

# Considering more-than-human participation in co-design with older adults

**Implications for a material gerontology**

# Agenda

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1. Socio-gerontechnology design:  
humans and non humans and  
matters of care?
2. Empirical example
3. Implications for material  
gerontology?

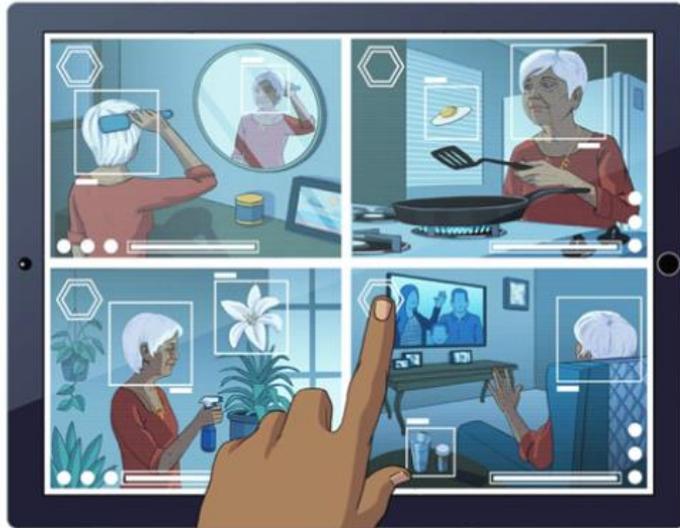


Foto: Beate C. Koehler

# Gerontechnology design as matters of fact

## *Did Mom Take Her Medicine? Keeping Eyes on Elders in Quarantine*

Technology can help families monitor the health and safety of older people kept from their families by the coronavirus.



**“ageing as a problem that can be managed with the help of technology”**

(Cozza et al., 2017: 608)

**“age-based assumptions lay at the heart of technology design and implementation”**

(Neven, 2010: 344)

# Human focus in co-design

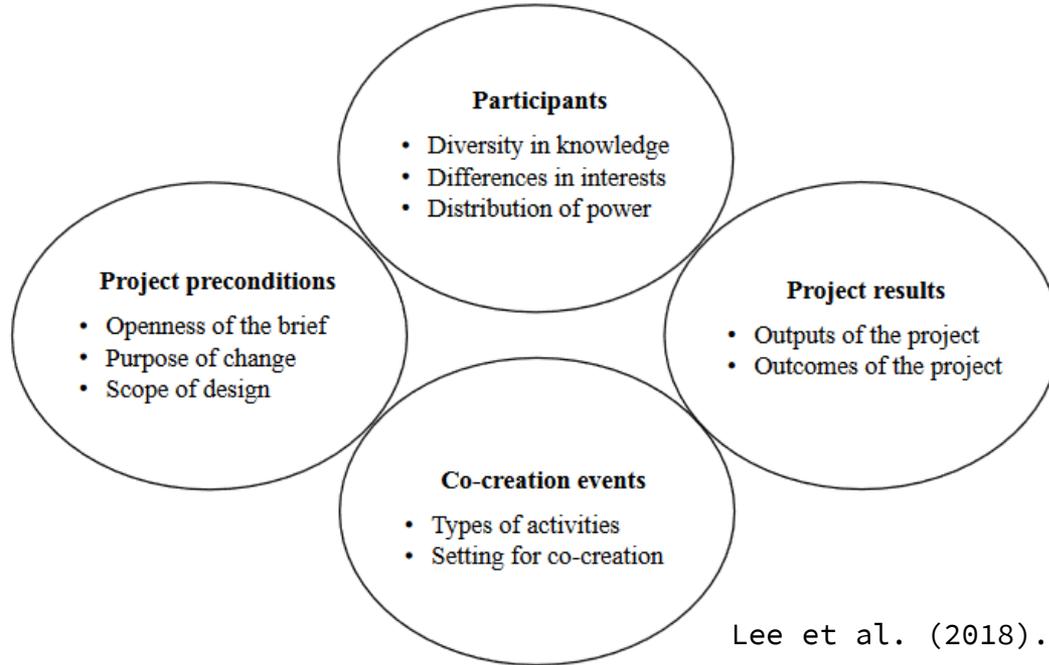


Figure 3. Ten design choices grouped into four categories.

