

Digital participation, rebellion and co-design with older adults

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Digital innovation, design (& ageing)

- Tech design processes (often led by white men in labs):
 - Define a ‘problem’ related to **deficit understandings** of older adults as frail, in need of care
- Focus on scaling up and business potential
- Design products and services related to the **physical and health ‘needs’** of older adults
- Older adults as consumers: less on change or **bringing about different ageing futures**



Introducing co-design

- some shifts to seeing older adults as design participants (**'co-designers'**)
- But:
 - Little engagement with **minoritised communities** and the structural inequalities they face
 - Retain focus on older people's **deficits** rather than their passions and interests
- We explored how we might bring together **participatory methods** with an **intersectional lifecourse lens** in a 'co-design' process with older adults



Connecting through culture as we age

- Re-thinking digital innovation : **what might it mean to start by engaging with the situated everyday lives, experiences and passions of minoritised older adults?**
- Project explores how and why we take part in arts and culture as we age. How participation, including digital forms, can influence our wellbeing and feelings of social connection as we age.
- **A digital co-design process** that centres the voices, lived experiences and expertise of older people: 6 funded prototype projects
- 3-year project funded by UKRI 'Healthy Ageing' Challenge fund

AGE OF
CREATIVITY

 Bristol
ageUK

 CADA
CREATIVE AGEING
DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

 WECIL
supporting independent living

 KWMC
KNOWLE WEST MEDIA CENTRE

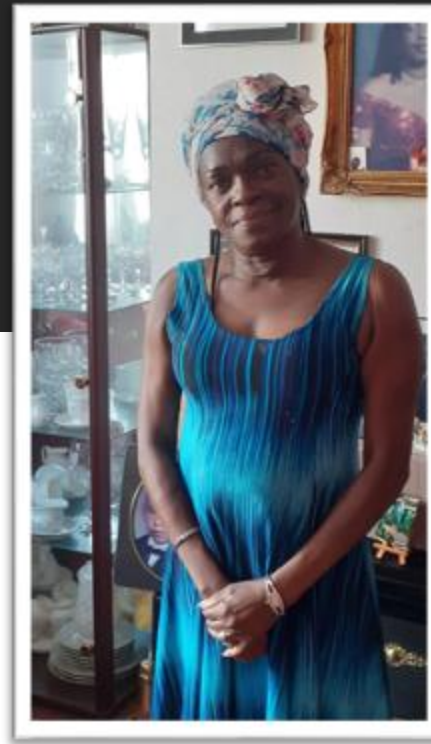
 Pervasive
Media Studio

 Black
South West
Network

 Wellspring
