#AFMIL The Age-Friendly Media and Information Literate City: Combining policies and strategies for ageing populations in media and information rich societies.
The situation

• Fundamental demographic shifts in age structure & disruption of “traditional” elder roles and relationships

• National & supra-national bodies developing rights-based approaches to ageing (rather than deficit/dependency models)
We are seniors with individual characteristics, emotions, needs, behaviours

Photo: Minxiao Cao

Sheila Webber & Bill Johnston, 2018
The Stereotype... Seniors as:

Deficient
A burden
Lonely
Incapable
Alike

Expected to be grateful and thankful for any attention from politicians or younger people
“Ageism is the stereotyping of, prejudice or discrimination against individuals or groups based on their age. Although ageism can target young people, most studies in this area focus on the unfair treatment of older people.

Ageism is deeply structural, “find[ing] expression in institutional systems, individual attitudes and inter-generational relationships.” All manifestations of ageism – at the individual, group or societal level – gravely undermine older people’s right to human dignity and reduce their potential to contribute actively to society. “

What does this mean for MIL?
3 perspectives on MIL & older people

• Older people as portrayed by media and experts: avoiding stereotyping & disinformation

• Older people as consumers of information and media: taking account of their preferences, practices and life experiences

• Older people as MIL creators, innovators and critics: older people can create new media practices too!
“Every citizen is a creator of information/knowledge and has a message” (UNESCO, 2016).
What does this mean for cities?
“Age-friendly cities and communities foster healthy and active ageing and thus enable well-being throughout life. They help people to remain independent for as long as possible, and provide care and protection when they are needed, respecting older people’s autonomy and dignity.”

World Health Organization (2017 p.3)
Age Friendly Environments: guidelines from WHO

- **Communication and Information**: recognised as one of 8 policy domains (WHO, 2017)
- **Age-friendly information**: accessibility, dissemination and formats
  - **Includes**: local centres; face to face services; using word-of-mouth among older people; tailored information; multiple formats; public events; peer exchange; health literacy initiatives
- **Note**: accessibility and Universal Design benefit everyone
There are useful guidelines out there, but undermined by:

Lack of recognition of ageism

Austerity policies
“Ageism is the stereotyping of, prejudice or discrimination against individuals or groups based on their age. Although ageism can target young people, most studies in this area focus on the unfair treatment of older people. Ageism is deeply structural, “find[ing] expression in institutional systems, individual attitudes and intergenerational relationships.” All manifestations of ageism – at the individual, group or societal level – gravely undermine older people’s right to human dignity and reduce their potential to contribute actively to society. “

An #AFMIL city

- **Practices MIL**: is media and information literate in policy and practice – including in producing, organising, disseminating etc. information for all citizens

- **Develops MIL citizens**: supports the media and information literacy development of citizens of all ages

- **Uses all forms and formats of media and information** to increase democratic participation and informed critique
“As we get older, our rights do not change. As we get older, we are no less human and should not become invisible”

(Archbishop Desmond Tutu, HelpAge International, 2016, p.3).
Where is the MIL older persons’ forum at this conference?

Having expert speakers who happen to be older is *not the same* as making space for the older person’s voice.
References


• Think Local Act Personal. (2017) *Survey Results Exploring the impact of the Care Act on the lives of people with care and support needs*. https://www.basw.co.uk/resource/?id=6593

