



## **Training course Senior Service Worker**

### **Networking in home and community based settings for elderly**

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#### **Methods of social space analysis**

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### 3. Methods of social space analysis

Every day environment and familiar surrounding is very important for life quality in older age. Therefore social space analysis focuses the local community, the district, the living quarter of elderly. The key idea of socio-spatial approach is to emphasize the social space as an area where two perspectives are connected (double structure): On the one hand the material and objective conditions and frameworks of life in a certain area and on the other hand the subjective perspective of the inhabitants and service users in their life world. Social space analysis follows central questions regarding to the elderly (e.g.): Are there special meeting places for the elderly? Which meeting points are highly attractive for coming together? Are these meeting places easily accessible for the elderly? There are any obstacles and barriers which impede participation of elderly in the social space?

Social spaces are analysed in a form of practice research which is carried out by social work practitioners/Senior Service Workers or in collaboration of practitioners and researchers. Usually social space analysis is based on a mixture of quantitative and qualitative research methods. For our subject qualitative approaches are relevant because they are suitable to identify the subjective impressions and the life world of the elderly in their social space. This unit focusses best practice methods for the analysis of social spaces and individual life world.

#### 3.1. Procedure and methods of social diagnostics

##### 3.1.1. Social space

Social space analysis in networks is regarded to the “social aspect”. It needs „to focus on the interactive and relational interaction between individuals and social structure” (Spatschek/Wolf-Ostermann 2016). In community based networking social space analysis allows to find a broader understanding of the life situation of the target group and their environment (Spatschek 2013). Spatschek explains that the scientific context of socio-spatial analysis is rooted in “the critical-hermeneutic paradigm of ‘everyday’ or ‘life-world’ orientation”. He highlights that human development is a “process of interdependence between individual *life-worlds* and influences from public *systems*” (Spatschek 2013).



In the scientific literature the concept of social spaces are described as “relational arrangements of humans and material goods at certain places that are always dynamical and changeable” (Spatschek/Wolf-Ostermann 2016). Social space is what the inhabitants of a social space experience, perceive and design. Usually their perspectives and interpretations differ significantly.

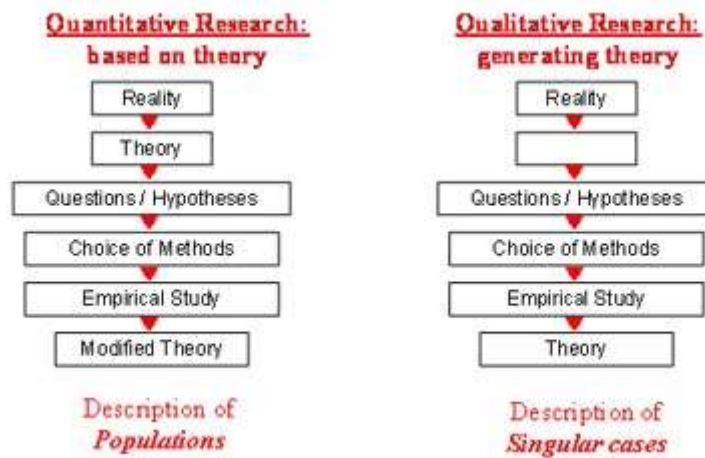
Klaus Dörner, a famous medical and psychiatrist in Germany uses the phrase “the third social space” and describes it as neighbourhood, district, quarter, village community (Dörner 2012). This so-called ‘Wir-Raum’ has 1000 to 10.000 inhabitants and it’s the only place where professionals and citizens can synchronize their services (“Service mix”). This social space is the place “where I belong”, where someone wants to live until he dies.

Networking in social spaces has the objective to build and promote sustainable cooperation between all local actors and relevant stakeholders. Various bodies and facilities of the social space are linked together, resources and competences are concentrated and bundled. The network is strengthened if the cooperation is supra institutional, inter professional and involves also volunteers. Particularly personal contacts among the partners may bring benefits because resources can be used directly.

