



The meaning of outdoor environments to older people with home care services

An interview study

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The meaning of outdoor environments to older people with home care services. An interview study

Betydelsen av utemiljöer för äldre med hemtjänst. En intervjustudie

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Abstract

Welfare systems in Sweden and the rest of the world are facing vast challenges due to an increasing older population. With aging comes physical limitations, thus an increased need for home care. For older people, outdoor environments - especially natural ones - enable meaningful activities, socialising, and have positive effects on well-being. Many older people perceive environmental obstacles in relation to the outdoor environment, and a fit between the person and the environment is especially important to older people.

The aim of this study was to explore the use and experience of outdoor environments among older people with home care services. Five semi-structured interviews were conducted and analysed with meaning condensation. The analysis resulted in three interrelated themes: *Using and experiencing the outdoor environment*, *Meaning of early life experiences and habits* and *Enabling use and experience*. It was found that the use and experience of outdoor environments consist of a variety of activities, environmental qualities, and impressions and feelings related to these. Many of the important aspects correlated with previous research and theory on older people. It was found that nature is important for well-being through enjoyment of as well as relaxation and comfort. The outdoor environment is important for socialising and being part of community and aspects of caring for others and feeling cared for by the community. It is important for keeping meaningful habits and outdoor experiences earlier in life may provide tools to manage the outdoor environment in present time. The findings suggest that there are physical obstacles to person-environment fit, such as difficulties getting through the door, as well as subjective aspects such as fear of falling. In addition, it was found that getting outside independently is essential to the participants.

The findings from the present study are in contrast with some literature suggesting that older people have an increased need for restoration, social selectivity and withdrawal. It was found that the needs and wishes of the participants reflect those of *older people in need of stimulation, with difficulties getting outside independently due to physical limitations*. From the results, a proposed *universal approach* and a model to inspire decision-makers, planners and home care staff to sustainable solutions for outdoor activity was presented. The author proposes that sustainable solutions that enable getting outside independently can contribute to societal goals such as fall prevention, decreased loneliness, and well-being among older people.

More research is needed on the use, and experiences, needs and wishes related to outdoor environments among older people with home care. It is important to study the subjective sides of person-environment fit and, the meaning of social interaction outdoors, to motivate *universal approaches*, promotion of well-being and prevention of loneliness. In addition, knowledge is needed on older people's perceived function in society in relation to the outdoor environment.

Keywords: Accessibility, ageing in place, autonomy, environmental psychology, gerotranscendence, instoration, nature, person-environment fit, restoration, sense of control, social environment, supportive environments, universal design, usability, well-being

To V and T

Table of contents

List of figures.....	8
1. Introduction	9
1.1 Background	9
1.1.1 Ageing in place and home care	10
1.1.2 Person-environment fit.....	11
1.2 Previous research and theory	15
1.2.1 Environmental perception and experience	15
1.2.2 Benefits of natural environments	17
1.2.3 Social environments	18
2. Problem formulation and aim	20
3. Method	21
3.1 Participants	21
3.2 Interviews	23
3.3 Analysis.....	24
3.4 Ethical considerations	25
3.5 Method discussion	26
3.5.1 Data collection, processing, and analysis.....	26
3.5.2 The interviewer	27
3.5.3 Generalisation of results	27
4. Results	29
4.1 Using and experiencing the outdoor environment	30
4.1.1 Being close to nature	30
4.1.2 Absorbing surrounding life	32
4.1.3 Moving around	33
4.1.4 Socialising and being part of community	34
4.2 Early life experiences and habits	35
4.3 Enabling use and experience.....	36
4.4 Conclusion of results.....	38
5. Discussion of results.....	39
5.1 Perceptions from the outdoor environment.....	39
5.2 The importance of nature.....	39
5.3 The importance of socialising and being part of community.....	40
5.4 The importance of connection to the past and keeping habits	41
5.5 Sense of control, autonomy and person-environment fit	42
5.5.1 Accessibility and usability	43
5.6 The need for stimulation	43
5.7 Application of findings	44

5.7.1 A universal approach	44
5.8 Conclusion	47
5.9 Future research	48
References	49
Acknowledgements.....	57
Popular science poster	58
Appendix 1: Letter to recruiters.....	59
Appendix 2: Information letter	60
Appendix 3: Interview guide	61
Appendix 4: Original quotes in Swedish	62

List of figures

Figure 1. The inverted triangle of supportive environments incorporated with the four zones of contact (Bengtsson 2015)	15
Figure 2. A model of the main themes, sub-themes and their interrelation	30
Figure 3. Illustration of the activity of relaxing by the water (by the author). This is relatable to the present theme, as well as “Early life experiences and habits” as some participants have kept habits of relaxation from earlier adulthood.	31
Figure 4. Illustration of the observation of wildlife (by the author), relatable to “Absorbing surrounding life”, and activities and natural elements described in “Being close to nature”	32
Figure 5. Illustration of having a meal together outside (by the author). This is relatable to “Socialising and being part of community” and linked to “Being close to nature” through the aspect of sunlight.....	34
Figure 6. Illustration of independently moving around outside (by the author). Moving around outside is relatable to the present theme, “Moving around”, and “Early life experiences and habits” as the participants continue habits of walking from earlier adulthood. It can also be related to natural elements and activities described in “Being close to nature” and “Absorbing surrounding life”	38
Figure 7 Activities, needs and wishes of the participants in the present study in relation to the four zones of contact. More needs and wishes are fulfilled in zone 3 and 4. Most accessibility and usability issues are related to zone 2.	42
Figure 8. Illustration of the potentially fulfilled needs and wishes in the individual and the benefits to and demands on the municipality related to the activity of spending time in the garden	46
Figure 9. Illustration of the potentially fulfilled needs in the individual and the requirements of and benefits to the municipality related to the activity of grocery shopping in town	47

1. Introduction

This thesis is a project within the field of environmental psychology – the study of the interplay between person and environment. This study has a phenomenological approach, and is based on an interview study on use and experience of outdoor environments among older people with home care services. While the approach of this study was inductive, the discussion part of this thesis lead up to suggestions for application in Swedish society and home care in the future. Therefore, the following two sections aim to provide a contemporary understanding of what it means to grow old in Sweden, and the societal impacts the aging population might have. They also clarify the contexts of the participants in the present study through describing activity, mobility, well-being, home care and the home in relation to ageing and outdoor environments. An understanding of home care system in Sweden is valuable to understand the suggested applications later in this thesis. In the later section research articles and theories on environmental perception, use, and experience relevant to people in general and older people in particular, are presented. This contributes to the overall understanding of the results and the discussion part of this thesis. Both sections lead up to the problem formulation and aim of the present study.

1.1 Background

In Sweden, the population above the age of 65 is increasing more than the population in general and estimations show that the number of people above the age of 90 will increase by 25 % until 2030. Due to the increased survival rate, the average life expectancy is increasing and people at the age of 60 have in general another 25 years to live (Statistiska centralbyrån 2022b). The result of this is an increasing number of people in need of home care (Folkhälsomyndigheten 2019). More than half of the people over 60 in Sweden live in small houses (Statistiska centralbyrån 2022b). 60 percent of people above the age of 60 in Sweden live with a partner. It is more common for women over the age of 78 to live alone and for men above the age of 90 to do so. 25 percent of men and 17 percent of women above 60 are socially isolated, meaning they don't meet family or friends more often than twice a month. It is common among older people in Sweden to experience loneliness, which in turn affects their well-being (Svensson *et al.* 2022; Folkhälsomyndigheten 2025). The Public Health Agency of Sweden has presented a *national strategy against loneliness*, which includes the goal of *equal conditions for social relationships* with one of the sub-goals *social arenas accessible for all* with reference to universal design (Folkhälsomyndigheten 2025) – the latter further described in section 1.1.2.

For most people, decreased mobility and increased need for health care are significant for later years in life, and with age and it is common to experience a combination of several conditions which makes the matter more complex (World health organisation 2022). The proportion of people perceiving their own health as good in Sweden drops from 60 to 50 percent after the age of 80 and perceived health is closely related to the ability to stay physically active (Statistiska centralbyrån 2022b). People with cognitive and mobility limitations are less satisfied with their frequency of activity, experience health more negatively and experience more problems in the pedestrian environment (Hovbrandt *et al.* 2007). In Sweden, 19 percent of people aged 70-79 years and 44 percent of people 80 and older express decreased activity ability (Statistiska centralbyrån 2022b). Falling is the most common reason for injuries among older people in Sweden. About 70,000 older people a year are hospitalised due to fall injuries and about 2000 have a lethal outcome. Falling may impact independence and quality of life. The economic effect on the public sector was in 2020 11.3 billion Swedish kronor, the majority affecting municipal care. Many people fall in their own home or close to it.

1.1.1 Ageing in place and home care

The notion of growing old in your own home is described by concepts such as ageing/aging in place and aging at home. By Pani-Harreman *et al.* (2021) ageing in place is defined as the opportunity to live at home for as long as possible. Ageing in place relates to the home, the neighbourhood, the social environment and necessary services (Forsyth & Molinsky 2021). The possibilities of, and/or cost of, ageing in place vary depending on the country of residence (National institute on aging 2023; Department of health & social care 2024; Employment and social development Canada 2025) and may or may not be regulated by law. There are pros and cons to ageing in place. There may be benefits to health and social life (Sixsmith & Sixsmith 2008), it may be advantageous to attachment (Wiles *et al.* 2012; Löfqvist *et al.* 2013), familiarity, sense of security and identity (Wiles *et al.* 2012). There may also be downsides such as social isolation and decreased independence due to a lack of support (Sixsmith & Sixsmith 2008). Additionally, it is important for older people to be able to choose where and how they want to age in place (Wiles *et al.* 2012) and the desire to do so may be affected by the access to outdoor spaces and transportation (Iwarsson & Ståhl 2003; Choi 2022).

Social services in Sweden are obliged by law to work towards *reasonable* living standards, safe and independent living, as well as a meaningful and active existence for older people. Municipal social services can grant home care which might entail e.g. support in transferring around the home, hygiene or cleaning.

(Socialtjänstlagen 2001:453). 151 000 people had home care services in Sweden in 2023. Home care services are most common in people between the ages of 75 and 89, and it is more common for women to have home care services than men (Socialstyrelsen 2024). Outdoor time is not regulated by law, however in some municipalities there are guidelines for outdoor time for people receiving home care services. Some municipalities (Kristianstads kommun et cetera) elaborate on what services are available, and it is stated that outdoor time is available on application when it is not possible to do this individually. Additionally, help with groceries implies paying for home delivery. Some municipalities give scarce information and refer to individual assessment. While studies on older people in residential care facilities have shown that green environments can contribute to improved well-being (Bengtsson & Carlsson 2013; Dahlkvist *et al.* 2016), it was reported in 2023 that approximately 30 percent of the subjects in residential care facilities in Sweden described access to outdoor visits as “bad” (Socialstyrelsen 2023). In addition, Swedish universities have proposed a national strategy for outdoor environments for older people in residential care facilities (Bengtsson *et al.* 2025). More people receive care in their homes than in residential care facilities in Sweden (Socialstyrelsen 2024), however no equivalent investigation nor suggested strategy related to home care settings has been found.

1.1.2 Person-environment fit

While this study aims to explore the whole phenomenon of use and experience of the outdoor environment, an understanding of person-environment fit is useful for discussion and application of the results. Many concepts and theories are relatable to person-environment fit, such as compatibility, sense of control, accessibility, usability, supportive environments and universal design (Lawton 1986; Kaplan & Kaplan 1989; Grahn 1991; Iwarsson & Ståhl 2003; Bengtsson 2015; Choi 2022). Compatibility is, according to *Attention restoration theory*, connected to the evolutionary preference people have for nature and its restoring capacities. It determines if the environment supports the intended activities and fits the individual’s capacities, needs and expectations (Kaplan & Kaplan 1989). Person-environment fit is, according to Lawton’s ecological model (1986), the relationship between competence and demands and barriers in the environment. Conclusively, aspects at play regarding person-environment fit are both objective and subjective.

