A Vill**age** Apart

A critical analysis into the effects of age segregation within retirement communities and considerations for how we can design with a more intergenerational lens.

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Written as part of a Master's thesis at Northumbria University

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1.0 | Age Segregation

1.1. Introduction

It is common knowledge that segregation is the separation of specific subjects or groups and arises in many mediums, including throughout society. Most forms of social segregation, including, but not limited to, segregation based on gender, race, religion etc., tend to form the basis of topical debate and mass media attention. However, there is one form of social segregation which goes almost un-noticed by many in society; that is, age segregation. Put simply, age segregation is the action of dividing individuals within society based upon their age group (Kingman, 2016). This concept has been used, and acknowledged, as a beneficial tool in most civilisations for centuries, an example would be within the school system where children are separated based on their 'year groups' to facilitate their learning development. However, as a country, the UK has now become one of the most age segregated nations in the world (Miller, 2023), which has led to a decline in social interaction between individuals of different ages to themselves (Kingman, 2016).

The occurrence of segregation based on age can, on a fundamental level, be attributed to a rise in the ageing population. However, it is insufficient to simply state that this is the reason and further contextual discussion must be had in this regard. Some say that age segregation occurs naturally as we tend to socialise and form relationships with those who are of a similar age (O'Dare, et. al., 2017), while others say that the issue is far more deep-rooted, spanning across a plethora of societal structures including the housing market and social care sector. According to Kohli, life scripts are structured into three main stages based on a system of work/labour: "preparation," "activity," and "retirement" (Kohli, 1986). He argues that individuals are naturally separated based on each life stage due to the "common chronological standard"; that is, individuals in each "stage" share a common ground, thereby creating more opportunity for interaction.

Preparation   Activity   Retirement

Fig. 01 - Life Scripts as described by Kohli (1996). Personal Collection

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A more recent study by United for all Ages argues that opportunities for social interaction across different age groups has reduced due to the changes and reduction in common meeting places such as pubs, places of worship and even in the workplace. With the increase in self-employment figures and working-from-home initiatives, more people are interacting less in a traditional workplace setting, which in turn leads to further segregation (United for all ages, 2018). Those who would once have had the benefit of working with a diverse group, are now limited to those in their immediate setting. With the workplace being a key common meeting place for intergenerational interaction, certain groups who don't have a 'workplace' are therefore at an immediate disadvantage; this includes the unemployed, remote workers and retirees.

Another significant factor that contributes to an age-segregated society is the housing sector. On a macro scale, within the UK, the housing crisis is driving generations further apart with inner cities attracting younger populations and rural areas ageing twice as fast as urban ones causing large divides within neighbourhoods (Kingman, 2016). On a more micro scale, we are designing and building developments specific to certain age groups; examples being student accommodations and retirement villages which, at their very core, seek to insulate one age group from the rest of the community.

This paper will focus on the segregation seen and experienced within purpose-built retirement communities, assessing the benefits and drawbacks this may have on residents and the wider community and understanding how the design model could be amended to encourage more intergenerational interaction.

1.2. Retirement Communities and Segregation

Within the UK, there are certain purpose-built communities that are age exclusive which are marketed towards older persons and prohibit children from being permanent residents within the premises. These age-restricted communities and housing options take on a variety of names, but all share the same ideology and ethos of age-exclusive housing for those aged 55 and over.

Although the history of these housing typologies is rarely documented, the concept of 55+ communities originates from the United States, specifically in the state of Arizona following the Second World War. Designed by developer Ben Schleifer in 1954, Youngtown, Arizona was the first purpose-built retirement community that required residents to be over a certain age to inhabit (Trolander, 2011). Since then, many age-restricted retirement communities in North America have followed suit, with them also making their way around the world in places such as Australia, New Zealand and, more relevant to this paper, the United Kingdom.

1.3. Benefits of age-restricted retirement developments

Specific communities for retirement within the United Kingdom are still a fairly new concept, and as of 2019, there were over 500,000 units of specialist retirement housing in England according to Age UK. However, even with these figures, the UK is still not seeing enough purpose-built housing for older people (Age UK, 2019).

The benefits of living within a purpose-built retirement community include access to care, activities, sense of community, building friendships, safety, and security for residents. They allow people to maintain independence well within later-life, encouraging them to reside as long as possible within their own homes (The Extra Care Charitable Trust, 2024). Most purpose-built retirement communities within the UK typically offer individual apartments or bungalows (usually maximum two-bedrooms), alongside communal areas, lounges, activity spaces, gardens, and on-site support and care if and when needed. These typologies of housing are grouped by HAPPI under the 'specialised housing' category which includes retirement villages, sheltered retirement, cohousing, and extra care (see fig.2). All of the specialist housing groups share the common ethos that they are designed specifically with the needs of older persons in mind (Best and Porteus, 2012).
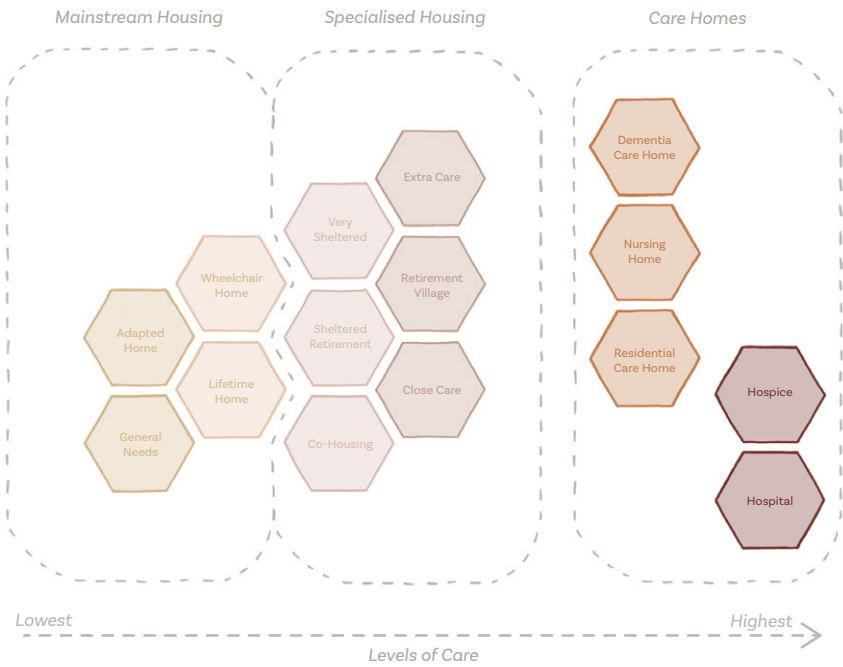

Fig. 02 - Housing Typologies, (Best & Porteus, 2012)

Due to specialist housing options being tailored to the needs of older persons, residents can move around all spaces freely due to improved accessibility features in comparison to mainstream housing. This prevents falls and ill health, and also increases the mobility and quality of life of the residents (PRP, 2015).

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In his paper 'In Defense of Age-Segregated Housing', Stephen Golant outlines the key social advantages that retirement developments have for residents. Although he states that these developments can vary in terms of facilities and features, he asserts that age-restricted communities result in 'more supportive and protective environments' where older people can sympathise with one another and share common history (Golant, 1985). This view is also supported by Manicaros and Stimson as they argue that large age gaps can cause tension between younger and older residents due to their differing needs (Manicaros and Stimson, 1999) and therefore socialising with people of a similar age is more appropriate and favoured. Research conducted by Sherwood et. al. also points out that attitudes towards ageing are significantly improved when living within a retirement community, leading to a better outlook on life (Sherwood et al., 1997).

