



MODULE 1

INTRODUCTION TO AGE-FRIENDLY
AND INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

UNIT

5

COMMUNICATION SKILL AND RESEARCH
DESIGN ON AGE-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENTS

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DESIRE

DESIGN FOR ALL METHODS TO CREATE AGE-FRIENDLY HOUSING

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DESIRE will provide professionals in the building industry and home furnishings sector with the tools and skills to apply Design4All methods as an integral part of the design process, with the aim to create or adapt age friendly housing as a solution for the wellbeing, comfort and autonomy of the older adults or dependents at home.

The DESIRE training platform consists of six modules and 21 units.



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UNIT 5 – COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND RESEARCH DESIGN ON AGE-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENTS

This unit explores the ways of including the clients' perspectives and needs in the designing process. They can be approached through the means of social-scientific research methods. There will be an emphasis on qualitative and participatory research methods such as the interview, participant observation, or other reflexive techniques. The participants will learn how to approach the views of their clients (seniors and their caregivers, relatives

etc.) and communicate with them in plain and non-discriminatory language. The goal of participation methods is more than just obtaining output data that will lead to better design of the environment. Participation leads to empowering, changing the role of older adults from researched subjects to development actors and even to partners in influencing design.

5.1 HOW TO DO RESEARCH ON DESIGNING AGE-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENTS?

As clients' requirements get more particular and diversified, research becomes a more critical part of the design process. However, designers and architects do not have to find new research methods from scratch, but they can get inspired in other fields of practice, including anthropology. As explained in Unit 2 of this module, anthropology has a particular perspective on human lives, societies, and culture. Hence, it is well acquired to study people and their everyday lives.

Moreover, the specifics of participation, used in planning and designing, can be orientation towards spatial and functional outputs, or the need and at the same time the possibility of visualization. If we need to discuss the spatial aspects of design (both in the case of furniture, its placement, and in solving the layout of internal spaces, but also, for example, the distribution of functions in public space), we need to work with such materials and methods that take this spatial aspect into account (maps, diagrams, photos, walks in specific places...).

5.1.1 Ethnology/Social anthropology and their research methods

IN A NUTSHELL

Social anthropology or ethnology are interdisciplinary social scientific fields based on holistic research (studying research phenomena as whole) focused on explaining the diversity of human cultures. They are rooted in the “bottom-up” perspective, exploring individuals' everyday lives and

identities as members of particular social groups (such as older adults). The research methods of social anthropologists and ethnologists are based on longitudinal qualitative research while using specific research methods such as participant observation or in-depth interviews.

To answer the question of how to do research on designing age-friendly environments, we seek inspiration from the bottom-up perspective as well as the “giving voice” perspective, which means using the research principles of social anthropology or ethnology. Giving voice perspective can range from listening to the voice of the given community to the possibility of co-decision making in different contexts. These principles are a part of anthropology as a holistic, interdisciplinary science combining the knowledge of several natural and social sciences to explain the diversity of human cultures.

Through research on a given community, the researcher ascertains the identity of members of different communities, e.g., village, town, community, company, age group etc. By understanding the specificities of a given group, anthropology can help prevent ethnocentric and hostile expressions, as well as suggest ways in which cultural agreement can be reached. And again, this recognition of identity can happen through inquiry and listening, or even through participation in co-decision making (however difficult it may be).

The research methods of social anthropologists and ethnologists are based on field research, mostly longitudinal qualitative field research: mainly through participant observation and interviewing, they seek to understand a given

culture, in a given time and place. In addition, he relies on historical and archival sources as well as contextual information from the media. The quantitative research methods are just complementary.

Ethnographic research is characterised primarily by the researcher's immersion in the local community and its everyday life, often through participant observation, which allows for a deeper understanding of local culture, customs, and social dynamics. Such research tends to be longitudinal – meaning that the researcher may spend anywhere from several months to several years doing it, allowing them direct access to authentic experiences, practices, and other aspects of the culture under study that would otherwise remain inaccessible.

The particular society is studied in its own environment, and the account of the community is exhaustive, inclusive, and comprehensive – usually including a brief history, a description of the environment or habitat, as well as the social structure and organization of the population under study. It thus aims to provide a rich narrative description, allowing its various aspects to be explored and interpreted. This all happens with an emphasis on its own point of view, especially through the key anthropological methods of participant observation and in-depth interviews.

For designers, it might be very fruitful to engage in social research and combine their intuitive approach with gaining a deeper insight into the social and cultural processes (Clarke, 2011). This will ensure their immersion into the perspectives, needs, and motivations of their clients. According to design anthropologist

Alison J. Clarke: “The shift towards cultural sensitivity through ethnography, while underpinned by a market-driven agenda, could optimistically be construed as a move towards socially responsive design,” as anthropological methods have the capacity to generate effective social innovations (Clarke, 2011, 11).

