid the integration and access difficulties of citizens in general and the most vulnerable groups in particular.

Keywords: city, citizenship, population aging, urban design, public space, universal accessibility

1.-Introduction.

The city constitutes itself as a key place for the construction of identities. In a globalized world, one of the great challenges that cities face in order to be innovative is the need to be designed to adapt to the requirements of their inhabitants and visitors, taking into account their diversity: age, gender, functional capacities, cultural level, country of origin, etc., and especially to ensure that those at risk of exclusion have access to additional guarantees in order to fully enjoy their rights and participate in economic, social and cultural events in equality conditions. According to the United Nations report on the demographic situation in the world, currently more than half of the world population lives in cities. According to forecasts, by 2030, about three out of five people in the world will live in a city, and the number of urban inhabitants in less developed regions will be almost four times greater than in developed regions. This will continue to be driven by two factors: the persistent preference of people to move from rural to urban areas and the population growth over the next 35 years. These two factors combined will add 2.5 billion people to the urban population by 2050 (United Nations, 2014). Furthermore, in the sociodemographic context in which we find ourselves, we can highlight two important factors: demographic changes, with a progressive aging of the population and a significant increase in life expectancy.

In this sense, from the logic of active aging, the accessibility of older people must be taken into account, both to the physical and symbolic spaces that legitimize the option of belonging. This determines the need to eliminate not only architectural but also social barriers from an institutional policy, coherent social practices and the promotion of an education and culture of aging.

In order to become a free citizen, it is a must to respect and monitor the accessibility chain and have proactive administrations so that cities represent meeting and development points for the people who live in them, regardless of their age, their capabilities and resources. We cannot forget that the more hostile the city, the less it allows its citizens to exercise the right to it.

Therefore, progress must be made towards a new inclusive paradigm of participation and citizenship, where older people acquire a special role as active subjects for the development of rights, in accordance with the new agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which urges in its third and eleventh objectives respectively to "ensure healthy lives and

promote well-being for all at all ages" and "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable".

Consequently, it can be assumed that an essential part of the implementation of public policies is materialized through the urban form, is present in the tools used to manage the territories. In such a way that the implicit relationship between ecological context and cultural content is expressed through urban design.

Urban design must be able to foresee, guide and develop mechanisms for safeguarding the material and immaterial values that cities treasure. It constitutes a propitious framework for the creation of an environment of economic sustainability where the forms of occupation, incorporation, appropriation and territorial organization are related to the environmental, social and cultural dimensions in an optimal, integrated and participatory way. Public space can fulfill different functions in the city. It is common to find extreme and contradictory positions that conceive it as a space for learning, freedom or control. It is, therefore, a stage of social conflict endowed with one or another function depending on the social and political weights and counterweights.

2.-Study methodology.

The conduct of the study is based on a systematic review of the literature. For this, the first thing that is determined are the keywords used for the operationalization of the search. It was considered appropriate to use the concepts: The city from anthropological and sociological perspectives; city; friendly city; aging; adults; elders; urban management; governance. The search for studies and information was carried out systematically in the Web of Science, Scopus and Dialnet databases; in the specialized academic search engine Google Scholar and in relevant web pages for the subject.

The methodological approach was considered from the establishment of the category of "daily life spaces" as a unit of analysis. This stems from the consideration of the places in which, the processes of production and reproduction of meanings and valuations about what is experienced take place.

From the perspective of active aging, understood as the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and safety in order to improve the quality of life as people age, it connotes the qualities of the spaces in which meanings and valuations on old age are produced and reproduced, and determines a position and a social action against it.

At the same time, the understanding of spatial mediation in the management of population aging, as a fundamental objective of the study, highlights the relevance of the physical structure, as well as that of the psychosocial space built through established social relationships. Likewise, the reciprocal influence of both.

The daily life space represents a social framework in which physical and symbolic space come together from the form-content relationship. Their understanding reveals the potential of making population aging management a place for the promotion of intergenerational learning communities based on daily social practices.

3.-The right to the city.

The right to the city is not a new proposal. In 1968 Henri Lefebvre, in his book "The right to the city", analyzed the negative impact on citizens when the city is at the service of capital. The

right to the city is to establish the possibility of good living for all people, and to make the city the meeting place for the construction of collective life. The right to the city is the possibility of building a city in which citizens can live with dignity, recognize themselves as part of it, and where the equitable distribution of different types of resources is possible: education, health, housing, social services, etc.

