

# Seeing Timeless Rebels

Challenge people's perspectives of ageing

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## Abstract

The rapidly ageing demographic in Western society influences people's own expectations of later life. One in four millennials think it is very normal to be unhappy and depressed when you are old (RSPH, 2018:5). The underrepresentation and misrepresentation of older people in visual media, e.g. advertisements of care, are outdated and only reinforce a fear of growing older. Therefore, this research set out to challenge people's perceptions of ageing through an intergenerational and participatory process.

The aim of the study was to have a better understanding of people's experiences and perspectives on ageing. The study generated practical recommendations to improve the visual representation of older people in Scotland. Furthermore, the study identified key insights about using engagement tools within a participatory process.

Keywords: ageing, visual communication, participatory, intergenerational

Semi-structured interviews were held with three older people (age 80+) and two adolescents (age 14) to understand their perceived image of a typical older person in relation to their lived experiences. Two participatory workshops were organised to collectively come up with new ideas that challenge the portrayal of older people in everyday visual media. Three sets of data (visual, conversational and observational) were analysed through thematic and content analysis.

The findings are a set of recommendations for organisations who wish to reduce the stigma around ageing and challenge ageing stereotypes in their visual strategy. Further research can explore how the recommendations relate to the visual representation of other marginalised groups, for example based on their gender, skin colour or sexual preferences.

**“Falling for old stereotypes  
that would be my fear,  
I want to be different than all  
the other oldies, no offence.”**

**- Participant, age 14**



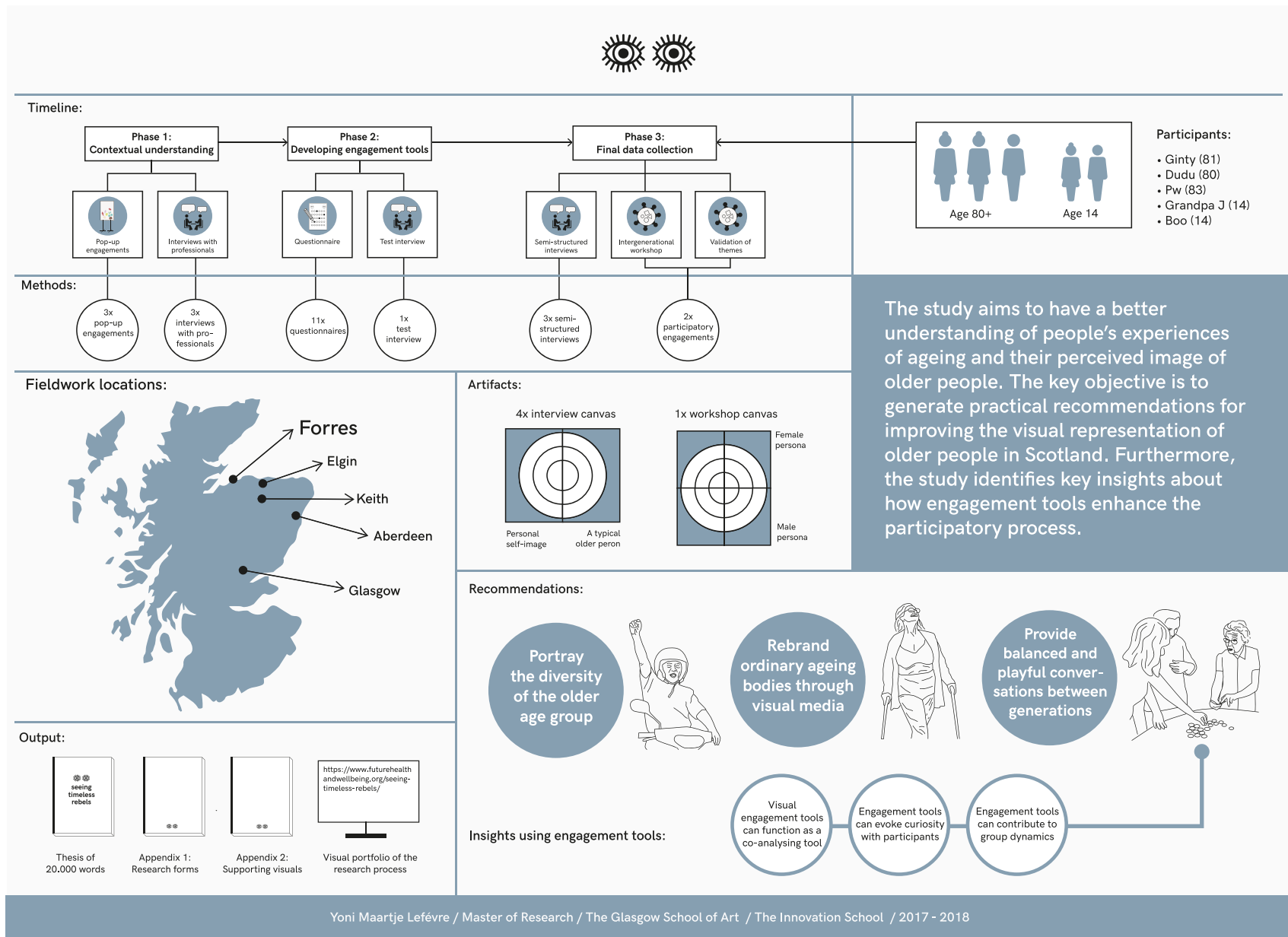


Figure 1. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Overview research. Illustration. Source: authors own.

## Modes of submission

This practice-led research includes a thesis of 20,000 words, two appendices with supporting research documentation and a digital webpage that shows a summary of the research project and can be seen at:

[www.futurehealthandwellbeing.org/seeing-timeless-rebels](http://www.futurehealthandwellbeing.org/seeing-timeless-rebels)

This study relies heavily on the participants' lived experiences of ageing, which means that I emphasise the importance of people's subjective knowledge. It would not be appropriate to distance myself from the research data because I am making an interpretation of participants' individual experiences. In addition, I am deliberately applying my visual communication practice throughout the participatory process and therefore this practice-led thesis is written in the first person.

## Acknowledgements

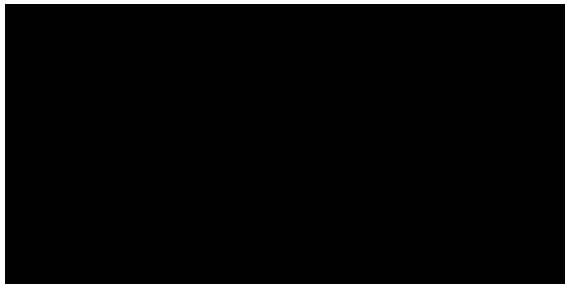
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and providing a quite space to work in. The GSA Sustainability Funds who supported materials for the workshop that positively contributed to participants' overall experiences. My friends Charlie Poos and Eveline Erens, who guided me through the unfamiliar world of academic research. Furthermore, the people who were part of the Dutch and Taiwanese "Grey Power" projects who actually created the foundations of this research project. Finally, I would like to thank my dearest family in the Netherlands for their unconditional (online) support.

## Declaration

I, Yoni Maartje Lefèvre, declare that this submission of full thesis for the degree of Master of Research (MRes) meets the regulations as stated in the course handbook.

I declare that this submission is my own work and has not been submitted for any other academic award.



Yoni Maartje Lefèvre

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December 2018

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# Appendices

## **Appendix 1: Research forms.**

Appendix one contains the information that was communicated to participants during the research such as information sheets, consent forms, interview topic guides, and programme of the workshops.

## **Appendix 2: Supporting visuals of the fieldwork and analysis.**

Appendix two includes visuals that supported the process of analysis during the fieldwork. It would be recommended to have Appendix two closeby when reading chapter four.

## Glossary of terms

**Adolescents.** For the purpose of this study adolescents are individuals with the age of 14. Adolescents can be identified as younger people who are in the transitional phase of growth and development between childhood and adulthood.

**Ageing.** The process of growing older throughout the whole life span of an individual.

**Ageism.** Butler (1969) coined the word ageism as the discrimination against individuals based on their age. In this study I will directly refer to ageism as a social construct that is widespread in society, generally accepted and largely ignored.

**Artefact.** A physical object or tool that embodies knowledge which is the result of previous investigation.

**Designer.** An individual whose design expertise is employed to support and improve a situation.

**Design innovation.** The study is part of the Innovation school and aims to design for social innovation. This will be defined as the activities by design experts to activate, sustain, and guide processes of social change towards sustainability (Manzini, 2015:62).

**Design research.** Design Research is a human-centred research approach that focuses on the study of people, processes and products to develop, articulate and communicate design knowledge (Cross 1999).

**Design synthesis.** Synthesis is a way of organising complexity and requires a designer to make connections through a process of selective data reduction and visual organisation (Kolko, 2010).

**Engagement tools.** As part of my visual communication design practice I use physical objects that are specifically designed to trigger, support and summarise social conversations (Manzini, 2015:133).

**Gerontology.** The academic term for studying the social, psychological and biological aspects of growing older.

**Intergenerational practice.** Projects, activities or events where people of different generations mix who might not otherwise meet each other. The intergenerational practice in this study included people with an age gap of 60 years.

**Interview canvas.** The visual framework (which can be seen at Figure 10, p. 37) was specifically designed to collect people's subjective perspectives of ageing. The interview canvas asked participants to identify the feelings, looks and experiences of their self-image and a typical older person.

**Interview toolkit.** The interview toolkit refers to the complete set of engagement tools that could fit into a wooden box (see Figure 19, p.54 for images of the toolkit). The interview canvas, as explained previously, was part of the interview toolkit and included different physical elements to involve participants during the interview session. The interview toolkit allowed participants to write down their own answer on a cardboard figure and place it into the interview canvas.

**Older people.** It is important to keep in mind that the classification of individuals as being young or old in relation to their age number is in many ways unhelpful as it does not reflect the diversity of individuals within each age bracket. However, given that this study is concerned with intergenerational engagement and perspectives I will identify individuals who are aged 80+ as an older person.

**Participatory Design.** This study has a strong participatory approach that values the voice of the people who are most impacted by the design outcomes. Participatory Design originates in Scandinavia as a workplace democracy movement during the 1970's and supports a practice that often looks forward to shaping future situations (Robertson and Simonsen, 2013:22).

**Personas.** A persona is a description of a fictional and archetypal person based on the behaviours and motivations of real people (Cooper, 2004:124). The interview canvas (identifying the feelings, looks and experiences) was used as a persona building tool during the generative and participatory workshop.

**Practice-led research.** The study has a practice-led research approach that allows me to incorporate my creative design practices, creative methods and creative output as part of the research methodology.

**Semiology.** Semiology is the term for the study of signs, and offers analytical approaches to deconstruct and interpret the meaning of e.g. words, images, paintings, photographs, illustrations, objects etc (Crow, 2016).

**Social semiology.** Social semiology acknowledges the meaning behind an image and the social effects of this meaning (Rose, 2016:107).

**Stereotypes.** Stereotypes are the assumptions regarding a group of people often reduced to a few, simple, essential characteristics within a society (Hall, 2013:247).

**Visual representation.** Representation can be seen as the process between signs (objects, images, people) and concepts (broader ideas) through a visual language that produces meaning (Hall, 2013:5). This study refers to a shared understanding of the visual language that is used to target older people which communicates ageing.



**Chapter one**

# **Introduction**

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1. Research introduction

The European Union (EU) recognised ageism officially as part of the Equality Act (2010) and made age discrimination illegal in the United Kingdom, together with other protected characteristics e.g. disability, gender reassignment, marriage, race, religion and sexual orientation. Negative attitudes towards old age can lead to physiological and psychological concerns (World Health Organization, 2015:11). The misrepresentation of older people in everyday visual media e.g. advertisements targeted at older people, only reinforces the inequalities between different social groups based on their characteristics. Therefore, this study set out to explore and understand people's perspectives of older people in order to develop recommendations that can stimulate positive attitudes towards ageing.

The study is situated in Forres, which has been my place of residency from September 2017. The research has been

conducted during my time as a full-time Masters of Research (MRes) student at The Glasgow School of Art's Innovation School based in Forres (region of Moray). My place on the MRes programme is partially funded by the Digital Health and Care Institute ([dhi-scotland.com](http://dhi-scotland.com)), an Innovation Centre funded by the Scottish Funding Council.

The study adopts a Participatory Action Research methodology, which can be identified as a research approach where participants and researchers are creating a better understanding of the subject matter together (McIntyre, 2008:5). The fieldwork is divided in three phases. The first phase supported me to create a contextual understanding of people's perspectives of ageing. It consisted of pop-up engagements in public spaces and interviews with professionals working in the field of ageing. The second phase was focused on developing appropriate engagement tools by completing a questionnaire about people's subjective experience of ageing and an informal interview to

test the initial interview questions. The final data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews with three older people (age 80, 81 and 83) and two adolescents (both age 14). Furthermore, a participatory workshop was organised where both age groups came together to share their own ageing experience and to come up with new ideas to improve the visual representation of older people.

## 1.2. Motivation for this study

The study adopts Frayling's (1993) proposed "Research through Design" as a particular research approach using design practice to understand a problem that exists outside the field of design. The reason for undertaking this research project was because of my lack of knowledge to clearly articulate the value of design that contributes to people's experiences of ageing. My interest in this topic started with my graduation project at the Design Academy Eindhoven entitled "Grey Power" (see Figure 2). The project showed positive images of older people based on childrens' drawings of their grandparents. Grey Power was extended with a Designer in Residency program in Taipei (see Figure 3) to capture the perspectives of ageing in an Eastern



Figure 2. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2013) Grey Power (NL). Credit: Nick Bookelaar. Images. Source: authors own.

culture. The Grey Power projects enabled children, designers, older people and volunteers to collectively work towards this imaginative “superhero” image that grandchildren often have towards their grandparents. Both projects set out to stimulate positive perceptions of older people. However, later I realised this positive portrayal of ageing was very limited and was ignoring the older and frailer age group. Andrews (1999) criticises the many attempts of people to speak about ageing in a positive light, which often results in a denial of ageing. Therefore, my Grey Power attempt to positively portray the older generation can also be seen as a form of visual ageism that shows an “ageless” portrayal of older people (ibid:309). With the present study, I have the opportunity to critically reflect on my visual communication design practice and to educate myself as a professional design researcher. The vision of this study is to change people’s perspectives towards ageing through an intergenerational and participatory process. The recommendations provided in this study are for organisations who wish to reduce the stigma around ageing that challenges ageing stereotypes through future intergenerational projects.



Figure 3. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2015) Grey Power (TPE). Credit: Jimmy Chao. Images. Source: authors own.

### 1.3. Research context

Just as other towns in the Western world, Forres is facing a changing demographic. There is a decrease in the younger population in Moray but at the same time there is an extensive increase of the older generation. In 2030 the age group of 75 and over will expand by 104% in Moray (Moray Community Health and Social Care Partnership, 2014:16).

Advertisements are an example of one of the many ways ageing is communicated to the public. The (often unintended) language of visual ageism in advertisements can influence the way people relate to older people as well as how they see themselves as an older person (Loos and Ivan, 2018:164). The mass media and the visual representation linked to older age can therefore be a powerful platform to redefine people's understanding of age. As Hazan (1994:19) explains:

*"... we see ourselves as we imagine others see us, and therefore the behaviour of older people and their attitudes towards themselves are shaped and reinforced by society's prevailing images of them. By*

*adopting these images, the elderly in turn confirm and strengthen them."*

Especially in this predominantly digital age, people are constantly surrounded by all sorts of visual messages that make us think about our future selves e.g. twitter, facebook, instagram, YouTube, Pinterest and so on. Often care services try to portray positive ageing within their advertisements, however the images of care are mainly passive and transactional.

The advert in Figure 4 portrays an older person who might need help in getting pharmacy prescriptions with a carer or family member. There are clear steps described for how the service could be used. Looking more closely to the combination of text and image it portrays an older person as someone with limited mobility that relies on help. The younger actor on the right is standing and the older person is seated, which according to Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) social semiotic approach symbolises power. Placing the younger actor in the higher position communicates that they have power over the older actor. In addition, the content of the text "limited mobility" and



“relies on help” drawing attention to age related loss, rather than a more positive message that address the capabilities and contributions of older people e.g. “accessible service supports people to create more time for their daily adventures”. The way the text is presented treats the older actor as an object to be described, in the style of a technical drawing. Further, it looks like the older actor is wearing a pyjama top, while the younger actor is wearing daytime clothes which makes the older actor appear vulnerable. This example shows the many underlying meanings of images that people often take for granted. As Rose (2016:23) argues, visual images are never neutral and a critical approach is needed because the underlying message of an image can be misleading for the people who are confronted by it.

Activist Applewhite (2016:232) suggests in her manifesto against ageism that we need to start shifting the discussion about ageing by transforming people’s experience of growing older. However, this will not happen until we replace current ageing stereotypes and stories with more diverse and accurate ones. Therefore, within the context of an increased ageing population



Figure 4. NHS (2018) Pharmacy advertisement. Poster. Source: Yours Magazine.

in the Highlands of Scotland I believe visual designers have a responsibility to reshape, redesign and innovate the visual language of ageing in order to contribute to people's understanding of health and wellbeing in later life.

#### **1.4. Research aim, objectives and questions**

The research focus of the study developed out of previous fieldwork, literature readings, collecting best practice examples, school tutorials and discussions with my supervisors. I did not start with a fixed research question in mind but allowed space within the research process to continuously refine the research focus and questions. It could be argued that this explorative and qualitative research journey is chaotic and complex rather than effective (Silverman, 2013:15). However, I was able to more strongly position my research focus by first developing a wider understanding of the context and educating myself about the research topic. Having time to prepare myself as a design researcher with a strong focus on challenging people's perspectives of ageing supported me to have more confidence for the final phase of engagements during the fieldwork.

The study aimed to have a better understanding of people's experiences and perspectives of ageing. The key objective of this study was to identify practical recommendations informed by older people (age 80+) and adolescents (age 14) to improve the visual representation of older people. Furthermore, the study reveals key insights about the participatory research process using engagement tools. In order to accomplish the above objectives, the research questions being asked in this study are:

1. How do older people (age 80+) and adolescents (age 14) currently perceive and experience ageing?
2. What recommendations can be identified through participatory practice to improve the visual representation of older people (80+) in Scotland?
3. What can we learn from participatory practice using engagement tools?



The fieldwork was situated in Forres because of the high proportion of older people, particularly people with the age of 85 and over, and a reducing younger population (Moray Community Health and Social Care Partnership, 2014:35). Furthermore, it provided a convenient place to locate the study offering pre-existing links into local networks to support the research, recruitment and to reduce travel. In addition, The Glasgow School of Art, Highlands and Islands Creative Campus is placed in Forres.

### **1.5. Reading this thesis**

The carefully chosen title "Seeing Timeless Rebels" has evolved over time and was part of my visual communication practice. It represents the holistic vision of this study that aimed to challenge people's general understanding of being old. "Seeing" stands for the visual language of age stereotyping that is widely accepted in society. "Timeless" conveys that there is no specific time or age group related to ageing as people grow older from the moment they are born. "Rebels" was mentioned during one of the conversations with a woman of later age during my public engagement. She explained her perspective on ageing as

something that depends on people's personal attitude whether to confirm or challenge old age stereotypes. The title reaches out to all age groups to think about their own perceptions and attitudes towards ageing and older people in general.

The thesis is divided into six main chapters that can be recognised by different colours. The current chapter gives the reader an overview of the motivation, context, aims, objective, and research questions of this study. Chapter two shares a critical review of previous research related to people's perspectives on images of older people in the media. I started to collect literature with a very broad understanding of ageism. Then I focused on peer-reviewed gerontology journals concerning the relationship between age stereotypes and people's health. I also collected examples of existing projects and images that show alternative portrayals of age stereotypes. I reorganised the literature review after the fieldwork in order to include references that related to the final research questions. In chapter three the theoretical position of this research is identified as social constructivism and the study adopts a Participatory Action Research methodology. Working with the





public demands a critical awareness about the researcher's role and their engagements with members of the public (Kelly, 2018). Therefore, I identify the ethical considerations that were addressed when engaging in the field. Furthermore, a rationale for the qualitative research methods and the analytical framework is explained. In chapter four I share a reflective documentation of the fieldwork by describing each research method in more depth and the analytical steps that informed the research process. Chapter five provides the results of the visual, thematic and observational analysis followed by a set of recommendations and design principles that need to be considered when stimulating positive perceptions of ageing. In chapter six, I present a discussion that examines the key findings of this study in relation to previous reviewed literature. Finally, a critical reflection is shared by identifying the constraints, further research opportunities and a brief conclusion.

Chapter two

# Literature review

## Chapter 2: Literature review

### 2.1. Introduction

Previous research shows that older people are underrepresented and misrepresented in the media, and therefore fails to represent the true size of the growing population of older people (Vasil and Wass, 1993, Roy and Harwood, 1997, Ylänne, 2015, Edstrom, 2018). Yet, other research shows evidence that there are currently more positive images of older people in the media than before (Miller, Leyell, and Mazachek, 2004, Lee, Carpenter and Meyers, 2006). The emerging interest within academic research about the representation of older adults in the media relates to the daily importance of on- and offline visual communication in people's lives (Lumme-Sandt, 2011, Williams, Wadleigh and Ylänne, 2010, Zang, Harwood, Williams, Ylänne-McEwen and Thimm, 2006). Understanding the forms of age stereotypes and people's own experiences of ageing in their cultural context is therefore crucial in order to tackle these challenges (Löckenhoff, De Fruyt, Terracciano, McCrae, De Boole et al. 2009; Abrams,

Russell, Vauclair, Swift, 2011). However, it is rather concerning that there is relatively little literature on how to reduce visual ageism on a practical level, especially through intergenerational and participatory methods.

This study responds to the emerging challenges of an ageing demographic and is specifically focused on the visual language of ageing in advertisements targeted at older people. This literature review will discuss previous studies that challenged images of older people, followed by the impact negative age stereotypes can have on people's health. Finally, I will reflect on previous participatory studies with younger and older people. This chapter concludes with the argument that using intergenerational and participatory research methods that challenge the visual representation of older people offers an opportunity to generate new insights that supports a positive experience of ageing.