1.4. The consequences of an age-segregated housing model

Despite the fact that living within purpose-built retirement communities has many benefits to residents, only 70,000 people within the UK choose to live in these developments (extracare.org.uk, 2023) and as of 2019, 96% of older households still lived in mainstream housing (Age UK, 2019). In Louise Drew's study, she highlights that this may be due to nineteen percent of over fifties believing they will be more isolated from friends and family when moving to a retirement community and almost a third do not want to live in a community of older people (Drew et al., 2023).

1.4.1 Consequences to Social Integration

While some argue that age segregation within housing developments can be a positive feature for older residents as they share common ground, research conducted by Carr and Fang emphasises that, although retirement communities may be homogeneous in age, they still have a diverse range of needs, especially around independence/dependency which can cause conflicting attitudes and a build-up of tension between residents (Carr and Fang, 2021).

Spatial and therefore social separation between age groups also decreases the likelihood of intergenerational friendships from forming (O'Dare et al., 2017) which can expose individuals to a higher risk of social isolation and loneliness (Social Integration Commission, 2014). Separation of any form between different groups is likely to diminish social interaction with others (Kingman, 2016), and age segregation specifically deprives older persons of different social stimuli (Addae-Dapaah, 2008). This is backed by studies and research that show reduced interaction with younger individuals can lead to more social isolation in older adults, thus affecting their health and wellbeing (Sabater and Finney, 2023) (Burns et al., 2022).

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1.4.2 Consequences to Health and Wellbeing

Living solely with other older people, especially those who may suffer from illnesses, can increase anxiety around the prospect of death and ill-health for residents and regular bereavements can make residents reluctant to form close friendships due to the fear of loss (Percival, 1996). This is also supported by findings from Lewis et al., as they discovered that seeing a decline in health amongst residents lead to others worrying about their own health and wellbeing (Lewis et al., 2020).

BENEFITS	DRAWBACKS
Access to care	Conflicting Needs
Facilities & Activities	Lacking Intergenerational Friendships
Sense of Community	Social Isolation & Loneliness
Friendships	Health Anxiety
Safety & Security	Fear of loss & Bereavements
Common Ground	Isolated from family & friends
	Decreased social stimuli
	Links to ageism
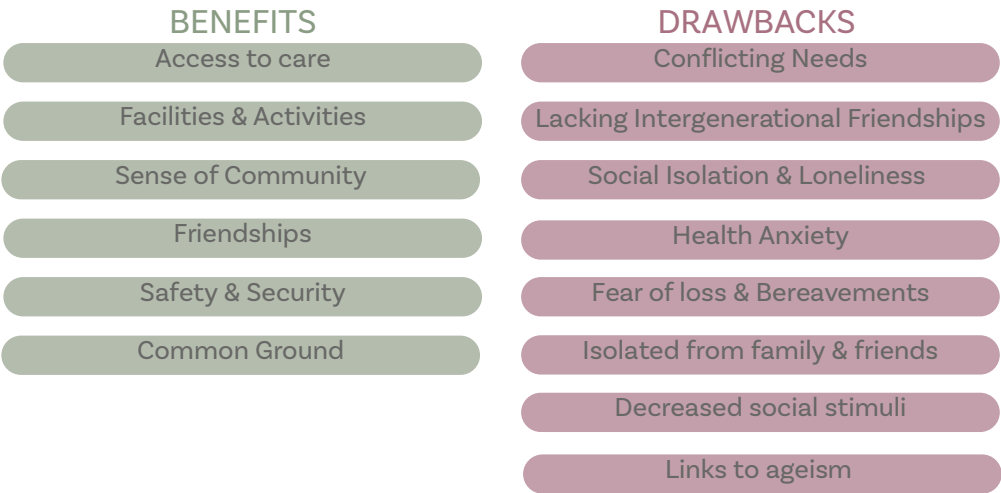
Fig. 03 - Benefits and Drawbacks of Age-Segregated Retirement Communities (personal collection)

1.5. Links to Age Segregation and Ageism

Like any form of discrimination, ageism is a large source of inequality within the UK at a societal level and causes negative effects on social cohesion, performance, and productivity (Robinette et. al, 2018), however ageism currently receives less attention than any other form of discrimination (United for all Ages, 2020).

Age segregation is known to have a direct link to ageism as it leads to exclusion of age groups which can provoke stereotypical thinking and prejudice of others (Sabater et al., 2017) and this stereotypical thinking leads to even more divide and distrust which is difficult to overcome. Increasing the chances of connection between younger and older age groups can broaden the number of positive interactions between them, which, according to Pettigrew and Tropp, can produce positive attitudes and behaviours to combat ageism (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006).

In conclusion, although age-restricted developments and communities built specifically for those aged over 55 offer many benefits in terms of care, support and lifestyle, the act of spatially separating one group from another in society causes disproportionate damage both at macro (societal) and micro (individual) levels. Therefore, to combat age segregation and bridge the gap between generations, as supported by recommendations from United for All Ages, we need to design and build more intergenerational communities, including within retirement developments (United for All Ages, 2018).

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Chapter 2

Intergenerational Approaches

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2.0 | Intergenerational Approaches

2.1. Introduction

While the current housing market within the UK is increasingly segregated by age, we are now seeing a developing interest in intergenerational housing schemes and practices, although they have been slow to take off (Pain, 2005).
Below, this paper will highlight the differing approaches to intergenerational housing across the globe in Europe and Asia, followed by a comparison to what we are currently doing in the UK to highlight gaps and lessons learnt that can be taken forward.

2.2 Approaches from Asia

The Population Reference Bureau (PRB), taking data published by the United Nations in 2019, highlights that Asia is the oldest growing continent (PRB, 2020), housing the largest percentage of individuals aged 65 and over. For this reason, it would be sensible to cast an eye on the intergenerational approaches taken to address this rise in ageing population and determine whether there are any principles that can be introduced to the UK to tackle the age segregation problem.

2.2.1 Kampung Admiralty - Singapore

Kampung Admiralty, design by architects WOHA, is Singapore's first mixed-use 'one-stop' integrated public development which offers Retail, Supermarket, Medical Centre, Hawker Centre, Senior Care Centre, Childcare Centre alongside 104 public rental studio apartments.
Although situated on a constrained site of only 0.9Ha, the building utilizes the concept of a 'vertical village' to maximize spaces and connections (WOHA, 2018).

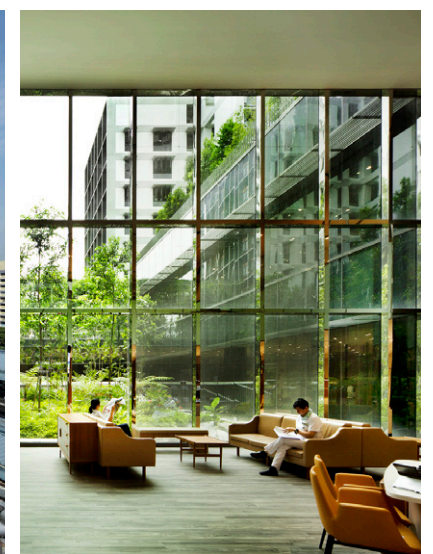Fig. 04 - Kampung Admirality External View, (WOHA, 2018)

Fig. 05 - Kampung Admirality Internal View, (WOHA, 2018)

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This 'one-stop-shop' approach to the development allows for an entire community to come together as one, whether that be to shop, eat, play, or enjoy outdoor space. The Senior care centre and Childcare centre are co-located to encourage intergenerational interaction and relationships between individuals that are significantly diverse in age. Older residents can volunteer at the childcare centre which boosts the idea of intergenerational bonding and friendship, alongside transferring knowledge from one generation to another. It is also a positive example of giving residents a sense of purpose during retirement which, as studies show, improves health, and reduces cognitive ageing and decline (Kim et al., 2020).