As Harvey (2009) affirms, there is the right for everyone to create cities that respond to human needs, transforming the city into something radically different. The right to the city is based on a dynamic of progress and conquest, in which social movements and citizen participation are the fundamental engine to achieve it.

Very important in this process was the elaboration of the World Charter for the Right to the City (WCRC), articulated by the Habitat International Coalition in 2004. This letter seeks to collect the commitments and measures that must be assumed by civil society, local and national governments, parliamentarians and international organizations so that all people live with dignity in the cities. In it, the right to the city is planted as the equitable usufruct of cities within the principles of sustainability and social justice. It is understood as the collective right of the inhabitants of the city, especially of the vulnerable and disadvantaged impoverished groups, which gives them the legitimacy of action and organization, based on their uses and customs, with the aim of achieving the full exercise of the right to an adequate life pattern.

The WCRC is based on a fundamental principle: the full exercise of citizenship, understood as the realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, ensuring the dignity and collective well-being of the city's inhabitants in conditions of equality and justice, as well as full respect for the production and social management of the habitat.

Based on this principle, citizen participation becomes a key aspect in the design or redesign of the city:

- Democratic management of the city, understood as the control and participation of society, through direct and representative forms, in the planning and government of cities, prioritizing the strengthening and autonomy of local public administrations and popular organizations.
- The social function of property and the city, understood as the prevalence, in the formulation and implementation of urban policies, of the common interest over the individual property right; implies the socially fair and environmentally sustainable use of urban space.

According to the Dictionary of the Spanish Language, participating means "being part", "taking part" and "having part". Along these lines, González and Marín (2005, p. 43) propose participation as:

- Being a part, having a clear identification with the processes and situations that affect them as a community. The internalization and recognition of the reality that is lived and self-location in front of these processes in an active and reflective way.
- Having a part is the active dimension of participation, it is about not waiting for others to solve problems.
- Take part, understand the commitment that is made with reality, taking on specific tasks, proposing and acting

Therefore, taking into account that the city is a meeting and exchange space par excellence, it is configured as an optimal setting for the participation of older adults and the full development of their rights...

In short, the right to the city broadens the traditional focus on improving people's quality of life, focused on housing and the neighborhood, to encompass quality of life at the city level and in its rural environment, as a protection mechanism for the population that lives in cities or regions in an accelerated urbanization process. This implies emphasizing a new way of promoting, respecting, defending and realizing the civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights guaranteed in regional and international human rights instruments.

4.-City and aging. A scenario of change in the 21st century.

The 21st century is configured as a stage for change and substantial transformations with regard to urban forms and functions and, consequently, for the relationship between the city and citizens. Likewise, the progressive aging of the world population represents one of the greatest socioeconomic challenges in the history of Humanity.

In this sense, aging and urbanization represent two characteristic elements of today's society, and at the same time important challenges in that cities must be designed to respond to the needs of their citizens and, therefore, provide facilitating living environments for all people. without any exclusion from an integral and innovative prism. To do this, they must provide structures and services that support the well-being and productivity of their residents, and that requires them to be facilitating and, when necessary, supportive living environments to compensate for personal (physical, cognitive ...) and social changes associated with the different conditions and stages of anybody's life.

One of the most analyzed topics in studies about population in urban areas, in addition to demographic indicators, is that of social structure and social stratification, as well as its spatial expression. In this way, analyzing the main factors of social stratification and the levels in which it operates, allows inscribing to them concepts, themes or approaches of great interest such as, among others, residential segregation, and its territorial implications of exclusion and social vulnerability.

The concept of sociodemographic vulnerability, increasingly related to population factors, must be linked to the incapacity or difficulties that certain people or groups of people present to face a threatening phenomenon and / or recover from it later.