## 2.2. Challenging images of older people

Loos and Ivan (2018:164) identify visual ageism as the social practice of visually underrepresenting and misrepresenting older people in a prejudiced way. The researchers argue there is a shift within visual ageism. It originated as the underrepresentation of older people in the media towards only representing the younger-older age group (65-80) but are therefore ignoring the old-old age group (80+). In addition, the small-scale study of Szmigin and Carrigan (2000) researched if UK advertisements actually need more older models with the age of 50 and over. They applied a questionnaire with 19 different advertisement agencies in London and the South East of England. The advertisement executives agreed that older people should not be stereotyped. However, they also do not see it as their responsibility to socially reconstruct this “fake” view of reality, as this has always been the case in advertisements.

Both studies argue for new sets of images of older people in the media that confront stereotypical portrayals of ageing. Szmigin and Carrigan (2000) even suggest that advertisements

cannot ignore the lack of creative imagination and dull portrayal of older people anymore, Instead they need to present more innovative, better researched and less patronising ageing images. Although the present study is not specifically creating new images of ageing, it is trying to understand people’s perspectives of ageing which can inform practitioners to improve their visual language of ageing.

Warren, Gott, Hogan and Richards (2012) initiated a UK research project “Representing Self- Representing Ageing/Look at Me!” to create “alternative” images of ageing by challenging the traditional portrayal of older women in the media ([www.representing-ageing.com](http://www.representing-ageing.com)). The images were produced together with a group of ordinary women (which means they are not professional models) based on their personal self-image (Richards, Warren and Gott, 2012). The researchers asked two professional photographers to engage with approximately 30 white, middle-class women with the aged between 77 and 96. One set of images shows unsmiling and melancholic poses (Figure 5) and can be seen as being sad and unhappy. The second set of images show smiling women having fun (Figure

6) and portrays a humorous image. The results showed that both images challenge the positive and negative perceptions of ageing and will always be contradictory. As the researchers explain, what for one person is “alternative” does not have to be for another person because this is based on people’s individual and cultural environment (ibid). Reading “alternative” images and understanding their meaning is therefore always influenced by the background of the reader (Crow, 2018:38). The second set of photographs shows a portrayal of an older woman that you would not normally see in mainstream publications and could therefore be seen as “alternative”. However, the research of Richards, Warren and Gott (2012) is only looking from a woman’s perspective and is ignoring the ageing experiences of men. It can be argued that excluding genders reinforces a lack of diverse portrayals of older people. Therefore, the present study will focus on both male and female perspectives about ageing.

Williams, Wadleigh and Ylanne (2010) argue that we need to consider the quality of the emerging positive portrayals of older people in advertisements. They applied a mixed methods



Figure 5. Richards et al. (2012) Look at me! project. Credit: Laura Pannack. Image.



Figure 6. Richards et al. (2012) Look at me! project. Credit: Monica Fernandez. Image.



approach of quantitative and qualitative analysis and asked older consumers themselves to judge the advertisements. The researchers argue that showing a positive portrayal of older people in UK advertisement is not always the right response to improve the representation of older people. Although consumers identified with more positive imagery of older adults (e.g. active, successful and smiling) in advertisements they also described these images as fake, unrealistic and overly positive. This implies that showing how people “should be living” in advertisements is a way of reinforcing old age stereotypes (ibid). These studies show that asking people the meaning behind an image generates a deeper understanding of how advertisements are experienced within their cultural context. However, both studies did not consider the opinions of adolescents and their understanding of ageing. In my study I do not consider ageing as something that is only for older people instead, just like Karpf (2014) argues, we need to rethink what it means to age at every age, not just old age. A common misconception is that ageism only affects those categorised as ‘old’ but it is important to note that ageism affects both younger and older people (Abrams and Swift, 2012:11). Particularly if we consider that exposure to age

stereotypes in younger years can have an impact on people’s health in later life, which I will explore more in the following paragraph.

### **2.3. Perspectives of ageing and people’s health**

Negative age stereotypes can become part of people’s self-views in later life, which impacts their physical and mental health (Rothermund and Brandtstadter, 2003, Levy and Leifheit-Limson, 2009, Konradt and Rothermund, 2011, Weiss, 2016). The Ohio Longitudinal Study of Aging and Retirement followed 660 adults, aged 50 years and over for a 23-year period. They found evidence that individuals who held more positive perceptions of ageing lived 7.5 years longer on average compared to those who endorsed more negative perceptions (Levy, Slade, Kasl and Kunkel, 2002). Other research shows that when people are confronted with negative age stereotypes they can show a reduced physical, mental and social performance (Levy, 2003). This is in support of Levy’s Stereotype Embodiment Theory (2009), which explains that age stereotypes can get internalised during childhood, reinforced through adulthood and enter old age with perceived attitudes



towards their own age. In other words, what people think about old age in general can be integrated into people's identity during the ageing process and affect their longevity.

However, this does not mean that when people are confronted with positive age stereotypes this can make them automatically feel better or younger. In the research of Kotter-Gruhn and Hess (2012) adults with the age between 18 - 92 were presented with positive, negative, or no age stereotypes. Their ageing satisfaction and subjective age were measured before and after confronted with the images. People did not feel any younger when they were exposed to positive age stereotypes because they would put their own ageing self into perspective and they might not feel that young anymore. Activating a counter reaction of negative stereotypes comes from "Resilience Theory" that suggests a confrontation with negative age-related information leads to more positive self-perceptions (Pinquart, 2002).

The studies of Levy (2003) and Kotter-Gruhn and Hess (2012) show evidence when examining the perceptions of ageing in combination with participants' physical and mental health

provides a fuller understanding of the experience of age stereotypes. In a nutshell, negative perceptions of ageing impacts people's longevity. Therefore, the present study aims to stimulate positive attitudes towards ageing through a participatory approach, with the ultimate goal of contributing to people's well-being and experience of ageing.

#### **2.4. Changing perspectives through intergenerational participatory methods**

There is an emerging interest from practitioners and researchers to use visual methods as a tool for personal empowerment and social critique (Richards, 2011, Hogan, 2012, Hogan, 2013). In addition, there is the need from professionals to consider the voice of older people within the design process (Reeve and Angus, 2006, Dankl, 2017). In the last 40 years design research has moved from a user-centred approach to a collaborative approach which directly involves end-users in the design process, also known as Participatory Design (Sanders and Stappers, 2008). This creative collaboration came from "The Scandinavian Experience" which was created to increase the value of industrial production by engaging workers in the



development of new systems on the workforce (Kraft and Bansler, 1994). A participatory practice is built on the idea of a democratic partnership that gives voice to the people who are most impacted by the design (Qazi, 2018:52). Therefore, this study has a strong participatory approach by including the perspectives of the current older people (age 80+) and adolescents (age 14) who are going to be the future older people.

Bringing younger and older people together can build mutual understanding to reduce stereotypical perspectives of later life (Abrams, Swift, Lamont and Drury, 2015:19). However, there is only a limited body of knowledge on practical examples of participatory design projects with younger and older people. Rice, Ling, Ng, Hoe and Theng (2012) provide a series of recommendations when designing intergenerational games. One of the recommendations of the study was to stimulate practitioners to go beyond what is already known and to relate intergenerational games with new experiences (ibid:376-377). This is in line with the motivation of the present study that is not only trying to understand people's perspective of ageing

but also develop a new approach to visually communicate alternative portrayals of ageing. However, the study of Rice, Ling, Ng, Hoe and Theng (2012) is situated in Singapore and therefore the recommendations may not be so easily applicable in Western cultures.

In addition, Yip, Sobel, Pitt, Lee, Chen, Nasu and Pina (2017) provide a framework that examines equal partnerships with adult - child interactions during a participatory design process. In total they facilitated 36 co-design sessions with 13 children aged 7-11 and 11 adults of primarily graduate students over a period of a year. Each session consisted of snack time, circle time, design time and discussion time. The researchers analysed the data using grounded theory to identify emerging themes from the videos that recorded the co-design sessions. They argue that the concept of equality in adult-child in co-design sessions are dynamic, contextual and participant sensitive. An equal partnership between younger and older participants is impossible because of the age differences and therefore researchers should find a balance between the generations (ibid).





Both studies provide rigorous evidence of the complexities within child-adult interactions in a participatory design process. However, they do not share any specific information about the content of the explorative design practice. As Sanders and Stappers (2008) point out, working with engagement tools can support social conversations with non-designers to express their own dreams, challenges and ideas which positions them as “experts of their experience”. Therefore, the present study emphasises the importance of engagement tools to enhance the participatory process and to create a balanced intergenerational conversation.

### **2.5. Gaps in literature**

There is a lack of practical examples of how to recognise and challenge visual age stereotypes within academic design research. In addition, participatory practice with younger and older people is an emerging field and still needs to be developed (Rice, Ling, Ng, Hoe and Theng, 2012). Therefore, this study will first understand people’s perspectives of growing older in order to identify and develop practical recommendations to improve the visual representation of ageing

in Scotland. Furthermore, this study shares key insights about the value of using engagement tools within a participatory research process.

### **2.6. Summary**

There is an increasing interest within academic research about the underrepresentation of older adults in the media (Zang, Harwood, Williams, Ylänne-McEwen and Thimm, 2006).

Previous studies mainly focus on images of women of later age (Warren, Gott, Hogan and Richards, 2012) and are therefore excluding males and younger people’s understanding of ageing (Williams, Wadleigh and Ylänne, 2010). In addition, there is a need to address negative ageing stereotypes (Dankl, 2017) because they can impact people’s physical, mental and social wellbeing (Levy, 2003). Engagement tools can function as a valuable contribution to position participants as “experts of their experiences” within a participatory process (Sanders and Stappers, 2008). Therefore, this research set out to challenge people’s perceived image of ageing through an intergenerational and participatory process.

**Chapter three**

# **Methodology**

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1. Introduction

The focus of this study evolved over time as I generated new insights when entering the field and started to collect and analyse data. This is in support of Schon's (1991:141) "reflection-in-action" where I am continuously interpreting, investigating, and reflecting on my previous steps to inform and guide further research. Therefore, this reflective and explorative study required a flexible approach to the fieldwork and demanded continual refinement of the research questions (MacIntosh, Burtunek, Bhatt, Maclean, 2016). The study set out to provide practical recommendations for improving the visual representation of ageing through a participatory process with older people (age 80+) and adolescents (age 14).

I identified three research questions in order to explore the collected data from different perspectives. The research questions asked in this study were:

1. How do older people (age 80+) and adolescents (age 14) currently perceive and experience ageing?
2. What recommendations can be identified through participatory practice to improve the visual representation of older people (80+) in Scotland?
3. What can we learn from participatory practice using engagement tools?

This chapter identifies the theoretical and methodological positions of the study, followed by an explanation of my practice and the ethical considerations that were made before entering the field. Finally, the research methods are critically examined and an overview of the analytical framework is discussed.

### 3.2. Theoretical and methodological position

Philosophical ideas and worldviews of the researcher can influence the research strategy and therefore it need to be foregrounded (Creswell, 2009:6). I used Wilson's Honeycomb framework (2013) to visualise the rotating relationship of the research process conducted in the final fieldwork phase, see figure 7 on the following page. I believe that the perceptions of individuals are formed by society and therefore the epistemology of this study was social constructivism (Crotty, 1998:53). The experience of stereotypes is a reality that is based on people's shared understanding of the (visual) language that is used in our culture (Hall, 2013). In contrast to naturalism, which is purely objective, this qualitative study aimed for an in-depth understanding of how people create meaning in their lives (Silverman, 2013, Creswell and Poth, 2018). As Crotty (1998:67) explains, interpretivism looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world. Therefore, the theoretical position that informs the methodological research approach is interpretivism.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) was employed as the

methodological standpoint of this study. I adopt McIntyre's definition of PAR as:

*"An approach characterised by the active participation of researchers and participants in the co-construction of knowledge; the promotion of self- and critical awareness that leads to individual, collective, and/or social change; and an emphasis on co-learning processes where researchers and participants plan, implement, and establish a process for disseminating information gathered in the research project (McIntyre, 2008:5)."*

Through interviews and participatory workshops I position the older people (age 80+) and adolescents (age 14) as active participants within this research (Hawkins, 2015, Berghold & Thomas, 2012, McIntyre, 2008, Reeve and Angus, 2006). A participatory approach can be seen as a collaborative and reflective process between people and designers that collectively learn to create, develop, express and evaluate their ideas and visions (Robertson and Simonsen, 2013:28).

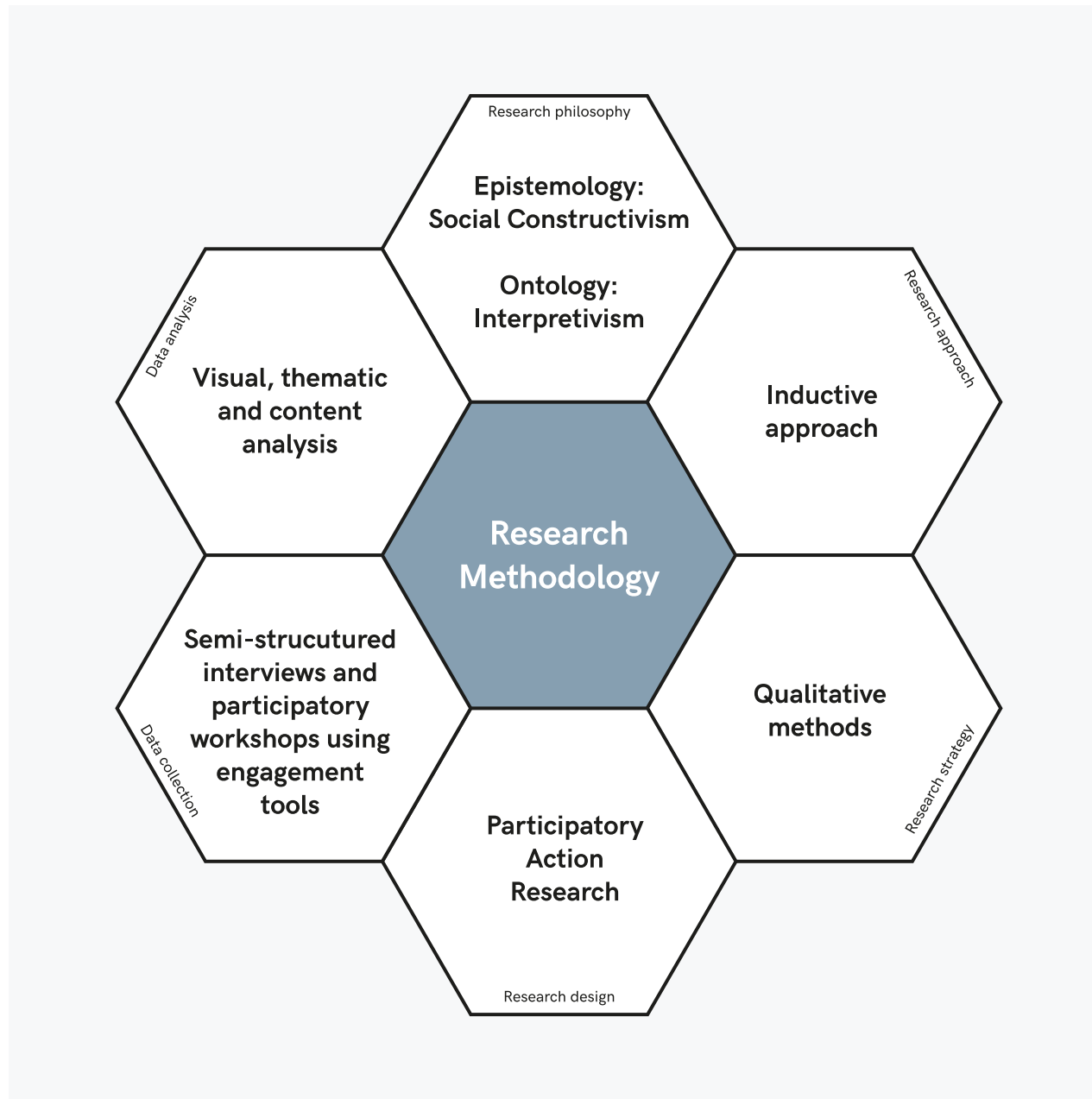


Figure 7. Wilson, J. (2013) Methodology framework: Honeycomb. Illustration.



Purely an observational methodology such as ethnography, that sets out to understand the daily lives of their participants would not be appropriate (Whitehead, 2005). This study acts on people's understanding of ageing in order to improve it. A critical note to PAR is that it often starts with a focus on fixing community problems, which implies the community automatically is weak and needs to be improved (Boyd and Bright, 2007:1023). This study is not presenting a brand new and successful solution to innovate ageing but is providing a better understanding of how to visually design for the future ageing demographic. In addition, Chatterton, Fuller and Routledge (2007) argue for putting the activism back into research and suggest more "academic activists" which is strongly in line with the outcomes of this study. The recommendations have the ability to open up the discussion about the portrayal of ageing between marketeers, health care service providers and their future ageing audiences.

### **3.3. Practice**

Within this design research I am deliberately changing the situation of my participants by bringing engagement tools

into the field (Raijmakers and Miller, 2016:8-12). This can also be described as Participatory Design Practice (PDP) that intertwines telling, making and enacting with specific designed engagement tools and techniques (Brandt, Binder and Sanders, 2013). My former education in "visual communication design" has been expanded over the years to "design for experiences" (Sanders and Stappers, 2008:11). Therefore, I use the language of visual design within my practice as a communication tool to create participatory engagements. As shown in Figure 8, my practice is a repeating process of understanding the context, designing engagements and analysing findings with a particular focus on challenging ageing perspectives. My design practice can be seen as an on-going cycle that is fluent, open and responsive to the situation which is similar to other PAR processes (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000).

### **3.4. Researcher's role**

Creswell (2009) argues that interpretative researchers cannot be separated from their own backgrounds, history and prior understandings. As a result, there is a need for reflexivity that acknowledges the researcher's own attitudes, thought

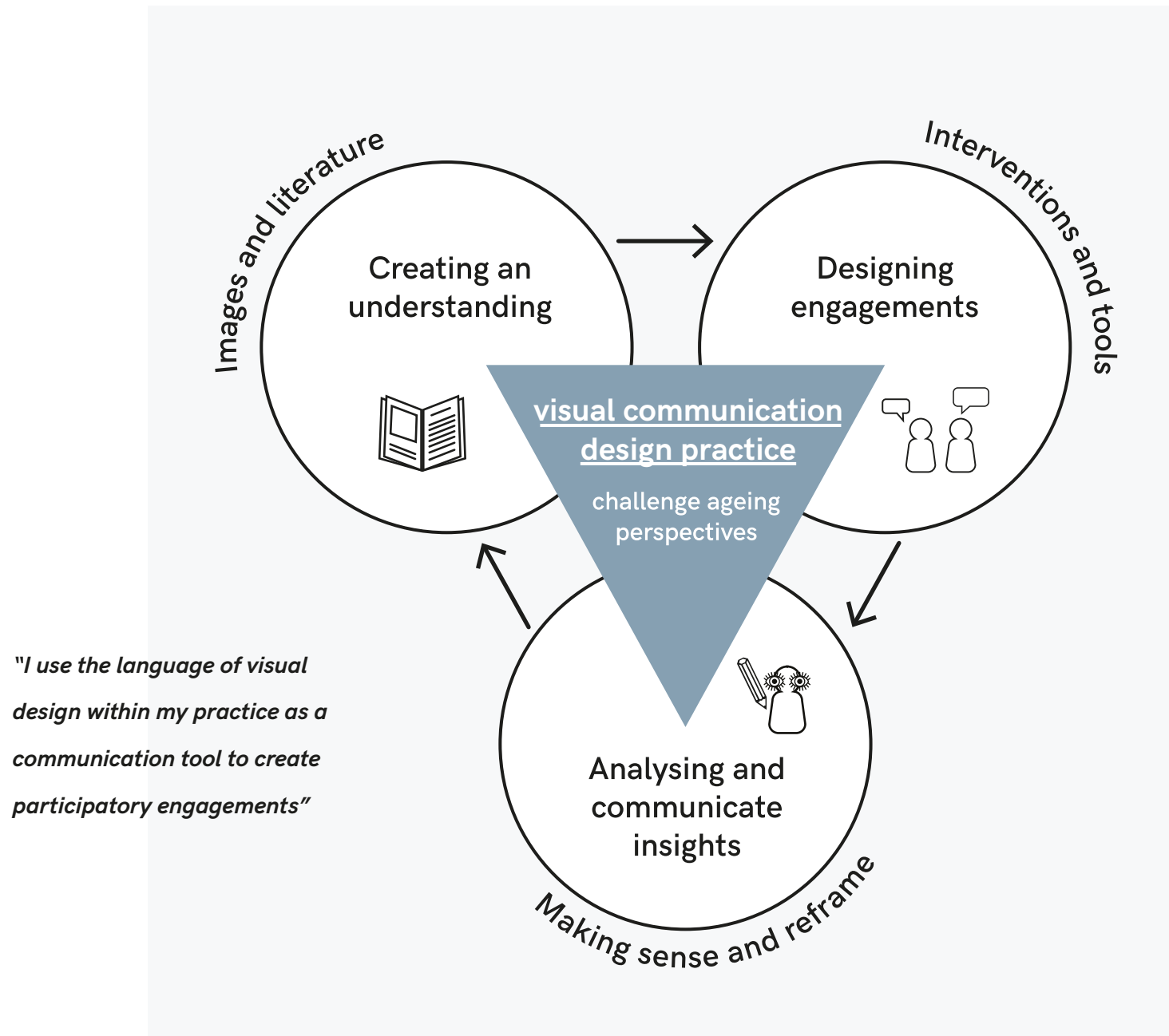


Figure 8. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Research practice. Illustration. Source: authors own.



processes, values, assumptions and actions to understand their roles in relation to others (Bolton, 2009). My appearance as a female and non-UK citizen in my late twenties can create a distinction between the younger and older participants and myself as the researcher. I do not have the same life experiences as the people involved. The cultural and native language differences sometimes made it difficult to reach the full potential of in-depth conversations. However, my visual design skills supported me to have a transparent way of communicating the research focus that was helpful for both my participants and myself. An example of this was my conscious choice to ensure the questions I was asking were always visible on the designed tools or accessible for the participants as a reference during the conversations. This transparent research approach supported participants to be self-directed during the engagements and I felt more confident doing fieldwork by having a structure to follow.

