

Key Thematic Findings: Virtual Co-Creation Camp 1

What is an Intergenerational Age-Friendly Living Ecosystem?

Intergenerational Age-Friendly Living Ecosystem (AFLE)



Findings

EMBED THROUGH DESIGN

Embedding age-friendliness through design that facilitates connections between people of all ages is important to ensure that intergenerational shared experiences are “not one off” (F6) but rather “part and parcel of daily living.” (F13) One participant described an intergenerational housing community that enabled people to “bump into” (F5) opportunities to enjoy activities together and develop relationships. An age-friendly environment should not rely on “just like a bench and some trees.” (F1)

Sharing regular activities, such as learning, exercising, and eating, is an important basis for embedding age-friendliness in an environment, and there is a need to establish what comprises effective intergenerational programming. From one participant’s experience, incorporating intergenerational programming into daily lessons for children means “it is not an extra effort for families to undertake intergenerational activities together.” (F13) This participant emphasised the limitation of time for making connections, which is further reason to facilitate opportunities for joint daily activities:

We don’t make time in a child’s day or in a senior’s day, for them to meet each other, for them to spend good times together. (F13)

Many daily activities could be shared among

people of different ages. The potential for space for shared activities could not only increase enjoyment of those activities, but also reduce age-segregation.

CREATE FAMILIARITY AND SAFETY

The need for familiarity and safety is experienced by people of all ages. It was deemed not easy for young people to meet older people, and older people to meet younger people. M6 suggested that “things that are facilitated, where support can be given for those that maybe don’t have the confidence” could reduce barriers to connection.

Intergenerational programming embedded in childcare and senior care centres in the context of F13 has resulted in familiarity and sense of safety for people of different ages. For example, parents “became more confident and less worried about things like touching another senior or maybe spending time with unfamiliar seniors.” (F13) As a further example, a child who used to be afraid to visit her grandmother, since involved with shared activities with seniors, started to “hold her grandma’s hand and start talking and singing to the grandma.” (F13)

This potential to cause a shift in perspective through increasing familiarity and sense of safety was deemed an important reason for designing activity-based opportunities to connect generations in their environments.

FACILITATE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The aim and impact of the design of space and shared activities enabled by space are not just about age, but rather “it’s actually bringing the community together as well.” (F13) For example, F13 continued, “seniors and juniors come together to write a play, they put on a play and they share this with the families and with the community.”

The design of environment and opportunities for shared activities could be considered on a community level, which includes culture and infrastructure, like commerce, government, and education. F12 shared an example from her context in which the location of schoolchildren and people in a care home were connected in addition to commercial shopping areas.

Stakeholder engagement was deemed important not only for making structural design changes on a community level, but also to enable the co-creation of solutions to adapt spaces in contexts where “custom-built” (M6) environments are not feasible. Participants indicated they were inspired by the potential for age-friendly design to make impact on a community-level yet identified challenges to implementation.

FEELING AND EMOTION AS STARTING POINTS FOR PHYSICAL DESIGN

Sensory and emotional needs should be considered as starting points for design. These focuses can connect people and contribute to wellbeing for all ages:

We started our discussion talking about the design of spaces with the senses in mind and how we all share smell, and taste, and touch, and things like the feel of the wind and different things. (F15)

Design guided by sensory experience needs to be inclusive of peoples’ varying ability to use senses, particularly due to age and disability. One participant (M6) raised the importance of considering acoustics in a place to ensure connection is possible through speaking and listening. Design that facilitates relationship-building was deemed particularly vital for meeting emotional needs:

We talked a little bit about companionship and love and those kinds of more emotional aspects, how do we design those into environments? (F14)

It was acknowledged that it can be hard to describe emotional experiences of a place, and thus challenging to apply to design. Yet, there was agreement that emotional experiences are important to consider, such as a sense of belonging:

If we think we belong there, we’re more likely to use it, we’re more likely to enjoy it. (F14)

Meeting sensory and emotional needs through design could also be achieved through opportunities created to connect people of all ages with the outside environment. This was deemed particularly important given the increased use of technology to facilitate connection, especially given the circumstances of COVID-19.

Participants strongly emphasised the importance of the emotional and sensorial experience of a place, particularly to facilitate sense of shared intergenerational humanity.