5.1.2 Approaching the views of the clients (seniors and their caregivers)

IN A NUTSHELL

What is common is never universal. People often decide on the basis of “unwritten rules”. The way all members of any community refer to such rules is always site-specific and contextual. Rarely do speakers have cultural mediators at their disposal in translation of

what remains in between the lines. One of the ways to get a clearer message is to ask ethnographically, as if from the viewpoint of the insider. In the following section, you will find basic rules and principles on how to interview people ethnographically.

The ground principle in approaching the view of the clients is the emic approach. The emic approach consists in interpreting cultural phenomena from the perspective of the person of the subculture under study. This approach examines how people think and categorize in their own culture and is therefore also called natively oriented. It is important for the researcher to have a key cultural consultant(s) from the community studied, who can raise important issues for the community as well as represent the community's ideas¹. This is not relevant only when researching a particular group of people in a “remote place somewhere in the world” but it is also essential when addressing a new group of clients, and trying to understand their needs and adjust to their perspectives.

Giving voice perspective has the aim to adequately capture diversity and at the same time the universality of experiences. The aim is to bring to the forefront the perspectives of persons too often marginalized and silenced within the society (Ashby, 2011). To give an example, in the case of older adults, very inspiring can be the perspective of human becoming (Parse, 1981, 1998). According to this perspective, humans are not reduced to parts. Rather, people are appreciated as unitary wholes who relate in a distinctive manner and are free to choose their way within the circumstances of their lives. Researchers guided by the human becoming theory believe that only the person living the life can describe its quality (Parse, 1994) and that this applies to all persons – even those living with dementia: “concerns about confusion, memory changes, and confabulation are not relevant from the human becoming perspective since the person's experiences and descriptions of reality are honored and accepted” (Parse, 1996). This seems to be very important, because even in the

¹ The opposite principle is the etic approach. It consists of the interpretation of cultural phenomena from the perspective of the anthropologist. In this case, the researcher opens up the topics and creates the categories that they think are important. This approach is also defined as scientifically oriented.

recent past, we still knew more about opinions and attitudes towards older adults than about the diversity of opinions and feelings of older adults themselves.

This approach, governed by ethics and respect for one another, needs to be at the core of design practice. Regarding this, we might find inspirations in basic anthropological fieldwork methods like the following: The basic guidelines when talking to an interview partner seem to relate to introducing yourself, using a comfortable tone, making eye contact, trying to avoid the challenges/traps of hierarchical position caused by the interview situation, and not talking down to the interview partner/client, being comfortable with the so-called “horror vacui” – long pauses and finally, with displays of emotion. Understanding of the perspective is possible only if the actors create a communicative space for clarifying questions. Communicative space is an object of negotiation by all the participants. Open ethnographic questions thus built bridges between previously unknown territories – be it a foreign community or new clients in the design process.

One example of using the ethnographic methods when approaching the views of the clients presents the study focused on exploring ergonomic problems and coping strategies in designing the kitchen space. Its aim was “to develop a holistic approach to understanding person-environment fit (Peace, Wahl, Mollenkopf, & Oswald, 2007) leading to informed design practice” (Maguire et al. 2014, 73). The authors interviewed 48 older



Figure 1.5.1 (Valábeková, 2022)

adults about their current kitchen, how they are satisfied with using it, and possible problems in the kitchen. They also used the observations of activities when older adults performed typical tasks in the kitchen. Another method could rest in asking them to keep a diary of their day-to-day activities. From the bottom-up perspective, the study focuses on coping strategies and solutions addressing the problems related to restriction of sight, hearing and movement, as suggested by older adults.

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT...

A special position belongs to people living with dementia. “The view that persons living with dementia are empty shells may account for the failure of many researchers to include the person's perspective.” (Moore & Hollett, 2003) The idea that might be inspirational when designing and creating the space for this particular group of people is that persons living with dementia are able to actively participate in qualitative studies, responding to open-ended questions in a meaningful way.

Thus, the critical social gerontologist and the practitioners in the care area have begun to challenge the idea of losing personality and to recognize the importance of the person's perspective of quality of life. However, the assumption is still widespread: the person's inability to understand and make choices in one area is often generalized and also includes decisions in all areas (Post et al., 1995). Marson et al. (1994) note that rather than asking “is he/she competent?”, it is appropriate to ask “is he/she competent to do X in Y context” (p. 8).

5.2 THE BASIC RESEARCH METHODS

IN A NUTSHELL

The designing process as a creative endeavour very much relies on designers' ability to look, listen, notice, learn and immerse into the experiences and challenges of people (Suri, 2011). Today, it has become a well-established practice to ask anthropologists or psychologists to take part in the designing teams. If this is not the case, designers still can

acquire their methodologies, approaches, and research techniques to inform and inspire the designing process. These are mainly oriented on qualitative research methods as they might easily become a viable part of the design process, such as participant observation, ethnographic interviews, or participatory research methods.