# Socio-gerontechnology design as a matter of care?

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co-design as a care practice:

from 'I am concerned' to 'I care'

'Caring involves a notion of doing and intervening.' (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011: 89-90)

'to care is to...meticulously explore,' quibble', test, touch, adapt, adjust, pay attention to details and change them, until a suitable arrangement (material, emotional, relational) has been reached.' Winance, 2010: 111



# Co-designing care arrangements

- (1) Process: co-design as joint problem making
- (2) Outcome: co-design care arrangements

‘care is not only seen from a bodywork perspective - that is, the usually invisible physical labour that care-giving entails - but from a broader perspective considering socio-material arrangements: that is, where care-work appears as distributed amongst people and things and where ‘delegations’ [...] of tasks to things are also noted.’  
(Criado & Rodríguez-Giralt 2016: 212-3)



**Considering more-than-human participation in  
co-design as matters of care**

# Example: MobileAge Project



EU-funded project  
(2016–2019)

4 European  
cities/regions

Co-creation of  
digital public  
services with  
older adults

(Jarke 2020)

# Motivation to participate: Caring for their district and its residents

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‘I [uh] was very surprised that there's something like that [MobileAge project] at all, that **someone is caring** so much and [uh] and **if you can contribute** a little bit, that the neighbourhood or the city or whatever, **the living conditions are improving** and [uh] then you should contribute to it if you have the opportunity.’

‘**We do something for Osterholz, we do something for older people** and in this way, maybe you can get involved.’

‘I was curious and I thought, yes, **I like to do something for the people here in the district**, that they are doing well. That was my motivation.’

# More-than-human participation

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‘When a nonhuman is not present or invisible; it is not communicating. It signifies nothing because it is invisible, no longer seen or thought of. [...] Humans or nonhumans who are invisible or absent are less likely to be, or become, participants in a design conversation’

(Rice 2017: 241)



# More-than-human participation through Design Probes

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# Careful co-design with more-than-human participation

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‘To care is to meticulously explore, test, touch, adapt, adjust, pay attention to details and change them, until a suitable arrangement (material, emotional, relational) is achieved’

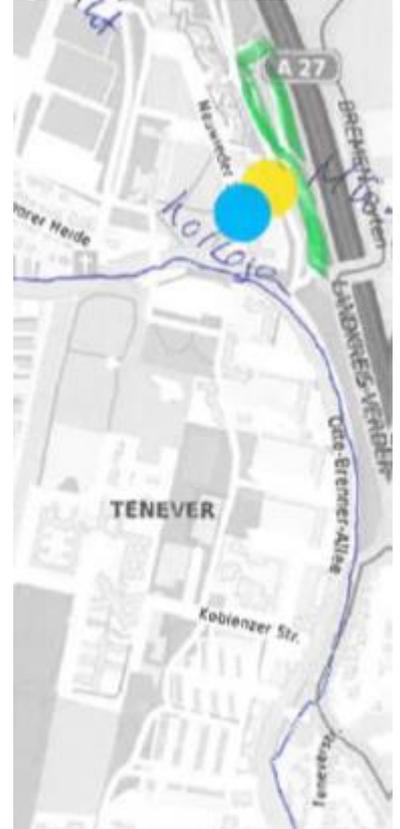
(Winance in Mol, Moser & Pols 2010: 11)



# Careful co-design with more-than-human participation

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‘My own neighbourhood, I like that one. [...] I wouldn't like to live in Tenever for example. [...] I'd rather be in the area where I live now or I prefer this. It's kind of like that, a little bit closed off and you know a lot of people and there's a lot of greenery and gardens. Whereas in this tower block neighbourhood, that doesn't suit me at all, I don't like that. **I don't want to say that it is terrible, but for me personally, if I had an apartment there, I think I would be truly unhappy.** Those tall houses, that overwhelms me. At least to live there. **And I never actually go there.**’



# Co-design as care practice

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‘Caring is not an option but a vital necessity in our technoscientific world, and [...] nothing holds together in a liveable way without caring relationships.’

