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## **The appearance of the socio-physical environment in psychoanalytic infant observations: Localization and the experience of locality<sup>1</sup>**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### *Background and aims*

The aim of this study is to enrich the psychoanalytic infant observation approach with environmental-psychological considerations. It is also to point out that observation – in the socio-physical (i.e. social and spatial/objective) context – may be modulated by environmental-psychological aspects, and this can reveal hidden meaning levels about the place and sense of place. We assume that during observations, the observer non-consciously perceives a number of socio-physical environmental cues (cf. Dúll, 2009). However, as these are non-conscious perceptions, these generally do not serve as explicit information sources. At the same time, our experience shows that observation reports frequently spontaneously mention (socio)physical environmental features. These, beyond a mere description of the environment, often indicate certain psychological processes. It appeared, when analysing the infant observation reports, that family relationships and other interpersonal relationships can sometimes be more obviously mapped in the characteristics and functions of space or of certain objects. Space; the arrangement and function of objects; and the human-environment transaction often draw attention to interpersonal characteristics as well (cf. Túry et al., 2006). Therefore, in our study, we aim to investigate the socio-physical environment's function in expressing latent meaning.

Some interesting and important scientific research has already been done in the area of environmental psychology and psychoanalysis, mostly on place attachment and interpersonal attachment (e.g. Searles, 1960; Fried, 1963; Chawla, 1992; Sebba, 1991;

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<sup>1</sup> This work was partly completed in the ELTE Institutional Excellence Program (783-3/2018/FEKUTSRAT) supported by the Hungarian Ministry of Human Capacities.

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Giuliani, 2003; Morgan, 2010).<sup>2</sup> However, both environmental psychology and infant observation seem to be underexplored fields. This may be because both fields of science are quite new. Nevertheless, these fields offer the chance to study exciting and original intersections. This is because, in environmental psychology, the home is one of the most important and emphasized fields of study; and infant observations take place in the subject's home, so a comparison of the two seems evident. Our research focuses on the intersection of these fields.

### **Theoretical background: Presence of the environment in psychoanalytic thinking**

Psychoanalytic theories differ in what they say about the relationship of a newborn to his/her physical environment, and to what extent he/she adapts himself/herself to the environment. Although, according to Freud, the infant is at odds with this adaptation because he/she has to control his/her instincts as a part of socialization and to adjust to environmental needs, other analysts have subsequently considered the infant to be more accommodating to his/her environment (Mitchell & Black, 2000).

Of everyone, the independent school of British psychoanalysis (e.g. Winnicott, Balint) have contributed the most to the exploration of early childhood development with respect to the environment, and to understanding how the environment facilitates or inhibits the process of getting from primary total dependence to mature independence (Winnicott, 1963). One of their outstanding theorists is Winnicott, who – opposing Kleinian traditions of pathologizing the infant – emphasized the importance of the baby's environment. Although the primary focus was on the inadequate functioning of the mother, the broader physical environment was considered as well.

According to Winnicott (1956), during pregnancy, the mother's task is to prepare an appropriate environment for her baby, in order to create the state which he terms *primary maternal preoccupation*. If the mother is able to devote herself to her baby, she can provide a holding environment in which the infant's developmental tendencies can evolve so that the child can develop in his/her own way. Even a devoted mother will sometimes fail or make mistakes. These mistakes – if not prevalent – will progressively force the infant to adapt to the environment, motivating development. Winnicott (1999) regards a good-enough holding environment as a protective umbrella that protects against unbearable psychological experiences and primitive or excessive anxiety during the period when the self is in a vulnerable transitional state from unintegration to integration. He referred to *holding*<sup>3</sup> as one of the key functions of empathic mothering. *Holding* entails support, physical and emotional holding, total environmental care including insulating the baby from disturbing environmental

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<sup>2</sup> See also our own previous publications on this topic (Varga & Dúll, 2001; Tóth-Varga & Dúll, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> *Holding* is essential not only in infancy, but also in the therapeutic process of adults, mainly in severely regressive pathologies. The good-enough holding environment should be established in the therapeutic sessions: this state was termed *cocoon* by Slochower (1991), because in this cocoon-like state the patient can re-experience, work through and reframe childhood injuries, in a yet secure environment. He considers the concepts of e.g. Balint's basic fault, Mahler's extrauterin matrix, Kuhn's protective shield, and Bion's container variations of the holding function (Slochower, 1991).