Having a medical centre on site provides older residents with security and care, in addition to the connection to green space which promotes healing and aids towards a more active, healthy lifestyle.
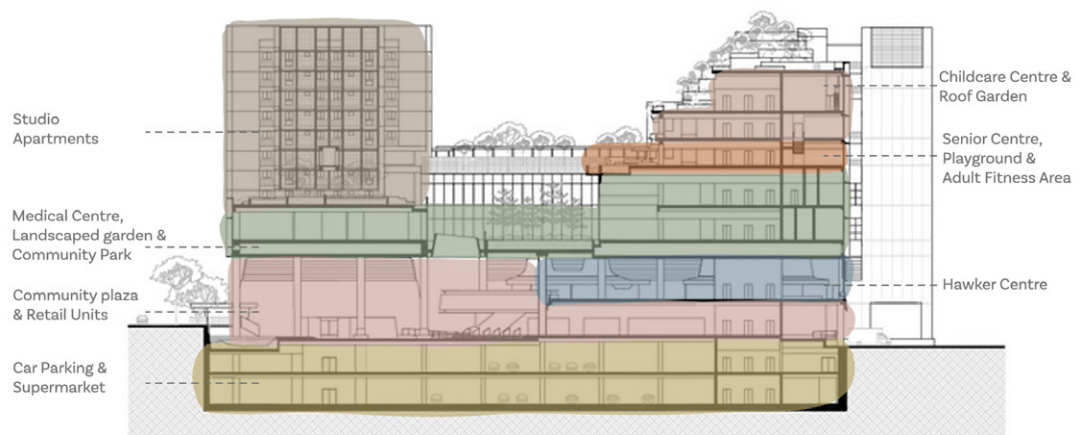
Fig. 06 - Kampung Admirality Programme, (WOHA, 2018)

The studio apartments are arranged around a shared communal area to encourage neighbourly connection. The units themselves are flexible and adaptable with column-free interiors and minimal circulation to allow the spaces to mould to the resident as opposed to the resident moulding around the spaces (Kim, 2020).
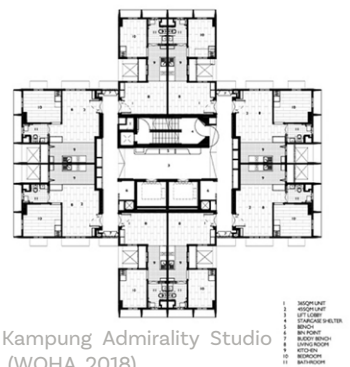
Fig. 07 - Kampung Admirality Studio Floor Plan, (WOHA, 2018)
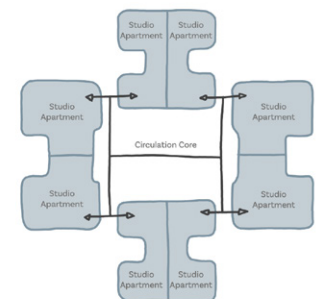
Fig. 08 - Kampung Admirality Plan Diagram, (Personal Collection)

2.2.2 Kotoen - Japan

As a contrast to the purpose-built facility in Singapore, the Kotoen facility as an intergenerational development happened by chance. It was first built in 1962 as a care home for older residents (Sugi, 2009). Later, in 1976, a nursery was built next to the facility which, through staff members of both the care home and nursery coming together and planning activities, gave birth to a new model of connection and living. By 1987, the nursery and care home became integrated, allowing children and residents to come together each day to connect and play (Dix, 2004).

Fig. 09 - Kotoen Facility Intergenerational Connection, (Hassani 2018)
Fig. 10 - Kotoen Facility Activities, (Hassani 2018)

Kotoen now houses just under 200 residents, providing a mixture of long- and short-term residential options alongside day services, with the nursery occupying over 100 children. Daily, the facility will open its doors to the nursery children and residents will engage in group activities with their younger guests, hosting seasonal activities and festivals, focussing on a 'big family concept' (Sugi, 2009).

The main driver for the Kotoen facility to become Japan's first intergenerational care home was to remove misconceptions between generations and strengthen Japan's long-standing concept of the extended family unit (Hassani, 2018). For the older residents, interaction with the children revitalises their youth and gives them connection to the wider society, whereas for the children, interaction with senior citizens provides them with education, respect and care.

Due to a shift towards more western approaches to family structures, Japan has seen an increase in nuclear families where grandparents live away from the family home, so many children are experiencing less interaction with older relatives and senior citizens are increasingly feeling the effects of social isolation and loneliness (Sugi, 2009). Therefore, at Kotoen, the idea of bringing young and old together mutually benefits both the residents and children, making the facility incredibly popular with the demand and waiting lists ever increasing (Dix, 2004).

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2.3 Approaches from Europe

Europe holds the world's second largest ageing population, and although the UK is slowly introducing more intergenerational approaches to housing, other European countries have sought to implement and build unique proposals to tackle the later-living housing crisis much earlier.

Both the Netherlands (18.9%) and Spain (19.1%) share similar percentages of individuals aged 65 and over as the UK (18.3%) according to the PRB (PRB,2020), therefore small case studies have been composed below to highlight the different concepts taken by each.

2.3.1 Humanitas Deventer Retirement Home - The Netherlands

Humanitas Deventer, designed by Wim Knuppel, is an innovative retirement home that houses students within the development who live there rent-free in exchange for being 'good neighbours' to the older residents. (humantiasdeventer.nl, 2019).

The scheme currently houses only 6 students amongst the permanent residents however, it brings together two different demographics to help build intergenerational relationships.

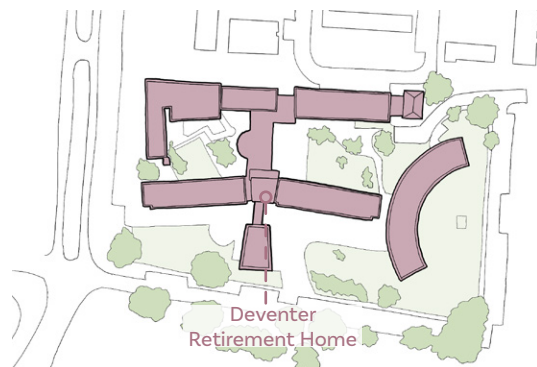Fig. 11 - Humanitas Deventer Location, (Personal Collection)

Fig. 12 - Shared Meal Times, (humantiasdeventer.nl, 2019)

The scheme is viewed as a win-win situation between residents and students alike; the students save money on high student accommodation bills and the older residents gain connection with younger individuals to combat social isolation and loneliness (Harris, 2016). The students, who are to spend at least thirty hours per month on neighbourly activities, can provide a level of support to older residents and both sets of resident groups can teach new things to one another and share life experiences (Landi and Smith, 2020).