### **3.5. Ethics**

The participatory nature of this study meant that I worked

closely with my participants. Participatory designers have the responsibility to address the ethical issues that may emerge during fieldwork to ensure a positive outcome of the research that empowers participants (Kelly, 2018). Furthermore, Wadsworth (1998) shares his concerns about conducting participatory research and suggests that the effects of these fieldwork interventions must be assessed. The GSA Research Ethics Sub-Committee approved all fieldwork engagements prior to commencing recruitment. The data was collected and anonymised by using pseudonyms chosen by participants themselves. Visual documentation was only taken with the approval of the participants. All participants were given an information sheet about the research project to decide whether they wanted to participate. After agreement, participants were issued with a consent form or, the younger participants were given a parental consent form because they were under 16. Copies of all forms can be found in Appendix 1:11-16. Furthermore, I asked a teacher to accompany the students during the interviews and the workshops. This was to make sure the students felt safe with a familiar adult present.





### 3.6. Recruitment

This study aimed to recruit both adolescents (age 14) and older people (age 80+). Recruitment of the older participants happened through a local organisation that supports communities and volunteering groups (see Appendix 1:9 for a digital flyer). I approached this organisation during the first phase of my research to get in contact with different local groups for pop-up engagements. Two women (who chose the pseudonyms 'Ginty, 81' and 'Dudu, 80') and Dudu's husband ('Pw, 83') contacted me, as they were interested to join the research project. Recruiting the younger age group was much harder because of the lack of youth organisations for teenagers in the area compared to the many older people activities. I reached out to several local high schools and younger people's organisations to recruit adolescents. Initially, I aimed to recruit students with the age of 16 - 24 because they might have a better understanding of the concept of "ageing" in relation to their self-image (Rice and Pasupathi, 2010). In addition, they would have been old enough to give their own consent. However, due to the recruitment and fieldwork taking place

during exam time and the lack of response from younger people's organisations it was difficult to get in contact with this age group. I shared an extra digital flyer on social media (Appendix 1:10). Eventually, a chance visit by a group of local high school students to the GSA Campus in Forres allowed me to speak to the students. This personal way of recruiting, with permission from the teachers, allowed me to introduce myself and show my enthusiasm to the group, which proved more successful as two students (who chose the pseudonyms 'Boo' and 'Grandpa J' and are both age 14) volunteered to participate in the research.

### 3.7. Methods

The methods applied in this study were pop-up engagements, semi-structured interviews, a questionnaire and participatory workshops. Continuous iteration after each fieldwork intervention (see Figure 9) resulted in choosing the most appropriate research methods for the final data collection in phase three. In this section I will provide a rationale for each method.

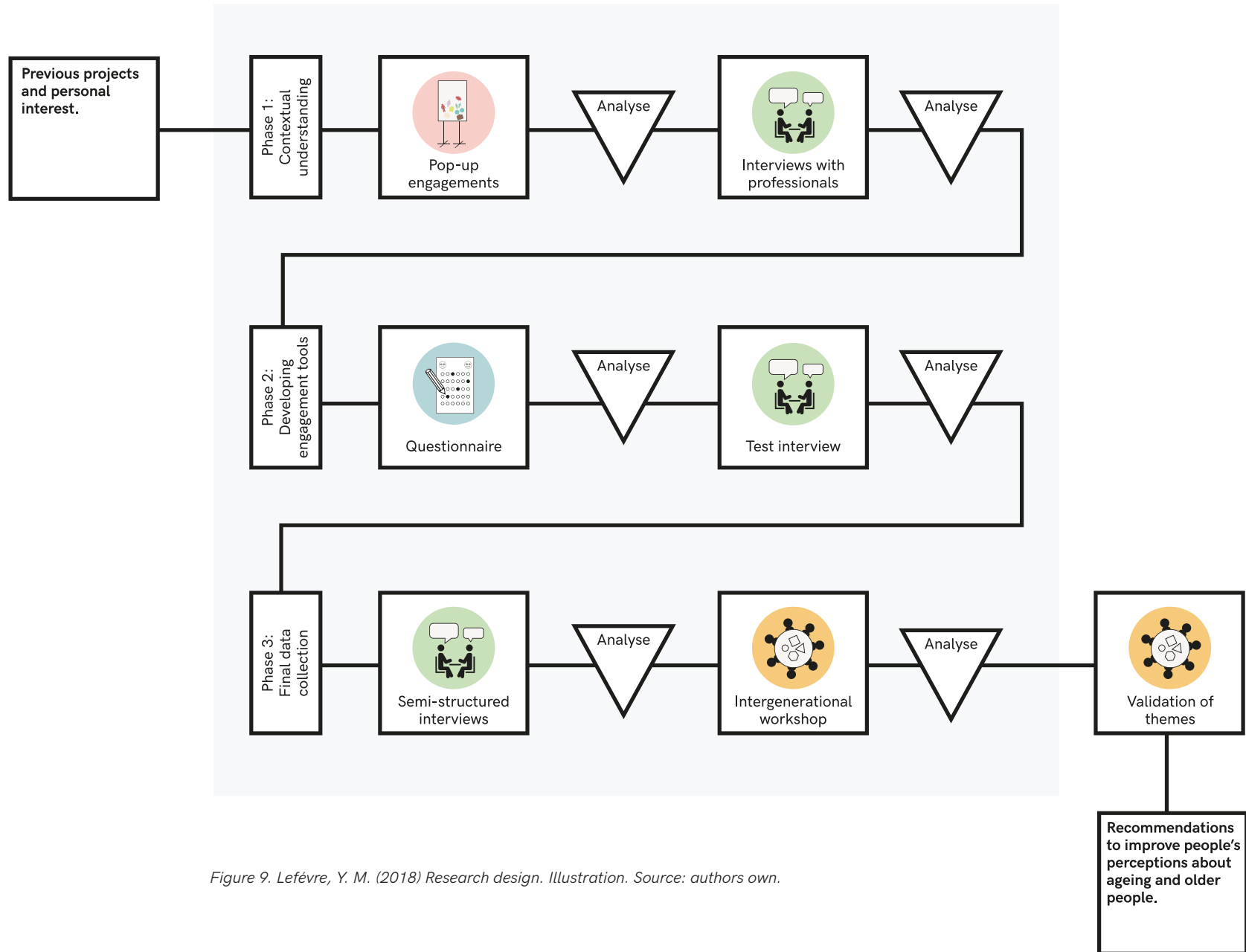


Figure 9. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Research design. Illustration. Source: authors own.

### 3.7.1. Pop-up engagements

Pop-up is a form of public “designed engagement” that generates meaningful dialogues and explores creative ways of tackling societal challenges (Teal and French, 2016). The researcher is “popping up” in different locations e.g. the library, on the street, at a conference, for the purposes of starting conversations with members of the public to identify new insights (ibid:6). In this context, pop-up engagements offered a way to familiarise myself with Scottish culture, attitudes and language, by collecting people’s general perspectives about ageing. The pop-up was entitled “Re-imagine Ageing” and existed of a wooden panel display system to present questions and gather responses. I shared a flyer to introduce the research project if people were interested to get involved (see Appendix 1:3). Three open questions were visible on the panels:

- (1) What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of older people?
- (2) What advice would you give a younger person on how to age and how would you convince him/her to take this advice?
- (3) How would ageing well look and feel like for you?

The questions functioned as a starting point to open up the dialogue on people’s perceptions and attitudes towards ageing. The answers were captured on colourful paper figures and were taped on the wooden panels. The pop-up engagements were a good opportunity to collect a snapshot of the public opinion on ageing within a short period of time. Although the collected data is less in-depth, it supported further direction of this study.

### 3.7.2 Questionnaire

A questionnaire was employed as a structured and quick way to gather people’s general perspectives towards older people (Morgan, 2012). The questionnaire was developed by combining the answers of the pop-up engagements and existing literature about examining people’s perspectives on ageing. The analysis of the pop-up resulted in a set of positive and negative descriptions linked to a broader ageing topic. Which is similar to the “images of ageing” scale developed by Levy, Kasl and Gill (2004). The researchers measured positive and negative age stereotypes which are applicable to younger and older age groups (ibid). In addition to the ageing scale of the questionnaire, I added a drawing assignment inspired by the



“Positively Ageing” teaching programme (Lichtenstein, Pruski, Marshall, Blalock, Murphy, Plaetke and Lee, 2001). They found that middle school students were drawing an older person more positively after participating in a one-year interdisciplinary educational programme about ageing (ibid). Finally, I avoided asking people’s real age by letting them share their subjective age of how old they feel, their preferred age and how old they think they look. An example of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1:7-8. The structured nature of the questionnaire offered a brief form of engagement and was not intended as an in depth way to consider the wider understandings of ageing. I was more interested to see which research techniques would be appropriate when exploring people’s ageing experiences. Similar to the pop-up, collecting people’s responses about their subjective age through different techniques informed the process when designing engagement tools for the final data collection.

### 3.7.3. Semi-structured interviews

According to Rubin and Rubin (2012) interviews are social

interactions and seek to understand how a particular group of people perceive things. In phase one I conducted three semi-structured interviews with professionals who are working for or with older people in the Highlands of Scotland. During phase three I held three interview sessions with Ginty (81), Dudu (80) and Pw (83) and finally Boo and Grandpa J (both 14). The strength of semi-structured interviews is that research topics can emerge during the conversation and the researcher is getting access to people’s personal “experience” and “feelings” (Silverman, 2013, Morgan, 2012). However, the presence of the researcher and the situation of the conversation can be considered as well as part of the data collection (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995, Raijmakers and Miller, 2016). Therefore, the study also reflects on the interaction between participants and the engagement tools the researcher brings to the site. Personal contact with the participants during the interviews offered a way in getting to know each other before the participatory workshops. Building mutual trust and respect between the researcher and participants is a fundamental principle in Participatory Design as part of the decision-

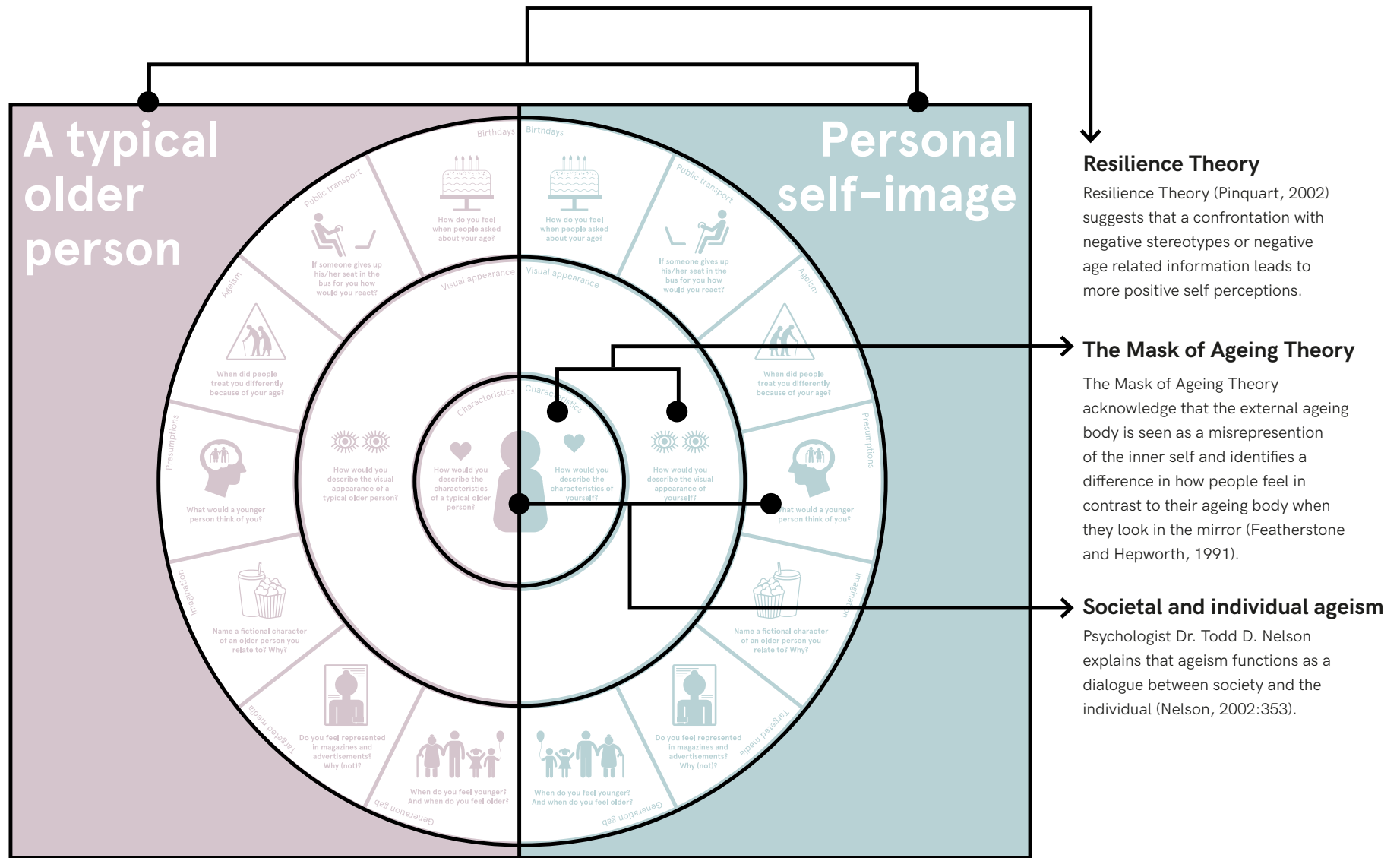


Figure 10. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Interview canvas. Illustration. Source: authors own.



making power (Bratteteig, Bødker, Dittrich, Mogensen and Simonsen, 2013:160). To balance the power dynamics during the interviews in phase 2, I designed an “interview toolkit” (Figure 19, p.54) where participants were in control of the visual documentation about their subjective experience of ageing and their perspectives of older people in general. The interview toolkit consisted of two foamboard boxes with a wooden frame supporting a paper canvas. Cardboard sticks with the answers written on it by participants themselves could be inserted into the foam canvas to create a 3D visual map. The insights gathered from previous fieldwork (pop-up engagements and questionnaire) and the literature strongly informed the design of the toolkit. The interview canvas (see Figure 10, p. 37) is based on different theories that examine participant’s personal self-image and their perceived image of a typical older person. The separation of two personas is based on Resilience Theory (Pinquart, 2002) that suggests a confrontation with negative stereotypes or negative related information can lead to a more positive self-perception. Furthermore, the interview canvas has three circles which represent participant’s characteristics,

visual appearance and social situations. The two inner circles of the interview canvas were inspired by the Mask of Ageing Theory (Featherstone and Hepworth, 1991) that acknowledges a difference in the external and internal experiences of ageing. As Hepworth (2004:20) explains:

*“This tension between the inner personal and the outer social identity may cause us considerable distress [...] the result is a mask: a subjective sense of distance between the inner or private self and the outer or physical observable social life, indicated by the geriatric and physiognomic bodies.”*

Finally, to understand people’s cultural experience of stereotyping I added a third circle which required participants to describe their different social situations. As Nelson (2002:353) explains ageism functions as a dialogue between the individual and society. The different layers and circles (feelings, looks, experiences) of the interview canvas enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of people’s perspectives about ageing.

### 3.7.4. Participatory workshop

Previous studies show that intergenerational contact can change people's stereotypical perspective towards each other (Abrams, Swift, Lamont, Drury, 2015:19). Therefore, I organised a workshop after the interviews where both age groups (14 and 80+) could meet each other and work collectively towards new opportunities for improving people's ageing perspectives. I used the same interview canvas from the interviews as a generative engagement tool for building personas where both age groups could relate to. Several engagement tools were used to stimulate the group dynamics for each task and supported participants to express themselves in their own language (Sanders and Stappers, 2008). The unfamiliar setting and working with people who are not experienced with creative design sessions could make participants feel uncomfortable. However, positioning myself as one of the participants by being involved in the workshop tasks supported a more equal balance of the conversation. This appreciative approach stimulated a mutual learning process where both participants and researcher were part of developing new ideas to improve the visual representation of older people in the media.

### 3.8. Analytical framework

Qualitative analysis is an ongoing process that involves cycles of continual reflection and refinement across various phases of the analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, Creswell and Poth, 2018). This reflective process allowed me to collect rich descriptions from people's subjective experience of ageing. I applied my visual design skills throughout the whole research process by synthesising the collected data. According to Kolko (2011:70) the activity of taking down important points from participants' conversation is known as memoing. Visualising diagrams and writing memos forced me to think about the data and in this thinking process the analysis occurs (Corbin and Strauss, 2008:117). Visual mapping and clustering categories formed the basis of the first two research phases when analysing the data. In the final phase I collected three sets of data (visual, conversational and observational) that each had a different analytical approach as can be seen in Figure 11. Filtering the data step-by-step and trusting my personal intuition led to a robust analytical process that developed over time.

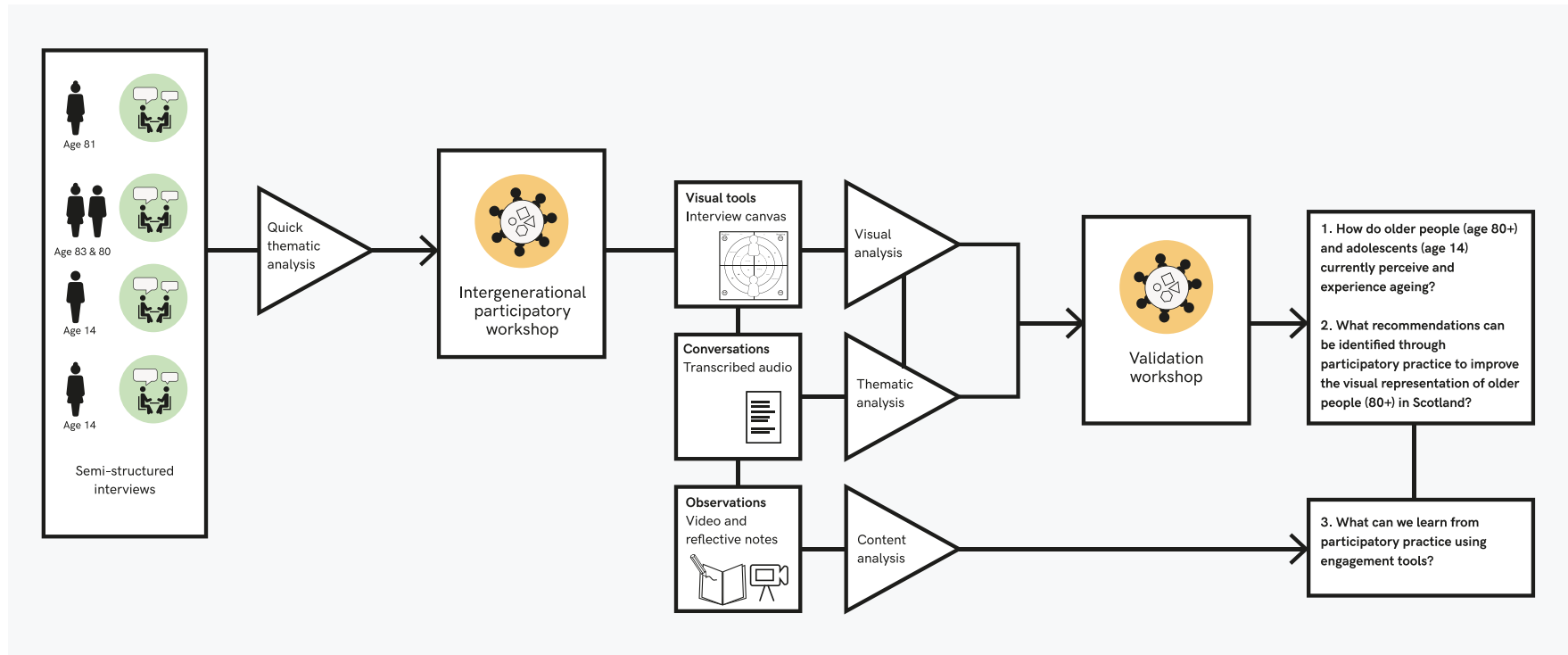


Figure 11. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Analytical framework. Illustration. Source: authors own.



### *Visual analysis*

The visual data collected through the engagement tools consisted of participants' personas of a typical older person (Cooper, 2004) identified during the interviews and a male and female persona created during the workshop. I digitised the engagement tools and organised the memos through "dimensional" analysis technique (Gray and Mallins, 2004:147). The visual data had different functions during the analytical process. First it informed the coding process of the transcribed audio by already giving some understanding of emerging broader themes. After identifying the themes within the thematic analysis, I went back to the visual data to validate the final themes. Finally, I reduced each interview canvas into an illustration that represented their general image of a typical older person.

### *Thematic analysis*

The conversational data consisted of the transcribed audio from the interviews and the participatory workshop. Thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2006:78) is chosen as the analytical strategy, as they explain:

*"Through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data (Braun and Clarke, 2006:78)."*

Taking time to understand the meaning behind the data enabled me to identify each theme in more depth. My design background stimulates an intuitive analytical approach in order to make sense of the data. As Kolko (2011:8) emphasises, designers are often known for making decisions using their intuition and acting on an informed hunch that developed over time through experience. However, in social science analysing qualitative data is a very systematic approach of reducing the data into meaningful segments (Miles and Huberman, 1994:10-12). Design research adopts and adapts social science research methods but the different language used by each discipline sometimes made it confusing for me to choose an appropriate analytical technique. Designers speak of "key findings" and "insights" but social scientists speak of "themes" and "memos". Figuring out the different vocabulary and understanding each



meaning in relation to my thematic analysis was frustrating. I feel there is a gap in design research which is actually reflecting and documenting the analytical steps that are employed by design researchers.

As Kolko (2010:16) explains, the process of making sense and organising complexity is often invisible and intangible which will lead to new, innovative and appropriate design ideas. Although this study is completely transparent in describing the data collection and decision making process of analysis, it also needs to acknowledge a development of “intuitive” synthesis that took place in the researcher’s head. The study cannot be seen to fill this gap however, it hopes to contribute to the wider discussion of design research in making the participatory process and analysis accessible and understandable to a wider audience.