influences, a 24-hour caring routine, and attention and adaptation that takes into account changes resulting from the infant's physical and psychological development (Winnicott, 1962a; Khan et al., 1974). Studying the psychodynamics of this mother-infant unit, Winnicott (1962b) points out that the father plays an important role as well. His task is to protect the mother from situations and circumstances, which may interfere in the mother-infant bond. He ensures that, in the early period, no external environmental influence disrupts the mother's primary maternal preoccupation so that the mother can devote herself fully to her baby. In addition to the role of the father, Winnicott (1962b) emphasizes the importance of the physical environment of the family, society and infant. He describes the division of "me" and "not-me" (i.e. the environment) as part of the normal maturation process in which transitional objects and transitional phenomena help the infant (Winnicott, 1969a). Winnicott finds that the presence of the facilitating environment is essential for personality development (Winnicott 1969b/1986).

Michael Balint (1959/1997) identified types of attachment by using the person's relationship to the environment. This included interpersonal relationships, and (socio)physical locations and objects. According to Balint's theory, apart from basic *mutual interdependence*, another possible personality development path is to create an *ocnophilic* world where objects are responsible, permanent, always present when needed, and never "resist". A person with this type of attachment clings to objects, overestimates their importance, becomes dependent on them, and feels any distance between the objects and himself/herself threatening. As a third possible world-creation, he coined the term *philobatic*, which means some independence from objects. This kind of attachment disorder is characterized by denying a need for objects and the excessive need for open space. Later, Balint speaks about trauma in the mother-child relationship as a mismatch between the person and the environment. In other words, between the mother and the child. Both attachment disorders may be interpreted as a reaction to the recognition that the symbiotic, harmonious world has been disturbed by various intrusive, ambivalent objects that need to be perceived and recognized by the child (Bálint, 1968/1994; Haynal, 1996; Bergman, 2004). These disorders can evolve during the process of separation-individuation, on the way from symbiosis to independence.

Dúll (1996, 2002, 2009, 2017) refers to the work of Searles (1960), who examines the general relationship to the physical environment, and draws comparisons between this and the mother-infant relationship. According to his ideas, although human beings depend deeply and strongly on the physical environment, these unidentified and unconscious dependences are very difficult to tolerate, and are much easier to reject and neglect, and that this is why a scientific approach to the topic is unfairly set aside. He argues that the nonhuman environment, as a secure base, can compensate for damaging social relationships by allowing the individual to identify oneself with the surrounding physical environment. Developing or having self-awareness can actually make the nonhuman environment more important because it can aid in environmental self-regulation via familiarity, and in increasing feelings of belonging and control (Dúll, 1996, 2009).

Observations and research by Meltzoff and Moore (1977) as well as Stern (1985)

support the idea that the infant interacts with his/her environment from the very moment of birth. Ainsworth (1969, 1979), observing mother-infant relationships in home environments, was the first to reveal that interactional characteristics of the mother-infant relationship indicate strong correlations to the context. For example, a parent-infant dyad can harmoniously cooperate in some areas of life, and less so or not at all in other areas. Under this theory, maternal sensitivity is significantly dependent on context, and less determined by the type of attachment (cf. Hámori, 2005, 2015, 2016). Differences in context often mean environmental differences.

Mahler and her colleagues (1975) regard the psychic birth of a human as a slow process, and that the way to individuation is through separation. Beyond the biological bases of development, they attach great importance to adaptation, and they illustrate the process of separation by movement in and withdrawal from the space as well. Because object relationships require normal separation, Bergman (2004), building on the separation-individuation theory developed together with Mahler, describes the infant and the child's changing attitude towards space, and his/her exploration and use of the physical environment. He also frames the optimal, secure place where a baby's development satisfactorily progresses towards individuation.

According to Dornes (1993), it is essential the infant engage in an active exchange with his/her environment. He emphasizes that the infant is an active contributor, and is looking for relationships and stimulation, not to simply be passive or introverted.

Family therapies set a high value on the place and environment of the family. Home visits may be part of family therapy, particularly in the treatment of eating disorders. Therapeutic sessions in the family home provide valuable information about personal boundaries and family roles, and these are often obviously represented in the physical environment. For example, in the form of missing doors, merged sleeping routines, or the unequal distribution of space among family members (Túry et al., 2006, 2008).