Qualitative research involves the collection and analysis of data that are descriptive and relate to phenomena that can be observed but not necessarily expressed numerically (quantitatively). In anthropology and other social sciences, this mainly involves data collected through participant observation, videos, photographs, participant interviews, or other texts. Through these methods and techniques, qualitative researchers explore and interpret how individuals within a particular society understand their social reality.

Ethnography, grounded theory, or discursive or narrative analysis are some of the frequently used qualitative methodologies in anthropology.

As opposed to qualitative research, quantitative research involves the collection and analysis of data that can be expressed numerically. It is generally used to look for patterns, averages, predictions, as well as cause and effect relationships between the variables under study. The goal of quantitative research in anthropology is to develop and use mathematical models, theories, and hypotheses to investigate certain social phenomena. The process of measurement is central to quantitative research because it provides the essential link between empirical observation and the mathematical expression of quantitative relationships.

In the following section, we will dive into anthropological research tools and methods, that might be included in design process.

5.2.1 Participant observation

IN A NUTSHELL

Participant observation is a key anthropological research method aimed at collecting qualitative data. It is a major component of field research and, in a broader sense, synonymous with it, as it represents an attempt to directly experience the sociocultural life under study. It thus involves not only observing the various activities,

events and interactions of the communities under study, but also actively participating in their course. Participant observation – as a method providing deep insight into the everyday life of the subjects – might easily become a fruitful approach in the design process.

Doing participant observation does not just mean watching people work, but also trying it out with them – participating in that work. In this way, anthropologists leave the position of distant “spectators” and try to take on the role of local inhabitants. Ultimately, such practice allows one to get closer to the perspective of the populations under study, their practices, and ideas in action.

The immediate product of participant observation is detailed notes or (audio)visual records, such as photographs, films, maps, or drawings, that capture elements of the observed phenomena.

The first is to set the objective: are we exploring a topic or way of being (social)? Are we looking for data collection, or the perspective of the observed? What contexts are we identifying? What variables do we refer to in our reasoning? If we focus not on the meaning but the use of a cultural phenomenon in its time and space – we don't need to ask directly why. If the goal is to capture the so-called commonplace, we focus on the everyday routines that we do more automatically than reflexively. The rules we need to discover are unwritten and for the participants may seem obvious. The question about utility leads us to implicit knowledge of the respondents.

Orientation in space forms the cornerstone of a general sense of security. Space itself structures the predispositions of the one who expresses himself, both the issues and the modes in which he expresses himself. Although space does not guarantee anything, it has a significant impact on the creation of a symbolic room for communication, i.e., the establishment of connection. People move through a space, but it is only when they go through an experience together in that space that they attach meaning to the place, and it becomes a place of memory for them. Repeated shared experience is the basis for genius loci. Humans, like many other animals, renew their territoriality and inscribe it in their bodies, going through an embodied experience. In every culture, people define both the axis of the places they inhabit and the places whose meaning is both contested and perhaps transformative. The referential axis can be the site of encounters, rituals or even places of silence. It is often impossible to return to the places that people have visited. One technique is to listen attentively to the recollection over a hand-drawn map. We can begin with the global level of areas that the conversation partner considers as appropriated. In countries they indicate their spots, perhaps towns, villages, parks. They may designate language areas. They zoom in the maps gradually through the levels of the routes taken, until they reach the level of local social groups and finally their own dwellings.

After you describe the sites – how the social group uses them, what meaning they attach to them, how their functions change in the course of the activity, focus more on observing time and temporal dimension of spaces used. Optimally, you would write down the observation every day of the week. We are interested in experiencing time, especially the processes of getting to a routine. Just as certain boundaries are fixed in space, they are also fixed in time.



Figure 1.5.2 (Pauliniová, 2022a)

If we can't be with the people observed for a long time and take part in their own time and place, we let ourselves be guided by specific examples. (Could you please describe to me your daughter's place? Could you describe to me the last party?)

By asking about typical events we get frequently used generalizations of the interview partners. (Would you describe to me a typical party here in your house?)

Ideally, we get a tour of the place and lead a tour-type conversation. (Could you please give me a tour of your place? If I were here with you last time you had a visit, tell me please what it looked like?)

We can also ask for a guided tour of the place/ area map. (Could you please draw me a map of the village as you know it and specify what usually happens where? Could you tell me more about these places? How did it look like last year?)

Finally, we can ask about the quality of the relationship to the place. (What is it like to live/work in this place?)

The concept of “grand tour” (Spradley, 1980, 77–78) comes from the common experience of having someone show us around their house, place of business, or school. We can expand the idea of a grand tour to include almost every aspect of the experience in addition to spatial location. We can identify features that will help you in formulating initial grand tour questions and making the observations. This will give a total of nine major dimensions to every social situation.