### *Content analysis*

The observational data consisted of reflective notes made after the interviews. In addition, video recordings of the participatory workshop documented participants’ interactions with the engagement tools. The analytical process for the observational

data was much more straightforward compared to the visual and transcribed data. Robson (2011:349) described content analysis as a semi-quantitative technique for counting the number of instances. For the video recordings I tuned off the sounds and was counting the time participants touched or held the engagement tools during the workshop. Although content analysis can be seen as a quick, replicable and valid technique that can support and strengthen the qualitative findings it is less in depth compared to thematic analysis. This was because I was not trying to understand the intergenerational interactions between participants but I was only reflecting on the usage of the engagement tools. Reflecting on the use of the engagement tools in action provided insights when participants felt more comfortable or uncomfortable using the engagement tools within a group dynamic.

### **3.9. Summary**

This chapter has explained the theoretical and methodological position of this research. The epistemology of this qualitative study is social constructivism and the ontology is interpretivism. The methodological standpoint is Participatory Action Research



(McIntyre, 2008) where participants were recognised as the experts of their experiences. The methods applied in this study were pop-up engagements, semi-structured interviews, a questionnaire and participatory workshops. Visual mapping and clustering categories formed the basis of the first two phases when analysing the scoping data. In the third phase, dimensional analysis (Gray and Malins, 2004) was applied to the visual data, thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was used for the transcribed data. Furthermore, content analysis (Robson, 2011) explored the usage of the observational data.

Chapter four

# Fieldwork

## Chapter 4: Fieldwork

### 4.1. Introduction

The fieldwork consisted of three comprehensive phases (Figure 12) that took place from November 2017 until August 2018.

This chapter provides a reflective documentation of each fieldwork intervention that strongly informed the direction of the research. Even though the recommendations are based on the key insights collected during the final data collection, it would not justify the research process by ignoring the previous steps. This exploratory research approach is common within a participatory process because it aims to include the decision making process of the designer and the participants (Bratteteig, Bødker, Dittrich, Mogensen and Simonsen, 2013:162).

### 4.2. Phase 1: Contextual understanding

The study started first with generating an understanding of the context (Whitmore, 2011). This consisted of three pop-up engagements at different locations in Moray. Furthermore, I interviewed three professionals working in the field of ageing in Scotland.

#### 4.2.1. Pop-up engagements

In total I visited three locations in two days; a men's shed in Keith, the public library and a local senior activity group, both in Elgin. A Dutch colleague with experience in facilitation accompanied me to support the pop-up engagements. Men's Shed (2013) is a community concept originally from Australia that aims to reduce loneliness and isolation with older men by providing a workspace where they can connect with each other through making activities. In total six men, who attended the general group meeting, volunteered to join the pop-up session. I was positively surprised that the men felt comfortable enough to share their thoughts and experiences with each other. As one of the men mentioned, "never judge a book by its cover" referring to seeing the person and not their age in contrast with someone else who identified "boredom" when thinking of old age.

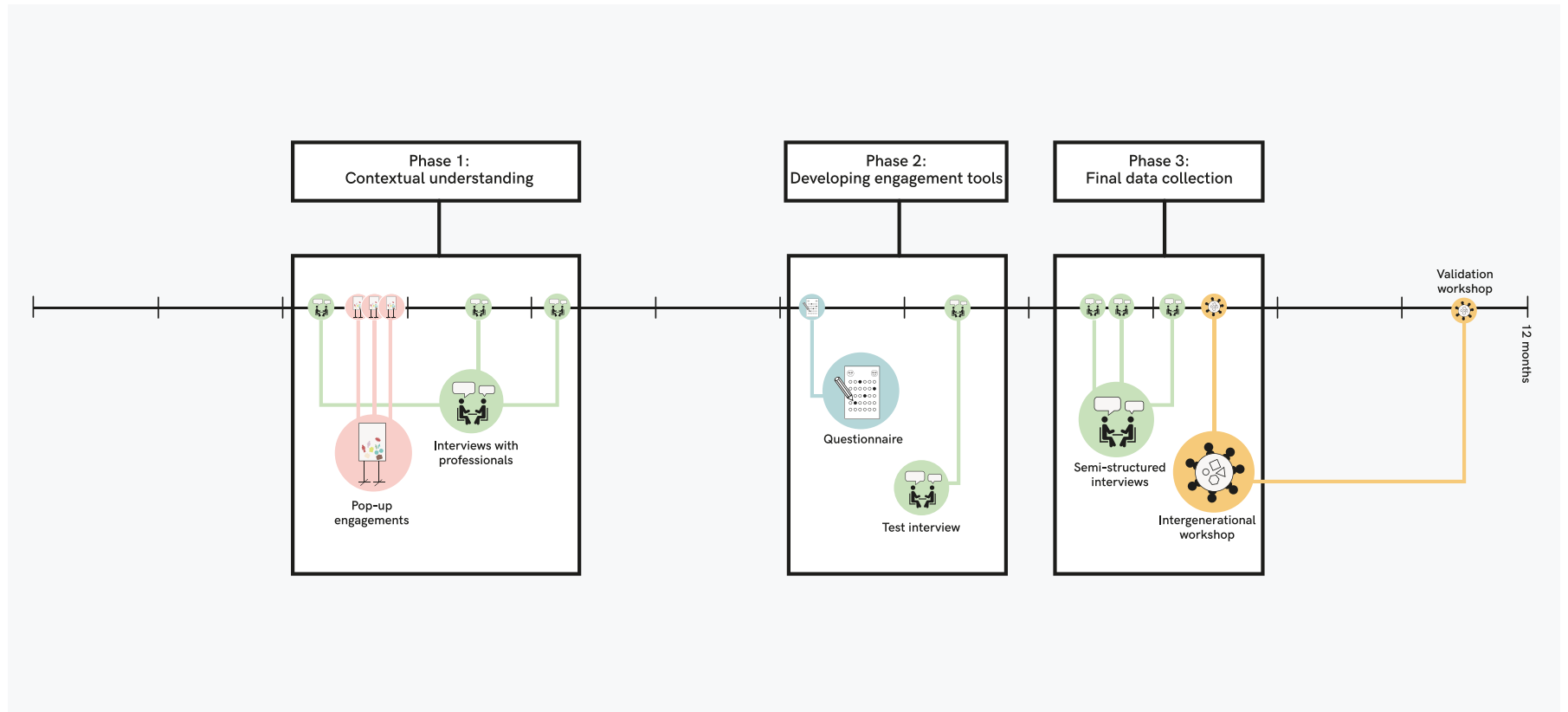


Figure 12. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Timeline fieldwork. Illustration. Source: authors own.

In the afternoon we took the pop-up to the common hall space of the library in Elgin. The library café and a small book fair in the room next to us supported us to meet a diversity of age groups that was willing to engage with us by answering some questions. One lady expressed her skin concerns of getting older as she was working for a cosmetic company that also makes anti-ageing products. Furthermore, getting rid of retirement, seeing older people as living stories and providing equal opportunities from cradle to grave was a selection of things people shared when asking how we can become an age friendly Scotland. However, two people already experienced Scotland as age friendly and did not have any concerns whatsoever. The day after we joined a local activity group in Elgin Town hall. In total 10 people including the volunteers were part of this session. Some people had difficulties in writing down their answers therefore I decided to collect the answers verbally by writing them down myself. According to the volunteers most of the older people are less afraid to say what they think as one woman mentioned “they have no filter”. The group thought in general that their social network and being active was important in order to stay happy and healthy at an older age.



Figure 13. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Pop-up stand in the library. Image. Source: authors own.

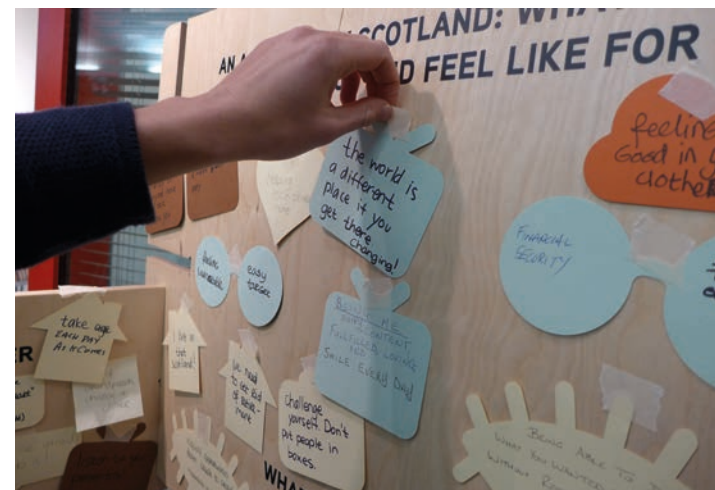


Figure 14. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Capturing people's reactions. Image. Source: authors own.

#### 4.2.2. Analysis: Pop-up engagements

The responses gathered during the pop-ups were analysed with visual thematic mapping (Appendix 2:3). I digitised all the answers for each question and started to make thematic diagrams to connect overlapping answers. Organising my data digitally helped me to recognise a strong tension between positive and negative responses, see Figure 15. For example, one of the contradictions was a differentiation in experiencing ageing as “boredom” or “freedom”. Some would describe older people as being “a fossil” or “a rebel”. One lady shared that she experienced some unwritten rules for older people as she got a comment that long hair was not appropriate at her age. This means that the experience of ageing is strongly related to people’s social life (Nelson, 2005). Furthermore, I collected children’s perspectives of older people which shows a totally different understanding of being “old”. For example, they would think of Victorians, sweets or relating old age with the responsibility of being able to play with scissors. The pop-up engagements directed me to explore more literature about people’s perspectives of ageing and how to measure this (see “images of ageing” scale described at p.35).

#### 4.2.3. Semi-structured interviews with professionals

In addition to the pop-up engagements, I interviewed three professionals who are working for services for older people. I asked them to share their perspectives, thoughts and ideas about ageing in Scotland. The professionals were identified and contacted through my supervisor Dr. Tara French and visiting local network meetings in the Highlands. Firstly, I interviewed Donald Macaskill in Glasgow, who is Chief Executive of Scottish Care. Secondly, I met Rebecca Dunn in Aberdeen who was at the time a Local Network Development Officer for Generations Working Together. Finally, I invited Anne McDonald to the Innovation School to talk about her experiences as co-ordinator for Highland Senior Citizen Network. An example of the consent form and information sheet shared with the professionals can be seen in Appendix 1:4-6, followed by the topic guide. All professionals shared that they experience inequality towards older people through their work. As Donald explained:

*“I don’t experience any ageism with my direct colleagues but in every single day, rather in speaking to the media, working with politicians, I experience ageism. It’s so endemic in society in Scotland.”*



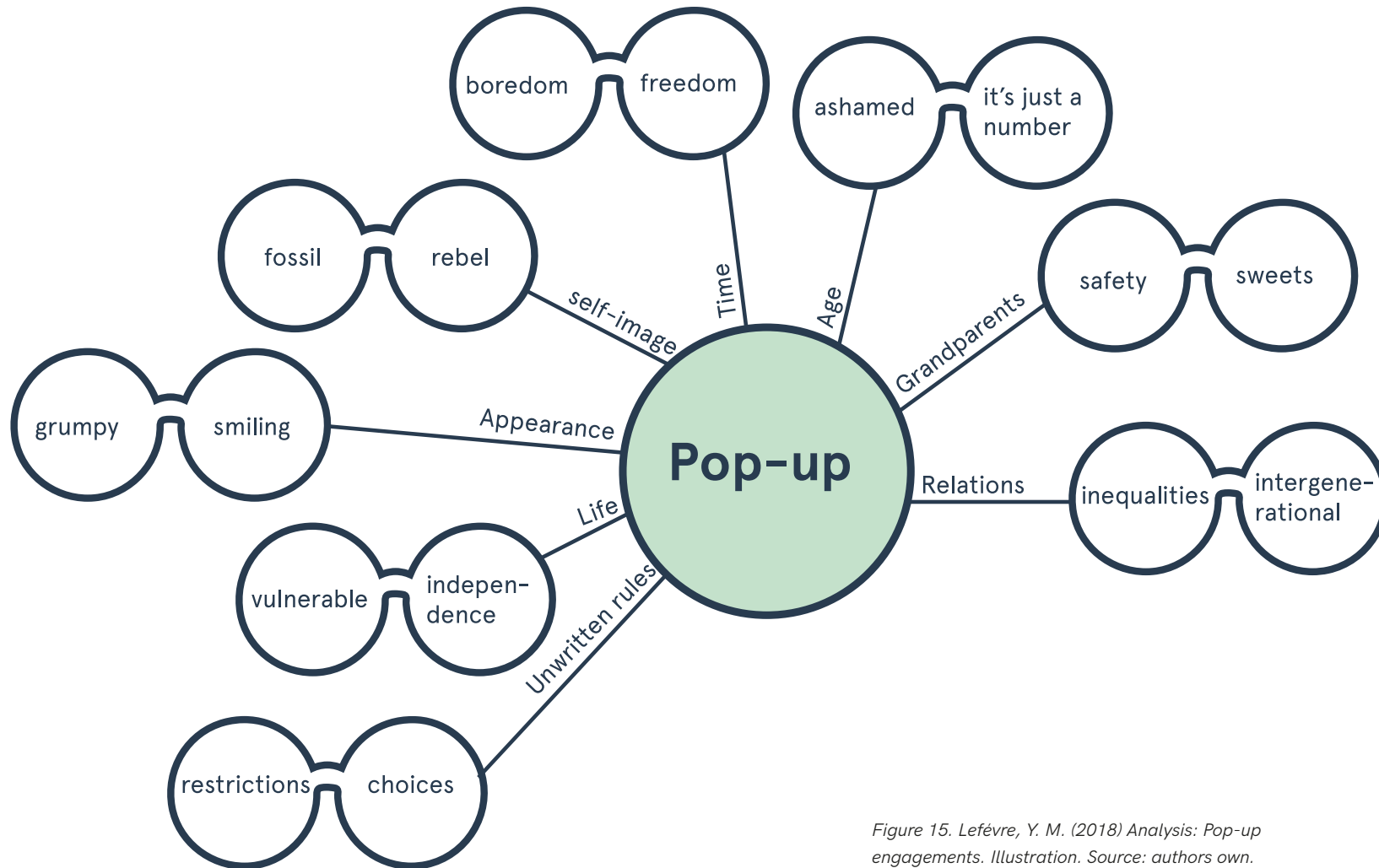


Figure 15. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Analysis: Pop-up engagements. Illustration. Source: authors own.

When asking about the Network meetings for older people in the Highlands it became clear that these are more strongly represented by women. As Anne explains:

*"Ageing for men can already be challenging enough. All the groups who are attending senior services are predominantly women to network and socialise."*

This made me even more aware about the importance of including both genders when recruiting older participants.

#### 4.2.4. Analysis: Interviews with professionals

The conversations were audio recorded and quotes were grouped together to identify overlapping topics. It became clear that all three professionals contributed to the experience of ageing in Scotland but each one of them used a different approach, as can be seen in Figure 16. The conversations supported me to understand the services provided in the Highlands for older people. Furthermore, I could position my research focus relating to existing organisations.



Figure 16. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Interviews with professionals. Illustration. Source: authors own.



### 4.3. Phase 2: Developing engagement tools

The second phase enabled me to explore and develop different engagement tools for the initial fieldwork. Branding the project by designing a logo and making physical research tools is strongly embedded within my visual communication design practice. All the tools in this study were designed with a particular attention to the visual identity, which informed the overall communication of the project. For me it was important to represent a research project that would share an unconventional terminology, e.g. avoiding “old” or “ageing” to come up with a project title. In addition, the visual language (logo, colours, font) had to appeal to both younger and older age groups. First, I did a small questionnaire to ask about people’s experience of growing older and their description of a typical older person. Secondly, I tested the interview questions and tools before doing the final fieldwork. This allowed me to reflect on the lessons learned of previous fieldwork interventions in order to refine my research focus and prepare for the final data collection.

#### 4.3.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was completed with a small group of older people during a coffee morning in the local Town Hall in Forres. Approaching locals during this social event provided a good opportunity to meet new people and explain my research project in a nutshell to strangers. The good thing about a questionnaire is that it requires a small amount of time and it is easy to complete. Everyone held more positive self-perspectives in contrast to their general image of a typical older person. People did not want to relate themselves as being old, as one lady explained that this was absolutely not related to herself when describing a typical older person. Physical descriptions were given to older people as e.g. no teeth, glasses, hair in a bun, wears frumpy skirts, thick tights and a walking stick. The characteristics given to older people were: lonely, judgemental, not happy, grumpy and not willing to try anything new. Only one person shared his critical view by saying that the typical older person does not exist. In addition, when asked about their subjective age, people felt much younger ( $\pm$ age 35) than they think they look ( $\pm$ age 60). Finally, when



I asked people to draw a typical older person this was often interpreted as discouraging, as one man mentioned:

*"You are not seriously asking me to draw, are you?"*

It made me aware about the effect engagement tools can have on people and their situation. If I am approaching my participants for the final data collection, I do not want to discourage them when interacting with the engagement tools. However, bringing participants out of their comfort zone by using engagement tools does not automatically mean this is bad. McIntyre (2008:20) suggests that visual, hands-on activities are a form of storytelling by constructing knowledge with participants to uncover "what we know" and what we "know anew". Therefore, I see the functionalities of my engagement tools as a new and inspiring way for the participants and the researcher to get to know each other and provide a neutral space for group discussions.

#### **4.3.2. Analysis: Questionnaire**

In total I collected twelve questionnaires but one was not filled

in completely therefore I analysed eleven questionnaires (for the answers see Appendix 2:4-5). Engaging with older people helped me to gain awareness about my research approach. Given that there is such a negative stigma when people hear "ageing" and "older people", I set myself the challenge to avoid these words when coming up with a title for the initial research project (see p.16 for the explanation of the title). Furthermore, the negative responses on drawing a typical older person directed me to avoid visual expression by hand when designing the interview toolkit. These practical insights of engaging with engagement tools and the knowledge gained within literature about people's perspectives of ageing gave me enough insights to make a concrete research plan. I made a visual storyboard (Appendix 2:6-8) to communicate the initial fieldwork steps when applying for ethical approval from the GSA Research Ethics Committee.

#### **4.3.3. Test interview**

When I received approval from the GSA Research Ethics Committee I immediately started to design the interview toolkit (see Appendix 2:9 for sketches of the interview canvas). I had to

simplify the interview structure to collect people's perspectives of ageing so that it could fit within a one-hour conversation. Furthermore, I wanted to make sure the questions and engagement tools were appropriate and clear enough for the participants to use. Therefore, I asked a professional from the local Health and Wellbeing group to test the interview toolkit with me. Piloting interview questions provides researchers the opportunity to improve their questions and interview procedure (Creswell and Poth, 2018, Silverman, 2013). I made a very simple prototype of the interview canvas and the

different questions printed on cardboard sticks (Figure 17). The professional enjoyed putting her answers into the interview canvas (Figure 18) however the structure and logical order of questions had to be refined.

#### 4.3.4. Analysis: Test interview

After the pilot interview I made a reflective description about the difficulties I noticed during the conversations which supported me to finalise the interview canvas. The following points were changed:



Figure 17. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Prototype of the interview canvas. Image. Source: authors own.



Figure 18. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Result of the test interview. Image. Source: authors own.

- The questions were printed on the paper canvas as a reference for the interviewee and the researcher to look at.
- A clear consistency of positioning the questions on each side of the box that gave the interviewee a clear structure to follow.
- I reducing the questions to those that provided the richest response during the pilot.
- The wooden sticks were glued on the cardboard figures for extra reinforcement and the size was made bigger.
- The plastic foam was too stiff for placing the cardboard sticks and was therefore changed to a lighter material.

Figure 19 shows the final elements of the interview toolkit. Even though I did not audio record the conversation I immediately noticed the richness of the conversation was not captured within the interview canvas itself. This already gave an indication that the visual data is supporting the transcribed data. However, using engagement tools contributed to the experience of the participant by actively inviting them to take part of the data collection. Furthermore, designing the interview canvas and making engagement tools was such a relief within the research process as this is an area where I definitely felt more confident.



Figure 19. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Interview toolkit. Images. Source: authors own.

#### 4.4. Phase 3: Final data collection

The final data collection took place between May and September 2018 and aimed to engage directly with adolescents (age 14) and older (age 80+) participants to improve the representation of older people. I conducted semi-structured interviews with: Ginty (81), Dudu (80) and Pw (83), Boo (14) and Grandpa J (14). The interviews were set out to create an understanding of people's perceptions of ageing. Furthermore, it generated input for the participatory workshop where the participants could collectively respond as a group to improve people's perceptions of ageing.

##### 4.4.1. Semi-structured interviews

The older participants (Ginty, 81 and Dudu, 80) are members of a local active lifestyle group. I first joined Ginty (GI, 81) at her weekly activity class to conduct the interview afterwards. I introduced the project briefly by unpacking the interview toolkit and explaining the purpose of the interview. In addition, I asked the participant to write down her answers on the cardboard sticks and to place them in the canvas. Even though I tried to make the interviewee comfortable by taking time to

explain certain questions I could observe that Ginty was a little uncertain as she often ended her sentence with a question e.g. "is that okay?" or "will that do?" It made me aware that this creative interview approach by bringing engagement tools to the site can be very unfamiliar for my participants. However, the playfulness of the interview toolkit supported the conversation to overcome this uncomfortable feeling as we were literally building the interview canvas together. Being the interviewer and documenter at the same time caused some distraction at some points during the conversation. However, I realised it was better to focus on the quality of the conversation and trust the audio recording instead trying to photograph and video record as well.

In the second interview I initially planned to only interview Dudu (DU, 80) but her husband Pw (PW, 83) was intrigued and willing to join the conversation. The interview took place in their own home, which felt more cosy and warm (Figure 20) in contrast to the previous interview that took place in the community centre. Dudu (80) and Pw (83) have been married for almost 60 years and often completed each other's sentences during





Top: Figure 20. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Interview Dudu (80) and Pw (83). Image. Source: authors own.

Bottom: Figure 21. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Interview Boo (14) and Grandpa J (14). Image. Source: authors own.

the conversation. They were intrigued and pleasantly surprised when filling in the interview canvas. During this interview I was more conscious of my own presence by allowing silent moments during the interview and not sharing my personal opinions about the topic too much. However, in practice it is also a dialogue, where you cannot just leave the site without sharing your own bias. As Warren (2014) explains, the interview is a role-playing activity where both the interviewer and respondent influence the social situation. For example, I noticed Dudu (80) was curious about my experiences of living in Forres as a foreigner. Therefore, I think as a participatory researcher you need to open up during the interview as well in order to maintain an equal balance of sharing information. It is about building a trusting relationship with participants and this means sharing information from both sides.

