

AGORAge

CARING COMMUNITY

TOOLKIT



DEPARTAMENT D'ANTROPOLOGIA,
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Universitat Rovira i Virgili



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KEYWORDS

AGEING, CARING COMMUNITY, SOCIAL SAFENESS, CITIZEN SCIENCE

For further information about the AGORAge project, visit our blog:

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INTRODUCTION

The AGORAge Toolkit is the outcome of the one-year journey conducted within the citizen science-inspired project AGORAge: Ageing in a Caring Community. It is addressed to all those who are interested in implementing initiatives to promote the creation of caring communities in which the social inclusion of older people is given special consideration. This toolkit can serve researchers and professionals dealing with social intervention as well as policymakers, service providers, and municipalities. Its two main objectives are to describe diagnostic and intervention techniques through the specific experience of the AGORAge project, and to provide further resources (good practices, toolkits, and recommendations) to foster the creation of caring communities.

The usefulness and suitability of these tools will depend on each specific project, the context in which they are used, and the user, but what we believe is crucial in all cases is familiarity with the starting point, that is, understanding the needs and requirements of the people involved. This reality can only be understood by making contact with the target group from the beginning and involving its members as much as possible in each phase of the research. We invite you to browse the toolkit and explore the concepts, methods, techniques, examples, and resources to familiarise yourself with each of the tools and evaluate its applicability to your project and context.

STARTING POINT: AGORAge project

AGORAge: Ageing in a Caring Community is a **Citizens Science** project undertaken from June 2022 to May 2023 (as one of the 10 pilots of the H2020 – 101006325 [COESO](#). Connecting Research and Society) resulting from the collaboration between academia and civil society. Its promoting institutions were the [Department of Anthropology, Philosophy and Social Work](#) (Universitat Rovira i Virgili), the [Medical Anthropology Research Center](#), and [ISRAA](#) (Istituto per Servizi di Ricovero e Assistenza agli Anziani), an Italian public service provider that delivers multiple services to older people. The aim of the project was to understand the needs and the bases to promote the idea and implementation of a caring community, taking into account the relational, emotional, and material (basic needs provision) dimensions, with a special focus on older adults' social inclusion and their social safeness.

CONTEXT

AGORAge implemented this social intervention in the Borgo Mazzini area, located in the historic centre of the city of Treviso (Italy), where the Casa Albergo nursing home and Borgo Mazzini Smart Cohousing are situated. ISRAA has long pursued the goal of conveying a new conception of ageing and care facilities by also opening its "homes" and breaking down symbolic barriers between what is inside and what is outside. Specifically, it aspires to gradually turn Casa Albergo and Borgo Mazzini Smart Cohousing into an open community in dialogue with the surrounding neighbourhood.




Casa Albergo nursing home

Since its foundation in 1972, Casa Albergo has offered a place to live for older people who, although still self-sufficient, want to feel protected, cared for, and safe while at the same time maintaining their autonomy. The facility includes small apartments, where residents can enjoy the intimacy of their own homes. Casa Albergo offers creative activities such as musical performances, book exchanges, mindfulness classes, and art workshops, which aim to sustain a continuous dialogue between the nursing home and the local community. A total of 125 self-sufficient and 42 non-self-sufficient older adults currently live at Casa Albergo.

Borgo Mazzini Smart Cohousing estate

The Borgo Mazzini Smart Cohousing project was launched in 2013 by ISRAA with the intention of proposing an alternative form of residency open to citizens over the age of 65. Based on the cohousing model, an open consultation with local citizens was initiated in 2014, managed by ISRAA experts. Key elements, such as community, and social and architectural dimensions, were collectively explored to define a common vision of the characteristics this cohousing project should have. The first occupants took up residence in 2018, following a transparent public selection process and new residents continue to be accepted. Building restoration and expansion are ongoing. Today, the project is home to around 60 people.





MAIN CONCEPTS

Citizen science

"Citizen Science refers to the public engagement in scientific research activities when citizens actively contribute to science either with their intellectual effort or surrounding knowledge, or with their tools and resources".¹ One of the main strengths of this approach is that it provides new learning opportunities, thus enabling citizens to increase their understanding of scientific goals, methods and results and to improve their awareness. Moreover, according to the third principle of citizen science,² playing a role in the production of scientific results, finding answers or solutions to relevant questions -and thus having the opportunity to influence policies- can also enhance individual well-being and satisfaction.

Community care

The idea of the caring community underlying the AGORAge project was inspired by the core concepts of community care. The concept of community care covers a wide range of practices that are difficult to capture theoretically.³ It often refers to the settings where daily life takes place as appropriate contexts for social care⁴ and to practices as different as the care provided by family, friends, neighbourhoods or collective projects in non-profit spaces.⁵ In reference to older people in residential settings or assisted living, one notion related to community care is ageing in place. This takes into account several dimensions: **physical**, such as the home and the surrounding environment; **social**, which


¹ Serrano Sanz, F., Holocher-Ertl, T., Kieslinger, B., Sanz Garcia, F. & Silvia C.G (2014): *White Paper on Citizen Science in Europe* <http://www.zsi.at/object/project/2340/attach/White_Paper-Final-Print.pdf>. Societize Consortium.

² ESCA (European Citizen Science Association). (2015). *Ten principles of Citizen Science*. <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/XPR2N>

³ Martínez-Buján, R. (2019) Cuidados con 'sentido común': desafíos, vacíos y contradicciones. *Journal of Regional Research*, 44 (2): 111-124.

