

ual:

LONDON
DESIGN
FESTIVAL

Ageing Societies: A Global Response

Online Symposium 20–22 September 2022 | Evaluation

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**This event was part of the
London Design Festival.**

#UALAgeingSocieties

Overview

What key challenges and opportunities are arising as a result of population ageing, and how is the globe responding?

Ageing Societies: A Global Response - a three-day online symposium - explored how societies around the globe are responding and adapting to population ageing - a global phenomenon that has emerged as a result of social and economic development.

Organised by the University of the Arts London (UAL), a global leader in specialist art and design higher education, this symposium set out to present new models of international engagement, celebrate the creativity and activism of UAL's students and staff, and speculate on creative futures.

The event focused on three key themes:

- **Silver Economy**
- **Urban Regeneration and Spaces for Wellbeing**
- **Ageing Futures**

The event attracted attendees from across five continents, making it a truly global gathering. Featuring talks, roundtables and presentations from celebrated figures in the fields of design and beyond, the symposium brought together multiple perspectives to enable critical discussion on the key challenges and opportunities arising from population ageing.

UAL is committed to building a global creative community for positive change. By showcasing a wide range of ambitious projects from across the UK and internationally, this gathering aims to strengthen our global response to address population ageing and the impact it has on the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities and societies, now and in the future.

'Health and Wellbeing' is one of the [UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals](#), and the event took place during the [United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing \(2021-30\)](#).

Day One

Embracing the Silver Economy and Opportunities from Ageing

The event's first day saw a focus on the "Silver Economy." With Nicky Ryan, Dean of Design at London College of Communication as chair, speakers explored the ways in which elders interact with the economy and vice versa. London College of Communication's Anne-Marie Creamer spoke on overseeing Health Arts and Design (HeArD) - a grassroots research hub that is shining a spotlight on the relationship between art and health. In ageing societies where people are living longer than ever, this is a project intent on cultivating synergy between different sectors and promoting the pooling of knowledge for creative health solutions.

This was adroitly followed by a talk from London College of Fashion's Dr Hannah Zeilig, speaking on how ageing is perceived by society as burdensome. The audience were presented with research conducted about the post-Botox spike in anti-ageing language within cosmetic advertisements. Dr Zeilig thoughtfully examined the negative perception of ageing within a society that elders contribute to their whole lives.

Chair

Nicky Ryan

London College of
Communication, UAL

Speakers

Anne-Marie Creamer

Health, Arts and Design (HeArD)
Research Hub, UAL

Maria Fitzpatrick

Department of
International Trade (DIT)

Ishan Jha

London College of Communication
MA Service Design Alum

Rachel Lim

Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts

Magdalena Plebanski

RMIT University

Hannah Zeilig

London College of Fashion, UAL

[View the recording of this panel on YouTube \(opens in a new browser window\).](#)

Dr Hannah Zeilig:

"Could we reimagine ageing as something that is so much more than skin deep and which we should not seek to fix, but to celebrate?"

Magdalena Plebanski from the RMIT approached the perception of ageing from a biological lens. She highlighted the importance of recognising the diverse immune systems within a population.

London College of Communication MA Service Design alum Ishan Jha told the story of Travel Hands - a service designed to ease travelling for visually impaired people. This underpinned the discussion with a focus on accessibility and adaptability.

The audience heard about the importance of international collaboration from the Department of International Trade's Maria Fitzpatrick. Described by Maria were a series of workshops about adapting to an ageing population. This involved policymakers and academics from both the UK and Basque Country, and dovetailed

the theme of breeding innovation through collaborative thinking.

Nanyang Academy of Fine Art' academic Rachel Lim next shared fascinating design proposals from Singaporean students that accommodate the nation's widening elder population. From both Basque Country and Singapore, the audience were provided insight into action being taken outside of the UK to adapt to global ageing.

Image (facing page): Jiahe's illustration embodies key themes from Day One discussion, including the importance of society adapting to empower an ageing population in both a social and economic context.