The students have become part of the family within the development and residents were quick to welcome them into their lives, stating that the stories and lives of their younger neighbours got them reminiscing about their own youth and formed a connection between them and the outside world. (Arentshorst et al., 2019). This spatial integration has led to real friendships forming between students and residents which is a true testament to the benefits of intergenerational connection.

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2.3.2 The Plaza de América Building - Spain

The Plaza de América building, located within Alicante, Spain is an intergenerational municipal building which was completed in 2008 and compromises of 72 single-bed apartments. The development houses older people above the age of 65 as well as younger people under the age of 35 and is within close proximity to a health centre housed in the basement levels of the scheme should residents need it. (CPA,2016)

Similar to the concept within Humanitas Deventer, the younger residents must dedicate 4 hours per week to 'neighbourly' activities and participation in the programme.

The scheme hosts a social programme, which is organised by the younger residents, and includes gardening, music, parties, technology, home repairs and help with chores. The older residents also host workshops on cooking, cleaning, and budgeting (Copeman et al., 2019).

A social programme targeted to both demographics that they can all be a part of brings the community together and sparks friendships between old and young. Younger residents enjoy learning from older residents, hearing life experiences and offering their support. The older residents appreciate the support from their younger neighbours and experience improved vitality due to living within an intergenerational environment. Communal spaces within the development such as the TV and music rooms enable residents to come together and spend time with their neighbours, promoting socialisation and personal connection. (CPA,2016)

Fig. 13 - The Plaza de América Building, (Copeman et al., 2019)
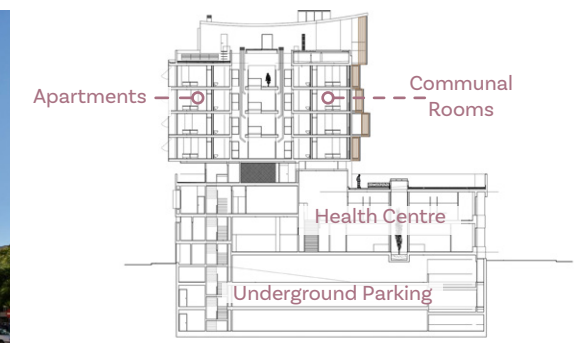
Fig. 14 - Plaza de América Building Section, (Garcia and Martí, 2014)

The Plaza de América building succeeds in integrating into the local community, allowing accessibility to the town square and urban centre. The location of the building has lead to an acceptance of the scheme by the community and surrounding areas, further highlighting the benefits of its intergenerational approaches (Garcia and Martí, 2014).
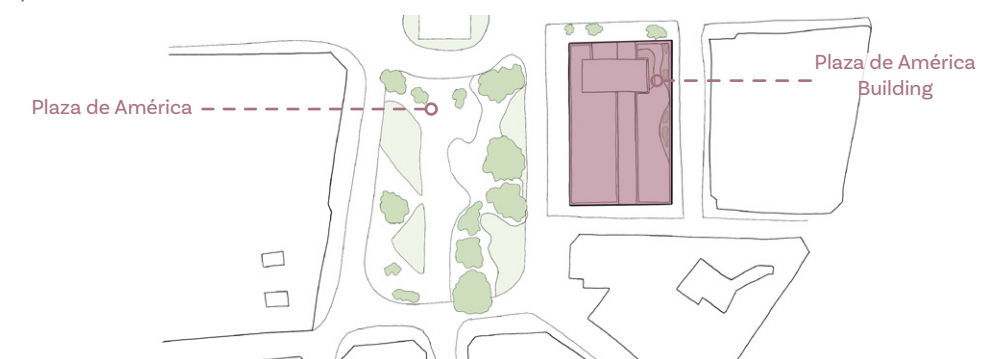
Fig. 15 - Plaza de América Location, (Personal Collection)

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2.4 How the UK Compares

It is apparent that, in comparison to some other countries across the globe, the UK has been slow to realise the benefits of intergenerational connection and therefore fewer schemes and programmes exist that encompass it. That being said, since the broadcast of Channel 4's 'Old People's Home for 4-year olds' which shed a new light on the advantages of bringing two different generations together, there has been a drastic uplift in intergenerational interest across the sectors.

The 2017 documentary demonstrated the effects of intergenerational connection between two completely different age groups and inspired the nation with its heart-warming testament. The health benefits confirmed an increase in mobility as well as decreased social isolation and improved mood for the older residents (Channel 4, 2018) leading to St Monica Trust to offer intergenerational activities and interaction across all of their sites in Bristol and Somerset (stmonicatrust.org.uk, 2024).

Fig. 16 - Channel 4's award-winning documentary, (Tate, 2018)

Fig. 17 - Two generations together, (Machell, 2017)

2.4.1 Apples and Honey Nursery - South London

As England's first integrated care home nursery, Apples and Honey is situated in the grounds of Nightingale House care home in Wandsworth London and holds daily sessions between the children and the residents (United for all Ages, 2018). The close proximity between the nursery and the care home allows both children and residents accessible contact with each other without the worry of costly travel plans. The nursery's ethos is to maintain intergenerational practices between young and old to inspire both generations and harness the mutual benefits it brings.
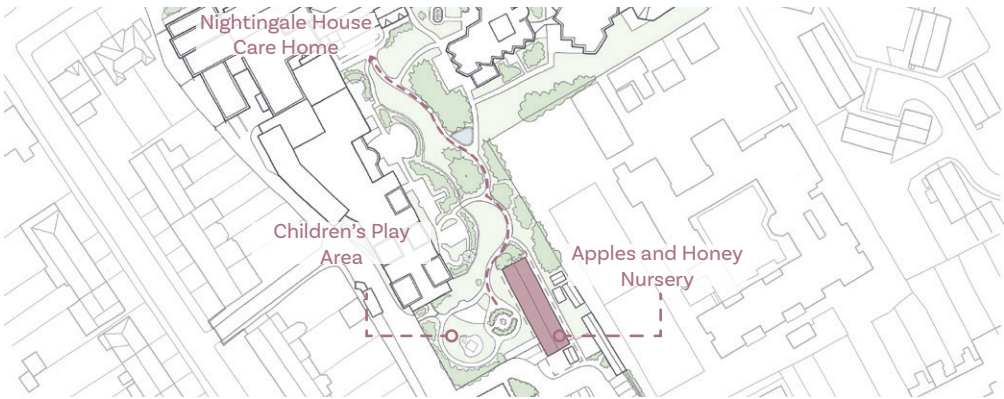
Fig. 18 - Apples and Honey Location, (Personal Collection)

Meaningful play between children and residents, which include exercise, sensory activities, music making and gardening helps early-years development as well as combating loneliness in older age, offering a sense of purpose for the residents.

"We wanted to give the residents a new sense of purpose and to give children extended families." – (Ish-Horowicz, 2018).

'There's only a 90-year age difference, but what's 90 years between friends.'

'There's increasing evidence that if you put services for old people and services for very young people together that you get a better outcome for all of them.'

