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The Development of 'Age Appropriate' Living Environments: Analysis of Two Case Studies from a Social Work Perspective

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Abstract

As the growing number of older people, particularly in urban areas, and changing lifestyles are increasing the importance of continuing to live in the community (ageing in place), studies show that age-related planning of living environments is often shaped by stereotypes, and that the needs of present and future older people are not sufficiently taken into account. In this context, two case studies based on Henri Lefebvre's theory presented in his book *The Production of Space* investigate how 'age-appropriate' living environments are conceived, practiced and lived, and to what extent age-related stereotypes affect these processes. The two cases examined are an intergenerational project to promote physical activity and the development of a new city square. For both cases, interviews and walkthroughs were conducted with experts from various planning disciplines, as well as with current and future older people. The findings show that in planning practice the notions of old age and older people often remain diffuse and, at the same time, older people are often seen as a homogeneous and fragile group. The results indicate that the importance given to neighbourhood in old age can vary greatly. For social work, this implies that older people should be even more involved in the design of their living environments, through participatory processes, in order to better meet the heterogeneity of their needs.

Keywords

ageing; neighbourhood; old age; participation; social work; stereotypes; urban planning

1. Introduction

1.1. Neighbourhood, Ageing Societies and Stereotypes

There is a clear link between the place and environment of a neighbourhood of older people, and their quality of life and well-being (Petersen & Minnery, 2013). This statement immediately raises the questions of how such places and environments are developed, who plans and designs them and how they are put into practice. The importance of these points is emphasised by Wolf and

Mahaffey (2016, p. 59), to whom "design and planning professionals have long been influenced by the belief in physically and spatially deterministic power over people and the environment, a belief that their representations of space become space" (cf. Buse, Nettleton, Martin, & Twigg, 2016). A holistic view of the development of spaces, based on Henri Lefebvre's (1991) theory of the production of space, shows that this is not only a limited view, but that it can also lead to inadequate solutions (see section 1.2). An urban neighbourhood is the central place in daily life (Schnur, 2014, p. 43). The neighbour-

hood needs to be understood as a spatial-physical living environment as well as a social setting for participation and support networks and, as such, as fundamental to dealing with everyday life successfully (Motel-Klingebeil, Wurm, & Tesch-Römer, 2010).

In the coming decades, the population in many Western countries, including Switzerland, will continue to grow. The number of people aged 60 or over, as well as the number of people aged 80 or over, will significantly increase over the years ahead (United Nations, 2015). In particular, the population aged 60 or over is growing faster than all younger age groups (United Nations, 2017b). At the same time, a new group of older people is becoming increasingly differentiated. The lifestyles of people aged 65 and older have changed and are shifting towards increased activity and greater involvement in mainstream life, namely in sports, access to modern technologies, sexuality, education, fashion, etc. (Jopp, Rott, & Oswald, 2008; Santoni et al., 2015). Diversity and heterogeneity increase with age (Kydd, Fleming, Gardner, & Hafford-Letchfield, 2018; Lowsky, Olshansky, Bhattacharya, & Goldman, 2014; Santoni et al., 2015). Due to these rapid changes, older people today in no way represent a blueprint of tomorrow's older people, and linear future scenarios such as planning templates are of limited use. In this context, it is important to note that the number of older people who do not have family networks, and therefore social support through the family, will increase because of changing family structures, longer life expectancy and differentiated lifestyles (Siebel, 2007). Peer groups other than those based on the family will be of particular importance, while the neighbourhood as a reference framework and as a place of everyday life will provide the social arena for the formation of these peer groups.

