

Lifelong Ageing

A SAACY Workshop for Early Career Researchers and Local and National Charities

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CHALLENGING AGEISM
AGEING IS A LIFELONG PROCESS
SUFFERING COMES FROM ILLNESS
HOW TO FLOURISH WITH ILLNESS
CREATIVITY CAN HELP WITH LIFE TRANSITIONS
OVERCOME BARRIERS
BROADEN THE DEFINITION OF ART
WHAT SHOULD A HEALTHCARE SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?
ARTS LIFTS YOU!
POTENTIAL TO THRIVE
IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTION

AGE & DISEASE SEEN AS PREVENTABLE & UNDESIRABLE STATE
SHAME ASSOCIATED WITH AGEING
DIFFICULTY TO REACH OUT

DIET & EXERCISE AFFECT NEUROGENESIS
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CAN EXTEND THE HEALTHY LIFESPAN
EXERCISE, RATHER THAN AGE, AFFECTS NUCLEI SHAPE
AGENCY
DEMENTIA IS A DISEASE OF MIDDLE AGE

RURAL ISLAND AGEING
WHERE I LIVE IS WHO I AM
IDENTITY & PLACE ATTACHMENT
CONFIDENCE
WE NEED A SPACE FOR DESIGN BETWEEN LISTENING & PERFORMING

AGEING INEQUALITIES
ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES
INCREASED RISK OF MULTIMORBIDITY
EMPATHY
INFORM POLICIES
SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS IMPACT ON OUR BIOLOGY
METABOLOMIC AGEING
BOTH A TOOL & A BRIDGE
PEOPLE INTERNALISE AGEISM

WE ALL HAVE A UNIQUE HEARING TRAJECTORY
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
CONNECTION
SOCIALISATION
CO-DESIGN ACTIVITIES
NEW PARTNERSHIPS
LINK UNIVERSITY & LOCAL COMMUNITY

COLONIALISM CREATED SYSTEMIC INEQUALITIES
IT HASN'T CEASED!
AFFECTS AGEING
HEALTH
FAMILY
FAITH
BRITISH PAKISTANI PATIENT-DECISIONS ARE DISTRIBUTED WITH THEIR FAMILY NETWORK
EVOLVING STORY ABOUT WHO WE ARE

COMING TOGETHER
FEMINIST & ANTI-RACIST AGEING POLICIES
ELDER-LED ACTIVISM
INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTION & RECIPROCITY
SENSE OF SELF-PURPOSE
NARRATIVE CO-CREATION WITH CARE PROFESSIONALS

MAKING THE MOST OF LATER LIFE
WE NEED A SPACE FOR DESIGN BETWEEN LISTENING & PERFORMING

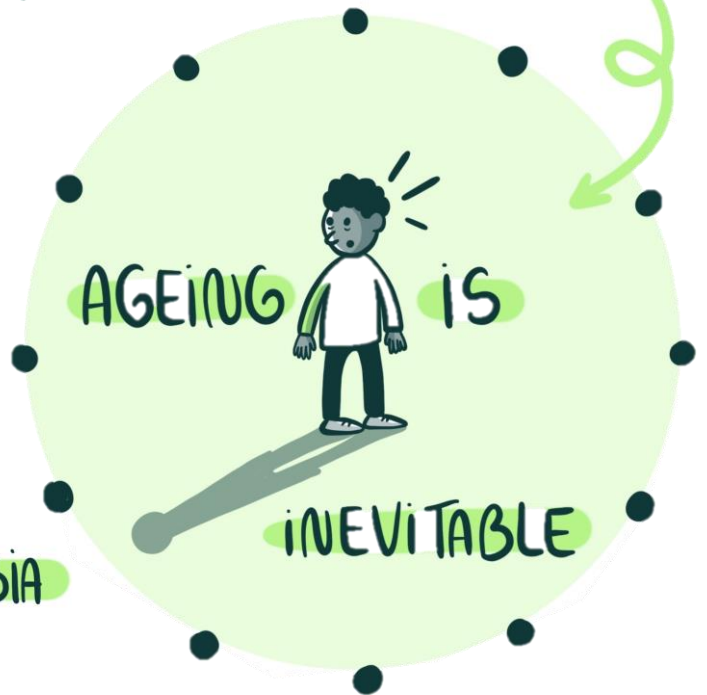


SUFFERING
COMES FROM

SHAME
ASSOCIATED
WITH AGEING

EXERCISE, RATHER THAN AGE,
AFFECTS NUCLEI SHAPE

AGEISM IS A
PARADOX



AGEING PHOBIA



WILL I BE ABLE
TO AFFORD
BEING OLD?