FLEXIBILITY FOR INTERGENERATIONAL USE AND CHANGE IN CIRCUMSTANCES

Universal design that enables people of varying ages and abilities to use the same space was discussed. F2 shared an example of a swing that was adaptable for use with a wheelchair. The capacity for one place to be enjoyed differently maximises its utility and facilitates shared enjoyment among users:

We also talked about physical exercise, designing flexibility into our environment so that we can all enjoy the same space but differently. So, the example there was we could design playgrounds for older people and younger people together. (F14)

So, a big thing came up in our discussion about spaces being changeable and having multiple uses as well. (M6)

The potential to use the same space is unifying for people of different ages and smart for keeping spaces relevant to people as their circumstances change.

CHANGE NARRATIVES ABOUT YOUNGER AND OLDER PEOPLE

Dispelling negative stereotypes about younger and older people was deemed important for designing an age-friendly environment. Design should consider the multiple determinants of health and embed features for people of all ages and abilities without assuming younger people are well and older people are frail.

We don't want the young people only to know older adults as those who are frail. We also need to find ways to make sure we bring the well older adults, who live in your community, and how can we bring them together. (F4)

...that whole shift in a young child's perspective of a senior... that is something that we are very, very, intentional with pursuing. (F13)

Positivity about young people and ageing helps to create conditions for people of all ages to enjoy their environment.

Conclusions

An age-friendly environment includes a physical design that embeds and facilitates opportunities for individuals of different ages to connect on a regular basis through shared experiences. This can be achieved by addressing human needs and interests, including the use of the senses, feelings and emotions, sense of safety and belonging, and enjoyment of activities such as eating, playing, and learning. Space and intergenerational programming enabled by meaningful places that are designed to remain useful and accessible over time to diverse people of all ages are perceived as particularly beneficial. Community-level engagement and support for the design of age-friendly environments presents challenges and opportunities. Age-friendly environments designed as intergenerational places could help to change negative age-related stereotypes and attitudes.

Reflections

Participants came from various country and cultural contexts yet perspectives on age-friendly environments did not significantly differ. There was a sense that contexts matter particularly in terms of what would be appropriate, feasible, and effective but further data would be needed to draw conclusions based on participant characteristics.

Implications

Age-friendly environments can benefit people of all ages, and positively impact not only an individual and their family but also community. The potential for design to facilitate and embed opportunities for intergenerational familiarisation and connection through shared experience is an exciting avenue for promoting health and wellbeing in a population. The barriers and facilitators of designing age-friendly environments should be further investigated, with particular attention paid to expertise from people of all ages representing diverse sectors, academic disciplines, and nations.

Funded by the Scottish University Insight Institute, this pilot project is an initiative jointly led by scholars from the School of Health Sciences, University of Dundee and the School of Energy, Infrastructure, Geoscience, and Society, Heriot Watt University. The project team includes academic and non-academic partners from across Scotland, Canada, China, Denmark, Australia, Singapore, Slovakia, and India.

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Intergenerational Age-Friendly Living Ecosystem (AFLE)



Key Thematic Findings: Virtual Co-Creation Camp 2

First steps towards co-creating an age-friendly living ecosystem

Intergenerational Age-Friendly Living Ecosystem (AFLE)



Findings

CONNECTING AND LEARNING

Cross culture, global intergenerational ideas

The diversity among people of all ages within the same countries and cities was recognised, which can mean a “different lifestyle,” (F15) and various needs and interests in terms of aims and priorities for designing an age-friendly living environment. Yet, participants identified the value of looking at similarities across contexts to address a shared challenge. For example, F3 asked, “What are some of the things that we’ve learned that are not a challenge but the commonalities we have across our cultures and across our generations?”

An example shared from Copenhagen, Denmark, in which seniors and students lived in housing environments with shared spaces like kitchens, illustrated the potential for intergenerational contact without completely changing the environment or community, which could be a helpful solution in a variety of contexts: “I think that you can build—maybe not a whole city but some of the same aspects within the city that you live in” (F9).

The result of this can be that “you are still connected to your community and to the city that you’re living in” (F9). There was a sense that people and communities across sectors and countries and ages were creating

interesting projects, and important questions related to the best way to gain and apply learning from these achievements:

How can we find out what is happening in other parts of the world, what are the best practices, what are some of the challenges that have been experienced as people are trying new ideas and new methods? (F3)

The potential learning from across cultures could be focused through exploration of the shared barriers and facilitators to designing an age-friendly environment.