Regardless of this starting point, the professional discourse around the living environment is implicitly shaped by constructions and perceptions of age and ageing. For example, Peterson and Warburton (2012, p. 60) argue that "business interests sustain stereotypes of older people as either ageless or dependent" and that "spaces designed for older people reinforce historical legacies of separation from the community". On the other hand, Motel-Klingebeil et al. (2010, p. 21) call for an understanding that refutes any stereotype of 'age' and instead promotes a differentiated approach towards the plurality of age. Stereotypes are "schemas that we have for people of various kinds" (Gilovich, Keltner, & Nisbett, 2006, p. 18). Due to stereotypes, we tend to judge people on the basis of a particular criterion (or a few criteria) such as gender, nationality or age, and to attribute characteristics to them (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2014). Such schemas are important in everyday life, but they can also be incorrect and lead to erroneous judgements about people (Gilovich et al., 2006). Research shows that there are many age-related stereotypes—mostly negative ones (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2013). In the context of age and ageing, relevant stereotypes as-

sume that older people have declining competence, are less energetic, motivated or creative, are less productive, are less technologically-savvy, and in general less positive. However, there are also positive stereotypes: older people are seen as more reliable, loyal, stable and dependable. Nonetheless, it is important to consider that "these positive images of ageing may not be sufficient to prevent discrimination based on stereotypes" (Abrams & Swift, 2012, p. 4). Furthermore, stereotypes are internalised in younger years because as a young person one is not affected by them, so one does not reflect on them (Kornadt, Voss, & Rothermund, 2013; Levy, 2009). These internalised stereotypes then influence an individual's own experiences later in life. We can say that age stereotypes are abstract knowledge structures that are shared among the members of a culture (including older people), and which refer to properties, but also to processes and transformations. The consequences of this can become visible on an individual level (e.g., rejection of older people due to their age), as well as on an institutional level (e.g., societal living conditions systematically discriminating against older people; Ayalon & Tesch-Römer, 2018).

1.2. The Production of Space

As we have seen, place and neighbourhood are relevant dimensions for the wellbeing of older people and the opportunity to age in place. Questions arise as to how concepts related to place and neighbourhood are planned and how they are put into practice, who has the power to design neighbourhoods and make decisions, who defines what is age-appropriate and what it should look like. As Day (2008, p. ii) points out, several different types of environmental inequalities can arise. One of these is insufficient access for older people to decision-making processes affecting the local environment (cf. Walsh, Scharf, & Keating, 2017). The reasons why older people are only marginally or not at all included in these processes can be found partly in age-related stereotypes:

> In the two more deprived areas though there was a feeling that older people are overlooked in regeneration and inclusion policies. In these areas, there was also a stronger view that some older people do not feel able to speak up or do not know the channels to go through to be heard. (Day, 2008, p. ii)

Given the wide range of urban development theories available, it is appropriate to take a look at those that explore the question of how certain places and spaces (e.g., neighbourhoods) are produced in relation to perceptions. These theories not only help to identify stereotypes but also to analyse the significance of stereotypes for current urban and neighbourhood development processes. Up to now, there have been very few explicit studies on these issues (Vitman et al., 2013). However, the question of how space is produced has been stud-

ied in the context of critical urban research and theory (Brenner, 2009). In critical urban studies, urban development is understood as being the result of actions and decisions made by different powerful stakeholders (Bourdieu, 1982, 1997; Früchtel, Cyprian, & Budde, 2013). Such spaces are understood not only to be the results of human actions, but also to mirror social relations and to be influenced by the wide scope of human action. Social spaces are thus produced, reproduced and institutionalised in everyday social interactions. In this process, spatial and institutional settings influence the access and participation of individuals and groups (Früchtel et al., 2013; Sennett, 1994).

Henri Lefebvre's theory presented in *The Production of Space* (1991) is a key contribution to the relational spatial development perspective. In his urban theory, Lefebvre states that space is a product of the dynamics between everyday practices and perceptions of people (*spatial practice*), cognitive concepts or theories of space (*representations of space*) and the spatially imaginary (*spaces of representation*). The production of space "is composed of three dialectically mutually co-constituting spheres or facets: conceived space, perceived space, and lived space" (Pierce & Martin, 2015, p. 1282). The three facets interact simultaneously. In the context of ageing, the significance of these three dimensions in producing space should not be underestimated (cf. Moulaert, Wanka, & Drilling, 2018). According to Lefebvre, urban spaces are not places, but rather social relations that are constituted by the interplay of collective action and reciprocal inspiration (Vogelpohl, 2015).

