

# *Our Life as Elderly*



**Analyses of current situation and suggestions of national changes based on our citizens wishes.**

## **Subproject 6: *Networks***

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# 1. Summary

“Our Life as Elderly” has actively been focusing on developing elderly care based on citizen’s needs, demands and wishes. This has been done through an active citizen’s dialogue targeting people that will be in need of care in 10 to 15 years. The work has been project based and in this specific report through an Interreg III B, Northern Periphery financed project, involving partners from Norway, Faroe Island, Finland and Scotland. The project will partly function as a source of inspiration for future development of the elderly care but also as an instrument to more in detail identify different areas that is in need to be developed. The project has been divided into six different focus areas, Housing, Personnel & Competence, Relatives and Kinship, Service for elderly, Health Care and Networks.

The City of Luleå, Sweden, Municipality of Bodö, Norway, and The Faroese Association of Municipalities, Faroe Island has through the engagement in this sub-project “Networks” wished to shed a light on, and clarify some of the wishes and thoughts of the citizens, of how they wish to live and what they consider to be important regarding their social networks. The multitude of organizations throughout our Nordic countries is valuable for each society, both in volunteer activity, and for building great or small networks between people. Networking between generations is also very important as it generates a cross-generation facilitation between young and old that enriches the whole society.

*“Networks have existed in every economy. What’s different now is that networks, enhanced and multiplied by technology, penetrate our lives so deeply that ‘network’ has become the central metaphor around which our thinking and our economy are organized. Unless we can understand the distinctive logic of networks, we can’t profit from the economic transformation under way.” [Kelly (1998)]<sup>1</sup>*

The main method in this project was a dialogue with the citizens, e.g. interviews, dialogue groups/focus groups and questionnaires carried out in 2005. The dialogue has concentrated on questions concerning the situation and wishes they would like to see realised in their senior years. Semi-structured interviews were held with twelve persons, 55-65 years of age, in May and June 2005. They were equally divided according to gender and living conditions e.g. rural and central areas. Dialogue groups/focus groups were performed during May to October in 2005. Questionnaires were sent in 2005 to a random sample of 200 men and women, aged 55-65. The methods applied in implementing the survey varied a little in the different countries. This naturally affects the quality of the comparison basis. The questions asked in the Faroe Islands differ slightly from those asked in Norway and Sweden.

What we clearly can see from the trans national interviews and questionnaires, that this project have carried out, is that all our societies in greater extent then today should have a role as charter or generator for people’s social networks.

## **Meeting places - Networks joint proposal for the future**

Our societies need to further develop meeting places where you can go without a formal invitation, to have a cup of coffee or for to participate in some activity of interest. Physical meeting places with functions to:

- Support individuals and senior groups within the community to bring about positive changes

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<sup>1</sup>The book “New rules for the new economy” by Kevin Kelly published in 1998

- Foster participation in educational/training/development groups and cultural activities.
- Make available at local level information to assist local people develop their own skills.
- Develop a sense of friendship, co-operation and neighbourliness to overcome the generation barriers
- Develop relationships and alliances with other agencies and organizations.

Giving pensioners the opportunity to teach their skills to the younger generations – handicraft, weather forecasting, and other issues are some of the suggestions that the Faroe Islands highlights as functions in a meeting place. Creating opportunities within the health service for pensioners to be active in supporting other pensioners. The Faroe Islands has undergone a development that in many ways is exceptional in the western world. The old society was symbolised by very strong informal networks, the family and the surrounding community. The new society is symbolised by the state taking over “affairs” that formerly were regulated by the family and the community. More professional networks replace informal networks.

Building networks throughout generations, not only in the family, is equally important as this helps to educate the young generation. In order to form a basis for these contacts between generations the Municipality of Bodö has started a pilot called ”Mørkved utviklingssykehjem” where pupils from the fifth grade (10years old) visit ”sykehjemmet” and have activities there. Positive effects are expected from this both in how to treat elderly and life at the home, early activities for recruiting, increased well-being for the elderly, an activity to develop further.

**Meeting places can also be of virtual nature** as an online community on the Internet.

A virtual information and activity centre where people can exchange ideas and find information about activities and recourses that is of local interest for seniors. In Luleå this has been put into practice through a pilot web portal called “lulesenior”. This virtual portal can easily be run and administrated by elderly in co-operation with society or some non-profit organisation.

## **1.1 Background**

The overall objectives of the projects is to develop solutions to meet citizens future needs, demands and wishes in regions with our specific situation. Our project shall initiate and find ideas and working models for, quality in care, wider society interaction and cross generation involvement set in the needs and requirements of today for the future.

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The *social network* is regarded to be very important. There is a desire for “informal” meeting places and cultural activities that could help people that are facing changes. An active social network other than family is very important for everyone. Lifelong friendships are important; people sharing history, experience, identity etc. Friends have in most cases been there over a number of years, from early teens to old age and therefore do play an important role with shared experience and phases in life. Mostly everyone has a need for a life outside family that is ones owns, this does not change because you grow older, you still might not want to share all thoughts and feelings with your family. The family is still a big part of peoples social network, even though the interdependence between the generations are seems to be less.