Finally, I interviewed two students at a local secondary school. A teacher accompanied them during the interview but she did not actively participate within the conversation. Boo (BO, 14) and Grandpa J (GJ, 14) were classmates and already good friends, which enabled a natural and easy conversation through



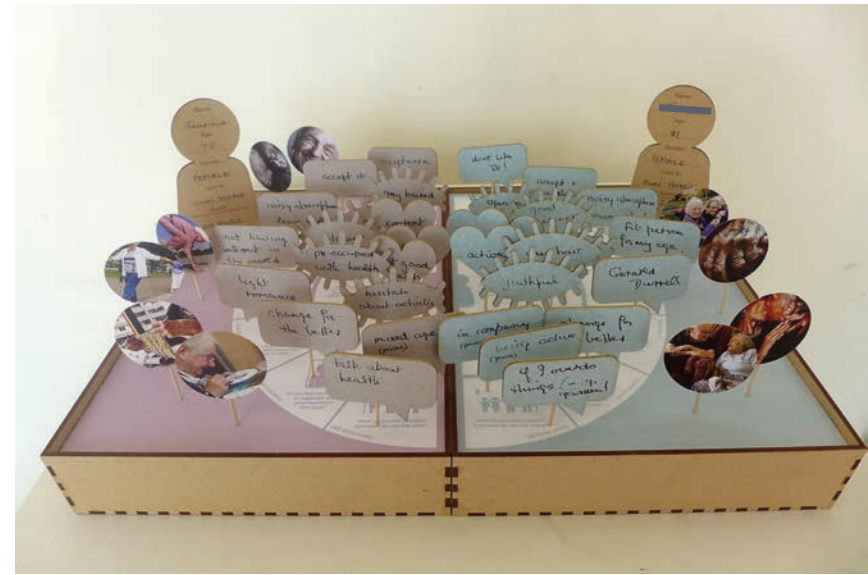
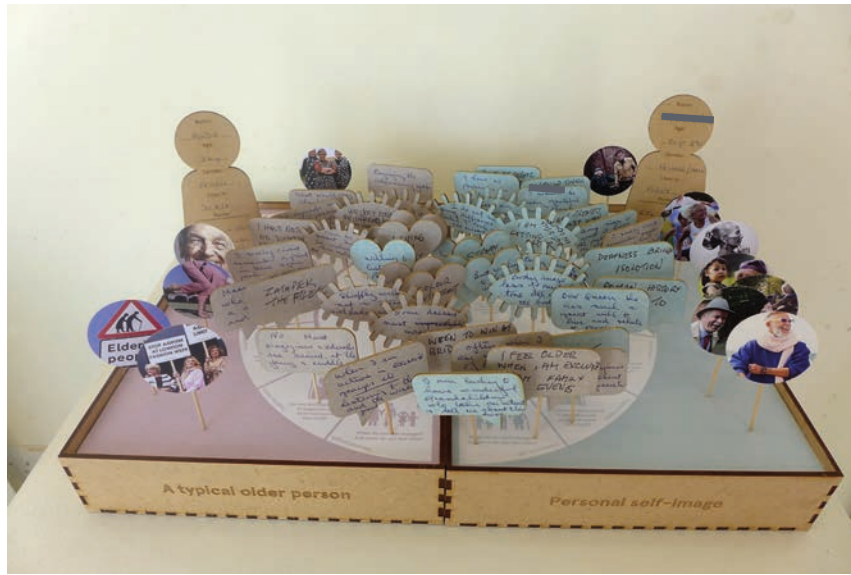


Figure 22. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Documentation interview canvas. Images. Source: authors own.

their familiarity with each other. The students were not afraid to interact with the engagement tools and immediately started to use them (Figure 21). Sometimes they did find it hard to be self-reflective in response to some questions compared to previous interviewees, perhaps due to their age difference. People's self-concepts may become clearer and more stable when they enter adulthood (Rice and Pasupathi, 2010). The limited timeframe of one hour for interviewing two people was not ideal and I had to rush some questions towards the end. As a result, the richness of the conversation was less in-depth.

In all three interviews the interview canvas showed a direct visual accomplishment of the conversation (Figure 22). In addition, participants had the opportunity to immediately reflect on their artefact. This enabled the researcher to sense-check agreement with participants about the information that was collected during the conversation.

#### 4.4.2. Participatory Workshop

Shortly after the interviews the intergenerational and participatory workshop was organised at The Innovation School

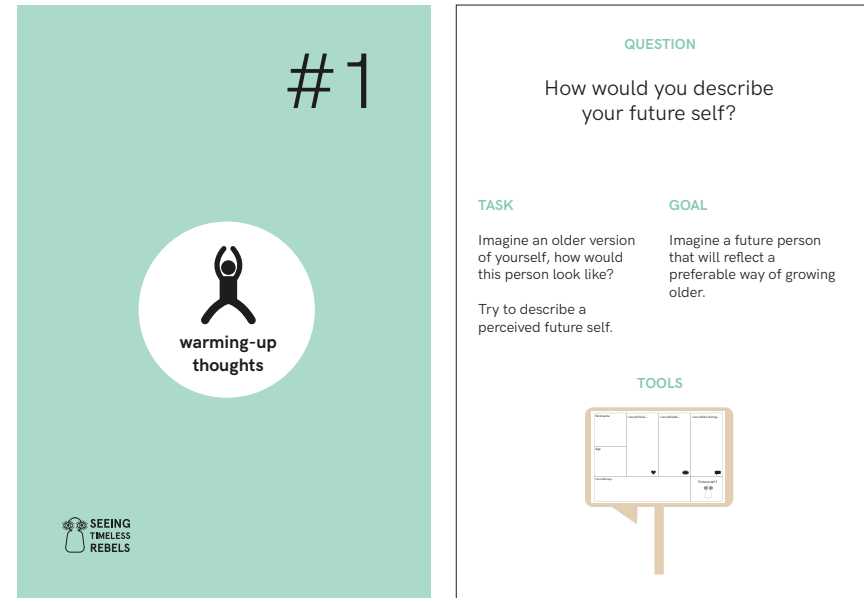
in Forres. The participants arrived in the morning and were welcomed with coffee, tea and snacks to settle in. A teacher (which I gave the pseudonym "TE", age 56) accompanied Boo (14) and Grandpa J (14) for safety reasons but I also asked her to join the workshop activities as an active participant. Everyone was given a wooden name card and a set of printed A6 programme cards in the beginning of the workshop that they could keep as a reminder of the day (Figure 23). I prepared a digital presentation to introduce the participants to the research project once again and shared the programme of the workshop. Before the workshop I did a quick initial thematic grouping of quotes from the interviews and identified three main topics: ageing, media stereotypes and the generation gap (see



Figure 23. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Workshop package given to participants. Image. Source: authors own.

Appendix 2:19). These topics were shortly discussed during the introduction. As an ice-breaking task I asked the participants to introduce themselves by filling in the “self-image” sheet presented on a wooden board. In addition, I asked them to share their future ageing self, reflecting their preferable way of growing older (Figure 24 and 25). I also wanted to position myself as a participant to the group therefore I joined this introduction task. The answers can be viewed in Appendix 2:10-11. The older participants shared they would probably have more grey hair (Ginty, 81), would like to be upright in their posture (Dudu, 80) and be able to communicate better (Pw, 83) when thinking about their future self. The younger participants wanted to become happy (Boo, 14), taller and wearing bright colours (Grandpa J, 14). Imagining yourself as an older person was hard for the older age group, as Dudu (80) explained:

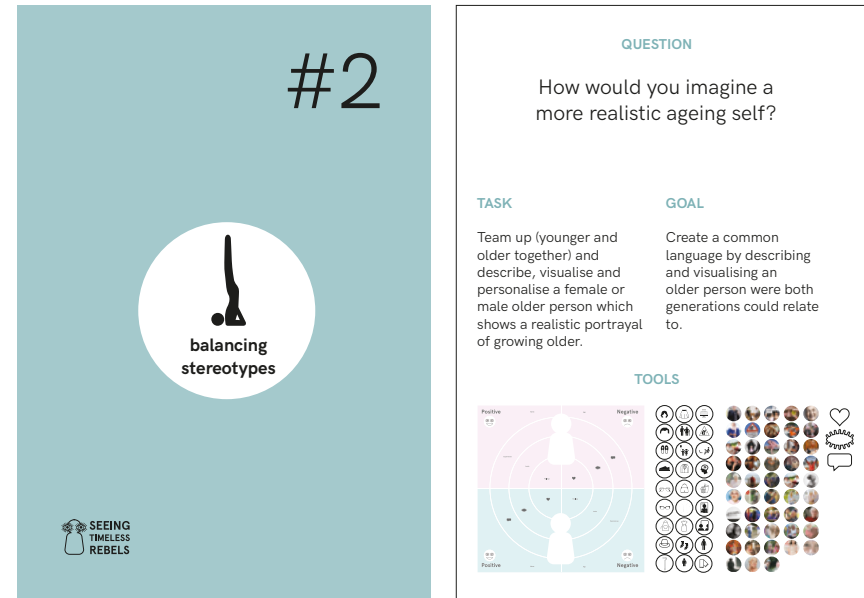
*“This is the troubles you get when getting older, you want to see a future but you are a bit frightened to see a future [...] when you portray that forward you think I might not be here then and that’s quite an unpleasant feeling.”*




Top: Figure 24. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Task #1 Future self. Illustration. Source: authors own.  
 Bottom: Figure 25. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Ginty (81) Explaining her future self. Image. Source: authors own.

Secondly, I asked the group to split into two teams to visualise a future ageing self (Figure 26). The goal of the task was to create a common language between the age groups by collaboratively describing and visualising an older person they could both relate to. A 1x1 metre poster was designed to help the participants to organise their answers within the same structure as the interview canvas (feelings, looks and experiences). I added a divide in positive, negative, male and female categories based on previous literature (Levy, Kasl and Gill, 2004, Richards, Warren and Gott, 2012). I provided each team with a set of tools:

- Wooden round icons inspired by the visual elements that were mentioned during the interviews when describing older people.
- Cardboard figures (a heart for feelings, an eye for looks and a speech bubble for experiences) to write the answers on.
- A selection of inspirational images selected by the participants during the interviews.
- Writing material such as post-its and pens.



Top: Figure 26. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Task #2 Creating personas. Illustration. Source: authors own.

Bottom: Figure 27. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Team one working on male persona. Image. Source: authors own.



Team one (Pw, 83, Grandpa J, 14 and Dudu, 80) needed to identify a male persona and immediately started to explore all the tools to work with (Figure 27). Team two (Ginty, 81, Boo, 14 and Teacher, 56) were focusing on identifying a female persona and they were more hesitant by first discussing their thoughts before starting to put anything on the canvas. After twenty minutes both groups were finished and I proposed a small tea and coffee break. Meanwhile I hung the posters on the wall and asked each team to summarise the person they imagined. The female group came up with "Dorothy" who was 89 years old and was very positive, active and social. The male group created "PJ" and decided the positive side of the persona was aged 40 years and the negative side was aged 80 years. This already implicates that an older age is strongly related with negative perspectives. A digital version of the persona canvas made during the workshop can be seen in Figure 30. The visual documentation of the conversation supported the group to immediately reflect on it. For example, the women's group had much more positive aspects compared to the male group. Furthermore, both teams identified a decline in health as something negative. To continue the discussion, I prompted



Top: Figure 28. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Sharing the male and female personas. Image. Source: authors own.

Bottom: Figure 29. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Discussing future scenarios. Image. Source: authors own.

Seeing Timeless Rebels  
 Seeing Timeless Rebels

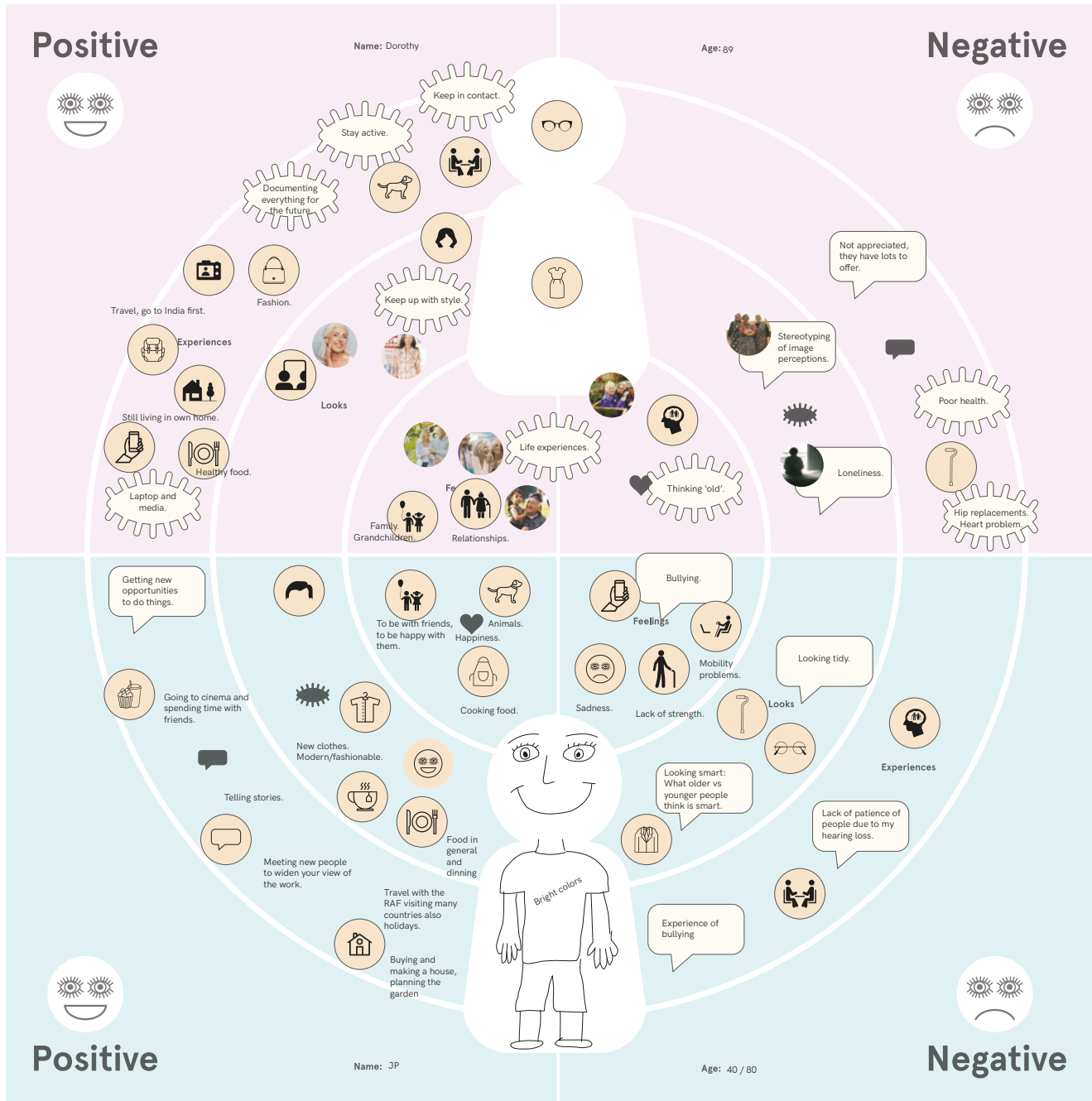
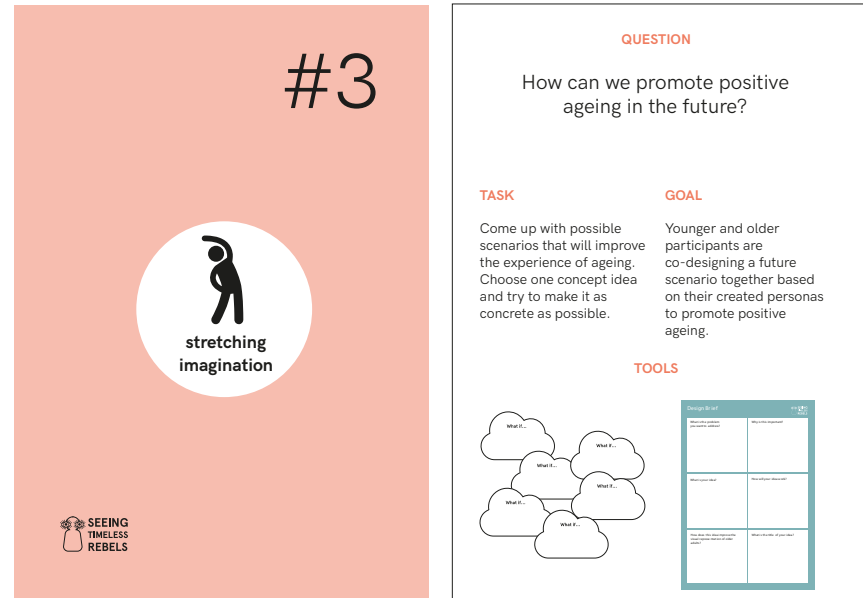


Figure 30. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Documentation workshop canvas. Illustration. Source: authors own.

some wooden “what if...” future scenarios to inspire the group for the following task. The “What if...” future scenarios drew upon Wadsworth’s (1998:6) argument that PAR involved an imaginative transition of the world “as it is” to a world “as it could be”. I asked the group to come up with a design brief that promotes positive ageing in the future (Figure 31). They could refer to their imagined personas “Dorothy” and “PJ” in order to co-design a future scenario. I provided them with an A3 sheet of questions to clearly communicate their concept e.g. What is the problem? Why is this important? What is your idea? How will your idea work? How does your idea improve the visual representation of older people? And what is the title of your idea? The younger participants (Boo and Grandpa J, both 14) came up with the idea of designing a fashion brand for older people that would express their personality, entitled “Old and Fab”. The other two groups (Dudu, 80, Pw, 83, Ginty, 81 and Teacher, 56) had similar concepts that would promote an intergenerational education program in schools or communities, entitled “Live and learn” and “You’re never too old” (Figure 32). The explanation of each design brief can be seen in Appendix 2:28. I concluded the workshop with a tour of The Innovation



Top: Figure 31. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Task #3 Imagine a future scenario. Illustration. Source: authors own.

Bottom: Figure 32. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Dudu (80) and Pw (83) working. Image. Source: authors own.

School and a carefully chosen Mediterranean lunch to show my appreciation to the participants for taking time to join the workshop.

#### 4.5. Fieldwork analysis

In total I collected three sets of data: visual, conversational and observational. The analytical steps are described in more detail in Figure 36 at page 69 that shows how the preliminary analysis informed the final analysis. In order to cope with the amount of transcribed data I first analysed the visual engagement tools. In total I collected four “personal self-image” boxes, four “a typical older person” boxes from the interviews, and one male and one female persona from the participatory workshop. Several steps were taken in order to condense the data from the interview boxes. The answers were digitised and then grouped together by “dimensional” analysis (Gray and Malins, 2004:147). The coded categories were positioned in a matrix between positive and negative descriptions between the younger and older participants (see Appendix 2:12-15). With the visual data of the workshop I made different diagrams for each category (see Appendix 2:16-17). Eventually, I summarised the codes and

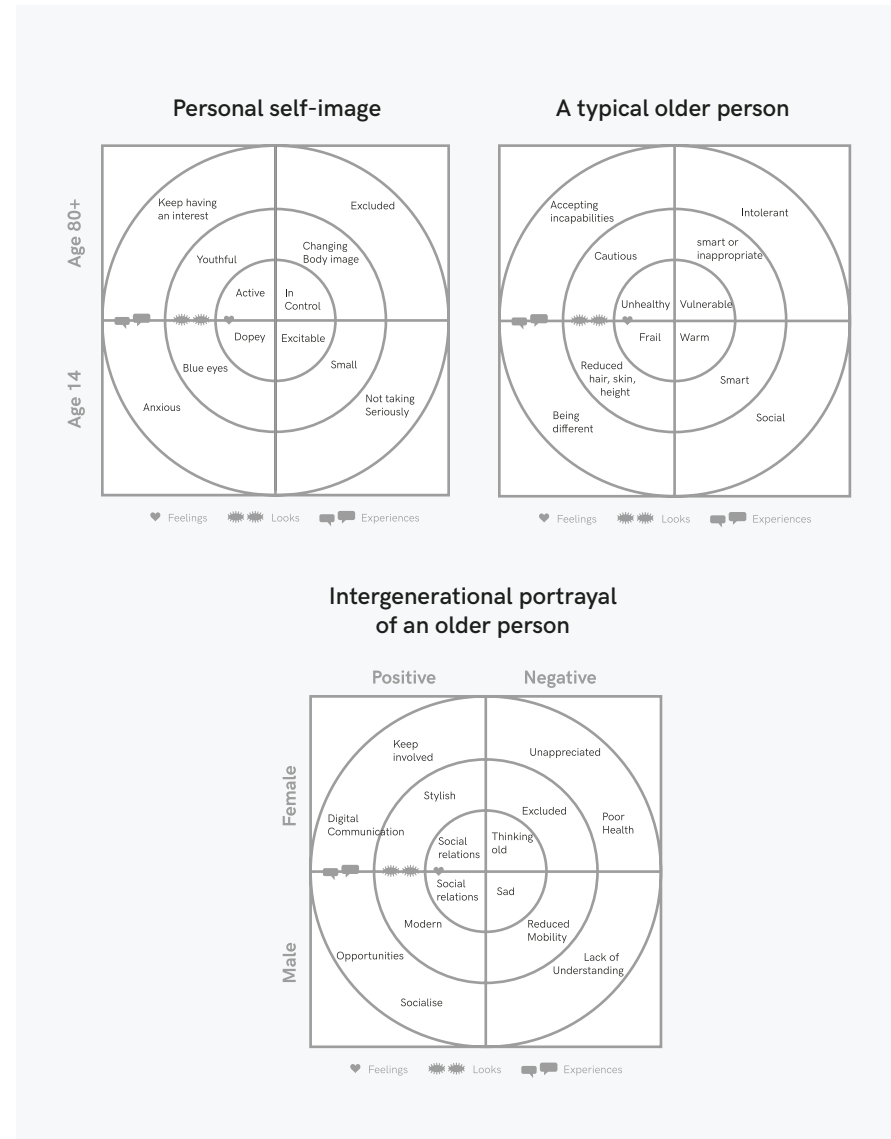


Figure 33. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Final analysis visual data. Illustration. Source: authors own.