The first factor, the *spatial practice* (or the *perceived space*) of Lefebvre's theory (1991; see also Pierce & Martin, 2015) concerns space as the product of daily practices and perceptions. Spatial practice derives, for example, from non-reflexive daily routines that are affected by the built neighbourhood and infrastructures, all of them located in specific sites. These structures can be physically touched, navigated to or frequented, and give rise to specific individual perceptions and actions. How older people with differing lifestyles and concepts of life perceive environments and other people, and how they act in their environments, is influenced directly and indirectly by age stereotypes that are hidden in spatial practices. For example, the built environment may urge older people to use specific infrastructures that others had planned without taking into account their real needs. We call this effect *materialised stereotypes*.

The second factor is the *representations of space (or the conceived space)*, in other words, concepts and theories of space. This may be understood as a cognitive perspective, created by the knowledge society through its policy makers, architects, planners, developers and administration, as well as their ideas and approaches. Specific examples include spatial planning concepts, plans of settlements or also concepts and ideas as to how an area should be used, by whom and how. All these stakeholders have their own ideas and convictions about what age

and ageing means and about which age-related stereotypes influence attitudes, action and design of the neighbourhood (McHugh, 2003; Peterson & Warburton, 2012). For example, neighbourhood renewal processes that include older people only to a limited extent are also quite likely to be biased by the stereotypes of planners and other professionals involved. We term the stereotypes arising in this context *ascribed stereotypes*.

The third factor is the actual lived experience of space itself. *Spaces of representation* or *lived spaces* refer to how a neighbourhood is appropriated and experienced by residents or the people who spend time there (Lefebvre, 1991; see also Pierce & Martin, 2015). Processes of symbolisation, aestheticisation and collective experience lead to stubborn landscapes that often show that planned structures are used in a way other than expected. In this dimension, the aspect of social networks and encounters, as well as relationships between people are important. Internalised age stereotypes (Kornadt & Rothermund, 2012; Kornadt et al., 2013) can shape the perceptions, thoughts and actions of older people in a significant way. In addition, stereotypes shared by the community or in subgroups, contribute to the spaces of representation and lead to more or less participation in social life (e.g., neighbourly help; Vitman, Iecovich, & Alfas, 2013). We call the stereotypes emerging in this context *self-attributed stereotypes*.

1.3. Social Work

From its very beginning in the 19th century, social work has been strongly committed to an urban development that promotes a liveable and inclusive urban environment for all citizens (Klöti, Drilling, & Fabian, 2017):

> Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. (International Federation of Social Workers, 2019)

In the context of urban planning, planning-oriented social work is an interesting concept. In this approach, "social work is characterised by a stronger but still critical collaboration of social workers with planning authorities" (Klöti et al., 2017, p. 106). The aims are to represent the people's interests in planning processes or to create possibilities for direct participation of citizens. The concept of planning-oriented social work aims to influence urban planning processes to create a more inclusive and socially just urban environment, which may be also called a socially sustainable urban development (Drilling, 2013). Two principles are the basis of socially sustainable urban development: the consistent and continuous participation of interested and marginalised social groups, and the improvement of access to relevant social

resources and equal opportunities for all citizens (Klöti et al., 2017, p. 107). "Urban planning should therefore be socio-spatially sensitive which means taking into account the life worlds of current or future residents by analysing social inequalities and integrating citizens needs and resources such as for an ageing society" (Drilling & Oehler, 2013, cited in Klöti et al., 2017). Practices in various contexts show that numerous projects that implement participatory planning processes often neglect less affluent or marginalised groups. These groups are less visible, less well represented or not well engaged in society. Participation generally remains a top-down process that tends to reproduce power structures and transform them too little (Fabian & Huber, 2019; Klöti et al., 2017). These statements lead to the question of whether and how the many existing stereotypes of older people have an influence on planning and implementation processes. Do stereotypes reinforce the neglect and exclusion of older people from (political) development processes? Do stereotypes interfere with sustainable urban development as advocated and supported by social work?

2. Research Question, Design and Methods

This research project focuses on the question of how 'age-appropriate' living environments are conceived, practiced and lived and to what extent age-related stereotypes impact on these processes.

