

Outreach elderly work supplementing public sector services – A viewpoint  
of employees of Deaconess Foundation

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## ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to elucidate the importance and challenges of outreach elderly work. Outreach elderly work has been done for a long time and it is done internationally widely. It is guided by the general principles of outreach work, which are similar to youth work, for example. In short, its purpose is to find those to whom the following applies: They need services and services do not reach them. The work methods vary much and the work is done creatively and in collaboration with wide network. The principle is to first identify the elderly, especially those most in need, and then to look at their situation holistically, keeping in mind the help network around them, and then to carry out the service need assessment, which then directs the employees to offer the exact appropriate services.

The research material consists of interviews of three employees of one outreach elderly work organization, Deaconess Foundation. The method used was theory-guided content analysis, although coding was very material-driven. A total of 94 codes were obtained. The analysis emphasized emotional expressions which was a good choice, as perspectives that were considered important included emotional repetition, for example.

As results, outreach elderly work plays an important role in networking and, via the networks, it develops and implements better elderly work with its own, proven holistic methods. The various care gaps of the public sector are complemented, especially in the service needs assessment, which, however, is not a sustainable situation. Finally, outreach work provides welfare-enhancing services not recognized by the system. The challenges are as follows: Networking is hard and the public sector often has practices that are contrary. In addition, there often is not enough resources available. In conclusion, outreach elderly work provides information to the network of elderly care, saves care resources and can even save lives. Its challenges are scarce resources and uncooperativeness of the care network.

**Keywords:** elderly, care poverty, unmet needs, outreach elderly work, loneliness, co-operation, non-governmental organization, care for older people, municipality, Finland

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Long and healthy life is important not the least because of the elderly's dignity but also to keep the public sectors costs low. The task is not simple: Professional health care is inevitable and cannot be replaced by family, volunteers or a man in the street (e.g. Heikkinen, Kauppinen, & Laukkanen, 2013; Skinner, Sogstad, & Tingvold, 2019). Still, NGOs<sup>1</sup> has an important place. 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organizations can provide a strong emotional, social and psychological support as well as help with practicalities. Even a mere presence is important because loneliness is having an unquestioned causal relation with both mental and physical illnesses (Stephoe, Shankar, Demakakos, & Wardle, 2013).

In Finland, for long time, the alternative options of organizing care have been a hot topic. The aging of large age groups has been a repetitive refrain. According to Karisto (2013) the large age groups need care the most not until 2030s. The statistics are certain and there comes to be an unprecedented amount of need for social and health care services.

The last peak in the discussion of the care of the old was in the Spring 2020 during the global COVID-19 pandemic. People of old age were defined as risk groups and told to stay home as much as possible. Care facilities and care homes were closed of visitors. Concluding from Churchill (2020), Makaroun et al. (2020) and Office et al. (2020) new ways of organizing help and care were needed and so there was a global boom in volunteer as well as NGOs help. Seniori-Vamos is one of this type of NGOs. One could say that outreach work, the definition of which I will give later, is now everywhere but there are still no established practices. This boom is not over yet so this text could not be timelier.

## 1.1 Biological aging and loneliness

Elderly people, insofar as their physical and cognitive functioning begins to decline, are in more than one studies defined as those over 75 years of age. At this age, daily activities are difficult without help and there is a peak in the need for services compared to the age group of 60-74 years old. (Kröger, Aerschot, & Puthenparambil, 2019; Puthenparambil, 2019, 40.) Living in environments without elevators or with high stairs may impair performance and make it difficult or even impossible to participate the social activities that the elderly enjoyed

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<sup>1</sup> NGO=Non-Governmental Organization

before. The connection of sociality to physical functioning is two-folded but undeniable. (Andrew Steptoe et al., 2013; Nummijoki, 2009).

When discussing of loneliness one must take into account what Steptoe et al. (2013) distinguish: There is emotional loneliness and social isolation. Of these, social isolation is much more detrimental, and even lethal, to the individual. From this can be concluded that outreach elder work, the concept of which I will explain in the following, would be a good solution to the social isolation and despair caused by COVID-19. At its best it helps to use clinical health services as well when the employees are good listeners with the elderly's needs.

## 1.2 Concept of "outreach elderly work"

"Outreach elderly work", in this text referred to "outreach work" from now on, if not separately defined, is the only reasonable term when connecting the ideas of Szeintuch (2015) and Kuikka (2015, 5-9). Both of the aforementioned sources (ibid.) and Aerschot (2020) tell of the lack of established concepts and models of this type of work. There is a great number of reports and projects though, clearly linked to outreach work (e.g. Lapierre et al., 2011; Kuikka 2015, 91 & Office et al., 2020). But practices in outreach work, of all ages, all around the world, including youth work, are inconsistent (Andersson, 2013; Bouman, van Rossum, Nelemans, Kempen, & Knipschild, 2008; Szeintuch, 2015).

I will come to use this concept in its Finnish definitions from now on; From Finnish literature it can be said that outreach elderly work helps elderly to achieve comprehensive welfare in all aspects of agency. This means supporting mentally, physically and socially. But, strictly, this is not done by stepping on health and social care professionals' toes. One must encourage to follow the professionals' orders and not give any own orders. It is also important to guide to services if needs are perceived and continuity of services must be guaranteed. (Jokinen, Lötjönen, Rahunen, Nikula, & Tarvainen, 2017, 16; Kuikka, 2015; Saarenheimo & Pietilä, 2018.)

## 1.3 Research material and its origin in summary

In this thesis I will focus on the outreach work made by Seniori-Vamos, a unit of Deaconess Foundation in Espoo, and even more accurately to outreach elderly work that is its special area. My study material consists of a pair interview given by paid employees of that organization. I have two employees' pair-interview and one Senior employee's interview.

According to Deaconess Foundation (2020) and Kuikka (2015, 85) Seniori-Vamos supports the elderly who are marginalized or at risk of marginalization. Elderly people in need are helped by elderly work professionals, co-operation networks, neighborhood and significant others. Usually, a professional evaluates the need for help first ((s)he might visit home) and then offers the support of Seniori-Vamos' own volunteers and/or guides forward to other services or NGOs. The aim is to provide the elderly with comprehensive support according to their own needs and wishes.

#### 1.4 Authors interests and research questions

Already in the last summer I decided that the care-gaps or care-deficit of the elderly could be a good subject and I even contacted Attendo, a certain care home of whom, where I had worked in. They did not answer anything but then I realized that the centre of excellence of my university, CoE AgeCare<sup>2</sup> discusses these themes. I contacted them and so they gave me this research topic. Possibly I can help CoE AgeCare with their research.

What it comes to my biases in this topic, I have recently myself been in diaconal work, in youth work though, so I might be biased into the direction that there should be more support and funding to this. I also consider the public sector's work important and that it should be guaranteed. However, I am well aware of my opinions and I strive for neutrality. And I have to say that I got keen on this topic after I received it. This is exactly what I am specialized in.