The *technical network* will be of importance when it comes to the development of new services and new working methods for the field staff, but also for present/future retired elderly persons with IT knowledge, as the infrastructure for trans-national/trans-community communication is well developed.

## **1.2 Definitions**

In this report, the sub project “Network” has only dealt with the citizen’s view of their social networks and its importance. The use of IT in social interaction has been taken into consideration as a possible tool, in our elderly wishes, to share information and interact with others than family. There has been no deeper analysis done on technical networking, broadband and/or issues regarding infrastructure, as this is already well developed in the municipality of Luleå.

## 2. Sweden

Throughout the year of 2002 advertising campaigns, lectures and dialogues was carried out in the municipality of Luleå and administrated by the Development Unit within the Administration of Social Services. The main purpose with these activities, named “Lule Paradiso”, was to raise awareness among people concerning their future elderly life and formed the base for a written report on future elderly wishes. From that report as well as from this citizen dialogue one can clearly define that the access to meeting places and activities where social networking and interests can be facilitated is regarded as very important by our citizens. Meeting places where you feel welcome without formal invitation and where you can meet other people with common interests, cafés, restaurants, “senior houses” have been mentioned as examples in the reports.

### Citizen’s wishes

To maintain the current social well being when getting older the interviewees pointed out in this resent research by “Our Life as Elderly” the necessity of being active, as long as you are well and fit, in building networks, to develop new contacts. The interviewees also pointed out the importance of keeping your contacts near you and to participate in society in a way that your social and mental health won’t deteriorate. To develop interests, join clubs or get a hobby would be a good way to maintain your social well-being said some of the interviewees

Most of the interviewees thought that an active social network other than family is of great importance to maintain their independence as elderly. It is through these informal networks such as special interest groups and hobby groups that one can get out and meet other people. If you don’t have friends and an active social life you might be confined to your apartment or house and not meet new people. Associations/clubs that has activities is important as it is through these organizations new contacts can be made. Many interviewees also regarded IT, as a tool to be important for to be active outside the family, as one said, -“yes and it is also fun”

### 2.1 Analyses of the citizen dialogue compared to current situation ”OLE”

<b>Networks as social function</b>	
<b>Current situation to maintain social well being</b>	<b>Wanted situation to maintain social well being</b>
Current personal networks static	Initiate the build of new personal networks
Active in their own organisation/association	Initiate forums for co-operations between these
Religious resources as support in hard times	=
<i>Depending on ones own ability</i>	<i>Independent on ones own ability</i>
<b>Current situation family, friends, as support</b>	<b>Wanted situation family, friends, as support</b>
Active brothers and sisters as extra care personnel	Family as social and mental inspiration
Parents and children as extra care personnel	Parents and Children as social support not care.
Friends as support in hard times.	Friends that help out with practical things and social/mental inspirations.
<b>Current situation other active social networks</b>	<b>Wanted situation other active social networks</b>

Pensioner organisations as information suppliers in their organisations	Pensioners/interest groups and associations as information and inspiration brokers
Friends and neighbours as support	<b>Practical</b> help and support from neighbours and friends
No voluntary activity	Voluntary organisations as support of service
Associations as support and inspiration	Municipality lead activity groups
Religious associations as contacts in hard times	Churches and religious institutions as support and service
<b>Current situation physical pre conditions</b>	<b>Wanted situation physical pre conditions</b>
Inactivity can be a problem	Enable people to activate themselves, activity groups run by the community
No activity	Someone to accompany me on activities
Depending on own ability	Should not depend on own ability
<b>Current situation IT as tool for social networking</b>	<b>Wanted situation IT as tool for social networking</b>
Telephone	Information about where to find resources, web sites for seniors
e-mail	e-mail
Senior Webs	Facilitate e-learning resources
	Creation of special interest groups on the Internet

## 2.2 Suggestions for the future

Luleå suggest:

- **Physical meeting places**
- **Virtual local access points**

In the previous citizen dialogue “Lule Paradiso” as well as from this dialogue in “Our Life as Elderly” we can clearly see that, *the access to meeting places and activities where the social network with common interest can be created* is of great value. *An active social network other than family* is regarded as very important in order to maintain elderly peoples independence. It is through these social networks people can be activated and meet other people with common interests. If you don’t have friends, that you can communicate with and meet other, life can be very lonely.

The co-operation between the municipality and the business community in Luleå is very well developed through the participation of the University. The University is important for new business developments as it has the possibility of using their researchers in co-operation with established companies. This is a cornerstone for, and a model for, the municipality of Luleå.