⁴ González-Torralbo, H., Larrazabal, S. y Lube-Guizardi, M. (2020) Envejecimiento, género y cuidados: debates para situar a las políticas públicas. *Revista Sociedade e Cultura*, 23, e543000. doi: 10.5216/Sec.v23.e54300

⁵ Esteban, M^a L. (2017) Los cuidados, un concepto central en la teoría feminista: aportaciones, riesgos y diálogos con la antropología. *Quaderns-e de l'Institut Català d'Antropologia*, 22 (2), 33-48.



involves the relationships with the people in this environment; **emotional** and **psychological**, which have to do with the feeling of belonging and attachment; and **cultural**, which refers to the values, beliefs, ethnicity, and symbolic and shared meanings of older people.⁶ Therefore, the idea of a caring community has to be underpinned by these dimensions to achieve social inclusion, emotional, mental and physical well-being, and attention to the cultural dimension, with the full recognition of the older person as a citizen.

Social safeness

Gilbert characterised social safeness as feelings of warmth and connectedness that play an especially important role in psychosocial functioning.⁷ Social safeness is a warm, soothing affective state often experienced with close, trusted others. Gilbert also suggested that in the absence of threats or opportunities for resource seeking, the social safeness system creates feelings of peace and safety and allows rest and recuperation. Social safeness may relate to attachment processes and contribute to the creation of familial bonds through the shared experience of these warm feelings.⁸

⁶ Lecovich, E. (2014) Aging in place: From theory to practice. *Anthropological Notebooks*, 20 (1), 21–33.

⁷ Gilbert, P. (2009) *The compassionate mind: Coping with the Challenges of living*. London: Constable Robinson.

⁸ Gilbert et Al. (2008) Feeling safe and content: A specific affect regulation system? Relationship to depression, anxiety, stress, and self-criticism. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 3(3), 182-191.



DIAGNOSTIC TOOLS

Those involved in laying the foundations for caring communities need to understand how the concept of a caring community is incorporated and concretely translated in the local context, and be aware of the elements required to create a caring community that meets the needs of its individual members. Anything we do in a community calls for familiarity with its people, its issues, and its history. Any intervention is far more likely to succeed if we understand the community's dynamics and the relationships among its individuals and groups. In this section, we will discuss how to gather new data using social research techniques and tools. As an example, we will also provide a brief description of the way each tool was used during the fieldwork in the context of the AGORAge project.

Points of special interest

- When techniques are adopted that entail direct engagement with the community, all individuals involved must sign an informed consent form in line with privacy regulations.
- Before starting each activity, restate its objective and explain how the data collected will be used.

OBSERVATION

Observation is one of the best ways to first approach a community. Just by wandering through the area, you can observe how people interact in different circumstances, the amount of traffic or commercial activity, how facilities and spaces are used, what kind of activities take place in the space and at what times, and many other relevant aspects. Observation can take many forms. As well as simply visiting a place and taking notes, additional tools such as video, audio, photographs, or drawings can be used.

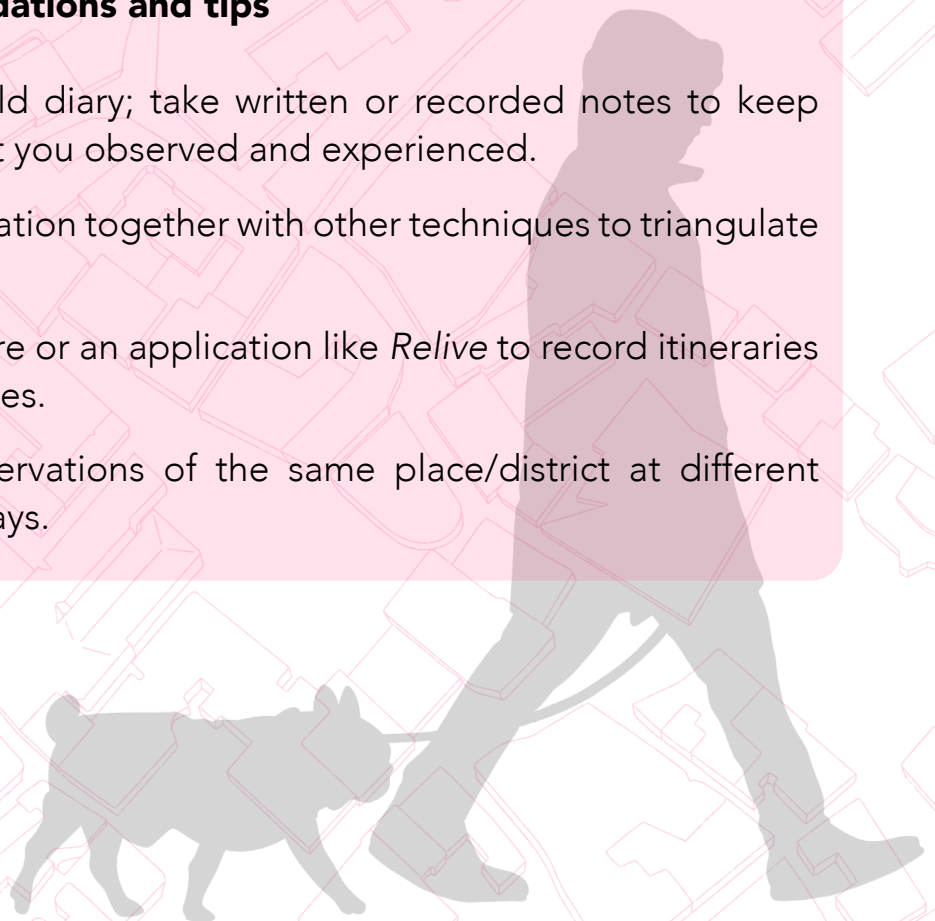
The AGORAge experience

How we implemented this technique and how it can be used in similar projects

The active involvement of ISRAA staff in the project since its inception gave rise to a process of continuous observation of the Casa Albergo. This mainly took place informally as part of their daily professional activity, but at the same time, observation was used systematically to extend knowledge about the notions of security/insecurity, uses of space, the residents' social interactions, emotions, and activities. Likewise, observation was applied in interviews and workshops to complete the information about the participants and their interactions. Finally, observation took place in the neighbourhood and the key places where people congregate (markets, squares, parks) were mapped; information on leisure activities and services for older adults was also gathered in this way.

