Design Thinking As A Social Tool To Redefine Aging: The Third Age As An Agent Of Social Transformation.

Design Thinking como uma ferramenta social para redefinir o envelhecimento: a terceira idade como um agente de transformação social.

Sara Patrícia Martins Gancho

Doutoramento em Design Management
IADE, Universidade Europeia/UNIDCOM
sara.gancho@universidadeeuropeia.pt

Thiago Janning

Bacharel em Design.
Mestrando em Design Management - IADE,
Universidade Europeia/UNIDCOM
thiagojanning@gmail.com

Raquel Cristina Oliveira Lima

MBA EXECUTIVO INTERNACIONAL EM GESTÃO
DE NEGÓCIOS UDESC / ESAG e Universidade
Independente de Lisboa
Mestranda em Design Management - IADE,
Universidade Europeia/UNIDCOM
raquel.queu@gmail.com

Abstract

The ageing of the population has turned into a challenge not just for the government but also for companies and brands, which are looking for alternatives to create relations with this target. Being more inclusive with all ages can help create synergies to build a society more adapted to this new social reality. From this point of view, Design Thinking can be a tool to create solutions for our society by putting the elderly as agents of transformation and giving them a more active and participatory voice in business and governance.

Keywords

Aging active; design thinking; inclusive design; intergenerational; social innovation.
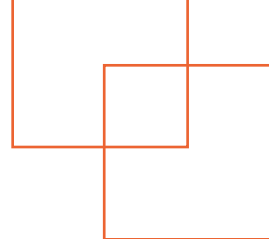
Resumo

O envelhecimento da população transformou-se num desafio não apenas para o governo, mas também para empresas e marcas, que procuram alternativas para criar relações com esse público. Isso é mais inclusivo para todas as idades, através do qual podemos criar sinergias para construir uma sociedade mais adaptada ao novo reino social. Neste ponto de vista, o Design Thinking pode ser uma ferramenta para criar soluções para a nossa sociedade, colocando os idosos como agentes de transformação e dando-lhes uma voz mais ativa e participativa nos negócios e governança.

Palavras-chave

envelhecer activo; design thinking; design inclusivo; intergeracional; inovação social.

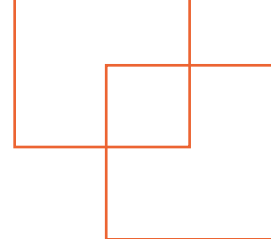Laboratório de Orientação da Gênese Organizacional - UFSC

1 Introdução

Nowadays, the world is debating about the ageing population and the lack of a hard-working and active workforce in society, either because of financial and technological reasons or because of retirement. Moreover, at no point in human history people have been able to enjoy the possibility of ageing healthily and with an increased prospect of longevity. Christensen (2009) states that many people born in the 2000's will likely turn into centennials. In this scenario of ageing some authors define that beyond the three traditional periods of human maturity (childhood, adulthood and old age), we will have two new components, the third age and fourth age, which displace the sense of a senile ageing. "Very long lives are not a distant privilege for future generations to come, very long lives are the fate of most people now living in developed countries." (Christensen, Doblhammer, Rau, & Vaupel, 2009, p. 1206).

In this scenario of increasingly active ageing and integrated transformations, the design, which has at its core the proper innovation matrix to society's needs, has been active in contributing with methodologies that go beyond the products for this niche. As an example, we have entities such as the Design Council department in the United Kingom that develop studies and activities such as "Ageing Well" in 2016 (Design Council, 2016), the Aging Action Alliance (Aging Action Alliance, 2015), which seeks to make older be seen, valued and heard through partnerships with organizations, and the "Age of No Retirement" study (Age of No Retirement, 2016), which targets a world where age no longer defines who we are, how we are seen or what we can do.

On this basis Design Thinking, with its collective and cooperative charac-teristics, is a valuable tool for the development of innovation integrating young and older minds, as a way to work intergenerational relationships and transform the meaning of ageing, as they create forms where age is disregarded variable in the process, in other words, ageless.