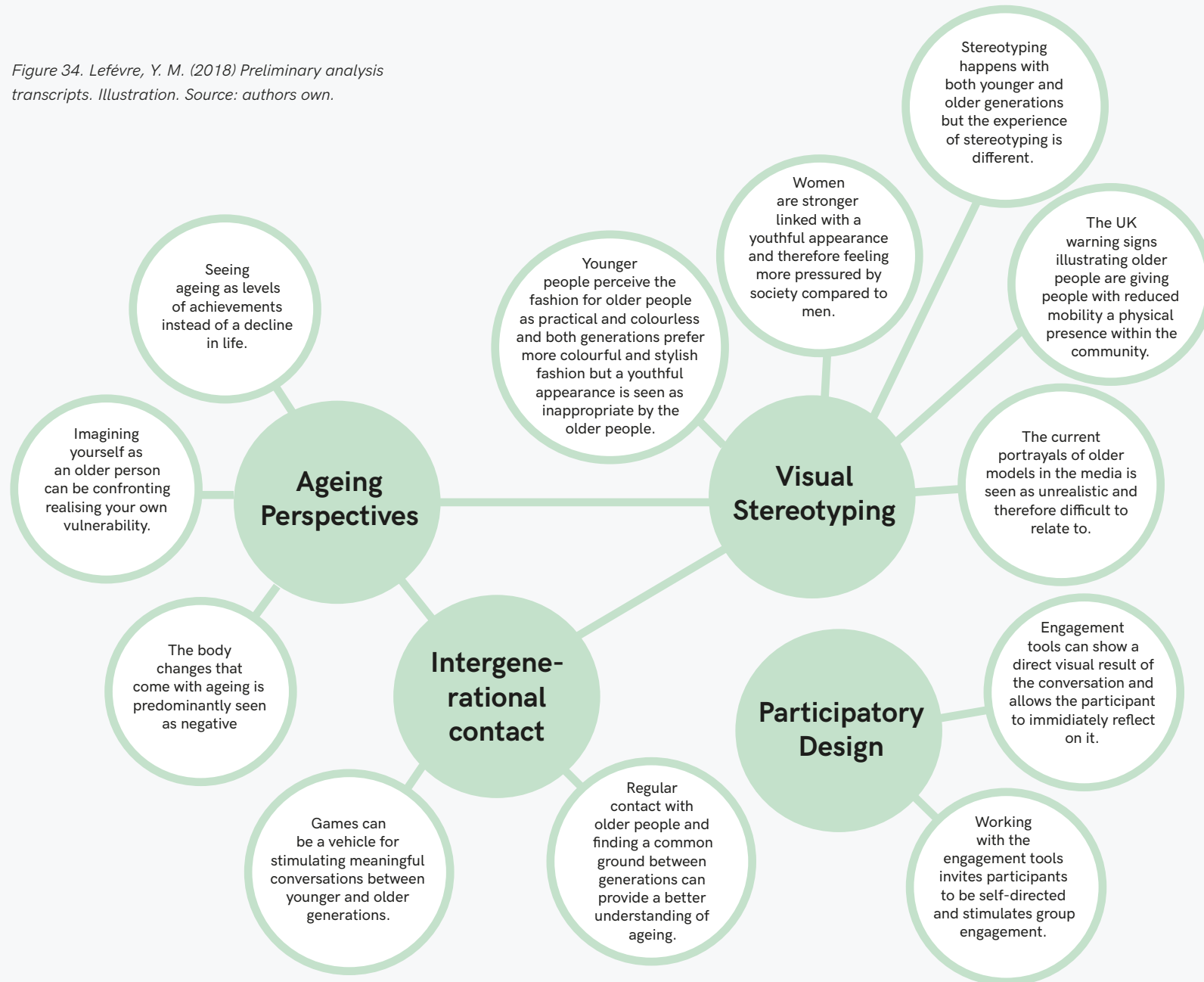
memos, which can be seen in Appendix 2:18. After the thematic analysis of the conversational data I could downsize each visual data set in a diagram which can be seen in Figure 33. The audio recordings of the interviews and the workshop were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006:87-93) to find rich and detailed information within a complex amount of data. Two rounds of coding were applied to organise the transcribed data. Firstly, I grouped related quotes together in order to make a memo of the topic (appendix 2:20-30). Figure 34 represents a visual map of the memos. Then I made different visual thematic maps based on a second round of coding (Appendix 2:31-33).

The observational data was explored by two analytical techniques. A reflective note of each interview was written as a documentation of the situation describing the interaction between the engagement tools, the person and the place of the interview. The notes were synthesized and put in a matrix divided into four categories: action, conversation, being

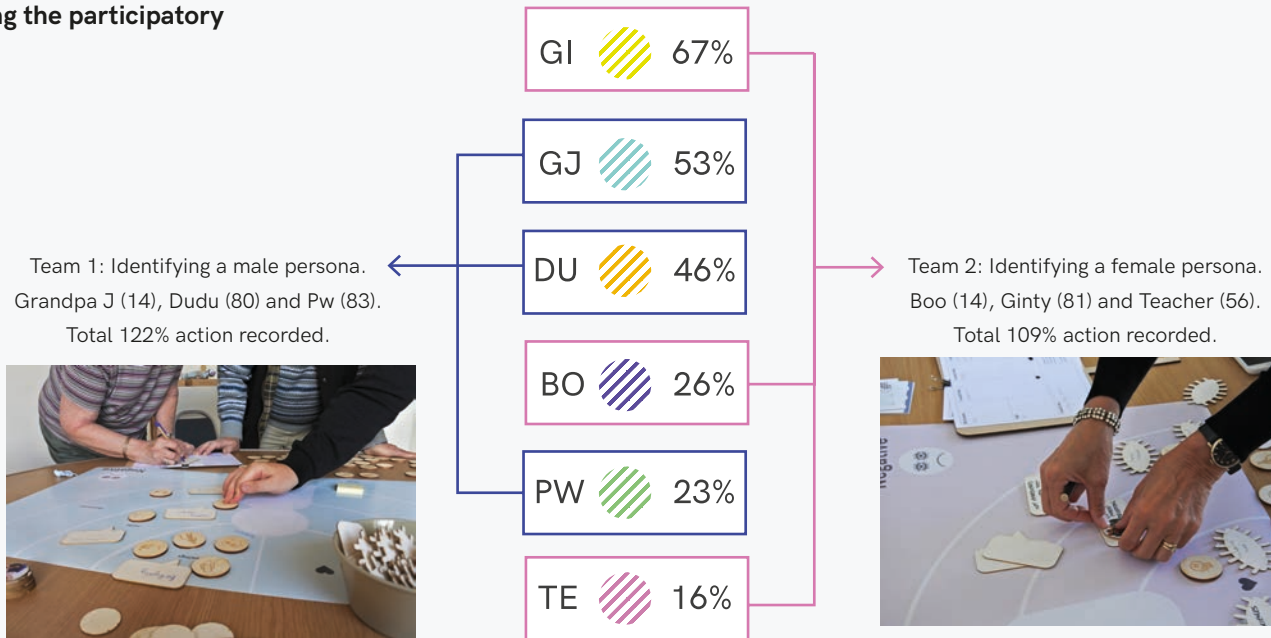
comfortable and uncomfortable (Appendix 2:34). In addition, I documented each team with a video camera for approximately 6 minutes during the workshop. I applied content analysis (Robson, 2011:394) to record the frequency participants hold or touch the tools during the workshop and visualised it in a timeline (see Appendix 2:35-36). Figure 35 shows the amount of time each individual touched the tools as a percentage of the total action time (the percentages add to 200% as there were two groups distinguished using blue/pink colour coding). Even though the content analysis of the video is less in depth compared to the thematic analysis it was good to try out a different analytical approach. Now I have a better understanding of the wealth video data can offer for capturing the many different layers of social actions during group engagements e.g. talk, gestures, gaze, body movements, postures and so on (Kara, 2015:167).

The results of the visual, thematic and observational analyses are discussed in the following chapter.

Figure 34. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Preliminary analysis transcripts. Illustration. Source: authors own.



**Frequency participants touching or holding the engagement tools during the participatory workshop.**



GJ  age 14   
 DU  age 80   
 PW  age 83   
 BO  age 14   
 GI  age 81   
 TE  age 56

Figure 35. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Final analysis video observations. Illustration. Source: authors own.

#### 4.6. Summary

The fieldwork took place in three comprehensive phases from November 2017 until August 2018. Phase one allowed me to gain a contextual understanding through pop-up engagements and interviews with professionals. Phase two enabled me to prepare the final data collection by developing appropriate engagement tools. A short questionnaire was completed about people's experiences of growing older and their description of a typical older person. Furthermore, I tested the interview questions and engagement tools with a professional from the local Health and Wellbeing group. During the final data collection, I conducted semi-structured interviews with three older people (age 80+) and two adolescents (age 14) following the interview canvas. In total I collected three data sets: visual data, conversational data and observational data. Dimensional analysis (Gray and Malins, 2004), thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and content analysis (Robson, 2011) were used to make sense of the data.

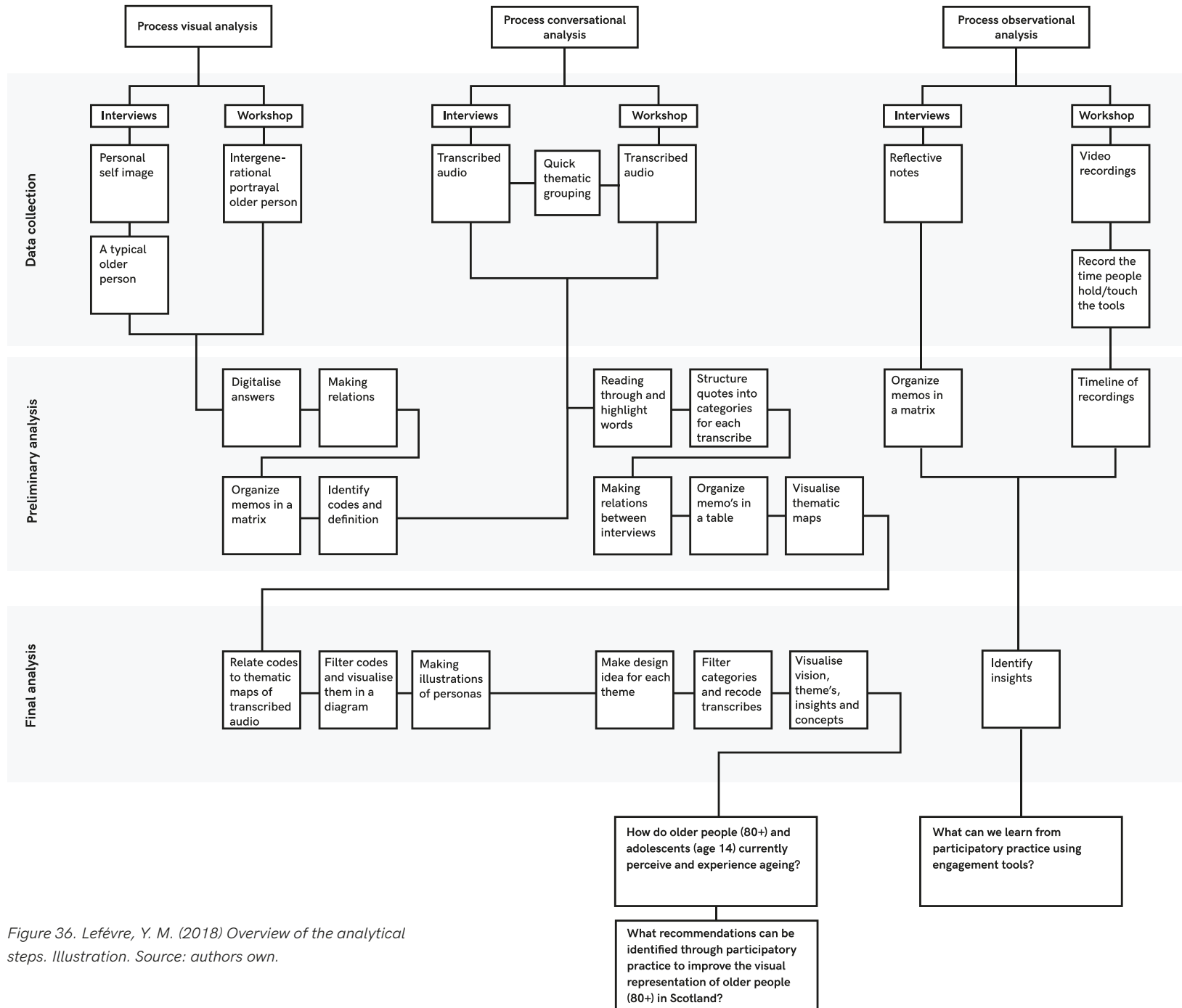


Figure 36. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Overview of the analytical steps. Illustration. Source: authors own.

Chapter five

# Results and findings

## Chapter 5: Results and findings

### 5.1. Introduction

The study aims to have a deeper understanding of people's experiences and perceptions of ageing. The objectives are to identify a set of recommendations to improve the visual representation of older people. In addition, the study reflects on the participatory practice using engagement tools applied in the fieldwork. In this chapter I present the results of the visual, thematic and the observational analysis. Furthermore, I will share the recommendations to challenge people's perspectives of ageing. Finally, an illustration of three design concepts is presented that embodies the recommendations.

### 5.2. Results of the visual analysis

In order to represent participants' general image of older people I illustrated several personas that were captured in the visual data. Generally older people were described as having grey hair, wrinkly, thin skin, being short, having reduced mobility and wearing colourless clothes. Looking at all four

personas (see Figure 37 - 40) it could be said that a typical older person according to the participants is a woman with an average age of 75 and over. When I asked Dudu (female, 80) and Pw (male, 83) to describe a typical older man during their interview, to generate a more complete image of older people, they found it hard to describe a typical older man. As Dudu (80) explains during the interview:

*DU: You see most of the men we know are ageing anyhow so you tend to sort of look at them as you would see them as years before [...] Because they are ageing and you are ageing, so you don't necessarily...*

*PW: ...notice that other people are ageing.*

*DU: ...notice any difference in them...*

This suggests that women are much more stereotyped than men. Therefore, there needs to be an equal balance between portraying older men and women through visual media.

"I was awful stiff this morning"

Jeannie, age 76

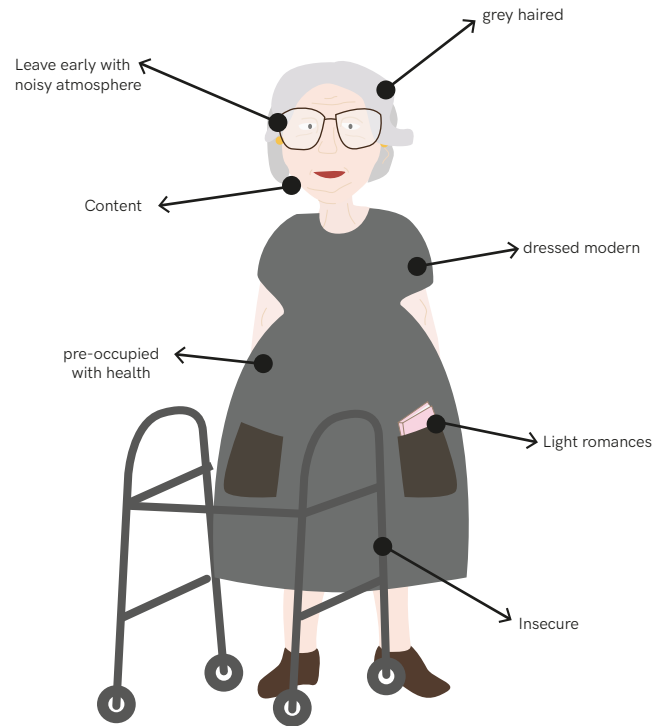


Figure 37. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) A typical older person #1. Illustration. Source: authors own.

"That's not right, doesn't look good"

Mary, age 84

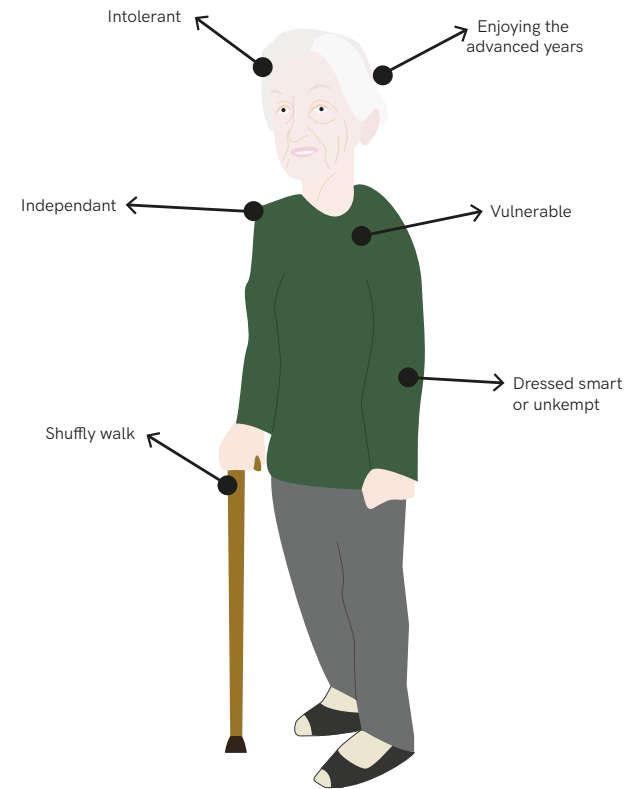


Figure 38. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) A typical older person #2. Illustration. Source: authors own.



"I love you"

Lorna, age 70

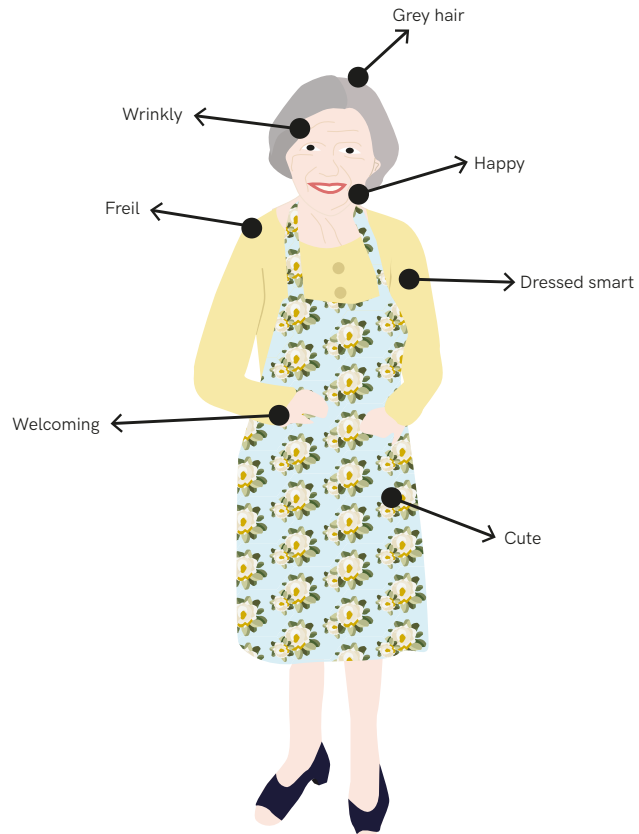


Figure 39. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) A typical older person #3. Illustration. Source: authors own.

"Oh well..."

Janet, age 86

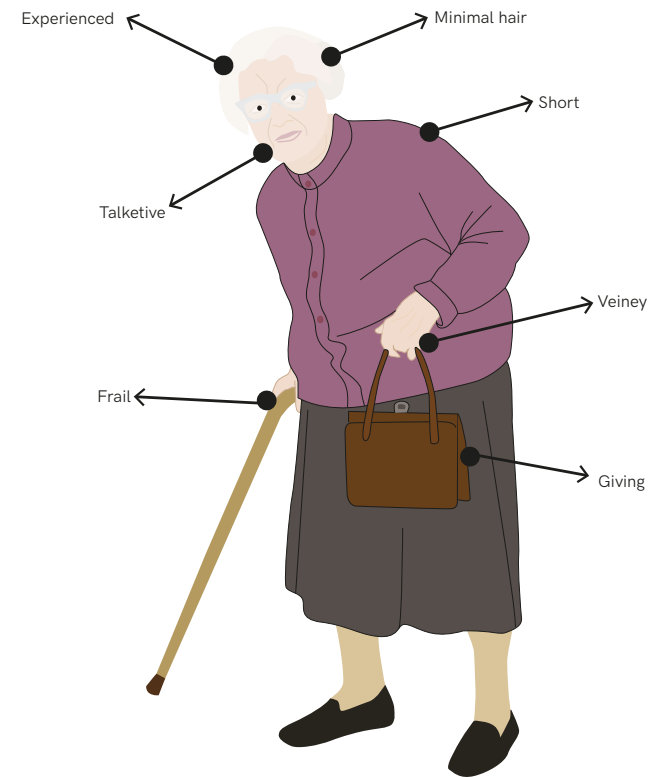


Figure 40. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) A typical older person #4. Illustration. Source: authors own.

### 5.3. Results of the thematic analysis

After intensive thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke (2006:87-93) I will provide an overview of the emerging themes identified in the conversational data and supported by the visual data. A thematic map is visualised in Figure 41 on page 80.

