

## Older users shaping Gerontechnology and design

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**Purpose** A growing number of studies highlight the possibility to involve older people in design projects (Tsai, Tsai, Lo & Lo, 2014; Verhoeven, Cremers, Schoone & van Dijk, 2016). The general idea is that involving older adults may support designers in better tailoring technologies to the needs and expectations of older people (Merkel & Kucharski, 2018). But how can older persons make an impact during the de-sign process when they are involved? This presentation reflects on different ways of how older people can be involved in the design process, and emphasizes the value of engaging them in an 'open' fashion - to emancipate their views and suggestions and avoid steering away from the topics that matter to them. **Method** Recent studies indicate that involving older people can take very different shapes depending on how it is executed in actual design practice (Östlund, 2015). The degree to which older people can make an impact during the design process is often at the mercy of the designer (Sanders & Stappers, 2008; Bratteteig & Wagner, 2008). To explore the role older people can play in gerontechnology design, our research team built design workshops that involved older people at a higher level of involvement. Specifically, this meant that we placed our focus on that the older adults had a 'voice' and 'say' in the essential design decisions (Essén & Östlund, 2011; Joshi & Bratteteig, 2016). We encouraged the older adults to elaborate on which role they expected technologies to play, based on what was important to them. I then observed the outcomes of these workshops. **Results and Discussion** My preliminary results show that design workshops built at a higher level of involvement can be helpful to uncover areas of knowledge that designers do not often contemplate, but older adults do: their life-long experiences having undergone a wealth of technological changes, and their unique knowledge about the circumstances of their everyday life. These competences constitute valuable resources for inspiring technology design for older adults, which are at risk of being overlooked or side-lined if older people are involved at lower levels of involvement.

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