Since there is not much research to this new type of social work, "outreach elderly work", it is inevitable that I have to stick to basics. That is why I greatly come to answer the question of what outreach elderly work is though it is not my research question. My research material mainly deals the context of this work and the failure of different types of care-arrangements. These themes raise the research questions in the following order: 1. Why is outreach elderly work important and 2. what are the challenges it confronts? It is possible to get multifaceted answers to these questions since my material includes interviews with both employees and the director, and the theoretical basis is, of course, from impartial researchers who are familiar with the field even more broadly.

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<sup>2</sup> CoE AgeCare = Centre of Excellence in Research on Ageing and Care

## **2 Research framework and literature review**

Next I will explain the locational and social political framework around outreach work and my research material. I will discuss the theories I come to use in the analysis and I will do some literature review on the side. I have used gerontological and socialpolitical approach for the evaluation of the elderly's care-deficit, peer-reviewed articles from NGOs doing this type of and CoE AgeCares studies of the projects that fit the concept of outreach elderly work.

### **2.1 Outreach work in Finland**

Pietilä & Saarenheimo (2018) tell that outreach work has been done in Finland in various ways for quite some time. Its forerunners have included the Salvation Army, the City Mission (NGOs) and outreach youth work, and since then, municipalities, cities and organizations have joined in the various forms of mapping and welfare-promoting home visits. Kuikka (2015, 5-9) and Aerschot (2020) tell that outreach elderly work promoted by public sector does not have much history. The author found out this the hard way when doing time-consuming searches.

Finnish definition for the outreach elderly work, i.e. “etsivä vanhustyö” is quite clear and undeniable and all the necessary information can be found with this keyword. (Jokinen et al., 2017, 16; Heikkilä, 2020; Kuikka, 2015; Saarenheimo & Pietilä, 2018). Still, the Finnish research is not much more than numerous theses and NGOs articles, the latter of which I consider to be perhaps biased on the importance and funding of that work. I will take that into account and respect on the various text types is given in their own class. Definitely I have used the NGOs articles in founding out what are the good methods and places in doing the work and what is its history. For example, Arto-database found only 16 matches with the phrase search “etsivä vanhustyö” and with criteria the search must target all fields in the database.

### **2.2 Seniori-Vamos**

Finnish Seniori-Vamos unit was established in 2013; gathered with the support of project funding from STEA. At first the unit was just only in Helsinki but then it spread to Espoo, where my research material is from, and to other cities too. The project began as part of the nationwide “Eloisa ikä”-program coordinated by STEA and now it is still funded even though the program is over.

What is Deaconess Foundation, then? Deaconess Foundation (2020) tells that it is a non-profit organization and it was established already in 1867 and now its operating revenue is over €190 million. Over 100 communities are buying its services and now it is even teaching municipalities to use their work methods. It can be concluded from the above that Deaconess Foundation is a knowledgeable player in the field of social and health services for the elderly. What it comes to its values, according to Deaconess Foundation (2018; 2020b; 2020c) Seniori-Vamos' activities as well as all of the foundations activities, their values are based to Christianity above all.

### 2.3 City of Espoo and other municipalities organizing care

What it comes to the situation in Espoo, 14,8% of Espoo's population is over 65 years old. This means ca 42880 inhabitants. The number can be expected to increase. (City of Espoo, 2020b.) Espoo is doing broad collaboration with different 3rd sector organizations, of which it offers a wide range of everyday help, for example with groceries and loneliness (City of Espoo, 2020a, 9-10, 94).

In 2018 Espoo centralized its guidance and information services, in a large change, to one unit called "Nestori". This unit then guides the elderly in need of help to the 3rd sector organizations mentioned above. (City of Espoo, 2018, 2.) In comparison to common situation of care services in Finland, this could be considered even ground-breaking, since Saarenheimo & Pietilä (2018) say that exactly networking should be developed in elder care and Puthenparambil & Kröger (2016) add that coordination and information of options are often unavailable. Espoo can be said to be pioneering outreach work. Normally outreach work is facing challenges when it is trying to find the relevant services.

How then, municipalities usually organize care? Puthenparambil & Kröger (2016) denote that in Finland care is practically arranged by municipalities. They have wide possibilities to organize care as they see fit. Usually elderly is having different types of service housing and the most ill are in institutional care. Social care is based on services and not on financial supplementary benefits. One-third of social care services for the elderly are now in private sectors' custody. This increases complexity - This aforementioned Puthenparambil, work of whom has been really helpful, recently deducted (2019, 26) that there are also difficult bureaucratic processes for the dwellers; for example elderly with low income cannot cope the "hassle" and they are easily left without income-exemptions. As a result it could be concluded that when outreach work faces such a situation, there are challenges ahead.

Finnish user fees in service housing are 15–20% of service costs. However, the municipality covers the majority, ie 70%, with public taxation. Fees for home care visits are usually in the range of 10-19 euros. Services do not cost a horrible amount of money but costs can begin to pile up. How much of the user's own money is left is between 108€ and 250€. Usually service users must pay up to 85% of their income for the different services. (Puthenparambil, 2019, 26.) The aged have to pay separately from the contract with the municipality coordinating the services elderly needs and also of all the services. When the service packet is heavy there is a cost-ceiling so that the user has 50-100 euros left to his/her own use. (Puthenparambil, 2019, 21.)

## 2.4 Legislation around outreach elderly work

Communities might fail with care-giving but is it illegal, and to what extend? At this point it is good to make this clear with the analysis of Heli Heikkiläs (2020, 14) thesis which gives a great glimpse of today's Finnish law regarding the outreach work. For example, the Social Welfare Act (L1301/2014) ensures that people over the age of 75 have access to an assessment of the need for social services on the seventh working day after contacting the municipality. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has published a quality recommendation to ensure good aging and improve services in 2017–2019.

Heikkilä (2020, 14) lists that there is a lot of government laws and recommendations around the topic of outreach work. The law also obliges the municipality to co-operate with the various branches of the municipality as well as with public bodies, companies, organizations representing the elderly population and other NGOs in order to support the well-being, health, functional capacity and independent performance of the elderly population. (L980/2012.)

## 2.5 Outreach elderly work internationally

International articles and reviews of the outreach elderly work are missing; Still, from “outreach work”, more abstractly, it is possible to find numerous articles of short interventions. I told earlier that the concept is abstract but I will try to define it in the following. Szeintuch (2015) explains that “street work” can be used as a synonym to “outreach”. His literature review was helpful to me as it contained, practically, all the important concepts such as “street work”, “reaching-out” and “social work method”. Still, even though I followed Szeintuch, and, in addition to this I used other words and word pairs such as “loneliness” and “elderly social work”.

According to Szeintuch (2015) all outreach work shares two principles: 1. To discover the people who are in service gap and 2. “engaging them will serve a purpose” These principles can also be found in the texts of Kuikka (2015), Andersson (2013), outreach youth work (Into Ry 2018, 4) as well as in the work of Seniori-Vamos. Many sources proclaim all outreach work as inconsistent but this is not the case in Finland. For example, Into Ry (2018) explains that in Finland there are clear guidelines for youth work, guided by Ministry of education and culture, who also recently ordered a handbook of outreach youth work to be followed as a recommendation. The principles of youth work are guided by this centralized organization “Into ry”.