Co-operation is also to involve and use the social capital/social networks in a way to generate development in society. The first time the term, social capital was used, was apparently in a book published 1916 by Lydia Hanifan that covered the co-operation between neighbours for supervision of a school. Later the urban theorist Jane Jacobs and the economist Glenn Loury used the term in their book. Jacobs created the thesis that the social capital that generates in the networking of social relations, in a town area or residential district, is what makes everyday life to function. The standard definition of social capital is *“Social capital is created from the myriad of everyday interactions between people, and is embodied in such structures*

*as civic and religious groups, family membership, informal community networks, and in norms of voluntarism, altruism and trust.”*

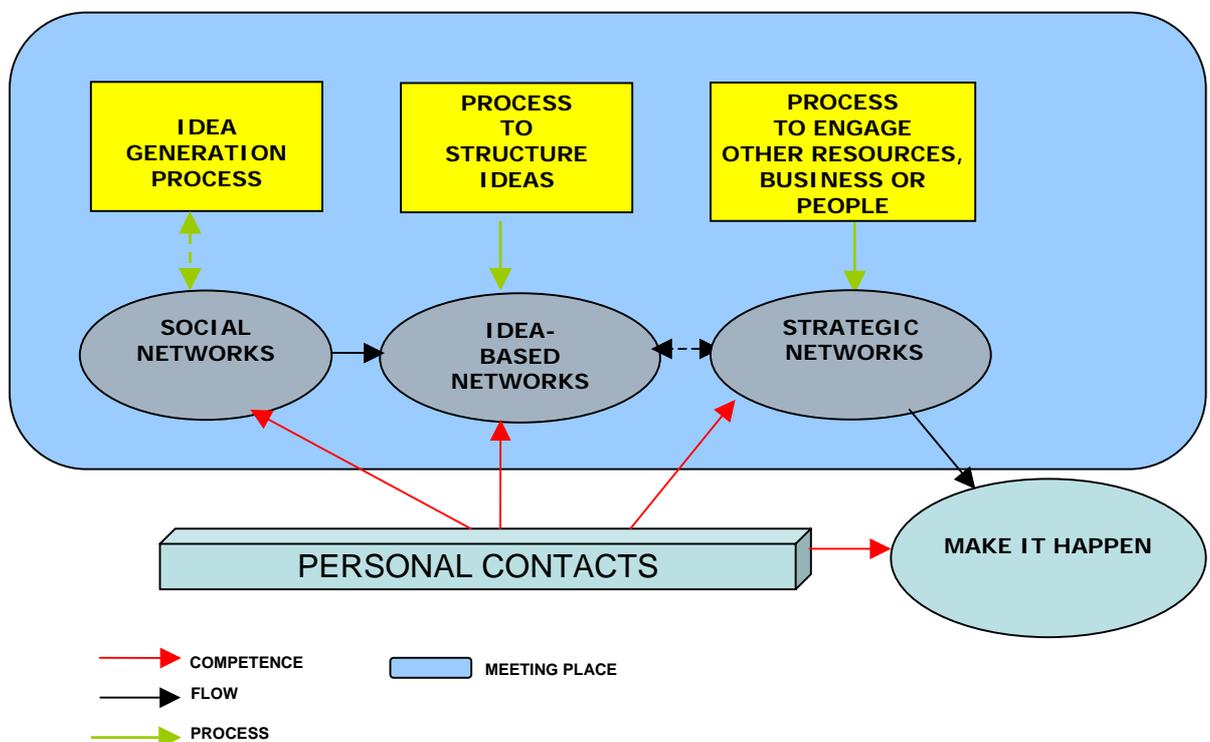
In the municipality of Luleå, there are somewhat 537 associations and organisations registered in the city organisational database. Society and business as well as organisations, have a role to play in how to realise and use this social capital that elderly people represent. It is only through activating the full potential and competences of the elderly that society can fully use this social capital.

The Administration of Social Services cannot, and maybe should not, have the sole responsibility for the life as elderly. There has to be some kind of co-operation within the municipality as whole, the county hospitals, churches, associations, volunteers, relatives and kinships. The general perception should be that elderly people, regardless of raise, gender or ethnic origin, is an asset and a challenge not a burden.

### Social networks

A social network is a social structure made of nodes which are generally individuals or organizations. Nodes are the individual actors within the networks, and ties are the relationships between the actors. The shape of the social network helps determine a network's usefulness to its individuals. Smaller, tighter networks can be less useful to their members than networks with lots of loose connections (weak ties) to individuals outside the main network. More "open" networks, with many weak ties and social connections, are more likely to introduce new ideas and opportunities to their members than closed networks with many redundant ties. In other words, a group of friends who only do things with each other already share the same knowledge and opportunities