Previously, ageing was seen as an unchanging physiological and evolutionary process of living beings. To the present day there are countless factors to be considered as influencers, such as: the social aspect, biological vulnerability, physical and mental health, and autonomy. That said, according to research by the World Health Organization, the ageing of the population is a worldwide phenomenon, in which there will be 1.2 billion people over 60 years old in 2025, and Portugal is also part of this statistic. According to Instituto Nacional de Estatistica, in Portugal the young population (0-14 years old) decreased by 35.1% and the elderly population grew by 111.4%, with only 21.4% of the population

in a state of unfavorable functional dependence. (Oliveira et al., 2010; Sousa, Galante, Figueiredo, 2003)

Focusing on future projects, this study aims to bring to light information that will help make a Design Thinking model applicable to Portugal's social issues. Thus, we will present Design Thinking as a tool that places the individual in its mature phase as a protagonist of projects and solutions, working together with society, public and private entities, not just focusing on the development of products or design solutions for its niche, but where the individual is active. Through Design Thinking we aim to create favorable solutions that aim to improve and solve many issues, whether in social, environmental and business sectors.
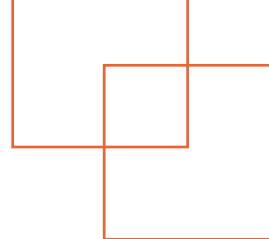
2 Ressignification of Age

"We not only hope to live longer, we also expect to experience less disability and less functional limitation." (Christensen K, Doblhammer G, Rau R, Vaupel JW., 2009) Technological, medical development and the search for new, healthier and longer-lived alternatives of life have put in focus a new perspective on ageing and made companies, public entities and research centers to put forward studies and proposals for a new meaning of ageing.

"Research shows that the elderly consider themselves to have aged successfully, but classifications based on traditional medical models do not." (Bowling, 2007). A recent study called "Age Does Not Define Us", by the research center The Age of No Retreatment conducted by Design Council, Flamingo, Tapestry and The Helen Hamlyn Center for Design (RCA), 2016, brings light to the way the ageing narrative needs urgent transformation as both young and old are on the internet. Both ages would like to spend more time exchanging experiences with other people. Older people do not feel represented by brands. The study also suggests that increased intergenerational interaction helps younger people feel more confident at work. "Younger generations are more prone to lack of confidence, which suggests they could benefit from older mentors and cross-generational help." (Intergenerational Design Principles, 2016, p.13)

According to a study by author Kathrina Dankle (2016), there are three mechanisms that help build a design look at the resignification of ageing. These are: the social construction of ageing; product design focused on ageing; and the anthropology of design.

From the point of view of social construction, ageing was primarily constructed under a pessimistic outlook. Today it brings new perspectives (Wesley Jongen, Genc Burazeri & Helmut Brand, 2015) in which the

authors state that ageing should be addressed as a challenge for the promotion of social participation, rather than merely health care. The same point of view is applied to the renowned designer Roger Coleman who recently stated he does not conform to the stereotypes of ageing in the sense that he feels they are insulting and a gross misinterpretation of a rapidly growing sector of the population. (Coleman, 2015).
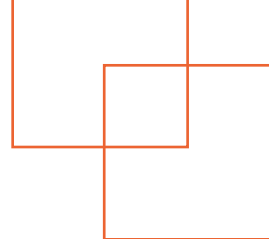
Certain social components have helped to perpetuate the pessimistic discourse on ageing, where design creates a certain stigma when it places its focus on "designing for old people" rather than proposing a more holistic view of its performance. When design focuses on ageing, some of its most prominent players, in this context, are mapped by author Kathrina Dankl (2016), design students and scholars, design labs and design agencies, and area professionals. Although these initiatives are relevant they have failed to contribute actively and sufficiently to change the image of ageing. The criticism of the author rests on the fact that these players have almost exclusive focused on productivity and technology.

Anthropological Design, whose main focus is learning through the world we live in, brings valuable information in the context of aging. Through prototyping models based on real-time tests, Anthropological Design has provided insights for the development of modern design, argues author Ignold (2013).