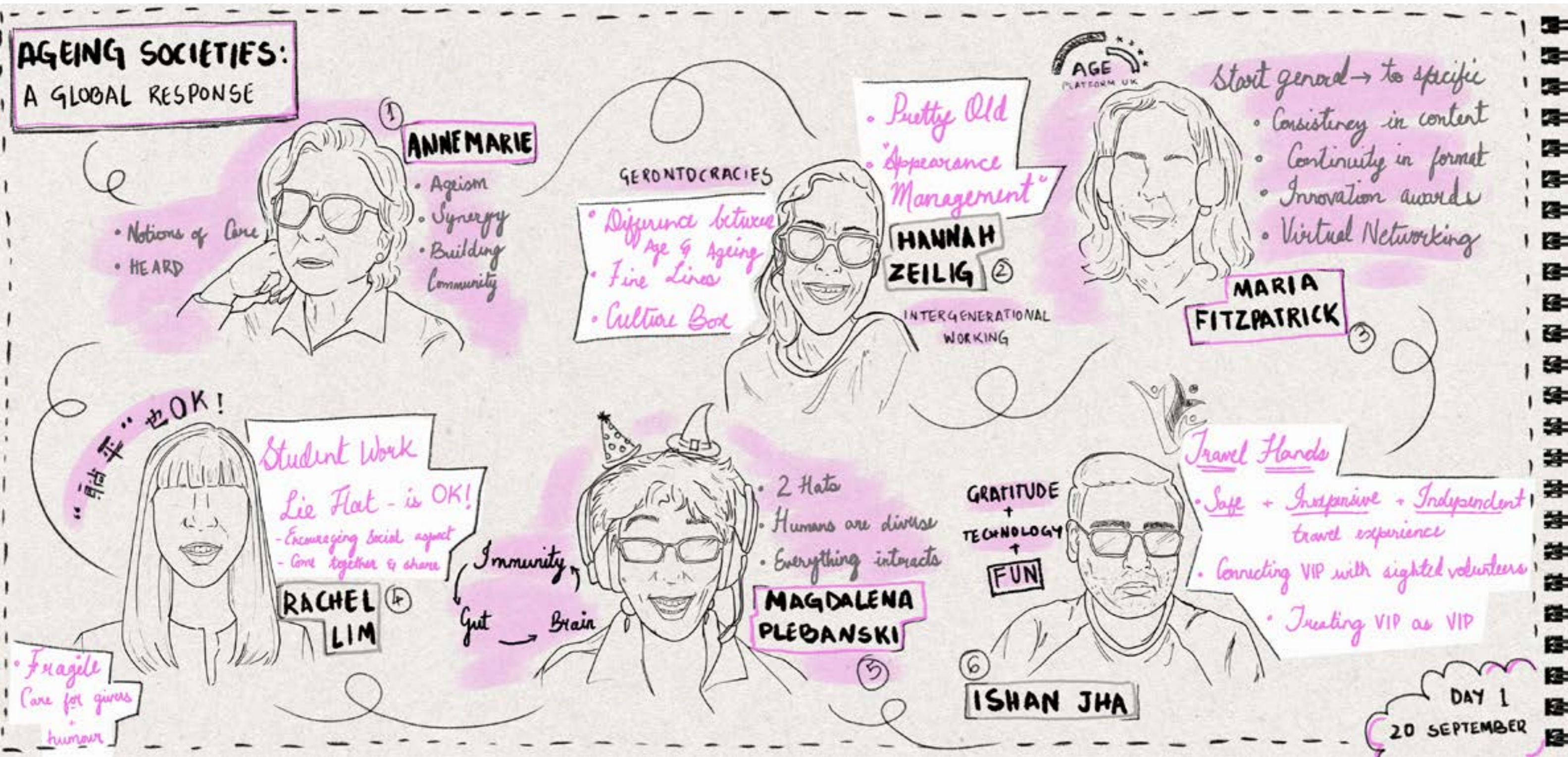


Image (spread): Ipsita Kurikala's illustrations made using a mix of digital and traditional techniques to highlight key takeaways from the speakers.

Day Two, Session One

Spaces for Wellbeing and Urban Regeneration

Chaired by London College of Communication's Steve Cross, the second day of the symposium was divided into two sessions under the theme of Spaces for Wellbeing and Urban Regeneration.