When observing physical activities, there are several methodologies that work with categories of behaviour in space. We can use such methods, for example, in the initial phase of participatory surveys, the goal of which is to evaluate the rate of use of space, occupation of space by different groups, their number, intermingling, spatial conflicts, visibility in space, etc. It is possible to capture, for example, different age categories and different ways of moving (on foot, on a scooter, with a bicycle, with support, e. g. with crutches, in a wheelchair, with a stroller, etc. In this case, it is a quantitative survey, where the output is maps or spatial graphs. It is more than appropriate to combine such survey with qualitative research (questionnaires, on-site interviews). The combination of methods can serve as a basis for concrete planning with the involvement of people (see part 5.2.3).

EXCERCISE

Make a figure. For example, go to neighborhood near the senior house and observe the public spaces. The following dimensions can serve as guides for the participant observer.

1. Space: the physical place or places
 2. Actor: the people involved
 3. Activity: a set of related acts people do
 4. Object: the physical things that are present
 5. Act: single actions that people do
 6. Event: a set of related activities that people carry out
 7. Time: the sequencing that takes place over time
 8. Goal: the things people are trying to accomplish
 9. Feeling: the emotions felt and expressed
- Make notes and combine them with short videos or photographs.

5.2.2 Ethnographic interview

IN A NUTSHELL

Semi-structured (in-depth) interviews are the basis of qualitative anthropological research. They are characterized by a pre-prepared set of thematic questions (therefore the term semi-structured) that are asked to respondents in the field. Their flexibility is also an important characteristic—the outlined headings roughly guide the flow of the interviews, but also allow for the discovery of new aspects of the topics under investigation or entirely new topics through freer narratives

by the male and female respondents as well as through sub-questions by the researchers. The conversation usually takes place at the research site and face-to-face. Some form of interview is usually an intrinsic part of building up a client/designer relationship in various stages of design process. However, its form and structure can be easily improved by including the principles of ethnographic interview.

When doing the semi-structured interviews, when we go more into depth the subject of the conversation might be practically anything that is close to the respondents' and interviewees' hearts. For example, the interview can be focused on various socio-cultural practices, ideas, attitudes, or experiences... Descriptions of the details of social life and the connections

within it, which are at first largely hidden, obscure or unspoken, can be brought to the surface through this method. This way, not only do we enrich ethnographic-anthropological knowledge, but we also might get useful information which can guide us in the design process.



Figure 1.5.3 (Vořanská, 2021)

To know how to ask questions ethnographically is to unlearn the common way of asking questions. The following exercise serves as a way of realizing what kinds of questions people usually ask and then helps to make the shift to an ethnographic way of asking. Workshop participants are divided into groups of three, with one asking (A), the second answering (B), and the third (C) writing down the questions verbatim. A asks B different questions to find out more about his eating habits. C writes down each question on a separate sticker note. After about 10 minutes they are asked to group together questions which are formally similar. They can also describe how they felt with each question. The exercise appears trivial at first glance, but has several non-trivial implications. Typically, participants see how often they ask closed questions that confirm or refute the questioner's opinion, form a "firing of questions", generating lots of brief answers. The most important shift happens when each group discusses how to transform closed questions into open questions. They observe how the reformulation of a question can change its typological classification (e.g., from unpleasant to pleasant, from personal to general, from clueless to targeted, from helpful to open).

By practicing to open the questions, people usually step out of affirming their own biases. At first, each group usually creates its own type classification of the questions asked such as closed, open, probing, leading, controlling, direct, indirect, either/or. Another type of classifier could be based on emotion the question evokes: joyful, painful, pleasant, unpleasant, targeted on "the best", justified using "why", or enumerative. Usually, the question types lead to the underlying narrative or to a stereotype of the interviewee:

a) Closed: "Do you like cooking? Do you count your calories? Do you like sweets? Do you eat bread? Do you have any intolerances?" Such questions refer to a particular food stereotype rather than to the person's actual diet. Moreover, whether in the case of yes

or no answer, responding requires follow-up questions.

b) Either/or: "Do you prefer wine or beer?" This type of question is usually referred to by participants as black and white. It excludes a whole spectrum of other answer choices in advance. Nevertheless, this polarity type is often asked, giving false freedom. Instead, an ethnographer would ask, "what kinds of drinks are usually served in your home"?

c) WH questions (who, what, when, where, with whom, i.e.): 'Where do you eat? What do you cook for dinner?' which at first glance appear open-ended, but nevertheless provide a partially predefined answer and also do not do without a follow-up question for context.

d) "Why" question is mostly perceived by the participants as reproachful and may take a defensive stance towards it. People do not routinely give reasons for their actions and in answering "why" they will always give only a partial answer anyway. Conversely, when asked openly about a given area, they give a broader explanation.

e) "The most" questions tend to self-confirm a bias. Instead of asking what is your most preferable vegetable, it is more effective to ask an open question: What kinds of vegetables do you usually get?

f) Open questions give room for detailed open-ended answers seeking understanding. The philosophy of open questions stems from "techné maieutiké" – midwife's art. Socrates followed his mother's – the midwife – way of bringing out the ideas that are intrinsic to the person with whom he is in dialogue. In the dialogical type of questioning, people increase their mutual sensitivity, which develops understanding of different concepts. The aim of this type of conversation is to reveal the broader contexts and assumptions of the speakers, and to get to the language of a particular "tribe" (group of people).