A case study approach was adopted for data collection and analysis. According to Johansson (2003, p. 2) a case study "should have a 'case' which is the object of study. The 'case' should be a complex functioning unit, be investigated in its natural context with a multitude of methods, and be contemporary". A case study seeks explanations of social phenomena (Denzin, 2001). In this article, we have brought together the results and findings of both cases in order to provide answers to the research question. Recognising that practice in the context of urban planning can be very diverse, we do not see our conclusions as generalised statements, but rather as a central basis for reflecting on similar development processes and as a basis for further research (see also Flyvbjerg, 2006).

The two cases examined are an intergenerational project to promote physical activity and a new city square. The intergenerational project involved the development, installation and use of equipment designed to encourage older people and children to participate in physical activity together. Five devices were installed in a prominent position in an existing park in a quiet neighbourhood. This was a typical, quite well-resourced residential area, with some businesses and good infrastructure for the residents. The new city square is in a much more densely built and socially more diverse neighbourhood. The square is part of a larger, new settlement with many residential units, businesses and a centre for older people immediately next to it. Both cases were in an urban area in Switzerland and included the neighbourhood area surrounding these starting points.

In a preparatory phase, documents from the two cases were analysed in order to get to know them both from the perspective of the planning bases (e.g., concepts, planning and implementation descriptions) and the relevant actors and potential interview partners (e.g., decision-makers, planning experts, and implementation experts). Furthermore, two world cafés with older people (case 1: n = 6/case 2: n = 12) were organised. World Cafés are structured discussion groups (Brown & Isaacs, 2005). The goal of the world cafés was to sensitise the participants to the research issue and generate potential candidates for the subsequent interviews and commented walks. We therefore collaborated with organisations in the neighbourhood that work with and for older people, and with centres for older people located within the perimeter of our study area. Further, the world cafés served to help us understand the importance of the neighbourhood for the older people.

In a next phase for both cases, semi-structured interviews (Edwards & Holland, 2013) were conducted by three different researchers with experts as well as with older people. A total of 11 experts from the fields of urban planning, landscape architecture, sports and physical activity sciences, product development and social work were interviewed, focusing on stereotypes that exist among these professional actors and how they deal with them in the context of their professional work (E1 to E11 in the results chapter). A total of 10 interviews were conducted with older people, focusing on how older people live in their neighbourhoods and how they perceive the built environment. A distinction was made between older people aged 70+ (Codes 70+/x) and older people aged 50 to 60 (codes 50–60/x). In order to better differentiate between both age groups, we use the transition-cohorts of 60 to 70 as a buffer, which enables the 50 to 60-year-old and 70+-year-old age groups to be more clearly delimited in the target groups to be interviewed. As far as possible, the interviews were complemented with commented walks (Thibaud, 2013) which focused on spatial aspects of 'age-appropriate' planning. All the interviews and commented walks were conducted in Swiss German or German. They were audio-recorded and then transcribed literally. For the older people, the conditions for joining the study were their readiness and ability to take part in an interview as well as a short walk through the neighbourhood. All persons involved were informed about the research process. Oral consent was obtained to conduct the interviews and to use the data for the research project in anonymous form.

Following a reflexive, grounded theory approach, the data was analysed in an iterative process, moving back and forth between initial and focused coding, memo-writing and comparing data, thereby developing, exploring and connecting ideas about the codes (Breuer, 2010; Charmaz, 2005). In this process, Lefebvre's theory of the production of space was used as a sensitising concept (Blumer, 1954) to guide our analysis. ATLAS.ti was used to structure and analyse the data. Near the end of the re-

search process, two reflexive workshops with older people and planners (case 1: 2 older people, 2 experts/case 2: 4 older people, 4 experts) were held in order to validate and discuss interpretations.

3. Results

In this section, we will explore, in a first part (section 3.1) how spaces are practiced and lived by the older people and to what extent age-related stereotypes impact on these processes. In a second part (section 3.2), we will focus on the conceived space from the point of view of the experts, explore the limitations of age-appropriateness in an urban context and present a few findings about participation. The two cases in this study are combined in this section, bringing the results together as there are no notable differences with regard to the question raised in this article. Furthermore, results show that the commented walks served as a supplement to the interviews, and some of the points were specified in greater detail or explained using examples. The data from the interviews and commented walks thus flow together in the results section.