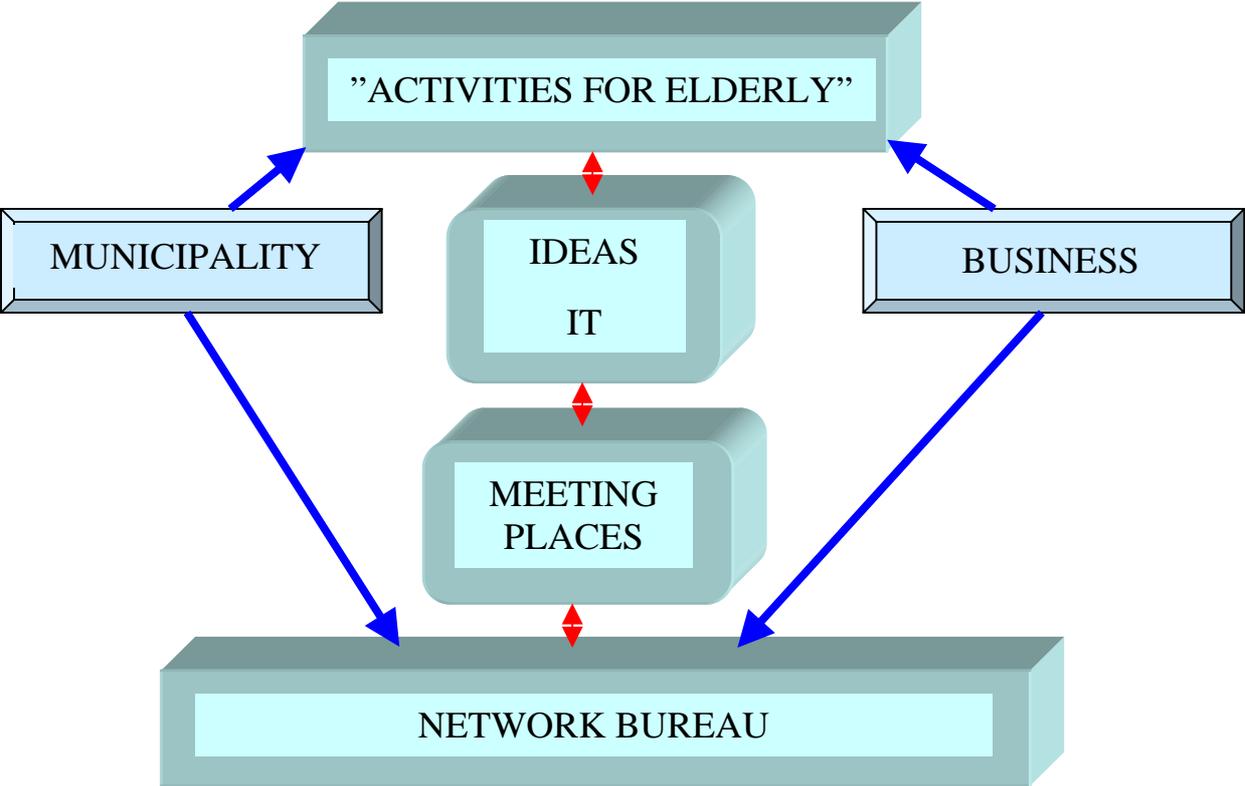
**A MODEL FOR IDEA GENERATION IN THE SOCIAL NETWORK:**



A group of individuals with connections to other social worlds is likely to have access to a wider range of information. It is better for individual success to have connections to a variety of networks rather than many connections within a single network. Similarly, individuals can exercise influence or act as brokers within their social networks by bridging two networks that are not directly linked. One good example is the “OLE-Senior group” that was created around the interest of cultural activities, this made it possible to run theater shows during daytime for pensioners. The “OLE-Senior group” was generated from a meeting with the chairmen of the largest pensioner organisations in Luleå and functions very well today.

**A friendly place to meet**

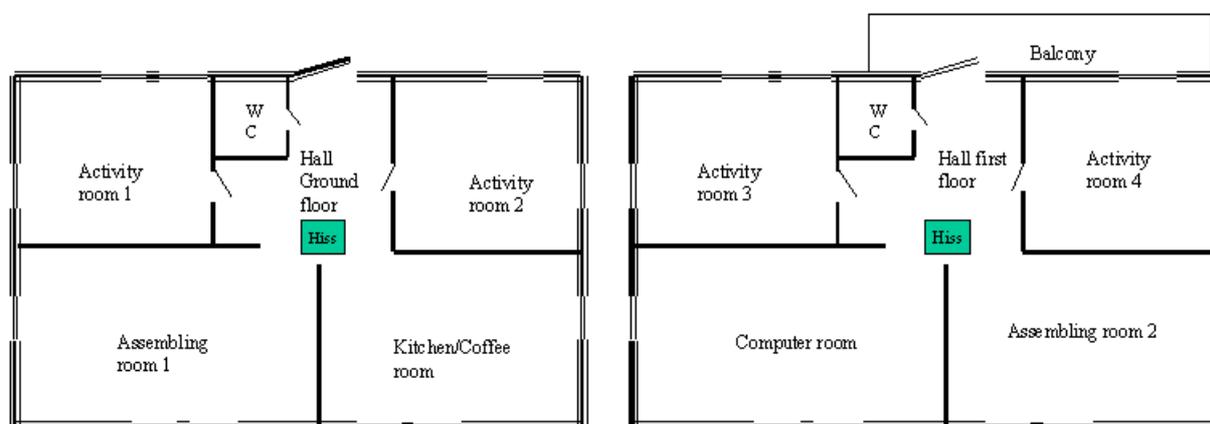
From the citizen dialogue commenced with “Lule Paradiso” and later continued in this project, a clear wish has been to establish some kind of physical meeting place. Due to this the project group “Networks” suggest that the municipality facilitate the use of some free premises for elderly to set up a **physical meeting place**. This meeting place or hall should function as the access point for informal networking and the creation of new co-operations around ideas or free time activities. In this meeting place there also should be a possibility to practice some craft, but also allow the visitor just to have a cup of coffee. The meeting place would have a function of a “Network Bureau” where the elderly and groups of elderly can obtain information about municipality service and activities.