Settlement

CO-RESEARCHERS: A BRIEF INTRO TO THE COHORT

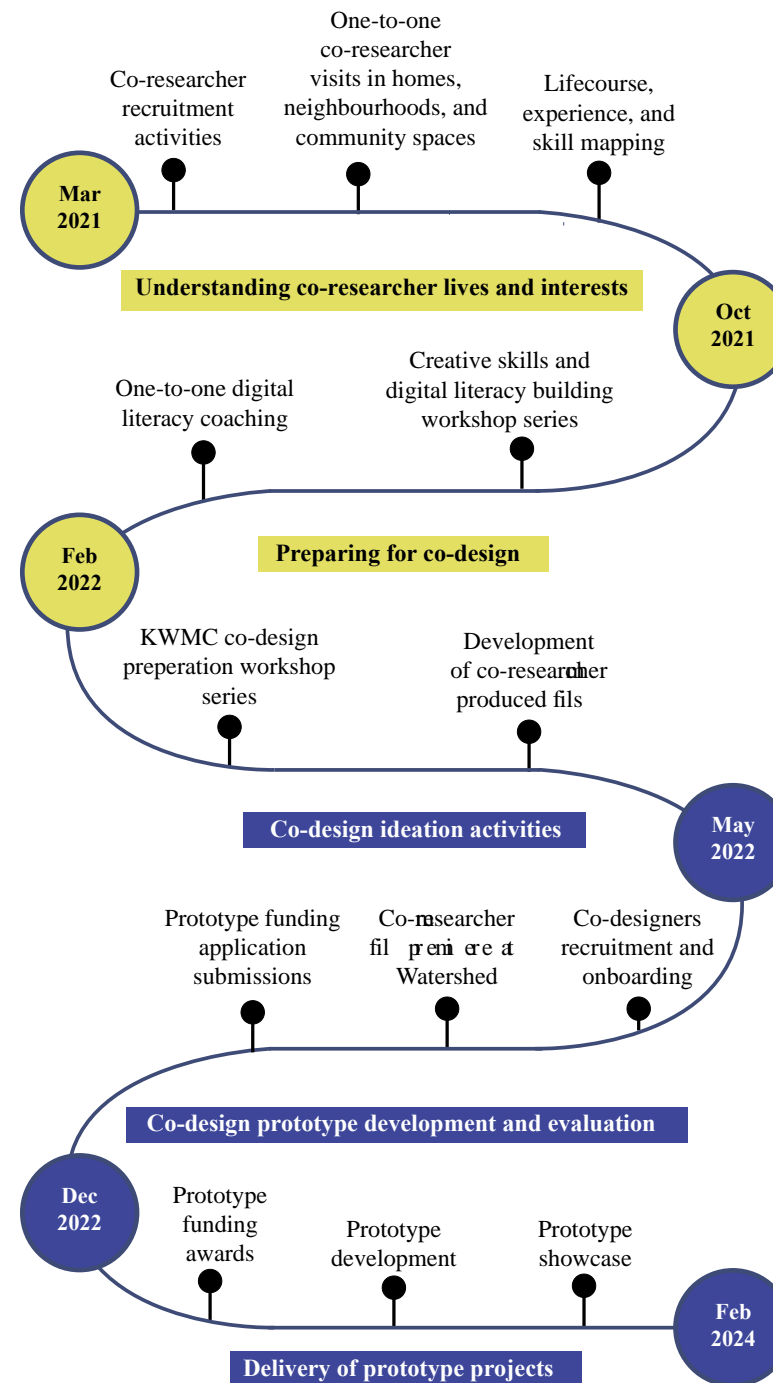
- A diverse cohort of 20 'co-researchers'
 - Worked closely with community partner orgs
 - Minoritized older adults aged 60-75
 - 'Co-researchers' because they have participated in the research, analysis and design
 - Languages, literacies, digital literacies, creative interests/experiences, life experiences



An Intersectional Lifecourse Lens

- Understanding how the lifecourse shapes digital, cultural and social participation
- Ageing as processual, situated and socially constituted (Hockney & James, 2003; Barron, 2021)
 - Material gerontology - Focus on the social and materiality of everyday life
 - Allows a bridging between the micro- and macro- levels of socio-structural analysis (Bengtson, 1997)
- Intersectional lens - how age interacts with other markers of social difference (race, class, gender, etc)
 - How these intersections are associated with 'differential power/resources, life chances, and lived experiences' (Holman & Walker, 2021)
- How intersecting systems of oppression (e.g., ageism, sexism, classism, racism, ableism) produce inequalities in ageing
- Agency and resistance – people act individually and collectively to resist and challenge structural discrimination (Nash 2008.)

Project Timeline



Year 1

Ethnography (Pink, 2009)

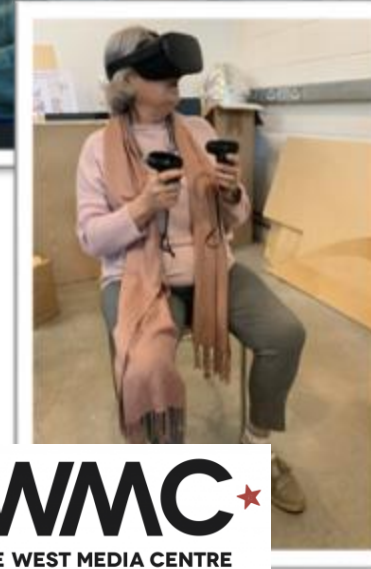
Participatory arts-based methods

(Kara, 2019)



Year 1-2

Creative & digital group workshops

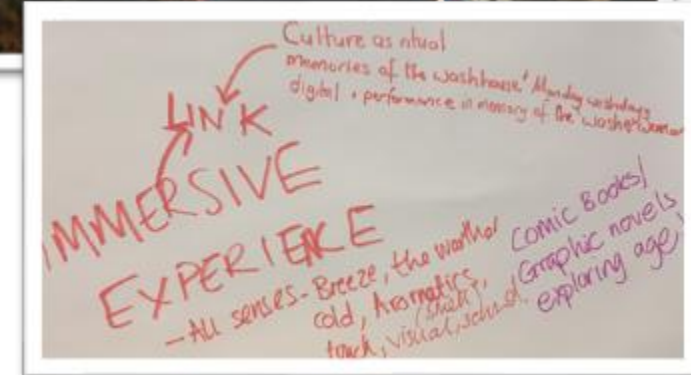


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Year 2 - 3

Co-design workshops

6 demonstrator projects



Pervasive
Media Studio

These methods and approaches generated learning that helped to situate design within the everyday lives of older adults

Introducing Carmen

Carmen is a 66 year old black woman from Jamaica, who moved to the UK in 1999.