SOCIAL vs.
MEDICAL
PROBLEMS

INEQUALITIES
IN PENSIONS

Sketchnotes based on conversations on the day and from other SAACY events, produced by our live illustrator Camille Aubry.

The SAACY Research Programme

The Sciences of Ageing and the Culture of Youth (SAACY) is a research programme on ageing funded by a UK Research and Innovation Future Leaders Fellowship. It looks at how we talk and think about ageing, in scientific research, medical practice and wider culture, and how the way we do so can affect our experiences of ageing, the meaning we assign to growing older, and the decisions we make about older people.

A core aim of SAACY is to tackle cultural pessimism about ageing. Such pessimism endangers intergenerational solidarity, it shapes perceptions of the worth and value of individual human beings, and it directs decisions about care, research and funding priorities. SAACY wants to inform practices and policy development in these areas.

Lifelong Ageing

As part of the SAACY programme, we ran an event called Lifelong Ageing at Science Gallery London in May 2023. This was a workshop for early career researchers (ECRs) and representatives from local and national charities and other third-sector organisations focussed on the theme of ageing as a lifelong process.

Through a range of ECR talks and opportunities to network, we wanted to start conversations between third-sector partners invested in policy-making and up-and-coming researchers working in this field. We invited specific non-academic attendees based on the ECRs presenting as well as more general representation from the field, including from our Project Partners and charities based locally in the King's 'home' boroughs of Westminster, Lambeth and Southwark.

AGEING IS A
LIFELONG PROCESS



How did the project come about?

The project emerged as a direct result of a Policy Lab which the SAACY team ran with the Policy Institute at King's in September 2022. This brought together a diverse group of stakeholders to consider how we can shift the understanding of the ageing process from something bad that happens at the end of your life to a lifelong process of change and development. One of the key next steps emerging out of the lab was the increased need for productive conversations between academics and those working in charities and other third-sector organisations, primarily because charity partners desire, and are equipped, to help shape academic research projects.

“Thank you so much for this event. It has achieved all that I wanted from it and so much more!

— anonymous feedback

Aims

The day had a series of aims aligned to the ethos of the SAACY programme around inspiring discipline- and sector-crossing conversations. These aims included:

- to foster dialogic collaborations between ECRs working on 'ageing as a lifelong process' and interested charities and other third-sector bodies
- to establish an impact-focused network of ECRs and potential collaborators keen to invest time and energy in a lifecourse approach, a field which is currently fairly dispersed
- to give a forum for ECRs working in this field to communicate their work to interested third-sector attendees, primarily hoping that emerging collaborations will optimise the impact of existing research and inform future research based on co-creation
- to offer an opportunity for conversation between national and local charities, permitting local organisations to have national influence and national organisations to hear local concerns and innovations
- to encourage ECRs to discover the impact potential of their research through public engagement with external stakeholders and to develop an impact programme based on such engagement

Ways of Maximising Impact

We were able to hire a **live illustrator** to document the themes and mood of the conversations on the day. This is an invaluable way of collecting audience responses and core themes in an accessible, engaging way. Images created are being used to illustrate this report and can be employed in a variety of ways by the SAACY team in the future to articulate key ideas.

We employed a student **evaluation assistant** through the King's Talent Bank (a recruitment agency for temporary staff, not affiliated to King's). This allowed the SAACY team to focus on running and participating in the day by having one person dedicated to collecting responses from participants through a reflective diary and one-to-one conversations. The data collected has given us a good idea of the success (or otherwise) of the event and what we could have done differently. It also offered the selected student recording the day invaluable experience.