#### 5.3.1. Theme 1: Unrealistic voice in the media

Both generations did not feel represented by the media. Even though there is an age gap of more than 60 years between the participants it is clear that both age groups are strongly underrepresented and misrepresented which needs to be addressed. As both generations explain:

Interview Dudu (80) and Pw (83):

*DU: There is never anything in the magazines about older people or if there is, it is because they are decrepit or they suffer from dementia or something, never about the young, the younger older person who is still doing so much, going out and about you know and living. I mean I don't take a magazine so it is a bit difficult for me but we used to help at the RVS shop in the hospital,*

*which is voluntary, and there where all the magazines we would sell and it is all on the younger, sort of early, middle aged with families. I did not see any specific magazine for the older person at all.*

Interview Grandpa J and Boo (both 14):

*GJ: I don't really think there are any magazines targeted at like, our age, like you've got ones that are for like, five and six years old or you've got one for like, people like our parents age. And then for older people I feel like they get magazines, that they get targeted like knitting books, like not every older person, like my great granny is not sitting with a knitting book. My great granny, I don't even know what she is doing in her spare time?*

*YO: Well, you are saying that for you, you are not feeling represented but what would you like to see then?*

*BO: I don't know, I feel like everything we have is like online, we are teenagers so we are kind a (portrayed) like "go and sit in a corner" doing drugs [laughing].*

Younger people were often portrayed in the media as “hooligans”. Older people were often referred to as “useless”. A typical example that contributes to this passive image of ageing is the UK elderly warning street sign (Figure 41). Although the older participants did not relate to the portrayal of this general sign they did appreciate having a voice in the community, as Dudu (80) explains during the interview:

*DU: I don't bend over down and I don't walk with a walking stick but then on the other hand, how do you make signs? You've got to have a sign for an older person, and an older person is usually someone that is slightly bend and often with a walking stick. As a child is often seen in a pram but not all children are in prams... I think any sign has to be general.*

But even positive and active images of older people can be interpreted as inappropriate, as Ginty (81) reacts:

*G1: I am not keen on that (looking at Figure 42) sometimes I think they are trying to prove something and then I think what's the point?*

When I asked what could be done to improve this portrayal Ginty (81) recommended using older models in realistic situations. In addition, Grandpa J (14) suggested to show the diversity by avoiding generalising age groups. The underrepresentation and misrepresentation of older people in the media are therefore contributing to an unrealistic portrayal of ageing.



Figure 41. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Warning sign. Image. Source: authors own.



Figure 42. Barcroft Media (2009) Yoga supergran. Image. Source: Daily Mail.

### 5.3.2. Theme 2: Ageing as the story of decline

Health was predominantly associated with negative experiences of ageing. The older participants identified a typical older person as unhealthy, vulnerable and accepting the incapacities that come with ageing. In addition, all participants identified the body changes that come with ageing as negative during the interviews and workshop. Imagining yourself as an older person can therefore be scary because you realise your own vulnerability, as Grandpa J (14) and Book (14) share:

BO: *I only see my great grandparents like, every once and a while because I am so scared to see them.*

YO: *You are scared to see them?*

BO: *Because they're old! They are like...*

YO: *Okay elaborate...?*

BO: *I just want to stay away from old people, they just make me feel very uncomfortable and awkward, it's like you are interested in like knitting and like magazines and like, you're just like different, you scare me.*

YO: *But is it then maybe because they remind you of*

*your ageing self?*

GJ: *The visual, like you will be there one day, like some people are a bit creeped out by that, like 'one day that will be me'.*

Confronted by older people can trigger a fear of growing older because it reminds them about the end of life. However, an alternative view on ageing is to see them as warm and friendly, as Grandpa J (14) responded:

GJ: *Oh no I would want to hug them, I think they are so cute!*

Both perspectives can be experienced as positive or negative because identifying them as "cute" could also imply they are not competent. Furthermore, avoiding older people on the streets because of a fear of ageing would position them as being different and excluded from the social norm. Pw (83) explains that it is rather painful when people treat him differently because of his reduced mobility:



YO: *And what did you write down? "I get treated differently when I am walking with sticks" How come?*

PW: *People get out of my way.*

YO: *They move?*

PW: *It is noticeable, I've been doing it (walking with sticks) for about 3 - 4 months [...] I find it very painful. It is only arthritis and apparently most older people have but I am finding it ... it came suddenly, that is why I am finding it a bit difficult.*

But when asked how to improve this negative portrayal of decline that is strongly connected with old age, Boo (14) shared her personal recommendation during the participatory workshop:

BO: *I think if we thought of age as levels, because that's something I always think about when I'm get to a certain age. When I'm like 50 I'm not going to say I'm 50 years old, I'm going to say I'm on level 50 because it sounds more impressive than just saying I'm 50.*

The older participants, Dudu (80) and Ginty (81), supported this idea of shifting the perspective of "old age" by seeing the potential ageing brings:

DU: *You should be proud in having wrinkles, because it's a short sign...*

GI: *...to have some experience.*

Shifting perspectives about the beauty of ageing is a difficult task because of the worldwide multi-billion-pound anti-ageing industry. It needs a radical change of people's understanding of what it means to grow older (Applewhite, 2016, Karpf, 2014). Therefore, portraying more diverse and accurate older role models in the media can support a broader idea of what ageing means at any age, not just old age.

### 5.3.3. Theme 3: Language barrier between generations

Negative perceptions of ageing are fed by the misconceptions that exist between generations. Both younger and older participants hold stereotypical perspectives towards each other. As Dudu (80) shares a personal example during the workshop.



DU: *I know when Yoni and I were talking I had to interview a young man for a job and he came in and he had earrings and tattoos everywhere, I thought he is definitely not suitable for here. But in actual fact he went to a different ward and he was absolutely brilliant, and it's just made me think, yes I did think not what he could do but I just took him at face value, which is very, very wrong.*

The younger participants, Boo and Grandpa J (both 14) also shared during the interview their difficulties in understanding older people's world because of the big age gap:

GJ: *Yeah and with older people, like, they grew up at a different time than you, so a lot of stuff is different now then it was 60 years ago when they were like our age. So, sometimes, we don't understand quite as much or get them. And you can't blame them because it was just a different timeframe that they grew up in and it's just really hard to understand some of the things nowadays.*  
BO: *I think they are so much different, yeah.*

In addition, the group mentioned they found the second task of the participatory workshop difficult (see Figure 26 on page 60) because the age differences of sixty years between team members creates such different experiences and perspectives in life. However, this task was not intended to come up with the perfect future persona, but sought to reveal how younger and older people have a discussion about ageing. Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998:21) explain that the "success" in PAR projects is not based if participants complete the steps correctly but whether they have a sense of development. Acknowledging that it was difficult to create a common language between generations also supported the group discussion to come up with ideas to break down the age gap between generations.

Close contact with an older person is a way to familiarise yourself with ageing (Abrams, Swift, Lamont and Drury, 2015). Grandpa J (14), who has very close contact with their grandparents, could gradually see them ageing compared to Dudu (80) and Pw (83) whose grandchildren are living in a different country. The grandchildren would see the changes very suddenly, as they explain during the participatory workshop:



DU: *I mean, our own grandchildren, uhm, I mean they are great, but they are miles apart, they don't see us that often. Yes we skype them, the ones in [name of country] and we get on with them very, very well but where GJ (14) will probably just accept them growing older, ours don't see it. They suddenly see a difference, you know, one minute grandma is there and the next minute she's there and she's got a walking stick or something, it's more difficult for them I think to accept people getting older because the transition is so sudden, from one visit, having no problems at all and the next they have a difficulty in getting out of their car. It's that sort of thing, which GJ (14) I would imagine, I mean I don't know...*

GJ: *No yeah definitely.*

DU: *I would imagine, you don't necessary see your grandparents getting older because you see them, but then if these things happen it takes, you know, you accept it because it's happening over a much slower pace of time.*

GJ: *Yeah, I definitely see them every day, without a*

*doubt, at some point (during the day) I'll see them, so with that it's over a long period of time, it is very gradual it's not big, like drastic changes.*

All participants identified social activities and personal relations as a positive contribution to their ageing experience during the participatory workshop. However, both generations only have contact with older people within their family circles. Although, there are currently more opportunities for generations to mingle and meet, e.g. primary school children visiting care home residents, the older participants think these are missing depth, as Dudu (80) explains during the participatory workshop:

DU: *I think it would be better to involve all age groups.*

[...] *I don't know about a game but I certainly think, uhm, the mixing of an older group and a younger group, but not maybe so young is a brilliant idea.*

YO: *yeah because?*

DU: *Because I do think the young ones tend to think that our age group is sort of gone and that we are sort of just ready of dropping off the perch but you know,*

*there is also a lot, that we sort of say to them, yeah fair enough, we are this age but there is a lot of living yet to do and do remember we were young once [...] getting older isn't such an awful thing, there is so much to look forward to in between.*

Although both age groups enjoyed having the opportunity to have conversations about each other's understanding of ageing they also acknowledged that it was not easy to create a common language. Regular contact with older people between generations can therefore provide a better understanding of growing older.

#### 5.4. Results of the observational analysis

This study sought to understand how engagement tools enhance the participatory process. In addition to the more explorative thematic analysis I also identified key insights (Figure 44) about using engagement tools within a participatory process. The observational analysis is based on reflective notes of the interviews (Appendix 2:34) and video recordings that looked at the usage of the tools during the workshop (Appendix 2:35-36).

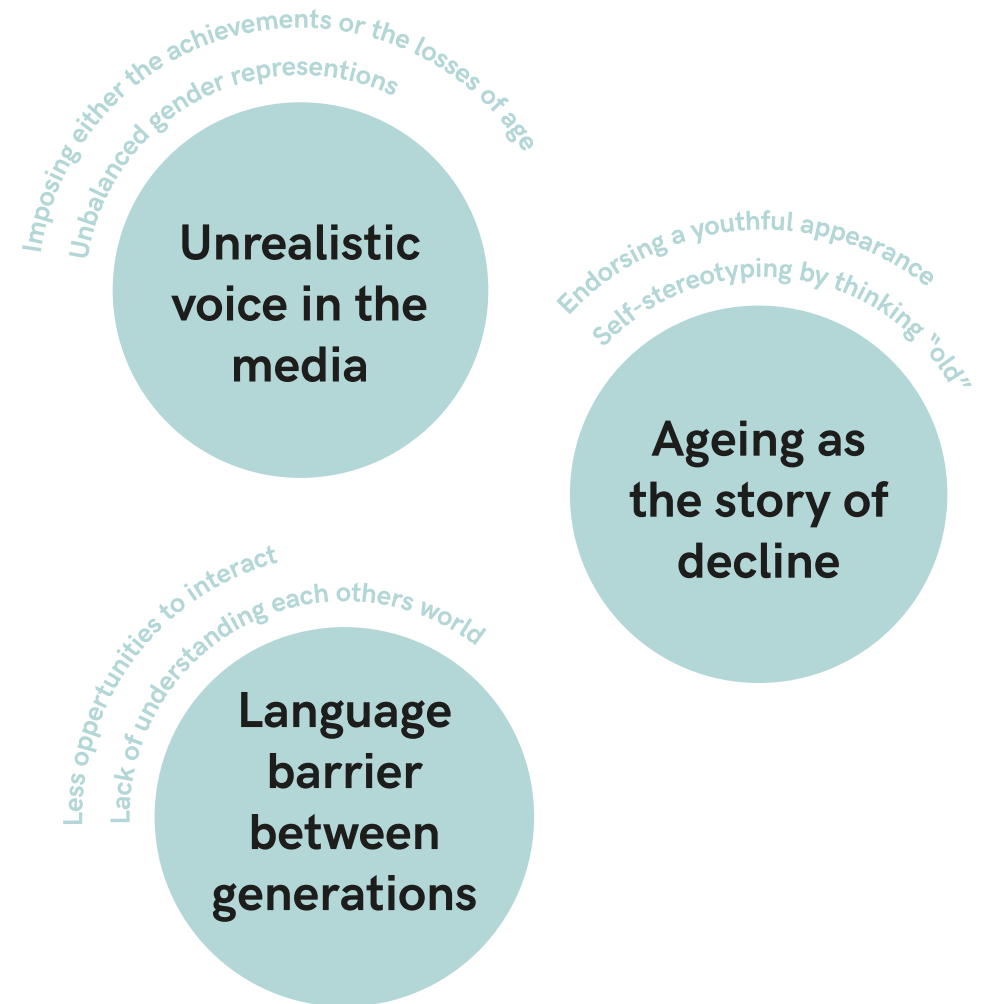


Figure 43. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Thematic map. Illustration. Source: author own.



#### 5.4.1. Visual engagement tools can function as a co-analysis tool

During the interviews I asked participants to write down their answers on the cardboard sticks themselves. Through the process of distilling their answers to fit on the cardboard figure, the participants became part of the first step in the analysis process by summarising their thoughts on the subject matter. One of the strengths of applying visual methods within an interview is that the researcher's interpretation of the conversation becomes immediately visible for participants. This allows participants to directly validate, reflect and react to it. As Dudu (80) pointed out after looking at the results of the male and female personas created during the participatory workshop:

*DU: It's interesting to see that the male (group) have more negatives than the females (group).*

*YO: Yeah, yeah I don't know, why is that actually? Do you think men are more open, or common to talk about the negative things?*

*DU: I don't know (0.05).*

*YO: But how do you think about the fact that it's so heavily focused on the positive, is it a realistic image?*

*GI: I think women are generally more positive.*

*DU: Yeah that's true, I think the women have their cup half full and a lot of the men have their cup half empty, not all of course obviously.*

While the engagement tools provided a high-level visual summary of the conversation, the richness of the stories was only captured in the audio recordings. However, the visual summary of the conversation supported the analysis process, providing an early indication of themes for the transcript analysis. In addition, it enables participation in the process of analysis by making the data gathering transparent and collaborative.

#### 5.4.2. Engagement tools can evoke curiosity with participants

Working with the interview toolkit stimulated participants to be part of the data collection and analysis. Participants were able to communicate their thoughts and ideas in their own language. The playfulness of the tools also supported a certain curiosity

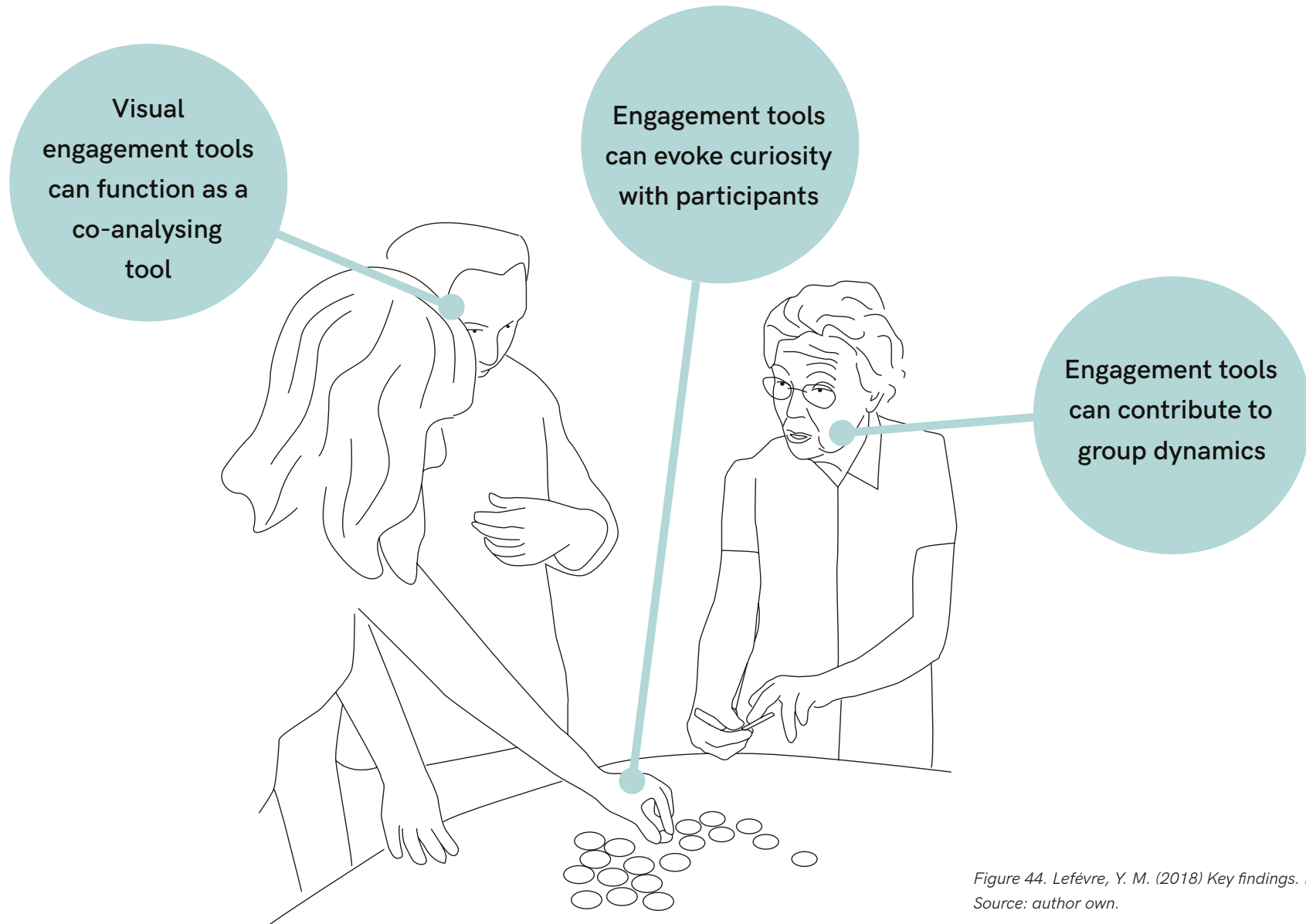


Figure 44. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Key findings. Illustration. Source: author own.



with participants when seeing and working with the engagement tools, as Dudu (80) and the teacher (56) react:

DU: *This looks absolutely intriguing! [...] I love your box and all your bits, did you design it all?*

YO: *Yes.*

DU: *Did you really? Well done.*

TE: *This is fabulous, it's such a lot of work to put together, but it looks fantastic!*

YO: *Yeah, I got a little bit carried away.*

TE: *No, I think that's great because, it's really engaging, they are not just writing their answers and it's a really good visual.*

It takes time to make a considered and appealing design tool. Therefore, it can be questioned whether this is a valuable use of time of the design researcher, when compared to traditional research methods e.g. using a topic guide. As a visual communication designer I believe that when you present an engagement tool that is attractive for the eye, it shows a

level of appreciation from the researcher. Investing time and money in carefully designed research tools communicates the professionalism and expertise of the researcher, and shows the value they place on the participants' knowledge.

#### 5.4.3. Engagement tools can contribute to group dynamics

The action that is stimulated by physically sharing tools between people is a way of balancing the power dynamics (Hawkins, 2015). For the workshop the older participants (Ginty, 81, Dudu, 80 and Pw, 83) and adolescents (Boo and Grandpa J, both 14) were new to each other. Working together as strangers on different workshop tasks could be a bit uncomfortable. However, the gesture of physically giving each other engagement tools enabled the group to get familiar with each other. Furthermore, prompting participants with visual tools supported the discussion to come up with new ideas to stimulate positive perspectives about ageing. As Dudu (80) explains:

DU: *Although your little (What if...) clouds over there did help. I think, if you haven't had those, I might would*



*be struggling a bit but to have a title, then you have something to work on.*

identification of themes to the practical implications of the design ideas helped me to eventually identify a clear set of design recommendations and principles (Figure 45, 46 and 47).

For most of the participants, working with engagement tools was a new and interesting experience. However, they also shared it was sometimes difficult to think on the spot. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that using engagement tools within the context of intergenerational and participatory workshops is to stimulate the creative process and not focussing on developing a finalised output or solution.

### **5.5. Findings**

The visual and thematic analysis resulted in a set of design recommendations to improve the visual representation of older people. Firstly, I identified a design challenge for each theme to fully understand the meaning of the different themes in relation to design. Secondly, I made the practical consideration of creating different design concepts for each design challenge that could function in a wider social and cultural context. Just like doing thematic analysis, going back and forth from conceptual

## Recommendation #1

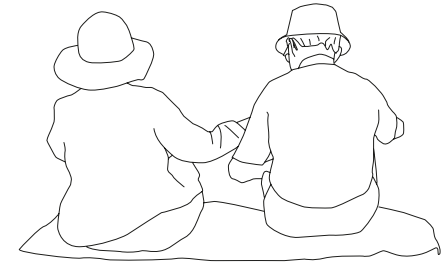
# Portray the diversity of the older age group

Both generations did not feel represented by the media and therefore this needs to be addressed. Older people were often portrayed as “worthless” and younger people as “hooligans”. Generalising different age groups only stimulates a limited perspective towards each other and reinforces a negative stereotyped image of growing older. A common example of portraying a limited image of older people in the community are the UK warning signs showing older people with a walking stick and bend over. The following design principles can be considered when portraying older people in general:

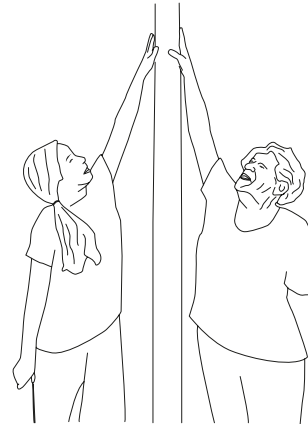
Figure 45. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018)  
First recommendation. Poster. Source: authors own.



(a) Represent an empowering and accessible voice for the older age group.



(b) Show an equal balance of male and female models.



(c) Stretch the boundaries of conventional activities for older people.



Example: The Design Museum (2017) in London explored the role design can play in improving later life in a free pop-up exhibition titled “NEW OLD”.



## Recommendation #2

# Rebrand ordinary ageing bodies through visual media

The anti-ageing beauty industry strongly emphasise on a youthful, active and refreshed visual appearance, which positions the ageing body as abnormal. As a result, some participants felt that the body changes that come with ageing make them stand out as different from the norm. When people identify "being old" with a "story of decline", it's not surprising that they find it hard to positively imagine their future self. Therefore, we need to consider ageing, in its entire spectrum, as a well-accepted beauty norm within society. The following design principles can be considered when communicating ageing through visual media:

*Figure 46. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018)*

*Second recommendation poster. Poster. Source: authors own.*



(a) Show different models e.g. range of sizes, natural hair colour, wrinkly skin, age spots, hearing aid, less mobile etc.



(b) Avoid an artificially youthful appearance in advertisements.



(c) Embrace a colourful, modern and age-neutral fashion style.



Example: A pro-age campaign of Dove (2007) which shows that beauty has no age limit. Photocredits Annie Leibovitz, an over-50-year-old woman herself.



### Recommendation #3

# Provide balanced and playful conversations between generations

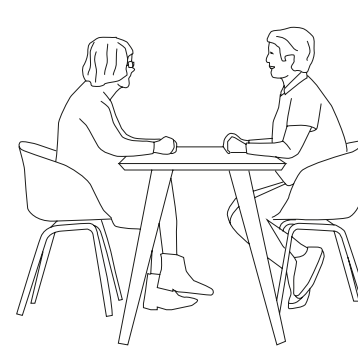
There is a lack of social opportunities within society for bringing different age groups together on an equal basis.