## **The method of infant observation**

The observation method has a long history in psychoanalysis. One thinks of Freud's case of Little Hans; Melanie Klein's observation of her own children, which strongly influenced her theory of development; or Anna Freud's observations in Hampstead Nursery (Rajnik, 2010). The impressive theories of René Spitz, Margaret Mahler and Selma Fraiberg and colleagues (1975; 1990/2005) were developed and formulated using observation, as were the theories resulting from the series of Bowlby's (1969) observations at Tavistock Clinic, or from the longitudinal observations of Mary Ainsworth (1969; Ainsworth et al, 1979) .

Winnicott used observation as a diagnostic tool. His ideas about the facilitating environment were derived from observation (Winnicott, 1969b; Rajnik, 2010). The effects of infant observations are profound because, in the period before observations, the image of infants was a reconstructed picture based on adults' therapeutic experiences. The results were descriptions of infants as being at the mercy of his/her

instincts, hedonistic and introverted. Instead, infant observations reveal that the infant is rather active, sensitive to his/her environment, developing and evolving, and able to form relationships (Halász, 2001, 2018).

Partially based on these antecedents, in 1964 Esther Bick published the participating infant observation method she invented for educational purposes. The method is impressive because it contributes to what we know about the role of the observer and the analyst. It has become part of child psychotherapy training<sup>4</sup> (and, in many places, part of adult psychotherapy). Its function is to help professionals better understand their patients' infantile experiences, and help digest their infancy experiences. Via observation, it becomes apparent that maternal care and the specific characteristics of the mother-infant relationship can be understood via daily, repetitive, and mainly non-verbal events (Stern, 1995/2004). Observation of the normal daily routine is important because parents often complain about problems within the daily routine, such as feeding, sleeping and attachment. Similarly, traumas can pertain to ordinary, daily, even non-verbal events (Rajnik, 2010).

The essence of the infant observation method is that the therapist trainee observes the baby (and his/her mother and their interactions) in the home from birth to one or two years, once a week for an hour. After the observation, the trainee makes a record. The experiences are discussed in a supervision seminar group. The aim of the seminar group is to share impressions and experiences, discuss how the observer participates in the situation, talk about how the observer resonates to the mother, and how the mother accepts the observer's presence. Group work also helps the observer to understand and analyse any emotional meaning beyond direct actions. The reactions and associations of group members and the supervisor are used to do this (Bick, 1964, 1976; Rajnik, 2010).

In the report, the observer registers detailed observations about the mother and the infant, the interactions between family members, and the baby's development. It is important to register the emotions, thoughts, and somatic reactions of the observer as well. The function of this self-reflection is to help the trainee enter the world of the patient's infantile experiences, and to understand how the observer's inner processes can influence perception and interpretation (Rajnik, 2010).

Participant observation requires a specific attitude from the observer. The observer may feel part of the family while needing to keep a certain distance from family members to fulfil the role of observer. The role of the observer is often illustrated with metaphors like "fly on the wall" or "pattern on the wallpaper". Parents usually expect the observer to be a participating guest with whom they can share their struggles and achievements (Brafman, 1988).

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<sup>4</sup> In Hungary, the first infant observation course was held tentatively at Child Clinic I. from 1986-1988. Since the Ego Clinic was founded in 1989, infant observation has been part of its child psychotherapy education (Halász, 2018).



## METHOD

The Research Ethics Committee of Eötvös Loránd University approved the research.<sup>5</sup>

Because infant observation predominantly takes place in the family home, observation reports are remarkably suitable for analysis from an environmental-psychological perspective. Written materials allow for the comparison of records about mother-infant interactions with various environmental factors. Analysis of place and object use, human-environment transactions, and the socio-physical environment can provide important information to enrich the experience of the observer.

