

Towards Sustainable Transition of Age-Friendly Community Centres Based on Transition Design

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Abstract

The world's population is ageing and countries are urgently seeking new solutions to ageing issues. According to Irwin (2015), Transition Design is a new design proposition for a rapidly changing society based on thinking about the concept of the "long term" and the idea of global localism, placing the natural world in a more macro context, and advocating a more systematic approach to the transition to a more sustainable future for a design-led society. In the context of active ageing, this PhD research aims to explore how Transition Design guides Design Research and Practice, taking the example of the sustainable transition of age-friendly community centres, from the vision of stakeholders, and the perspective of designers and policymakers, incorporating stakeholders, especially older people, into the design decision-making process, recognizing their entire lifestyle, and involving the infrastructure reimagining, including the products, services, environment, and social systems involved. Through wicked problem in age-friendly community centres, stakeholder relations, historical evolution of wicked problem, future visions, and designing system interventions, discussing the transitional design strategy and future vision for age-friendly community centres. The transition framework and design strategies for sustainable inclusive age-friendly community centres under Transition Design core tenets will be addressed. This will enrich the theoretical and practical basis of Transition Design and have significant implications for the sustainable development of ageing communities.

Keywords: Transition Design; Sustainable Design, Social Design, System innovation, Inclusive; Age-friendly community; Community centres; Sustainable transitions; Design strategy

Introduction

In 1972, planner Horst Rittel identified a complex class of "wicked" problems for which the traditional design process was inadequate for solving (Rittel & Webber, 1973). "Wicked problems," such as climate change, biodiversity loss, forced migration, natural resource depletion, and the widening gap between rich and poor etc. require new approaches. Wicked problems affect multiple stakeholders at multiple system levels (Palmieri et al., 2022). Today, population ageing has become a new "wicked problem". The ageing trend is spreading rapidly worldwide. In the United Nations (UN) World Population Prospects 2019 (UN, 2019), it states that by 2050, one in six people in the world will be over age 65 (16%), up from one in eleven in 2019 (9%), see Figure 1. Ageing has become one of the major social issues that countries need to address, and will have a direct impact on economic development, policy planning, infrastructure, social security and many other levels. Meanwhile, cities and communities are also facing a huge test. The contradiction between the proliferation of the number of elderly people and the construction of local infrastructure and service is also becoming increasingly evident. Existing community living spaces are no longer able to meet the

growing needs of older people, and the environment and social services constructed without an all-ages inclusive perspective have caused many inconveniences to older people's lives (Fan et al., 2017; Guo & Pan, 2013; Hu, 2020; Wang & He, 2021). Therefore, the need for age-friendly transitions in communities and spaces becomes urgent, and the systematic and sustainable nature of the transition approach becomes a key factor in measuring the success of the transition.

Scholars have generally suggested that design is an important part of integrating spaces into communities (as cited in Shin & Planning, 2006; Tubbs, 2012). However, there is limited research on the involvement of design in the sustainable transformation of communities and community spaces for older people. Transition Design (Transition Design) is a practice and knowledge that originates from other disciplines and incorporates their principles, and envisages the mediating role of design itself to facilitate multi-level and multi-stage socio-technical transitions (Palmieri et al., 2022). In transition studies, Transition Design is of great relevance and necessity, as it aims to move from understanding to action. Unfortunately, to date, the academic and non-academic fields know very little about the effects and implementation of this new discipline in practice and always end up with an unfulfilled promise. The role, value and potential of transitions has been well defined and explained as the design discipline has increasingly focused on Transition Design. The subject has also been mentioned in several academic literature and conferences. Nevertheless, more importantly, only a very limited number of academic case studies can be found that implement and validate methods and tools, thus validating the potential of Transition Design (van Selm & Mulder, 2019). Transition Design approaches require a highly interdisciplinarity, collaboration and are rooted in an understanding of how change manifests itself in complex systems, coupled with a vision of a sustainable future that expands the problematic framework and therefore requires further discussion and debate. Designers working in the field of social innovation have developed important new approaches from fields such as sociology, organisational science and business that can and should be expanded and deepened in the emerging field of Transition Design (Irwin, 2015). The transition of future communities is inseparable from the involvement of Transition Design.