“I have always been church ... cos with all the world going bad god is the only answer to it, so I always being at churchsome Sundays I don't go cos of the rain, because I ride my bike [mobility scooter], and if the rain outside not looking good, I'm not going, I'm in pain and I prefer stay at home, cos some mornings I wake up and I know it's Sunday morning but I don't feel like going so I just stay home and watch it, you can watch it from YouTube, when I put it on live.”



Technologies in Carmen's life

- Diasporic life and connecting with family
- Literacies and creativity
- Technologies as disabling
- Photos as material stimulus for conversations that ranged across time, space and cultures
- Everyday and historic experiences of race and racism
- Global caring, connection and fun



Expressive Pockets

“Utilising off-the-shelf technology to augment textiles, we will design a means for people to make a wearable patch/badge/pocket that conveys their culture, sense of self and emotions via light, sounds, vibrations and/or movement to other people, both in person or remotely.”



Team – Fanny Eaton-Hall, Carmen Groves, Malcolm Hamilton, Annie Lywood, Becca Rose, Dani Hale, Ruby Bennett

Partners – KWMC





Carmen - Co-designer on Expressive Pockets

What might it mean to start by engaging with the situated everyday lives, experiences and passions of minoritised older adults in digital innovation and design?

- Everyday creative interests in textiles, sewing, clothing, fashion
- Everyday materialities – digital technologies, canvas bags, clothing, etc
- Women's experiences of feeling invisible in older age
- Focus on resistance – age rebellion
 - Visibility and voice
 - Disrupting narratives of older adults and digital technologies
- Finding accessible ways to work with textiles in older age



Concluding: A praxis of care-full co-design

- *praxis of care-full co-design* departs from the capitalist logics of digital innovation as steered by 'markets', (large-scale technology companies, funders, care organisations and policy makers)
- Our praxis is responsive to the lived experiences, situated knowledges, bodies and more-than-human material and multi-sensual lifeworlds of older adults in the doing of design:
- This opens up spaces for thinking about equality through difference and intersectionality in the context of co-designing with older adults who live along multiple axes of inequality, taking account of struggles and transformations across the lifecycle.
- Following a radically reconstructive and affirmative focus, our praxis is a process of collective making, being and doing together towards the building of socially just and sustainable ageing futures.



Concluding: A praxis of care-full co-design

Three interconnected 'threads' :

- 1) grounding design in older adults more than human everyday lives,
- 2) working in the thick present, and
- 3) design as an emergent practice of care-full responsiveness.

Spare slides...

Carmen's choice of image and words for her bag

"This is deep, it's deep for me, this is where I came from. If it wasn't for the slave rebellions in Jamaica I might not be here"



雾早上
Foggy Morning



Bath Room
Hand wash



A sociomaterial lifecourse lens

- Developing a nuanced, relational understanding of the situated material experiences of minoritised older adults – relationalities, materialities, places and spaces of everyday life
- Lifecourse approaches developed in the field of material gerontology (Barron, 2021)
- Working in the ‘thick present’ (Haraway, 2016) – (an expanded timescale that recognises how power and struggles are entangled across the lifecourse) to understand ageing as situated and socio-materially constituted across time (Hockney & James, 2003; Barron, 2021)
 - Allows a bridging between the micro- and macro- levels of socio-structural analysis (Bengtson, 1997)



An intersectional lifecourse lens

- How age interacts with other markers of social difference (race, class, gender, sexuality)
- How these intersections are associated with 'differential power/resources, life chances, and lived experiences' (Holman & Walker, 2021)
- How intersecting systems of oppression (e.g., ageism, sexism, classism, racism, ableism) produce inequalities in ageing
- Agency and resistance – people act individually and collectively to resist and challenge structural discrimination (Nash 2008.)





Dani

Jeanne Elin

Yee LOHUAWEI nova plus

Annie Lywood

Becca Rose