The topic of diet is so common that it allows people to play around with formatting questions freely. They first need to experience the absurdity of commonly asked questions to realise that they are not really asking, but merely confirming or verifying their own assumptions. Because of the openness of the questions, the ethnographic interview is called an in-depth interview. After anchoring the need for open-ended questions, the group can create questions about other domestic or local routines.

Different types of questions are appropriate at different stages of the interview. Very effective and suitable for the introduction (non-threatening and initially easy) are, for example, questions about procedures (What does your day look like? Where do you go to the store? What do you do when you arrive at the clubhouse? How do you choose your route?). Such questions are a suitable starting point for more demanding questions.

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT...

Chris Voss and Tahl Raz (2016) effectively summarize the procedure in this vein, that is commonly used in qualitative interviews:

- **effective silence:** silence may encourage the counterpart to open up;
- **short encouraging** “yes, um, aha” may signal attentive listening;
- **mirroring:** echoing of the other party's phrases deepens communication;
- **naming:** describing the concerns of the other party leads to their understanding;
- **paraphrasing:** repeating in one's own words is a validation of comprehension;
- **summarizing:** pronouncing the meaning nourishes partnership in conversation.

Participation by asking is effective when people calibrate the questions, i.e., tailor them. The real beauty of calibrated questions is that unlike clear statements, they do not make anyone a target for counterattack.

They do not create a potential conflict by giving the person on the other side a strict announcement of a problem. Rather, they expand the knowledge of the nature of the problem (Voss & Raz, 2016, 147). In fact, even while being questioned, people constantly reflect three basic feelings: security, control and autonomy. Instead of closed questions “Do you like it?” the more open-ended question “How do you see it?” instead of “Why have you done it?” the calibrated question “Please tell me about what made you do it?” If the conversation partner exerts pressure, a question is effective: “What do you think I should do?”, “How could we solve this problem?”, “What is our goal?”, “How can I contribute to this?” Such short, calibrated questions not only calm the situation, but also help participants to find solutions.



Figure 1.5.4 (Pauliniová, 2022b)

5.2.2.1 ORAL HISTORY

The oral history method is a particular kind of ethnographic interview that works with human memory and personal memories. Although it is often characterised as method of conducting historical research through recorded interviews between a narrator with personal experience of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, the German historian Alexander von Plató explains that: „One of the main points in the discussions about oral history is the misunderstanding that oral history is mainly a method of looking for special events, a method to reconstruct facts and figures. However, I think oral history has its main strengths in analyzing the subjective dimension, the experienced, the “digested” history by individuals, groups, generations, sexes, and so on...” (Vaněk, 2013, 118).

Unlike classical history, oral history does not try to find out the facts so that researchers can then construct how something really happened. It is focused on the interpretation of the person who tells the story, his opinions, comments and the ways in which he decided what to say and what to leave out of the story. What is important is the uniqueness of what the narrator experiences and how he describes the remembered events (Nosková & Kreislová, 2019).

It is thus clear that the primary goal of researchers working with this method is to obtain individual / subjective statements about a certain historical period, phenomenon, or event from the people who survived it. The increased quantity makes it possible to indicate certain tendencies in the studied phenomena or historical events (Vrzgulová, 2016, 23; Benovska-Sabkova & Vrzgulová, 2021).



Figure 1.5.5 (Veselský, 2021)

5.2.2.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INTERVIEWS

Biographical interviews as part of ethnographic interview research methods are focused on the life story or a narrative as told by the individual person. The narratives stand between the macro-, meso- and micro-levels of society: it reflects the experiences of those who are part of the macro- or meso-structures and indicates how they can deal with them. It allows an insight into the stability of these structures from a long-term perspective. In this way, it can indirectly draw attention to susceptibility to social change. Thus, they represent human experiences as captured in memories, and especially in experiences from the recent past retold in the form of a story.

To collect the life stories, we use different methods: fixed guidelines (similar to semi-structured interview); flexible guidelines and narrative stimuli. Situations may occur when in-depth questions that were only planned for a later point in the interview can also be brought forward. Using flexible guidelines means higher concentration of the interviewer, so interviewer training is usually necessary. Targeted discussion stimuli on individual life are based on the decisions of the interviewer. However, the task of the interviewer is primarily to get the narrator to tell the story as a coherent narrative. The course of the interview is largely open and the interviewee is given enough time to talk about particularly crucial points in his or her life.

Biographical narratives contain two basic levels: on the one hand, they reflect the historical and social reality, on the other hand, the subjectivity of their creators. In this case, however, the question of whether the memories of older adults are “correct” or “true” is not considered relevant in the sense of biographical research. What is important is what they express about the state and what they mean for the situation of the old person in the present (Jamieson, 2002, 24).

