

Abstract

Title	The arenas of everyday life. About the daily and social lives of people with intellectual disabilities.
Key Word	Intellectual disability, community living, social integration, everyday life, social life, social space, weak ties, strong ties
Distribution	Göteborgs University. Department of Social Work Box 720, SE 405 30 Göteborg
ISSN	1401-5781
ISBN	91-86796-36-4

This is a dissertation about people with intellectual disabilities; their living arrangements, their daily and social lives at home, in the neighbourhood and in the local public environment. The purpose is to describe and understand how everyday life and social life is created in new kind of group homes. The study is carried out as a qualitative case study of three group homes, for persons with intellectual disabilities, integrated in different kinds of residential areas. The basic issues are; How did the individuals use their private apartments, the common room and the common space provided in connection with the group homes and how do these areas affect everyday social life? What does home, sense of home, the neighbourhood and the local public places mean to the individuals and how do they use them?

The primary data collection method is participant observation. In order to add depth to the issue, data collection also includes interviews with 18 persons, living in the three group homes and their staff. The view of what constitutes a good home for people with intellectual disabilities stems from the ideology of individualisation. From this perspective, the own apartment was viewed as an arena where all the functions of everyday life was to be tied and where the residents were to spend most of their free time. This proved to be an ideal that suited some people but far from all. Many of the informants had found other ways to use and shape their apartments from their own experiences. For them, their own apartment has been given its significance and its purpose from being a private sphere within the collective and common. By putting certain functions to arenas outside of the own apartment the private was given space and function.

Three social styles are distinguished in the material the *informally oriented contact seekers*, the *club oriented*, and the *staff and relative oriented*. The groups are separated by their spatial orientation, the extent of the social relationships and character as well as their action patterns. The informally oriented group were the ones who spent most time in the public and semi public environments and they also were the ones who had the largest and broadest subjective network as defined as the largest number of people and different kinds of relationships. The club-oriented spent an almost equal amount of time in semi-public and public environments, but in a more organised form, which were more clearly limited in time and space than what was true for the previous group. The people in this group also had a large, if not as large of a subjective network, which was based mostly on similarity, identification and shared experiences. The staff and relative-oriented people had fewer arenas at their disposal and were spatially home oriented and spent more time in their own apartment and in the common area. Their network of contacts was relatively limited.