According to the transactional approach to environmental psychology (cf. Dúll, 2009), the character of our homes and buildings are not only determined by personal characteristics, but by physical features as well. A kind of human-environment reciprocal interaction can be noticed. Places and objects (Baudrillard, 1984/1987) can provoke emotions and feelings, and can facilitate some behaviours and acts while inhibiting others. At the same time they also retroact on their users. Observers perceive this environmental information in the homes they visit, and these perceptions are often described in their reports. The home environment tells us about its inhabitants (Kapitány & Kapitány, 2000) and influences and changes its inhabitants (or users') values, way of living and interactions. The person and the environment are in a transaction, and, therefore, they cannot be interpreted in isolation (Szokolszky & Dúll, 2006). This is why the interpretation of the observation reports is based on the transactionalist idea. When analysing the reports, we were mindful that a description of the environment or mention of a place often has significance beyond what the first reading suggests. Indeed, it has meaning beyond what the manifest meaning is, and what the conscious thoughts of the observer are.

In our study, based on qualitative content analysis of infant observation reports, we make an attempt to understand the secondary, hidden meanings of the socio-physical environment used in environmental psychology. As a result, our research question looked at whether the observational reports contained references to the socio-physical environment. In addition, we were interested to discover what categories these observations could be grouped into. In other words, what are the main areas in which the most significant socio-physical environmental observations could be found?

To answer this question, of the different qualitative analysis techniques, *Grounded Theory* (GT) (Corbin and Strauss, 2008/2015) is the most suitable. Our aim is not a confirmation or disproof of the preliminary hypotheses (Sallay, 2015; Sallay and Martos, 2018). Rather, through the systematic analysis of data via inductive reasoning, we hope to understand a phenomenon or formulate a relevant theory. It is appropriate to use the above-outlined psychoanalytic approach as a theoretical framework because it perfectly suits the insight that infant observations provide. Combining the theory, the research subject (the infant observation reports), and the method is also supported by the fact that these each of these emphasise reflection. According to constructivist GT,

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<sup>5</sup> Reference number of permission: 2018/30.

the researcher and the subject form an inseparable unit. This is because all of the knowledge is a consequence of the researcher's attribution of meaning (Daly, 2007, cited by Sallay and Martos, 2018)). As a result, objectivity cannot be the main objective of the research. The process and the results are inseparable from the researcher's own set of values, beliefs and attitudes. A firm belief of constructivist GT researchers is that an understanding of the studied phenomenon is only possible by accounting for the special context of the research (Charmaz, 2013, Sallay, 2015; Sallay and Martos, 2018; Somogyi et al., 2018). This is similar to how knowledge about the world can be interpreted differently based on different views (Sallay and Martos, 2018). The researcher and the subject's relationship is the focus, and the psychoanalyst places an emphasis on reflecting on this relationship because psychoanalysts, according to Stolorow (1998, cited by Bokor, 2011), are interested in the relationship between the subjective worlds of the patient and the analyst. Thus, while psychoanalysis is interested in the interactions between intrapersonal and interpersonal processes, environmental psychology investigates person-environment relationships.

### **The subject of this study**

Infant observation records and reports, made in the infant observation module of child psychotherapy training at the Ego Clinic for the purpose of further study between 2006 and 2016, formed the subject material. Convenience sampling was applied, and known therapist colleagues were asked to provide observation reports. Therapists and the families that were observed gave their written consent that the reports could be the subject of this study. The Ego Clinic approved and supported this research as well. Seven observation reports constitute the subject of this study.

As part of their training, trainee psychologists visited a family once a week for between one to one and a half years. The observed families were informed that the observation was part of a psychotherapy training, that the experiences were discussed in a supervision group, and that at the end the observer psychologist was required to write a case study summarizing their observations about the infant's development. They were also informed that they would remain anonymous throughout the whole process. Only families who agreed to all of these terms and conditions were included in the observation study. For the sake of privacy, the observer changed all personal data (such as name, address, identifiable characteristics). If any identifying data was accidentally not changed, we changed it during the process of analysis. As a result, observed families are not at all identifiable.

This study, as a pilot study as part of a larger research, analyses the written materials of seven infant observation reports. We intend to find and interpret the descriptions of the socio-physical environment found within these reports.

## **Sample**

The analysed observation reports were the results of a 1.5-year observation training module. The weekly reports were sometimes very detailed and sometimes only summaries. In the end, we analysed 510 pages of notes.

Because GT does not expect equal representation (Corbin and Strauss, 2015), the observers and the families were selected based on availability. Although theoretical sampling is possible in GT, this aspect has not been applied in this research. Because we were analysing closed reports, some of which were 10 years old, we were unable to contact the families. The availability of the families (for signing the consent statement) was not possible. In many cases, a move or other changes in the contact details made contacting the families impossible.