In internationally oriented studies, exploratory elderly work is perceived in the same way as in Finnish studies, of which I explained on page 3, with the exception of ensuring continuity (e.g. Lapierre et al., 2011; Kuikka 2015, 91 & Office et al., 2020). The lack of research does not mean that I wouldn't have a solid foundation in drawing my conclusions: I will not make a general, Finnish-wide assessment of outreach work, for example, but will focus on my case that comes from Espoo. And, outreach work seems to include the same general themes worldwide. Since this thesis does not go too deep, the international studies can be considered to be greatly in line with my conclusions and Finnish theories as well.

The same themes can be found in multiple interventions worldwide and it also seems to fit with practices and means, though if one would dig the practices and means deeper, major differences could be found. But, in general, as the international sources say it, outreach work is been done by volunteers visits, professionals telephonic or video visits and by many other means (Churchill, 2020; Makaroun et al., 2020; Office et al., 2020; Van Citters & Bartels, 2004). Churchill summarizes the research by saying how meter readers and utility works, not just primary care-givers, can refer the individuals for assessment. This seems much to follow Jokinen et al. (2017), a major part of my theoretical background, since the elderly are helped in their versatile daily activities starting from their needs and without prejudice.

## **2.6 A black sheep among the studies of outreach work, and concluding notes**

Almost all studies on outreach work think it is effective and meaningful. However, during the literature review, I found one as an exception, the study of Bouman et al. (2008). This text was the only one that said in the abstract preventing home-visits are not effective in health-promotion. Opposite arguments to Bouman are very common (e.g. Forsman et al., 2011; Kuikka 2015, 28; Lapierre et al., 2011; Van Citters & Bartels, 2004). I will take this

article into account but I logically have to exclude the disputed facts the other research outnumbers. Boumans et al. article has some problems I will discuss next. The article of Bouman et al. is a literature review.

First, Bouman et al. were looking for articles in which the intervention had lasted at least 4 visits a year for 12 months or more and longer. Other articles were excluded. This baseline could be found very difficult to accept since Sihto (2020) underlines that care is a day-to-day action. Second, the delimitation of the remaining articles could have been done both more precisely and more loosely. There were methodological problems of which I do not make further ado within this space. And third, the reviewing article perhaps made an unnecessarily strict delimitation in that it ruled out the option of simultaneous interventions. In the end, what is the definition of intervention? At least it was not volunteer help, according to Bouman et al., which can be considered as hard to agree with. Concept should have been defined, as it is a controversial concept. Thus, it may well be that the review may not be right in its conclusions. This is a fatal problem for an academic research.

This study at hand will be greatly focused on the work methods of the outreach work and the collaboration between different interest groups and the effectiveness of that collaboration. Although there is lack of research, much can be said of the known case we have at hand, as the work methods are simple and easy to evaluate. It can be said that there is clear evidence of their effectiveness. What is complex, and what this research turns eventually turns our eyes on, is improving or changing the service system in relation to them so that they would be successfully implemented.

### 3 Theoretical background

In this thesis, Finnish NGOs articles have a major role in elaborating the practical tasks of outreach work – In particular, the article of Jokinen et al. (2017) is at disposal. A big question is whether there are articles independent of the NGOs that deal with the lack of care for the elderly and in that way argue for outreach work. The answer is yes. These sources usually justify outreach work in a semi-accidental way so that my doubt of the biases seems to be unnecessary too. These type of grounds can be found from the international articles mentioned on page 2 as well as articles by Van Citters & Bartels (2004), Steptoe et al. (2013), Forsman et al (2011), McDaid (2011) and Nyunt et al. (2009). On the practical level of outreach work the Finnish articles by Saarenheimo & Pietilä (2018) and Thitz (2017) have much to say in this thesis.

All in all, with the international articles I will focus the most on the ones done by CoAgeCare and, in addition I will use Finnish articles of which (e.g. Aaltonen & Van Aerschot, 2019; Kröger et al., 2019; Puthenparambil, 2019; Puthenparambil. & Kröger, 2016). The most important concept of my theoretical background is “care deficit”<sup>3</sup> and the problematics of which. Outreach work is important particularly for the reason that it reduces care deficit. The themes of care deficit are found in the work of CoAgeCare (ibid). Sources named here and in previous two paragraphs are also in line with Jokinen et al. (2017, 16) who summarizes methods of outreach work, and themes of whom I conclude table 1. To this practical side I delve later. First I will handle the care deficit. Alongside care poverty, these are key concepts that I will also talk about in the results.

#### 3.1 Care deficit

Care deficit means that the informal nor formal care-givers are able to meet the elders’ day-to-day needs of care. The most important care services for the elderly are round-the-clock care, and home care, including its various support services. Care and measuring care deficit are both controversial concepts in academia and I am now unable to explore the controversies further within this space. What is important, however, is that in studies they have very often been thought of as subjective. (Kroger at al., 2019.) Therefore I consider the experiences from the field narrated by the material at hand to be suitable for my research as well.

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<sup>3</sup> Basically the concept explains itself – It means the areas of care in which the aged are facing lack and also would prefer a change to better. I consider this so known concept that I do not explain it further. The different aspects of this umbrella concept are to come explained in this thesis.

Inadequate aid basically means a big deal - the failure of social and health services and even inequality between groups of people. Fundamental rights or laws on the services of the elderly will then not be implemented. (Kroger et al., 2019.)

Aaltonen & Aerschot (2019) tell that 25% of the old with memory problems are suffering from care deficit and Kröger et al. (2019) count 20% of 75+ aged to have care deficit in their recent study. The needs of which the elderly with memory problems are not met are simple things like moving outside the home, shopping for food, and getting help in finding services. There is clear evidence that this is a broad phenomenon. From both sources the greater amount of informal care with the more sick can be seen. Puthenparambil (2019, 37-38) sees family background determining the use of care.

There has been a large change in universal principles if Puthenparambil (2019, 14) is to be trusted: “Local governments ... employ means assessment” nowadays. Reflected to the legislation, this is illegal to a point. Care is also increasingly being familized today (Puthenparambil, 2019, 14). The care can be given by many actors and I do not see there anything wrong as long as care is comprehensive and well organized. According to Puthenparambil & Kröger (2016) many of the old cannot even afford public social services and leave their care needs to friends and family. If one does not get help from these, the care needs will not be met at all. Puthenparambil, alone (2019, 37-38), tells that people with lower socio-economic status rely on family care the most.

Van Citters & Bartels (2004) say it is precisely those elderly people who have accumulated health problems that seem to be the ones who are socially isolated and may be left without services. Outreach work can be a very good link between services as well as between the elderly who need them the most. It can be reasoned that, even though accumulated health problems are connected with lower socio-economic status, in this case the given family care might be really rare. Otherwise lower socio-economic status would not be connected with family care. I will try to figure out the complex connections in my analysis. Anyhow, Thitz (2017, 23) tells that outreach work is being done in co-operation with the loved ones.

