Experiential Design – Rethinking relations between people, objects and environments

• Paper / Proposal Title:

Three Generations Together: Intergenerational living

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• Abstract (300 words):

From time in memoriam, people have lived, not in nuclear family units but as larger groupings – tribal, family, or extended community. Intergenerational living, homes around the family courtyard or compound, continues to be usual in some cultures. The UK and the US, in the Victorian Era, embraced the exclusive nuclear family as a bourgeois standard; working class families continued to live as multi-generational units into the second half of the twentieth century. Families continue to take in frail parents as an end-of-life prerogative but there is also a growing group of healthy ageing people and their adult children who are choosing to live in close proximately. Much has been written about the so-called ‘Boomerang Generation’, but what about healthy elders who are opting to be an integral part of the lives of the two generations below them? In what ways might that effect health and well-being of the family? How might that impact home design? The continued legacy of ageism?
This paper is based on an autoethnography case study conducted through the lived experience of a bi-cultural gerontologist. After many years of living in the UK, the researcher/author (a member of the first wave of the postwar generation) made the difficult decision to repatriate to the US. In this paper, the researcher/author will discuss the decision to create a family compound with her daughter, son-in-law, and their two young children and the process that ensued. The paper will continue with a wider discussion of the implications of intergenerational living in the twenty-first century, who benefits and how, and the indications of wellbeing for all three generations. The author explores the emerging cultural phenomenon of intergeneration living, using a systematic analysis of who benefits and why at this point in history.

- Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Dr Woodspring is a Visiting Fellow at The University of the West of England. With an MA in clinical psychology and a PhD in critical gerontology, she brings a multi-disciplinary perspective to both her research and teaching. She has taught systems thinking, both applied and theoretical on both the graduate and doctoral level. Systemic thinking informs both her research and practice. The focus of her work has explored the first wave of the postwar generation, embodiment, and time. Her groundbreaking work takes a widely interdisciplinary approach to paint a picture of how this cohort is facing aging and its physical, mental, emotional, and social effects. Dr Woodspring’s work was used to develop a mixed senior living complex in the old Cadbury Chocolate factory. She played a pivotal role in the city-wide ‘Bristol (UK) Ageing Better’ project. She was the co-director of the Villa Esperanza international Architectural Competition (US) that sought to redesign a public housing project based on grassroots community input. She was also co-director of the anti-gentrification, Triangle District Project. Prior to returning to university as a late-life learner, Woodspring had her own consulting firm providing sustainable solutions to organizational and community challenges.