Similarly, following Alguacil (2006, p. 161), this notion of vulnerability can refer to "both social groups and territories at risk or in decline". In this sense, the factors of exclusion from public space can be synthesized in a triple classification:

- a) Factors of a physical-urbanistic character, which as a general rule tend to affect urban peripheries and historic centers as they tend to present various variables of urban degradation such as distances, architectural barriers, lack of equipment or deterioration, among others.
- b) Factors associated with economic activities. In this sense, it is worth highlighting the exclusively residential function of some peripheral neighborhoods, declining industrial areas, and the decline of small commerce in these urban sectors, which paradoxically often leads to marginal activities.
- c) Social factors, among which it can be pointed out that the homogeneity of poverty contrasts with the heterogeneity of the processes that have led to it, being the weakening of social network, social segmentation, social deterioration and the perception of abandonment its main manifestations in public spaces.

4.1.-Demographic trends. A comparative perspective.

Since the end of the last century and due to, among other factors, the prolongation of life expectancy and the decrease in the number of births, the percentage of people over 60 years of age has been increasing faster than the rest of the age groups in most countries. (World Health Organization [WHO], 2017).

Cuba is a country with an advanced demographic transition, low mortality and fertility palpable in less time than in European countries, like the rest of Latin American countries. Also its migration with negative signs accelerates the phenomenon. With a level below population replacement for more than 40 years and high life expectancy at birth, the aging of the population has become part of Cuban society and family.

In 2018, 2,286,948 people over the age of 60 resided in the country, which represents 20.4% of the total population, and 19% in rural areas. The oldest provinces are Villa Clara (23.7%), Havana (21.7%) and Sancti Spíritus (21.4%), although it is worth noting that nine of the 15 provinces have more than 20% of older adults, and in general they are all above 18%. At the municipal level, the Plaza de la Revolución municipality in Havana stands out, with a percentage of 28%. Older adult women (1,223,319 people) represents 53.5% of older adults, highlighting female survival in late ages.

According to estimates by the United Nations Population Division, Barbados and Cuba will be the oldest countries in Latin America and the Caribbean in the immediate perspective (Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas e Información [ONEI], 2019, p.4)

In Europe, a very notable aging process is expected, since 34% of the continent's population will be over 60 in 2050.

Focusing on the situation in Spain, the phenomenon of aging is not foreign, but on the contrary it also advances in a notable increase, especially in the subgroup of octogenarian people, following a faster pace than the rest of European countries, which, according to forecasts, places it as one of the countries of the European Union and the world.

According to figures from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE, 2019), the percentage of the population aged 65 and over, currently stands at 19.2% of the total population, and according to forecasts it would be 25.2% in 2033. If the current trend continues, the population will increase in the upper half of the population pyramid, which would mean that 12.3 million people over the age of 64 would reside in Spain, 3.4 million more than today (37.6%).

A significant fact is the feminization of old age, although more men than women are born, women in the age group 65 and older are 32.0% (5,068,440) higher than men (3,839,711).

If we make a territorial comparison, the oldest Autonomous Communities are Asturias, Castilla y León, Galicia, País Vasco, Aragón y Cantabria, with 21% exceeding the percentage of older people. While the least aged Communities, with a percentage below 16%, are Murcia, the Balearic Islands and the Canary Islands.

In relation to volume they are Cataluña, Andalucía y Madrid each one of them surpassing a million older people over 65.

5.-Towards a new paradigm: inclusive, humanized and friendly cities with older people.

Nowadays, a change of priorities is beginning to take shape in city management. In the first place, the notions that define the city must be raised taking into account social inclusion in a

transversal way in each and every one of the areas that make it up, as stated in the Inclusive City White Paper (Fundación ONCE y Tecnalia, 2015).

Likewise, older adults begin to be in the majority, therefore, new needs arise that require a change of mentality about urban development. In this sense, the report Cities Alive-Designing for ageing communities (ARUP, 2019) defines those which in its opinion are the four basic needs:

- Autonomy and independence (creating passable environments, guaranteeing access to transportation, aging on-site and providing guidance and information).
- Health and wellness (guaranteeing access to health services, providing space for exercise and recreation, and generating connections with nature).
- Social connectivity (fighting loneliness and isolation, promoting inclusion and civic participation, creating intergenerational spaces and providing options for older people to remain in their neighborhoods).
- Safety and resilience (preparing for extreme climates, designing safe streets and public spaces).