### **3.2 The practices and means of outreach work**

Next the benefits and problems of outreach work will be handled, the practical on-the-field aspects of which are really well summarized by Jokinen et al. They show that outreach work could help with the matters brought up by care deficit. Also The Finnish Union for Senior Services (2020) lists in its method cards that guide the outreach work, with very much the

similar lines as Jokinen and her partners, that these basic corner stones of daily living are the ones in which the outreach work has helped and strives to help. Next the tasks of outreach work will be presented with the table 1.

*Table 1: Task of outreach in different dimensions of quality of life*

<b>Dimension of quality of life</b>	<b>Task of outreach work</b>
Physical functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting self-reliance and mobility</li> <li>• Guiding to social and healthcare services</li> </ul>
Psychological welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening, presence</li> <li>• Emotional support</li> </ul>
Social relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social support</li> <li>• Finding meaningful doing</li> <li>• Encouraging to group activities, finding a friend</li> </ul>
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for running errand</li> <li>• Finding stimuli in close environments</li> </ul>

The table 1 indicates that outreach work can help a lot with the basics of daily living. According to Jokinen et al. (2017) each task of outreach work, that are shown on the right side of the table, support some aspect of quality of life. For example, with physical functioning, the elderly are motivated for various everyday tasks, outdoor activities and movement. Employee/volunteer can also go for a walk together with the aged. The parts of the table are otherwise quite self-explanatory so I will not go into this further here. Above all, the method of outreach work means walking side by side and older people themselves can be experts in their lives and troubles have to be clarified together and in encounter.

Given the specific health problems elderly have, to me it looks like that sometimes it is of course the case that outreach work can only help to move forward to health services. Outreach work rarely includes health professionals since its task is more in connecting different professions (Andersson, 2013). Anyhow, from the table it could be seen that practically everyone could do outreach work in many parts of the table 1 and, in fact, that is the case since there are many volunteers in the field. But, on the other hand, according to Jokinen et al. (2017), outreach work requires gerontological skills of special level, which in turn requires higher education. Personally, I cannot say for sure what this contradiction

should be thought of, when such different working methods have been successful<sup>4</sup>, but I think at least the first encounter should be for a professional. This remains to be clarified in the research material.

### 3.3 Greatest challenges of outreach work

Next a few challenges will be named but I will also tell more of them under some themes of the theories, as a side note. In order the outreach work to start, there must be some sort of networks to find the elderly in need for help. As I have said, Espoo and Seniori-Vamos are good at this but according to Saarenheimo & Pietilä (2018) this often causes difficulties. Networking is hard. Of this I think it could be reasoned that it is clear that the elderly with the greatest needs are hard to find – The sought aged are not necessarily covered by any public services and do not always have loved ones. Also, it is often hard to encourage the already found elderly to attend good services. In addition, it can be that there are no proper services because of an exact target group that is different from the individual. Even for the organizations arranging relaxed actions it is hard to define the concept of peer. This can cause unintended inequality then.

Of course, the outreach work also needs resources. However, activities are not always resourced according to the fact that enabling a real encounter takes a lot of time (Thitz, 2017, 21-22). According to Thitz (2017, 578) who assesses numerous projects, the outreach work would best achieve its goals with better resources and cooperation between different actors. From her (ibid., 21) and Jokinen et al. (2017, 33) work can be pulled together that sometimes an employee may not be invited at all, let alone the services (s)he provides. The employee may then feel unsuccessful. The work is sometimes mentally heavy and resource-consuming for the employee.

### 3.4 Outreach work helping with mental health issues, and concluding notes

Depression is another common problem that outreach work can do a lot with. Forsman (2020) sums the following: “It is estimated that  $\approx$ 12% of adults aged 65 or older are currently affected by depressive disorders in Europe”. In addition to individual psychological factors, another factor that prevents depression is social capital. Institutional intervention on top of the latter is not needed to get help for depression. Even non-professionals can do effective mental health work and even attend to curing depression with their presence. Kuikka (2015,

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<sup>4</sup> I tell of this under the chapter 3.4 as well

13) adds here that if outreach workers themselves cannot give their time, they can encourage to group-activities which can also be found from the table 1.

In summary, just encountering helps, and a top professional is not inevitable. The all-type of actions of outreach work partners has proved to be effective, as it has reduced the depression, anxiety and social isolation of people found and guided and increased their well-being (Nyunt et al., 2009; Van Citters & Bartels, 2004). Still, I think that outreach work can face difficult situations when the aged has major mental health issues.

Lastly, practical implementation of the outreach work is not impossible at all. Here costs are surely to be taken account at first. I find out the common discussion often to say that elderly's welfare is not that meaningful because they will die soon anyway. McNaid (2011) proves this wrong by counting that preventive promotion of elderly's welfare and mental health saves public sector's money in the long run. Nyman (2009) presents a solution where the employment assisted help the elderly. I will tell you more about this in the discussion. According to Thitz (2017) "the most successful participatory and outreach methods seemed to include club activities, various events that gathered elderly people together, and home visits by workers and peers".

## 4 Research material and methods

The material came from the CoAgeCare-research unit that I do this in collaboration with.<sup>5</sup> It is obvious that this material is of high quality. The material at hand consists of two parts. The two employees' pair-interview is from the end-year 2019 and one Senior employee's interview from early 2020s. The COVID-19 pandemic was not expected yet; That has even more raised the loneliness as a major problem.

Seniori-Vamos, for whom the interviewees are working, has ca. seven professionals, couple of which are working in our Espoo area, and around 60 volunteers (Deaconess Foundation, 2018; Deaconess Foundation, 2020). As the leading employee (Woman, senior employee, 7-8)<sup>6</sup> explains, their own volunteers or some other help may be suggested to elderly by some of the employees who negotiate with the aged and do the evaluation first. Customers (elderly) contacts are given to Seniori-Vamos mostly via gerontological social work, namely home care, common senior-infos, health-center's nurses, rehabilitation services, service-centers and –control centers. Sometimes friends and/or neighbors might be worried.

### 4.1 Collecting of the research material

The interviews have been conducted as an open interview method, but it also has elements of a semi-structured interview. Both are about an hour and a half of interviews. The interviewer has a lot of questions, but she still keeps the conversation smooth. The interviewer does not oppose anywhere, even though there are sometimes controversial ideological issues. I see that this is not a matter of bias, but of keeping the interview running smoothly. In that the interviewer has succeeded well. Indeed, Robert Yin (2012, 4) writes that deep and very precious understanding of the case is to be produced when research comes close to the research subject.

It could be thought that the material is biased in the direction that outreach work is important even if the interviewer raises opposing ideas. After all, it is about workers who are dedicated to the industry. However, the interviewer has led the discussion in an intellectually honest way. Apart from the above, the material can be proclaimed as completely impartial and excellent for the purpose I am now using.

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<sup>5</sup> This material has also been used as a source of the facts considering HDLs position as a 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organization and collaborating with the public sector.

