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Walkability and design of tourist routes in **old city centres** for **senior tourists**: The case of a historical peninsula in Istanbul

Mobilidade pedonal e rotas turísticas para **pessoas idosas** em **centros históricos**: o caso da península de Istambul

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Keywords | Accessibility, ageing, senior tourism, universal design

Objectives | Population ageing is a global phenomenon. The recently launched OECD report on "Ageing in Cities" (2015) states that the population share of those over 65 year old reached 17.8% in 2010, and is predicted to rise to 25.1% in 2050. Particularly since the beginning of this century, the challenges presented by this demographic shift towards ageing societies have led nations around the world, in cooperation with global entities, to outline frameworks for action to foster what is labelled as 'healthy ageing'. According to WHO (2015, p. 13) healthy ageing is "the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables wellbeing in older age". It is within this context that the Age Friendly City initiative, was launched in 2005 by the World Health Organisation with the purpose of "optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age" (WHO, 2007:1). In fact, ageing societies have required cities to review their urban design, not only so they can be used by all citizens from an equity perspective (through the use of Universal design principles), but also to be attractive and competitive, hence keeping cities thriving. Accordingly, providing accessible and secure built environments, services and public spaces can be seen as key to attracting senior tourists. Travelling is an important social activity for elderly people, and has been increasing substantially over the past two decades (Banister and Bowling, 2004). As ageing is more a physiological than psychological situation, elderly do not wish to travel less than younger people. Active ageing, in this sense, involves travelling more and being able to participate in cultural activities individually and independently. It is argued that if tourism, urban planning and universal design are considered in an integrated way, tourism potential for older people may increase. Accessibility, in this sense, comprises more than transportation or accommodation. It includes other urban elements such as walking, shopping, liveability of spaces and cultural learning. This paper aims to debate the importance of promoting accessible communities in this broader sense and in the particular case of senior tourism. With 19 million foreign tourists in 2015, of

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which approximately 2 million of these are over 65 years old, the case of Istanbul, the capital of Turkey, is discussed.

Methodology | Following a review of current literature on the relationship amongst senior tourism, urban planning and universal design, the paper attempts to move the discussion further by presenting the results of a case study. Focused on the historical peninsula of Istanbul, the paper aims to understand senior mobility and accessibility in specific tourists' routes. In 2015, 19 million foreign tourists went to Istanbul, of which almost 2 million were over the age of 65. Following previous conceptual work developed by Santinha et al. (2017), field observation and mapping will be used to analyse the relationship between mobility and urban spaces. The analysis, which will imply filling in an observation grid for each touristic route, will focus especially on the context of public spaces and roads to show how the city enhances or hampers the mobility and independence of older people. In addition, possible features that may be attractive for senior tourists will be discussed.

Main Results and Contributions | This is an ongoing research project, so only preliminary and exploratory results are available at this phase. Sill, results show that, despite the high number of senior tourists visiting Istanbul, barriers concerning the urban design are largely found, in part related to difficulties with crossing roads (e.g. verbal and visual warnings are not available in many places), the routes are not clear and easily identifiable, route networks do not provide clear links between different the different key tourist attractors, and in some cases pedestrian crossings do not allow the continuity of walking routes. The findings and propositions will be discussed in a manner conducive for continuing research on this increasingly important issue for this population segment.

Limitations | The analysis of the walking patterns should be complemented with the tourists and stakeholders voices, namely decision makers and tourist organisations. Accordingly, the results presented in this study are only part of what a decision making process should involve in order to design guidelines to enhance the walkability of historical city centres.

Conclusions | Policy makers are increasingly recognising that older citizens are more susceptible to the influence of their neighbourhood environment. Age-Friendly communities, which generally refer to a places where elderly persons are socially valued and supported with services and infrastructures that respond to their needs, are good examples of such concern and show why urban design has such an impact on this population segment. Developing such environments seems a necessary and sound response to promote the wellbeing of both senior residents and tourists. Actually, achieving a barrier free / accessible status can mean a lot to any community in terms of tourism. The case of Istanbul, a greatly touristic destination, shows that there is still much to be done in this subject. Acknowledging such obstacles is a further step for policy-makers to improve the present status and create the necessary conditions to increase the wellbeing of senior citizens.

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