Sense of control and autonomy

According to Küller (1991), controlling the surroundings - physically and internally - is important to emotional regulation and stress, and quality of life is positively correlated with *sense of control*. Regarding personal control, regulation of boundaries helps individuals within social interaction. A lack of personal

control makes the individual react as they strive for independence. Sense of control entails the possibility to own decision making, to determine what to do and what others do to you. The benefits from sense of control may come not only from using the place itself but knowing it is there and knowing it can be used if one wants to (Ulrich 1999). Older people who feel that others have made decisions for them against their will are less likely to handle an incompatibility with the environment which leads to many negative effects on physical and psychological well-being (Golant 2015).

Person-environment fit to older people

After trauma or illness, people may find the physical and social environment incomprehensible or too demanding (Grahn 1991; Grahn *et al.* 2010; Bengtsson & Grahn 2014). Aging and disease prevalent to older generations come with degeneration, which may affect motor functions and which in turn will cause insufficiency to the demands of the environment (Seidler *et al.* 2010). Person-environment fit is particularly important to older people as people with functional limitations are more sensitive to change (Lawton 1986; Iwarsson & Ståhl 2003; Hovbrandt *et al.* 2007; Bengtsson 2015; Firdaus 2017; Choi 2020) and over- and under-stimulation (Bengtsson 2015) than people with high capacities.

Environments near home that support physical activity may improve or maintain person-environment fit, and thus allow more years ageing in place (Wang & Shepley 2018). Neighbourhood environments that facilitate outdoor activities have a positive effect on well-being (Sugiyama & Thompson 2006), and walkability and stimulation may contribute to better mental health (Khosravi & Tehrani 2019). Presence of water is also correlated to higher physical activity among those with walking difficulties (Keskinen *et al.* 2018). A study on *assisted living residents* (Rodiek 2005) presents a number of features related to use and preference of the outdoor environment, such as an abundance of paths to reach landscaped areas, sufficient shade and seating, abundant vegetation, access to views beyond the facility, presence of windows close to entries and areas near the entrance for the preview of the outdoor space. Additionally, falling (Socialstyrelsen 2022) and fear of falling may be reduced with improvement in the outdoor areas (Lee *et al.* 2017; Lee *et al.* 2020).

Sense of control is enabled by access to privacy and temporary escape and according to Guwaldi (2009) a possibility to find a quiet place.

According to Tornstam (2011), older people through gerotranscendental development may have a greater need for quiet and meditation than younger people and Dahlkvist *et al.* (2016) state that *fascination* is especially important to older people with many impairments and barriers to experiencing the outdoor environment. For some people, their restorative space may be a driving distance

from home (Lord *et al.* 2011), thus a decrease of compatibility between the person and the environment, e.g. through injury, often dramatically decreases the access to restoration (Scopelliti & Giuliani 2006). However, older people are not a homogenous group (Statistiska centralbyrån 2022a) and needs wishes vary (Bengtsson & Carlsson 2013; Sundevall & Jansson 2020) as well as the perceptions of their ability to cope in objectively similar environments (Golant 2015).

Accessibility

According to Iwarsson and Ståhl (2003), accessibility is mainly objective, referring to standards and norms, and is about the functional abilities of the person in relation to the environmental demands. The accessibility concept should consider the personal and the environmental components and the incongruence between them. In many studies, accessibility is used in a wider sense, meaning whether the person can access the environment and does not always specify reasons behind it. With this in mind, accessible environments are associated with increased activity and well-being in older people (Kearney & Winterbottom 2006; Hovbrandt *et al.* 2007; Clarke & Gallagher 2013; Keskinen *et al.* 2018; Aliyas 2021). The frequency of outdoor use in assisted living facilities may be affected by accessibility as well as specific environmental aspects such as seating, views, doors, and thresholds (Rodiek 2006; Bengtsson & Carlsson 2013; Rodiek *et al.* 2014), staff availability (Kearney & Winterbottom 2006), cleanliness, and safety (Sundevall & Jansson 2020). In a study on older men by Gong (2014) it was stated that people with poor lower extremity function were more likely to participate in regular physical activity if the neighbourhood had low variation in vegetation.

Usability

A physical ability to go outside does not necessarily mean the person will do so (Cutler & Kane 2006). Accessibility is conditional to usability and refers to the possibility for the person to move around and use the environment like other people. It is based on the encounter between the person and the environment, is about subjective expressions and evaluations of person-environment fit and can be considered a measure of efficiency, effectiveness and satisfaction in relation to the goals of the individual. It is the activity aspect that differs accessibility from usability (Iwarsson & Ståhl 2003). According to the usability concept, the individual will evaluate the environmental fit without considering the official rules. The usability of an environment is influenced by psychological aspects such as motivation, expectations and self-image (Iwarsson & Ståhl 2003). According to Golant (2015), older people's coping and motivation vary in objectively similar ill-adapted environments. Coping depends on the subjective belief of whether the

activity is doable as well as subjective and objective environmental characteristics. Physically attractive, accessible, safe, supportive, and universally designed homes and public environments, as well as accessible, safe and affordable transportation positively impact the perceived ability to cope with environmental barriers. In addition, weather conditions ought not to restrict use. Support from family, friends and neighbours is valued highly; however, autonomy is foundational to coping (Golant 2015).

Also relatable to usability is *sense of safety* and *sense of control*. It is common for older people to perceive fear related to moving outdoors (Rantakokko *et al.* 2009; Socialstyrelsen 2022). This increases the risk of perceived impaired walking ability. Older people receiving care often feel vulnerable, and risk of falling, or feelings of insecurity may increase avoidance and anxiety (Khosravi & Tehrani 2019). In addition, ambiguity about the ability of the environment to meet one's needs may negatively impact *sense of safety* in nursing home residents (Bengtsson & Carlsson 2013). However, social interaction may positively impact sense of safety in urban environments (Scopelliti & Giuliani 2006). *Sense of control* may, in different populations, increase when one gets to be part of the planning of activities and environments (Pitt 2014; Jiang *et al.* 2019), and it is enabled by the ability to take care of the home and maintain privacy (Downing 2008).

Universal design

For an environment to promote well-being, one must not only consider accessibility and usability but also the environment as a restorative resource and an aesthetic experience for all users. While accessible design makes a division between normal and abnormal and stems from exclusion, *universal design* emphasises one population and inclusion (Iwarsson & Ståhl 2003; Bengtsson 2015). *Universal design* is defined as an approach *for design that to the greatest extent possible can be used by everyone* and aims for a change of attitudes in society and work towards democracy, equity and citizenship (Iwarsson & Ståhl 2003).

Supportive environments

Despite an aging population and an increased need for home care, there is much that can be done to make additional years more meaningful through supportive environments (World health organisation 2022). Increased compatibility between the person and their environment may not only maintain independence, attachment and social networks, it may also be more cost-effective for the

individual (Forsyth & Molinsky 2021) and the municipalities. Supportive environments enable the development of bodily senses, motor functions and psychological functions as well as well-being (Grahn 1991; Grahn *et al.* 2010; Bengtsson & Grahn 2014). According to the *Theory of supportive environments*, a supportive environment is comprehensible, accessible and secure, and requires different aspects depending on individual resources (Grahn 1991; Grahn *et al.* 2010; Bengtsson & Grahn 2014). According to Bengtsson (2015) the original *theory of supportive environments* does not consider the aspect of over- and under- stimulation that may be present in some groups. The original model was adapted and incorporated with *the four zones of contact*, ranging from 1. From inside the building, 2. The transition zone, 3. Immediate surroundings and 4. The wider neighbourhood. In consideration of groups sensitive to under-stimulation, such as people with physical limitations, the triangle is reversed, making

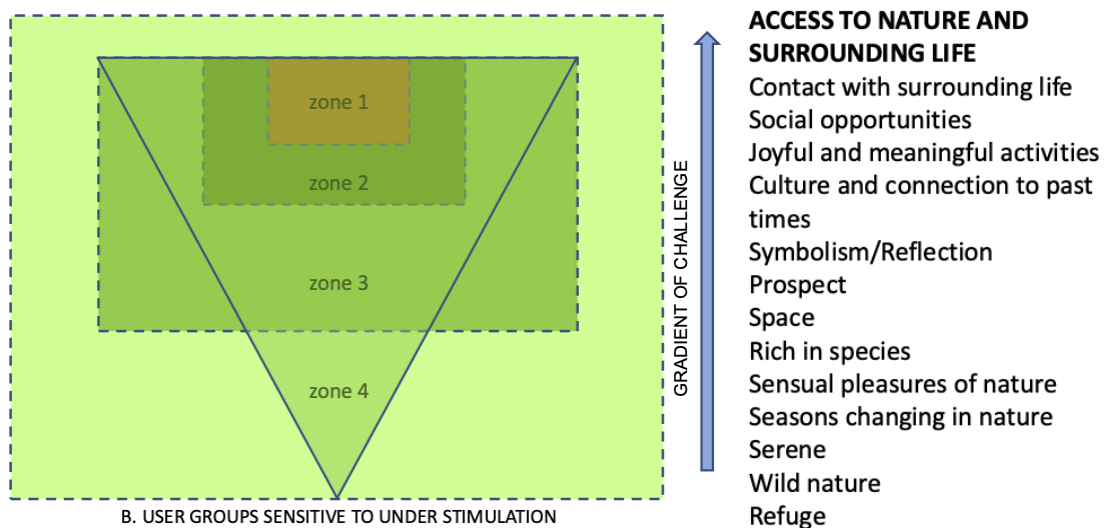


Figure 1. The inverted triangle of supportive environments incorporated with the four zones of contact (Bengtsson 2015)

challenge easily accessed (Figure 1). Aspects important for comfortable environments are incorporated: closeness and easy access; enclosure, safety and familiarity; orientation and way-finding; different options in different kinds of weather, and a gradient of challenge based on qualities that support access to nature and surrounding life as illustrated in figure 1 (Bengtsson 2015).

1.2 Previous research and theory

1.2.1 Environmental perception and experience

A foundation of environmental psychology is Ecological psychology. It is about the dynamic human-environment relations, functionally meaningful environmental aspects vary and change. Humans adapt to their environments by

changing the properties of the environmental conditions (Heft 2013). Environmental perception is, to Gibson (1979) the processing of scenes as whole entities and the perceiver as part of it. It is highly complex and goes beyond object perception with colour, form, et cetera. There are individual differences in perceptual capacities, and perception is influenced by aging of the sensory organs as well as the brain. With aging and disease prevalent to older generations comes degeneration which may affect sensory and perceptual processing (Raz & M. 2006; Seidler *et al.* 2010; Mather 2016). According to *Theory of gerotranscendence* (Tornstam 2011), aging means perceptions of being part of a bigger picture rather than being an isolated individual, and perception of time may change in a sense that past, present and future is less clear. Knowledge about perceptual differences may be valuable when discussing person-environment fit. With this said, the present study has a phenomenological approach, with the standpoint from Merleau Ponty's (2005) explanation of perception as the inner dialogue of the subject in the lived world. It is a complex interplay between cognition, emotion and imagination within the body of the subject.

Environmental preference, familiarity and identity

According to evolutionary theories, such as *The biophilia hypothesis* (Wilson 1984) and *The preference matrix* (Kaplan & Kaplan 1989), what environmental qualities people are drawn to is related to survival in early humans. According to *The Biophilia hypothesis*, humans are motivated to seek out animals, plants and landscapes due to an innate preference for lifelike things (Wilson 1984). According to *The preference matrix*, this environmental preference is due to basic needs of exploration and understanding (Kaplan & Kaplan 1989). A cultural theory, *Topophilia* (Tuan 1975), states that landscape preference is linked to familiarity as humans tend to attach to places they know well and it is suggested that people choose where to live based on preferences of nature characteristics. According to (Tveit *et al.* 2012), most theories agree that human beings tend to attach more easily to some characteristics as they are of vital importance to survival, such as water and forests. From a study by Adevi and Grahn (2011) it was found that the natural environment and creatures experienced in childhood are of importance as the individual has learned to master these surroundings. Thus, this is the type of landscape that they are familiar with and can survive in. From a study by Berto (2007), it was found that older people showed more familiarity with natural environments, while the younger groups were more familiar with the built environment. Familiarity is important to the compatibility between the person and environment through independence, preserving memories, and a continuation of social networks (Forsyth & Molinsky 2021).

Adults use memories of childhood environmental experience to understand their present place experience (Morgan 2010) and experiences and memories from earlier in life, especially childhood, shape a person's perception of their identity (Grahm 1991; Stigsdotter & Grahm 2002; Bengtsson & Carlsson 2006). The environments that correspond with one's identity are the ones preferred (Grahm 1991; Stigsdotter & Grahm 2002).