As a response to demographic aging and the urbanization process that characterizes the world population, the Friendly Cities with the Elderly project, developed by the World Health Organization (WHO), with the participation of older people, where some central themes to turn a city into a friendly city for the elderly were identified. Among them: respect and social inclusion; civic participation; communication and information; community and health services; outdoor spaces and buildings; transport; housing and social participation (World Health Organization [WHO], 2007).

The idea of an elderly-friendly city is based on the WHO concept of active aging, bearing in mind that an elderly-friendly city or community is a good place to grow old. Therefore, the general objectives of the project are:

- Generate community participation processes.
- Introduce changes in the different areas of competence of the municipality in order to improve quality of life for its citizens.
- Harnessing the potential that older people represent in citizen life

The WHO (2007) defends that in a community friendly to the elderly, the policies, services and structures related to the physical and social environment are designed to support and allow them to actively age, that is, live safely, enjoy good health and continue participating fully in society. Accordingly, an age-friendly city allows, through its policies, services, environments and structures, to actively age since it:

- Recognizes a wide range of capabilities and resources for older people.
- Responds with anticipation and flexibility to aging-related needs.
- Respects their decisions and lifestyles.
- Protects the most vulnerable.
- Promotes inclusion, participation and contribution in all areas of social and community life.

In short, to achieve a friendly city with the elderly, it is necessary:

- That the city can satisfy the basic needs of citizens, and in this aspect the physical, virtual and social environment plays a key role.
- That the city projects security in a broad sense. Lack of economic security in old age is a major obstacle to Active Aging and to reducing differences. As a concrete example could be the case of the right to adequate and safe housing, which involves more than four walls and

a roof. As we can see in the recently published guide of the Aging Lab “Practical Guide. Accessible Environments for the Elderly”. The benefits of better fitness include: improved mental health, fewer injuries, the ability to maintain ties with both home and community, and greater autonomy and Independence

- That the city allows them to continue learning, growing personally and making decisions, all this is key for them to have a sense of control.

- That the city allows them to create new relationships and maintain their emotional heritage.

- That the city allows them to contribute, the ability to contribute is closely related to participation in social and cultural activities between generations. An example of this capacity is being able to recover the principles of giving and receiving between generations, with the creation of intergenerational centers being a clear example

All these concepts are encompassed within the Human Centered Design concept. The implementation of services based on the traditional concept of a Smart City is not enough. It is necessary to develop inclusion strategies to avoid generating or expanding the difficulties of access and integration of citizenship, especially those population groups that are specifically referenced in the Charter of the Right to the City as priority objects of care such as the elderly, women, especially female heads of household, and minors.

5.1.-General trends in Spain.

In Spain, the importance of accessibility as a mechanism for quality of life and integration of people is gaining strength in the public consciousness, coinciding, to a large extent, with the process of transfer of powers from the Central Administration to the Autonomous Communities and with the progressive influence of the associative movement. Thus, since the end of the 80s of the last century, important governmental actions have been developed to incorporate accessibility as an important element of action in the public sphere. However, although the notion of accessibility has traditionally been linked to the imaginary of adaptation through ramps, support material and / or people with reduced mobility, these terms have a much broader conceptualization encompassing processes, goods, products, services, objects, instruments, devices and / or tools since in this way the full equality of opportunities for citizens and their active participation in society can be guaranteed.

As a response to demographic aging and the urbanization process, Spain joins the World Network of Cities and Communities Friendly with Older Persons, being San Sebastián the first city to join this Network. In 2012, 8 municipalities joined. Currently there are 180 distributed in all the autonomous communities, with expectations of continuing to grow, which will imply, under the objectives of the Network, the generation of community participation processes, the introduction of changes in the different areas of competence of the municipalities in order to improve the quality of life of its inhabitants and the exploitation of the potential older people represent in citizen life.

5.2.-The Cuban situation.

Since the very beginning of the Cuban revolution, the political will towards social development and the formation of human capital has been essential. The recently approved constitutional text includes, at a macro-political level, the treatment of the elderly in the chapter concerning

families, which in its article 88 states that "The State, society and families (...) have the obligation to protect, assist and facilitate conditions to meet the needs and raise the quality of life of older adults. Likewise, it urges respect for their self-determination, guaranteeing the full exercise of their rights and promoting their integration and social participation".