This meeting place needs though be built from co-operation with the municipality, business and organisations that are active in these age groups in Luleå in order to make it sustainable for the future. One way to set this up is through social entrepreneurship or a social business.

The primary benefit with the “network bureau” would be to foster the creation of informal networks of seniors at all levels and to activate them in the everyday activity of the centre. The secondary benefit would be, if it were run as a social business, the creation of jobs for people with disability or people that has been on sick leave for years.

Example layout of a physical meeting place:



### Virtual local access point for seniors

IT has come to play a much larger role as a tool for the society to disseminate information and to enable people to be in contact with their elected politicians. The future elderly generation also view IT as important for personal needs and to find new friends. This is also something that we would like to develop as a complement to the physical meeting place mentioned above.

A meeting place on the Internet that is administrated and run by the organisations that has activities for seniors in Luleå. This can both be private companies as well as other voluntary organisations that have activities for elderly and that would like to develop these on a broader scale.

‘Lulesenior’ shall apart from being the local access point for seniors, also be a channel of information to these groups for the municipality and businesses.

This Internet Portal shall contain a start page, where overall information about the network is presented. There will also be local information channels built on the portal where people from different areas can find out what is happening in their specific are and what organisations there are to facilitate these events.

Below is the IT portal described as a screen shot of [www.lulesenior.se](http://www.lulesenior.se)

*Layout and structure for the IT – pilot portal.*

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Luleå Senior portal. At the top left is the logo for LULEÅ SENIOR. Below it is a navigation menu with links: Startside, Pensionärsföreningar, Stadsdelar, Byar, Aktivt seniorliv, Nyheter, and Kontakt. A secondary menu lists various districts: Centrum, Bergnäset, Björkskatan, Gammelstad, Hertsön/Lerbäcken, Kronan, Mjökudden/Hotviken, Porsön, Svartösten, and Örnäset/Skurholmen. The main content area features the Luleå Kommun logo and a section titled 'Luleå kommuns stadsdelar' with descriptive text. Below this is an 'Översiktskarta' (overview map) of the city. On the right side, there is a 'News' section with a date '8:e augusti 2006' and a 'KALENDER' (calendar) for August 2006. A yellow box highlights the 'Stadsdelar' link in the navigation menu, with an arrow pointing to the 'Luleå kommuns stadsdelar' text. Another yellow box highlights the 'Nyheter' link, with an arrow pointing to the 'NYHETER' section. A third yellow box highlights the 'KALENDER' link, with an arrow pointing to the calendar table. A fourth yellow box highlights the 'Aktivt seniorliv' link, with an arrow pointing to the text 'Activities for seniors such as cultural establishments, interest groups or study circles.'

Area specific information for seniors, based on in which area they live.

Activities for seniors such as cultural establishments, interest groups or study circles.

News

**LULEÅ SENIOR**

Startside \* Pensionärsföreningar \* **Stadsdelar** \* Byar \* Aktivt seniorliv \* Nyheter \* Kontakt

Centrum Bergnäset Björkskatan Gammelstad Hertsön/Lerbäcken Kronan Mjökudden/Hotviken Porsön Svartösten Örnäset/Skurholmen

**LULEÅ KOMMUN**

Luleå kommuns stadsdelar  
Till stadsdelen Porsön hänförs även universitetsområdet med dess studentbostäder och även de olika företag och industrier som ligger i närheten. Till stadsdelen Björkskatan hänförs även Lulsundet. Du som söker uppgifter om Lulsundet ska således titta under Björkskatan för att hitta eventuella uppgifter om Lulsundet. Till stadsdelen Örnäset/Skurholmen hänförs även Lövskatan, Malmudden och Bredviken. Till stadsdelen Hertsön/Lerbäcken hänförs även Kvarnbäcken.

**Översiktskarta**

**NYHETER**  
8:e augusti 2006  
Välkommen till vår nya webbplats för seniorer ...[Läs mer](#) >>

**KALENDER** >>    **AKTUELLT** >>

<<	Augusti	>>					
(2006)							
V:	Må	Ti	On	To	Fr	Lö	Sö
31		1	2	3	4	5	6
32	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
33	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
34	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
35	28	29	30	31			

A calendar which show what is planned and by whom.