Recommendations and tips

- Keep a field diary; take written or recorded notes to keep track of what you observed and experienced.
- Use observation together with other techniques to triangulate data.
- Use software or an application like *Relive* to record itineraries and key places.
- Make observations of the same place/district at different times and days.



QUESTIONNAIRE

Responses to questionnaires help you gather information from a large number of people. Researchers are usually interested in a whole population, but since not everyone can be surveyed, they choose a sample of the population and use a questionnaire to gather information from that sample. Each participant in a questionnaire is asked the exact same questions in the same way. These questions are usually about opinions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours, along with demographics like age, sex, level of education, income, and so on.



The AGORAge experience

How we implemented this technique and how it can be used in similar projects

During the first phase, the project was presented to the residents' community. A questionnaire was then distributed to collect information about the residents' profiles, the places they frequent in the neighbourhood, and their support networks both inside and outside the nursing home/cohousing project. The questionnaire was also used to select the key informants who would be interviewed in the second phase of the fieldwork. We ensured that these key informants had a range of profiles in terms of educational background and life history, and took account of those with special characteristics that distinguished them from others. Another questionnaire was also administered to the ISRAA professional team to gather their views on the relationships between the people living in the nursing home and cohousing project.

Recommendations and tips

- If you are planning to collect a large amount of data and you want to use an online questionnaire, it is not enough to simply circulate your questionnaire widely on the internet. People are busy and they need to have a special interest in the topic and sufficient time to answer the questionnaire questions. Use concrete engagement strategies, such as personalised e-mails or phone calls where possible, and disseminate the questionnaire through different channels (social media, website, emails, blogs).
- Emphasise why their contribution is relevant for the activity/ the project and the direct or indirect benefits to respondents.
- Look for software that best matches your interest or skills (Google forms, WPForms, etc.).
- Always start the questionnaire with a clear explanation of its purpose and the project/activity it forms part of.

INTERVIEWS

An interview is a dialogue between two people -researcher and interviewee- conducted and recorded by a researcher to produce a discourse on a specific topic within the framework of a research project. Interviews can be very helpful when you need information about assumptions and perceptions of activities in your community, or population needs and behaviours, and as such, they are a great tool if you are looking for in-depth information on a particular topic. There are three types of interviews: structured, semi-structured and non-structured. Structured interviews are based on concrete and specific questions; semi-structured interviews are more flexible and use open questions or topics; non-structured interviews are totally open, and the interviewee decides what to say and in what order.



The AGORAge experience

How we implemented this technique and how it can be used in similar projects

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with older residents in the Casa Albergo and the Borgo Mazzini Smart Cohousing project to explore their experiences and sense of belonging to the neighbourhood, their relations with the community, the subjective dimension of security and the reasons why they came to live there. People were selected in light of their first questionnaire response and their profiles.

Recommendations and tips

- Ask the interviewee where he/she prefers to do the interview, considering that ideally it should be a quiet environment without background noise.
- Be patient and listen without eliciting answers.
- The interviewee may not want to answer one or more questions. In this case, do not force a response.



FOCUS GROUP

A focus group is a meeting led by a trained facilitator where a group of individuals selected by the researchers discusses and elaborates on, from their personal experience, the topic or social issue that is the object of research. Focus groups are perhaps the most flexible tool for gathering information because you can concentrate on getting the opinions of a group of people while asking open-ended questions that the whole group is free to answer and discuss. This often sparks debate and conversation, yielding lots of great information about the group's opinion.

Focus groups can be homogeneous or heterogeneous. The first type includes people with the same profile and it can be a good way to generate a discussion around a topic in greater depth because they all start from a common background/experience. The second type includes people with different profiles; it can be a meeting space for exchange between citizens and providers or professionals who do not generally have this chance for dialogue.



The AGORAge experience

How we implemented this technique and how it can be used in similar projects

A focus group was held with Casa Albergo and Borgo Mazzini Smart Cohousing professionals (a psychologist, a community nurse, an educator and a Casa Albergo coordinator). The purpose of the focus group was to investigate ongoing “community building” activities and initiatives, residents’ needs and desires, and their relationships with families. This fieldwork activity allowed us to go beyond merely gathering information, and gain insight into the vision, approach, and positioning underlying the work of the individual professional and the work as a team.

Recommendations and tips

- Consider that there may be hierarchies between participants, and the position of power some of them hold may influence the other participants’ behaviour, especially in heterogeneous focus groups.
- Make sure that only one person speaks at a time and try to engage people who are shyer by giving them the floor.
- Choose a quiet, comfortable place; food and drink can be a good strategy to make people feel welcome.

RELATIONSHIP MAP WORKSHOP

Relationship maps are used to visualise the key people in a person's life. This tool can be adapted to different situations depending on the purpose; different graphical tools can be used to highlight the aspects to be investigated (the type of relationship, the closeness of the people involved in relation to the subject).



