

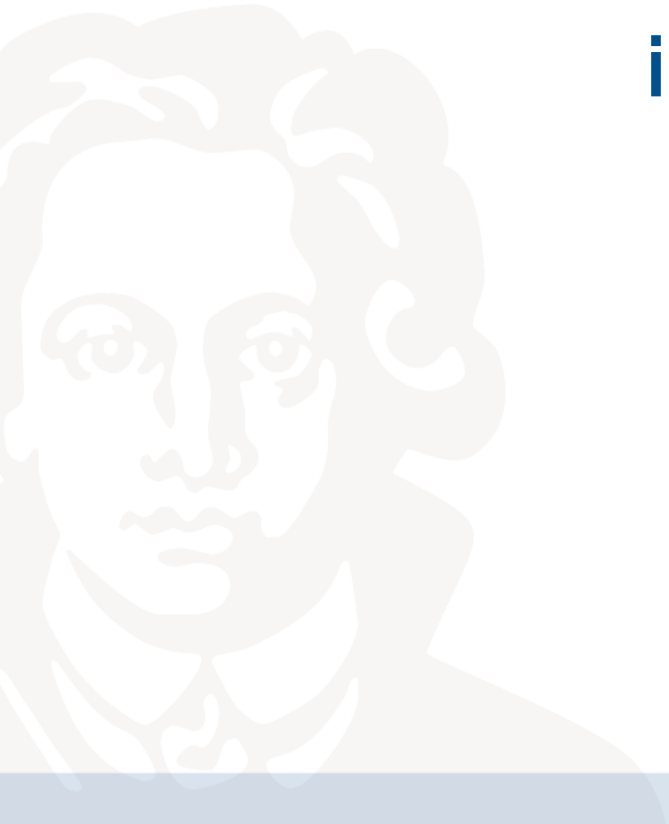
Workshop on Aging in Place with Dementia
Session 1: Frameworks for aging in place with dementia

**Theorizing place and aging: An environmental gerontology
perspective on aging (with dementia)**

Frank Oswald
Interdisciplinary Ageing Research (IAW)
Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany

NASEM / NIA Workshop on Aging in Place with Dementia, September 13-15, 2023

- 1. Theorizing place and aging**
- 2. Person-environment exchange processes
in transition into dementia**



Data, tables and figures in this presentation are based on work together with colleagues and mainly taken (and adapted) from:

Oswald, F., Wahl, H.-W., Wanka, A., & Chaudhury, H. (in press). Theorizing place and aging: Enduring and novel issues in Environmental Gerontology. In: M. P. Cutchin & G. D. Rowles (Eds.). *Handbook of Aging and Place*. London, UK: Edward Elgar Publ.

Niedoba, S., & Oswald, F. (2023). Person-environment exchange processes in transition into dementia: A Scoping Review. *The Gerontologist*, online ahead of print.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnad034>

1. Theorizing place and aging

Starting point

- In the past decades, the home and the neighborhood or community environment have gained much attention in gerontology, both in scientific inquiries and applied perspectives
- This has been serving to counteract the trend to downplay the role of the physical environment compared to the social environment in aging research

Why theorizing place and aging?

- To reconsider 'aging in place' and the 'place of place' in everyday life of today's older people
- To identify 'enduring' and 'novel' issues that have shaped theory construction on place and aging
- To explore a range of more traditional and more recent theories in environmental gerontology

1.1 Reconsider the 'place of place' in everyday life of today's older people

- The concept of 'aging in place' is mostly applied to indicate the desire of and opportunities to stay put and to live independently, perhaps with some assistance, for as long as possible without having to move to another place (Pani-Harreman et al., 2021)
- Instead of using the term 'aging in place', the concept of place should be considered an overarching concept to address aging in context in all its multitude of dimensions, issues, challenges, potentials and risks (e.g., Cutchin, 2018; Rowles, 1993; Rhodus & Rowles, 2023)

1. Theorizing place and aging

1.1 'Aging in place' or place and aging?