5.2.3 Participatory research methods

IN A NUTSHELL

The idea behind the participatory research methods is that a researcher can gain insight into community-specific issues through actively working with the people – the community. In other words, participatory research (PR) engages those who belong to the people who are the focus of the research. Instead of the objects of traditional research, PR collaborates with stakeholders, the community, constituents, and end-users

in the research process (Vaughn & Jacques, 2020). They become our partners and collaborators in ethnographic projects and through the lens of these methods, we can engage people in design processes in different ways and at different scales. Thus, it allows us to involve the community in defining user needs through the whole process of the research.

Knowledge is power and it should be equally delegated to all of the participants during the whole process of research (Arnstein, 1969). Hence, we can consider research as an emancipatory and empowering tool. The process of the research can activate participants of the research and therefore bring them the ability to carry change shaped by themselves – by the community. They gain the opportunity to shape their future, embrace the changes, and together empower the community. The method of Participatory action research reacts to the problems of real life and is realized by the community, with the community, or for the community. Projects of the participatory action research are designed to raise requests and critiques from the “marginalized”, from the bottom (Fine & Torre, 2006, 255).

There are several methods using the participatory approach like various kinds of walking interview, sensory walks, soundscape walks, transect walks etc.

Walking interview or go-along (Kusenbach, 2003) is a method of interviewing where walking is explicitly the focus. The method can be very helpful if you work exploratively at the start of a project, but can also be used if you want to test some preliminary results in the middle or end of a project.

Both the surroundings and the actions of our interview partner(s) are actively involved in the process. Thus, the method is a mixture of interview and participant observation, as we are talking to our interview partner(s) and at the same time we are observing their actions and asking about their actions and ideas associated with them. Being present in a certain environment offering relevant context enables us to uncover series of thoughts contributing to deep insights associated with the environment. For this reason, the walking interview is particularly useful if you want insight into people's relationship to an environment or an object, e.g., at workplaces, at home and in public spaces.

You can also create a semi-structured interview guide or questions based on the place where you will conduct the walking interview or even after the walking interview, if you plan to gain deeper insights in a following semi-structured interview.

“Transect walks are a participatory exercise, where members of the community, planners and other municipality representatives walk through different areas of the neighbourhood, interviewing passers-by and drawing a map with observations of characteristics, risks and existing solutions after the walk.”

(<https://parcitypatory.org/2017/10/29/transect-walks/>) The walks usually take the route from point A to point B and their intention is to transect or cross a community space/place. Their aim is to describe the location and distribution of landscape, its resources, infrastructure, different activities taking place within a community, including social interaction etc.



Figure 1.5.6 (Pauliniová, 2022c) – alebo prechádzka z Krížnej?

Sensory walking is a technique inspired by various sources. Rajko Muršič (2019) describes the process: “A group of people follows the leader of the walk and concentrate on any sound they might perceive, walking or standing, obeying strict rule not to talk, write, take photographs or do anything else than listening and moving.” One example presents the soundscape walk, based on a walk with a focus on listening to the environment. Its main source is soundscape experience in soundwalk. Another example that might be interesting when working with older adults is the sensobiographic walk. “It is another essentially very simple research technique: a pair of a younger and an older walker walk a path meaningful for a leader of the walk. In contrast to sensory walk, by walking, or occasionally standing at spots important

for them, they talk to each other. Before the walk, the researcher who accompany them, asks them to pay attention and use all senses during the walk, and reflects them on the spot. In these cases, the sense of smell, another typically neglected sense, very often becomes the trigger of memories. Whichever senses are employed in specific moments, they connect individuals, no matter of their age, with they own bodily memories, which are basically holistic memories of specific places and environments” (Muršič, 2019).



Figure 1.5.7 (Pauliniová, 2022d)

Despite their seeming simplicity, the participatory methods might be challenging: the problems occur when trying to find representatives from all parts of a community, sometimes they might have contradictory perceptions of the same subject. The participatory methods require a lot of motivation and willingness, as they are rather time-consuming.

Citizen science is a broad term, covering that part of Open Science in which citizens can participate in the scientific research process in different possible ways: as observers, as funders, in identifying images or analysing data, or providing data themselves. This allows for the democratisation of science and is also linked to stakeholders’ engagement and public participation².

² <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/citizen-science>

Community-based participatory research is applied across multiple disciplines and its structure can be used by citizen science to upscale local approaches of problem solving, “because citizen science emerged through individual environmental activism that is not limited by geography”³.

Frerichs et al.⁴ identified 5 areas of synergy between systems science and community-based participatory research—paradigmatic, socioecological, capacity building, co-learning, and translational. These synergies provide a rationale for integrating systems science and community-based participatory research, with the central concept revolving around qualitative problem-structuring and systems mapping – a process that prioritizes research questions for computational modelling to delineate the complex pathways.