### 3 Norway

#### **Organizational, and functional Networks for/ by elderly to day.**

The Senior University in the Municipality of Bodø is an educational organization working for a better society for the generation of the elderly. The aim is to provide lifelong learning for senior citizens and to stimulate their skills and resources. Further, to create arenas for social interaction. The functions of the organization are study groups, social and cultural activities, lectures, and courses. These activities are run on voluntary and unpaid basis.

Tusen hjemmet Activity Centre is another key to the preconditioned health service in Bodø and of great importance for social, cultural and professional and personal networks in the care of elderly. This Centre makes it possible to network the Senior University and different pensioner organizations in the Municipality. The centre is a meeting place with Café' and a number of complementary services.

Sport Activity run by the cultural office offers different kinds of activities. This is important in networking and improving health.

The Pensioners Associations are function well and are engaged in Norway. In the Municipality of Bodø there are 8 local associations registered in addition to several occupational pensioner organizations.

All Pensioners associations in Norway are members of the NPF, (Norsk Pensjonistforbund), and the NPF is the only pensioners' organization with formal political influence.

Activities in the Pensioners Associations are much the same all over the country. Social and cultural activities, political activities, information to the members related to pensions, health care, service, taxes and so on.

The Municipality Pensioners Advisory Councils has 7 members and these are elected by political organizations and pensioner organizations. The purpose of these councils is the same as in Luleå.

Other networks are The Voluntary Central of Bodø, Red Cross, the Women's Voluntary Service, religious networks, and other voluntary organizations.

#### **The wishes of our citizens**

It is clear from interviews, questionnaires and meetings with focus groups that maintaining networks is both important and necessary in the promotion and maintenance of the quality of life. Many recognise and acknowledge that their networks will diminish as they grow older. It is a natural consequence of age that friends and colleagues are lost. There are however many who recognize the importance of establishing new networks, and assuming personal responsibility for this is considered to be important.

#### **3.1 Analyse of the citizen dialogue compared to current situation "OLE"**

<b>Networks as social function</b>	
<b>Current situation to maintain social well being</b>	<b>Desired situation to maintain social well being</b>
Personal networks static	Initiate the building of new personal networks. Be aware of the importance of building new networks to prevent isolation and ill health. Information, knowledge.

<b>Current situation family, friends, as support</b>	<b>Desired situation family, friends, as support</b>
Family is important, and often necessary to provide enough services to the elderly.	Family as social and mental inspiration. The burden of caring for the elderly must not be too great. A great challenge in caring for the elderly in the future !
<b>Current situation other active social networks</b>	<b>Desired situation other active social networks</b>
An active and well-developed organization sector. A large variety of activities, hobbies, and meeting places.	Sustain, and maintain, and further develop volunteer activity, how to recruit new volunteers.
Buildings with common areas. Some have many activities, some none.	Build houses with possibilities for common activity
	Use best practice – how to succeed
<b>Current situation physical pre conditions</b>	<b>Desired situation physical pre conditions</b>
A lot of possibilities to take part in physical pre conditions. Active daily life is one example	Sustaining, maintaining and further developing. Information, and knowledge about the pre condition importance for physical and mental health.
<b>Current situation IT as tool for social networking</b>	<b>Desired situation IT as tool for social networking</b>
Seniornett	Increase membership, communicate and exchange experience
Well developed technical systems	Maintain, build new
General scepticism about using technology, especially by women	Knowledge, courses, information, , examples of using technology in a practical way.
Need more contact across the generations	Develop common IT networks for young and elderly people.

### 3.2 Suggestions for the future

#### Bodø suggests:

- **Create common meeting places between the generations**
- Efforts must be concentrate on **Accessibility - Transport- Voluntary work.**

Creating common arenas and *common meeting places between the generations* will be an essential tool in the years ahead.

The Municipality will have a key role to play in the future as **provider**, in that the Municipality has networking and network building as an important element in the planning of good welfare services for inhabitants. This applies in particular to being the driving force and organizer for the creation of meeting places. Typical examples of these can be in *dwelling complexes, common areas, and activities*. It is important that it is the residents themselves that are actively engaged in creating activities and in network building. The municipality must not take over the important personal responsibility that lies in the maintenance and further development of networks in later life.

Here in Bodø we have not focused specifically on dialogue and joint activities with the commercial sector. Conversely, the work place and the labor unions are very important in maintaining networks that are already established. Many of the labor unions in Bodø have

pensioner clubs. Their role seems a little unclear in our selection of respondents. The loss of networks in the form of diminished contact with colleagues can be compensated for if there are **active labor unions with focus on the membership that continues after retirement**. There are also many who reach pensionable age relatively early, for example pilots, police officers, and others.

The various organisations have a vital role to play in the future in connection with networks and network building. Special interest organisations with their focus on activities as well as voluntary work will be central participants. The challenges for the organisations will be to recruit people to organisational life, and in this context young people in particular. The recruitment of a greater number of men to organisational work is also a challenge that must be tackled in the future. Efforts must be concentrated on **Accessibility - Transport- Voluntary work**.