Two of the families were observed with their first child. The other five families each had older siblings. Two of the families lived in the capital, three in the agglomeration, and two lived in regional cities. All lived in completed families, three of the families lived in stand-alone houses, four lived in apartments.

The observers (7 people) were completing their reports as part of their training. Most (6) were women, one was a male. Their qualifications were diverse, but all had several years of employment history. There were no career-starters among them. All were, however, at the start of their child therapy training because the observation module started at the beginning of the course.

There were no strict guidelines as to how the observation reports should be completed. Only the object of the observation was defined: The observers were to look at the child's development, the interaction between the mother and infant, and the feelings and actions of the observer herself/himself.

## **The aims of this study**

Our purpose was to explore, describe and map the phenomenon via the analysis and coding of the data from the observation reports, and to establish further areas of study. Raw data from the text was grouped into concepts. These concepts were then arranged into a logical and systematized explanatory schema. Questioning and comparison were constant – both useful methods in analysis. We conducted microanalysis<sup>6</sup> by fragmenting the text into small units, and we created open codes by assigning concepts to the fragmented data. Then we developed axial codes by relating

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<sup>6</sup> We can draw an interesting parallel with microanalysis of psychoanalyst D. N. Stern (2004/2009) who emphasized common features of theoretical and practical approach. He concerns micro-momentary details of the present moment, and based on moment-by-moment microanalysis, he developed the method of dynamic psychotherapy. Phenomenological approach to the present moment means observing everything that happens to us in a single moment, in an everyday routine situation. According to Stern, the way we experience the very present moment, tells a lot about how we approach to ourselves and the world (Stern, 2004/2009).



categories and/or sub-categories by their properties and dimensions, which form core categories via selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/2015).

As this is an inductive coding method, there were no specific preliminary theories or hypotheses (Corbin & Strauss 2008/2015); instead we formulated a research question in advance to guide the systematic analysis.

The richness of the material provided in the infant observation reports makes different kinds of analysis possible. We were interested in the environmental (psychological) aspects of infant observation, so observation reports were analysed from that point of view.

We assumed that, in the infant observation reports, well-defined units of the socio-physical environment would be present, which – beyond their manifest socio-physical meaning – refer to interpersonal relationships and intrapersonal processes. We also assumed that long-term, regular visits enable the observer to make conclusions about intrapersonal and interpersonal phenomena.

We started with the observation that although the well-defined objective of each infant observer trainee was to study mother-infant interactions and monitor their own feelings and experiences, observation reports frequently included descriptions of the socio-physical environment as well. The role of these descriptions is – albeit not always on purpose – to support or depict a particular psychological process or phenomena.

The aim of the study is to examine these assumptions and to operationalize related constructs. Accordingly, using its well-defined aspects, this approach may be integrated into the method of psychoanalytic observation and would presumably help observers better understand a particular situation and their experiences of it.

The environmental psychological approach is seminal to psychoanalytic observations and thinking, and vice versa.

## **ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS**

Our general research question was, what category system do observers use to report on what they have observed (i.e. the child's development, the family interactions (primarily those of the mother and infant, and their own feelings) and what role does the socio-physical environment play in these observations? In addition, to what extent do the observation reports include descriptions of socio-physical environment?

In line with these aims, the full material making up the observation reports were coded using the GT method. The text corpus was examined step-by-step in small units, and every single unit was assigned a content category. In these small units, we encoded both content and environmental descriptions.

## **The socio-physical environment in observation reports. Localization and description of the socio-physical environment**

In the course of analysing the reports and through the constant comparison of descriptions and codes, it became clear that observers frequently register environmental factors. It is even visible in the fact that each one of the observation reports is rich in socio-physical illustrations of the phenomena. In this study, based on the system of categories we developed, we will explain localization and the experience of locality in detail. We will also try to show which phenomena observers demonstrate with these descriptions, and how. Aiding this purpose and serving as a comparison, other non-environmental open codes assist interpretation of the perceived spatial characteristics of actual events, actions and emotions. In other words, other open codes can place environmental descriptions into context by indicating characteristics of interactions between the mother/father and the baby, and transactions between the family (members) and the observer.