It also has some accessibility provisions such as:

- NC 391: 2004 "Accessibility of people to the physical environment". Norm that establishes the general elements and the specific accessibility requirements to be met in urban planning, buildings, communications and transport. It is made up of four parts; three of which are mandatory.
- Instruction Number 1/2000 of the Institute of Physical Planning: It establishes that the elimination of architectural barriers and, in general, of accessibility, must be incorporated in the planning instruments in all plans.
- Resolution No. 5/2000 of the National Housing Institute. It establishes that approximately 2% of the rehabilitated or newly built homes in each province meet the requirements established in the current accessibility standards.
- Resolution No. 392/98 of the MICONS. It establishes the essential requirements that the construction works must fulfill that will serve as the basis for the elaboration of the technical regulations of said works, as well as those related to materials, products, systems, installations, equipment and auxiliary means; that are incorporated into them permanently or temporarily.
- Resolution No. 240.2005 of the MITRANS. It establishes the execution periods and the percentage of means, facilities and feasible capacities to adapt, modify, build, assemble or import that guarantee the accessibility conditions specified in NC 391: 2004.

When evaluating management practices, the predominance of a fragmented and sectoral vision of population aging was found, centered on the institutional objective. In the same way, a salubrist approach prevails with a marked assistance tendency that prevents understanding the dynamics of the social phenomenon and its implications for territorial and urban planning. At most, the needs to increase specialized care institutions, the number of beds in them, and the training of professional care skills are recognized. Taking as an example the city of Santa Clara, capital of the central Cuban province of Villa Clara, it should be noted that the city is one of the oldest in Cuba, a condition that also has its historic urban center, the second oldest popular council at the national level. The detailed study of the historic center of Santa Clara makes it possible to verify the deficiencies in territorial and urban planning for the management of population aging, identifying limitations associated with infrastructure; to the environment; urban facilities, public spaces and with architectural barriers. The weights of the weaknesses found indicate that the greatest restrictions are located at the level of the existence of architectural barriers in public spaces, as well as environmental problems that affect their quality and negatively impact citizen security; those that are above the usually referred problems of material resources that affect the conservation of buildings, infrastructures and public facilities. This corroborates the need to propose a management of population aging that takes into account spatial mediation and its direct impact on quality of life.

6.-Discussion and Conclusions.

The Cuban case offers particularities for the study of population dynamics. Institutional policy and the humanistic nature of the social project have led to indicators on par with first world countries in terms of health and education. It is verified that population aging is a social achievement of the public policies implemented. However, it is a challenge for its sustainability. Excessively centralized and verticalist practices are expressed, at the level of population aging management, as fragmented, sectoralized, welfare and health practices. It is necessary to create changes that favor the active participation of the subjects involved in the construction of an active aging perspective with an emphasis on universal accessibility.

The use of the category "spaces of daily life" in the analysis of population aging management makes it possible to articulate the physical and symbolic spheres from a perspective of equity, inclusion and social justice.

There are strong limitations in the regulations of the Physical Planning System in Cuba to promote the management of population aging due to the descriptive expression that is given to the sociodemographic variables.

The study in the historic center of Santa Clara, Cuba, shows the limitations that persist. Furthermore, the importance of promoting policies that by design eliminate the strong architectural barriers on public space that affect citizen security and hinder the operation of public spaces as sites of social interaction and intergenerational education.

On the other hand, Spain, in recent times, has endured a significant increase in the older population that has caused a transformation in its social policies. Both at the state, regional and, in some cases, local levels, governments have developed political and regulatory strategies for people with disabilities and people in situations of dependency, mostly older people.

After different analyses of the data on the population in Spain, it is concluded that the majority of the elderly and people with special needs reside in urban areas, thus finding greater resources and services to cover those needs. This causes cities to be those public spaces that provide the greatest coverage of needs. In order to fulfill this objective, in Spain the friendly cities with the elderly began to be created, there are currently 180 municipalities with these characteristics.

These places provide an increase in the quality of life for their inhabitants, who can enjoy an independent, autonomous life, without limitations and enjoying the services of the city on equal terms.

Finally, it is also possible to affirm the positive impact of the application of universal accessibility and design for all people in cities of this type, which benefit not only people with disabilities, dependents or the elderly, but also facilitates life to anyone. That is why the fight to get more friendly cities in the world must continue, hence the importance of this idea being included in the New Urban Agenda.

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