1.2.2 Benefits of natural environments

The benefits of natural environments are relatable to many different research fields. Experiencing nature and having access to natural environments is associated with well-being in people in general as well as older people (Ulrich 1984; Kearney & Winterbottom 2006; Rappe *et al.* 2006; Tang & Brown 2006; Velarde *et al.* 2007; Bengtsson & Carlsson 2013; Aliyas 2021; Grahm *et al.* 2021; Moberg & Petersson 2022; Jarosz 2023; Madan *et al.* 2024; Nordh *et al.* 2024). In a study by Sang *et al.* (2016) well-being was more associated with urban green space among older people compared to younger people.

Restoration

Restoration means psychological and/or physiological recovery (Ulrich *et al.* 1991; Joye & Van den Berg 2012; Markevych *et al.* 2017). According to Kaplans' (1989) *Attention restoration theory*, restoration comes from effortless indirect attention, also described as *fascination*. According to Dahlkvist *et al.* (2016), *fascination* is especially important to older people with many physical impairments. Gardens may provide resources in terms of restoration (Ulrich 1999; Rodiek 2002) and coping through a sense of control, social support, physical movement, and positive natural distractions related to *fascination* above. Environments with restorative qualities may entail water, lush vegetation, trees and openness and peacefulness Ulrich (1999). Hartig and Staats (2006) propose that preference and restorative qualities are positively connected. Restorative elements are often the ones preferred by people in general (Hartig & Staats 2006) and older people (Berto 2007; Ottosson 2013).

Instoration

Natural environments may be beneficial to people through instoration, meaning health promoting effects such as social cohesion (Markevych *et al.* 2017), mood and reflection (Mayer *et al.* 2009) improving one's capability to meet everyday demands, contribute to self-confidence, acquiring new skills (Hartig *et al.* 1996) and/or personal development (Stigsdotter & Grahm 2002). Instoration may also entail physical fitness (Hartig *et al.* 1996). In turn, spending more time outdoors (Lee *et al.* 2020) and physically exercising may reduce both fear of and actual risk of falling (Socialstyrelsen 2022).

Brief sensory contact, or micro-restorative experiences with nature, may be specifically effective to individuals with low stress levels and may be preventative to future stress (Joye & Van den Berg 2012). Personal development is specifically important when considering *Theory of Gerotranscendence*, where aging as a development is emphasised as opposed to the general view of it being static (Tornstam 2011). Aging may entail subjective positive development (Tornstam 2011; Ratan & De Vries 2020) despite a lack of independence (Lord *et al.* 2011).

Meaningful activities

Related to instorative benefits are meaningful activities. From a study by Sang *et al.* (2016) it was found that older residents participated in more nature-related activities, perceived greater aesthetic value and took more enjoyment from urban green space than younger people. It was also found that residents living close to urban green space with higher perceived naturalness participated in more activities. Older people's use of the outdoor environment is closely related to proximity, and neighbourhood environments may contribute to well-being by offering activities and an arena where people can socialise - elaborated upon below - and enjoy nature (Sugiyama & Thompson 2006; Sugiyama & Thompson 2007), through e.g. gardening (Rodiek 2002; Van den Berg & Custers 2011; Freeman *et al.* 2012; Soga *et al.* 2017). Both quality and quantity of activities are important (Sugiyama & Thompson 2006; Sugiyama & Thompson 2007). In addition, Ottosson and Grahn (2005) suggest that resting in outdoor gardens, as opposed to indoors, can improve concentration and, consequently, performance in daily activities.

1.2.3 Social environments

According to Avlund *et al.* (2004), a strong social network may reduce the risk of developing physical disability. In general, older people's social networks tend to shrink with age (Wiles *et al.* 2009). According to Kweon *et al.* (1998), exposure to green spaces in urban environments is positively related to social integration and sense of community, which could mean older people that are socially integrated spend more time outdoors or that the outdoors makes people socialise and get to know their neighbours. Either way, it is meaningful to older people to socialise outdoors (Kweon *et al.* 1998; Sugiyama & Thompson 2007; Bengtsson & Carlsson 2013; Khosravi & Tehrani 2019) and in natural places or environments (Sugiyama & Thompson 2007; Sundevall & Jansson 2020) such as gardens. In addition, social interaction between humans may be elicited by the presence of dogs (Beetz *et al.* 2012; Nilsson *et al.* 2023).

Sundevall and Jansson (2020) state that places designated for older people as a group are important. Studies also indicate that social interaction across generations may have positive effects on physical activity, psychological health, and attitudes towards aging (Krzczkowska *et al.* 2021). Older people may develop into perceiving the self as less important than they used to. They may feel it is more important to be part of a bigger context and have a connection to past, present, and future generations. They may, however, be more selective of whom they interact with (Tornstam 2011), corresponding with what is stated by Lis *et al.* (2024) and Bengtsson and Carlsson (2006) that the environment must be flexible in relation to social opportunities, where people can both socialise in groups and find solitude. Selectiveness, according to Tornstam (2011) does not naturally lead to social isolation but it may, if the role and function of the person is no longer needed or if activities are not adapted. Additionally, solitude may be important in natural environments; however, social interaction may increase the sense of safety and thus restorative qualities in urban environments (Scopelliti & Giuliani 2006).

2. Problem formulation and aim

To older people, outdoor environments are important for meaningful activities (Sugiyama & Thompson 2007), their identities (Grahn 1991; Stigsdotter & Grahn 2002; Morgan 2010), socialising (Sugiyama & Thompson 2007; Bengtsson & Carlsson 2013; Khosravi & Tehrani 2019), well-being and satisfaction (Ottosson & Grahn 2005; Rappe *et al.* 2006; Tang & Brown 2006; Bengtsson & Carlsson 2013; Dahlkvist *et al.* 2016; Sang *et al.* 2016; Aliyas 2021; Jarosz 2023; Nordh *et al.* 2024). While there are studies on older people in general and residents of assisted living facilities, studies on how older people with home care services use and experience the outdoor environment are scarce. There is a need for studies relatable to people ageing in place (Firdaus 2017), home care receivers, and the home as a care setting, to increase knowledge in policymakers and health care planners (Elf *et al.* 2020). Research into older people's subjective experiences in general may contribute to a diversification of the middle-age norm criticised by Tornstam (2011) and may contribute to the UN's sustainability goals (United Nations 2025), specifically *Good health and well-being* and *Sustainable cities and communities*. Thus, the aim of this study was to explore how older people with home care services use and experience outdoor environments. Hopefully, the findings can contribute to an increased understanding of the needs and wishes for this group, make an addition to existing models and frameworks, spur on future research, and give concrete examples usable for improving well-being for this group.

3. Method

This section provides a description of the methodology of the present study. Participant selection and recruitment, interview method, processing and analysis of data, and ethical considerations will be presented and referred to relevant literature.

Environmental psychology has the holistic approach that the person and the environment are interrelated (Gifford 2014a), the person will be impacted by and impact the environment they are in. The aim of this study is to explore the use and experience of outdoor environments. As it is the lived experience that is at focus, and the phenomenon is previously unexplored, a phenomenological approach was chosen. In phenomenology, meaning is understood through the person's experience, without external interpretation (DePoy & Gitlin 2015); theories and concepts are not defined by the researcher but are coming from people, and the approach transforms the person from being an object to a subject. Thus, the ontological and epistemological assumptions in this study are that the lived world of the person is reality, and that truth is found through the investigation of the person's experience as they describe it, adequately through interviews. While many studies about outdoor environments are limited to natural elements, it was important, as the topic was found to be under-researched, to include the whole outdoor environment. The investigated phenomenon was the use and experience of outdoor environments among older persons receiving home care, and while the approach was inductive, some concepts had to be defined to guide the interviewer and gain rich descriptions, further described below. In order to stay unbiased, the introduction part of this thesis was written after the analysis was completed.

Though the approach of this study was inductive, this study was motivated by the wish to improve well-being in the target group. The research design was formed to study participants that use and experience their outdoor environment, interview questions were formed to capture what the participants do rather than don't do, and the discussion aimed to lead up to the application of findings. During the discussion and application part of this thesis and onwards, this study followed a Salutogenic approach, meaning learning from what supports well-being rather than risk factors (Antonovsky 1996).

3.1 Participants

The chosen target group was older persons receiving home care. The specific target group was determined after consideration of statistics on age, activity level, and home care. Activity level decreases after the age of 70, even more so after the

age of 79, and home care services are most common among people aged 75-89 (Statistiska centralbyrån 2022b). Thus, participants were persons 75 and older, considering the need for care but also the decrease of activity level in the age group above 79. Individuals that could express their experience, had lots to share regarding the topic, and that could provide rich answers were considered for inclusion. People with dementia or other cognitive disorders, severe impairment of hearing and/or vision, severe mental illness, persons with complete loss of mobility e.g. bedridden, persons with ongoing standardised palliative care, and persons that do not speak Swedish or English were excluded from this study.

For convenience purposes, the participants were recruited via the workplace of the author. Purposive sampling, as described by DePoy and Gitlin (2015) was made via physiotherapists and occupational therapists in municipal home rehabilitation. The information letter to the recruiters is found in Appendix 1. The recruiters were chosen as they have knowledge of the patients' use of the outdoor environment and their present home care situation, the competence to assess the ability of the patient to provide rich information, and applying exclusion criteria. After the potential candidate agreed to participate, they were given an information letter (Appendix 2) in person by the recruiter or mailed by the author and asked how they would like contact to be made further. If needed, the author approached the recruiters with follow-up questions to ensure criteria and if they would contribute to a broad target group considering housing situation, age, gender, and functional ability. Recruitment of participants was an ongoing process while other interviews were conducted, and saturation, as described by (DePoy & Gitlin 2015), was considered before another interview was scheduled. Some participants requested to make contact themselves, while others requested the author to contact them by phone. Secondly, when contacting the person, the author confirmed that consent was valid and if they had further questions. Two candidates declined participation when being contacted by the author, while they were not asked to give reason, one candidate expressed they did not dare to have unknown people in their home.

Three men and two women of Swedish descent between the ages of 76 to 96 years were included in this study. Three of the subjects lived alone, and two lived with their spouses. The living conditions ranged from flats with lifts in the building to larger homes with private gardens. There was a variation in mobility; two of the subjects needed an electric wheelchair to move around outdoors while the others walked independently with or without walking aids. All the subjects had safety alarms from the municipality and varying needs for assistance in the home.

3.2 Interviews

The choice of interviews was due to the epistemological approach, as it was most suitable to grasp the expressed experiences of the participants. Prior to the interviews, an interview guide (Appendix 3) was formed which contained general information, background questions, two interview questions, and themes to gear the participant towards unless already touched upon. The interview questions were modified during the period of time where the interviews took place. First, the participants were asked to describe, in as much detail as possible, a situation where they experienced the outdoor environment. As it was found after the first interview that this question was difficult to comprehend by the participants and generated answers like *what do you mean?* or *I don't understand*, further the question with inspiration from the method described by Bengtsson and Carlsson (2013) of *do you go outside?* with the follow-up question of *what do you do there?* was used, unless the participants spontaneously began descriptions related to the outdoors after the introduction and background questions. These questions were found to generate richer descriptions than the original questions.

The interview guide contained themes that were included in follow-up questions unless spontaneously described by the participants. Follow-up questions such as *what does that mean to you?* and *how did that make you feel?* were used to cover meaning, emotions and sensory experiences. Themes such as social aspects were initiated by e.g. *do you have neighbours?* In order to explore use and experience in the person's whole environment, *the four zones of contact* (Bengtsson 2015) were also part of the interview guide, and questions on location were used if necessary.

The five semi-structured interviews, in accordance with the methodology described by (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015), were conducted between the end of October and the beginning of December 2024 in a small town in the south of Sweden. The interviews were conducted in Swedish, and took place in the subjects' homes. They lasted from 60-90 minutes, and they were scheduled to aim for daylight, between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. The interviews were audio-recorded.