<sup>6</sup> Interviews marked as their own group among the other sources

The research material explains the problems and benefits of outreach work on the practical level quite straight. It is quite clear in that it goes straight to the social scientists themes that I of course have to handle; discussing of which I must show my skills in this thesis. That is why I had to consider the methods I would use quite long. For example, discourse analysis or political analysis is not necessary as the text begins to directly reflect on the social science paradigm - after all, the interviewees are workers of the same field. For this reason, content analysis is the best option. Then, of course, the next question is how much I would let the content guide the research. A fully material-driven analysis would otherwise fit very well, but after deep-diving to the theory, I found that some of the materials repetitions are not related to the topic. So if I used material-driven analysis, I would do useless work coding themes that I would later have to rule out. Then again purely theory-driven analysis would not give enough respect for the research material and would not be scientifically objective.

## 4.2 Theory-guided content analysis

So I set out to look for a method of analysis in which I could code the data, mainly, theory-guided, but then look at the context and the way in which these codes are spoken, as material-based as possible. If there are some greatly repetitive words, I will try code them even if they would nothing to do with my theoretical framework - It is good to give the material the opportunity to conflict with theories and things are not just to look through theories (Neuendorf, Skalski, Cajigas, & Allen, 2017, 30; Silvasti, 2014). After coding I will move on to look at the whole material theory-guided from there on. I will use content analysis and this decision will be based in the following.

Content analysis starts with coding, where “an abundance of codes,” even those that contradict theories, can be the goal as it was with myself now (Silvasti 2014). Admittedly, I try to produce only a maximum of a few conflicting codes, if any. In coding, it is important to find out the different nuances of the language anyway (Neuendorf et al., 2017, 7-8). The nuances, above all, suggest that there are two contents in the texts: Immediate content, that is, how the text seems to name reality and hidden content. If one can't get the nuances out of the text, some hidden content may be missed. (Neuendorf et al., 2017, 32-33.) However, the content analysis generally focuses on what the text directly communicates (ibid., 99-100).

## 4.3 Coding

What is coding, then? According to Silvasti (2014) in content analysis, it is a microanalysis, an accurate and careful line-by-line examination and specification of the material - in a way,

the disassembly of the material into parts. In all coding methods, coding must be based on a research question, whether the method is theory-based or data-driven. The code must describe a part or phenomenon of the material particularly well and catchy. Code refers to the meaning, keyword, concept, or common nominator chosen by the researcher for a particular piece of material.

Silvasti (2014) tells that in theory-based coding, the codes could already be ready and locked. Personally, however, I use more theory-guided coding. This is the more recommended way. As it is generally known, content analysis includes very much liberty. Especially, this seems to be the case in coding – Yin (2015, 184) says that there “does not need to” be formal rules in that part. Silvasti (2014) agrees by saying that the whole research is very free, as there is no well-defined textbook of qualitative research. Coding may be freely derived from prior knowledge, but not prejudice. The same thing applies to thematization.

From the method literature I found that accurate doctrines can certainly be tried. They also make the research more objective. According to Neuendorf et al. (2017, 155-156), for example, attention must be paid to the prevalence of adjectives, nouns, and emotional expressions. After I began coding I ended up ignoring the first two as there was nothing special about their use. Long emotional expressions I did take account and exceptional adjectives and nouns mainly appeared in them as well. – Otherwise the use of language was for the most part academic and similar to my theoretical background from which it directly contains much words. Admittedly, however, I recognize that it is colloquial language - Things have been shortened and simplified. Within this space of this research I cannot go to this in more detail; I just announce that I am planning to follow Neuendorf et al., although I feel free in using common sense considering contexts and meanings, as Silvasti and Yin suggest.

I received a total of 94 codes. I also coded, contrary to my previous plans, the interviewees (Aerschot) discussions and supplementary remarks because they contained important additional information about the outreach work based on her extensive research work and previous interviews. Codes included customer, networks, care concern, home care, work method, relatives, public discussion, disease, friendship, prevention, humanity, well-being, and standard services. Much has been discussed of different aspects of outreach work and there seems not to be more talk of any aspect than of the other. In the senior employee's

interview, the material was already quite fed up on page four so that it did not contain new codes - new codes were always either synonymous with old ones or subcategories.

#### 4.4 Thematization

Thematization, i.e. summarizing to themes, is the next and the last step. A theme is a set of issues, a speech framework or a unified topic found in the material. Here, too, the question of research must be borne in mind. In summarizing as themes, some of the codes can be found to be irrelevant from the point of view of the research problem and they are excluded from the research. (Silvasti, 2014) Themes may already be concepts that are directly applicable in the research literature (Neuendorf et al., 2017, 8-9). Sometimes one has to crop and combine (Silvasti, 2014).

I started to combine the codes into parent categories. Again, I emphasized here the points where emotions were loaded, of which I already told, and what kind of topics the material most often discusses. For example, some key codes of the material are the everyday resources, empowerment, individuality, and sovereignty of the elderly. These are all related to the theme "agency" which is also a wider concept. Other themes are work method, guiding to the suitable services, loved ones, network of professionals, public opinion, bureaucracy and resources of the public sector, and health problems of the elderly.

Now it can be seen that not all of the themes are related to my research - I still need to crop and combine, namely the last two of them, according to my theoretical background and research question; Public opinion I completely have to exclude out of the research. Furthermore, on the problems of the public sector, I end up focusing on bureaucracy and hurry. The health problems, on the other hand, I categorize to loneliness and loved ones and the network of professionals I combine to one theme: help network. I chose different colours for different themes, which I then used to mark the pieces of text associated with each. So there are a total of six themes.

## 5 Analysis and Results

The material made it clear that outreach elderly work has established itself as a resource boost for the elderly and as a respondent to psychosocial needs. The coordination to services plays a great role. Also, here it is important to remember what the law on the services for the elderly and constitution say. As I proceed in analysing, it is evident that outreach work is implementing these laws in the care gaps where some elderly have fallen to. Problems at doing the outreach work are encountered when there is too much hurry, the client is sticky or does not understand their own best, and when the division of responsibilities between the help network is unclear or uncooperative. In the following chapter I will answer the research questions in more detail by using theories especially derived from Jokinen et al (2017) and the work of CoE AgeCare. I have translated the quotes of the interviewees myself so that I have left the original meaning and grammatical errors. I will proceed by presenting the results thematically, with the themes that emerged from the research material. In the end I will pull together the most important results.

### 5.1 Work method

The material indicated that outreach work was not considered to be everyone's job after all, in contradiction to the theoretical background. Of course, here is good to note that, in the theoretical background, competence was not said to be an insignificant factor. According to all the interviewees, at least the first meeting / call and the assessment of the need for the services should only be done by experienced, highly educated employees. This poses challenges to outreach work because of the general lack of resources since it is not easy to have funding to hire this type of people. At this light it seems to be no wonder that the Seniori-Vamos project has not many employees. The lack of resources was not surprising, as it was also shown by the theoretical background.

Jokinen et al (2017), particularly the table 1, have much to say under this theme – The method of outreach work is to help the elderly in all dimensions of quality of life and that is been done in such a way that the elderly person primarily tells their problems themselves and much time has been reserved for the encounter. All these aspects can be found in the material and, in fact, the word “holistic” is even repeated when talking about the work method.

