

Sociospatial Approaches

What is it used for?

To explore different places, where people live, work, pursue their leisure times or convictions. In this case it is used as a method as part of emphasizing and step of already working on the challenge.

Every step should be documented, also intermediate states: With photos, audio (interviews!), video, art work ...).

Hint: You can also integrate step 4 in step 2 and combine steps 3 and 5.

Find your space

Step 1: Think about what space you want to observe. The location should be a place that is in your surrounding*, easy reachable and accessible (you want to observe the space at different times of day – keep in mind when and to what degree the space is accessible). You should choose a space that you like, find interesting, use regularly, maybe have already a connection with (e. g. related to your study, your work, your hobbies, aspects of your biography ...).

Please remember that we think of space with a very opened mind: the starting point of your observation could be a bus stop or your favorite bench in a park – but it is crucial to include, observe and describe the surrounding space as well! Keep that broadened view!

* approx. radius of 15 min to reach from the home(base) of participant – depending on what is possible; It should be a place that is easy to reach, so that further investigations and observations are possible.

Step 2: Organize / create a map of the space you will research*. Explore what surrounds the space and mark places on the map where you know or suspect that there are people / institutions / incidents / offers / services related to the topic: use pins in different colors and label them (e. g. with glued paper, sticky post or in a digital tool). This can also include "lost places", i. e. vacant buildings / spaces, open spaces, closed stores

*Start with drawing a sketch from memory. The space you want to observe is the center. Now add all the information you are aware of. The map doesn't have to be complete or correct from the beginning. You still can add places that you discover / information that you collect during your observation (e. g. people are using the space at particular times of the day, ...) / alter the map later!

Step 3: Visit the places that you have marked on the map. Preferably on foot or by bicycle. Do these places exist? Does the "current state" on site correspond to memories / previous perceptions? Take photos of the current state. Take informational materials with you that can be found on site.

On your way: Which other places do you find, you haven't thought of?

→ Complete and update your map: add new information, mark what changed!

Step 4: Research online, in libraries, at relevant information centers about details of the social room. It can also be helpful to look at the history of a place / a topic: What happened / was there in the past? Which plans existed and what happened to them?

→ add the collected information to your map (you can color code, put extra, sticky notes ...)

Step 5: Visit the places / the space again. This time focus more on the things that are happening, that you see and feel. Take your time and document everything you experience on your way! Note, what time you visit the places / the space, what you saw, what you felt (**see the supporting document "observations"**).

Questions like the following ones can help you to dive deep into the space:

- What is your favorite spot in the space you explored? What do you particularly like to do there?
- Which of your personal interests / passions / hobbies are connected to the challenge? Are these aspects of this connection reflected in the space you are observing?
- Where and how have you already encountered aspects of the challenge in your (personal / professional) life?
- Which places in "your social space" offer references to the challenge / evoke the most positive or pleasant memories (tell us about 1-3 things)?
- Who uses the place? What people / groups do you see (age, gender, sports group, demonstration, families ...)?
- Is there a dominant group? Depending on time of day?
- Is it possible for users of the social space to take part in steps to co-create various aspects (e. g. giving feedback, co-determination of political issues, take over different tasks, presenting / selling own ideas or products)?

Step 6: Talk to persons that use the space / are present in the space you are observing (this can be an employee of one of the surrounding institutions, a passenger ...). **(See supporting document "interview")**

Ideally the interviewed person gives approval for a recording. If not, create a memory protocol / log right after the conversation, to make sure that no information gets lost!

Summarize the most important aspects and thoughts of the interviewed person. Mark on your map where the interview happened (if it happened in the space you are observing).

Step 7: What else would be important / possible for the selected space? What could / should be created there? Who could be involved in next steps?

Mark places on the map. Visit the places to envision steps of realizations of possibilities, build prototypes / mock ups there.

Getting lost in the familiar

Inspirations for exploring social spaces.

For all of the following variations, take photos, for example:

- Every 30 seconds
- Aimed at the ground only
- Without looking through viewfinder / looking at the monitor or with closed eyes
- Give the camera to different people, with the assignment
 - To spontaneously photograph three things that they notice right now
 - To photograph you in this environment

...make audio recordings

- Every 3 minutes for 10 seconds
- At very specific places like an intersection, a river....

...make sketches and notes in a book and/or with digital tools

--> check out Komoot (<https://www.komoot.com>)

Perceptual Variations:

Decide on a familiar route in your neighborhood:

- Walk it in slow motion
- Walk towards something with the idea in your mind that this destination is coming towards you
- Stop every 10 steps and turn very slowly in a circle
- Pay attention exclusively to a very specific color of objects / houses / people

- Pay attention exclusively to a certain shape (angular / round / big / small / smooth / spiky....) of objects / houses / people / animals
- Stop at min. 10 (show)windows and discover 5 details each there
- Stand next to a person and look at what he/she is looking at.
- Adapt to the pace of different people and adopt aspects of the way they move (step length, track width, way feet are placed, hand and arm movements, head posture, direction of gaze...)

Find a place to sit along the way and play with the following variations:

- Close eyes, turn head slowly, open eyes for 20 seconds, close, continue turning head, open eyes for 20 seconds, etc. - repeat 20 times.
- Pay attention exclusively to specific sounds: people, traffic, wind....
- Observe a person and their paths and how they use them
- Who does this person meet and what form of interaction happens
- Try to find out from a person who is already sitting here his/her first name and an aspect that he/she despises / particularly likes / longs for in this neighborhood.

Go to different stores and places

- Discover 5 objects, which you have never noticed / looked at so intensively yet
- What have they been used for?
- What else could they be used for?
- How could the 5 items be combined with each other?