Previous experience has demonstrated that we were likely to get far better uptake if we could offer **travel and accommodation bursaries** to those coming from outside London. We were able to offer bursaries to charity and third-sector participants from Scotland, Yorkshire, Cambridge and the South Coast of England.

The SAACY team were keen to make the Lifelong Ageing event an engaging workshop for all attendees regardless of their skills and experience in attending academic conferences or conversing across disciplines. A significant amount of effort was expended in making communication about the event clear and accessible, and in fostering the **ethos of availability and openness** which we hoped the event would take on. Feedback and other evidence suggested that, predominantly, we succeeded at this, but we want to note that it takes significant effort and required one of us to be the consistent point of contact. This also involves acting as a networker at the event itself, directing people towards others with similar interests and curating initial conversations.



Participants

ECR speakers were chosen from applications to an open call and so were self-selectingly interested in speaking to those outside the academy and using their research to achieve meaningful change. Charity and third-party participants were either existing contacts from among the Project Partners of the SAACY programme, had participated in the Policy Lab from which Lifelong Ageing arose, or were approached by the SAACY team either because they were recommended by some of our speakers or because SAACY identified their organisation as relevant to the research programme.

Speakers were asked to present in a way that was accessible to those outside the academy (more of a TED talk than an academic talk). Charity and third-sector attendees were primed to engage with up-and-coming researchers and to provide feedback based on their experience on the ground.

We gathered a range of speakers from departments as diverse as Neuroscience, Anthropology, Music, Medicine and English, all working on projects that take a lifecourse perspective.

Our charity and third-sector attendees similarly represented a diversity of local and national organisations from intergenerational nursing home projects and older people's exercise initiatives to national think tanks and research charities.

We also had representation from other ECRs as well as the Science Museum Group at our Research Marketplace during the lunch break. Through a series of stalls, people could engage attendees about their ideas in a less formal setting. For example, one ECR presented their work on the Nottingham Extended Activities of Daily Life scale using, of all things, Kerplunk!

“what a great event [...] really good presentations, really interesting audience, great coffee time chats and so well organized!

— follow-up email from a presenter

AGE & DISEASE SEEN AS PREVENTABLE & UNDESIRABLE STATE



The Day Itself

On the day, we had four sets of three or four talks, loosely grouped around four emerging themes.

We started with talks on challenging ageism, including how long-term health conditions can affect how old we seem to ourselves and others, and the importance of everyday creativity in later life.

Then a series of talks on making the most of later life brought together ideas of neuroplasticity and the importance of exercise for cell nuclei with research on gendered rural ageing and new musical wellbeing technologies for people living with dementia.

Our lunchtime research marketplace brought together ideas of everyday independence, health insurance in east Asia, and musical technologies for dementia patients plus colleagues from the Science Museum Group.

A session on ageing inequalities detailed the factors behind the way that adverse childhood experiences or increasing hearing loss can each affect someone as they get older, and how metabolomics is able to trace the effects of such inequalities at a molecular level.

Finally, our coming together panel addressed postcolonial literary approaches, family and faith in British Pakistani ageing and how narrative might let us reconceptualise ‘successful ageing’.

Each set of talks was followed by at least twenty minutes of discussion time, as well as much needed tea and coffee. During these, conversations revolved around the questions: What does it mean to flourish as we age? How can technological, intersectional or intergenerational approaches help ageing research? And, most importantly, how can we make our research relevant to people's everyday realities?

There was a really great buzz in the room on the day and conversations allowed professionals working at national and local levels in the community to question and inspire the academics in the room. Although from such a wide range of disciplines and approaches, many of the talks resonated with each other in meaningful ways and produced interesting parallels.

What was the project's impact?

We have a group of people who have come together to show support for a lifecourse approach towards ageing. Many conversations took place between the academics presenting and charity and other third-sector audience members, and we plan to follow up some of the possible avenues of collaboration and co-creation.

In the meantime, we have a mailing list for those interested in ageing as a lifelong process.