3 Design Thinking as a component for Social Innovation

In a traditional view, the conceptualization and studies of innovation come from Schumpeter's conceptions, delimiting the term as "new combinations" (Sweezy, P. (1943). It aims to achieve extraordinary profits, and are only linked to the concepts of profit generation and economic objectives. From Schumpeter's concepts about the definition of "development," new definitions for innovation, such as MIS research in Minnesota, involved "generation, adoption, implementation and incorporation of new ideas, practices, or artifacts within the organization". (Bignetti, 2011)

Currently, the focus of research on innovation and social innovation has been developed as one of the widely studied concepts, which became the subject of courses and research at universities such as Harvard, Stanford and Cambridge. This innovation strand aims to "benefit human beings first of all, unlike the traditional economic notions of innovation, geared primarily to financial benefits." (Bignetti, 2011, p.6) Ferrarini and Norström (2010) point out "both social innovation and social entrepreneurship are operations that combine creation of social value and social change."

Brown and Wyatt (2010) describe that design traditionally was only used to enhance the appearance and functionality of products. Recently design has expanded its breath and began to "create whole systems to deliver products and services", including in its objectives the resolution of problems related to Social Innovation through a new approach to problem-solving - Design Thinking. Design Thinking enables a better and more effective generation of results that include finding the infrastructure necessary for its execution and analyzing the needs of customers and consumers through a constructive and experiential system that incorporates rapid prototyping in the process.
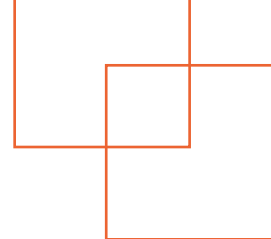
Design thinkers observe how people behave and how their experience affects their reaction to products and services. They take into account the emotional meaning of things as well as their functional performance. They identify people's unstated, or latent, needs and translate them into opportunities. (Brown, 2009, p. 162)

IDEO, a global design company headed by Tim Brown, is an organization that implements problem solving through Design Thinking, bringing cases of human-centered methods for inclusion in various industries. Since the term "Inclusive Design", created by Victor Papanek (1971), has been heard for the first time, the role of Design has adapted to social needs. Design should serve as support for transformations of ageing and old age, adding to this question its vast multidisciplinarity.

4 Design Thinking as a Intergenerational tool

Brown (2009) defines Design Thinking as "a way of describing a set of principles that can be applied by diverse people to a wide range of problems." Brown (2009) also states that there's not "one best way" to move through the process since the continuum of innovation is best thought of "as a system of overlapping spaces rather than a sequence of orderly steps", which compasses three big ideas: inspiration (problem that motivates the search for solutions), ideation (generating, developing and testing ideas) and implementation (how to put the project on the market). "Projects may loop back through these spaces more than once as the team refines its ideas and explores new directions." (BROWN, 2009, p. 20).

Research proves designers are able to improve their technical skills to solve problems and transform Design Thinking into a integrative tool for technology and economical viability to design products. For Tim Brown (2009) this is not concerned just to human-centered, but to humanity in its totality. "Design thinking relies on our ability to be intuitive, to recognize patterns, to construct ideas that have emotional meaning as
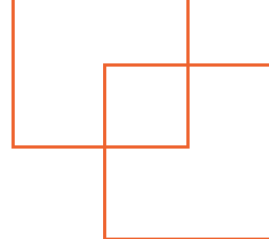
well as functionality, to express ourselves in media other than words or symbols." (BROWN, TIM. 2009) Design Thinking generates a trustable and applicable form to analyse business not just based on feelings and intuition only, it creates a process where rational and analytical walk along side by side integrated.

Many entities, scholars, professionals and initiatives that have studied and applied design tools for the social inclusion and resignification of the active ageing. Some of these initiatives find the need for changes that will not only be reflected in health issues, but in the labor market and life in society.

To explore the potential of design thinking as a social changer, we chose one particular project that allowed us to see the intervenients of this process and its participants. This project aims to expand the ageing experience and puts together older people, entrepreneurs, health and social leaders in a kind of caravan inside the UK. Transform Ageing is a Big Lottery initiative in partnership with the Design Council, UnLtd - a Foundation for Social Entrepreneurs, the South West Academic Health Science Network and the Center for Ageing Better. The program engages 120 participants in four months of application in four different cities in England: Cornwall, North Devon, Somerset and Torbay.

The program was designed to place old people in the center of the research, acting not as spectators but as transforming agents. The active engage of their insights encourage creators and society to see not just what elderly people needs but also its active role in society.