In the code system, the first selective code was named “*Localization and presentation/description of socio-physical environment*”. This core category can be divided into four axial codes (see below) that, together, demonstrate our preliminary assumption that observers register perceived interactions and own experiences in a socio-physical context, and that they attribute an extra meaning beyond the socio-physical background itself in most cases.

*Localization and presentation/description of socio-physical environment:*

1. *Localization of home*
2. *Introducing the physical environment of the home*
3. *Introducing the social environment of the home*
4. *Detecting appearance*

### **1. Localization of home**

The first axial code was named *Localization of home*. This axial code is for descriptions in which observers locate the place of their visit i.e. the family’s home in a broader spatial-environmental context. Interpretation should include background factors behind events, emotions and all registered phenomena (Corbin & Strauss, 2008/2015). As a result, we will introduce the context in which observations are assigned to this axial code.

This axial code consists of the following open codes: *Localization and description of the settlement and surroundings*; *External appearance of the house/building*; and *Presentation of the stairway and corridor*. It is noticeable that the home is generally introduced from a broader perspective. Observers often guide us from the settlement to the door, where they attribute significance to things like *Signs around the door (door-plate, decorations)*, and they “read from these.”

An important observation of the observation reports is that the observer, in almost all cases, places the place of observation in an environmental context. This typically occurs in one of the first observation reports, where (in differing levels of detail) the

name of the settlement where the observation takes place or at least its type (town, city, capital etc.) is given. Through this, the family's home is located in a broader context. This helps the reader be in tune with expected events, and locate the family and their home in the physical environment.

“I had to go to Pomáz, to a suburban family house.” (V, 1)

It is common that, after introducing the type of settlement, the focus gradually narrows. After, or instead of, naming the settlement, the characteristics of the *neighbourhood* or the surroundings are briefly described. This helps orientate the reader, and helps the reader make general and personal associations with the place. This is another chance for the reader to attribute further levels of meaning. Therefore, it is not only the house/apartment that is significant regarding place attachment, but external spaces, such as the neighbourhood (e.g. Bonnaiuto, 1999; Scannell & Gifford, 2017).

“The family lives in Rákospalota, in a neighbourhood where there is nothing but 10 storey blocks of flats and a shopping centre. There is a small sort of a park by the house, but without any sandpit, playground or bench.” (N, 2)

Reading this description, we can imagine a metropolitan residential district from the early 2000s. High blocks of flats, narrow spaces, high density... an environment that is not really suitable for children (and mothers). We know from environmental-psychological literature that blocks of flats can often be more impersonal, there are no half-public places in which it is possible to build a social network (e.g. a circular gallery), and there are too many people without defensible spaces (Newman, 1972), and that people do not really know each other due to the high number of people. Moreover, it is often dark in the stairways, and there are a lot of places to hide, which decreases the sense of safety and crime rates can be high (see Yancey, 1971). Therefore, this environmental structure does not really meet the needs and suit the preferences of those people who like to facilitate social interactions and keep a private sphere (Dúll, 2009).

There are plenty of examples of personal associations guiding the observer. For example, how easy the home was to reach. This is understandable because these are important factors for the observer who will be there weekly:

“We live close to each other.” (B, 6)

The localization focus then often narrows further. Observers seem to find the *External appearance of the building/house* and the *Characteristics of the corridor, stairway* informative as well:

“I have to climb up to the third floor, downtown council house, high storeys, no elevator. It flashes through my mind that it would be difficult to get up here with a baby.” (C, 1)

There are examples of the signs on doorbells, signs or door decorations appearing in the descriptions, referring to a hidden meaning. In the example below, decoration suggests personalization and a distinction:

“On the door-plate both the father’s and the mother’s name is present, and a nice door-decoration, a wreath, is hanging on the door. Only on their door.” (J, 2)

In other cases, we found that the observer is already seeking an answer to his/her questions, a confirmation or disproof in the environment of his/her beliefs or doubts:

“The mother’s name is written on the doorbell. The absence of a husband/partner is strange. It didn’t come up when we first had a phone call or when we met.” (C, 2)

Observation reports that start from a broader perspective correspond to the phenomena described by Kaplan (1988), which is that although the person is mainly interested in the aesthetics of smaller units i.e. the space/environment used, this always fits into a larger unit, the aesthetics of which will influence the judgment of the smaller unit.