During the interviews, the participants described activities in relation to specific places and environmental properties outdoors, close to home or in the wider neighbourhood. Some of these places were visited by the author after the interview, made possible by the author's geographical knowledge about the surroundings. Photographs were taken; if the place was close to the participants home consent was given beforehand. The photographs and the descriptions by the participants in combination were used as inspiration for the illustrations presented in Section 4. The purpose of these illustrations was to complement the text with

visual examples, to contribute to the understanding of the interrelation between the identified themes, and to contribute to the readability of the text. After the interview, initial reflections were written down. The audio-recordings were first transcribed in verbatim and, in the case when inaudible or unclear statements occurred, this part was excluded from further analysis.

3.3 Analysis

The data was analysed according to the five steps of Meaning condensation as described by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015). First, the transcripts were read through several times to get a sense of the whole. Where clarity was lacking, the parts of the audio recordings were listened to again to assure the authenticity of the transcripts. Passages relevant to the aim were kept for further analysis. In relation to the aim, the outdoor environment was considered everything outside the home of the participants, as well as experiences of the outdoor environment from inside the home through windows. Use and experience were everything the participants do, feel and think related to the outdoor environment. Passages clearly irrelevant to the aim of this study, such aspects without reference to the outdoor environment, e.g. accounts of medical history, educational background or elaborate descriptions of the lives of family members were excluded from further analysis but some information was used in section 3.1 and 3.5.

The transcripts were re-read to distinguish meaning units and descriptions of importance to the aim of this study from an environmental psychology perspective. A table was used, the meaning units were separated and presented in text as described by the participant. The units were then restated and simplified as the view of the interviewee was understood by the author, and translated into English. The natural meaning units were then labelled with the dominating theme in relation to the purpose of the study in terms of environmental psychology. This is illustrated in table 1.

In the following steps, the five interviews were analysed together. The natural meaning units were printed and cut into paper notes then organised into themes manually to get a visual overview. The overarching themes were given temporary names in relation to their contents. Some natural units were doubled or tripled as they could be organised into several themes. The process of organising and reorganising natural units and the revision of the names of the themes was continuous throughout the analysis and the writing process of the descriptive statement. The analysis process meant revising the original, subtracting and adding natural meaning units. The author recalled aspects from the interviews and transcripts which led to the revision of the natural meaning units. In the last step, the essential themes from the interviews combined were included into a

descriptive statement (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015) and an elaborate description of themes with quotes from the transcripts to exemplify important aspects were written. The original quotes in Swedish are found in appendix 4. An example of the transition from transcription to part of the descriptive statement is found in table 1 below.

Table 1. Illustration of transition from transcription to descriptive statement

Transcription/meaning unit	Natural meaning unit	Theme	Natural unit as part of descriptive statement
I have put candle sticks here a bit, what I have gathered. /I love being outside in the fresh air ... it might come from me doing ... even an acrobat when I was 12 years old ... out touring ... and then gymnastics and swimming ... I like moving around ... I actually do exercises here ... it is the best thing one can do ... for one to move outside ... completely different sleep at night than when you sit inside/ ... We've had to move the bed from there ...	I love being outside in the fresh air. Maybe it's because I was a touring acrobat when I was 12, and a gymnast and did swimming. I like to move; I do exercises here, the best thing is to move outside. A whole different sleep at night than when you sit inside.	Meaning of previous experiences and habits	The participants' experiences from childhood and adult life are related to the importance of spending time outdoors in present time. Outdoor experiences from childhood such as working on their parents' farms, picking flowers, interacting with animals, ice skating, swimming or doing acrobatics has contributed to a sense of a natural outdoor being and may have also shaped the identity as an outdoor person.

After the descriptive statement was written, the transcripts were re-read in the light of this, tracing the descriptions back to meaning units and transcripts to assure authenticity.

3.4 Ethical considerations

When personal data is gathered, the researcher must be aware of its power (Nollaig 2021). People in need of home care presumably have a greater dependence and are thus more subjective to the power imbalance an interview situation can bring. Prior to the study, written and oral information was given to the participants. Participation was voluntary; the participants were informed that they could cancel their participation at any time without having to state a reason. They had the option to bring a relative or friend to the interview for support. The interview duration was flexible, ranging from approximately 30-90 minutes, making it possible for the participant to still take part despite a lack of endurance. The participants also had the option to request time of day and reschedule at short notice. Oral consent had to be given before the interview and confirmed on the

day of the interview. Upon request, the interviewer would contact relatives to further increase the sense of safety, although this was not requested. The participants were asked for consent before photographs were taken of environmental elements. These photographs were used to create illustrations, through paintings, which made the location of the scene undetectable. Audio recordings, notes, and photographs were stored safely. The name, address and phone number were kept on paper and thrown away after the interview was completed.

3.5 Method discussion

In this section data collection, processing and analysis, the interviewer, participant selection and recruitment, and generalisation of the results will be discussed. Reliability and validity of the present study will be discussed as well as considerations for future studies.

3.5.1 Data collection, processing, and analysis

The researcher has limited experience of research interviews which may affect validity through the credibility of the researcher (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015), however the researcher has experience from patient interviews, beneficial as it generates awareness of aspects that create a safe environment, and skill in simultaneous attentive listening while certain areas are covered effectively.

According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) it is vital for a phenomenological meaning condensation to gain nuanced and rich descriptions from the participants. Comparing examples of rich descriptions provided by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) with descriptions from the present study, it was found that the latter were mostly brief. This may have an impact on the trustworthiness of the accounts from the participants (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015). Detected in the audio recordings were some occasions where the interviewer could have asked the subject to clarify what they meant, providing short summaries and seeing if the subject agreed. However, this could have interrupted the flow of the interview and not necessarily made the statements clearer. Additionally, it is possible that the lack of depth in the descriptions may have impacted the results, as many of the descriptions focus on *use* rather than sensory experiences or emotional responses. An exploration of restorative responses could possibly demand more elaborate descriptions than an exploration of stimulating activities. With this said, the method of analysis was descriptive, and the verbally expressed experiences from the participants were key.

During some of the interviews, the participants moved to other parts of their home to show views of the outdoors, which generated more elaborated descriptions. The

interviews were conducted during the autumn; however, many accounts were referring to the summer months, thus it would have been interesting to investigate the phenomenon when activity is higher. When planning future studies, the type of interview, location and time of year should be considered.

Transcriptions were difficult due to poor sound quality and fragmented accounts. This may affect reliability, as it is perceived that if another researcher would have attempted transcription, it would have been difficult for another researcher to transcribe as well as analyse the transcriptions. Reliability could have been tested through two independent people transcribing the same recording (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015), on the other hand, important aspects were distinguishable and sufficient for analysis, and notes after the interviews provided some clarifications of ambiguous passages.

The analysis was time consuming, and it is evident that it is a demanding process that takes practice. Piloting not only interview questions but whole interviews, transcriptions, and practicing of analysis ought to have given valuable insights.

3.5.2 The interviewer

The recruitment method may imply reliability issues, as it raises the question whether the interviewee would have given a different answer to a different interviewer (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015). Some of the participants encouraged the interviewer to pass on their point of views. One participant expressed *now that you write about it, one wishes for all old people to get out more*. As the participants were recruited via staff in the municipality, they may have presumed that the interviewee could serve as a messenger for their causes. The issue was addressed by guiding the participants back to individual experiences, and it was found that the majority of the descriptions were individually based. Additionally, one of the subjects was previously known to the interviewer through a home rehabilitation a year back. The matter was approached by the interviewer prior to the interview, and the interviewee did not appear to have recollection of the visit. Thus, there were possible bias issues for the interviewer, however they may not be more than those deriving from work experience in general.

3.5.3 Generalisation of results

Individual aspects from results and the discussion part of this thesis may be useful for reader-based generalisation. Generalisability of the results in this study is, however, closely connected to validity aspects – as described by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) - of how well the participants reflected the chosen target group. First, there is the question if the participants are rehabilitation patients rather than home care receivers. Many are - from the experience of the author – both. People

with home care services often get in contact with rehabilitation staff if they have difficulties transferring in and around the home. The selection aimed for diversity regarding functional ability which ought to have compensated for some of this. Second, people with cognitive disease were excluded from this study, possibly a large part of people with home care needs. Third, the participants are Swedish and in a Swedish home care context, which is a system not comparable to other care systems. However, the findings were relatable to findings from other geographical contexts. With the above in mind, it was found from analytical generalisation – as described by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) – that the participants mainly reflect use and experience of older people with difficulties getting outside independently due to physical limitations, who are in need of stimulation.

4. Results

The purpose of this section is to present the findings from the analysed interviews through a general description of the use and experience of the outdoor environment and a more detailed description of the themes that emerged from the analysed interviews.

The participants use and experience outdoor environments from inside the home, balconies, patios, gardens, and the greater surroundings. Spending time outdoors is essential to the participants, connected to joy, comfort, feelings of freedom and independence. The outdoor environment is used for relaxation, gardening, socialising, and moving around to meaningful places and activities, and for transportation. Moving around outdoors contributes to wellbeing through breathing fresh air and exercise. The participants enjoy sunlight, greenery, landscapes, birds, water, and the feeling of fresh air and wind, as well as sensory experiences through hands and feet. The participants find it interesting to follow the change of seasons through sunlight, greenery, and wildlife and enjoy taking in the impressions of children playing, people, and movement of traffic. Observations of greenery, wildlife, and people contribute to learning and perspectives on life. The possibility to socialise, with close ones, neighbours, and previously unknown people is meaningful to the participants and mutual consideration from neighbours and the wider community is emphasised.

The way the participants use and experience the outdoor environment is impacted by experiences from earlier in life, individual abilities, and environmental aspects. The participants are motivated to use the outdoors because of positive childhood experiences and habits from earlier adulthood. Weather conditions, mobility, fear of falling, and dependency on other people negatively impact the perceived ability to get out and use the outdoor environment. While fear is present, it is overcome by some as being outside is more important.

Three main themes: *Using and experiencing the outdoor environment*, *Meaning of early life experiences and habits* and *Enabling use and experience* emerged from the data. *Using and experiencing the outdoor environment* has four sub-themes *Being close to nature*, *Absorbing surrounding life*, *Moving around* and *Socialising and being part of community*. The themes are all interrelated which is illustrated in figure 2, and further exemplified in section 4.1 through figure 3 to 6 and their descriptions. *Early life experiences and habits* and *Enabling use and experience* impact present use and experience of outdoor environments, thus the four sub-

themes too. A detailed description of the eight themes is found in the section below.

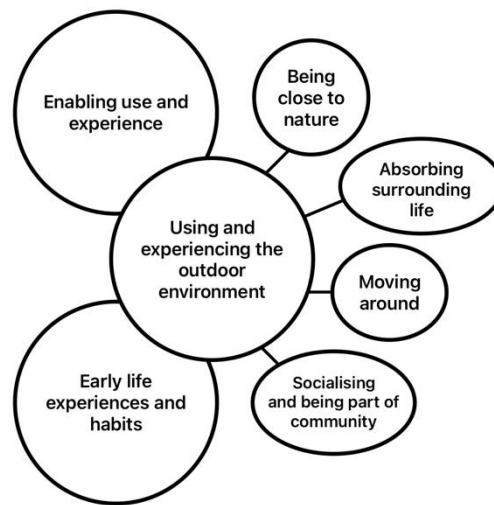


Figure 2. A model of the main themes, sub-themes and their interrelation

4.1 Using and experiencing the outdoor environment

4.1.1 Being close to nature

Being close to nature is a meaningful thing, essential to the lives of the participants. It is related to feelings of appreciation, joy and happiness. The participants express the importance of being close to nature from their balconies, patios and gardens. They appreciate fresh air and wind; they enjoy the sunlight and some express how they follow the sun from inside their homes and in their outdoor spaces. Walking on grass is a meaningful sensory experience to some, as one participant explains that one is drawn to the ground. The participants enjoy watching flowers, trees, water, and hills from their balconies, patios and gardens. These observations are found nice, beautiful, and wonderful. Some appreciate the view from inside their homes and patios, as one participant explains:

It is so to speak a bonus this outdoor environment. When I sit here, it is my favourite spot to look out. I can see the hills, and if I go out on the patio in the morning and stretch I can, with some imagination, see a glimpse of the ocean. I think it's wonderful.



Figure 3. Illustration of the activity of relaxing by the water (by the author). This is relatable to the present theme, as well as “Early life experiences and habits” as some participants have kept habits of relaxation from earlier adulthood.