The study used Design Thinking tools to raise insights and recommendations that will serve as a briefing to entrepreneurs who can work on five different fronts, according to the themes addressed: Diversity and Collaboration; Accessibility and Inclusion; People first, then professionals; The process and language of design; and Property and Legacy.

One of the main ingredients of Design Thinking is the team work. Although a researcher can explore alone the journey, the complexity of today's projects requires a more diverse and multiple skilled and different background groups. The leading theories and designers see the co-creation and the strength of the teams as the key for smart solutions, as IDEO use to says "all of us are smarter than any of us". Based on the capacity to unlock the problems of a british society in what regards on elderly, the Design Council creates a very diverse group to analyse and look for some responses in this area. Common people, government specialists and social entrepreneurs were brought together to define, develop and deliver solutions for ageing communities.
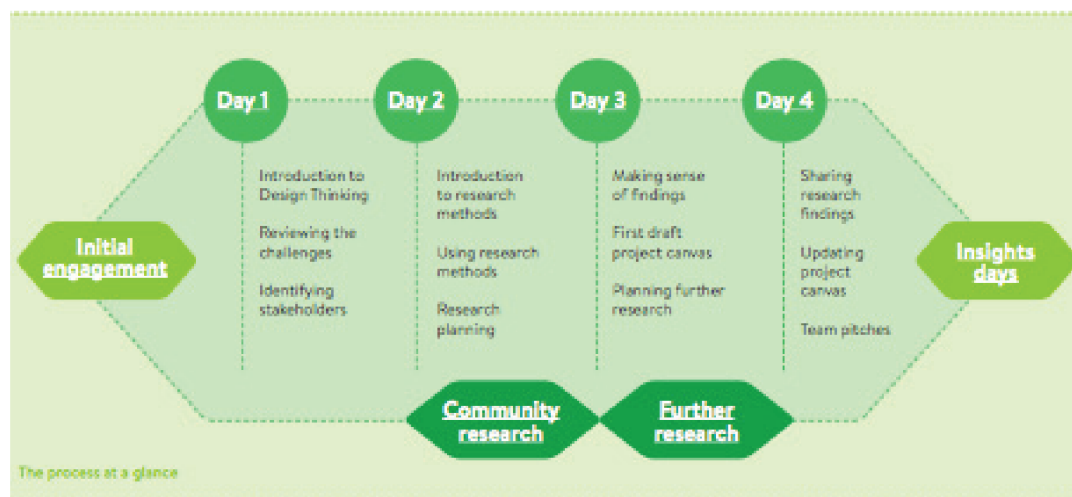
In this case, those responsible for applying the Design Thinking processes were concerned about clarifying the steps to the participants, since many did not know the theory and its applications. So, after define the primary focus, the experience defined the indicators that could allows us to see how integrate people in late life into a solve problem process. This indicators were focused on see how people in later life interact with the process of design and how leaders understand and value social entrepreneurship in later life. They also looked at the role, contribution and satisfaction level of participants, as well as the staff delivery and organization.

To see all the components in a clearly form, the experience was filmed and documented in every step. This make the researcher could analyse even the face reaction and body communication. In this aspect, design thinking is also about be able to build a level os trust among people to make their comfortable in the interaction of the journey.
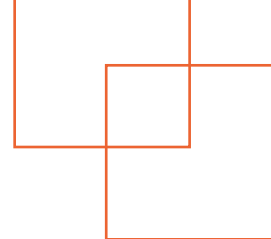
The dynamics were divided in four days and involved introduction to Design Thinking, research methodologies, interviews, identification of opportunities and consolidation of insights.

Figure 1: Transform Ageing, 2016

Fonte: autoral.

Much has been written about human-centered design and its importance to society, economy and innovation, but a study like this, shows us the particular path inside the process. This research is different because it has focus groups and involves people into the dynamic of Design Thinking. It is able to put their problems in the middle of the course to give a strong and more aligned results, even if its processes were not so clear, for people in late life. As Tim Brown (2009) says "The

tools of conventional market research can be useful in pointing toward incremental improvements, but they will never lead to those rule-breaking, game-changing, paradigm-shifting breakthroughs that leave us scratching our heads and wondering why nobody ever thought of them before."

