



Figure 1. Walking aids for seniors.  
Photo: By Yago Rodrigues

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# DESIGN FOR AGING: SENIOR'S EXPERIENCE WITH WALKING AIDS

In the current scenario of aging of the European population, walking aids (like the walking sticks, crutches and walker) are part of the senior's material universe and bring for one hand, the support in locomotion and, for another side, they activate complex subjectivation processes, evoke cultural aspects, massification, and symbolic values. Thus, it is necessary to problematize the relationship between the senior subject and the stigmas associated with the aid equipment through medical-hospital aesthetics. In this sense, it is evident that this category of product does not, rigorously, offer an ideal of comfort, security and aesthetic empathy for its generation.

**Keywords**  
Inclusive design,  
Mobility experience,  
Assistive technology,  
Stigma on products,  
Medical-hospital aesthetics.

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**Context:** The walking aids appear in the imaginary as a vertical support cane. However, the meanings of the products change according to the experience of use over time. In the twentieth century, these equipments adapted to the medical-hospital aesthetics and related to the issues of aging, linked to the archetype of the senior body - "fragile and slow". Although, these objects, even today, are interpreted as a symbol of aging.

**Problem:** There aren't so many researches that reflects the relationship between aid equipment and the senior subject, regarding the process of stigma production (BISPO, 2018). In addition, it is also perceived, little interest in the personalization of the devices of aid, something that walks against the tendency of the current market, in which adapts products, clothes and even the workspace in our own way.

**Objective:** To reflect and identify the production of meanings related to the aid equipment, regarding the perception of stigma and the meanings attributed by the seniors and caregivers of the Patronato rest home in Aveiro - Portugal.

**Method:** For Yin (2005) the scientific method of case study is preferable when problems refer to contemporary phenomena. Therefore, the adopted method was a case study in the Patronato Institute in Aveiro - Portugal and it was divided into five major phases (exploration, evaluation, ideation, creation and validation). In this way, it is possible to evaluate the aid equipment more closely with the environments and activities, due to the comparison of the data, thus relating the production and effects of the observed problems.

**Contribution:** To create a project that improves the senior's experience by minimizing social stigma. In this sense, the walking aid should allow personalization through the subject, potentializing the emotional connections, deconstructing the archetype rooted on the body aged athwart materiality. Thus, more focused on user experience (identity) and resistance to subjection processes (stereotypes).

**Acknowledgement:** This work is supported by national funds through the FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, with the PhD reserch grant number "PD/BD/135277/2017".