

Brief

The older demographic proportion of western society is increasing at a rapid rate as a result of improved medical care, better living conditions and the first baby boomers starting to reach state pension age¹. Despite this, many older people live in unsuitable accommodation, alone and excluded from society².

There is also evidence of an increasing generational divide. Today, fewer younger people live in a multigenerational household or have regular contact with an older person in society, reinforcing negative perceptions and stereotypes of older people³. Certain skills, including the production and nurturing of locally grown food and skills relating to some small production-based inner-city businesses, have been lost over a single generation as a result of low cost mass production and globalisation, but are now becoming increasingly relevant as the world looks for lower carbon alternatives and sustainable local production.

People are living longer than ever before. In recent history it was common to retire at sixty-five and die several years later⁴. Today it is increasingly common for people to live for more than a century⁵. Our understanding of retirement is changing. Different models of housing are urgently needed for a new 'third generation' - a demographic group which is, more often than not, well educated, active, healthy and with high aspirations.

The *School of Lost Skills* combines the productive typologies of a brewery, bakery and community kitchen with the latest research behind cohousing and food production to provide a radically different housing typology for older and younger people. Students come to learn and exchange the necessary skills providing a useful role transition for people as they age whilst also forming a practical and socially-beneficial business model. Younger adults benefit from low rent and the acquisition of new skills, whereas older residents benefit from in-kind care and equal knowledge exchange.

¹ ONS (UK Office for National Statistics) (2011) *Topic Guide to Older People* available [online: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/population/ageing/older-people/index.html>] date accessed: 02.03.2011

² Homes and Communities Agency (2009) *HLAPPI Report: Housing Our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation*. Homes and Communities Agency: London

³ Blanchard-Fields & Cavanaugh, J (2006) *Adult Development and Aging* USA: Thomas Higher Education.

⁴ Fraser, D (2009), *The Evolution of the British Welfare State (4 ed.)* Palgrave Macmillan

⁵ ONS (UK Office for National Statistics) (2011) *Topic Guide to Older People* available [online: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/population/ageing/older-people/index.html>] date accessed: 02.03.2011