Being close to water is meaningful to the participants. Some participants enjoy sitting by the water in their close outdoor environment, an experience related to feelings of comfort and relaxation (Figure 3). Some participants appreciate the complexities of dynamic environments, a feeling described by one as:

All little pieces that make the environment, it gives me something, like a fresh cake that smells good ... It's not knowledge, it's a feeling, it exists in my head.

The participants use their gardens and patios for having meals outside in the sun (Figure 5), feeding birds, planting flowers, fruits, berries, and vegetables, herbs, and mending fruit trees. The participants use their gardens in the spring, summer, and autumn. Gardening is related to feelings of being productive and good as well as comfort. Some participants stress how moving their hands in the soil as something that feels good.

The participants enjoy and find it interesting to follow the change of the seasons through sunlight, wildlife outside their windows in the spring, and observing the change of trees, their colours, buds, berries and blossom, as one participant describes below:

Just going out to see plants, they come day by day, the apple trees blossom. One gets to follow the time which is interesting. Otherwise, we wouldn't have lived like this. When spring comes the plants come out and one sees budding birches and how things develop, flowers. Very interesting to follow. And then the lovely colours come, and the autumn when the trees go in different nuances...

4.1.2 Absorbing surrounding life

The outdoor environments allow the participants to take in impressions of life around them. These experiences are connected to positive feelings. Some participants express how the outdoor environment provides a good balance, sometimes quiet and sometimes lively. The participants take in the impressions from the outdoor environments through windows, on their patios and gardens and in the greater surroundings. They observe their neighbours, children playing, wildlife (Figure 4), people walking and the movement of traffic.



Figure 4. Illustration of the observation of wildlife (by the author), relatable to “Absorbing surrounding life”, and activities and natural elements described in “Being close to nature”.

For some participants, signs of health and that the city affords, a sufficient number of shops and flower decorations, are connected to positive feelings. One participant explains how he never rolls down his blinds to take in the impressions from the outdoors:

I don't want to look at the time, I want to feel, when things start to move. Today compared to yesterday. Now around five-half past five it starts to move, I see cars. And in the summer, it is better of course, it is the light, I feel something's happening. The surroundings will tell me what time it is, not my phone, and then I see, and it affects the body. I feel what time it is and then I look at my phone, I never do it the other way around. It means everything ... One has learned from the trees and the greenery, it sounds poetic, it is the message of nature...

Some participants enjoy hearing and watching children play and wave to them as they walk by. Watching children have fun is related to feelings of joy and satisfaction. The participants observe wildlife and pets such as birds, cats, hares and hedgehogs through their windows, from their balconies and patios. Some

enjoy watching the ducks in the river. Wildlife is by some described as something to rest your eyes on. The participants enjoy watching and listening to the birds around their home; they follow their lives and interactions with interest. Some favour blackbirds but appreciate noisy birds too as it is natural, and they are a part of the environment. One participant describes how they discovered that one special place, which they hadn't paid attention to before, had made an impression on them through reflection in their paintings.

The participants enjoy learning about trees by the river through signs and lectures about the history of the place and educating themselves about animals in their close surroundings and contemporary construction plans for nearby streets. Some participants find it exciting to follow the development of the outdoor environment and construction around them.

Observing the outdoor environment gives some of the participants new perspectives on life. They observe people that may not live as well as them, making the participants feel grateful for what they've got and that their own family is doing well after all. Observing children and adolescents' behaviour in the outdoor environment also contributes to keeping an open mind, as one participant explains:

...the children play and it's fun and nice. It's also nice to see the adolescents and their behaviour. It is important to follow, how they live today and not grow mossy and consider how I'm not right about everything because I'm not. When you see children play, they don't have prejudices or dishonesties, they make friends, never seen each other before...

4.1.3 Moving around

Moving around outside means freedom and independence, and the participants express how only getting through the door or sitting on the patio is a positive experience. Some participants compare the feeling of not being able to get out as being locked up or imprisoned. By moving around outside, the participants can enjoy the views of flowers, parks, and old buildings in town. The fresh air makes the participants feel well, and some emphasise that the air outside is better than that inside. The outdoor environments also provide opportunities to move around for exercise and elicit breathing for some. For some participants, moving around outside is related to decreased pain and better sleep.

The outdoor environments are used for walking, dog walking, driving electric wheelchairs, and/or cars. The participants move around outside to enjoy the oceans and rivers, the cemetery, the town square and to go shopping. For some, the means of transportation or the activity has less significance as long as they get

outside. The ability to move to do their own shopping is something that is perceived as essential to freedom, as described by a participant below:

I was outside the day before yesterday and picked up food, it was wonderful, it's such a joy. It's slow but I enjoy it so much. But I must be careful and sit and watch constantly, when I cross, I never chance it, I don't drive until a car has stopped ... I enjoy the freedom, I am myself. I decide for myself and drive as I please, I rule my life so to speak

4.1.4 Socialising and being part of community

The outdoor environments allow the participants to socially interact with their close ones, neighbours and people in the wider surroundings. Some go shopping with their spouses and have meals and coffee together in the garden (Figure 5). Some talk to neighbours together, stressing the importance of creating common memories. The participants enjoy waving to children passing by their homes and interacting with people when they move around in town and by the river.



Figure 5. Illustration of having a meal together outside (by the author). This is relatable to “Socialising and being part of community” and linked to “Being close to nature” through the aspect of sunlight.

Sometimes the neighbourhood interaction is due to practical reasons: asking for help with shopping, carrying furniture, or notifying someone about something that needs to be fixed on their patio. Approaching the neighbours because of practical reasons may lead to more interaction later, as one participant explains he interacts regularly with one neighbour after approaching him about making too much noise late at night.

One participant explains that the garden is a link between him and his neighbours. Some participants relate dogs to more interaction when out walking or with neighbours:

When one has a pet people automatically stop and talk, the animal is the conversation, it's always nice ... The closest neighbour, if our dog is out, he talks about it. Eight dogs

in the neighbourhood, that makes us connect. There's a rental building over there, the two people with dogs one is in contact with, but the others. Then the pets say hello to each other, and the cat owners talk to us. Animals make connections. More than you think...

In general, participants appreciate the neighbourhood communities and express it in terms of good, important, and how the interaction is enjoyable. They stress respect for one's privacy, with saying hello and helping each other out when needed as good qualities. Some participants enjoy socialising in the common yard of the apartment building with arrangements of parties and common meals. One participant explains that is a natural thing that everybody says hi and they try to encourage others to socialise. For some, it is important that neighbours aren't friends but keep things at a shallow level, help each other out and say hello but not to spend time in each other's homes. For some participants, it is the opportunity to socialise that is important, not necessarily regular interaction. One participant explains that the neighbours are nice, however, they have little contact with them, and one neighbour in particular is found intrusive as they bring over gifts despite being turned down.

Some participants stress the importance of contributing to the wider community by shopping in the town centre, explaining that a town that doesn't flourish is sad and that the possibility to use the town now and in the future means everything. To some, change in greenery, improved streets, decorations, and accessibility measures such as ramps contribute to the feeling of being cared for by planners.

4.2 Early life experiences and habits

The participants' experiences from childhood and adult life are related to the meaning of use and experience today. Much outdoor time in childhood and experiences such as working on their parents' farms, picking flowers, interacting with animals, ice skating, swimming, or doing acrobatics have contributed to a sense of a natural outdoor being, and may to some have shaped their identity as an outdoor person. One participant explains how their childhood experiences have contributed to her appreciation for the outdoors later in life:

My longing might be because of my biology teacher who was amazing. She always brought us outside, we biked in the spring and picked flowers ... and in the winter, we were outside too because she said we should see the trees without the leaves. So much of the appreciation for the outdoors I learned from her

Some participants express how their work experience as nurses and swimming instructors has contributed to their knowledge about - and desire for - breathing fresh air and exercising outdoors. Other experiences and habits from earlier adulthood, such as dog walking, gardening, bird-feeding, talking to neighbours,

and relaxing by the water are expressed as something the participants have always done and therefore keep doing to this day. The absence of the possibility to maintain previous interests and habits may contribute to longing for those. Some habits are kept in a different form, by e.g. keeping flowers inside the home, but some participants express a longing for lost habits, as one explains how they can no longer swim without assistance as they have been their whole life, and wishes they could feed the birds from the balcony but is not allowed by the landlord.

Some participants provide examples of how previous experiences may influence how one has chosen, and looks at, their present home and the outdoor environment. Some participants emphasise the preservation of old buildings as they hold long-term memories which are recollected when they visit the place nowadays. Continuous living in a house means spending more time outdoors for some, thus living without access to a garden may be undesirable. One participant explains how daily exploration of walking paths in her neighbourhood has contributed to placing an increased importance on the outdoor environment later in life, compared to when they were younger, and thus moving to a flat is not an option. One participant describes how they chose to live higher up in a building due to fear of intrusion, which made them now miss being close to the grass and the ground, which is however, manageable as long as they get to move around outside independently.

Previous experiences and habits also impact the participants' perspectives on their ability to move around today. The participants give examples of how memories of falling or being tied to the home have made them more careful but also contribute to feelings of appreciation for how things have improved. Experiences from how they've worked their way back before spur some to get back to being more mobile, expressed by one participant about moving around in an electric wheelchair:

The garage for my electric wheelchair is a distance from the door so I must work on getting there. I used to walk there with a walker. As soon as one remains sitting the muscles stop working. I haven't been able to walk since bedrest due to injury. Now that it is healed, I can walk a little bit with a walker. My goal is to walk to the garage and get to my electric wheelchair. If only I can get to the wheelchair I can step on the gas and drive. It means freedom to get to it.

4.3 Enabling use and experience

The participants express how the ability to move around depends on the weather and the seasons, as some avoid walking or using their electric wheelchairs outside when it is slippery. They give examples of sacrifices made for safety concerns for themselves and others, such as stopping driving despite it being something they

love or using a walker or vehicles leading to difficulties moving around independently.

They give examples of specific aspects that hinder their ability to get out, how that bothers them, and make them miss being active. Some are bothered that they cannot be as active as their spouses. The participants explain how an inability to put on shoes can make walking outside difficult, how hand function is important to the use of walkers, and another how using a walker and dog walking may not be compatible. One participant points out how they must be able to take some steps to get to the electric wheelchair, which is difficult due to an injury and also feels their hand function and vision are impaired, which affects the ability to book transport digitally. Impaired hand function and difficulties writing may also, according to some participants, require extra travel as one has to do meetings in person. The participants also give examples of how they would like to do more gardening and taking care of their outdoor space but cannot be due to impaired physical ability or their housing situation. As one participant puts it, the older one gets, the longer it takes. Some participants express that when they do less outside, they do more inside instead, such as bringing flowers inside or putting up decorative lights.

The participants describe how they depend on others to get outside, and this is related to a lack of freedom and independence. Some participants believe they don't get enough help from the municipality to get outside, or that taxis or assisted transport are complicated and slow, as described by one participant below:

They say you can take assisted transport. Sure, I go downstairs and there ten minutes before, there's no car. And I have to call and stand there and wait and wait. One is so dependent on everybody else. To get out by yourself is a freedom to the human being. It is impossible to describe.

The participants appreciate how they, with help, can stay active: preinstalled ramps, volunteer work, or paid services for snow shovelling or mowing. Some participants express how visits from friends and family are scarce, and they appreciate help from neighbours bringing in mail, shopping, or getting through the gate. It is expressed how they don't want to misuse or overuse the help they get, from neighbours and their safety alarm. Some participants emphasise that one must ask for help as there is a lot out there.

Fear is related to the way the participants use and experience the outdoor environments. Some avoid going outside due to previous experiences of falling, and some express how they don't do activities such as gardening or swimming as they used to as they don't dare. Some have chosen to move around differently due

to fear of falling over. Some participants express fear related to being attacked by other people and express how it is overcome, as one participant describes below:

I am not afraid. Anybody can push me down the river, it's easy. But if I'm afraid I can't go out. Sadly, many elderly people are afraid of going outside in the evening.

Some participants take detours when they move around outside. They express how it must be overcome and that they are not bothered with what they spend their time on.



Figure 6. Illustration of independently moving around outside (by the author). Moving around outside is relatable to the present theme, “Moving around”, and “Early life experiences and habits” as the participants continue habits of walking from earlier adulthood. It can also be related to natural elements and activities described in “Being close to nature” and “Absorbing surrounding life”.