We could observe that creating empathy was determinant to make the participants share their experiences, develop assumptions and create emerging ideas. Although, some of them are not comfortable with the design thinking theories, the journey with the staff helped them amplify their performance.
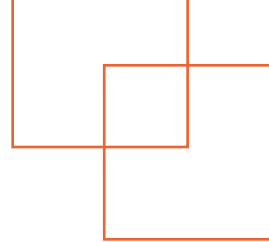
The participants were also encouraged to interact with their communities to capture the other's perspective about the problems delineated.

"We've just evaluated the problems as they are perceived around the table and I think everyone has a different view of the scale and the importance of that problem. [...] It is quite challenging in terms of focus. We're talking about problems, which can be all things to all people. We're talking about a huge section of the population." (Paul H.)

The main conclusions of this project are focused on human interactions throughout the implementation of the project and the management of diversity. They could conclude that smaller teams were more engaged and made the challenges successful. In addition, the importance of the process facilitator was raised to guide and more actively lead the discussions in the teams.

Another central aspect of this theme and research was the social inclusion and feeling of participation mainly of older people. Many of them felt connected and active, they found purpose and even a way to meet new people. As we can see from one of the participants "I came to Transform Ageing in the hope that I would glean from it some tools to be able to reach out in the community. I have a desire to make friends because my partner died, and I was completely isolated."

However, the people who participated felt mostly engaged and, although some problems of understanding the initial statement and clarity of purpose of the challenge set out, the teams helped themselves by sharing their perspectives, experiences and background. Idealizers also considered positive the impact of diversity for generating insights. One of the greatest challenges was to engage and retain the attention and perception of older people, to make them feel part of the transformations that the results of the dynamics proposed. This provocation was

successfully completed as more of the older participants felt included and both visual and acoustic accessibility barriers were addressed. (Transform Ageing, 2016, pp. 36-44)

5 Conclusions

Today, we can say that the theory widely disseminated in the 70's called "Theory of Disengagement", where the argument falls on the view that in the preface of death the elderly individual should compulsorily move away from society, is totally falling into disuse, as we create and we are acting in a new light with ageing society (Cumming M.E., 1964).

In addition, we must understand that current issues in the global sphere are transforming our society. If the twentieth century was about income distribution, the twenty-first century will be the period of redistribution of labor, according to Christensen, the author argues that the population will work longer and for longer periods of their lives (Christensen, 2005). Actively ageing will be a prerequisite and this issue will be central, and should focus the debate and actions in partnerships with society and citizens (Foster & Walker, 2015).

We have to think worldwide and invest in an improvement of the quality of life in the elderly focused only on retirement, treating older citizens as a part of the population that does not have more productive capacity. Through this research it was possible to perceive that, based on data collected about the Portuguese population and the cases studied, that integrating people over sixty as productive members of society is viable and necessary.
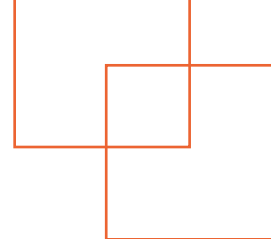
With the help of Design Thinking methodologies we can in intergenerational groups, involve public and private companies to help create a series of solutions applicable in our communities, as well as creating a new look and opportunity to design a more active and active social ageing.

Therefore, possibilities were revealed for future actions to be carried out in partnership with private companies, the City Council and the Town Councils. By placing active retirement as a premise for the creation of jobs, valuing ageing and rebuilding a new perspective for the age.

References

Age of No Retirement. (2016). Flamingo, **Tapestry and The Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design (RCA)**.

Age Action Retirement. (2015). **Putting Partnership into Practice**, AAA

Progress Report, May 2015.

Bignetti, L. P. (2011). **As inovações sociais: uma incursão por ideias, tendências e focos de pesquisa.** Ciências Sociais Unisinos, 47(1).

Bowling, Ann (2007) **Aspirations for Older Age in the 21st Century: What is Successful Aging?.** The International Journal of Aging and Human Development .Vol 64, Issue 3, pp. 263 - 297
Brown, T. (2009). Change by design.

Brown, T., & Wyatt, J. (2010). **Design thinking for social innovation IDEO.** Development Outreach, 12(1), 29-31.