Embed through design

The importance of creating opportunities for learning and connecting through environmental design was emphasised, particularly to mitigate barriers to intergenerational contact and shared experiences:

Overcoming barriers between generations and using lots of shared experiences and thinking about activities and places where different generations can come into contact and meet and share skills from each other and learn from each other. (F6)

Sharing experiences through activities was deemed important for shifting the norms around intergenerational contact. As F2 suggested, “I think unless we have some shared activities, then we’ll default to the

current structures.” Digital skills sharing was raised as a particularly effective potential bridge to facilitate the goal of “intergenerational inclusion,” (F7) especially given the ongoing consequences COVID-19.

F11 shared an observation from the Maori culture in New Zealand in which organic opportunities for intergenerational working existed in the natural environment. This was compared to a perception of greater effort required to create and organise activities in the Scottish context. Participants would like to explore how to design spaces conducive for sharing experiences, especially exchanging knowledge and skills that can promote inclusion. Further, they were interested in how to design outdoor spaces to facilitate organic opportunities to connect.

CULTURE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Create familiarity and safety

Priorities in terms of culture and relationships strongly aligned with the theme of creating familiarity and safety, which was primarily discussed in a physical and literal sense. The use of the natural environment and family systems was particularly highlighted. These were seen to allow for exploration of indoor and outdoor design ideas that facilitate opportunities for intergenerational relationships to develop. F11 from the Scottish context spoke about

the potential to explore intergenerational ideas for an age-friendly environment within families. F11 said, “Classically, people see intergenerational practice as not being family-based but I don’t see how you can ignore that because it is your intrinsic intergenerational relationship, isn’t it?”

It was recognised that the feasibility of designing spaces to enhance intergenerational relationships within families could differ across national and cultural contexts. For example, F12 shared, “I think intergeneration in China, in the families, is quite easy because older adults take a big responsibility for their children and also their grandchildren.”

Exploring the differences in relationships between grandparents and grandchildren across cultures was seen to be a potential means for identifying opportunities to design living spaces that encourage connection between family members of different ages. While the family system was deemed a valuable route for exploration, the limited contact between generations for those who do not have connection to extended family was acknowledged:

There are many younger people who do not have grandparents and there are many grandparents who do not have younger people. So... we also need to think about those who do not have connections to younger generations. (F3)

The need for familiarity and safety in an age-friendly environment was discussed in a physical and literal sense as well as emotional. The existence of “physical barriers” to intergenerational relationship-building was identified, particularly to ensure physical safety without “increasing much more falling” (F12).

Participants felt older and younger people want familiarity to be able to feel safe to build relationships. F7 asked, “How do we create a safe environment across the generations? Again, that could be a physical built environment and it can be that kind of emotional environment as well that we’re talking about.”

The emotional sense of safety and familiarity was discussed in a gendered way as sheds and gardens were identified as particularly welcoming for men, and “a good place to encourage them to transition into different spaces and utilise and socialise more than anything else” (F5).

Participants would like to know what makes indoor and outdoor living environments - whether shared by families, neighbours, or strangers - physically and emotionally safe for people of all ages to use.

Facilitate community development

The priorities related to community development focused on addressing isolation and linking people to connection through relationships with people as well as community assets such as service organisations and facilities:

We also talked about actual places and where services are and where people are living and town centres and suburbia, and rural living and how to connect people together to the services. (F6)

There was a sense that places themselves mattered as well as the spaces between them. An example shared from F1 about sheds observed in Denmark, spoke to the importance of shared places that bring people out of their own environments to connect with others: “I think that there is something about how we use our spaces that are ours but there is something about how we use those spaces between buildings and the spaces in between.”

Participants identified that a community-level approach to designing an age-friendly environment should be assets-based. F1 said, “I think we need to have a bottom-up approach to understanding what is the existing assets of a place and that could help us inform, like, what do we need in this place and where is the best place to locate things?” (M1)

The engagement of stakeholders was discussed as useful for achieving representativeness in the process of facilitating community development:

...we always do a stakeholder mapping at the start of every project and set up a steering group as well and have regular meetings for them throughout the year, just to make sure that we’ve got a representative of all different groups within the community. (F4)

There was a sense that infrastructure needs to support people getting to places but also to each other. Questions about what places matters to people and what is needed to connect people to these places, and each other, requires assessment of what spaces and connections to them are already in place.