Matt Hancock
Health Secretary, Oct 2018
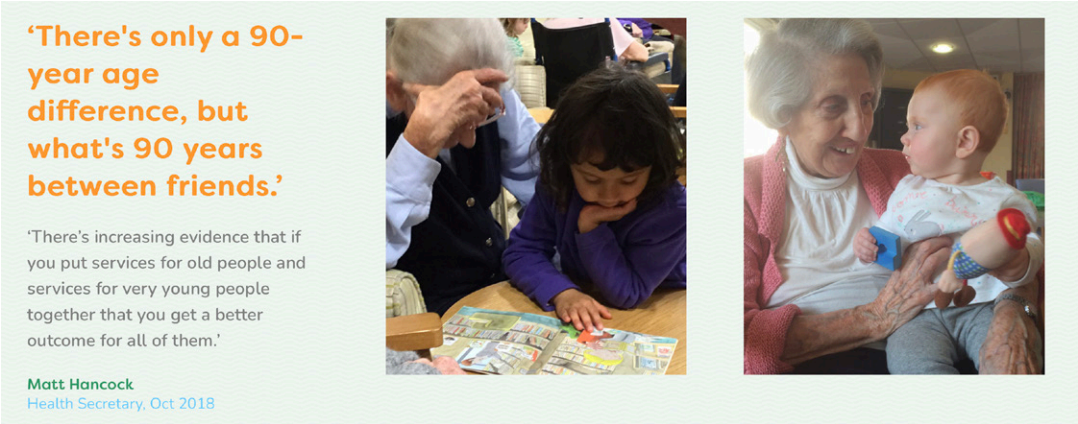
Fig. 19 - Website Snapshot, (applesandhoneynightingale.com, 2024)

The accessibility between care home and nursery is a key factor as to why this scheme is so successful. The nursery staff members can easily walk across the gardens of the care home and into the lounge with the children to offer intergenerational interaction. Likewise, residents can see the nursery from Nightingale House and can hear the children playing in the gardens (Ish-Horowicz, 2018), further strengthening the connection and social cohesion of both facilities.

2.4.2 The Linkages Housing Project - Cambridge

Taking inspiration from Humanitas, Ellis House, a sheltered accommodation in Cambridge, opened its doors to PHD students at a reduced rental rate in exchange for 15 hours of volunteering per month. Founded in 2017, the programme sees at least 3 students per cohort and over 20 older residents sharing a home and coming together during activities and events. The reduced rental rates alleviate some of the pressures of Cambridge's student accommodation shortages and reduces loneliness and social isolation of the residents. (Quinio and Burgess, 2019).

Fig. 20 - Ellis House, (CHS Group, n.d.)

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2.4.3 Marmalade Lane - Cambridge

Though not a development which targets specific retirement living or care homes, Marmalade Lane in Cambridge is a multigenerational co-housing development designed by Mole Architects in 2018. Incorporating 42 homes in a mixture of apartments and terraced houses alongside shared communal facilities within the common house, the scheme aims to bring the community together to create a sustainable neighbourhood (Krstic et al., 2020).

The innovative model of this development allowed households to get involved in the design process and customise their own homes. With a selection of five 'shell' house or flat types, residents could select standard floor plans, fittings, and even external brick specifications making each home tailored and unique.
The reason this scheme has been given it's multigenerational classification is due to the differing residents who live there; families with young children, young professionals and retirees who can all come together within the communal areas of the site, whether that be for parties, national holidays, gardening or shared meals.

Fig. 21 - Marmalade Lane Site, (Hobbs, 2017)

Fig. 22 - Personalised Housing , (Merrick, 2019)

Most of these schemes, although incredibly valuable to improving intergenerational connection within the UK, lack an organic and natural approach to bringing people together and are, instead, orchestrated and planned.
Moving forward, we should perhaps look to create spaces that naturally bring people of all ages together, especially within retirement villages and developments to spark incidental meetings, looking at a community-driven approach rather than on a programme-by-programme basis.
Research will be conducted to determine what makes a space truly intergenerational and how design can be altered to view traditional retirement communities through a more intergenerational lens.

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Chapter 3

Research Design

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3.0 | Research Design

3.1 Methodology

For the data collection process of this research paper, qualitative research methods were utilised in order to yield subjective data from a selection of participants.
Interviews were conducted with a range of professional individuals within the built environment alongside current retirement community residents to gain a holistic picture of opinions and feedback on the traditional age segregated approach to retirement living and how we can improve the lives of the ageing population.

3.2 Participants

In total, eight participants were interviewed, two of which were conducted at the same time due to both participants working within the same office environment. The participants involved were as follows;

Participant 01 - Geriatrician and Ageing Well Expert
        Conducted 16.01.2024

Participant 02 - Adult Social Care Lead at a Local Council
        Conducted 22.01.2024

Participant 03 - Intergenerational Expert
        Conducted 24.01.2024

Participant 04 - Architect, specialising in residential & urban design
        Conducted 10.03.2024

Participant 05 – Age UK
        Conducted 02.02.2024

Participant 06 - Age UK
        Conducted 02.02.2024

Participant 07 - Retirement Village Resident 1
        Conducted 19.02.2024

Participant 08 - Retirement Village Resident 2
        Conducted 19.02.2024

Interviews with participants were held either in person or remotely via Microsoft Teams and lasted between 30-60 minutes.

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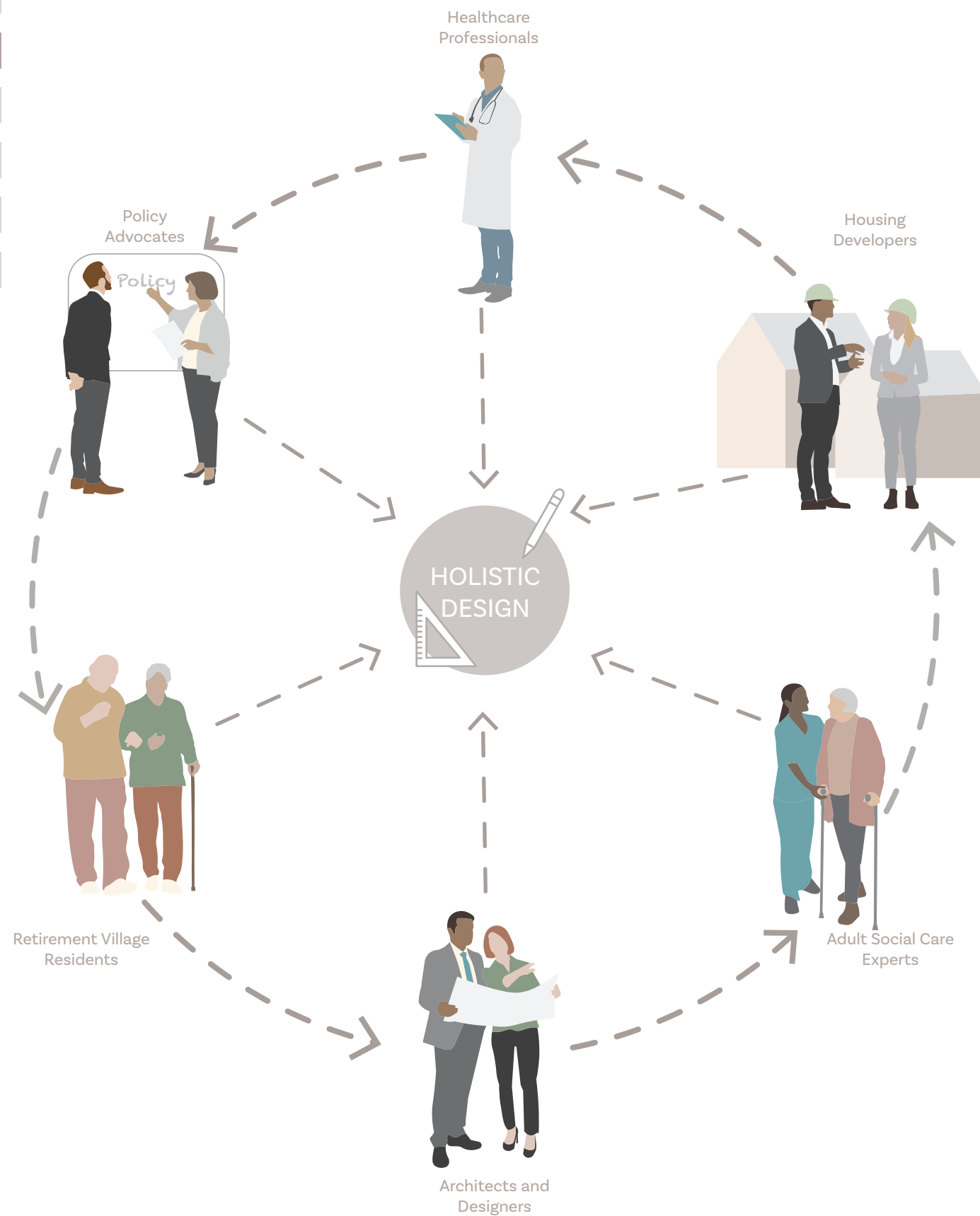Professionals