3.1. From the Point of View of Older People

3.1.1. Everyday Practices and Spatial Practices

The people interviewed from the 70+ group described a few relatively similar central forms of everyday practices in the neighbourhood. A frequent practice is walking in the neighbourhood, which is also associated with sitting down and even reading. Walking regularly in this way is described by some as a form of sporting activity. On the other hand, walking and sitting down is sometimes linked with observing changes in the neighbourhood and a form of 'being involved'. 'Being involved' means that older people feel they are part of life, of society, or of what is going on. On several occasions, older people reported it as positive if a lot was going on in the neighbourhood, for example, if many children were playing there. Some grandparents described how they visited the playgrounds in the neighbourhood with their grandchildren. In addition, drinking coffee, eating out and attending appointments and events in the neighbourhood were often mentioned. The importance of 'nice cafés' was mentioned. All these activities generally have an important social function in the sense of encounter and exchange—they express a social and spatial practice, according to Lefebvre. The importance of being able to shop near home was mentioned by some, while for one person, being able to use public transport to shop elsewhere in the city was more important. Some people described the neighbourhood almost exclusively as an 'intermediate space' on the way to other places, as a space to be crossed.

There were no fundamental differences in everyday practices in the neighbourhood as described by people

between 50 to 60 and those 70+. The exception is the fact that the daily practice of the 50 to 60-year olds is sometimes strongly characterised by their job, and therefore the usage of the neighbourhood is more often limited to off-peak times. Social contact in the neighbourhood was also considered to be of minor importance in some cases, as people primarily feel involved and engaged through their job. With regard to the imagined everyday life in the neighbourhood in 10 to 20 years, several interviewees mentioned that it is extremely difficult to think so far ahead. Nevertheless, some expressed the idea that they would go to a café more often to maintain contact. In what follows, we will be writing about the older people in general, without differentiating between the two age groups.

3.1.2. Meaning of the Neighbourhood: The Lived Space

The meaning attributed to the neighbourhood as the experienced or lived space in the descriptions of the older people interviewed is framed by an inner and an outer delimitation. Everyday practice partly takes place in a relatively closed setting within the neighbourhood (inner delimitation). This is particularly pronounced among residents of centres for older people, where there are many networks and a lot of social exchange between the residents. These are made possible or organised via in-house cafés or events in the centre and can thus be maintained. In other forms of housing, social exchange mainly takes place in people's individual place of residence. On the other hand—in the outer delimitation—many respondents are mobile and use public transport to move around the entire city or beyond. There is no preference for or restriction to concentrating on the home or the immediate environment.

In spite of these delimitations, as mentioned above, the neighbourhood is often seen as an important place for recreation, allowing walks and outdoor activities, as well as a place for 'being involved', allowing residents to get out of their immediate surroundings and get involved in social exchange. With regard to 'being involved', one interviewee said that people used to say that older people should have access to 'nice and green' spaces (70+/4). That is only partially true, as she explained in the following:

> But they don't want to go out into the green space; they want to be able to see what the baker is doing today….Yes, and connections to the past, whether it is as it was, or what has changed. Yes of course, it is more modern, but earlier it was more comfortable. Social participation in everyday life, the closeness to everyday life. (70+/4)

On the other hand, there are also people who see the outdoor space more as a space for individual relaxation, when fewer people or families with children are on the move: "I prefer to go to the park when it is quiet, at my

age. I like to sit on a bench or just walk around, just taking it as it comes" (70+/5). In general, however, people reported that the need for social exchange is more pronounced in old age, which is also linked to retirement.

As soon as physical problems limit the use of public transport, the neighbourhood becomes increasingly important. Referring to her walks in the neighbourhood, one interviewee said that she was grateful that care workers took older people out into the fresh air: "And the neighbourhood itself is very important for this. Because taking wheelchairs onto the tram is nevertheless a big task" (70+/4).