- Place covers concepts that may help to comprehensively understand how older adults are embedded in contexts, how they shape contexts including cultural variation and how contexts 'bounce back,' hence influencing the course of aging (e.g., Lewis & Buffel, 2020)
- Place is not limited to the micro-level, but also related to the meso- and macro-level of the environment such as the neighborhood or community (e.g., Greenfield et al., 2019)
- Consequently, place and aging interchange processes depend on historical development and cohort flow and are under constant change driven by historical-cultural influences and transitions and global mega-trends, such as digitalization or climate change

1.2 Some 'enduring' and 'novel' issues for theory construction on place and aging

Traditional or persistent or 'enduring' issues emphasize on place...

- to enhance or hinder access, orientation and resource use at home, in the neighborhood, and in the community
- to support or constrain the experience of privacy, comfort, recreation, social exchange, participation, and community / society embeddedness
- as a source of identity and meaning making on different contextual layers
- as the socio-physical frame for processes of continuous change over various time metrics (life course, months, weeks, days, within-day variability)
- (...)

1.2 Some 'enduring' and 'novel' issues for theory construction on place and aging

Recent or 'novel' issues emphasize on place...

- as shaped by ongoing mega-trends (digitalization, climate change, globalization), e.g., technology use can enable or constrain place-making processes in a digitalized world
- as shaped by increasing diversity in older adults (e.g., effects of migration, social inequality, ethnicity, cognitive status [e.g., dementia], lifestyle such as LGBTQ older adults)
- as shaped by environmental and social innovations in community-based housing types and support/care networks or AFCC frameworks
- (...)

1. Theorizing place and aging

1.3 Generations of theories concerned with place and aging since the 1960's

Focus on core developments and qualitative theoretical leaps forward across historical time

Historical Time	Generation of Theory Construction on Place and Aging	Inherent Person-Environment View	Major Achievement	Main Contributors (alphabetical order) ¹
1960's to 1990's	First Generation Theory Construction: Focus on Interactional Views	Need to consider person-space (objective place) as well person-place (experiential) relations as interactions ; place seen as both 'environmental press' or 'environmental richness'; primary focus on physical dimension of the environment	Pioneering in stimulating person-place research in gerontology	Carp, Carp, Kahana, Lawton, Nahemow, Rowles, Rubinstein, Watkins

¹ For references, please see Oswald, Wahl, Wanka, & Chaudhury (in press).

1. Theorizing place and aging

1.3 Generations of theories concerned with place and aging since the 1960's

Focus on core developments and qualitative theoretical leaps forward across historical time

Historical Time	Generation of Theory Construction on Place and Aging	Inherent Person-Environment View	Major Achievement	Main Contributors (alphabetical order) ¹
1960's to 1990's	First Generation Theory Construction: Focus on Interactional Views	Need to consider person-space (objective place) as well person-place (experiential) relations as interactions ; place seen as both 'environmental press' or 'environmental richness'; primary focus on physical dimension of the environment	Pioneering in stimulating person-place research in gerontology	Carp, Carp, Kahana, Lawton, Nahemow, Rowles, Rubinstein, Watkins
Approximately 2000 to 2015	Second Generation Theory Construction: Covering Interaction and Transaction and Extending the Understanding of Place	Need to combine behavioral (visible) and experiential (reported) processes of P-E exchange (e.g., P-E agency and belonging ; residential normalcy and coping repertoire) technology as a historical new place characteristic	Stimulating new empirical studies on P-E processes and outcomes; broadening the understanding of place	Cutchin, Golant, Lang, Oswald, Wahl

¹ For references, please see Oswald, Wahl, Wanka, & Chaudhury (in press).