Christensen K, Doblhammer G, Rau R, Vaupel JW. **Ageing populations: the challenges ahead.** Lancet. 2009;374(9696):1196-1208. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(09)61460-4.

Cumming M.E. (1964) New thoughts on the theory of disengagement. In: Kastenbaum R. (eds) **New Thoughts on Old Age.** Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg
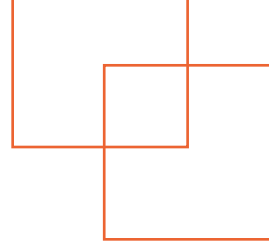
Dankl, K. (2016). **Design Age: Towards a participatory transformation of images of ageing.** Elsevier.

Ferrarini, T. and Norström, T. (2010), **Family policy, economic development and infant mortality: a longitudinal comparative analysis.** International Journal of Social Welfare, 19: S89-S102. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2397.2010.00736.x

Foster L, Walker A. **Active and Successful Aging: A European Policy Perspective.** The Gerontologist. 2015;55(1):83-90. doi:10.1093/geront/gnu028.

Hulgård, L., & Vieira Ferrarini, A. (2010). **Inovação social: rumo a uma mudança experimental na política pública?**. Ciências Sociais Unisinos, 46(3).

Ingnold, T. (2013). **Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture.** Routledge.

Laslett, P. (1991). **A Fresh Map of Life: The Emergence of the Third Age. Harvard University Press.**

Oliveira, C. R. D., Santos-Rosa, M., Mota-Pinto, A., Botelho, M. A., Morais, A., & Veríssimo, M. T. (2010)**. Estudo do perfil do envelhecimento da população portuguesa.**

Papanek, V. J. (2012). **Design for the real world: Human ecology and social change.** Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers.

Roger Coleman, **Designing for our future selves**, Applied Ergonomics, Volume 46, Part B, 2015, Pages 233-234, ISSN 0003-6870, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apergo.2014.10.015. (http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0003687014001987)

Sousa, L., Galante, H., & Figueiredo, D. (2003). **Qualidade de vida e bem--estar dos idosos: um estudo exploratório na população portuguesa.** Revista de Saúde Pública, 37(3), 364-371.

Sweezy, P. (1943). **Professor Schumpeter's Theory of Innovation.** The Review of Economics and Statistics, 25(1), 93-96. doi:10.2307/1924551

Transform Ageing. (2016). **Exploring the challenge: the impact of the design process.** Design Council, alongside UnLtd – the Foundation for Social Entrepreneurs, the South West Academic Health Science Network (SW AHSN) and the Centre for Ageing Better.

Wesley Jongen, Genc Burazeri & Helmut Brand (2015) **The influence of the economic crisis on quality of care for older people: system readiness for innovation in Europe**, Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research, 28:2, 167-191, DOI: 10.1080/13511610.2015.1019839

Sara Patrícia Martins Gancho

Sara Gancho é Professora Auxiliar no IADE, Universidade Europeia, onde lecciona disciplinas na área do Marketing, Gestão do Projeto, Gestão do Design e Design. É investigadora sénior no grupo de investigação Envision Future, pertencente à UNIDCOM/IADE unidade de investigação em Design e Comunicação. Trabalha nas áreas do Design, Marketing e relacionadas desde 2005.

Thiago Janning

Graduado em Design pela Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. Experiência em gestão de marcas (Branding). Integrou o Laboratório de Orientação da Gênese Organizacional (LOGO UFSC) de 2013 a 2016, dedicando-se a gestão de marcas, além do contato com gestão de projetos, ilustração, produção de materiais gráficos impressos e digitais e diagramação. Desde setembro de 2017 cursa o mestrado de Design Management no IADE, em Lisboa.

Raquel Cristina Oliveira Lima

Experiência em planejamento estratégico de comunicação e gestão de marcas. Integrou o laboratório Jr de Publicidade da Unisul entre 2000 e 2001. Entre 2002 e 2008 se dedicou a criação de campanha de comunicação para marcas em Florianópolis. Deste 2009 até os dias atuais (2018) se dedica a gestão de marcas a nível de estratégia e branding para empresas do Brasil e Europa. Empreendedora social no âmbito do envelhecimento, com o projeto Mesah, que fornece conexão, renda e integração social através da comida.