

# Open discussion:

## “Older but bolder- sustainable aging thinking”

Croatia based company [Prokotip](#) created open discussion "Older but bolder - sustainable aging thinking" which arose as a reaction to the [New European Bauhaus initiative](#).

One of the Croatian but also European biggest challenges is an aging population. Taken that into consideration, we see that kind of development as a huge opportunity that can transform the whole continent for the better. Our goal is to host co-creation sessions with a myriad of domestic and international experts focusing on the topics such as inclusive design, the new concept of aging, age-friendly design, multigenerational living - retirement settlements, and the new role of design in today's circumstances. We would like to see how "silver years" can become a new youth through aging education- a new way of thinking and planning how to spend that time in the future?

idea is to register the conclusions which will arise from it for the New European Bauhaus - [Host a conversation](#) section.

We want to bring together people from different fields because we believe that these interactions between experts are very constructive, beneficial, and encouraging. By participating, we are also contributing to the New European Bauhaus initiative, through which we help to define today's challenges and contribute to finding long-term solutions.

### Questions for inspiration and preparation for the open discussion

#### The new concept of aging (Ageing-education, Ageing-thinking)

- How to prepare younger people of the EU for the "older days"?
- How can young people sustainably live to old age?
- What does sustainability in aging implies?
- Is there enough conversation about aging in the mainstream media, social networks, and personal communications?
- What will be the specific needs of generations such as X, Millennials, and Z once they get old?

#### Ageing-friendly: User experience adjusted to the needs of the elderly.

- Role of digital innovations in a future „silver generation “? Where do you see the potential for intervention?
- How could we as a society lose the fear of aging?
- How to change the lack of empathy towards the elderly that can be observed during the COVID-19 crises?

Conclusion that we gained after first preliminary, preparational for the open discussion.

### Participants at the first conversation

- [Aurelie Glorieux](#), Senior Service Designer
- [Ozana Palić](#), Urban Planner and Landscape Architect
- [Jovana Vlasisavljević](#), Graphic Designer at Prokotip
- [Samuel Creuso](#), Energy consultant at Serisolar
- [Matej Brizar](#), Industrial Design Student at Eindhoven University of Technology
- [Antun Paradzik](#), Service Design Researcher at Prokotip

### IDEAS/THOUGHTS/DOUBTS

- Recognition of aging is a celebration of our own youth.
- In this COVID period, we are all experiencing the feeling of isolation; maybe this can be the right time to empathize with older people who, by default, feel isolated.
- The elderly can be our mentors.
- Lack of empathy has been occurring for a long time; it has just erupted now. Less and less people think and live for the others. Just think about your week - how much time you dedicate for free to others? Not to get something in exchange, not to expect something?!
- People who live with generosity have more people around them. If I live selfishly, I will end up lonely.
- In UK or northern France, it is not common to take care of your parents/grandparents, on the other hand in Spain, many families are living with their elderly.
- A lot of older people are poor, but on the other hand one of the most successful businesses is housing for the elderly.
- You are excluded after you don't bring any economic value to society. How will this system work in the future?
- The more love you can cultivate will lead to good feelings towards others, the sensation of love is your money/currency.



Conclusion that we gained after second and final discussion

#### Participants at the second discussion

- [Aurelie Glorieux](#), Senior Service Designer
- [Ozana Palić](#), Urban Planner and Landscape Architect
- [Jovana Vlaisavljević](#), Graphic Designer at Prokotip
- [Antun Paradzik](#), Service Design Researcher at Prokotip

#### Persons who didn't participated at discussion, but contributed with content

- [Samuel Creuso](#), Energy consultant at Serisolar
- [Martina Čaić](#), Assistant Professor in Strategic Service Design at Aalto University

The theme of open discussion was "empathy aging and youth". In other words, how to make more empathy among youngers, how to prepare them for the older days, how to lose the fear of aging, how to raise awareness, how to promote voluntarism etc...?

The agenda for the meetings:

1. Introduction about the New European Bauhaus and topic (3 minutes)
2. Each person presents their relation towards aging topics/silver generation. (1 minute each person)
3. Each participant presents thematic keyword, the 3 questions and the 3 "success stories." (40 minutes)
4. We try to recall most memorable takeaways (10 minutes)



## SUMMARY KEYWORDS/PHRASES

- gardening
- ageing
- meditation
- intergenerational
- isolation
- community
- losing fear of ageing
- meaningful ageing
- love bank
- create a society that is Age Friendly
- small scale sustainability concept
- we are gardening the future generations
- speculative design
- generations are lost in translation between each other
- gamification of aging

## RURAL AREA

### 1. Elderly in the rural area? Lost heritage, lost lives, lost cultures? How can elderly in marginalized areas live sustainably?