4.4 Conclusion of results

The use and experience of the outdoor environment consist of a variety of activities, environmental qualities; and impressions, reflections and feelings related to these. Using and experiencing outdoor environments is meaningful through positive feelings such as joy, interest, learning, relaxation and comfort. It entails following change as well as connecting to the past. It is connected to feelings of freedom and independence and possibilities to socialise and putting one's own life into perspective. The perceived possibilities to use and experience the outdoor environment is related to one's capacities, the physical environment, and previous experiences.

5. Discussion of results

The aim of this study was to explore how older people with home care services use and experience outdoor environments. The analysed interviews resulted in three main themes: *Using and experiencing the outdoor environment*, *Early life experiences and habits* and *Enabling use and experience*. *Using and experiencing the outdoor environment* has four sub-themes, *Being close to nature*, *Absorbing surrounding life*, *Moving around* and *Socialising and being part of community*.

The dominating aspects were extracted from the themes above and related to previous research and theory. The most important aspects were categorised into *nature*; *socialising and being part of community*; *connection to the past and keeping habits*; *sense of control, autonomy and person-environment fit*; and *the need for stimulation*. These discussions form the basis of the proposed *universal approach* and *a model of individual needs and wishes, outdoor activities and municipal impact* presented in the application section.

5.1 Perceptions from the outdoor environment

In simple terms, the participants watch greenery, oceans, wildlife, and other people. Some expressed other sensory experiences through skin such as feeling the wind or touching soil, hearing birds sing, and children play. The participants stress the feeling of breathing fresh air and moving around outside. They follow the change of seasons, absorb surrounding life, and socialise outdoors which can be connected to a combination of sensory modalities and perceptual processing. Some give examples of the complexity of taking in a whole environment at once and how that generates feelings that are difficult to describe. Thus, the participants give express environmental perceptions, as previously described in literature (Gibson 1979; Gifford 2014b).

5.2 The importance of nature

The participants provide examples of how the outdoor environment decreases their pain, makes them sleep better, provides comfort and relaxation, and makes them feel well. The latter corresponds with research on the health benefits of exposure to natural environments in general, and studies on older people in particular regardless of living situation (Ottosson & Grahn 2005; Rappe *et al.* 2006; Tang & Brown 2006; Velarde *et al.* 2007; Bengtsson & Carlsson 2013; Dahlkvist *et al.* 2016; Sang *et al.* 2016; Aliyas 2021; Jarosz 2023). While some of the participants in the present study appreciate old buildings and follow the development of roadworks, most of the meaningful environmental features are

natural. The participants enjoy views from inside and outdoors, of greenery, water, wildlife and the aesthetics of them providing descriptions such as beautiful and wonderful, corresponding with studies by Bengtsson and Carlsson (2013) and Rodiek (2005). Some express they are drawn to the ground and the experience of grass and enjoy sitting by the water which may be connected to evolutionary theories as the participants are drawn to elements important to survival (Wilson 1984; Kaplan & Kaplan 1989; Grahn *et al.* 2010).

The experience of relaxation and comfort is related to natural environments. The participants provide examples of how they watch trees, sit by the water, *rest their eyes on* wildlife, as well as find comfort in gardens, relatable to previous research on older people by Rodiek (2002), on nursing home residents by Bengtsson and Carlsson (2013), and theories on restoration by Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) and Ulrich (1999). It is described in previous research and theory that older people in or out of care may have a greater need for meditation and restorative environments than younger people (Tornstam 2011; Ottosson 2013; Dahlkvist *et al.* 2016). While the participants provide examples of experiences of relaxation and comfort, they provide more examples of activities and experiences that can be related to stimulation.

5.3 The importance of socialising and being part of community

Socialising outdoors is meaningful to the participants in the present study as well as studies by Bengtsson and Carlsson (2013), Sugiyama and Thompson (2007) and Khosravi and Tehrani (2019). As in the study by Sundevall and Jansson (2020) the participants socially interact in places with natural elements such as gardens and by the river. Bengtsson's (2013) study on nursing home residents exemplifies a diversity in social preference, where some participants describe how the view of people socialising outside encourages them to go out at the same time, and some want to withdraw from social interaction indoors. Sundevall and Jansson (2020) state that older people prefer social places designated for their own group, and Tornstam (2011) states that social selectiveness is a common development for older people. The participants in the present study stress the importance of mutual respect of one's privacy between neighbours but, however do not provide examples of social selectiveness when spending time outdoors. They find it meaningful to interact with neighbours of different ages; some appreciate going for walks with younger volunteer workers, and some enjoy the interaction with children from a nearby nursery school, in correspondence with the benefits social interaction across generations described by Krzeczowska *et al.* (2021). As stated by Tornstam (2011), social selectiveness doesn't have to imply social isolation, but it may be a consequence of a lack of purpose or ill

adapted activities. The participants in the present study describe a variety of places to visit once they're outdoors and emphasise being able to choose whether to socially interact. Thus, one conclusion could be that they are at greater risk of being socially isolated due to not getting outside than being subjected to involuntary interaction.

The participants provide examples of social support relatable to the study by Bengtsson and Carlsson (2006) and Scopelliti and Giuliani (2006), and theories by Ulrich (1999). They express the importance of feeling cared for by the community and planners through signs in the environment, flowers, reconstruction of roads or ramps et cetera. It is meaningful to the participants to belong to a community and have a network where they help each other out. Spontaneous and rare help from neighbours is appreciated. On the contrary, the participants speak about municipal help to get outside in negative terms, in comparison with help from neighbours.

5.4 The importance of connection to the past and keeping habits

The impact of *earlier life experiences and habits* on present environmental perception and experience can be relatable to cultural as well as evolutionary theories (Morgan 2010). The participants give examples of how experiences from earlier in life impact how they socialise in present time, as they have habits of how and where they interact with other people. It is also found from the present study as well as the study on nursing home residents by Bengtsson and Carlsson (2013) that the participants strive to keep habits from childhood and adulthood such as gardening and going for walks outdoors. Experiences and habits earlier in life have given the participants a preference for the outdoors and specifically natural environments, it has shaped their identities as *outdoor people*, corresponding with Stigsdotter and Grahn (2002), Morgan (2010), Grahn (1991) and Bengtsson and Carlsson (2006). The participants also give examples of environmental features that are important to memories, such as old buildings and the cemetery.

Experiences from earlier in life impact not only on preference for nature and social behaviour as described above, but also on the way the participants perceive their present home. Some say they cannot imagine living somewhere else as they have always lived close to the outdoors, corresponding with what is stated by Adevi and Grahn (2011). The concept of familiarity is emphasised by Tuan (1975), saying humans emotionally attach to places they have gotten to know well, and prevalent in some studies such as (Bengtsson & Carlsson 2006; Bengtsson & Carlsson 2013) however, it is more implicit in the present study.

There are descriptions of how the outdoor environment is more important now than then as they have discovered new paths in the neighbourhood, the participants stress preservation of buildings, saying hi to the neighbours and indicate feelings of ownership by calling elements in the environment *my river* or *our neighbourhood*.

5.5 Sense of control, autonomy and person-environment fit

The participants of the present study stress freedom and having options, which corresponds with sense of control, described by Ulrich (1999) and the autonomy aspects proposed by Golant (2015) and easy access and getting outside independently highlighted by Bengtsson and Carlsson (2013). These concepts are relatable to all themes but *Enabling use and experience* in particular. They have negative feelings related to having to ask for help to get out like the study by Bengtsson and Carlsson (2013) and find assisted transport complicated and unflexible, in contrast to aspects important to coping (Golant 2015). Thus, the person-environment fit may not be optimal.

The four zones of contact as described by Bengtsson (2015) is used as a frame of reference for where in the environment use and experience take place in the present study. The purpose of this is to first exemplify use and experience in relation to accessibility and usability, and supportive environments. The model (Figure 7) will also provide concrete examples for the application section.

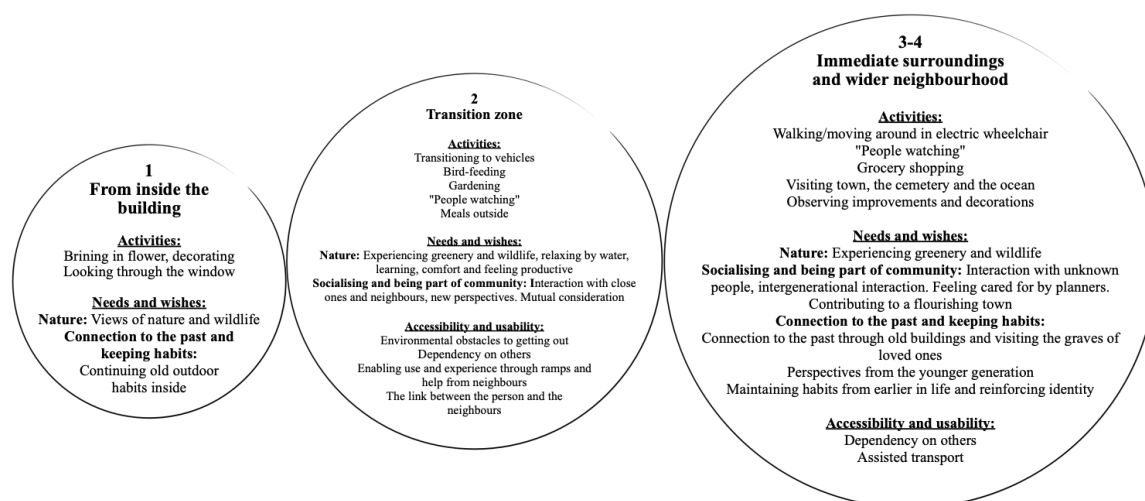


Figure 7 Activities, needs and wishes of the participants in the present study in relation to the four zones of contact. More needs and wishes are fulfilled in zone 3 and 4. Most accessibility and usability issues are related to zone 2.

5.5.1 Accessibility and usability

Many of the meaningful activities and experiences mentioned by the participants are presumably incompatible with indoor environments such as gardening, bird-feeding, dog-walking, having meals in the sun, talking to neighbours, watching animals, exploring, walking on grass, relaxing by water, feeling wind and breathing fresh air and exercising through walking around the block. Some experiences require travel such as grocery shopping and visits to the ocean or the cemetery. The participants tend to use the outdoor environment more during the summer months and weather is often a determinant if the outdoors is used. They give examples of how they, through impaired abilities, find transitioning to the outdoors too demanding. The participants in the present study as well as nursing home residents in the study by Bengtsson and Carlsson (2013) often require assistance to get out. They express how they have reduced their social activities due to physical impairment. From this, it is suggested that the criterion for a comfortable environment that enables coping (Grahn 1991; Bengtsson 2015; Golant 2015), is not fulfilled, with it lacking easy access, safety and different options in different kinds of weather.

5.6 The need for stimulation

The participants use the outdoor environment for exploring, relatable to *the preference matrix* (Kaplan & Kaplan 1989) as the participants want to move around freely as an activity in itself. Some go for walks and discover new paths, some go to town to talk to unknown people or “people watch” to gain new perspectives and they emphasise learning about greenery and wildlife. Many descriptions are relatable to contact with surrounding life, social opportunities and joyful and meaningful activities, which belong higher up on the gradient of *The inverted triangle of supportive environments* (Bengtsson 2015), as well as aspects lower on the gradient such as sensual pleasures of nature and seasonal changes in nature in close proximity to their home. In the middle of the gradient are symbolism/reflection relatable to learning and perspectives which the participants gain from watching other people from their close surroundings and in the wider neighbourhood. Culture and connection to past times are prevalent in the wider neighbourhood or farther away through old buildings and visits to the cemetery. Seasons changing in nature is the one aspect accessible from zone 1; the others mentioned above demand that the participants get outside, move around outside, or transport themselves there.