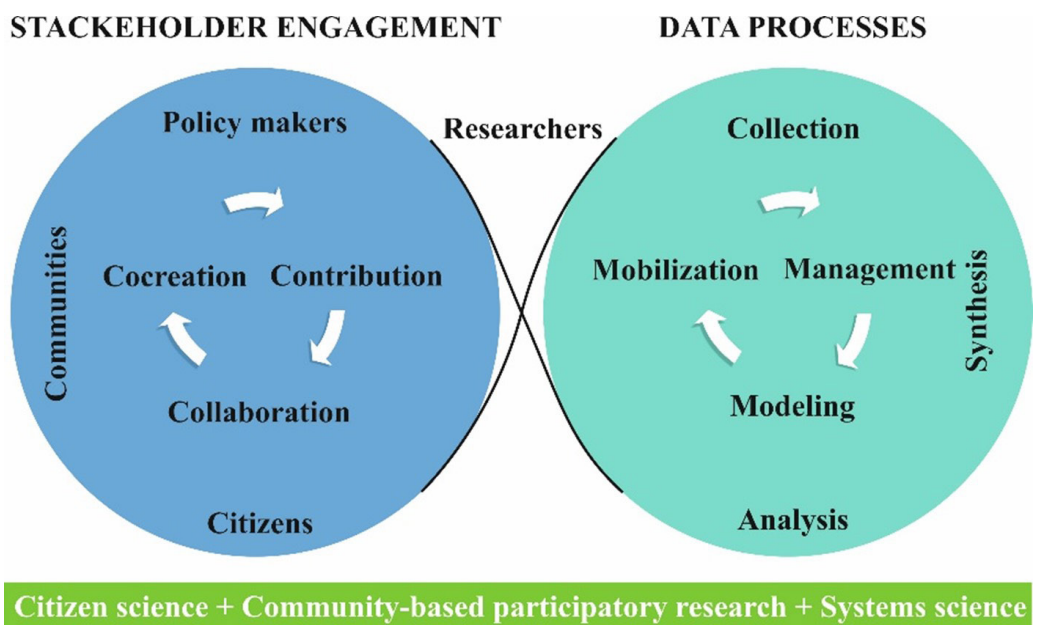


Figure 1.5.8 SMART Framework (SHINE2Europe)

³ Katapally TR. The SMART Framework: Integration of Citizen Science, Community-Based Participatory Research, and Systems Science for Population Health Science in the Digital Age. JMIR Mhealth Uhealth. 2019 Aug 30;7(8):e14056. doi: 10.2196/14056.

⁴ Frerichs L, Lich KH, Dave G, Corbie-Smith G. Integrating systems science and community-based participatory research to achieve health equity. Am J Public Health. 2016 Feb;106(2):215–22. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2015.302944.

The contribution, collaboration, and co-creation cycle is central to citizen science and community-based participatory research, and the engagement of stakeholders becomes essential for qualitative systems mapping to determine research questions. The evidence translated enables the evaluation of existing research goals in collaboration with the stakeholders, to inform future data generation. The infinity symbol in the framework represents the continuous interplay between stakeholders, as well as the constant flow of data and evidence. Intervention mapping,

in its original shape⁵, was developed to address questions about how and when to use (i) Theory; (ii) Empirical findings from the literature; (iii) Data collected from a population, to create an effective behavior or systems change intervention. Theories of Change (To C)⁶ are recommended for pursuing and evaluating community engagement in implementation of innovation projects and programs, for their ability to make explicit intended outcomes and understandings of how engagement activities contribute to these outcomes.

⁵ Bartholomew-Eldredge LK, et al. (2016), *Planning Health Promotion Programs: An Intervention Mapping Approach*. 4th ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
⁶ P. Brest (2010). "The Power of Theories of Change". *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Spring. <http://sc4ccm.jsi.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/The-Power-Of-Theories-Of-Change.pdf>.



Figure 1.5.9 (Pauliniová, 2022e)

5.2.4 Reflexive research techniques

IN A NUTSHELL

Whenever we study a social phenomenon, be it for the purpose of ground research or as part of an applied project such as designing the environment or a particular design product, we relate to the object of our analysis. We are never completely isolated from it; we are always part of our research

to some degree. This is even more valid when studying the social world, which we are intrinsically part of. For these reasons, consideration of reflexivity should be part of all forms of research (Aull Davies, 2007), also (and maybe even more so) in the case of the applied one.

Designers are used to rely on their own living experiences in the design process. However, there might be situations when their intuitiveness stumbles upon their own preconceptions and biases. At the same time, they need to relate to the perspectives of their clients who might have (and they often have) different living experiences from their own. Therefore, reflexivity is a necessary part of the design process to create a high-quality and innovative product.

First, what we need to do is to contemplate our biases, meaning trying to understand our motivations for working in a particular area of design, or affection for specific design practice. Then, we should consider the influence of our presence in the “research field”, which might also limit our immersion in the perspectives, needs, and motivations of our clients. Finally, we can acquire reflexive research tools and techniques to our advantage. Without any doubt, designers do use some of these techniques intuitively. By utilizing anthropological reflexive methodological tools, designers might systematize their creative process and find new inspirations for how to dip into the perspectives of their clients and – moreover – themselves as the designers.