Now, more than ever before, we have the resources to capture and write down all the details that elderly know and gotten to know, about their culture, ways of living and being etc.

#### a/ Polyphony project - making grandmothers cool

<https://www.polyphonyproject.com/en>

They explore, preserve and present the living musical folklore of Ukrainian villages. Recording the intangible cultural heritage of the Ukrainian peasantry and make it accessible to contemporary society and particularly to younger population.

That is one example of bringing elderly closer to younger generations.

#### b/ Associations that help the elderly - Associations "Zaželi"

<https://pomocukucistarijimosobama.net/>

### 2. How can retired people contribute to society? What spaces, opportunities they have now for that and they can have in the future?

- Robert De Niro movie, Senior intern

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZU3Xban0Y6A>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=324pojjHOhl>

It is a movie that comes to my mind often when I think about this topic. De Niro becomes a Senior Intern for this younger CEO and basically becomes her best friend and support. I like that movie mostly because I love talking to elderly and I think they are a bank of knowledge and experience that we should not neglect.

### 3. Empathy - How to reduce social isolation, loneliness and depression that lead to mental and physical decline? How can we change the structure or at least perception about retirement homes? What can be a new form of retirement settlement? Using social media to boost the campaign...

- Connecting older and younger population in new types of places - - Intergenerational living has to include different activities - - retirement home / kindergarten / ZMAG

- ZMAG - spaces with different functions and structures

<https://www.zmag.hr/en/>

ZMAG is not connected directly with the elderly, but it is quite important for today's society. They are working on implementation of activities in the fields of organic food production and seed preservation, sustainable waste management, learning about the use of renewable energy sources, building of ecological and natural houses, advocating and creating models of good economy.

# INTERGENERATIONAL SPACES

as a key to raising awareness and awaking **empathy towards elderly**

## 1) How to generate intergenerational mix in public spaces?

By creation of inclusive public spaces that are adapted to the needs of the whole population and are accessible by everyone we can enable intergenerational activities. It is important to create public spaces that are not designed exclusively for one age group, but with different structures and functions generate meeting of different age groups and spark spontaneous interactions. In addition, community initiatives like community gardens or tactical urbanism actions can bring youngsters and elderly to work together towards a common goal of improving their neighborhoods and cities.

**Example:** Community garden in Vermont in which young and old collaborate in process of food production.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7pElsMmFhNc>

## 2) How to generate intergenerational mix in private spaces?

Common housing situations of elderly population like private homes or elderly residences sometimes tend to isolate silver generation from the society and create spatial clusters avoided by younger people. Alternative housing solutions are possible that can help create sense of inclusion into society, and on the other hand familiarize the youth with ageing. Examples like mixing children daycare or students dorms with elderly centres, renting parts of big family houses inhabited by one elderly person or co sharing of apartments can bring generations together on everyday level.

**Example:** Humanitas elderly home in Netherlands that offers accommodation to university students in exchange for dedicating their time to elderly residents. In that way, young people become much more aware of needs and problems of older people and get valuable companions during their formative ages.

<https://www.humanitasdeventer.nl/english/73-english/194-the-living-students-of-humanitas>

## 3) How to generate intergenerational mix in virtual spaces?

Even though virtual spaces are not mostly “inhabited” by elderly, pandemic times and isolation have shown us the need to include them more in order to prevent isolation in these sensitive times. Apps and online platforms that enable elderly to connect with younger generations and exchange knowledge, experiences or just their time can give back the sense of usefulness to elderly and in the same time prevent the fear of ageing in younger generations.

**Example:** The Storytellers Project by Laura Boffi that provides a tool through which elderly can connect virtually with young children by reading to them. Children get to meet elderly outside of their family circle and be familiarized with them, while elderly get the sense of giving their contribution to the society.

<https://www.the-storytellers-project.org/theconcept>



# LOVING SOCIETY FOR GRACEFUL AGEING

How might we get older gracefully? What prevent people from fulfilled ageing?

> Traveling to my ageing future

How might we make tackle isolation of ageing generation? What is the feeling of isolation?

> Cultivate generous and altruist lives to prevent from isolation

How might we create multigenerational and empathic society, that support each other at every stage of their existence?

> Love bank: Warmth generated with love toward others as a value (vs. money)

> Transgenerational village: Retirement home with kiddengarden...