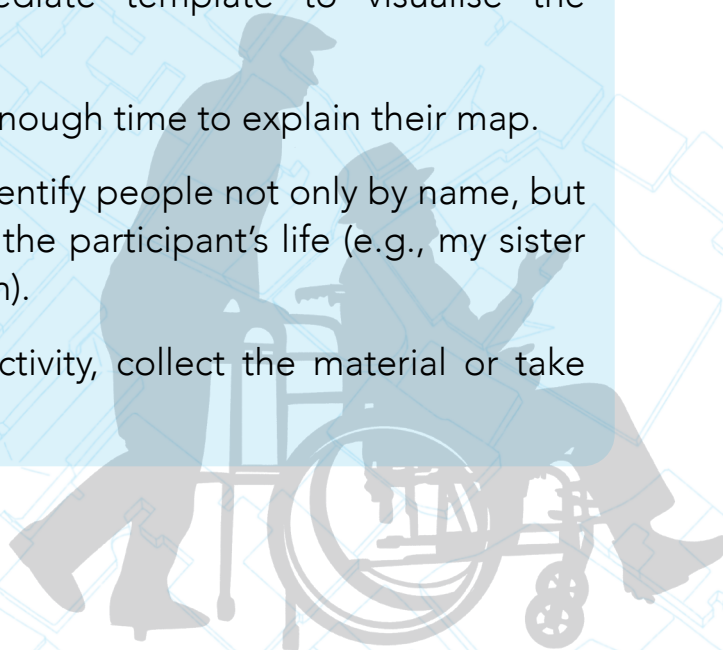
The AGORAge experience

How we implemented this technique and how it can be used in similar projects

During this workshop residents worked using a simple tool: a map consisting of three concentric circles, at the centre of which is the subject, in the middle circle the people and relationships they considered as fundamental, regardless of the reason, and in the outermost circle, those equally important but more distant. The aim of the activity was to identify and classify their principal relationships, from closest to farthest, as well as to highlight where these relationships were located, whether 'inside' or 'outside' the Casa Albergo and Borgo Mazzini. When the aim is to reflect on the dimension of community, it is important to trace the relational network of the subject and observe its ramifications. After the initial individual work on network identification, each person presented and discussed their own map, explaining the criteria and reasons behind their choice.

Recommendations and tips

- Use a simple, immediate template to visualise the relationships.
- Give each participant enough time to explain their map.
- Suggest participants identify people not only by name, but also specify their role in the participant's life (e.g., my sister Sara, my best friend John).
- Once you finish the activity, collect the material or take photos.



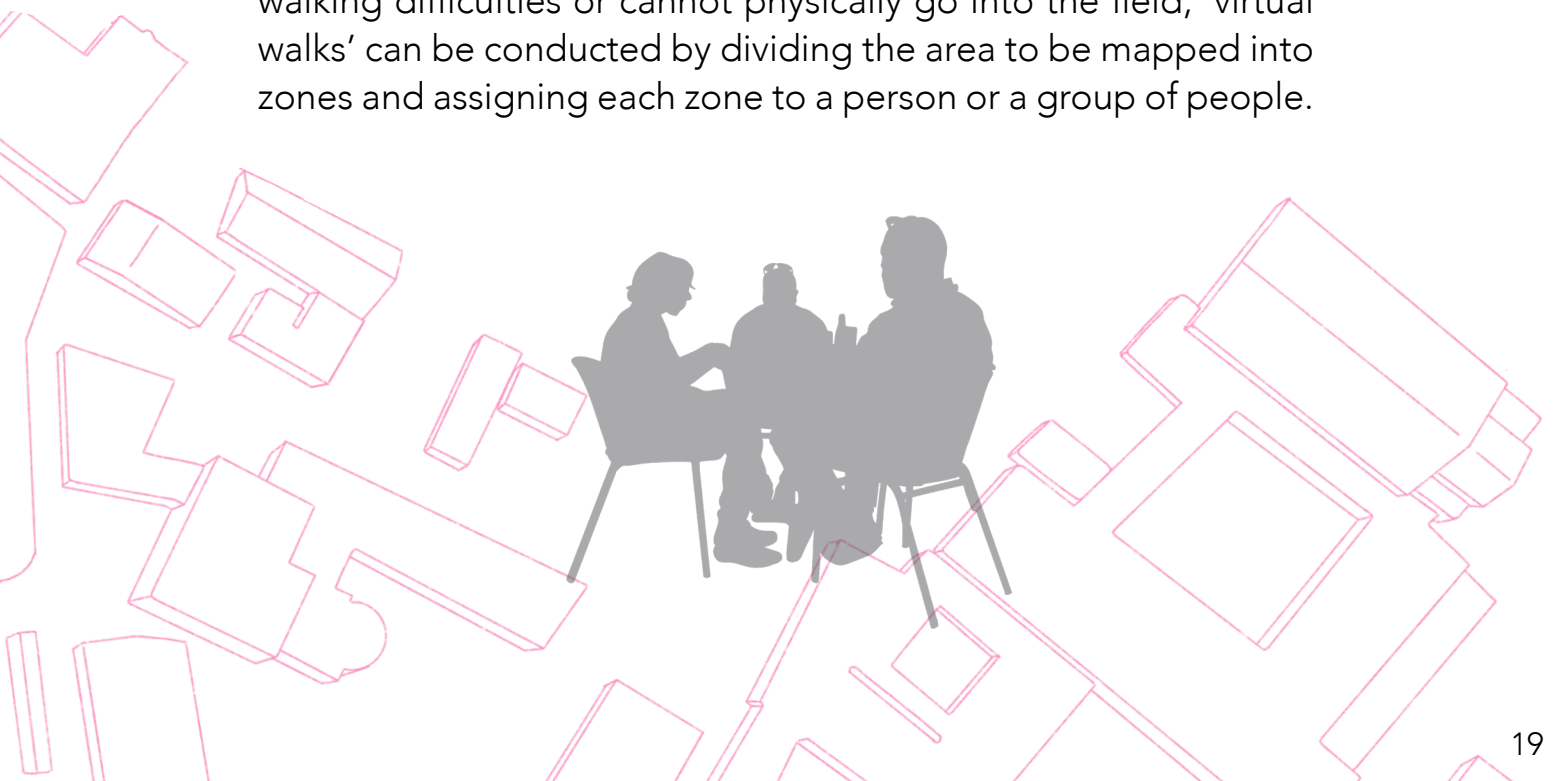
OTHER DIAGNOSTIC TECHNIQUES

Accompanied itinerant observation - observing the usual itineraries of the target audience by accompanying them on their daily routes through the neighbourhood. This should be done systematically, i.e. with a purpose, previously establishing aspects to be observed, taking photographs and/or drawing or mapping (using computer applications), and collecting data to be analysed. Another option is to carry out group walks around the neighbourhood with the same purpose as individual walks but with the added value of creating a core group of people.