3.1.3. Stereotypes and Age Images

Older people also have age-related stereotypes and age images, which relate to socio-spatial aspects. In the interviews and walkthroughs, older people often talked about other older people in general, and not about themselves, even though they were asked about their personal experience. They often made generalising statements about the older population because, as one older person said, "I'm probably not the classic older person, because I'll work until I drop" (70+/7). It is also interesting that the term 'age-appropriate', in relation to spatial design, is strongly rejected by some older people. Further statements demonstrating age-related stereotypes were that a certain park "is good for children, because of the animals, but for us older people it is a bit too far away" (70+/3). Another person said when she was talking about benches: "They're all too low; we don't sit down because we can't get up anymore" (70+/1).

3.2. From the Point of View of the Experts

3.2.1. Older People, Stereotypes and the Planning

In the context of 'age-appropriate' planning and development projects, the experts interviewed often described older people as a homogeneous and fragile group. Although different needs and requirements are attributed to older people with regard to the neighbourhood, these differentiated age images are seldom included in the planning and development of 'age-appropriate' living spaces. As soon as planning and development are involved, this contradiction between one-sided, stereotypical and differentiated age images is resolved in favour of uniform planning. Wheelchair accessibility in particular is considered to be of central importance. For example, "playground equipment...is being further developed with regard to wheelchair accessibility. Precisely because the playground is also planned for senior citizens" (E1). This view of older people as a fragile group finds its way into planning-related measures. It is about maintaining and restoring the physical health of older people: "Because you know about balance and strength, you can influence fall prevention in this sense, with balance and strength training" (E6). Furthermore, there are efforts on the part of planners to promote an active lifestyle among older people. The aim is to reach them through play and "trick" (E6) them into movement through physical activity and interaction with children.

In general, it can be said that experts consider generational exchange to be of great importance, specifically between young and old: "The interaction between old and young. It is explicitly play equipment, where the younger park visitor or play visitor is partly dependent on the older one" (E1). This generational exchange is intended to not only promote physical activity among older people, but also facilitate encounters and social contact.

It appears that age is often associated with functional limitations. In particular, topics such as balance problems, walking difficulties and health issues are often mentioned in connection with the idea of old age and ageing. These age-related stereotypes in the form of ascribed needs materialise in age-related aspects of planning and the subsequent realisation of construction projects. Here the existence of (age-appropriate) seating is considered as one of the most important planning elements for the planning and development of age-appropriate living spaces: "And then we also have situations again and again...where one can sit down, where one can rest. Sometimes I have the feeling that older people already feel their needs are quite satisfied" (E1). The choice of the model and the location of seats is usually based on criteria such as seat height: "The seating options vary in height, rising to 58cm so that...older people can also sit down without sinking into them" (E7). Armrests and the selection of sun-protected places and "places where things happen" (E7) are almost as important.

The materialisation of age-related stereotypes can also be found in the following planning element—the handrail: "Okay, what does the older person need? Above all, they need handrails. A young mum doesn't need a handrail to hold herself" (E6). In one case, the handrail is understood as the central planning moment for the perception of safety of older people: "And for older people, safety is perhaps even more important. That's probably why these holding options are so important" (E3). According to experts, the existence of infrastructure facilities, such as toilets, restaurants, shopping facilities, etc., and the planning of simple path systems represent further aspects of planning relevant to the planning and development of 'age-appropriate' living spaces:

> If you look at dementia gardens in this way, then it is always the case that dementia gardens are designed in such a way that you always find your way back to the same point. So mostly it is a cycle, so when I start and go straight ahead, I usually come back to the same point. It's such a classic dementia garden theme that people can't get lost. (E7)

In planning processes, however, older people are not only seen and characterised as people with physical lim-

itations, but sometimes also as people "who are somewhat older, who also tend towards dementia" (E7).