### **3.1.2. Social space analysis**

The key idea of the socio-spatial approach is to emphasize the social space as an area where two perspectives are connected (double structure). The top-down perspective focuses the material and objective conditions and frameworks of life in a certain area (“socio-geographical and infrastructural perspective”). On the other hand there is the bottom-up perspective, the subjective perspective of the inhabitants and service users in their life world. “The socio-spatial paradigm follows an interactive perspective that tries to focus on the mutual connection of these two dimensions.” (Spatschek/Wolf-Ostermann 2016).

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Reference: Spatschek/Wolf-Ostermann 2016

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### The special subjective perspective

Effective Networking is based on social space analysis. Particularly in community based work with elderly the special subjective perspective is really important. This bottom-up perspective helps to understand their every-day-life, their life world. Researches prove the close interdependence of participation and life quality in social space. It's obvious that for life quality in older age the everyday environment and familiar surrounding is very important. Most of the elderly want to spend an independent life as long as possible. They are looking for services which allow them to live at home and in the quarter where they spent their previous life.

Senior Service Worker has the task to concentrate on this special perspective of the elderly. Senior Service workers are the key persons for social space analysis. Their task is to assess if the structures of a network are geared to their needs, which services have to be offered to reduce the health gaps in the quarter. Senior Service Worker need knowledge, skills and competences to carry out this social space analysis. They use the results of their social analysis systematically for networking. They contribute their professional knowledge and their various experiences with the elderly and are able to access their resources and needs to manage daily life and they are experts on services and competent partners in the quarter.

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### 3.1.3. Social diagnosis

The aim of social space analysis is “to discover, analyse and shape social spaces in order to create social conditions that enable processes of social development” (Spatschek/Wolf-Ostermann 2016). Social space analysis in networking with the elderly follows central questions regarding to their life-world (e.g.):

- Where do the elderly meet in the quarter?
- Are there special meeting places for the elderly?
- Which meeting points are highly attractive for coming together?
- Are these meeting places easily accessible for the elderly?
- Are any obstacles and barriers which impede participation of elderly in the social space?

Social space analysis concentrates on individual aspects (case-related) but also on general aspects (across individual cases). Based on the results of social space analysis Senior Service Worker are able to identify internal personal resources of the elderly (e.g. medical consultation: possible accompaniment by grandchildren) and their external resources (e.g. delivery service by a grocery store in the quarter).

#### Example

An old man, 75 years old, who lived a great part of his life in the quarter, has a chat with the Senior Service Worker about former times. He tells that since childhood his family bought any foodstuff in a small shop in the quarter. He knows the owner since his childhood. Five years ago the owner handed the shop over to his son and now delivers the ordered articles by bicycle to the customers' home. “Usually”, tells the old man, “we drink a cup of coffee and liquor and have a chat in my kitchen.”

This example shows that methods used for social space analysis are also instruments to enhance practical service work for the elderly. For life quality in the quarter this delivery service is important because it helps to maintain independent life for the elderly and also promotes social contact between the inhabitants.

#### Principles



The concepts and methods of social space analysis are based on concepts of case- and care management. Characteristic for this approach is to focus on resources and life-world based contexts of help and services (family, relatives, neighbourhood and social networks).

Experts discuss some relevant principles for social work which are also important for social space analysis:

- Support and promotion of acquirement
- Empowerment
- Support and promotion on own initiative and self-help
- Orientation on resources
- Cooperation and coordination of various offers
- Participation

Senior Service Worker carries out the social space analysis based on these principles and choose methods which are relevant for community based networking with the elderly.

Practical experiences show that qualitative approaches are suitable to analyse social spaces and individual life world. In the following passages the characteristics and some selected qualitative methods are described.

**Reflection task:** *What is the key idea of social space analysis? Why is this approach important for Senior Service Workers? Please explain your arguments.*



### 3.2. Selected methods of social space analysis

The social space analysis works as a practical research. A comprehensive collection of social space methods has been developed (Deinet 2009; Krisch 2008). The methods are based in the context of qualitative research. They work with structured interviews and participative observations and focus on subjective impressions of the inhabitants and their life world. The main characteristic of these methods is to address the inhabitants - the elderly - directly in their everyday life world and to treat them as experts of their life world. The methods are low-threshold and use inciting and encouraging elements. The following methods are suitable for community based networking with the elderly and can be realized without a lot of effort (Spatschek/Wolf-Ostermann 2016):