Seniori-Vamos has a “certain, special way of working.” as Aerschot notes during the interview. How this way of working differs from that of other NGOs I will handle later. Here

it is good to notion that outreach work seems to be so important for the public sector that it puts effort in developing it. After all, the senior employee says that “the city” (Vantaa) “will be working with this approach we have developed” and to this Aerschot comments that “it is pretty much given”. According to the material, Vantaa has already hired their own employees to do outreach work and it is better to do, exactly, like this; to separate a particular segment for outreach so that not every service segment is doing it.

*We're now developing an operating model, which I think is important that it's detached, that there's nothing in that employee's mind, that now I'm producing some service.*

At this special work method, the elderly person is not confronted with service as a spearhead. Not many things should be known in advance when facing the customer. Or if things are known, still it should be that the customer has the first words when defining his problems. Listening to the other is very important, which is emphasized in the following quote from the material.

*(S)he has to process information all the time so that it's listen, listen, listen. That when (s)he doesn't accomplish anything.*

The work method that Seniori-Vamos has seems to be somewhat unique, even in comparison with the other NGOs, namely congregations, the Red Cross and Helsinki Missio, doing the outreach work. The senior employee says that if these NGOs have been suggested by the public sector to go and find out about the situation of an elderly person, then when it comes to mental health problems or bigger difficulties, the organizations withdraw quite quickly.

*But that their problem is that if there are even small challenges out there at home then they will push the doors shut.*

The challenges of the work method are mentioned in particular by the fact that the need for services and other assistance should be sought individually for each person and that takes a lot of effort. The goal is to find the individual resources of each client. Of the outreach work it takes a lot of time with one client as well as mental resources: The amount of emotional work is sometimes difficult to endure. In the following the employees tell of the work in the field.

*...Enormously burdensome and time consuming... Here the amount of emotional work is so insane. That it also becomes that weight in this job that sometimes it feels like you've drained yourself completely empty.*

Summarizing the results derived from the work method, a key contradiction can be seen: In fact, already in the theoretical background, several sources argued on the one hand that work can be done in many different ways without strict professional and competence requirements, but on the other hand that outreach work is mentally heavy, resource intensive and should be done by higher educated professionals. However, in the research material, the matter is not so complicated, although it may seem like that at first: the material is very clear in that at least the first encounter is only the task of a professional, but at this encounter and the future encounters the dimensions of the elderly's life cannot be seen through strict professional lenses but extensive gerontological expertise is required. Volunteers can be used as long as the situation has calmed down or is not that demanding.

Theoretical background correctly predicted that outreach work means diverse coexistence in everyday life, taking into account all dimensions of quality of life. For example, an elderly person could be encouraged to go to a nearby activity centre or use a cleaning service. Things as small as wiping the rollator wheels' dust came to light. The outreach work was considered to improve the life of the elderly in the above matters and it also functions as a preventive factor before problems turn into crisis. In addition, the material agreed with the theoretical background that outreach work is mentally heavy, but the holistic encountering was very much approved by the elderly and it reduced their loneliness and the feelings of emergency. Then this, for example, reduces emergency calls.

## **5.2 Guiding to suitable services**

Also related to the work method, the outreach work is directing the elderly to services. Here, perseverance is really important. The research material says that at outreach work, services must first be concretized so that the elderly understand what they are about and then sometimes elderly repeatedly has to be asked to receive the service or person they need. Sometimes trust on these persons or services must be "dug by digging", as the research material emotionally puts it, which is of course a considerable challenge at outreach work. Both Jokinen et al. and Thitz note here that careful and gentle motivating by listening is always inevitable if the help is to be arranged to the elderly.

Following the table 1, at outreach work, guiding to services is greatly attached to the following dimensions of quality life: Social relations and Physical functioning. The research material does not handle much physical functioning but, of course it is mentioned implicitly, for example when talking of day activities which are also a social activity. In the case of social relations, the research material mentions the loved ones, volunteers and organizations arranging relaxed actions. In the latter, the encouraging work method of outreach work comes into play when guiding to day activities for the first time.

*It's awful to go anywhere for the first time, it's just really exciting*

There is a lot of care poverty when older people do not have access to their services, of which the theoretical background also discussed. This is for several reasons and outreach work is doing its best in filling the care gaps. Maybe the most significant reason in that the services are not exactly targeted, is the insufficient work method of the public sector. Here in turn, first, the elderly is not seen holistic.

*It is profitable that he gets the things (s)he needs and not the services he is given expensive services that they always go by. (S)he is dissatisfied, even though he is quite the target of services. We have a lot of examples that we have also been able to reduce those services...*

According to the research material this type of situations have been many and the outreach work has been able to reduce the use of services. In these cases, the importance of outreach work is obvious: firstly, it is possible to reduce public costs, secondly, to reduce the burden on public, already busy services, and thirdly and, above all, to improve the well-being of the elderly.

In summary, outreach work finds those who are in a care deficit; left without proper services. In this way, they can then be referred to services, which, in the theoretical background, was found to be cost-effective prevention compared to allowing the situation of the elderly to subside. In the more common case, the work method acts by finding the services that are fit for the elderly, reducing the wrong ones, and encouraging them to attend them so that they achieve a better life. Each of these good sides of outreach work has its own challenges, which were identified already.

Of the key concept of care poverty, Aerschot has directly asked the question of what the senior employee thinks are the main reasons for the inadequacy of care. She responds clearly and at length that public sectors' bureaucracy and hurry, as well as a poor work method, in

line with the themes of analysis and theoretical background, are the key issues. The poor method also includes incompetent drug treatment which violates a number of laws quite strongly. A question might rise then, that why is the situation as it is: Why is the public sector having insufficient work methods and such a hurry. Next there will be some answers, though I recognize it is not the main target of this thesis.

### 5.3 Bureaucracy and resources of the public sector

Theoretical background, namely Puthenparambil (2019, 14) talks about bureaucratic processes and means assessments in the public care industry. Not everyone who needs care gets it. It is common knowledge that the public sector lacks resources as well as employees, and this could be thought to be the reason for having to resort to bureaucratic processes which, in theory, follow the law but not in practice. Practices can also be abstract words on paper that, if implemented in reality, would make the outreach work unnecessary, as one of the employees puts it in the following.

*That even with such self-employed models, they are on paper really awesome in a way that with that kind of person the outreach work somehow shouldn't be needed anymore.*

In addition, according to the research material, there is more people willing to be within the city's services than the city can take them. This is being repeated emotionally. The amount of people who should be let within should also be higher. At this light the hurry of the public sector starts to look like logical but, of course, it is good to remember that if greater amount of resources would be allocated for the care work, this would not be a problem. There is pressure to quickly direct customers out of the system so that the next one in the queue is processed and then they are directed more to the Seniori-Vamos.

*They come all the time, and there has also been discussion with Nestori that peo- customers are coming all the time. And, they just come all the time.*

Sometimes it is the case that the elderly would just need a small help in some practical aspect of daily living but because that help is not a standard service, it is not possible to receive that help. First, of course, the elderly should be listened to, when assessing the need for that small service. This, in turn, could lead to the possibility of giving help with the bigger issues, such as medicines, when there are such issues.