Housing
Developers

Policy
Advocates

Policy

HOLISTIC
DESIGN

Retirement Village
Residents

Adult Social Care
Experts

Architects and
Designers

Fig. 23 - Data collection diagram, (Personal collection)

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Chapter 4

Discussions

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4.0 | Discussions

4.1 Problems with an age segregated retirement model

"it is very much on the agenda for age segregation to be wiped out if it can." – Participant 3 (Intergenerational Expert)

4.1.1 Problems affecting health and wellbeing

As previously highlighted within this paper, age segregation can have negative effects on a person's wellbeing, both physically and mentally. In their interview, Participant 3 highlights the issues being related to mental health, ageism, and social isolation. This idea is supported by Participant 1's comments as they state that loneliness and social isolation has significant effects on older people's physical wellbeing as well as their mental health. The fear of falling amongst the older population is, in their words, "common place" which is only heightened as they progress well into later-life.

"There's a psychosocial spiral that results in physical decline as they become more isolated through fear of falling and get out and about less and less, hence become more physically inactive, hence become at higher risk of falling." – Participant 1 (Geriatrician)

This comment stresses that, without an active lifestyle, the fear of falling gets significantly worse, and in the conversation with Participant 2, they emphasise the phenomenon in which *"some people just morph into whatever everybody else is"* when living with others of a similar age, therefore, should the majority of residents within a particular environment be quite inactive, other residents may subconsciously follow suit, thus negatively affecting their lifestyle and health.

"I do wonder if perhaps without the intergenerational component that just retirement communities might not necessarily do the older people the favours that we think it might do them." – Participant 1

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4.1.2 Problems with the 55+ Model

In their interview, Participant 4 highlights that the 55+ bracket is incredibly diverse, so catering for a diverse range of needs under one roof is extremely difficult and, when discussing this topic, Participant 2 suggests that the 55+ category and age segregation doesn't work at all. Instead, specialised housing options should be based on needs and not age.

"For me, I just don't think the over 55 age limit, age segregation works at all. I think I'd just stop them all together."
"I think certainly if it's for people with care needs over 18, it's better rather than over 55." – Participant 2 (Local Council)

4.1.3 Problems from the resident's perspective

When speaking with residents who live within age-segregated housing, there appeared to be tension between some of the neighbours relating to who should be allowed within the building. One resident in particular took issue with younger visitors, causing another resident to make the following comment:

"I mean, my grandson told me, when he came to visit, she told him he should leave. Said that he shouldn't be in here" - Resident 2

This demonstrates that the age-segregated model can lead to hostility towards other age groups and, as Participant 2 would describe, *"can become a gated-community type place, and therefore, never shall anybody go in and never shall anybody come out, like Charlie and the Chocolate Factory."*

Fig. 24 - Problems with an age segregated retirement model, (Personal collection)

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4.2 Advantages of purpose-built retirement communities

4.2.1 Advantages to health and wellbeing

In terms of care and support, purpose-built retirement communities can offer residents many advantages, as Participant 2 highlights being the safety and security that their own home can't provide, *"enabling people with care and support needs to live as independently as possible without the need of going in care homes"*.

This is also supported by comments made by Participant 5 in their interview as they echo a similar ethos to extra-care retirement living, stating that independence is a key driver to developing these schemes.

When speaking with residents, this was also the main reason that they opted to move into retirement living, as one resident suffered a fall in her previous home resulting in needing that extra support from a specialised environment. The fact that the buildings are level-access is an enormous benefit for those with accessibility and mobility issues.

4.2.2 Advantages to community

The sense of community within retirement developments can appear quite strong when done correctly. As Participant 5 highlights, having well-designed communal areas *"is vital to reducing social isolation if you can get people there and have activities"*.

This is backed by residents as having good neighbours contributed to their satisfaction of the development and one resident commented that *"we've got more of a social life now. Because you've got the big community room downstairs"*.

Another occupant who didn't class herself as "the social type", still enjoyed the option to participate in communal activities. Choice to her was very important.
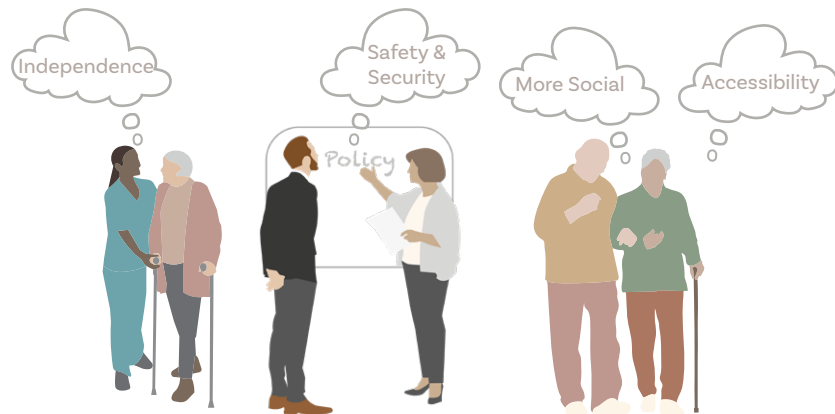
Fig. 25 - Advantages of purpose-built retirement communities, (Personal collection)

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4.3 Barriers to moving into a purpose-built retirement community

4.3.1 Housing Stock

Only a very small percentage of people in later-life choose to move into purpose-built retirement communities. When discussing the reasons behind this, Participant 2 made the point that *"one of the barriers that a lot of people face when they want to downsize to a bungalow or whatever accommodation that might be is the size of it"*.

From their experience, the specialised housing stock in that particular region is not desirable to the older population as they often only offer one-bedroom properties, and without an additional bedroom, having family over to visit can be quite difficult due to the lack of space.

Participant 5 stated that people *"should be able to have their families and friends around them"*, so when looking at designing homes for the ageing population, additional space to host should be considered and judged as being extremely important.

4.3.2 Attitudes and Perceptions

From the research, one of the main reasons that discourages people from moving into specialised housing is the fear of being deemed an 'older person' or living amongst others that they would define as being in that bracket.
This concept is reiterated from interviews carried out as Participant 6 highlights that *"a lot of people don't want to be put in that group as an older person so if you were 65, 70 and you were mobile you were going to the pub all the time or you were going out shopping you don't want to be put into that older person's category"*.