Photo voice - participant use photos as a tool to express themselves and as a starting point for a conversation. They can take pictures of objects, places, activities, and people in the neighbourhood they consider key in terms of community, caring, and safeness.

Life histories - an in-depth conversation in which the person talks about the main stages of their life (childhood, youth, adulthood) and in which specific topics can also be explored in each of these stages (relationships, work, care, family life, social life, leisure, residence, social life, etc.).

Virtual observation - if you want to gather information on key elements in the neighbourhood from a target group that has walking difficulties or cannot physically go into the field, 'virtual walks' can be conducted by dividing the area to be mapped into zones and assigning each zone to a person or a group of people.



INTERVENTION TOOLS

The intervention phase involves activities that aim to change the community's status by improving its dynamics, leadership and management, or generating and increasing relationships and bonds, as well as helping to solve problems and promote individual and community resources. In this section we will describe techniques and tools that can be used with the target group to promote and implement caring communities. As in the previous section, we also provide concrete examples about how each tool was used during the AGORAge fieldwork, as well as elements to consider when putting the technique into practice.

Points of special interest

- When techniques are adopted that entail direct engagement with the community, all individuals involved must sign an informed consent form in line with privacy regulations.
- Before starting each activity, restate its objective and explain how the data collected will be used.

COMMUNITY MAPPING

Community mapping is a data collection and intervention tool for representing space collectively; it covers the knowledge, points of view, and perceptions of the people who have a strong connection with the locality. This visual technique enables community members to identify significant elements in the area, to share and re-signify them, with the purpose of exploring and thinking up possible activities and initiatives to improve the living conditions of people living in that area.

The AGORAge experience

How we implemented this technique and how it can be used in similar projects

The aim of the community mapping workshop was to identify people's perceptions, relationships, and uses of the district where they live and to explore the notions of community, social safeness and a friendly environment. Participants were given a map of their neighbourhood on which they identified their main spatial and relational landmarks (stores, pharmacies, places of worship, bars, etc.) and the places where they feel comfortable. At a later stage, the participants' observations and the points that emerged from a group discussion were assembled to create a collective map. The map was intended to be not only the sum of individual observations but to contain new elements that came out of the dialogue, a few of them shared, others new for some of the participants but recommended by others. The idea was to encourage participants to reflect on the neighbourhood as a place where each one of them could find an element of their everyday life; some references are central to everyone and may be associated with a community dimension, whereas others belong to more individual itineraries. Once all the material had been collated, a second A3-size version of the map was created and shown to the residents a few weeks later. They gave their opinions and corrections were made before the final version was printed and hung in a communal area.

Recommendations and tips

- Use a simple and accessible map format.
- Favour a 'neutral' map, i.e. one that only shows the names of streets/historic buildings/main infrastructures and natural sites but not the names of commercial or other activities that may influence the user.

- Allow each participant to explain the reasons that led them to identify a specific place. Support the participants by asking why they go there, at what time of day, what they like/dislike about the place, why this place rather than another similar place in the neighbourhood.
- At the end of the activity, collect the participants' maps, as well as the collective one, or take photos to keep track of individual work.



SHARING A BENCH WORKSHOP

This technique was purposely co-designed by the AGORAge team to investigate the topic of social safeness. It is used to gather information on the places, the type of company, and, more generally, the social and environmental situations that help to cultivate feelings of well-being and allow people to feel at ease. At the same time, it identifies which factors are responsible for causing insecurity and/or discomfort.

The AGORAge experience

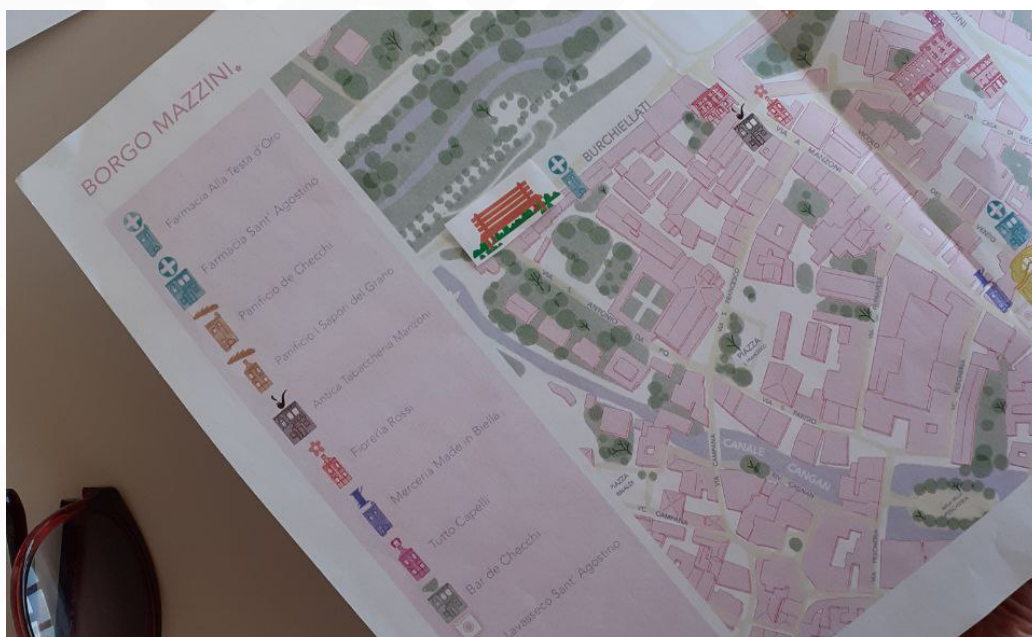
How we implemented this technique and how it can be used in similar projects