In terms of the methods and techniques, the reflexive approach draws on the traditional anthropological methods, such as observation,

interviewing, or visual-anthropological methods (photography, using audio-visual media, and others). However, it tends to include and put at the forefront the focus on the researchers, who might be themselves subjected to the analysis through autoethnography. Being reflexive does not mean the ambition of rejecting one's specific perspective and erasing it, but rather understanding it and putting it to use. Furthermore, designers' empathy can be also increased by the emphatic exercises, as proposed in the Module 1, Unit 4.



Figure 1.5.10 (Pauliniová, 2021)

5.3 COMMUNICATION IN PLAIN AND NON-DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE

IN A NUTSHELL

There are two main areas related to the urgent necessity of communication in plain and non-discriminatory language – one is the public discourse, the second one is when communicating with the clients and their families. With public discourse we understand “forms and rules of public thinking, arguing and action that need to be explained and defended as the fundamental principle of social life. It is an agreement and the clarification of notions and knowledge

within cognition systems which decide about what is important and what is not, what is correct and what is not, within the horizons of values in which common or different aims and interests are created within the ways of argumentation that justify the objective or the path toward it by being authentic, the most acceptable and explaining to all within the competences determining who can participate in the discourse.” (Kaschuba 2003: 236).

In the public discourse, old age does not exist in the material sense, old age is a generalizing term for complex attributes that manifest in images and codes of old age (Göckenjan, 2000, 102). The discourse on old age does not thematize the multiplicity and differentiation of life forms and social milieu, rather it focuses on common features. “Old age” then knows no statuses or classes, nor chronological boundaries. The goals of expert but also public discourse on old age is more normative, they try to give older adults instructions on how to live, they are less descriptive or explanatory, the discourse on old age is more or less a moral discourse.

In the media we can often find representations of ageism. In the past, if at all, the media used to portray older adults as decrepit, frail, the portrayals tended to focus on the negative traits associated with old age. Nowadays, representations of older adults are more driven by the spirit of successful and active aging. And while this new perspective represents an attempt to move away from depicting the pathology of aging and old age, its message is clear. Responsibility for their own condition,

decline and possible bad situation in old age is placed on the shoulders of older adults, and therefore this approach can be considered as supporting a form of ageism. Unwarranted and excessive expectations of active living in old age, usually propagated by the media, are likely to reinforce ageism and may increase social isolation and loneliness among older people who “failed” to age successfully.

The second area where plain and non-discriminatory language seems to be crucial is communication with the clients and their family members.

What may often occur in health and social services, which have in their scope the care of patients with chronic diseases, as well as in the long-term care environment, is the tendency on the part of those professionals/staff who have adopted ageist attitudes during their adolescence and education, often to use in communication with older people protective language that can turn into condescending language. This also happens in the case of communication with family members, they speak to older people too loudly, use

diminutives and other means of expression, similar to when communicating with children. Communication skills involve more than just speaking the language. Active listening and presentation in plain language are one of the main prerequisites of success. One highly sought-after communication skill is the ability to explain technical concepts to partners or clients who aren't technically proficient.

There are several characteristics of successful communication from the side of the person asking questions, there is the ability to approach the whole process of research or designing with openness to understand what the interview partner or client is trying to share. More aspects are, for example, accepting people as they are (it is easier said than it is done) and the ability to pay close attention and listen.

When speaking about the ethical issues – there is an obligation to keep in mind the verbal and nonverbal responses for signs of distress of

the communication partner throughout the interview. However, there is a thin line between the respect towards the participants'/clients' wishes and states and the paternalism from the side of the person asking questions/doing the research. Moreover, the interviewer's own discomfort with his partner's or client's distress plays an important role in assessing the situation (see more in the subchapter about reflexive research).

A big challenge presents not trying to avoid strong emotions when communicating with the client. In qualitative research, it is more respectful from the side of the researcher to pause in the interview and be with the partner/client in a supportive manner, not necessarily talking. Then, the interviewer may offer the partner/client to choose whether to continue the interview or not. If they choose to stop the interview, the next step is for both sides to decide whether they wish to participate in further interviews in the future.

CONCLUSION

Social anthropology and ethnology are sciences based on the fieldwork research. Because of this, anthropologists and ethnologists have developed many different ways how to approach their subjects and get a deep insight into their everyday lives and perspectives. These research methods and tools can be easily acquired by designers and other design practitioners during the design process and hence ensure better their understanding of the clients' needs.



Figure 1.5.11 (Pauliniová, 2022f)

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WEB RESOURCES

<https://www.oralhistory.org/about/do-oral-history/>

<https://www.plainlanguage.gov/>

<https://www.plainlanguage.gov/guidelines/audience/>

<https://plainlanguagenetwork.org/plain-language/plain-language-around-the-world/>

<https://parcitypatory.org/2017/10/29/transect-walks/>

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