Participant 1 made similar comments stating *"the thought of being in an older person's community fills me with abject horror. I just think, my God, I'm like 25 in my head."*

Perhaps if the perceptions of retirement developments shifted away from just 'older persons' and towards a more intergenerational environment, these fears would not exist.

Fig. 26 - Barriers to moving into a purpose-built retirement community, (Personal collection)

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4.4 Advantages to intergenerational connection

4.4.1 Benefits to Health and Wellbeing

As age segregation can lead to negative effects on a person's health and wellbeing, intergenerational connection works the opposite way and has extremely positive effects. Participant 3 mentions their research on the topic demonstrating that *"we've seen an 80% impact on the benefits, particularly around mental health"* and that intergenerational connection has proven to improve older person's *"emotional, cognitive, and physical well-being"*.
They also explain how there is a mutual benefit for both older and younger people. For children, *"it improves their resilience, their empathy skills, their confidence, and communication skills".*

Participant 1 highlights that intergenerational connection allows older people to have a sense of purpose which many experience a decline of as they move towards later-life.

"It results in such a boost for older people; that connection between old and young and that feeling of usefulness. Again, a lot of older people, particularly those who don't have families who have quite a lot of that. That feeling of being useless is not to be underestimated".
– Participant 1 (Geriatrician)

4.4.2 Benefits to Community Values

A successful community often demonstrates diversity amongst its residents, where people from all walks of life can interact freely. Participant 2 delves into the concept of respect and how intergenerational connection can build up respect between generations. When conversations are had between individuals, they may learn things about one another and build up relationships, thus reducing ageism and stereotypes.

*"Whilst ever somebody is a number, or 'that old guy that rumbles when he goes in the shop', you've got a risk to the younger generation not respecting them.
Therefore, potentially have intentionally or unintentionally harmed them."* – Participant 2 (Local Council)

In their interview, Participant 6 mentioned that an intergenerational neighbourhood strengthens community spirit in the sense that neighbours can help each other when needed. They recalled their own neighbour and how, when she needs assistance, there is someone there to help her when she needs. *"I was thinking you know what, if you're in a segregated community for older people do you have the opportunity to do that? Probably not.".*

4.4.3 Benefits to Care and Support

When discussing the idea of intergenerational specialised housing schemes, Participant 2 emphasises the importance of opening up extra-care schemes to adults of all ages, and not just those aged over 55.

They quoted a story about a former resident who suffered from MS and was in her 40's, but needed the care and support on hand that her and her husband's mainstream home could not provide. Due to Participant 2 championing opening up extra care facilities to over 18's, the couple were able to move in and their lives drastically improved.

"She described getting her husband back and he described getting his wife back."

"When you've been married for 50, 60 years and then you suddenly separate because one needs care, it's just, it's heart-breaking to be in it."

Participant 2 stresses that another important benefit of intergenerational specialised housing schemes is that people don't have to be separated to receive care. They describe a situation where an elderly mother may have a child who is in their 20's or 30's but may have complex learning needs and therefore cannot live independently. When the mother moves into specialised housing, it is incredibly important that she can take her child with her and not put them through the trauma of separation.
They go on to say that, if the mother were to pass away, she wouldn't have to worry about the care of her child, because they will already be in that environment, whereas current care models *"at the minute, that person would end up going into some other supported living or into a care home in crisis because their parent passed away".*

"But I just genuinely believe if we want people to live independently, we want people with mental health needs and people with learning disabilities to live in these properties as well, not just people who are ageing".
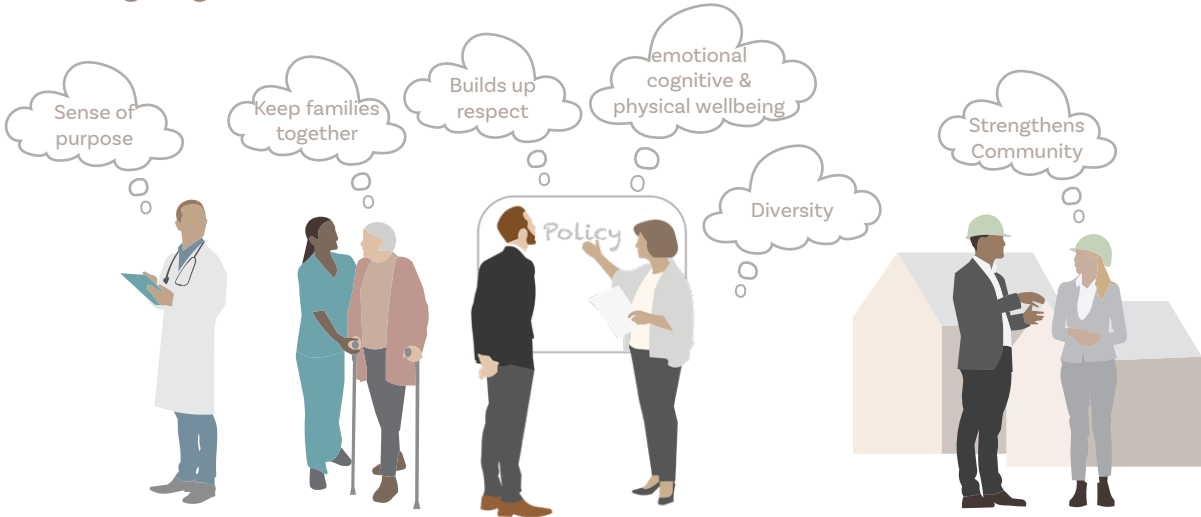

Fig. 27 - Advantages to intergenerational connection, (Personal collection)

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4.5 Resistance and Barriers to intergenerational connection

4.5.1 Physical Barriers

From their experience, Participant 3 describes the only resistance they have seen to intergenerational connection is physical barriers such as transportation to and from nurseries and care homes and synchronising with school timetables.

When a nursery or school is positioned away from a care home or retirement facility, transporting people between places can be time-consuming and costly. This was a key reason to why a nursery was implemented in Particiant 4's building scheme as it allowed the development to become naturally intergenerational; *"understanding the benefits of creating a space which brings together those two generations, and what they offer one another."*

4.5.2 Attitudes and Perceptions

A large portion of resistance discussed across the interviews appeared to be down to attitudes and perceptions.

Participant 6 highlights that it could come down to fear and nervousness that some older people have towards the younger generation, especially involving crime. However, the likelihood of older people experiencing crime is relatively low.

"They completely think that they're going to have high crime but chances are they're not going to be exposed to it."

When speaking with residents, both were hesitant around intergenerational connection. One resident stated that she is not social and "not the community type" towards all age groups whereas another resident said; *"I tend to want to speak to the people of my age. Because as I say, the young'uns, they want to talk about things I don't know about".*

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However, as discussed with Participant 2, these barriers need to be broken down by encouraging more intergenerational connection and combating ageism and stereotypes.

"If you can prove some of it works and you can work with communities to develop it, then that for me is the opportunity."

This is further echoed by Participant 3 as they put it down to an educational piece. If we can campaign, demonstrate and design for more intergenerational spaces, then the resistance will shift as a result.