*Network building is also about contact between the generations*, and not just within the immediate family, making the necessary arrangements for contact between the generations, for joint activities. In Bodø, there is a pilot scheme under which the Mørkved Development Nursing Home initiated a co-operative venture with Mørkvedmarka School. Pupils from the 5th year (10 year-olds) visit the Home where they have a fixed plan to follow. Positive effects are expected in connection with attitudes towards the elderly, knowledge of life in the nursing home, early recruitment, and pleasant experiences for the residents and so forth. It is important that this tool is developed further.

If one is to succeed, it is important to have a well-defined content and a well structured and mutually binding co-operation, engagement, and motivation from both the school and the nursing home. Other initiatives implemented are that the residents visit the school and assist in for example reading. This idea has been successfully implemented in Bodø through a dedicated project called “Lesevenn” (My Reading Friend).

## 4 Faroe Islands

Faroe Island has gone through a development that in many ways is exceptional in the western world. The old society was symbolised by very strong informal networks, the family and the surrounding community. The new society is symbolised by the state taking over “affairs” that formerly were regulated by the family and the community. More professional networks replace informal networks.

In many ways the development of welfare institutions in Faroe Island haven’t kept up with the development of the society in general. On the other hand the informal system of networks hasn’t disappeared. We have a situation sociologists call “non-simultaneity in society”. We have social structures, lifestyles etc. that in reality belong to days gone by.

In the last few years this is changing in the Faroes, and will change even further in the future. The demand for activities that are not connected to family and community will increase.

There are in the Faroes several organisations, which serve elderly on informal basis, and act as a spokes organ for elderly, and a forum for social activities.

The informal forum is perhaps of greater importance than the formal ones. Especially the form of communication in this sphere differs fundamentally from that of the formal sphere. The form of communication is collective, and it is the collective itself, which is the producer, communicator and receiver in the process. In the popular cultural process of communication

the entire process takes place within the collective itself. There is a direct connection between transmitter and receiver who often change roles during the process and all communication is based on direct feedback.

## **Citizen's wishes**

The citizen expects his network to carry on or even increase when reaching retirement. Almost nobody fears loneliness or isolation when reaching retirement. In general the respondents look forward to this part of life, where they expect to have time for other activities, like courses and most of all grandchildren.

Most of the respondents seem to have a very active social life, and actually expect it to increase when reaching retirement. It is very important for the respondent to stay in the local area where his life long friendships and family are. Moving from the area is for some like cutting the lifeline, which might explain why people want to stay in local and maybe more peripheral areas, even though they know that the service for elderly would probably be better in more central areas.

Many of the respondents mention physical meeting points. Especially many of the women express a wish to have a more formal meeting points in the future.

There seems to be many private, active old and very stable friendships due to a mutual dependency in different situations such as farming and fishing and weddings and funerals, and this is why it seems so important to remain in the local area. The respondent is afraid of losing this part of his network.

The demand and interest for other activities seems to increase. Several mentioned evening courses as an activity they hope to find time for when they retire. Travelling is also mentioned as a future dream.

### **4.1 Analyses of the citizens dialog compared to current situation "OLE"**

<b>Current situation</b> <b>Support from family and friends</b>	<b>Desired situation</b> <b>Family and friends as support</b>
Family networks are expected to diminish in rural areas because of migration.	Establish conditions where there is less dependency on family.
<b>Current situation</b> <b>other social networks</b>	<b>Desired situation</b> <b>other social networks</b>
Organized activities in pensioners organizations as well as other organizations like sports clubs.	Establish platforms where pensioners to organize their own activities.
Very little voluntary work assisting other pensioners is organized.	Establish platforms where voluntary work is organized. The governing body needs to look at this recourse and activate. As an example visiting and helping with non-care work.
Day centres are open once a week for cards, handicraft and other activities.	Establish meeting places with different activities and services.
<b>Current situation</b>	<b>Desired situation</b>

<b>Physical pre conditions</b>	<b>physical pre conditions</b>
Educational programs are not specifically for pensioners.	Courses that the pensioners organize themselves as well as with the assistance of the municipality or private firms etc.
No pattern is in existence for organized voluntary work teaching skills to others.	Activate cultural and other knowledge. The future elderly are willing to do voluntary work with a younger generation.
<b>Current situation IT</b>	<b>Desired situation IT</b>
Electronic facilities little used	Establish conditions for electronic communication.

#### *4.2 Suggestions for the future*

The Faroe Islands proposes:

- **Educational meeting points**
- **Voluntary activities**

Even if the municipality doesn't have the responsibility for elderly care today, the municipality can take on the role of the organizer and provider. The municipality needs to build conditions for different kinds of purposes that will support and activate elderly.

Elderly in the future will want an opportunity to meet in the day time, at organised activities and to socialize. The municipalities have a role providing facilities for that purpose. The suggestions can also easily be incorporated into the Home Care System, that often has facilities to house the activities. This would open possibilities for the users to participate in services like dinner and activities as a whole.