(Puig de la Bellacasa 2011: 100)



# Outcome: Digital neighbourhood guide

Startseite Mobil im Alter Suche Menu

## Willkommen beim Stadtteilführer für ältere Menschen in Osterholz

Auf den folgenden Seiten können Sie sich schnell und unkompliziert über den Stadtteil Osterholz informieren. Sie erhalten umfangreiche Hinweise zu folgenden Themen:

- Schöne Plätze**  
Natur und Architektur in Osterholz
- Kultur**
- Bewegung**

000 Liste Karte

Startseite Karte - Bremen Osterholz Menu

**Kuhkampsiedlung**  
Siedlungshäuser von vor und nach dem 2. Weltkrieg

Details anzeigen

Startseite Architektur Menu

## Kuhkampsiedlung

**Adresse:** Zwischen Weserpark und Feldmark, 20307 Bremen – Osterholz

Zwischen Osterholzer Feldmark und Weserpark liegt die Kuhkampsiedlung. Wer gerne Häuser und Gärten anschaut und vielleicht nach Inspirationen für eigene Projekte sucht, wird hier gerne spazierengehen. Man findet eine interessante Siedlungsstruktur mit Häusern aus der Zeit vor und nach dem 2. Weltkrieg, teilweise gruppiert um halboffene Innenhöfe. Vom Ehlerdamm aus hat man einen schönen Blick auf die Osterholzer Feldmark.

**Erreichbarkeit**

Mit dem Auto ist die Kuhkampsiedlung über die Osterholzer Heerstraße (Heiligenbergstraße) oder den Ehlerdamm (Am großen Kuhkamp oder Sußwälder Straße) zu erreichen. Mit der Buslinie 37 Richtung Isebaldsbrück/Bf. Mahndorf fahren Sie bis zur Haltestelle "Am Großen Kuhkamp".

zur Fahrtbeschreibung Karte mit Google-Maps

# Implications for Material Gerontology

# Call to action!

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## Gerontechnology design:

From matters of fact **to matters of care**

Instead of just criticizing gerontechnologies, we need to engage in **careful co-design** as **'it can be a speculative commitment to think about how things would be different if they generated care'**

(Puig de la Bellacasa 2001: 96).

**Get involved in the doing and making of technoscientific worlds!**



# References

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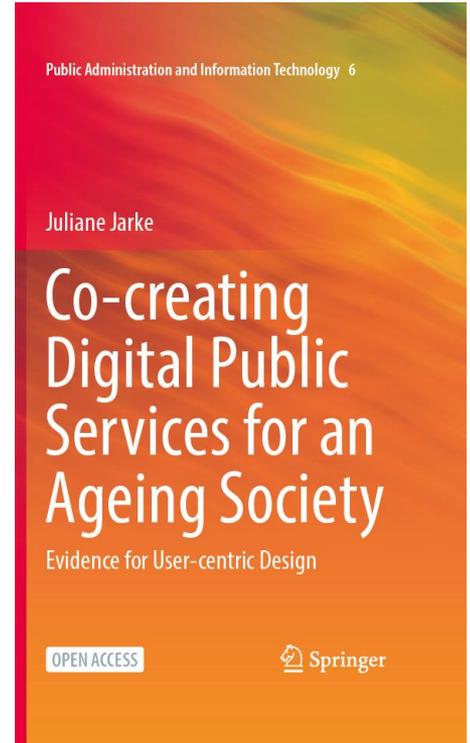
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