1. Theorizing place and aging

1.3 Generations of theories concerned with place and aging since the 1960's

Focus on core developments and qualitative theoretical leaps forward across historical time

Historical Time	Generation of Theory Construction on Place and Aging	Inherent Person-Environment View	Major Achievement	Main Contributors (alphabetical order) ¹
1960's to 1990's	First Generation Theory Construction: Focus on Interactional Views	Need to consider person-space (objective place) as well person-place (experiential) relations as interactions ; place seen as both 'environmental press' or 'environmental richness'; primary focus on physical dimension of the environment	Pioneering in stimulating person-place research in gerontology	Carp, Carp, Kahana, Lawton, Nahemow, Rowles, Rubinstein, Watkins
Approximately 2000 to 2015	Second Generation Theory Construction: Covering Interaction and Transaction and Extending the Understanding of Place	Need to combine behavioral (visible) and experiential (reported) processes of P-E exchange (e.g., P-E agency and belonging ; residential normalcy and coping repertoire) technology as a historical new place characteristic	Stimulating new empirical studies on P-E processes and outcomes; broadening the understanding of place	Cutchin, Golant, Lang, Oswald, Wahl

Agency: The process of becoming a change agent in one's own life by means of intentional and proactive behaviors imposed on the physical-social environment (e.g., Bandura, 2001, 2006)

Belonging: Non-goal-oriented cognitive and emotional process that makes a space a place, covering subjective evaluations and interpretations of place (e.g., Rowles, 1983; Rubinstein, 1987)

¹ For references, please see Oswald, Wahl, Wanka, & Chaudhury (in press).

1. Theorizing place and aging

1.3 Generations of theories concerned with place and aging since the 1960's

Focus on core developments and qualitative theoretical leaps forward across historical time

Historical Time	Generation of Theory Construction on Place and Aging	Inherent Person-Environment View	Major Achievement	Main Contributors (alphabetical order) ¹
1960's to 1990's	First Generation Theory Construction: Focus on Interactional Views	Need to consider person-space (objective place) as well person-place (experiential) relations as interactions ; place seen as both 'environmental press' or 'environmental richness'; primary focus on physical dimension of the environment	Pioneering in stimulating person-place research in gerontology	Carp, Carp, Kahana, Lawton, Nahemow, Rowles, Rubinstein, Watkins
Approximately 2000 to 2015	Second Generation Theory Construction: Covering Interaction and Transaction and Extending the Understanding of Place	Need to combine behavioral (visible) and experiential (reported) processes of P-E exchange (e.g., P-E agency and belonging; residential normalcy and coping repertoire) technology as a historical new place characteristic	Stimulating new empirical studies on P-E processes and outcomes; broadening the understanding of place	Cutchin, Golant, Lang, Oswald, Wahl
Present	Third Generation Theory Construction: Focus on Transactions, Co-construction Intra-Actions and Co-Constitution	Need to simultaneously consider the micro-, meso-, and macro dimensions of place in a variety of regards (SES, physical, social, care, technology); place seen as becoming a major facet of society's diversity and cultural evolution (cultural turn in aging and place); materiality as a crucial dimension of social life (material turn in aging and place)	Intensifying linkages with lifespan research , pointing attention to full bandwidth of place in older individuals' everyday world as well as to the importance of materiality	Buffel, Chaudhury, Cutchin, Diaz-Moore, Gerstorf, Greenfield, Höppner, Miller, Oswald, Rhodes, Rowles, Urban, Wahl, Wanka

¹ For references, please see Oswald, Wahl, Wanka, & Chaudhury (in press).

1. Theorizing place and aging: **Take home message 1**

What does this mean for theorizing place and aging (also with respect to dementia)?

- New concept developments suggest to overcome the dualism of person and place as separate pre-existing entities and to understand that persons and environments are co-constitutive, they are constantly becoming as we age (also with dementia)
- Second and third generation theories are better suitable than first generation theories to address ‘enduring’ and ‘novel’ issues of place and aging research and application, such as AFCC frameworks (e.g., Moulaert & Wanka, 2019; Greenfield et al., 2019)
- Differentiated measures lead to differentiated findings, either on the level of transaction (e.g., psychometrically sound measures for processes of agency and belonging), or on the level of participatory approaches within the AFCC movement
- From an empirical / intervention perspective: Instead of asking “What is an age-friendly environment?” or “How can place attachment be facilitated in later life?” we might ask “How do people and places develop (and grow) together (or apart)?”