- Structured town walks
- Qualitative interviews with key persons
- Needle method
- Peer group grids
- Subjective maps
- Auto-photography
- Time budgets
- Interview about institutions
- Eco-map/Map of resources

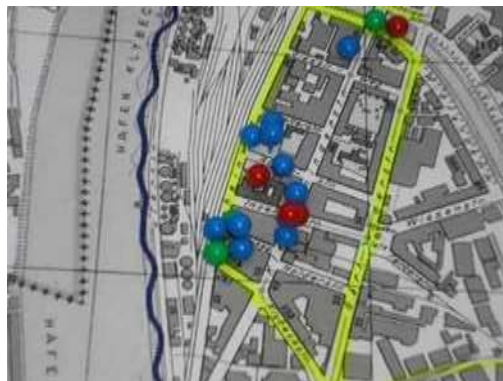
More detailed information about the methods you find in the collection of Deinet and Krisch (Deinet 2009; Krisch 2008).

In the following passage the methods “Needle method”, “Structured town walks” and “Eco-map”/“Map of resources” are described because they are well proved in social space analysis with elderly (best practice).

#### 3.2.1. Needle method

“Bird's eye the Needle method gives a visualisation of places in a quarter which are frequented in view of the inhabitants (Spatschek/Wolf-Ostermann 2016). The inhabitants are asked to pin needles on a district map or a section of a city map. They use needles with different colours to mark their chosen point with certain criteria as “good”, “bad” etc. The

needle method is like “bird's eye view” and shows the meaning of special places, e.g. popular venues for the elderly (café, parks), disliked places (railway station) or places that are never frequented (Internet Café). The results are presented on a map, they are compared, discussed and evaluated in different groups. This method cannot be used for detailed information about the quality of these marked places (e.g. if the senior centre can be easily reached by public transport). “An interesting capability of this method is the clear visualisation and the direct activation of people that can be quickly involved when passing by.” (Spatschek/Wolf-Ostermann 2016).



**The needle method.** Reference: Deinet/Krisch 2009

The Needle method can be also used in a mobile version if the needle-maps are pinned on small boards of Styrofoam and are transported. Topographic software solution like Google Maps or Google Earth offer new possibilities (Spatschek/Wolf- Ostermann 2016). Usually the Needle method is used at the beginning of space analysis. It stimulates inhabitants to talk about their most favourite places, former meeting places, about their daily life in the quarter. Based on the results a group can go for a walk in the quarter and continue the social space analysis with a “Structured town walk”.

**Reflection task:** Please use the needle method and create a Needle map of your quarter. Important questions are: Where are your favourite places to meet friends? Which are the places where you prefer to stay? Which are the places you don't like to stay? Why? Which places you would like to visit? Which places remind you of former times (childhood, youth, etc.)?



### 3.2.2. Structured town walks

Structured town walks are one of the most famous social space methods. There exist two forms of structured town walks:

1. Type one is an observation of researchers or social work practitioners who “try to find out more about a social space through a collection of impressions and perceptions that are gained in direct field experience.” (Spatschek/Wolf-Ostermann 2016). They focus on atmospheric aspects and social interaction, walk fixed routes and use filed notes and manuals to get a “higher density of observation”. The contact to the inhabitants is of secondary importance.
2. Type two is a special form where the town walk is performed with inhabitants to experience their impressions on living in concrete spaces. This walk can explore “hidden places and stories” (Spatschek 2013).

Experiences show that a combination of both types is useful. Often the structured town walk is performed in two phases: After the walk of the practitioners follows the walk with the inhabitants. “To reach a multiple and encompassing picture, it is important to discover a space with different groups and learn from their different experiences.” (Spatschek/Wolf-Ostermann 2016).

The observations and impressions are documented in parallel by photo and recording. Senior Service Worker have to consider that sometimes the elderly need support to do the documentation; one of the team could take on the task. The figure below shows how subjective impressions of a wheelchair user are documented representatively.