3.2.2. Limitations of Age-Appropriateness

Experts face various challenges in the planning and development of 'age-appropriate' living spaces. Standards and legal guidelines such as the Disability Equality Act (Eidgenossenschaft, 2002), the Tree Protection Act (Kanton Basel-Stadt, 1980), etc., significantly restrict the scope for action of experts:

> Then we have the Tree Protection Act here...and then you have to make sure that the equipment does not compete with the interests of tree protection. In addition, at the very end, it was of course the same with all the safety issues...and also keeping the overall budget somewhere within the specified limits. (E1)

It is not uncommon, however, for conflicts of interest to arise between legal guidelines and standards, and age-appropriate planning aspects: "The need for safety on the part of park visitors is already higher than the need for intimacy on the part of older people" (E1).

Although in both case studies older people are described as homogeneous and fragile, and rarely as a diverse group, the notion of age usually remains diffuse. This is because older people are referred to by a variety of terms such as pensioners, (active) seniors, the older, the very old, older people in retirement and nursing homes, etc. This diversity of terms can primarily be explained by the fact that experts take the surrounding residential environment or the immediate neighbourhood population into account when planning and developing neighbourhood and urban development projects. For example, residents of retirement and nursing homes are often regarded as a relevant user group: "So the...care home was very important to us, because they are right on the site and use the site quite a lot" (E7). The term 'age-appropriate' also remains diffuse. On the one hand, places that have certain planning elements are described as 'age-appropriate'. On the other hand, characteristics such as wheelchair-accessible, obstacle-free, barrier-free, paved, easy to understand, quiet, safe, green, planted, shady, etc., are subsumed under 'age-appropriate': "The strictest requirements are the ones we have for accessible constructions for disabled people. This has nothing to do with age. There we have strict guidelines, which concern fairness to disabled people, and if you keep to these, you are, like, automatically also age-friendly" (E7).

3.2.3. Participation

In both cases under study older people were only marginally included in the development processes. Some of the experts' ideas or stereotypes regarding older people play a central role: "I never had the feeling that they wanted to have a big say in things". This expert also said:

"If you let too many people have a say, nothing actually comes out in the end...because everyone blocks everyone else" (E4). Another expert said:

> One could of course have involved even more older people, but that is of course still difficult, probably to find the right people, who also have the ability—I don't know, [and] I mean, an older person sees it differently, but you also have to have the person who can really bring it to the point. (E2)

Yet another expert said: "Yes, we had an event where we presented the project....When you talk to older people, you also have to transmit relatively simple messages, let's say, so that you are understood" (E7).

4. Conclusions

Thus far, based on the three factors of Henri Lefebvre's (1991) theory, we have presented some results arising from the perspectives of the experts and the older people. Below, the three kinds of stereotypes that we have linked to Lefebvre's three factors are discussed in order to then explore the concept of participation. Finally, some recommendations for social work are outlined.

Although the results mainly show age-related stereotypes and generalised images of older people (ascribed stereotypes), it must be said that some more differentiated age images were also presented in the interviews. Nevertheless, stereotypes predominate. Due to the complexity of circumstances in the context of spatial and urban development, certain challenges are on the rise: firstly, urban development must find solutions that are suitable for everyone, for all residents and citizens. In addition, various laws and standards restrict the range of possibilities for development. We have learned that simplifying stereotypes is a good way of finding those solutions that are valid for a broad group (cf. Buse et al., 2016). This does not mean that these experts are trying to make their work easier. Stereotypes, however, may block the planners' view of the diverse needs, resources, opportunities and interests other people have.

The materialised stereotypes are embodied in the spatial practice. The solutions developed, and especially the processes involved in development, are shaped by stereotypes—but not only by these. In particular, one of the two cases under study also incorporated scientific evidence. As Day (2008, p. 47) said: "Participants emphasised that older people often have a wealth of experience, knowledge and skills that could be directly useful in many spheres, but that this resource was overlooked". One finding is that experts sometimes lack sufficient knowledge about participation and methodological skills. Moreover, there is also a lack of courage and trust that participatory approaches are appropriate and can lead to better solutions.