Participants were invited to describe their ideal bench by indicating where it should be located, who they would like to sit beside them and why, and what they would like to talk to this person about. They were then asked what would bother them enough to make them get up and leave the bench. Finally, participants were encouraged to place the bench in their local district. To this end, they were given small pictures of benches to place on a copy of the map of the neighbourhood. The purpose of the activity was to find out what contributes to a feeling of well-being, what makes participants feel safe and comfortable, and conversely, what factors are perceived as a potential source of unsafeness and unease. By asking them to locate their ideal benches in their everyday surroundings, we discovered which specific places in the area each of them associated with these feelings.

Recommendations and tips

- Sometimes it might be difficult to imagine unreal situations. Be prepared to offer examples to help participants during exercises that require abstraction.

- If you do not want to focus the activity on a specific neighbourhood, just do the first phase of the workshop.
- Encourage participants to explore the relational as well as the environmental dimension by asking questions about the person/s they want to sit beside them, the subjects they would like to discuss with them and why these elements contribute to their well-being.



IDEA GENERATION WORKSHOP

This technique forms part of co-creation processes, a participatory methodology originating in the world of design aimed at the collective creation of objects, processes, activities and services. Co-creation may include an initial co-design phase carried out through specific workshops using different techniques, depending on the purpose. Ideas can be generated using graphic and design tools or in group discussions.

The AGORAge experience

How we implemented this technique and how it can be used in similar projects

We organised a meeting to brainstorm and collect ideas for new activities that would foster the exchange between the residents and the surrounding neighbourhood, and in so doing, reinforce the sense of belonging to a broader community. These activities would take place in a newly renovated room in one of the cohousing sites, which participants had already seen so they had a concrete idea of its characteristics. Participants were then asked to start from their own personal desires and passions, which gave rise to several ideas. The team presented some examples of practices implemented in other countries to stimulate the conversation and add suggestions.

Recommendations and tips

- Graphic and design tools can be post-its, blackboards, images from magazines, pictures, etc.
- It is important to engage people who want to play an active role in both the preliminary ideation phase and the subsequent co-creation phase.

- Consider involving keystakeholders from the neighbourhood (citizens, public or private representatives, shopkeepers).



OTHER INTERVENTION TECHNIQUES

Collage of desired spaces - A collective collage is created with photographs of spaces and activities for coexistence and safety that participants would like to see. The collage is exhibited publicly at the end of the participatory process.

Neighbourhood co-design workshop - Activity in which safe and pleasant spaces are designed collectively. Participants first identify any unsafe or unfriendly spaces that they reject or avoid in the neighbourhood before coming up with activities and actions to make them safe and pleasant, so as to increase their use; they also think about the relationship between people and the neighbourhood. Participants can also suggest specific actions that would improve the neighbourhood.



RECOMMENDATIONS TO INVOLVE OLDER ADULTS IN CARING COMMUNITY IMPLEMENTATION

Citizen science is based on the active involvement of the public during several phases of the projects and in close collaboration between researchers and civil society. Although citizen engagement can be extremely beneficial, it is a challenging process that must be managed rigorously and carefully to prevent drop out. If older people are your target group, some crucial factors should be taken into account. In this section, we give specific recommendations and tips to engage senior citizens.

General recommendations for engaging older people

- Always take into account that older adults are a heterogeneous group of people, like any other group, with different profiles, interests, personalities, backgrounds and life experiences.
- Avoid infantilising older adults by, for example, using childish language.
- Give them several possibilities and tools to get involved with, without being pushy; this implies offering them the opportunity to participate in different activities. Some people prefer to be involved in one-to-one or group conversations, others prefer individual activities (such as filling in a questionnaire), whereas others enjoy participating in creative workshops.
- Bear in mind that older people may initially be reluctant to participate in activities involving paper materials, post-it notes, forms of expression such as drawing etc., which they may associate with methodologies and strategies for children and therefore consider them inappropriate or belittling. If this happens, explain the rationale behind these procedures, emphasising how they are instrumental in achieving the result.

- Be flexible when adopting the methodologies and be prepared to adapt them in the course of the activity according to the participants' responses. Our theoretical plans and models may not always work in practice, so flexibility is key to achieving results.
- Consider their opinion and involve them in decision making not only by asking for their points of view or suggestions but also by encouraging them to actively participate in the adaption processes.

Specific recommendations for:

Written activities (These can include surveys, questionnaires, relational map, but also informed consent documents)

- Hand out documents to be filled in or read in person, and give individuals time to read the document and ask questions, or to fill it in on the spot if they prefer.
- Increase the standard font size to at least 14 points when printing documents.
- In the case of questionnaire, you can add open questions but make sure they have a space limit or ask respondents to just note down some key concepts or key words.

Oral one-to-one activities (These can include interviews and walking observations)

- Do not automatically assume that older people have a lot of time available for you. Be punctual for appointments and try to stay within the times initially established.
- During interviews, keep the focus on the key issues raised in the questions but take into account that interviewees may deviate from the main topic. If this happens, try politely to bring the discussion back to the initial question. However, avoid interrupting deviations from the outset, as they may bring unexpected information of great relevance to the research.

- Some questions or requests may be unclear to your interlocutor, especially if they are particularly abstract. Be prepared to simplify/reformulate them or accompany them with concrete examples to help improve understanding.