*One could go and take and those garbage out and sit down and chat and build trust so that then after that we get that important drug treatment to succeed. That of yes, the services are just terribly stiff. Terribly stiff.*

The research material shows well that doing the care quickly and in a hurry does not always save time and resources. Some nurses become exhausted and careless. According to the material, also the form of governance should be developed to a more logical direction.

*People are exhausted. When done with too few resources when also done absurdly.*

The lack of self-direction in the form of governance has also caused problems. Indeed, the senior employee states that no matter how much money is given, it does not solve the problem of quality of service when illogical practices of the public sector are not flexible. It is clear this outreach work is also a matter of solving ethical problems, which becomes apparent especially when it is acting as a “lawyer” – Sometimes the public sector has failed to provide the services to their end-destination even though there is clear need. As a result, outreach worker must sometimes be a lawyer of some type, especially if the elderly does not have loved ones.

*Even if it were the authorities in it who handle those certain things. But still it, still the many things that are left unattended even if they are in it. Those some, well, first of all, the fact that the services are in use and the whole thing, but then that kind of thing .. the completion of things that a person is disoriented, even if those people are there. Authorities, around the network. Yes they are in a weak position who does not. Whether there were relatives or who do not have supportive loved ones who would help them. Yeah.*

Surely helping in this means high competence in knowing the rights and needs for services as well as networking with the public sector which, according to research material, is sometimes uncooperative. For outreach work this is challenging. One could say that if a negative decision is made about the services, the outreach work will face an insurmountable challenge as it cannot pay for the services. The only option would be to take a proper time for the case and start a legal process.

In summary, the outreach work functions as if patching a situation where the public sector needs to quickly take care of its customers. First of all, it seems that if the service need

assessment cannot be made within the timeframe, the customer may be referred to the Seniori-Vamos for that reason alone. Outreach work is important in this type of situations; otherwise the elderly might be left without care. Second, outreach work can build trust between the public sector and clients so that important issues are taken care of. And third, the outreach work acts as a speaker for the rights of the elderly. It is not difficult to conclude from this that with these important matters outreach work also requires a lot of resources, which, however, are often not available.

The same as under the theoretical background was deducted of the bureaucracy of the public sector fits to the results with the exceptions of the third issue. According to the Finnish texts presenting the outreach work method, it was not at all clear that outreach work would also have to clarify the laws as to which party is responsible for what aspect of daily care of the elderly. Outreach work will also face an insurmountable challenge if the public sector is very uncooperative. Internationally, however, it was manifested that outreach work faces a wide variety of challenges, creativity is needed, and there are no precise boundaries to doing the work.

#### 5.4 Help network

In the last quote, in addition to the bureaucracy, it also became apparent how the loved ones and the function of the whole help network are important. Cooperation between the public and private sectors often fails, still, as the theoretical background noted of the complexity. The theoretical background indicated that the network of outreach work is extensive and it also should be, and co-operation should be made within it. In the case of municipalities the co-operation is even required by law. The lower socio-economic background would seem to be related to the fact that the family is the main provider of care, although this assistance provided by the family is also quite limited. Table 1 and Kröger et al (2019) showed the importance of finding social support and meaningful activities for the elderly.

Networking within the area of the outreach work is important because it allows for the widespread finding of elderly people with care deficiencies. The senior employee tells a long list of actors within the help network, of which the following quote contains only some part, and she also adds some examples how the network has functioned well in finding the elderly.

*We have come to the conclusion that we have built these regional partnership networks... And the idea is that as many people as possible know that such activities are existing... the most significant network*

*begins with gerontological social work, senior information, service guidance... Then we also have successful cases that the neighbour has been in contact... sometimes relatives. I have been talking to stewards.*

At times, according to the research material, networking seems to fail, at least in the practical implementation. This is no wonder, as it is quite complex, as has been shown. Based on Table 1 it can be seen how many different people relate to different dimensions of quality of life if one begins to render it more closely. The importance of psychosocial support has already been emphasized in this thesis, but the “environment” section also seems to include social networks.

*And then the kind of things that pretty much the close relative would probably do. Or the concrete things that here in the home is cold this needs to be checked. The maintenance company says not interested that, this must be and ten times until it is reviewed and the case is resolved. And it would perhaps then be the close relative who in the normal situation.*

The research material indicates that in addition to the practical implementation, important development work is being done in the network, but as I quoted the material in the last chapter, the public sector is not always keen on this, although it has, on the other hand, adopted the work method for its own use in some cases. Thus, public sector practices seem to vary a lot. As my theoretical background also showed that there is a lot of variation from a municipality this does not come by surprise.

Lastly, what is the role of loved ones? Above, the practical day-to-day function of them was already mentioned. Interviewees have ambivalent attitudes towards care based on relatives. Some elders don't have them. Still, care is increasingly being familized today. Under the theoretical background, connections between socioeconomic status and the help of loved ones were thought of. The research material does not give answers whether money is a significant factor in having help from the loved ones, and in the overall situation of the elderly having care poverty, money is being seen just as a one causal factor. The only part where these problematics are rendered is summarized as follows.

*I think yeah is part of the reason but it doesn't also mean there couldn't be that, even though it's how much wealth*

Summarizing the role of outreach work within the help network, first, it can be said that it allows for the broad discovery of those in need of care, involving almost all citizens. In

today's society, outreach work implementing this type of solution would already seem a more effective way of taking care. Secondly, outreach work is involved in developing new solutions and in bringing forward the knowledge based on experience, and on the other hand it is also obtaining what enables the reduction of care poverty when good solutions can be implemented. Third, networking is essential to provide successful help in the day-to-day practicalities. The challenges here are, in short, that the parties to be networked are not always interested and the network is also complex for the outreach work.

## 5.5 Loneliness

According to the research material, those who have not yet been found are more often in a worse situation. In the theoretical background of this thesis there was discussing of the connections between social isolation and care poverty. Outreach work has often been able to help in them, but employees are annoyed that the worst cases may not be found.

*Some are really left alone. Some are really alone and that is the truth.*

*Sad idea too, just that .. that we don't face more than just a fraction of those people. A small little little scratch on those people who are in the sa- situation that they would need a little more. And we have often, thought about it or with the idea that well what if we weren't here now? ... That we have, dillydallied that well what then. Then there would have been something fatal and maybe pretty heavy services or help needs*

Social isolation and exclusion from services are interlinked, and so are greater care gaps and exclusion from services, which has come to light in the previous quote as well as many parts of this thesis. Many elderly would need the encouraging to contact the services in the first place, or encouraging to exploit more services.

*What should we think about the fact that then we have people in those homes who are there completely alone? And then are left without those services or, though are customers of home care but s(he) then does not take more than a part, however*

The theory framework also showed that prevention would be important and older people have a lot of need for psychosocial encounters. According to the research material, the outreach work speaks for encounter and the public sector should recognize its importance.

Amongst mental health services encounters have begun to be seen in brighter light but that has meant mainly a robot that has been used in contacting.