**Structured town walk.** Reference: Wittekopf/Noack 2015

“The road asphalt is uneven”

“Cars are driving through the tunnel”



**Reflection task:** *Imagine you are working in a mobile nursing service in a quarter where many elderly with reduced mobility are living. What do you take into account if you perform a “structured town walk” with the inhabitants?*

### 3.2.3. Eco-map/Map of resources

The method Eco-map/Map of relationship resources is well known in the German approach to social space analysis. The main field of application is social youth work (Früchtel 2014). There are also experiences in the context of community based work with elderly, particularly in social work with elderly suffering from dementia (ILAC 2009). The method was introduced in the seventies as an assessment for families in the child welfare system (Harold/Mercier/Colarossi 1997). The Eco-map simulates a model of an ecological system and highlights the connections between a family and its environment. The method focuses on social relationships of a person and identification of the resources in this individual network. Eco-mapping uses a map with 8 fields (“8 FelderKarte”), the different sections represent a part of daily life (Früchtel 2014):

1. Family
2. Relatives
3. Classmates/Colleagues
4. Neighbours
5. Friends
6. Associations/Clubs/Initiatives
7. Professionals
8. Other



**ECO-map.** Reference: Budde/Früchtel (2009)

- Is there anyone you can ask if you need to consult? Who?
- Is there anyone you can visit at any time? Who?
- Who were your friends at school time?
- Do you still have contact to your school friends?

Maps of resources are designed in various styles because there are no rules of documentation. The figure below shows the map of resources of a teenager.

The mind map is titled "MEIN LEBEN" (My Life) and is centered around a stick figure. The branches and their details are as follows:

- Family:**
  - Dad: "DAD"
  - Mom: "MOM"
  - Grandpa: "GRANDPA"
  - Grandma: "GRANDMA"
  - Uncle: "UNCLE"
  - Aunt: "AUNT"
  - Cousins: "COUSINS"
- Education:**
  - Kindergarten: "KINDERGARTEN"
  - School: "SCHULE"
- Hobbies:**
  - Sports: "SPORTS"
  - Music: "MUSIC"
  - Reading: "READING"
  - Gardening: "GARDENING"
- Career:**
  - Teacher: "TEACHER"
  - Doctor: "DOCTOR"
  - Lawyer: "LAWYER"
  - Engineer: "ENGINEER"
  - Artist: "ARTIST"
  - Writer: "WRITER"
  - Programmer: "PROGRAMMER"
  - Entrepreneur: "ENTREPRENEUR"
- Personal Life:**
  - Love: "LOVE"
  - Friends: "FRIENDS"
  - Pets: "PETS"
  - Travel: "TRAVEL"
  - Food: "FOOD"
  - Drink: "DRINK"
  - Sleep: "SLEEP"
  - Health: "HEALTH"
  - Environment: "ENVIRONMENT"

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*Reference: Früchtel 2014*



If one considers that social networks during life-cycle usually become smaller it's obvious that elderly have to (re-)activate previous and available resources and also to look for new resources.

- Place where they lived, residences (resources of mobility)
- Profession, employment, education (resources of knowledge, skills, competences, contacts and connections)
- Hobbies
- Relationships to important persons or to responsible authorities (resources of contacts and connections)
- Personal crises which are mastered (life experience, personal competences, resilience)
- Achievements in private life, professional success (resources of attitude)
- Special equipment (car, housing, garden, devices, tools).
- Special skills and attitudes



If senior service workers use this method they have to ensure that the dialog has an open and appreciative character and motivates the elderly to talk. All their individual narratives have the character of treasures. The method stimulates them to make a great “voyage of discovery”, a kind of personal “exploratory expedition”. Practical experiences show that the elderly are really proud of their “treasure map”, they take it home and sometimes talk about it with others.

**Reflection task:** *In 2 months you will take your examination. Please make a map of your resources regarding to this exam.*

## Conclusion

The outlined methods of social-space analysis are a substantial and integral part of networking in community based settings with the elderly. They open up possibilities for participation and promote empowerment of the elderly in their life world. The Elderly are actively involved as “experts” and contribute their experiences, perspectives and ideas to develop and change the quarter. The methods also promote communication, contact and networking of all inhabitants in community based setting in general. Senior-Service-Worker use the results of their social space analysis as a basis to perform their core tasks as a „Radar“, “Pilot” and “Joker” in community based networking.



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