Change narratives about younger and older people

Participants sought to transform age-related stereotypes, which were identified as barriers to intergenerational connection and co-creation of an age-friendly environment. Understanding conditions for creating “shared understanding” (F6) was deemed important to shift attitudes older people hold about themselves and younger people, and vice versa.

Effectively engaging people of all ages in the process of designing age-friendly environments was seen as a priority and a challenge across cultural contexts. F15, speaking about the Chinese context, raised the need to ensure questions are asked in a way that is accessible and generates responses beyond “everything is okay” from older people, and inclusive of younger children as well.

Understanding perceptions held by older and younger people about each other and themselves would help to inform the design of an age-friendly environment. For example, F1 shared, “...young people want to feel respected and feel that they’re not going to get shouted at for being young people, for

being louder or whatever.” Questions should focus on how to respect the independence of individuals, older and younger, whilst building an environment based on increasing connection and opportunities for relationships to develop.

PEOPLE AND PLACE

Embed through community investment

A new theme emerged that combined and focused two previously identified themes: facilitate community development and embed through design. The participants prioritised an aim to sustain age-friendly environments through community development as well as investment. For example, F6 spoke about “commitment to intergenerational spaces and this way of working together intergenerationally so that we’re not always chasing funding, so we have a commitment to this being the norm really.”

Key questions to ask related to how to embed age-friendliness into the design of spaces as well as the infrastructures that fund building projects. This level of embedding age-friendliness helps this concept not only to be sustained but also to become normalised.

How do we make it so that this becomes part of what communities do rather than just something that when the money is there, we can support? (F1)

We don’t want intergenerational communities just to be another theme. We’d like it to have,

as you say, this longevity, there is something that encompasses everything, that works for many people together in a way that is fair. (F7)

There was a sense that investing in design and adapting of spaces that are age-friendly does not necessarily mean spending more money. The focus should be on how to build and adapt spaces that are useful to people of all ages which could also be cost-effective compared to “acquiring land and building from new” (F2).

How to ensure the “longevity” (F6) of intergenerational spaces, and activities enabled by spaces, was identified as a key question. The imperative to gain community-level investment also related to concerns about the environment, and the potential ecological benefit of investing in age-friendly living spaces.

How to identify and support people who could champion the development of intergenerational spaces was also seen as a need for achieving sustainable age-friendly living environments. The best approach for gaining and using financial and human resources to grow and sustain the vision of multigenerational spaces was deemed a priority.

Flexibility for intergenerational use and change in circumstances

An age-friendly environment could be designed with features like furniture and equipment suitable for multigenerational use across the lifespan. For example, F9

said, “...chairs can be a little bit bigger so that young children can come onto, to sit together and things like that.”

An example shared from Scotland identified “the actual interior space was moveable,” (F2) which allowed it to be useful for changes in circumstances over time. Participants felt that universal design innovations could enable people to maintain independence and connect with each other as well. As F1 offered, “I think for both sides actually, no matter what age you are there are times when we want to be connected and there are times when we are quite enjoying isolation.”

Multigenerational environments that aim to bring people together must also respect peoples’ need for independence, and participants would like to know how to achieve this balance. Applying universal design principles also helps to avoid ‘othering’ older people through provision of segregated housing. As F3 from Canada said, “I would love to see communities that have a mixture but not housing just for older adults or activities just for younger people.”

COVID-19 is perceived as influencing considerations for physical design of spaces. F1 added, “It’s changing how people are thinking about where they live and what they desire in a home.”

Interest in multigenerational living, particularly within families, might be increasing due to COVID-19 and exploration is warranted of what opportunities exist to meet this

interest. Universal design of environments could enhance feasibility of multigenerational living and attract potential users.

Feelings and emotions as a starting point for physical design

While feelings and emotions are a starting point for physical design (pg. 2 of Key Findings Thematic Findings: Virtual Co-Creation Camp 1), they were not prominently discussed in VCC 2.

Conclusions

Participants would like to know the best approach to learning from organisations in sectors and organisations across cultures and nations that are implementing age-friendly, multigenerational projects. There was recognition that commonalities exist among diverse cultural contexts that could provide focuses for enquiry.

The use of outdoor space to embed intergenerational opportunities for learning and connecting, particularly given the circumstances of COVID-19, is a priority. Designing with physical and emotional safety in mind was also underscored, and potential directions for enquiry could be based on falls prevention and family-based intervention. Changing narratives about younger and older people could help to achieve mutual understanding among people of different ages, which could also facilitate safety.

