

# Housing

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## Technology for housing

In housing policies a common effort is to try to keep older people in their homes. Within this effort, technological devices might help older people in their care and home needs, they might also serve as support to human-based services.

A key aspect is to take into account the perspectives of each user and understand what specific needs he or she has and how these needs would be met by technologies. This means also let the elderly participate in the research process and in the implementation of technological devices so that they can value what is really useful for them.

## Effective technology

Technology should help enter the house, live in it and go outside in a more **accessible** way. To be useful, technology has to be comprehensible, understandable and clear what it is for.

For sure, there is no single solution which can be valid for all. It has to be **adapted** to the needs of persons, to their individuality, bearing in mind what region, country and cultural context they live in. In fact, a good technical solution, which could be a combination between technology and human-based service, can be perfect in one country or one region, but it won't work in another because it doesn't fit, there is no business model, you cannot afford it, or for other reasons.

Technologies should also be **affordable** for each individual so that it can be used by everybody. The situation is quite fragmented. In some countries there is strong support by the government, or the state, where in some others there is not.

## Inclusive urban planning

Regarding housing policies there is the need to think not just about the building and its interior, but also about the neighbor, in order to enlarge the opportunities for older people of being autonomous and at the same time to promote socializing. In this perspective, architectural urban planning can play a key role. It is important that people of different ages and living in the same neighborhoods mingle together. Urban planning can promote intergenerational debate and dialogue through inclusive design.



For this reason urban planning is of paramount importance in housing policies. We have urban plans that put diversity at the centre of their plans. It is not simply a matter of age diversity, but it is also a matter of different social and economic backgrounds, of different ethnicity or gender.

So, the main goal when thinking about the relationship between housing and urban planning should be inclusive design, which is not only for older people but for all. Inclusive design is not about year inclusion, it's about general inclusion of the whole society.

### **Robotic systems & housing**

Technologies can serve as support to other services, human-based services. In this, where you live is a very important aspect. In some parts of Europe robots are welcome, while in some others they are not. In Japan, for instance, you see cases in which habitants prefer to get cleaned by robots rather than by humans. This is not thinkable in Germany, for instance.

Other kinds of robots like vacuum cleaners or dish washers or other social robots may play a role in some places, but we see also a big diversity between people who immediately accept such help and people who are very reluctant. It is, once again, a matter of both individual attitude and cultural context.

### **Digital divide among older people**

When you think about the internet values of the current society you often think to younger people, as the most creative, technological, and reactive persons who can face a rapidly changing world. These are not the same values you associate to the elderly. As a matter of fact, when you ask common people of all ages "do you think that older people are good users of technology?" most people say that the younger persons are the typical users of the internet.

This has several consequences which are both collective and individual. For instance, there is a negative representation of older people as non users of technologies. This is one of the reasons why older people feel a sort of divorce from technology. They think that technology is really within this culture of rapid change. As people grow older they get the idea that they are not supposed to be so technological as the younger people are, because they are not equally innovative, creative, up to date. This is also what usually younger people think of the elderly.

There are studies that demonstrate that older people are not usually or typically linked to technology. Older people are in most cases afraid and they assess themselves as not capable of engaging with technology. But, as they do the first trial and succeed, they become fans of technological devices and real users. Clearly, a lot of technology is not made for them, it is too complicated. So, make technology simple and accessible is of major importance.

The representation of older people as technology non users must change. We all need to be aware that technologies are not from the moon. Rather, they are for the people and everybody can



benefit from them. It should be very important that all the elderly could communicate with the other age groups and, in doing that, contribute to society. Using technology would help older people communicate from their houses with the world. To realize that, we need to build a society for all ages where all people use technology side by side.

### **More interconnectivity in the society of the future**

The new generation of older people will have a very different approach to technologies. They will be much more used to technology in their daily lives. This big change is about to happen in the next 20 to 30 years.

What we need to consider is that the society of the future, which will be composed by many people in their sixties or in their seventies, is going to be a very new society. Therefore, we have to think further, to think out of the box and consider a new society with people with high chronological age but who are more connected across different aspects.

It is a multidimensional, complex process, with many aspects. In the future we will see this interconnectivity increase over time.