

B. ÖSTLUND. *How to work with old people as lead users for innovations. Gerontechnology 2010;9(2):240*; doi:10.4017/gt.2010.09.02.273.00 **Purpose** The key feature of the Ageing and Design program - a research and development program at the Department of Design Sciences at Lund University in Sweden - is older people's participation in the design process, not only as reactive testers, but also as lead users. Based on theories of how successful innovation is achieved it can be argued that older people are particularly suited for this. Successful innovation processes are characterized by high functional requirements and difficult problems. It is not always useful to involve users that are too responsive or lack patience. Older people, as a result of their long experience and the tendency to become more pragmatic over the years, have the potential to set high standards, be difficult to convince, and to be very patient. The purpose of this presentation is to contribute to methodological development when it comes to involving older users in the process of innovating new products and services, and to highlight the unique advantages associated with this approach. **Method** Findings from three research projects are presented, focusing on the way in which older people participate in the design of products supporting their lives. The research projects emphasize old people as lead users and modern ageing as a lifestyle, the development of the PLUS-values in furniture, and the development of communications between television and mobile telephony. Methodologies used in the three projects included tests in the laboratory, tests in the home and action research. **Results & Discussion** The studies show that older people's life experience is an asset in the design process and can serve as a basis for innovation. They also show that the demands of the elderly will be more precise when their interpretation is given priority early in the process. The suggested approach is not entirely straightforward because it works as a strong driving force for social change and challenge entrenched ideas about what the older person needs, wants and can afford.

References

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