Certain charity and other third-sector attendees pledged to make specific changes of actions as a direct result of the event. For example, a GP suggested considering in their daily practice the potential connection between hearing problems and possible symptoms of dementia a patient presents with, based on a presentation on this topic. Another charity worker wants to instigate a scheme of work around pelvic floor issues after hearing another talk.

We have set an example for this kind of discipline- and sector-crossing event. This report will hopefully inspire others to run an event of this nature either within the dispersed field of lifecourse approaches to ageing or in other fields and areas where this approach could be useful.

Examples of Key Take Home Messages

"Loved the range of topics – so inspiring and invigorating."

"Collaboration between researchers and charities/third-sector organisations is essential!"

"The potentials for ageing to be imperfect but still of value and worthy of appreciation."

Examples of "Things You've Learnt and Would Like to Follow Up"

"I learnt a completely new way of thinking about medicalising ageing and how it might not always be a bad thing."

"Increased collaboration between medical, scientific and social research in ageing."

"Build more connections with researchers/other charities – build a movement!"

Charities and other third-sector organisations present

Age UK Lambeth
Alzheimer's Research UK
Apples and Honey Nightingale
Centre for Ageing Better
Dunhill Medical Trust
Generations Working Together
Impact Initiatives / Ageing Well Brighton and Hove
InCommon
Open Age, Westminster
Re-engage
Science Museum Group

Speakers

Emily Bradfield, Health and Social Care, independent consultant & researcher
Rahul Chandrasekar, Medicine, UCL
Justin Christensen, Music, Sheffield
Chiara de Lucia, Neuroscience, King's / Stavanger University Hospital
Alison Herbert, Lifecourse and Society, Galway
Sarah Hopkins, Public Health and Primary Care, Cambridge
Kate Hough, Biological Sciences, Southampton
Sabrina Keating, Sociology, Oxford
Chungho Lau, Medicine, Imperial
Yichao Li, Gerontology, King's
Chengxu Long, Gerontology, King's
Jon Pigrem, Music, Sheffield
Matt Stroud, Life Sciences and Medicine, King's
Najia Sultan, Medicine, Queen Mary
Emily Taylor, Gerontology, Exeter / Cornwall County Council
Emily Timms, English, Vienna
Esca van Blarikom, Anthropology, Queen Mary

FEMINIST & ANTI-RACIST AGEING POLICIES



ELDER-LED
ACTIVISM

SELF-IMAGE SELF-ESTEEM



COOL
AGEING

CHANGE TO
REPRESENTATION
E.G. FASHION

EVOLVING STORY
ABOUT WHO WE ARE



SENSE OF
SELF-PURPOSE

NARRATIVE CO-CREATION
WITH CARE PROFESSIONALS

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SAACY

The Sciences of Ageing and the Culture of Youth

The Sciences of Ageing and the Culture of Youth (SAACY) is a project funded by a UK Research and Innovation Future Leaders Fellowship. It looks at how we talk and think about ageing and how the way we do so can affect our experiences and ideas of what ageing means.

Cultural pessimism about ageing endangers all facets of intergenerational solidarity; it shapes perceptions of the worth and value of human beings and directs decisions about care, research and funding priorities. SAACY wants to inform practices and policy development in these areas through asking whether we can overcome cultural pessimism by understanding ageing as a lifelong process of change rather than something that happens at the end of our lives.

Our research is driven by two questions: how does culture frame the questions and paradigms of scientists and researchers when they think about ageing and diseases of old age? And how do scientific research developments and assumptions act as cultural forces - in particular, how do they influence societal approaches to dementia?

To address these questions, SAACY takes a multipronged approach that reaches across disciplines and sectors. A literature-based study closely attends to the dialogue between cultural discourses and scientific models of ageing. Our sociological study explores meanings and anticipations of ageing with our project partners from the third sector. And, in collaboration with the King's Policy Institute and older people, SAACY aims to develop policy change for the ageing population.

Find out more about our research and upcoming events on our webpages (<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/saacy>), our Medium blog @SAACY, or find us on Twitter @SAACY_KCL. Alternatively, you can get in touch on saacy@kcl.ac.uk or with Dr Martina Zimmermann at Martina.Zimmermann@kcl.ac.uk.