While human need for safety as well as independence and connection were ‘senses’ identified as priorities, the sensory and emotional needs of people, such as ambience and use of senses, were not prominently discussed.

Participants would like to take an assets-based approach in designing links between people and community services. Further, community development should focus not only on physical infrastructure but also financial to create sustainability and normality for multigenerational living.

Universal design, particularly of interior spaces, was perceived as feasible for assisting people with independence over time as well as connection to others. Interest in multigenerational living might be increasing due to COVID-19. Questions could explore this potential increase and how to respond to it.

Reflections

The limited discussion of the senses and emotions might be due to the challenge of applying senses and emotions to implementation of design ideas. This difficulty was acknowledged among participants in the co-creation camp one (VCC 1). Following-up potential aims, priorities, and questions related to the use of feelings and emotions as starting points for physical design would be good.

Implications

Barriers and facilitators to implementation of age-friendly living environments was widely discussed in the co-creation camp two (VCC 2), which provided useful insight for forming research questions.

Experiences of gender was briefly discussed, particularly in relation to the importance of designing garden and shed spaces to enhance sense of safety and familiarity among men. Intersectional considerations relevant to other personal characteristics such as socio-economic status, religion, and race/ethnicity would be worth examining.

The use of the natural environment, particularly given COVID-19, was discussed across themes. Further exploration of potential designs and uses of the natural environment for enhancing age-friendly environments, including concerns about climate and weather in the Scottish context, is warranted.

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Key Thematic Findings: Virtual Co-Creation Camp 3

Refining project aims, objectives and research questions towards an intergenerational age-friendly living ecosystem

Intergenerational Age-Friendly Living Ecosystem (AFLE)



Findings

AIMS

Create roadmap

The project should aim to create not only a conceptualisation of age-friendly place-making but “something a little bit more concrete...a roadmap for people” (F3). This was deemed important given the circumstances of COVID-19 as well as diverse contexts in which age-friendly place-making could occur.

The creation of a roadmap could allow for people “to find out for themselves, what would be good” (F4) in translating the conceptualisation to a reality in the context of ongoing changes in how semi-public and public spaces are being used and the diversity of potential implementation contexts.

Innovate the use of outdoor space

The project should aim to innovate use of outdoor spaces particularly given the circumstances of COVID-19 and perceived benefits of outdoor place-making. This should be considered across urban and rural settings.

COVID-19 has necessitated a change in the use of semi-public and public spaces as well as urgency to use outdoor spaces optimally. F2 summarised, “Covid-19 had made a difference to how we were relating to each other and how we were relating to

specifically, outdoor space as well.” The opportunity to learn from existing projects that have been using outdoor spaces successfully to nurture people was also raised. F5 explained, “There is already so much knowledge and experience in the childcare sector” as outdoor nurseries for young children in Scotland have been making use of outdoor spaces year-round.

The potential to learn and innovate around the multigenerational use of outdoor spaces optimally was deemed particularly salient given the climate in Scotland: “I think that is quite a good theme to look at, the outdoor environments and our climate, especially in Scotland,” (F1). The learning from creative uses of outdoor spaces in the height of COVID-19 could inform ideas for how to further facilitate intergenerational interaction and relationship-building through outdoor structures and spaces.

Focus on universal benefits of multigenerational use of spaces

Multigenerational spaces could benefit people not only as their age changes but also as the contexts in which they live change, which is relevant to people of all ages.

As M1 explained, the project should consider “opportunities for people as they age, but also in response to changing environments.” The focus on this dynamism emphasises that the

project would be relevant to people not only as they age but also as they adapt to change of circumstances. Further, F3 noted that the project’s aims could “apply to younger people too,” and the relevance of this project to younger people should be acknowledged. The project should emphasise the universal benefits of multigenerational use of spaces over time rather than focus on aging.

OBJECTIVES

Produce roadmap that can be used across cultural contexts

The findings from this project should be translatable such that a roadmap could be relevant across various contexts. The knowledge gained from this project could be widely useful yet acknowledgement of the differences in potential mobilisations of the roadmap is important: “You translate from one language to another, you can’t do it directly,” as F4 explained.

M2 added that he liked the “wording of culture” in the objectives to highlight the diversity of project participants and partners. The diversity of involvement could be emphasised to acknowledge the breadth of the investigation as well as the relevance of the findings.