*That the device is even there and through it comes a contact even once a day. Like, kind of small, try or identification to the direction also that of okay this too can be one so-called treatment for this person that it is that contact.*

In summary, social isolation can be the greatest problem if the need for the service is high, as it potentially leads to a greater emergency, which is first a public cost factor, second a human loss, and third, against the constitution. Moreover, loneliness alone produces nausea. Outreach work has a lot to do in trying to find the ones that are the hardest to find.

## 5.6 Accumulation of the problems

As it was indicated above, social isolation is particularly dangerous in causing the accumulation of the problems where no-one can intervene. But sadly, this often seems to be the case when prevention is missing.

In one section of the material, all the themes as well as my research questions were combined into a few sentences. I will now take an example of this.

*... The person does not know how to take the matter forward from the time he has received the letter home. And if there are no loved ones who then start calling the cleaners in order, that could be it... may look like you are afraid of it. So that yes it is encouragement-, demanding that it is not enough just that letter. That you have been granted and this is the list please call.*

Here it can be seen that *loneliness* and the lack of loved ones can cause a situation in which the elder ends up out of the *help network*. Without the proper *work method* public sector cannot *guide to the suitable services* either. And the wrong *work method* is, as said, cause of the *bureaucracy* and insufficient *resources*. However, the outreach work can help in its own unique way in each of these areas of Finnish care system.

## 6 Discussion

This thesis highlights some new perspectives on the outreach work that will be discussed later, but in essence it is in line with theories. The thesis also revealed some antitheses to theories, which, however, cannot be considered to overthrow them, as this is only a single study at hand. No completely new area of activity came to be seen, even when limiting to the Finnish literature, except that outreach work can in some cases build trust between the elderly and the public sector so that very important issues, such as medication, are made successful. However, it is clear that not all the literature in the field can be read and this aspect might have come to light at some point when going through the different texts.

When outreach work begins to plug in new areas, it first becomes extensively networked and the work is also done by developing it together. The aim is then to find both those who are completely socially isolated and those who do not have suitable services. If there are clues about caring poverty, the older person in question is then confronted with a special work method in a customer-oriented way and the need for services is assessed, as well as whether the services should have any ready standards at all. The day-to-day practicalities and dimensions of quality of life are seen in a holistic manner. Finally, care is taken to ensure that the elderly person eventually receives his or her service.

In all the above stages, outreach work results in numerous ethically, financially and legally good activities and at best it is possible to reduce the burden of first aid, and even save lives. Most commonly, however, the question is of burden on elderly services. All in all, it is especially important to find those whose difficulties pile up. The challenges in all this are the reluctance of the help network and sometimes the customers themselves to co-operate and the need for large resources. Much information and skills are demanded. Of the help network, the public sector seems to have different, somewhat contrary work methods which causes hard work and debates for the outreach work.

Some of the findings were new in the sense that they were not mentioned in the theoretical framework of this study or they were having contradictions with the theories. First, there was no mention that outreach work is even at the forefront of development activities. Based on this study, outreach work is more important than thought in this sense. Second, the role of volunteers is ambivalent - The role of volunteers was given a lot of space in international research, but in Finnish research the role is more limited, although not as limited as in the current research material. As a synthesis, it can be said that a wide variety of interventions

and the roles of volunteers can be life-enhancing for the elderly, but it would be best to proceed in a way that is in line with Seniori-Vamos or similar actors.

Third, the fact that the outreach work complements the public sector's hasty assessment of service need was unpredictable, at least on the basis of the text on work methods. However, Puthenparambil (2019, 14) indicates that some municipalities may even engage in means assessment. This can be reasoned to lead to this type of situation. Fourth, outreach work seems to act as an advocate when an older person gets a decision that worsens his/her situation. This is especially true for older people who have no loved ones. The presence or the lack of presence of loved ones was not connected to socioeconomic status. Fifth, what was also new, was that services sometimes had to be decreased rather than increased, and the sixth aspect is building trust towards public care. And finally, seventh, poverty was not thought to be a significant factor of the care poverty.

Of the latter, theories did say that trust must be built to connect with the public sector at all, but being a type of a negotiator when services are rude, was new. In all of these new points, of course, international research suggested that outreach work may need to be very creative and applied. However, it is fair to say that Finnish research and methodological guidelines of the outreach work reach the most important main issues. Exceptions to the normal are easier to remember and I think that is why the research material contained somewhat a lot of such. It should also be remembered that this research material at hand deals with employees' perceptions of the Helsinki metropolitan area, especially Espoo, from a limited perspective, and the findings are therefore not generalizable in everywhere. Within this space, all the aspects novel to the theoretical framework cannot be handled in detail but something will be said of the poverty since its emphasis in the theoretical framework is quite high in contrast to the research material.

Wealth was not emphasized as a significant factor behind care poverty or the care-giving of the loved ones. However, theories embrace that there is a major connection. This may be explained by the contingency of this case study, but on the other hand, Senior-Vamos has been such a significant project in the capital region and there is so much information within its scope that this research result needs to be taken seriously. The result could tell, for example, that in the Helsinki metropolitan area, social capital is becoming a more important factor than wealth. As a side note, one extra challenge for outreach work now seems to be that it cannot fully rely on the academic information.

All in all, the research was successful in that it also got observations from the research material that either did not appear in the theories or were even partially against them. I did not do research with the idea on the background, that it would only have strengthened my preconceptions or general theoretical framework. The contents were quite obvious and the analysis was of high quality and accurate, so the author thinks it is safe to say that errors did not explain the antitheses arising from the material.

As topics for further research, I present governance of public sector and resource efficiency. It emerged from the research material that holistic consideration of the daily lives of the elderly would be a cost-effective prevention, although the general perception represents an opposite argument. Indeed, the senior employee says that recent studies have begun to recognize the importance of holism, especially including the social needs of the elderly. A concept which links this comprehensiveness as well as the themes of the whole research together, could be said “agency.” As a new trend concept among the researchers, especially led by Jyrkämä (2012), agency has indeed become part of Finnish eldercare in the 2010s.

Resource efficiency and scarcity as a topic for further research is very interesting because good concrete solutions can be found within it, once at least there is a shortage of employees, although finances are not going well either. The study found that the public sector does its job illogically by ignoring self-direction. I could think about looking for elder work, especially from this administrative point of view, in the future in my master’s research.

Concretizing the subject of further research, linking both the outreach elderly work and the lack of public sector resources, I think that preventive outreach work could take place through employment assistance – employment assisted could at least perform in simple, auxiliary home care tasks and as a friend after the outreach worker has looked where there is need for such. In any case, in the future, outreach work like the one done by Seniori-Vamos would reduce both staff and resource shortages, which do not seem to end. If skilled workers are not available, a wider range of volunteers could be involved, as their intervention have mostly been effective. This would require broad public participation, especially in meeting social needs.

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## **Attachment 1 - Interviews**

Woman, senior employee (2020): Spelled interview of the senior employee. CoE AgeCare research by Lina Van Aerschot. 31.3.2020. Tutkimustie Oy. Tampere.

Spelled interview of the employees. CoE AgeCare research by Lina Van Aerschot. 31.3.2020. Tutkimustie Oy. Tampere