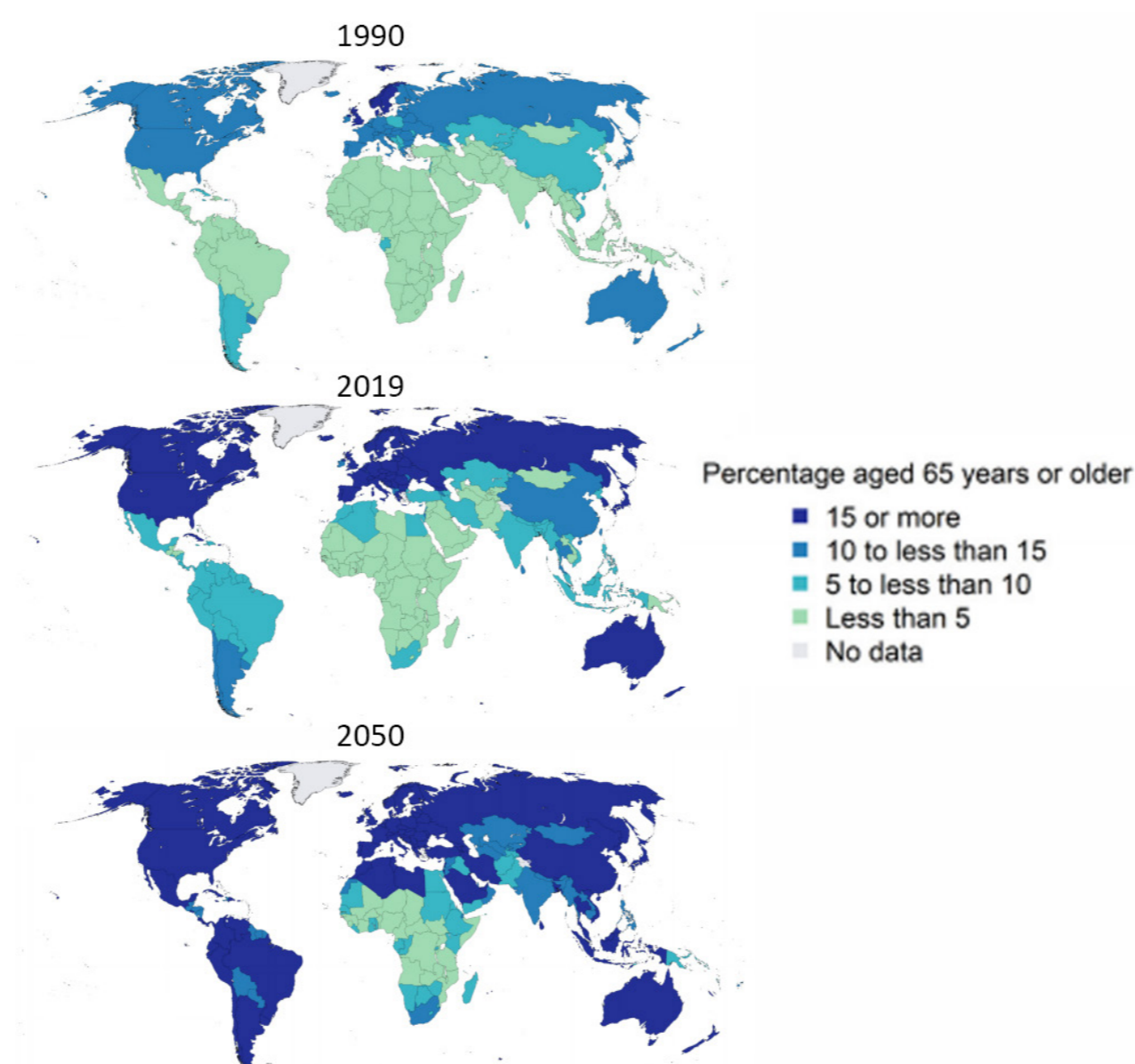


Figure 1. Percentage of population aged 65 years or over in 1990, 2019 and 2050, according to the medium-variant projection (UN, 2019).

Aim and Objectives

Identify the wicked problems of Age-Friendly Community Centres (age-friendly community centres)—the status quo, problems, and historical evolution—and make theoretical contributions to the relations and approaches between stakeholders' transition products, services, environments, and social systems to propose transition framework and design strategies for age-friendly community centres. To explore how Transition Design can engage in design research and practice to influence the planning and design of age-friendly community centres, and how stakeholders can actively participate in the design process and play a key role in providing a sustainable vision for finding new paradigms for system-level transitions in design-oriented social transformation and thinking change to make our future community environment more inclusive and sustainable.

Methodology

Based on the core tenets of Transition Design, this research will be divided into five sections: Wicked Problem in age-friendly community centres (data collection and data analysis), Stakeholder Relations, Historical Evolution of Wicked Problem, Future Visions and Designing System Interventions (transition framework and design strategies). The data collection consisted of two simultaneous parts: theoretical and practical. Data analysis will be based on different types of data.

Theoretical Part: Literature research. Practical Part: (1) Workshops (based on Transition Design approach, and the results such as problem map, stakeholder relations map,

stakeholder concerns, future visions, transition pathway, and potential projects etc. will be mapped and analysed as the practical data sources for the study). (2) Interviews (qualitative analysis). (3) Survey research (quantitative analysis). Stakeholder Relations, Historical Evolution of Wicked Problem, Future Visions and Designing System Interventions (transition framework and design strategies) will be constructed based on the analysis of wicked problem. The age-friendly community centres transition framework and strategies will be driven by the future vision, and proposed by combining the Age-Friendly Communities (AFC) domains and suggested spatial indicators (Davern et al., 2020) with the Design for Sustainability Evolutionary Framework (Ceschin & Gaziulusoy, 2016), based on the World Health Organization (WHO)'s framework Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide (WHO, 2007).