Use term that encompasses people of all ages (multigenerational)

The language used in the objectives should acknowledge the involvement of people of all ages rather than focus on older and younger people. F3 shared: “When we’ve spoken to people about who it is in their community, they want to know it’s not defined just by being a teenager or being over the age of seventy; it’s connecting with young mothers, it’s connecting in the middle as well.”

The importance of using language that acknowledges the inclusion of people of varying ages was typified by the notion of accessibility, as F4 noted, “anyone can be in a wheelchair.” F6 shared a personal example related to inaccessibility of spaces to babies and their caregivers:

...as I am trying to take a baby out in the pram, and things and as I’m trying to access spaces, many of these spaces are not really accessible to us as well. So, that is how it can be something that is much more across all the age groups.

While there might be specific considerations for certain age cohorts, it was agreed that taking a “multigenerational approach” (F3) is important.

Include intersectionality and inequality

In addition to including varying ages in the objectives rather than signpost specific age groups, the notions of intersectionality and inequality were raised. For example,

accessibility of spaces not only relates to physical concerns but also resources like information, money, and transportation. F2 summarised:

...we know that age doesn't cover all of the different aspects of a person when they are trying to use, to access, to develop meaning with space. And so, I think, disability, we've talked about gender and we've talked about age. So, maybe there needs to be some kind of recognition of intersectionality.

F3 noted that “sensory stuff is really important in terms of accessibility” and thus consideration of varying sensory needs could be crucial for promoting inclusivity; for example, F3 specified, noise level might need to be a priority for engaging people affected by dementia and autism. While the scope of the project needs to be focused and attainable, a range of perspectives must be considered, particularly in looking at multi-level constraints.

QUESTIONS

Interconnectedness of project partners

There was a sense that with Scotland at the centre of the project, there is a need to facilitate engagement of partners not only in terms of their expertise. As M1 said, “we want to ensure that those discussions are happening across these thematic areas” referring to the areas of expertise of international project partners. F2 agreed, “I do think we do need to be able to represent the interconnectedness of the whole

system...each partner works in specifically their area of interest and expertise and that we learn from that as a whole partnership.”

Further, as M2 said, “It would be interesting to have a little overview of this is how Scotland is for said area.” Connecting partners to each other could allow for learning to be exchanged more widely and Scotland's status in the different areas of expertise also could be highlighted.

Understanding of involvement at different levels

The proposed community participatory approach means that “people who use spaces and places are actually bringing their experience into our project in a very fundamental way,” according to F2. The benefits of this approach to people for all ages were perceived by F3:

I can imagine that being a really exciting opportunity for young people to talk about their experiences across cultures. I would hope that it would be the same for older people as well.

The mention of engaging with stakeholders led to discussion of how the project team could get people involved. It was agreed that understanding “what makes people wish to be involved of any age” (F4) is important for maximising benefit of this project to community development.

The proposed socioecological model benefits from a community participatory

approach. It facilitates understanding from the individual to societal level and enables conceptualisation of the processes that connect people to each other and their contexts. F2 explained the potential for the socioecological approach:

to understand intergenerational ecosystems from the perspective of—what is the person, the individual trying to get out of it and what does it mean for them? Right through to what does this mean on a societal level and what kind of policies and practices do we need to be working on to make sure this happens generally, rather than just for specific initiatives.

Understanding the motivations for involvement from the individual to the societal level would help ensure the conceptualised roadmap is representative of diverse stakeholders and developed sustainably for communities.

Conclusions

Themes identified for refining the project's aims, objectives, and questions relate to the importance of producing a roadmap that is usable across cultural contexts, highlighting the benefits of multigenerational spaces for changes in both personal and global circumstances, being inclusive in terms of language and consideration of intersectional social identities.

Additionally, innovating the use of

outdoor spaces, emphasising diversity and interconnectedness of partners, and understanding motivations for involvement at different levels are also important. The themes point to priority areas for the project's next stage of development.

Reflections

It might be helpful to include intersectional theory to frame how factors in addition to age will be considered in the conceptualisation.

Implications

The findings should be incorporated into project aims, objectives, and questions. The refined approach to the project should be shared with participants and partners for sense check, and reflection on progress of the proposal is warranted.

