

AGEING & INGENUITY: WHAT IS YOUR DESIGN STORY?

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ABSTRACT

This collective design workshop aims to provoke and test new design approaches towards ageing. We are looking for design stories/narratives that show how design thinking and collaborative working can enable the world to respond differently to the challenges of ageing. Can designers change our inherent ageism through the engagement of older people in the design and delivery of services and products with them? Can we change our current strategies towards ageing, turning its potential challenges into opportunities to engage, empower and improve the lives of the elderly? Together, we aim to build a collective design approach with ingenious older people and for our future selves.

INTRODUCTION

The Ageing & Ingenuity design workshop aims to investigate different design approaches that address the full spectrum of challenges around ageing including cognitive impairments to living in elderly care, tools for self-management and coping strategies for chronic diseases. Central to this workshop is the development of design responses to the statement '*Ageing in itself is not a policy problem to be solved*' (Bazalgette, 2011) and instead introduces '*ageing as a culture to inspire social innovation*' (Lee 2012). Knowledge, processes, outcomes and experience will be shared and collectively aims to investigate new services, tools, solutions we can

design together with the elderly, when thinking about our future society.

Our first question is, '**How can design enable a more solution-focused approach to ageing?**' Despite the negativity surrounding the fact that there is now a marked increase in the proportion of our population that is aged, this project wants to explore it from the viewpoint of possibilities. The elderly are important assets, holding previous information and experiences that should be collected and used. From the angle of design for social innovation in ageing, the designer is considered a facilitator when enabling people to understand and interpret their own problems and situations; subsequently coming up with their own solutions.

Thus, our second question is, '**How can design trigger ageing innovation through the ingenuity of ageing?**' According to the United Nations 2009 report, the global population of people aged 60 and over is 680 million, representing 11 per cent of the world's population. It is true that the whole world is ageing. However each country has its own development pattern and ageing reflects the diversity of different cultures. In order for design researchers to rethink the relationship between design, younger designers and older citizens it might be better to start with older people's experiences when dealing with the challenges of ageing. Primarily because they possess an enormous richness of information and experience. This methodological approach explains the link to the theory of ingenuity. Based on the UK's Royal Society of Arts (RSA) recent report that collated studies of ingenuity, this life skill can be defined as a capability with three main attributes: An inclination to work with the resources easily to hand, a knack for combining these resources in a surprising way, an ability to use these resources to solve a practical problem (Young, 2010). Furthermore, ingenuity can be seen as an individual's competence and is the basic element needed for societies to develop collective creativity and social innovation on a larger scale. This explains why it is important to work with individual

ingenious older people when attempting to develop ageing innovation for all. Therefore, identifying individual ingenious older people in different local contexts became the first priority as the rethinking process for ageing and design practice.

HISTORY: DESIGN & AGEING

1. LIFE-COURSE APPROACH TO AGEING

British historian Peter Laslett's famous slogan, *'Live in the presence of all your future selves,'* promoted a life-course approach to address ageing issues and promoted ageing as *'a unique experience for each individual'* (Laslett, 1996). This phrase was later absorbed and extended by the DesignAge Programme - the first formal design movement in ageing within a design school, started at the Royal College of Art (UK) in 1990 with *'Design for Our Future Selves'* becoming their manifesto. A pioneering project it focused on *'bringing older people, designers and industry together to improve the quality of goods and services in general, and the quality of life of older people'* (Crosthwaite, 1997). It was described by Laslett as *'an arranged marriage'* of an art and design school with the University of the Third Age, *'an organisation of autonomous, local, self supporting groups of retired people [where] ... the general approach is to 'Learn for pleasure and study at leisure'.* As director of the DesignAge project, Professor Roger Coleman explained that it was about *'a new collaboration between older people and young designers, and a new approach that is part of a growing trend towards a more thoughtful and respectful design process'.* This life-course approach has been developed into the notion of inclusive design and extended to different 'extreme users' of design.

2. ELDERLY'S EVERYDAY PRACTICES AS A DESIGN APPROACH

20 years after the DesignAge programme, more diverse forms of ageing research are carried out in design schools. Binder, Brandt & Malmberg conducted a workshop at the NordiCHI2012 conference aimed at introducing a new approach to ageing research through design. Their idea was *'oriented towards experiences in design using communities of everyday practice and situated elderliness as a design approach'.* In particular it focused on *'how we can use the notion of communities of practice as a design approach when working with the elderly.'* They started the discussion with a statement, *'Designing for elderly is a growing field of research and practice'* (Riche, Y., and Mackay, W., 2010), *but experiences with welfare technologies and service design, oriented towards this group indicate that there are significant gaps between the inscriptions of the elderly in welfare technologies and services and the elderly's own perspectives on aging'* (Ertner, M., Malmberg, L. 2012).

AIM AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Through the lens of ageing and ingenuity, the aim of the workshop is to bring together researchers and

practitioners who are working on the theme of ageing and exchanging experiences with the aim of extending development and building original design knowledge together. Its particular focus on cultural diversity means that this workshop will initially include representatives from different countries and represent the different perspective in ageing and design.

PROPOSED WORKSHOP FORMAT AND ACTIVITIES

We propose a full day workshop. Morning session is devoted to an introduction to the workshop and design stories from participants. Each participant needs to prepare a story of an ingenious older people from their project. All these real-world life stories of creative people will be formed into personas in the first part of the afternoon. The result of the workshop is expected to build a collective design approach for designers to design for older people, based on narratives produced by designers on their life. We aim to explore ageing aspects beyond impairment and disease but aspects of being and living as an elder.

We are inviting 10-15 participants. Each body is asked to submit a 2-4 page position paper outlining their story with an ingenious older people, background of the project, analysis of design role(s) and reflections i.e. how they relate their methodology to the history of ageing and design research.

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