> Back to communitarian living

## CLOSENESS

### 1. How can the elderly and young people be brought together?

How can more opportunities for social interaction be created? Young people (all the population group under 35) and the elderly (all the population over 65) in the life span of a human being are the two most distant generations culturally and age-related. In Europe there are already many cases of good practice in this sense. A prime example is the “Civitas Vitae” center in Padua, Italy, where a retirement home and a kindergarten coexist through common spaces; a second extra-European example is the “Providence Mount St Vincent” institute, where an institute for children aged 3 to 5 coexists with a retirement home. There is also a film about this experience, here the trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6K3H2VqQKcc>



## 2. How can elders and service facilities be approached?

Those who live farther from an urban center have greater barriers, primarily the geographical distance, therefore the time and money to cover this journey, to access the services they need. Similarly, the structures that provide widespread home care see their economic sustainability decrease, or have to raise their rates, as we move away from the place of departure of the caregivers. A good starting point is that of "SOS vizinho" in Portugal: a digital platform that through a national network of volunteers bring essential goods to those who cannot leave home.





### 3. How can the elderly be brought closer to each other?

Loneliness is also generated because the opportunities and possibilities for social interaction are reduced due to the frailties of the elderly. Social isolation can be reduced if physical and cognitive effort is reduced to access social and cultural initiatives that favor aggregation. A good example is the "Coventry Life Festival", a free public event to inspire participants, especially for the elderly, to be physically active and above all connected to each other.



## ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

### *How to prepare EU youth for the "old days"?*

People retire later and later, so for today's young people / adults I would encourage physical activity, self-care, meditation, cultural stimuli, health prevention to reach the age in which he is defined as "elderly" still in excellent efficiency. Personal growth and evolution never ends, if it is given a meaning and a purpose it lasts a lifetime and keeps young inside. This is what I would like to be able to do all my life, as an adult today and as an elderly person tomorrow.

### *How can young people live sustainably until old age?*

What meaning do you give to the word "sustainable" in this context? For me, "aging sustainably" means not living the years that pass with the worry of seeing one's cognitive and physical abilities decrease. Unfortunately, sickness and old age are seen as a taboo, because our society of hedonism and efficiency, and individualism, "discards" those who are not efficient, so the elderly are also considered, unfortunately and not to reason, a less "useful" segment of the population, despite the fact that the over 65s in Europe are 1/4 of the population. In the meantime, therefore, it is a question of facing old age and illness, death not as a taboo 'but as an integral part of life. Our society tends to ghettoize, to hide these phases of life, so that we are afraid to face them and live them.

Then there is an aspect of economic sustainability: today having a supplementary pension is very common.

### *What does sustainability imply in aging?*

It means being able to guarantee affection and assistance to a person who sees his personal abilities gradually decrease. It means reviewing the pension systems: many are in Italy talking about the collapse of the INPS around 2030. It means not ventilating euthanasia as a solution to get rid of those who are no longer active in society because they are too sick or too sick elderly. Widespread assistance should be guaranteed, that is, instead of encouraging the aggregation of elderly people in retirement homes to reduce assistance costs, to be able to provide help, support and company services directly at home according to needs.

### *What will the specific needs of generations like X, Millennials and Z be as they get older?*

Needs will be linked to trying to continue a very different lifestyle from that of our parents until later in life. Surely digital devices and software will allow you to play, interact, occupy time (even if they do not replace an individual)

### *Role of digital innovations in a future "silver generation"? Where do you see the potential for intervention?*

Certainly in the creation of devices and software, from voice commands to assisted movement, to all vital functions, capable of progressively integrating the decrease in motor and cognitive functions with increasing age '(monitoring health, performance, tracking of their habits, apps that promote fitness)

### *How could we as a society lose the fear of getting old?*

It takes high ideals that can accompany a person throughout their life. If as an elderly person I am not afraid of being alone, if I feel useful and with a social function despite the decrease in efficiency and autonomy, then I still have a role, a place in this society 'and I am less afraid of feeling myself outcast.

*How to change the lack of empathy towards the elderly that can be observed during the crisis of COVID-19?*

The elderly have at times been blamed for having extended the closure of production activities due to the need to protect themselves as the most fragile layer of the population.

It is a very difficult question because it 'has to do with the sensitivity' of each of us; I think that only by changing the heart can we be more empathic in general, finally also with the elderly.

## ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES

1. Students living with the older adults (<https://theconversation.com/heres-why-some-dutch-university-students-are-living-in-nursing-homes-68253>)
2. Preschool next to / inside the nursing homes: <http://www.toyproject.net/news/the-preschool-inside-a-nursing-home-the-atlantic/>
3. Last one is from my high school in Zagreb (International Baccalaureate – IB/MIOC). During our studies, we were encouraged to do some community work. This could be either through:
  - i) visiting preschoolers and playing with them
  - ii) visiting older adults in their nursing homes and reading to them or helping them with the usage of technologies