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Intergenerational Age-Friendly Living Ecosystem (AFLE)



Key Thematic Findings: Virtual Co-Creation Camp 4

Developing an intergenerational and age-friendly living ecosystem

Intergenerational Age-Friendly Living Ecosystem (AFLE)



Findings

ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY

Technology was identified as playing a potential role in developing a community of practice, capturing diverse voices and disseminating knowledge. In particular, the circumstances of COVID-19 require considerations of video-conferencing and design technology, and its potential for initiating and maintaining relationships was highlighted.

As F4 noted, technology should be seen as the facilitator of activity and not the main outcome: “We talked a bit about hackathons... and not just about coming up with technology-based solutions but about them being the beginnings of a relationship that would grow from there.”

Even so, caution was raised in relation to relying too heavily on technology given barriers to digital access and culturally based negative perceptions of technology: “In some cultures, technology is seen as a threat by older people, so we need to be wary of that and not just go down that technological route” (F4).

Nevertheless, the need for technology alongside traditional methods of engagement was identified as important for reaching diverse participants: “...we include everybody, and it doesn’t always have to be the technological side of things” (F7).

Careful consideration of the intended and unintended consequences of technology are suggested, as technology was viewed

as creating opportunities but also for their potential to impose barriers.

HIGHLIGHT THE HETEROGENEITY OF OLDER ADULTS

Recognition of the heterogeneity of older people was identified as key to effective engagement, and particularly the transformation of negative to positive stereotypes and to challenge ageism:

I think we really do need to big up our older people who are thriving. (M2)

...I think we are contributing to ageism when we don’t show the other side as well. I know there is a lot of focus on health issues so, you’re always looking at older adults as people who are incompetent, or they need support—they need somebody to help. So, we need to show the world that there are older adults who are very involved in their communities and working very hard so, we need to see them as well. (F2)

The involvement of multidisciplinary stakeholders offered perspective on the positive impact of recognising the heterogeneity of older people. Specifically, a student furniture designer explained, “Sometimes we will ignore their age because we think their physical condition is more important because if they can live by themselves or they need to use a wheelchair or they need others’ help... that will make a big change about what kind of furniture they will use” (F9).

Assumptions made about individuals’ experiences on the basis of older age limits opportunities to engage effectively with the older people. The universality of ageism was seen as a threat to involvement but also an opportunity to involve diverse people because everyone is affected by it.

As F8 summarised, “What we’re talking about affects everybody.” The prevalence of internal ageism was seen as a further threat and strategies to reach diversity of older people were explored.

HIGHLIGHTING INTERSECTIONS WITH AGE

The focus on diversifying engagement with the project involved discussion of the different backgrounds and experiences people have which were perceived as underrepresented in the co-creation camps to date.

The barriers to participation in designing and living in age-friendly communities on the basis of characteristics such as socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and race/ethnicity were discussed. Strategies to effectively address this were discussed:

...it is more than just opening the door, you’ve got to help people through the door as well... it’s about going, ‘Well, this is what we’re doing, and we would really like you to come and we’ll help you get there. (F3)

The diversity of national hubs represented

by the project provided an opportunity to address participation barriers within those settings. As F3 identified, “...the kind of context is everything though and so some of those hubs—the hub in India—the experience of being an LGBTI person in India is very different to being someone who identifies in that way in Scotland or in Canada or wherever else. And so, I think there is something about encouraging everyone to engage through those networks...” (F3).

There was a sense that diversifying involvement of people designing and experiencing age-friendly communities required local networks of champions who have knowledge and skills to “help people through the door” (F3).

In addition to identifying the value of strategising how to increase the diversity of creators and community members of age-friendly living environments, the importance of reaching people who might benefit most from engagement was acknowledged.

As M3 summarised, “The people who are already quite well connected, are already doing okay.” This notion of connecting people on the basis of characteristics other than age was also a strategy identified for promoting inclusion in designing and participating in age-friendly environments:

...thinking about pensioner’s associations, youth groups, housing associations—schools, and having clubs in schools where it’s not just

about learning—that's where people make real connections and there are lots of other things going on there; that's where life happens. (F4)

...not just being disseminated from one age group or one particular person in society but actually being shared to and by the whole community together and lots of ideas about buddy walks and YouTube videos, those kinds of things. (F1)

As with highlighting the heterogeneity of older people, highlighting the intersections of characteristics such as race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status with age was viewed as an opportunity to enhance engagement given the universality of this project.

The importance of inclusion for the project's benefit as well as for those with most to gain from engagement was also recognised.