The participants give accounts for a variety of activities once they’re outside. They move around and exercise, do gardening, shopping, bird-feeding, walk dogs, and socialise. *The inverted triangle of supportive environments* combined with *the*

four zones of contact by Bengtsson (2015) was applied to explore the needs and wishes of the participants related to outdoor activities. The choice and range of activities combined with the expressed need to get out regardless of activity indicates that the participants in the present study, in correspondence with some of the residents in nursing homes in the studies by (Bengtsson & Carlsson 2006; 2013), seek stimulation. While the participants' need and wish for restoration is concluded from a few descriptions of relaxation and comfort, the need and wish for stimulation are concluded from numerous expressed activities and feelings connected to them. The participants give accounts of environmental properties that – when related to previous literature - can be labelled restorative, however it was not possible to make this connection from the results. Methodological aspects related to the verbal expressions of the participants is further discussion in section 3.5.

5.7 Application of findings

The following section aims to exemplify how the findings from the present study combined with previous research can contribute to sustainable solutions in society at large and in home care. First a proposed *universal approach* will be presented. Second, the future home care context for the user group, older people with home care, will be described. Third, from a universal approach, a practical example of how individual needs, wishes, outdoor activity and requirement from and benefits to the municipality will be outlined. The following approach and model are applicable to older people with difficulties getting out independently due to physical limitations, with varying needs and wishes related to the outdoor environment.

5.7.1 A universal approach

In this section, first, aspects of *universal design* (Iwarsson & Ståhl 2003) will be discussed in relation to *accessibility* and *usability* aspects for the user group. The intention is to contribute to the subjective sides of the concept and the aim of *changed attitudes in society* – as described by Iwarsson and Ståhl (2003) - by proposing a starting point for a wider *universal approach* applicable to the home care context and older people ageing in place. Second, the future context of the home care receivers will be presented and a model to exemplify individual needs in relation to outdoor activities, requirements and benefits to the municipality.

In general, from the statements by the participants and previous studies, having to ask for assistance to get out impacts their autonomy and sense of freedom, aspects that are foundational to coping and well-being. Despite laws, regulations and national strategies, the present Swedish system requires a large group of people in society to apply for solutions and ask for help because of loss of functions that are

expected with old age. This makes the system exclusive rather than inclusive. A *universal approach* means an intention for older people to *not having to ask for help* and assuring autonomy in all processes.

Practically, thresholds, gate openers, and stairs are common issues for the participants in the present study and others (Rodiek *et al.* 2014). A simpler way to provide door openers, ramps and surfacing in the garden may enable spontaneous outdoor visits, socialising with neighbours and restoration when needed. In addition, accessible and usable bus services as a complement to assisted transport enables autonomy and inclusion into activities important to basic needs, such as grocery shopping ought to be considered.

The future of home care

In July 2025 a new social services law will be valid in Sweden. The purpose of the changes in the law is to enable interventions that prevent risks and enhance protective aspects: to provide simpler services faster. There is also increased demand for social services to be in line with research and experience (Socialstyrelsen 2025). The municipalities themselves determine how they will apply their operations within the frame of the laws and regulations. They decide which services, with exceptions, are to be offered without prior investigation. This could mean the individuals themselves can reach out to the provider of services directly instead of a social worker to apply, for e.g. *outdoor time*. While home care is to aim for *reasonable* living standards (Socialstyrelsen 2025), not all services provided by the municipality are regulated by law. There are still many ways to, from evidence, construct sustainable well-being solutions for older people.

A model of individual needs and wishes, outdoor activities, and municipal impact

From a *universal approach*, it is presumed that before staff services are applied, that needed and requested physical adaptations as well as assurance of autonomy are in place. With this said, staff presence may be conditional to *sense of safety*, and an important social aspect to some. The following two models are applicable to a Swedish context (Figure 8 and 9). They aim to exemplify how enabling different activities may fulfil several needs of the individual at once, and potential requirements from and benefits to the municipality are outlined. The presented needs and wishes derive from the present study and previous research and theory. Needs, activities, requirements and benefits merely serve as an example and there ought to differ depending on the individual, the surroundings and the municipality.

Figure 8 gives an example of how an activity closer to the home of the person can be beneficial to the individual and the neighbourhood community. By, e.g. assisting the person to have a meal outside, services often divided into *meal assistance*, *outdoor time* and *social gathering* could be combined into one service. Allowing assistance for, e.g. bird-feeding or gardening can not only fulfil many individual goals but increases the likelihood of spontaneous interaction with neighbours.

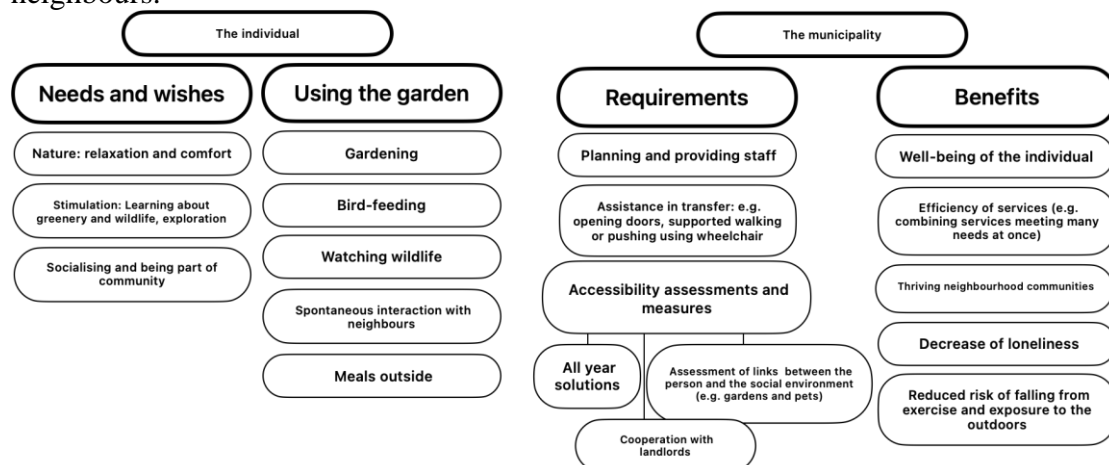


Figure 8. Illustration of the potentially fulfilled needs and wishes in the individual and the benefits to and demands on the municipality related to the activity of spending time in the garden

Figure 9 illustrates how the activity of grocery shopping can fulfil many of the individual needs as well as benefitting the municipality on many levels. Grocery shopping could entail many activities such as *people watching* which could be considered a social activity which fulfils the need of *new perspectives and personal development*, intergenerational interaction important to both the individual and municipality, and watching old buildings important to *connection to the past*. The activities in figure 8 and 9, depending on mode of transfer, can contribute to fall-prevention through exercise.

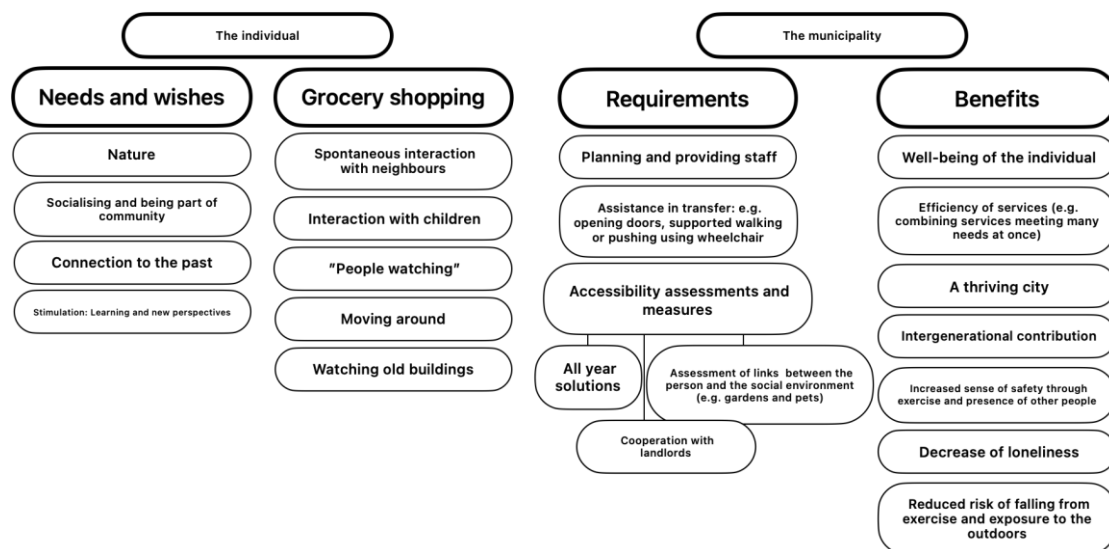


Figure 9. Illustration of the potentially fulfilled needs in the individual and the requirements of and benefits to the municipality related to the activity of grocery shopping in town

A universal approach – described earlier in this section - and solutions like the ones presented above can create opportunities for positive outdoor experiences which in turn can impact coping with their future environment (Morgan 2010), and motivate older people to get back to mobility and keep spending time outdoors. A universal approach – and solutions exemplified in the figure 7 and 8 above which exemplifies the connection between socialising and outdoor activities - can contribute to prevention of loneliness among older people and reduced risk of falling, both highly prioritised societal goals (Socialstyrelsen 2022; Folkhälsomyndigheten 2025).

5.8 Conclusion

The present study explored the use and experience of outdoor environments among older people receiving home care. It was found that the use and experience of the outdoor environment consist of a variety of activities, environmental qualities, impressions and feelings. The possibility to use and experience the outdoor environment is related to one's capacities, environmental qualities, and previous experiences. The findings confirm previous findings about older people, meaning nature is important for well-being through enjoyment as well as relaxation and comfort from greenery, wildlife and water. The outdoor environment is important for socialising and being part of community, through interaction with close ones, neighbours and people in the wider neighbourhood. The findings also suggest that the outdoor environment is important for caring for others and feeling cared for by the community. It is important for keeping meaningful habits such as walking outdoors, gardening or socialising with

neighbours. Outdoor experiences earlier in life may shape and reinforce identity and provide tools to manage the outdoor environment in the present time. The findings suggest that there are physical obstacles to person-environment fit such as difficulties getting through the door, as well as subjective aspects such as fear of falling. In addition, it was found that getting outside independently is essential to the participants, thus *sense of control* and *autonomy*.

The findings correspond with some literature emphasising the importance of restoration for people in general. They are however, in contrast with some literature that suggest that older people have a greater need for restoration, social selectivity and social withdrawal compared to other people. The participants in the present study emphasise movement and describe a variety of challenging activities in the wider neighbourhood, and they wish to learn, gain new perspectives and connect to the past. These aspects suggest that the needs and wishes of the participants reflect those of older people, with difficulties getting outside independently, that need stimulation. The identified *needs* and *wishes* formed the groundwork for a proposed *universal approach* and *a model of individual needs and wishes, outdoor activities, and municipal impact*. Both are applicable to a Swedish context and aim to inspire decision-makers, planners and home care staff to sustainable solutions. The author proposes that sustainable solutions that enable getting outside independently can contribute to positive experiences of *ageing in place* to the individual, and societal goals such as fall prevention, decreased loneliness, and well-being among older people.

5.9 Future research

More research is needed on the use and experience, and needs and wishes related to outdoor environments, among people with home care. Phenomenological interview studies can contribute to knowledge about the subjective sides of outdoor use and experience, such as the concepts of *sense of control* and *autonomy* as they are vital aspects to use and experience of the outdoor environment. It is also important to further study the relationship between socialising and the outdoor environment as increased knowledge about this is important to motivate outdoor access to older people, prevention of loneliness, and promotion of well-being. In addition, for a sustainable future, older people as a resource must be considered, thus it is of interest to explore older people's perceived function in society related to the outdoor environment, such as being needed and contributing to the community. Further research on needs and wishes of older people with home care services can also highlight the need for a national strategy for outdoor environments for this group, which is long overdue.

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Popular science poster



The meaning of being outside To older people with home care services

BACKGROUND

Spending time outdoors is important for well-being, especially to older people. Outdoor environments create opportunities for relaxation, socialising, exercise and activities. Many older people need help from other people - often home care staff - to get outside, but outdoor visits are not guaranteed by law. In Sweden 151 000 people had home care in 2023 which makes it more common than residential care. The need for home care is increasing but there are few studies on people with home care in relation outdoor environments.

AIM

To explore how older people with home care use and experience the outdoor environment

METHOD

5 semi-structured interviews

RESULTS

The participants find it meaningful to be close to nature. They enjoy greenery, water and wildlife. It is meaningful to absorb surrounding life, to move around, socialise and to be part of community.