The Age-friendly Community Centres Transition Framework

The framework first envisages a sustainable future vision for design-oriented age-friendly community centres, and subsequently elaborates a transition strategy for age-friendly community centres from the individual to the holistic, and from technology to human-centred concepts from a design perspective, see Figure 2.

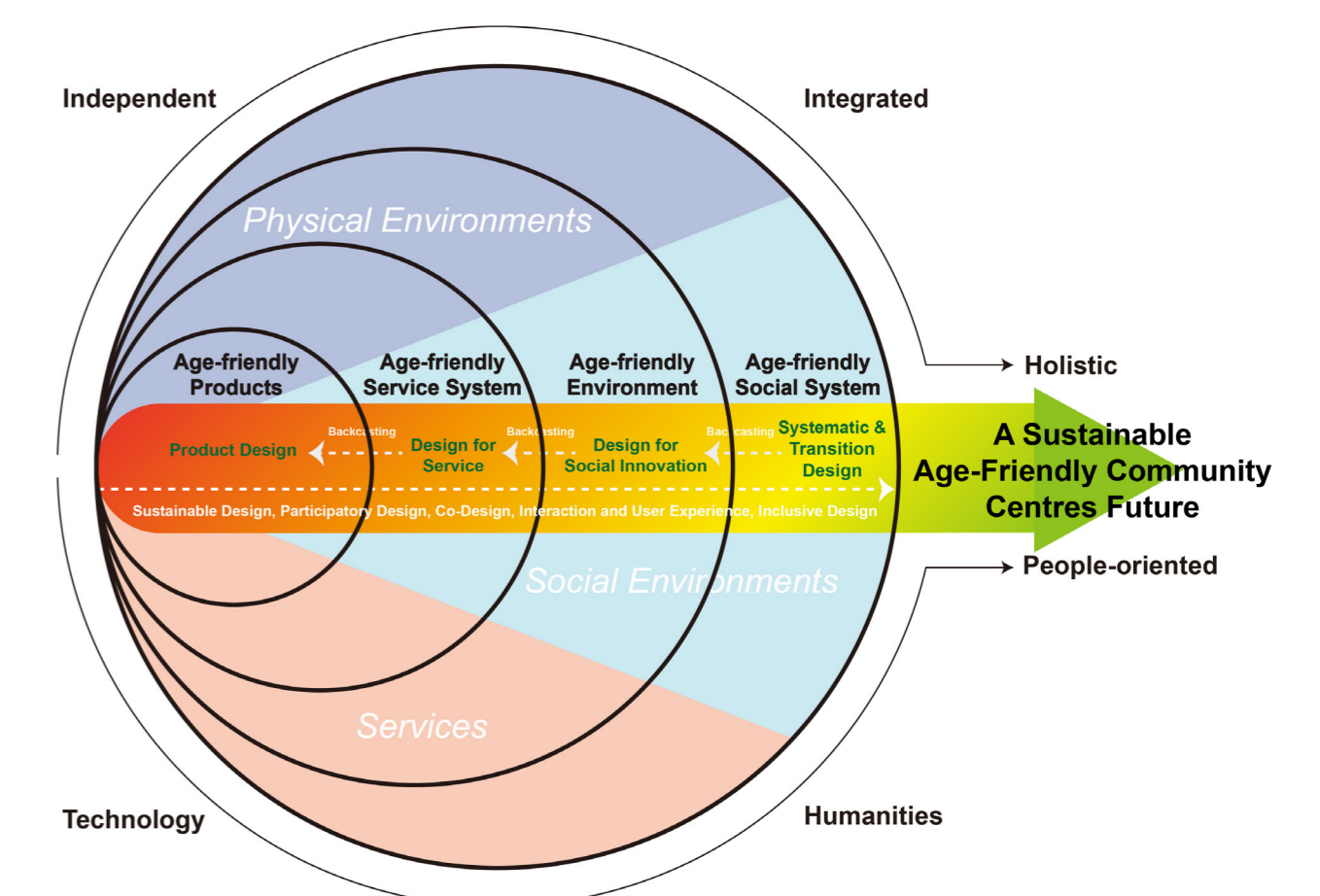


Figure 2. Age-friendly Community Centres Transition Framework (Author, 2023).

Case Studies

TRANSITION DESIGN WORKSHOP Age-Friendly Community Centres in 2050, CTU in Prague, Czech Republic (2022)



Transition Design Workshop 2 - Yangfangdian Community, Central Academy of Fine Arts, China (2023)



Transition Design Workshop 3 - Chunxuanmaoheyuan Community, Gengdan Institute of Beijing University of Technology, China (2023)



Conclusion

In summary, applying the Transition Design approach to address the ageing population, and using the transformation of age-friendly community centres as a fulcrum to design a bottom-up solution strategy for older people based on a long-term vision to radically improve their lives, change their lifestyles to be healthier, more inclusive and sustainable, and explore new solution paradigms will be the focus of this study, and will also contribute to Transition Design theory and the ultimate goal of transition to a sustainable future.