Group activities (These can include focus groups and workshops)

- Consider different needs and personalities: some people do not hear well so it may come naturally to you to raise your voice, but other people will consider this attitude aggressive and inappropriate. Try to understand the person in front of you and grasp what their needs are.
- Make sure your face can be seen and make frequent eye contact.
- If you decide to work in small groups, set up tables and activities at the start and avoid making people get up once they are seated.
- Ideally, have at least one facilitator for every four participants.

Digital activities

- Ensure that participants own or have at their disposal the necessary device(s).
- Try to identify tools/programs the participants are fairly familiar with so that they do not find them difficult to access and use properly. Difficulty in using a tool may discourage participation and general engagement.
- If you plan to use specific programs, it can be useful to create a simple printed manual with basic information on their use.
- Be prepared to step in with technical support.



After the project: Feedback to the community

We cannot know what social impact a project has straight away. Ideally, a project designed to create caring communities should trigger a process whereby the researchers' presence is no longer indispensable. For this to happen, a change must take place in the community and the people who participated in the project need to know its outcomes in order to take the process forward. Moreover, participants contributed significantly to the results through the time and energy they devoted to the analysis and action. Therefore, giving something back takes on a twofold significance: first, it is a sign of gratitude for their commitment and time; and second, it is an obligation, since they have played an active role in knowledge generation and in the analytical process, and they should therefore be informed of its outcomes. In this section, we present some tools we used to give feedback to the community.

BOOKLET

The key results of your research can be briefly explained in a booklet. Take into account the booklet's target audience and adapt the content and the format accordingly. In the AGORAge project we created a 15-page booklet printed in A5 medium size format to circulate among the people involved in our project, especially older adults. We briefly summed up the activities carried out and the results using simple language (not too specific or theoretical), and we also added visual material (pictures, drawings, and the tools used during workshops). In our case, we decided to distribute the booklet at the end of the project to acknowledge the participants and inform them of the research results. However, it can also be circulated in the middle of the project to keep people engaged. A leaflet is an alternative format for this purpose.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS, SERVICE PROVIDERS, AND DECISION MAKERS

By policymakers, we refer to people who have the power to take decisions and implement concrete initiatives at both the local and the national level. In the AGORAge project, because ISRAA is a public entity it can be considered as a policymaker. Even though the ISRAA and the URV-MARC teams led the research jointly, the ISRAA team was mainly involved in engaging citizens and had less to do with the data analysis. For this reason, the researchers acted as mediators between the Borgo Mazzini residents, professionals and managers of the institution, by providing them with a short report on the needs that arose during the fieldwork and possible solutions, initiatives and strategies proposed by the citizens.



GOOD PRACTICES

This section lists some good practices for implementing caring communities through initiatives related to social inclusion, community support, exchange of favours, creation of a socially safe environment and context, and intergenerational activities. Keywords can help you to select the practices that best match your context. The practices were collated by the research team from European and national websites, the press, key stakeholders, as well as through a public citizen science call to gather good practices.

NAME	BRIEF EXPLANATION	TARGET	WHERE	KEYWORDS
Dinar en companyia	Project to combat social isolation among elderly people living alone by offering a place to go for a cheap daily meal	Older adults	Tarragona (Spain)	#loneliness #socialise #meals
Viure-i-Conviure	Cohabitation project for people over 65 years old who live alone and students	Older adults and university students	Barcelona (Spain)	#housing #intergenerational
Happy-Chat-Benches	Initiative whereby some benches in the city are marked with the sign 'Sit here if you don't mind someone stopping to say hello' to promote chatting between people who don't know each other	Everyone	Newcastle (UK)	#socialise

Radars	Initiative involving neighbours, shops, pharmacies and health centres attentive to the daily dynamics of the elderly in their environment. If they detect any notable change, they contact Radars	Older adults	Barcelona (Spain)	#safeness
SeniorLab	Physical space where citizens, entities, and institutions co-create new and innovative solutions on ageing	Everyone	Reus (Spain)	#community #solutions
Open baking cafe	Encourages the elderly to participate in community life through cooking, to counter loneliness and social isolation and stimulate physical and mental health	Older adults	Germany	#loneliness #socialise #meals
UAF	Initiative to build links between young people and older adults but going beyond the welfare perspective and supporting a rationale of mutual exchange	Young and older adults	Milan (Italy)	#loneliness #intergenerational
Keep-In-Touch	Telephone service supported by Age UK Bury Volunteers, offering Bury residents over 65 a regular call to have a chat and answer any queries they may have	Older adults	Bury (UK)	#loneliness #safeness
Duo for a job	Intergenerational mentoring: experienced professionals in early retirement are matched with young job seekers to give advice and support	Experienced professionals and young job seekers	Brussels (Belgium)	#mentoring #intergenerational

Third Action Film Fest	Film festival working to change the narrative on ageing and guide an age-positive culture shift. Aims to reduce stigma and 'isms' and build resiliency	Older adults and society in general	Canada	#ageism #cinema
LIFT	In the LIFT pilot scheme, volunteer drivers help people visit neighbours, pubs and other social gatherings free of charge	Older adults	Ireland	#mobility
Radio Mouette	A radio project with and for older people, to give them a voice and combat loneliness	Older adults	Brussels (Belgium)	#ageism #radio
Portage de livres	A 'home delivery' service bringing books on loan to elderly residents in the neighbourhood	Older adults and volunteers	Brussels (Belgium)	#books
LATA 65	Urban art workshop that teaches the basics of street art to seniors in various neighbourhoods	Young and older adults	Lisbon (Portugal)	#art #intergenerational
Toy	Creates intergenerational learning activities to explore how this type of learning can benefit younger children and senior citizens	Young and older adults	Various EU countries	#game #socialize #intergenerational

Laboratori-intergenerazionali	Teaches children values such as altruism and respect and improves the self-esteem of older adults through workshops	Children and older adults	Milan (Italy)	#mentoring #ageism #intergenerational
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MORE TOOLKITS

The last section presents a number of toolkits focusing on community building and social inclusion of older people, establishing age-friendly environments, and citizen participation more generally.