"I think it's an educational piece actually. That needs to be shifted. And the environment can certainly, and building these, you know, intergenerational retirement villages can hopefully eradicate that".
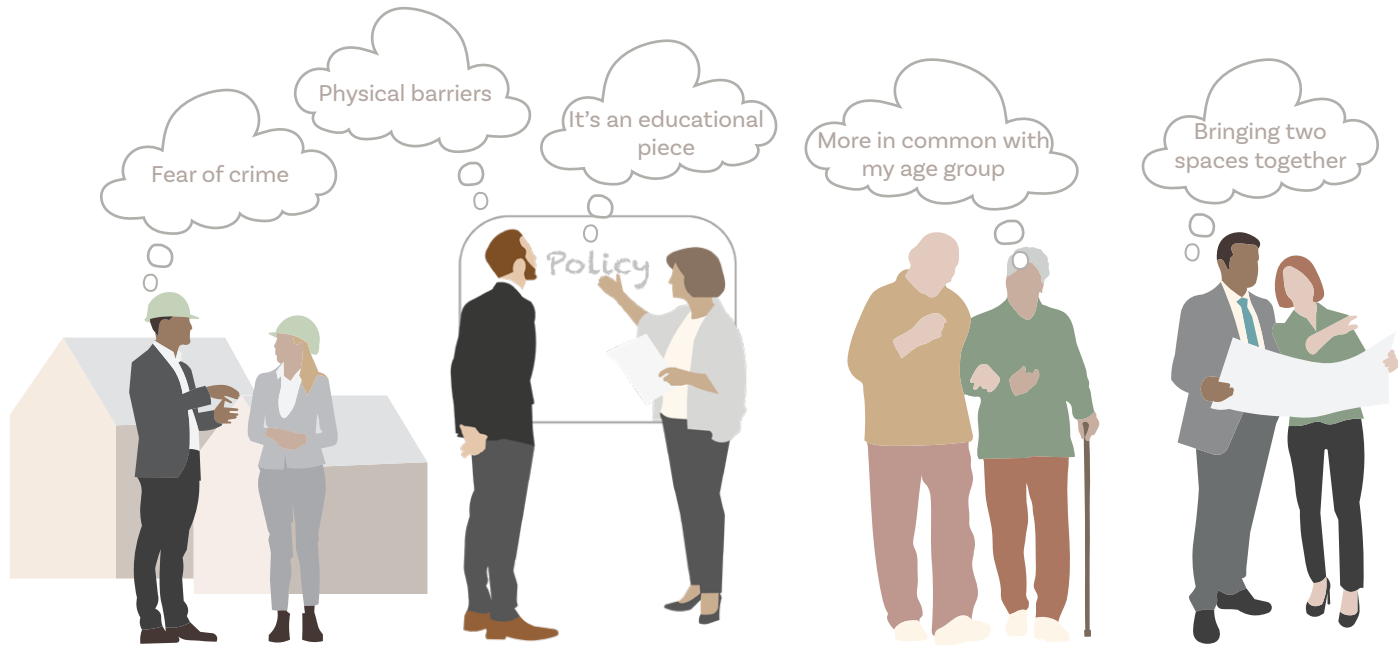

Fig. 28 - Resistance and Barriers to intergenerational connection, (Personal collection)

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Chapter 5

Design Considerations

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5.0 | Design Considerations

5.1 Designing with an Intergenerational Lens

Following the discussions had with a range of individuals and experts, it has become clear that, when designing for the ageing population, we must consider the benefits that intergenerational connection has in building healthy and sustainable communities.

As Participant 4 highlighted in their interview, it is essential for architects and designers to consider buildings as part of a wider scheme and never in isolation. Therefore, through analysis of all primary and secondary data collected, a set of design considerations have been composed below, with the ultimate aim of re-thinking the current approach to retirement developments and to urge designers to adopt a more intergenerational lens in future schemes.

1.0   Café within specialised housing
Cafes are great spaces to draw people into buildings and communities. It offers a place of incidental meetings, alongside revenue for the provider.

2.0   Clear Wayfinding
There should be clear routes throughout the site and overall neighbourhood to aid accessibility and promote safety.

3.0   Nursery on-site
A nursery or early-age education facility should be positioned with adjacencies to potential age-segregated environments (i.e. extra cares, care homes etc.) to allow both developments to come together and create intergenerational connection.

4.0   Mixture of Tenures
To encourage people to relocate or downsize into housing that is more suitable to their needs, a mixture of options should be offered such as bungalows, apartments, 'right-sizer' units etc. of varying sizes.

5.0   Communal Gardens
People should be able to enjoy outdoor space no matter where they live. Providing communal gardens seeks to bring people together and spark connection between neighbours.

6.0   Access to Amenities, Healthcare & Public Transport
Access to amenities including healthcare services and public transport should be considered, especially to those with lower mobility to increase independence, accessibility and convenience.

7.0   Frequent Resting Points
A place to rest, such as benching or seating areas, should be offered around every site to increase accessibility and reduce anxiety.

8.0   Communal Outdoor Events Space
An open area to host larger events should be considered to enhance intergenerational interaction.

The below diagram (see fig. 30) demonstrates how these principles could be utilised in a neighbourhood setting.

5.0 | Design Considerations

"I think we sometimes need to take a step back to appreciate how it sits in its context, what the wider implications are." – Participant 4

"Whatever you build has to bring people into it, not just have people housed in it." - Participant 2

"So I think in terms of what it looks like, I think it's a mixture of tenure" - Participant 6

1.0 Cafe within Extra Care

2.0 Clear Wayfinding

3.0 - Nursery on-Site

4.0 Mixture of Tenures

Apartments

Family Homes

Bungalows

Extra-Care / Specialised Housing

Social Housing

'Rightsizer' Units

5.0 - Communal Gardens

"big, open nature park areas or communal gardens, which are always very effective, and then big communal outdoor places." – Participant 3

6.0 Access to Amenities, Healthcare & Public Transport

"There was a library, there was a doctor, there was a chemist, there was everything. But now, there's nothing." - Resident 1

7.0 Frequent resting points

8.0 Communal Outdoor Events Space

Fig. 29 - Design Considerations diagram, (Personal collection)

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Chapter 6

Conclusions

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6.0 | Conclusions

The rise in the ageing population shows no signs of slowing down, therefore designing sustainable and healthy environments for older people is now more crucial than ever. Throughout this paper, the traditional model of age-segregated retirement developments has been critically analysed, drawing to the conclusion that, although they offer many care benefits to residents, they isolate the ageing population from the rest of society, thus causing more harm than good.

Intergenerational connection should be deemed as an essential pillar in any sustainable and diverse community, including within retirement. By breaking down the physical and environmental barriers that separate young and old, designers can build happier and healthier communities that can be inhabited for a lifetime.

Due to many years of segregation between the ages, a resistance to intergenerational living has formed to some degree. However, as discussed in interviews, this resistance will not shift until we start to approach design in a different way and prove that these barriers are solely self-created. It is not a natural occurrence for older and younger individuals to spend time apart so we, as a society and as designers, need to acknowledge this and, instead, use our designs to bring people of all ages together.

Policy Considerations

Although this paper holds a design-led focus, thought must also be given to the policy and guidance within the UK when designing for the ageing population. Local authorities should strive to provide sustainable age-diverse neighbourhoods where possible and look to move away from age-segregated models of retirement. Extra cares and specialised housing developments should endeavour to include all adults aged over 18 with specialised care needs, not only those aged 55+. This will encourage more intergenerational connection in the most traditional of age-segregated environments, hopefully shifting perceptions and tackling ageism.

In conclusion, it is critical that we encourage more intergenerational connection within our society and look to reduce age-segregated retirement communities, focussing on building better spaces that people of all ages can inhabit. Only then will we, as architects, truly be able to design with a more intergenerational lens.

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Chapter 7

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