To speaker Nigel Bertram of Monash University, this entailed placing an emphasis on holistic building designs to accommodate elderly people with disabilities. He spoke clearly of how mainstreaming accessibility services rather than viewing them as special exceptions has the potential to improve the quality of living.

The concept of "homefulness" was introduced by RMIT's Keely Macarow, who highlighted a need for comfort and creativity while broaching the topic of elder care. She also provided fascinating thoughts on the choreography of care and the physical, unspoken language of bodies involved in elder care. Zijie Lin deftly discussed social innovation, and the repurposing of buildings to benefit a community. It was pointed out that although this doesn't solely affect any one demographic, the creation and cultivation of community spaces is of great value to the elderly population.

Chair

Steve Cross

London College of
Communication, UAL

Speakers

Nigel Bertram

Monash University

Zijie Lin

Central Saint Martins MA
Industrial Design Alum

Keely Macarow

RMIT Univeristy

Hye Young Park

Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts

Leah Thorn

Poet

Veronica Yew

Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts

[View the recording of this panel on YouTube \(opens in a new browser window\).](#)

Prof Nigel Bertram:

"Age accommodation should not be a specialist, but a mainstream issue. A holistic approach that can augment both new and renovated buildings, and improve the quality of life for everyone in an inclusive way."

Nanyang Academy of Fine Art's Hye Young Park and Veronica Yew also shared their expertise on architectural designs and the power they hold to include elderly people in community activities. Interestingly, it was explained how projects that promote elderly wellbeing also serve to encourage younger generations to be mindful about sustainability and nurturing their community bonds. They also described student projects that explored ageing through the lens of architecture in Singapore.

Poet Leah Thorn offered an activism inclined view on the wellbeing of older women. She foregrounded the social and political ways in which women are marginalised as they age, as well as the benefit of raising awareness and voicing these experiences, as she does through poetry.



Image: Themes of dignity, beauty in ageing and accessible design all inform Jiahe's illustration that captures discussion from Day Two panel sessions around the importance of community and spaces within ageing populations.

Day Two, Session Two

Spaces for Wellbeing and Urban Regeneration

The second session of the day involved a new group of speakers exploring the same themes of Spaces for Wellbeing and Urban Regeneration.

For Dr Jessica Mudry from Toronto Metropolitan University, ageing is something that should be destigmatised. She mentioned the clinical disposition with which ageing is often discussed, and how that bleeds the experience of its humanity. Dr Mudry used as an example the design of walkers to demonstrate how the negative perceptions of ageing have practical implications when design features become afterthoughts and not priorities.

In the vein of design, an interesting concept unpacked by UAL's Ken Wilder was that of ocular centrism within architecture. As one-fifth of England's population is expected to be dealing with sight loss in the next few years, it seems arbitrary for architecture to sideline other senses and other non-visual elements that contribute to the atmosphere. This talk focused on inclusivity in art in a way that aids social wellbeing.

Alix Emery is also an artist, and a Central Saint Martins alum who featured on the panel to talk about

Chair

Steve Cross

London College of
Communication, UAL

Speakers

Miranda Campbell

Toronto Metropolitan University

Alix Emery

Artist and Central Saint Martins
BA Fine Art Alum

Jessica Mudry

Toronto Metropolitan University

Ken Wilder

Chelsea College of Arts, UAL

[View the recording of this panel on YouTube \(opens in a new browser window\).](#)

Dr Ken Wilder:

"It's about fundamentally changing how spaces impact upon our bodies in a way that should be thought about at the beginning of a design project and not as an afterthought."

Opes and Dreams. This is a project that seeks to veer away from prevailing narratives of impending doom, and instead instill hope. Alix spoke of how the project, based in Portland, Dorset, focused on alleviating feelings of loneliness among the ageing population through community engagement.

The interrelations of generations were examined by Toronto Metropolitan University's Dr Miranda Campbell, who spoke on care as a community-based response. While her research was based on those aged 18-35, Dr Campbell shone a light on how the structural barriers that set us apart can be used to reflect on our differing capabilities and therefore the care we can offer others. Through her talk, the importance of community-based responses to inequality was made clear.



Day Three

Ageing: Future Visions and Speculations

With Central Saint Martins' Rachel Dickson chairing, the final panel of speakers came prepared with more fascinating contributions to the topics at hand.