2. Person-environment exchange processes in transition into dementia

Empirical evidence on person-environment processes in early stages of dementia

- Data from a scoping review (JBI, PRISMA-Sc) based on 1,358 screened records leading to 102 sources has been analyzed according to the Context Dynamics in Aging (CODA) -Model by Wahl and Gerstorf (2018) as a framework for aging in place with dementia (Niedoba & Oswald, 2023)
- Categorization of (1) study design and different environmental dimensions of the individual's Life Space, i.e. the social, physical, care/service, technological, and socioeconomic environment, as well as of (2) the p-e exchange processes of agency and belonging
- Study design: 55% of all studies used qualitative methods (e.g., ethnographic methods, photo-voice), quantitative methods are mainly used to measure processes of agency (e.g., GPS)
- Dimensions of the environment: Most studies emphasized the social and the physical environment, only few have addressed care/service, technology or socioeconomic aspects

2. Person-environment exchange processes in transition into dementia

Process of Agency: People living with dementia can shape their life space by deliberately reducing, maintaining, using, or expanding it

- **Reducing agency:** People in early stages of dementia experience a “shrinking world” (Duggan et al., 2008). GPS-based measures show a reduced global movement (Tung et al., 2014) or a higher risk of mobility-restriction, i.e., less time spent outside, walking, or visiting places, compared to cognitively healthy adults or people with MCI (Wettstein et al., 2015).
- **Maintaining or expanding agency:** The extent to which places are visited depends on the type and meaning of place. While “consumer-administrative-and-selfcare-places, (...) social-cultural-spiritual-places and (...) places-for recreational-and-physical-activities“ are less visited, “places with contact with nature, for medical care, for staying in touch with their social network, and the neighborhood” continue to be visited (Margot-Cattin, 2021). Even after being socially excluded, people living with dementia can rebuild their social networks, strengthen existing relationships, and actively find spaces where they can establish new social contacts (Ward et al., 2021).

2. Person-environment exchange processes in transition into dementia

Process of Belonging: People living with dementia still perceive connectedness and familiarity with the socio-physical environment, although belonging can decrease

- Longing for feelings of connectedness, experiencing familiarity, and feeling at home: Studies indicate a persistent desire for belonging (e.g., Han et al., 2016; Mattos, 2016) and the promotion of community belonging through participation in social groups (e.g., Söderhamn et al., 2014), as well as perceived familiarity and safety at home (e.g., Duggan et al., 2008; van Gennip et al., 2016) to reinforce continuity of self and identity (Margot-Cattin, 2021). Beside the home (Li et al., 2019), objects (Dooley et al., 2021) and clothing can also provide identity (Buse & Twigg, 2016).
- Decreasing feelings of connectedness and familiarity: In the process of dementia, present places can become unfamiliar and less important compared to past places (Duggan et al., 2008; Genoe, 2009; Pace, 2020). “Gradually, the world becomes an increasingly alien place. The feeling of basic familiarity diminishes. Meaningful connections between the self and the outside space are interrupted, creating feelings of not-being-at-home and insecurity” (vanWijngaarden et al., 2019).

2. Person-environment exchange processes in transition into dementia: **Take home message 2**

What does this mean for aging in place with dementia?

- (Home) place plays a major ambivalent role in facilitating / hampering the process into dementia
- Although the transition into dementia can be an experience of undermining one's agency and sense of belonging, of stigmatization and social exclusion, people in transition into dementia should not be seen as victims of their environments, but can proactively co-create life spaces
- Moreover, environmental stability, familiar surroundings, and possibilities to engage with people, places, and objects might foster continuity of self despite dementia progression
- Findings are limited to a 'traditional' framework on distinct physical and social environments and conventional concepts of p-e exchange processes (agency and belonging, Oswald & Wahl, 2019)
- Need to put more attention to new theories, to more distal environments, such as places outside one's home (e.g., Sugiyama et al., 2022) or the technological environment (e.g., Gaugler, 2023)

Contact

Frank Oswald
oswald@em.uni-frankfurt.de



Thank You!

© W. Vorjohann, participant from the Frankfurt housing research project BEWOHNT