ROLE OF RELATIONSHIPS

In exploring the importance of going “beyond the notion that just organisations that represent older people or represent younger people” (F5) could be included in this project, the crucial role of relationships was identified. As F8 explained, “...it is about developing those relationships and it is those long-term relationships.”

Some means to develop long-term relationships to facilitate communities of practice, inclusion of diverse experiences, and disseminate learning included the potential for “intergenerational champions” with a “foothold in the community” (F5). The

development of peer support particularly among older people was also seen as a potential strategy for engagement.

ROLE OF PLACE

In addition to relationships, the role of place in relation to facilitating engagement in the community was highlighted. Specifically, there is the potential of identifying community places “as a base” so that there is continuity when “people move on” (F4).

Further, the involvement of places that already exist could provide infrastructure for “outreaching” such as “going out there” and joining a group and “talking about” (F3) the project.

Schools of higher education were recognised as an example of an intergenerational space, and F5 posed the question: “Can we build on what they're doing to take forward this idea of intergenerational to be part of communities of practice?”

Embedding intergenerational ideas into places that exist through outreach and promotion of good practice could diversify engagement with ideas and support sustainability.

STORYTELLING

The potential for storytelling to build trust among people from diverse backgrounds and reach various people was recognised. As F8 explained, “I think storytelling is one of the most powerful ways of doing a lot of things. It gives people a voice, it brings people together. It brings people together across

generations, it creates a common understanding. I think storytelling is hugely powerful” (F8).

Storytelling was identified as a common opportunity across cultures for hearing and sharing diverse intergenerational experiences: “I think there is something in that whole oral history. And that will be across the world, there will be stories in China, I'm sure, there will be stories in Canada—unique bits of history. If we don't capture them, we are going to lose them for sure” (M2).

F2 asked, “If we want to hear a story from all generations, what is the story we need to hear?” and the method of storytelling as a means to develop community of practice, involve people, and disseminate learning was enthusiastically discussed.

Storytelling could occur in diverse settings comfortable for a variety of people, including a community place, a drop-in session, or a camp or institute.

TIME CONSIDERATIONS

Consideration of the time required to comprehend the project and commit to involvement was discussed. M2 noted that explanation of the project can be lengthy, and a quick summary of points would be beneficial to maximise engagement: “If you need to tell someone in a quick period of time, what are the key bits they need to know, to really grasp what we're trying to do” (M2).

Further, there was a sense that once involved, time considerations exist that affect

participation. Online and intensive days might engage more people, and allow for a variety of people to engage, such as those working in the third sector.

F3 offered, “...these are quite time-intensive meetings” and reflected on the potential benefit of a camp or institute. F3 suggested that the value and accessibility of engagement could be conveyed by a message such as, “Well, actually, we just need you for three days or a week and then you'll be part of something, you'll gain skills and understanding that will improve your job.”

M2 agreed: “Three days is nice because, with other people's workload, you can say, it's three days, it's intense-- but at the end of that—that's it, done.” Streamlining an explanation for the project and offering a variety of ways to be involved (e.g. online, drop-in session, camp or institute) could diversify participation of individuals and organisations.

Conclusions

The findings from Virtual Co-Creation Camp 4 identify themes for activities aimed to enhance engagement, which is key to getting diverse people involved with the project, developing a community of practice, and sharing widely what has been learned.

Activities for engagement should consider the role of technology, heterogeneity of older people, barriers to engagement on the basis of characteristics intersectional with age, the role of relationships, the role of place, the method of storytelling, and time considerations for understanding the project and committing to involvement.

Reflections

Identifying a specific role and method for using technology, perhaps investigating and selecting a good practice for using technology to build and share ideas, could be valuable.

The need and challenge to facilitate diverse, intersectional engagement is not unique to this project, and further discussion of potential opportunities enabled by this project should be taken forward.

Consideration of how the method of storytelling has been used effectively in similar projects might provide useful learning.

Implications

Further developing accessible messaging for this project would be a good next step to facilitate the actioning of other activities aimed to enhance engagement.

Funded by the Scottish University Insight Institute, this pilot project is an initiative jointly led by scholars from the School of Health Sciences, University of Dundee and the School of Energy, Infrastructure, Geoscience, and Society, Heriot Watt University. The project team includes academic and non-academic partners from across Scotland, Canada, China, Denmark, Australia, Singapore, Slovakia, and India.

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