NAME OF THE TOOLKIT	INFORMATION
Creating age-friendly environments in Europe: a tool for local policy-makers and planners	<p>Author: WHO (2016)</p> <p>Target: Local policymakers and planners</p> <p>Objective: To guide the implementation of age-friendly policies and interventions.</p>
Toolkit on Citizen Participation	<p>Author: Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe</p> <p>Target: Local and regional authorities</p> <p>Objective: To improve local authorities' implementation of citizen participation.</p>
Aging in Place: a community preparation toolkit	<p>Author: The Southern Georgia Regional Commission</p> <p>Target: Municipalities and counties</p> <p>Objective: To provide technical assistance on how to create or sustain diverse services in the face of an increase in the number of older people to create lifelong communities.</p>
Dignity and wellbeing of older persons in need of care: a toolbox	<p>Author: AGE Platform Europe (EU Europe-wide platform of organisations advocating for the rights and well-being of older persons)</p> <p>Target: Policymakers and professionals working to ensure the well-being and dignity of older people in need of care</p> <p>Objective: To show how to adopt a rights-based approach in long-term care policies and daily practice.</p>

Researching Age-Friendly Communities: Stories of older people as co-investigators	<p>Authors: Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research Ageing; Age UK; Age Friendly Manchester; Office for Social Responsibility (University of Manchester)</p> <p>Target: Organisations, urban planners, researchers, older people</p> <p>Objective: To examine opportunities and constraints for older people living in urban environments with a view to improving their experience of living in the city.</p>
Queensland: an age-friendly community Toolkit	<p>Author: Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors</p> <p>Target: Community organisations, businesses and local government</p> <p>Objective: To bring age-friendly initiatives to life in a community.</p>
The hidden dimensions of poverty – international participatory research. A toolkit to conduct participatory methodology	<p>Author: ATD (All together in dignity) Ireland</p> <p>Target: People interesting in carrying out participatory action research, especially on poverty and socioeconomic discrimination</p> <p>Objective: To bring together the voice of co-researchers (citizens) and researchers. To provide an insight to the merging of knowledge method using the hidden dimensions of poverty research.</p>
Community tool box	<p>Author: Public service of the University of Kansas, developed and managed by the KU Center for Community Health and Development and partners nationally and internationally.</p> <p>Target: Community members and non-governmental organisations; teachers and trainers; foundations and grant makers; local, national, and international agencies</p> <p>Objective: To provide guidance for conducting assessments of community needs and resources.</p>
Age-friendly tool kit	<p>Author: AGE-friendly communities in MA</p> <p>Target: Local policymakers and planners</p> <p>Objective: To help communities in Massachusetts learn more about what it means to be age friendly, how to join an age-friendly network, and how to move forward with assessment, implementation, and evaluation.</p>

<p><u>Aging well in communities: a toolkit for planning, engagement and action</u></p>	<p>Author: Center for Civic Partnerships Target: Governments Objective: To provide a plan to implement ageing well communities</p>
<p><u>EngAGED Community Awareness Toolkit</u></p>	<p>Author: EngAGED The national resource centre for engaging older adults (US) Target: Organisations who want to engage older adults and fight social isolation Objective: To assist the Aging Network and partner organisations with increasing community awareness of the importance of social engagement.</p>



CONCLUDING REMARKS


Ageing in place does not necessarily imply ageing at home, as the term “place” refers not only to the older person’s home but also to the possibility of having choices about their living arrangements, good access to services and amenities, maintaining social connections and interaction between locals, feeling safe and secure at home and in the community, and a sense of independence and autonomy.⁹ When problematic situations accumulate at home and make it difficult for older people to integrate into their environment (loneliness, isolation, mobility problems, etc.), moving to a different residential setting needs to be accompanied by activities aimed at achieving integration between person and place.¹⁰ In a functional sense, ageing in place and community care, or the communities who care for their citizens, should include policies and programmes that help maintain the fit between people and their residential environment. In other words, enabling ageing in place in a community requires not only what are called liveable communities, a concept that connects the physical design, social structure, and social needs of all generations sharing a common location,¹¹ but also, from a more political point of view, new forms of democratic management based on people’s participation in the collective decisions that affect them.¹² In this way we may be able to convert certain still stigmatised spaces (such as nursing homes and senior cohousing projects) into a home; ISRAA has long been committed to the integration of its caring facilities and their residents in the surrounding community. The AGORAge experience, with its participative methodologies designed to explore and lay the foundations for a caring community, represents an innovative experiment to continue working on these important issues and go further in this direction.

⁹ Wiles, J. L., Leibing, A., Guberman, N., Reeve, J., & Allen, R. E. (2012). The meaning of “aging in place” to older people. *The gerontologist*, 52(3), 357-366.

¹⁰ Cutchin, M. P. (2003). The process of mediated aging-in-place: A theoretically and empirically based model. *Social Science & Medicine*, 57(6), 1077-1090.

¹¹ Lecovich, E. (2014) Aging in place: From theory to practice, *Anthropological Notebooks*, 20 (1), 21–33.

¹² Martínez-Buján, R. (2019) Cuidados con sentido común: desafíos, vacíos y contradicciones, *Journal of Regional Research*, 44 (2), 111-124.



Indeed, community building and, in this specific case, building a caring community, is a complex social process, which requires time and a consistent and lasting commitment from all the actors involved: service providers, citizens, policy and decision makers, local public administration. The case of AGORAge, of which ISRAA and some of its residents constituted the pilot site, serves as an example for other realities that want to embark on a similar journey. It also highlights the value of involving external experts who can support such initiatives by guiding understanding of the population's expectations, desires and real needs, and providing useful tools to facilitate the change.



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