Older people perceive and judge the world and their environment from a very subjective point of view. How-

ever, age is not the only decisive factor in how the world is perceived. Rather, biographical, familial, social, and health and mobility-related aspects also play a major role, together with many more. Accessibility to public space, shopping, etc., can be improved, e.g., by avoiding an obstacle: as long as public transport can be used autonomously, it can also be used to avoid 'obstacles' in the immediate living environment. Therefore, great importance is placed on the accessibility and usability of public transport. We have learned that self-attributed stereotypes of older people thus play a role. The influence of these stereotypes on one's own behaviour or on quality of life is in the end rather subjective. It is important to understand that different older people may develop individual coping strategies for dealing with these stereotypes. This also demonstrates that solutions that are intended to be equally good and of equal use for all (older) people are practically impossible.

In the context of age-appropriate developments and solutions, participation is a central concept. On the one hand, there are various guiding documents that emphasise participation in social and political aspects of life, among other things, and which address the inclusion of people, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948), Principles for Older Persons (United Nations, 1991), Age-Friendly City (World Health Organisation, 2007) and New Urban Agenda (United Nations, 2017a). In these documents, participation is defined as having the opportunity to participate or to be involved in social and political activities. However, participation goes beyond that. Participation involves a theoretical concept, social values and working methods. Central elements are: information, collaboration (co-development, co-creation), taking part in decisions (design, realisation) and co-responsibility (Fabian & Huber, 2019). The stereotypes related to older people, which also exist in the field of spatial and urban planning, influence the willingness of decision-makers to see participation as a possibility and as a valid approach, and to enable or permit it accordingly.

The claim that older people should be involved in the planning and design of their living environment is not a new one. Buffel, Philippson and Scharf (2012, p. 609) emphasise that the active participation of older people is essential: "Involving older people in the development and maintenance of age-friendly environments respects a crucial goal for social policy. Achieving this...will require a radical shift from producing urban environments for people to developing neighbourhoods with and by older people" (cf. World Health Organization, 2016). The question is, how can we advocate and promote the participation of older people in a planning culture and practice in view of the given practice and stereotypes that form a barrier here?

Social work as a profession, and in particular planning-oriented social work, has the goal of representing people's interests in planning processes or creating possibilities for the direct participation of citizens.

A whole range of tasks exists in the context of the questions explored above. First, social work has the task of pointing out the realities outlined, advocating differentiated ways of looking at things, focusing on older people not only in terms of their problems and limitations, but above all, in terms of their potentials and resources. Social work has the task of promoting comprehensive and equitable participation in order to better address the heterogeneity of the needs of older people. As a consequence of some of the above-mentioned stereotypes, older people are sometimes seen or treated as weak people. Even if they have certain rights, as shown above, stereotypes can be a big barrier to being perceived as full members of society. The consequences are sometimes ageist, and older people are excluded from society. Second, social work should promote discussion and actively participate in how urban planning can best be implemented for people. The goal must be the improvement of quality of life and inclusion of the older people and all residents. This can only be achieved together with the people. An urban planning approach must take into account the constant changes in the city and society and needs a more flexible concept for 'all generations'. This corresponds in certain ways to the lived spaces of Lefebvre (cf. Biggs & Carr, 2016). Third, with regard to age-related stereotypes, social work should engage in educating and sensitising planners and other professionals. This work is part of the social worker's role as advocate for marginalised groups. In addition, social work must also engage in the current intensive international discourse on age-related discrimination. This discourse takes place in many fields of action, but only marginally in the field of urban planning (cf. Ayalon & Tesch-Römer, 2018). Fourth, this study shows that there are major gaps in research. We have observed that stereotypes are common. In addition, we have first indications that they have an influence on planning and implementation processes. Important research questions arise, for instance: What influence do stereotypes have on planning and implementation processes? Are these influences negative? And if so, for whom or for what? Are there groups of older people who are more affected than others? Are exclusion processes observable? In the complex structure of urban planning, is it possible to empirically establish a structure of effects that shows how stereotypes work and which moderating factors are involved? Can planning processes be improved through information and sensitisation of experts and decision-makers in the sense of integrative and fair consultation? As our population ages, these questions will have increasing importance for the field of social work and beyond. The complexity of the field of urban planning, but also the questions raised here, show that research in this field must also be interdisciplinary.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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