Experiences from earlier in life are important to the participants' use and experience of the outdoor environments in present time. Physical limitations impact the participants' abilities to get out independently.

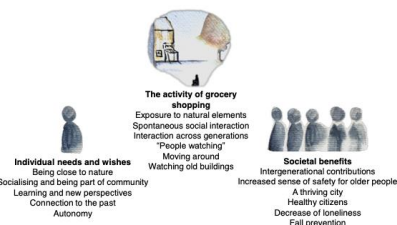
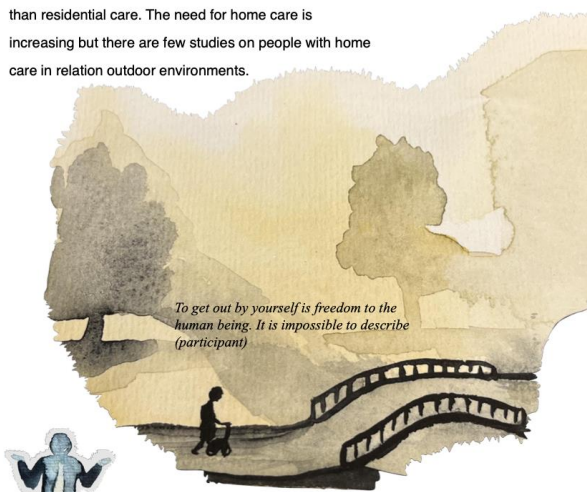


CONCLUSION

While the participants need relaxation and quietness, they have a greater need for, and wish to participate in stimulating and challenging activities. The participants in this study move around in the greater neighbourhood, they want to socialise, interact across generations and contribute to society. They learn from observing greenery and wildlife, and gain new perspectives from interaction with other people. Physical limitations make it difficult to get outside independently, but the participants want to master the environment, decide for themselves, get outside and move around outside without assistance. The results from this study in combination with previous research and theory can be generalised to older people with physical limitations, with a risk of under-stimulation.

HOW IS THIS USEFUL?

Many needs and wishes can only be fulfilled outside the home and outdoor environments hold links between the individual and social opportunities (illustrated to the right). Swedish laws, regulations and municipal home care systems require many people to apply for assistance from home care staff because of incompatibility with the environment. To assure autonomy and independence, accessibility solutions to get outside, such as adaptations of thresholds, doors/gates and surfacing around the home should be easy to apply for, and considered, before staff presence. If staff presence is required, the complexities of outdoor activities must be considered (e.g. grocery shopping is much more than buying food). Incorporation of universal design, as well as a universal approach to home care services can contribute to individual and societal goals such as well-being, fall prevention and a decrease in loneliness.



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This presentation aims to contribute to:



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SCIENCE AND EDUCATION
FOR SUSTAINABLE LIFE

Appendix 1: Letter to recruiters

Hej!

Som du kanske vet så skriver jag min masteruppsats under vår- och höstterminen. Jag läser ett masterprogram som heter Outdoor environments for health and well-being via Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet i Alnarp.

Det finns mycket forskning kring utemiljöers betydelse för välbefinnande generellt och en del studier kring utemiljöer på särskilda boenden men lite forskning på hemmet som vård- och omsorgsmiljö. Syftet med denna studie är därför att utforska hur äldre personer med omsorg i hemmet upplever och använder sin utemiljö och hur detta relaterar till deras välbefinnande. Studier på detta är av vikt för beslutsfattande och hälsostrategi då vi kommer möta en allt större andel äldre i befolkningen de kommande åren.

Jag kommer genomföra intervjuer om 60-90 minuter med initialt 4-6 deltagare under oktober-november. Intervjuerna utförs på plats i deltagarens hem enligt överenskommen tid. Intervjupersonerna rekryteras via arbetsterapeut eller fysioterapeut.

Jag ber er beakta följande i val av deltagare:

Deltagaren ska använda sig av utemiljön regelbundet, alltså tillbringa tid på uteplats/i trädgård och eller närmiljön kring bostaden. Deltagaren ska kunna ge utförliga svar och uttryckligen ge sitt samtycke. Jag ber er även beakta att deltagaren:

- Är 75 år eller äldre
- Ha någon form av hemtjänstinsats.
- Talar svenska eller engelska

Följande är exklusionskriterier: Demensdiagnos eller annan kognitiv nedsättning, kraftigt nedsatt hörsel som kan försvåra intervjun, allvarlig psykiatrisk diagnos och/eller pågående palliativt vårdprogram. Det kan också vara annat som gör att personen tillhör en sårbar grupp, i så fall kan vi diskutera detta.

Om du kan tänka dig att hjälpa mig med detta får du gärna när du träffar personen lämna bifogat informationsbrev och sedan mejla mig att du har hittat en deltagare (inga personuppgifter på mejl). Sen ringer jag dig för mer information.

Med vänliga hälsningar
Amanda

Appendix 2: Information letter

Inbjudan att delta i studie -om upplevelse och användning av utemiljöer hos personer med omsorgsbehov i hemmet

Forskning har visat att tillbringa tid utomhus kan bidra till vårt välbefinnande. De kommande åren kommer andelen äldre i Sverige öka och allt fler kommer behöva vård- och omsorg i hemmet. Samtidigt finns det mycket som kan förbättras för att öka välbefinnande och göra vardagen mer meningsfull. Studier på särskilda boenden har visat på betydelsen av utevistelse och utemiljöns positiva inverkan, medan hemmet som vårdmiljö fortfarande är outforskat. Denna studie kan bidra till förståelsen för upplevelsen och användningen av utemiljöer hos äldre personer som har behov av omsorg i hemmet. Studien kommer presenteras i form av en uppsats och muntlig presentation vid Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet i Alnarp.

Denna masteruppsats är en del av programmet Outdoor environments for health and well-being på Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet i Alnarp. Jag kommer genomföra en studie där 4–6 personer intervjuas individuellt under oktober och november i år. Dessa personer tillfrågas av fysioterapeut eller arbetsterapeut som arbetar i Ängelholms kommun. Intervjun tar cirka 60–90 minuter och genomförs på valfri plats i din hemmiljö på en tid vi kommer överens om. Om du önskar kan kontakt med anhörig och/eller kontaktperson ske för ytterligare information och dialog kring överenskommelse om tid.

Innan intervjun börjar kommer jag be om ditt samtycke. Ljudinspelning sker, anteckningar förs och med din tillåtelse tas eventuellt fotografier av enskilda delar av utemiljön. Endast jag och min handledare kommer ha tillgång till inspelningar, anteckningar och eventuella fotografier och dessa kommer förvaras på ett säkert sätt. All data kommer koder så att information kring personer, platser eller andra känsliga uppgifter inte kan identifieras. Du kan när som helst avbryta ditt deltagande utan att motivera varför. Ytterligare upplysningar lämnas av ansvariga nedan.

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Appendix 3: Interview guide

Intervjuguide

Presentation:

Av mig
Studien
Upplägg och ramar
Inspelning och samtycke
Ytterligare frågor efter intervjun

Bakgrundsfrågor:

Ålder
Kön
Nationalitet
Vistelsetid i nuvarande bostad
Eventuell tidigare bostad
Kontakt med anhöriga
Hemtjänst/hemvård/hem-rehab
Annan hjälp från kommunen/privat hjälp
Annan hjälp från anhöriga

Intervjufrågor:

-Kan du så detaljerat som möjligt beskriva en situation då du upplevde miljön utomhus?

-Hur påverkade denna upplevelse dig?

(-Kan du utveckla?)

Teman

4 zoner
Årstid/tid
Användning/aktivitet
Sensoriska intryck
Kroppsupplevelse
Känslor
Minnen
Tankar
Socialt
Mening/Betydelse

Sammanfattning av intervjun, eventuella kommentar

Fler frågor?

Kontakt vid fler frågor/kompletterande intervju?

Direkt efter intervjun:

Kontrollera inspelning och ladda ner fil
Förtydliga anteckningar
Eventuella reflektioner

Appendix 4: Original quotes in Swedish

Det är så att säga en bonus att den här utemiljön. När jag sitter här, det är min favoritplats att kolla ut på ... och om jag går ut på terassen en morgon och jag sträcker på mig kan jag skymta havet ... jag tycker det är underbart (p. 30)

... alla småbitar som är miljön ... det ger mig något rent som är ... eh ... en nybakad kaka som luktar gott ... det är inte kunskap, det ä ren känsla .. det existerar I mitt huvud (p. 31)

... bara man går ut och så ser man växter, det kommer, dag för dag. Äppelträden börjar dom blomma. Man kan följa hela tiden det är väldigt intressant. Annars hade vi ju inte bott som vi gör. När det börjar våras då kommer växterna man ser och musöron på björkarna och så ser man hur det utvecklar sig hela tiden, blomman . Väldigt intressant att följa, och sen kommer de härliga färgerna. Och hösten när träden börjar gå i okika nyanser (p. 31)

Jag vill inte titta på klockan ... utan jag vill känna när det börjar röra sig. Igår jämfört med idag. Nu vid fem-halv sex, så börjar det röra sig ... jag ser bilar. Och på sommaren är det bättre förstås det är ju ljuset. Jag känner jag att här händer nåt. Omgivningen talar om för mig hur mycket klockan är, inte min mobil och då kan jag se, och det påverkar kroppen ... jag känner vad klockan är och sen tittar jag på min mobil, jag gör aldrig tvärtom. Det betyder allt ... man har lärt sig på träden, på grönskan, det later poetiskt ... det är naturens budskap ... (p. 32)

Barnen leker och det är roligt och trevligt, det är fint att se ungdomarna och deras beteenden. Det är viktigt att följa, hur dom lever idag och inte bli mossig and tänka att jag har rätt om allt för det har jag inte. När du ser barn leka, dom har inte förutfattade meningar eller oärligheter, dom blir vänner, aldrig sett varandra förut ... (p. 33)

Jag var ute I förrgård och hämtade mat ... det är en sån fröjd. Det går långsamt men jag njuter så otroligt av det. Jag måste ju vara försiktig och titta hela tiden ... och när jag ska över övergångsställen så chansar jag aldrig utan jag kör inte förrän en bil har stannat ... jag njuter av friheten, jag är mig själv, jag bestämmer över mig själv och jag kör som jag vill. Jag styr livet så att säga... (p. 34)

När man har djur så blir det automatiskt att folk stannar då har man nåt att säga. Det är djuret som är diskussionen. Det är alltid trevligt. Den närmsta grannen, oom vår hund är ute, och så pratar han om att nu kommer hunden där. Åtta hundar I kvarteret. Det gör att man får kontakt. Det är ett hyrsehus som ligger där, de två som har hund har man kontakt med men de andra ... ja så ska dom hälsa på varandra djuren ... dom som äger katter pratar med oss. Djur skapar väldiga kontakter, mer än man tror... (p. 34)

... min längtan att vara ute beror mycket på att jag hade en biologilärare som var helt fantastisk. Som alltid hade oss ute .. vi cyklade på våren och plockade

blommor ... och på vintern var vi också ute för hon sa att vi skulle kunna se träden även utan löv. Så att mycket (uppskattning för) utemiljö har jag säkert lärt mig av henne ... (p. 35)

Jag har garage en bit härifrån till min elrullstol... så att jag måste klara mig dit till den ... så det ska jag träna på nu ... nu har jag ju kunnat innan alltså då går jag med rollator men så fort man blir sittande och inte använder sina ben då fungerar inte musklerna längre. Jag har inte kunnat gå sen jag låg så länge med den här skadan ... nu kan jag gå lite med rollatorn så det är mitt mål att kunna gå med rollatorn bort till garaget ... kommer jag bara på elrullstolen så kan jag gasa ... Det betyder frihet att få komma till den (p. 36)

Dom säger du kan ta färdtjänst ... jaha ... visst ... Jag går ner och så ska du va där nere tio minuter innan ... det kommer ingen färdtjänst. Och så får man ringa och så står man där och väntar och väntar. Man är ju så bunden till alla andra, om man själv kan ta sig ut och själv komma ut så är det ju en frihet för människan ... det går inte att beskriva (p. 37)

Jag är inte rädd ... det kan ju vem som helst putta ner mig I ån, det är ju hur lätt som helst. Men är man rädd kan man ju inte gå ut ... tyvärr e ju väldigt många äldre rädda för att gå ut på kvällen ... (p. 38)

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