RMIT's Laurene Vaughan opened a discussion about the scale and dimensions of ageing - the rate at which populations get older, and how and when we consider growing old a condition that presents challenges and opportunities. She proposed considering ageing through multigenerational and intercultural perspectives to augment the design of care for populations with diverse needs.

Designing for age ties in with the talk given by Professor Leah Heiss from Monash University. She spoke of infusing a consideration of lived experiences in an often system-based journey of health. The COVID-19 pandemic encouraged Professor Heiss to conduct online co-design engagements to find creative ways to approach end of life care - something that helps to evolve healthcare for ageing populations.

Chair

Rachel Dickson
Central Saint Martins, UAL

Speakers

Leah Heiss
Monash University

Peter Matanle
University of Sheffield

Jie Meng
London College of Communication
MA Service Design Alum

Rei Poh
Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts

Laurene Vaughan
RMIT University

[View the recording of this panel on YouTube \(opens in a new browser window\).](#)

Dr Peter Matanle:

"How can we learn to live beyond the twentieth century paradigm of growth?"

Sheffield University's Dr Peter Matanle imparted an East Asian perspective on ageing and depopulation. He astutely evaluated the contradictory negativity surrounding the environmental effects of population growth, and the socio-economic effects of depopulation.

From Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Rei Poh's talk introduced the audience to a community engagement project in Singapore that promotes "living well and leaving well". He spoke of the cultural significance of creating space to speak comfortably about the terms of death where people it's considered a taboo topic. A project like this can be greatly beneficial for elders and their families in relieving the stress of difficult conversations surrounding death.

A collaboration project between UAL students and Age UK Lambeth was presented by London College of Communication alum Jie Meng. The project interestingly found that attempts to socially include elderly people often struggle to hit the mark as the demographic concerned aren't always included in the decision making. Jie Meng and her project with Age UK Lambeth had a clear vision of a society that works to eradicate isolation among the elderly in order to build a strong multigenerational community.

Image (previous page): Jiahe's final illustration from Day Three's discussion is symbolic of the need to embrace the ageing process, as we look toward the future and accepting the inevitability of death. Innovative technology and design methods are integral to this shaping this process, as well as a collective responsibility for care.



AGEING SOCIETIES: A GLOBAL RESPONSE

• Economic constraints...

① **LAURENE VAUGHAN**

• What are the phenomenon involved?



Can we consider ageing through...

• CARE

as a design disposition - intentionally & as a design act

• To live well & leave well

② **REI POH**

• Both Sides Now

• The Last Dance

"Have you thought of the value of death?"

"SAFE SPACES"

- To bond and build community

ATTEMPTS



• Activities created FOR older people, BY older people

③ **JIE MENG**



• Question the narrative around ageing

THE COMMON ROOM

• Wearable technology

"TACTILE TOOLS"

LEAH HEISS



• Prototyping health experiences

"One Good Death" Workshop

• Sado Island as Ecology & Culture Island

④ **PETER MATANLE**

The "Depopulation Dividend"

もういちど
トキを空へ



Enabling Ecological Restoration

RIZING COLLECTIVE

DAY 3
22 SEPTEMBER

Image (spread): Ipsita Kurikala's illustrations made using a mix of digital and traditional techniques to highlight key takeaways from the speakers.

Dr Keely Macarow:

"We need to work creatively within our communities with the thinking that this could be me one day."

All in all, though there was a breadth of knowledge shown through the course of this symposium, there were several common threads that tied all the sessions together. This event displayed considerable empathy. Whether they spoke about physical spaces, linguistic details, or healthcare, all of the speakers went about their presentations with tact and mindfulness of how present and prevalent these issues are.

The different backgrounds of the speakers offered global perspectives and shed light on how ageing societies are responded to around the world. As well as this, there was a real sense of innovation present throughout this event.

Opportunities, development, and goodwill were all handled with as much gravity as the challenges discussed. This symposium was effective in presenting the dynamic topic of an ageing population through solution minded outlooks, inspiring worldwide optimism rather than producing fear.

[View the recordings of this event on YouTube \(opens in a new browser window\).](#)

