

Handbook “Secure Constructing and Living”

Theoretical concepts of the theory of architecture, the sociology of space and the theory of social control have built the basis for the construction of a guideline for secondary crime prevention measures in urban residential quarters.

Project aim

The aim of this research project was to explore neighbourhoods and their production of space and to describe the social processes of neighbourhoods and their function as social control agencies.

Characteristics of the semi-public space of neighbourhoods

The semi-public space of neighbourhoods – a space with borders and thresholds – can be characterised by four different qualities. These qualities are derived from the dichotomy between public and private space and are characterised by specific ambivalences along this dichotomy:

- *controllability (vs. uncontrollable use of space)*
- *ability to define boundaries (vs. open space)*
- *identification of space with persons (vs. anonymity)*
- *ability to occupy space (vs. occupied space)*

Methodological design

The research project followed a mixed-method approach consisting of:

- expert interviews
- group discussions with residents
- residents' survey

Four different residential buildings are the analytical units of this research project. They all comprise specific neighbourhood concepts, either self-initiated or other-directed.

Project results

Besides technical safety measures and the individual's responsibility for managing risks another very important crime prevention strategy are social measures which can increase the subjective and objective security in a residential area.

Each citizen has to understand his/her role not only as a consumer of safety but as an active producer of security within his/her neighbourhood. The strengthening of neighbourly relations is one of the greatest challenges in the field of crime prevention.

The five most important results will be presented shortly:

1. Professional help and consulting should be intensified for situations likely to cause conflicts between neighbours. The social competence of mediators or experts of community work is most important for a successful conflict management.
2. Neighbourhood networks are another important resource for conflict management. Community work can help initiating a stable and secure neighbourhood by activating each neighbour.
3. Neighbourhoods need representation – representative space as well as representative persons who take over responsibilities for the community.
4. It is important to foster processes of institutionalisation within neighbourhoods.
5. Ambivalences need to be expressed. The ambivalences between public and private space, open and closed space, personal identification and anonymity are fundamental elements of the semi-public space of neighbourhoods. Each ambivalence has to be worked out case-by-case in regular meetings of the community (which need to be institutionalised).

Please find our brochure “Sichere Nachbarschaft” about important technical safety and social security measures on our homepage: www.kfv.at.