Engagement tools during this research supported the intergenerational dialogue by having a shared purpose.

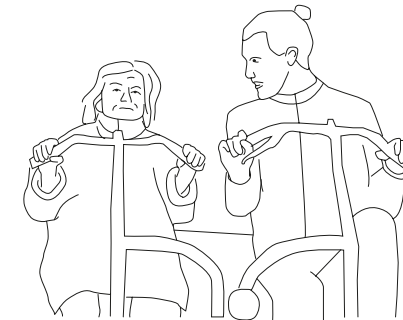
Educational games can be used to break down the age barrier between generations and to create a better understanding of what it means to grow older. The

following design principles can be considered when bringing different generations - with an age gap of

approximately 50 years - together:



(a) Stimulate balanced dialogues that relates to people's interests and not their age.



(b) A joyful and new experience for both generations.



(c) Learning each other's worlds through thought-provoking questions.



Example: The Age of No Retirement (2012) is a UK platform that develops new strategies to help businesses and communities towards an age-inclusive way of thinking and intergenerational action.

Figure 47. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018)  
Third recommendation poster. Poster. Source: authors own.



**“Seeing  
Timeless Rebels” could  
be seen as a movement that  
challenges people’s perceptions  
of ageing by supporting the rights  
of older people in visual media  
and inspire intergenerational  
engagements.**

### **5.6. Design concepts**

The recommendations cannot be seen as one fixed solution of how older people should be portrayed but it is rather exploring how we can improve people’s perspectives about ageing. Based on the themes and participants’ reflections during a second informal workshop I propose three design concepts that each embodies a recommendation, which are visualised in Figure 48. Holistically, all design concepts together can contribute to a change in people’s perspectives about ageing through a variety of contexts e.g. local councils, advertisement agencies or in education. The design concepts can inspire local organisations to contribute to a “Seeing Timeless Rebels” movement. At a national level the concepts could inspire the creation of an ‘ageing rights embassy’ to raise the profile of ageing rights and highlight the need for more appropriate visual representations in the media.



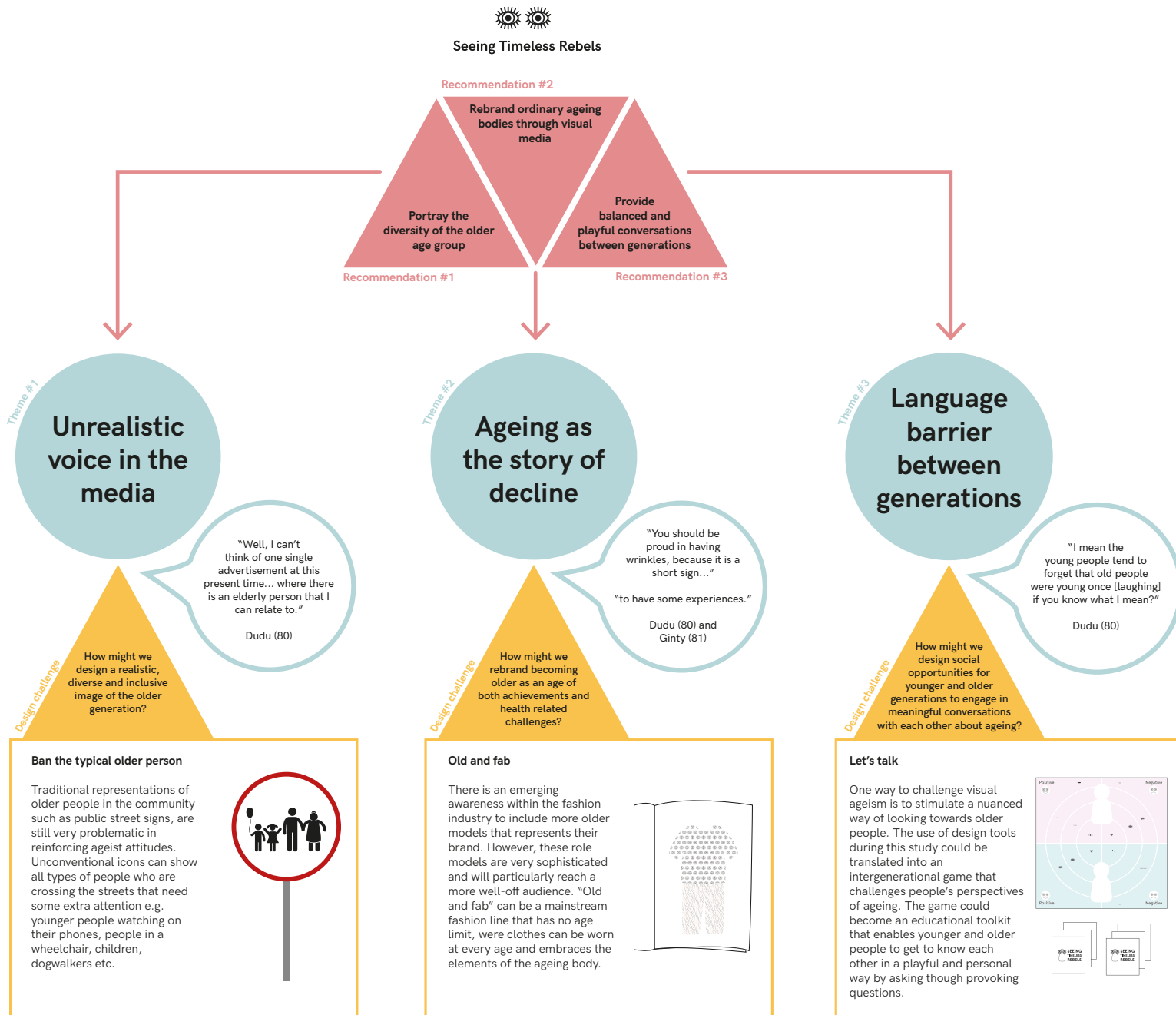


Figure 48. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Themes and design concepts. Illustration. Source: authors own.

## 5.7. Summary

Through visual and thematic analysis, the following emerging themes were identified:

- Unrealistic voice in the media
- Ageing as the story of decline
- Language barrier between generations

The lessons learned from participatory practice using engagement tools were:

- Visual engagement tools can function as a co-analysing tool
- Engagement tools can evoke curiosity with participants
- Engagement tools can contribute to group dynamics

The following recommendations are provided when representing ageing or older people:

### 1. Portray the diversity of the older age group:

- Represent an empowering and accessible voice for the older age group.

- Stretch the boundaries of conventional activities for older people.

- Show an equal balance of male and female models.

### 2. Rebrand ordinary ageing body types through visual media:

- Avoid an artificially youthful appearance in advertisements.
- Show different models e.g. range of sizes, natural hair colour, wrinkly skin, age spots, hearing aid, less mobile etc.
- Embrace a colourful, modern and age-neutral fashion style.

### 3. Provide balanced and playful conversations between generations:

- Learning each other's worlds through thought-provoking questions.
- A joyful and new experience for both generations.
- Stimulate balanced dialogues that relates to people's interests and not their age.

Chapter six

# Discussion and conclusion

## Chapter 6: Discussion and conclusion

### 6.1. Discussion

This study aimed to have a better understanding of people's experiences of ageing and their perspectives of older people. The objective of this study was to provide practical recommendations based on older people's (age 80+) and adolescents (age 14) subjective ageing experiences to improve the visual representation of older people in the media i.e. advertisements targeted at older people. Furthermore, the study identified key insights about the participatory process using engagement tools. The findings suggest that portraying the diversity of the older age group, rebranding ordinary ageing body types through visual media and providing balanced and playful conversations between generations would support more positive perspectives on ageing. In addition, reflecting on the engagement tools applied in the intergenerational and participatory process, they can function as a tool for co-analysis, evoke curiosity with participants, and contribute to group dynamics.

The findings of this research are in line with previous research (Vasil and Wass, 1993, Roy and Harwood, 1997, Ylanne, 2015, Edstrom, 2018) and provide evidence that the media is failing to represent a relatable image for both younger (age 14) and older people (age 80+). All participants chose to depict a woman with an average age of 75 as a typical older person, which suggests that women are more stereotyped than men. Even though the older participants acknowledge there is a positive change in the portrayals of older people just as the research of Lee, Carpenter and Meyers (2006) both generations still feel very underrepresented and misrepresented by the media which has to be acknowledged and addressed.

The complexity of the ageing experience, from both male and female perspectives, needs to be recognised when portraying older people. The findings of this study provide evidence that age stereotypes do exist in Scottish culture and need to



be challenged in order to reverse negative attitudes towards ageing. This supports the research of Richards, Warren and Gott (2012) that portrays both “alternative” positive and negative images of ageing. The recommendations and the set of principles can be considered when producing new images of older people to visually communicate ageing e.g. in advertisements of care.

However, we need to consider the meaning behind the portrayal of older people when confronted with public images of ageing (Williams, Wadleigh and Ylanne, 2010, Rose, 2013, Hall, 2013). At the outset of this research, I thought that the UK elderly warning signs on the streets were a form of ageism. However, as Dudu (80) and Ginty (81) shared, they did not feel represented by the portrayal but they appreciated having their needs made visible in the community. This indicates that it is necessary for older people to be involved in the design process as active participants by providing personal insights.

The participatory approach of this study supports the argument of Yip, Sobel, Pitt, Lee, Chen, Nasu and Pina (2017) that calls

for a balanced partnership between generations in a design process. However, I believe the way you bring generations together needs to be critically examined in order to generate a valuable outcome of changing perceptions towards each other. This study suggests that good facilitation, a balanced level of participation and, most importantly, stimulating a joyful and new experience between generations are crucial in order to reduce future internalisation of age stereotypes.

Furthermore, the study is using a participatory approach between the researcher and the participants of the research project. However, it can be criticised that involving non-designers in a participatory process can never be balanced or equal as the participants do not contain the years of trainings and understanding to be fully identified as a “collaborator”. Eventually the researcher, myself, is making an interpretation of the data as part of this study and this does not feel fully participatory (McIntyre, 2008). Instead of a “participant” they can also be seen as a “key informer” of the study as they do not carry the full responsibility of the study. Therefore, the level and meaning of being a participant within a participatory design



process needs to be clearly articulated in order to understand the power relations between the researcher and the people studied.

An important example is my questioning of whether the participants gave fully informed consent before the actual participatory research process had begun. While I was in no doubt that the participants understood the information relating to the ethically sensitive aspects of the study e.g. protection of their data, images and ensure quotes were not identifiable. I was less sure whether they understood the planned activities. Despite my best efforts in describing the research activities and through peer review, it was clear from feedback after the workshop that the participants remained unsure about what to expect. As Dudu (80) mentioned after the first participatory workshop:

*DU: I actually quite enjoyed it much to my surprise*

*YO: Yeah? You were a little bit sceptical? Before? Or?*

*DU: I mean when you first met us at our home I thought it would be just sitting down and asking us*

*a few questions so I had an idea when we had our boards (referring to the persona canvas used in the workshop) here that it was going to be something, you know, something similar to this, and uhm, I've done workshops before in my work so I had an idea what it was like but it was nice to meet the younger people, I have enjoyed that I must admit...*

As Dudu (80) described, she had no idea what the interview or the workshop was going to look like although this was explained in the information sheet. This supports Boser (2006:12) suggestion that:

*"participants cannot be given informed consent to research activities in advance, because the full scope of the process of the research is not determined in advance."*

The study developed over time and was a continuous action - reflection cycle where the activities and questions build upon what was learned in earlier stages. Being transparent



about the exploratory direction of the project and reflecting on the research outcomes together with the participants was my strategy to equally balance the power relations between the participants and myself. In addition, this explorative and participatory journey also allowed participants and myself to be surprised by its process. During a second, more informal workshop I asked the participants to share their reflections of their involvement in the research project. Dudu (80), Ginty (81) and Grandpa J (14) explain they were positively surprised by talking openly about each other's perspectives and experiences of growing older.

*DU: I've actually enjoyed these sessions because it really has been very nice uhm, I mean, we don't tend to think about these sort of things and if we do, we probably think very negatively, as I say, we don't talk to the young ones so you tend to look at the media and you think negative thoughts because of the media, because my own grandchildren aren't that close, I don't have such close relationships, I do, but I don't, if you*

*understand. But, uhm, it's been really nice, it's been quite nice listening to them, to hear them as well.*

*GI: Because within your social life your mixing with people of your own age.*

*YO: Did you learn maybe, new things about growing older?*

*GJ: I think so, like when you're younger you tend to think about other people in your head but with this, it's like you can see that other people are thinking about it as well, like what's wrong, and what's right so that was cool to see.*

I could not know the effect of bringing younger and older people together in this context beforehand because this was also a new experience for myself. This does not mean to suggest that researchers should avoid exploratory research approaches to limit uncertainties for the researcher and participants, rather they should acknowledge the level of informed participation within an intergenerational and participatory research process.

## 6.2. Constraints

### *Validity*

I organised a second, informal workshop with the same participant as before (Ginty, 81, Dudu, 80, Boo, 14 and Grandpa J, 14) to share the themes and to develop the design concepts together. Validating the outcomes of the study is one of the strengths of qualitative research (Creswell and Miller, 2000) because participants have the opportunity to comment on the research findings and share feedback about the outcomes. I informed the participants a week before the date by email with a programme (Appendix 1:20). We discussed the themes and design concepts (Figure 49) supported by a poster, which can be seen in Appendix 2:37-39. In addition, I gave each participant a postcard to share their individual feedback (Appendix 1:21). According to Gray and Malins (2004:136) this “communicative validation” is to ensure the situation and views interpreted by the researcher are not misrepresented. In addition, discussing the recommendations and outcomes together supports shared ownership of the research data between the researcher and



Figure 49. Lefèvre, Y. M. (2018) Second workshop to validate themes. Images. Source: authors own.





participants (Hawkins, 2015). All participants were provided with the results of the thesis to ensure that the researcher does not leave the site without giving back to the people who volunteered their time to take part.

### *Limitations*

Recruiting younger participants was a challenge and affected the recruitment process by changing the age groups from 16 and over to 14. The restricted school schedules of adolescents need to be considered in the early stages of recruitment. In addition, I was looking for depth when collecting the final data and therefore I chose a smaller number of participants (five people) and specific age range (80+ and age 14). I did not involve the age groups between 15-80, which would produce different recommendations as they probably hold other perspectives towards ageing. In addition, the functionalities of the recommendations need to be explored more in depth with practitioners and key informers in order to make a real contribution to changing people's perspectives towards older people in their everyday lives.

### *Generalisability*

The recommendations of this study are specifically related to a small local community in Moray. The study provides a unique and qualitative account of ageing perspectives in the Highlands of Scotland. The activities, methods, participants, objectives and research techniques are all particular to this specific context and therefore not generalisable (McIntyre, 2008:49). However, the findings of this study can inspire other researchers who are interested in the same topic to take the results further. However, the learnings from this study is not a definitive framework to replicate another PAR project.

### **6.3. Implications**

The recommendations produced in this study are particularly valuable to organisations who want to reduce the stigma of ageing. The recommendations can be useful for practitioners e.g. senior services, advertisement agencies, schools and communities, who wish to challenge people's perspectives of ageing and promote positive attitudes towards growing older.



As I am not experienced of working in the field of ageing on a practical level, I asked the professionals who I interviewed in the beginning of this research to share their reflections about the usage of the recommendations. Donald of Scottish Care responded about the difficulties of visually representing care:

*"I do not know of anyone working in the area of your recommendations in a coordinated and systematic manner. That suggests to me that they are both appropriate and necessary. For Scottish Care we would seek to review our imaging and presentation although we try to portray positive ageing in all we do. This would relate to use of language, representations on website, social media and publications of positivity around age. One of our difficulties is that our membership delivers care and so often images of care are passive and transactional. However, we try to present care as relational and reciprocal."*

Furthermore, Anne, co-ordinator of Highland Senior Citizen Network shared how she would use the recommendations:

*"Though they are not new concepts or ideas to Highland Senior Citizens Network, it is good to have them laid out so clearly and certainly something that we can share with the trustees and include in development plans and funding applications for development work. [...] I think your recommendations would be very useful for a group to consider when developing their own intergenerational activity."*

She applied the recommendations to sense check her presentation for High School students about intergenerational work:

*"I had to prepare a display for the afternoon so I was very aware of the need to catch people's attention in a visual way, and I am pleased to see that I covered all three recommendations with my display materials!"*

This shows the importance of exploring the implications of the recommendations more in depth. As most PAR projects, the people directly involved within the process are influenced by



the outcome and has little impact outside the project (Berghold and Thomas, 2012). Therefore, additional co-design sessions with different stakeholders need to be organised to explore the practical application of the recommendations. Ultimately, the design principles can be part of a long-term National strategy to visually challenge people's perceived perspectives of ageing through different levels of society. For digital designers these recommendations need to be considered when designing digital platforms or products for older people. This could relate to interaction design elements such as icons, and more broadly to brand and marketing visual materials that support any product or service targeted at older people. Furthermore, the recommendations are based on people's personal subjective perceptions and can strengthen the position of future design concepts by sharing a personal voice.

#### **6.4. Further research**

Further research can explore how the recommendations produced in this study relate to the visual representation of

other marginalised groups for example, due to racism or gender inequality. Research could include different age groups because I deliberately choosed two extreem age groups with an age gap of 60 years. Other research could measure people's perspectives of ageing in relation to their geographical locations as the context is situated in a rural town in the Highlands of Scotland. Specifically, further design research could focus on the particitpatory practice and the impact of engagement tools within an intergenerational context.

Beyond the focus on visual representation and intergenerational design research, my wider interest is using my design practice to undertake research that contributes to the quality of life of older people. To this end, I have begun a Design Research position at The Innovation School in Forres. The research project seeks to bring communities and a local care home in Elgin together by developing a rights-based approach through co-design sessions with residents, staff, families and the wider community.

## 6.5. Conclusion

The growing elderly population demands services for older people to innovate their strategies. However, there is a lack of awareness how ageing in general is communicated to the public. The misrepresentation and underrepresentation of older people in the media, e.g. advertisements of care, only contributes to a fear of ageing.

Therefore, this explorative study set out to create a change in people's perceptions and to open up the discussion about ageing to a broader audience. The study proposes a set of recommendations to improve the visual representation of older people. Furthermore, this study shares how engagement tools enhance the participatory process.

Returning back to Boo (14), one of the younger participants who was afraid of falling for older age stereotypes as stated in the opening quote of this thesis (p.I), shared after the workshop that she "learnt that old people aren't that bad". In addition, Dudu (80) had not perceived the elderly warning sign on the streets as a form of visual ageism but now, after participating

in this project, it made her think differently. This means that an intergenerational and participatory process has inspired both age groups to rethink their perspectives of ageing.

The set of recommendations can be considered for professionals who wish to reduce the stigma around ageing and challenge people's perspectives of growing older. We are living in a time where gender neutrality is becoming part of the political agenda should it then also be possible to live in a time without the societal boundaries of age differences?

Seeing Timeless Rebels offers therefore insight into how society can radically change the way older people are represented in the media. Furthermore, this research can inspire intergenerational engagements to stimulate positive perceptions towards ageing.

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## Y



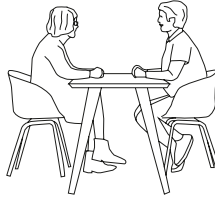


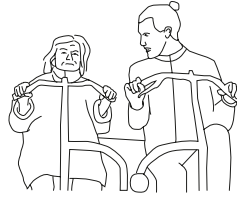
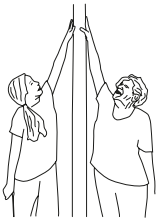



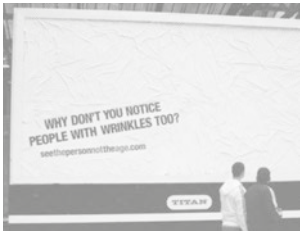

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|---|---|--|
| <p><b>Recommendation #1:</b><br/>Portray the diversity of the older age group</p> <p style="text-align: right;">P. 85</p>   | <p><b>Recommendation #2:</b><br/>Rebrand ordinary ageing bodies through visual media</p> <p style="text-align: right;">P. 86</p>  | <p><b>Recommendation #3:</b><br/>Provide balanced and playful conversations between generations</p> <p style="text-align: right;">P. 87</p>  |
|  <p><b>Go Grandriders</b> (2013) is a documentary, about a group of elders with the averagely at 81 years old, going on a roadtrip in Taiwan with their motorcycle organized by the Hongdao foundation, (gograndriders.com).</p> |  <p><b>Jade Beal</b> (2013) created a photo series capturing the beauty of the bodies of elders (www.jadebeall.com).</p>  |  <p><b>New Old</b> (2017) was a pop-up exhibition that explored the potential for design to enhance the experience of our later lives (designmuseum.org/whats-on/pop-up-exhibitions/new-old).</p> |
|  <p><b>Advanced Style</b> (2012) is an online fashion blog that captures the style of older people (www.advanced.style).</p>   |  <p><b>In This Place 206</b> (2016) is a project about gentrification and the loss of queer space and memory in the Capitol Hill neighbourhood of Seattle (www.inthisplace206.com).</p> |  <p><b>Humanitas Deventer</b> (2012) opened up their care home to provide students housing to socialise with the residents (www.humanitasdeventer.nl/women/humanitas-woonstudenten).</p>          |
|  <p><b>Kwiek</b> (2013) is a urban exercise route that uses street furniture to support people to do exercises in their own neighbourhoods (kwiekbeweegroute.nl).</p>   |  <p><b>Grannies Finest</b> (2006) is a social enterprise that sells handmade knitted products made by older people to combat loneliness (www.grannysfinest.com).</p>                   |  <p><b>Seeing Timeless rebels</b> (2018) workshop that aims to challenge people's perceptions of older people (futurehealthandwellbeing.org/seeing-timeless-rebels).</p>                         |
|  <p>Background image: Lefevre, Y. (2018) Sign board in Forres.</p>   |  <p>Background image: Newhaven Agency (2009) 'See the person, not the age' anti ageism awareness campaign commissioned by the Scottish Government.</p>                                |  <p>Background image: NIEUW/OUW (2017) is a Dutch co-design project where young and old work together to share the personal heritage of older people (www.facebook.com/nieuwoudtalent/).</p>    |