#### **Educational meeting points**

Start courses for pensioners on different subjects, like IT, SMS and picture processing and electronic banking.

These shall be organized by the pensioners themselves, businesses or/and the municipality. The main purpose is to activate elderly so they can maintain and strengthen networks.

The basic conditions in the local society, to meet, can be improved. **More formal meeting places** have been mentioned by some of the respondents.

Some improvement can also be done to strengthen the technical network. Teaching future elderly how to use IT can easily do this. This will improve their chances for communication between generations, independent of physical distances.

#### **Voluntary activities**

Give pensioners the opportunity to teach their skills to the younger generations – handcraft, weather forecasting, and other issues.

Creating opportunities within the health service for pensioners to be active in supporting other pensioners in non-care situations.

These suggestions can easily be incorporated into the Home Care System, that has the facility to house the activities. This would open possibilities for the users to participate in services like dinner and activities as a whole.

## 5. Conclusions

For those that are in a situation of transition, whether it is in career change, leaving work to become pensioner or experience ones children moving out and start their own family, social networks are of great importance. To guarantee improved quality of life for elderly our society might need to create basic conditions for network generations in greater extent than today. Life itself is about transitions, when you are young your world extends as your ability increase, when you get older the transition is reverse and your ability decrease.

What clearly comes out from the interviews and questionnaires is that our society in greater extent than today should have role as charter or generator for people's social networks. Meeting places where you can go without a formal invitation to have a cup of coffee or for to participate in some activity of interest.

A meeting place can be of both physical and virtual nature, physical as a meeting hall and virtual as in online communities on the Internet. These virtual communities can easily be run and administrated by elderly in co-operation with society or some non-profit organisation. A virtual information and activity centre where people can exchange ideas and information

### **The social network**

The *social network* is regarded to be very important for those that are facing changes in working life or family life. In order to secure increased quality of life also as elderly there is a need for the society to facilitate renewal of these social networks. There is a desire for "informal" meeting places and cultural activities that could help people that are facing changes. Relationships are critical to success; so often, knowing the right person to ask is as valuable as knowing the answer yourself, if not more so.

The exchange of information and resources, on a casual basis like this reaps rewards just as much as the structured environments from active professional networking. Certain things are true about both personal and professional networking. It is essential to get into a networking frame of mind. That frame of mind is simply the desire to help others as much as possible.

### **The family**

Family has a big role to play in social networking even though parents of today don't want their children to feel the same pressure they felt in caring for their parents. The fact that children shall manage their own situation firsthand, regardless of social and cultural background is from my point of view every parent wish. A central factor that is emphasised by the majority is the importance of the family in social relationships. To remain in touch with one's children and grandchildren is very important.

To be able to receive visitors, and to receive help, although mostly of a practical nature, for example help with shopping, lawn mowing and so forth is fine from close family. The majority do not however wish for help of a more personal nature from their nearest and dearest, they simply do not wish to be a burden to their children. This is a commonly expressed wish that is apparent both in interviews and surveys.

In the Faroe Islands the family is still a big part of peoples social network, even though the interdependence between the generations are less. They also see the physical distance between them and children and grandchildren as one of their biggest concern. Some even think about moving to the area their children live. We do see that even though family ties are breaking up, the family still is the most important part of the elderly network.

### **Friends and neighbors**

Friends have in most cases been there over a number of years, from early teens to old age and therefore do play an important role with shared experience and phases in life. Mostly everyone has a need for a life outside family that is ones owns, this does not change because you grow older, you still might not want to share all thoughts and feelings with your family. Another reason why friends and neighbors are so important is because they in most cases also share the same phase in life and can understand what you go through. Good friends and neighbors have an influence in well being, friends have always time for each other.

Meeting new people at hobby courses and other meeting places is also an important factor. Several respondents also say that friends will come to mean more as time passes, perhaps even to some degree replacing family connections, in particular where relatives live some distance away. Key words here are meeting venues and the means to participate in new activities - transport.

### **IT**

To use IT as tool and resource for finding new friends and to be active in society is more and more common in Sweden. There is though a slightly difference between men and women how they use IT in Sweden, women is in fact more positive to IT then men. Women would more frequently educate themselves, join and be active in special interest groups then men. This is reflecting on the women's wish to belong to a bigger social network and in their social engagement. They have a greater need for friends and neighbors than men. The men on the other hand brows the Internet for information and use e-mail more frequently than women, associations and clubs are more important for men.

To communicate trans-nationally and trans-community is a way of building networks in order to organize service and social contact. The Seniornett is a meeting place on the Internet for the pensioners. To develop Seniornett and IT for pensioners is a part of the Norwegian Governments IT-Policy. The Seniornett has several local clubs, including one in Bodø.

To use IT as a tool to communicate is not so common in the Faroes, especially among the elderly. Some use it to communicate with children living abroad and some try to educate themselves or are taking courses in IT, but the majority do not use IT at all.

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