## ***2. Introducing the physical environment of the home***

Our second axial code was *Introducing the physical environment of the home*. Open codes of this axial code include *Objective and subjective description of the home*, which stands for the arrangement and furniture of the apartment/house, as well as the experiences, emotions, impressions and associations beyond these. At the start of the observation reports, observers often register their first impressions of entering the home. Beyond arrangement and installations, they often describe the premises in details, and report about how they think these serve their purpose. In some cases, an objective description is dominant:

“Some clothes dry on a small clothesline. There is a large dining table in the middle, with four chairs around it. We sit down there. By the wall, there is some more seating (a sofa, a comfortable armchair). There’s a writing table in the corner. It seems there are two rooms: the bedroom communicates with the living room, and the kitchen, bathroom and conveniences open from the hall on the other side.” (N, 4)

The emotions the home evokes in the observer are also mentioned in most cases. In these reports, subjective elements are emphasized:

“She showed me into the living room that opened from the hall. The room is quite large (for a block of flats), and light colours dominate. Feels pleasant, comfortable, and clean. Not too orderly or too chaotic.” (N, 3)

It is interesting that in this axial code open codes are rarely distinguishable from each other and almost always appear together. A description of the layout of the house is followed by a description of the furniture, and this is always assigned with emotional attributes. The following example shows the objective description of the physical environment and its emotional influence on the observer.

“The hall I entered seemed cold and stern. It served two functions, one part was the real hall, and the rest was a storage closet at the back. [...] From the hall, I entered into a larger premises that was divided into a kitchen and a living room with a counter [...] the kitchen feels spacious with built-in furniture around and a large dining-table with chairs in the middle.” (F, 4)

Impressions of the socio-physical environment are often modulated by the *Experience of familiarity*, e.g. the similarity of the fixtures and the experience of “we have the same at home.” This experience of familiarity contributes to feelings of sympathy, acceptance and easier conformity.

[The bedroom is an] “oblong room, the changing table is on the left in the corner (it’s the same as ours!)” (C, 12)

Besides the physical environment, other ambient stimuli can also provoke the experience of familiarity:

“Cosy untidiness prevails in the room, MR2 Radio Petőfi is on, a slightly louder than I would prefer, and I imagine it may be a bit loud for the baby as well. (I like this new Petőfi, too, I often listen to it.)” (C, 21)

Sometimes it is not just the furniture and the emotions that the home provokes in observers that are described, but the feelings, desires and dissatisfactions of family members as well. Thus, objective and subjective descriptions are alongside descriptions of the desires of a family member. This can have a hidden meaning under the manifest physical deficit/desire, which, in this case, is family togetherness as a value. Therefore, on the one hand, it is a desire of a family member, on the other hand, it often provokes a particular experience in the observer.

“[...] the father’s desire is a huge kitchen that would be enough for the whole extended family, because now they can only have lunch in three turns. Conversation is not the same in the living room, sleepy after lunch, as if they were together by the table” –the observer recalls what the father said, then his own experiences with his family come to his mind soon: “[...] my own family, memories about saint’s days of my childhood came to my mind, and I really envied [them].” (F, 32)

Interestingly, one observer describes how refreshing it felt to experience something life-like in a well-composed, very tidy and strict flat. It happened in the spare room, as a result of a family picture and a spider:

“The spare room keeps memories of the past with old furniture and family photos on the wall. I recognize Zsolt’s [the father] mother, but there is a photo taken in a studio of another young couple (parents of Lili [the mother]?) and a picture of a baby (I guess it is Zsolt), and other people on small photos in golden frames. [...] They store toys here, too. [...] Nothing is moving in this room, but yet! I can see a spider descending from the ceiling. It lands on the top of the side table, then goes away. I imagine that if I mentioned this to Lili, she would make excuses. However, in this more realistic room, even this spider is rather authentic.” (B, 24, 25)

*Introducing the physical environment of the home as a reflection of Argelander’s approach*

The above presented coding and open codes are consistent with what Argelander wrote about three different sources of information about the patient in his book “*The Initial Interview in Psychotherapy*” (1999/2006). This approach, as shown by the open codes that emerged through the analysis, can be a good starting point for the process of environmental cognition and the making of an environmental impression. According



to Argelander, in an interview situation, important basic information can be provided by the so-called objective information i.e. the personal data of the patient (e.g. age, family status, education, financial status). If this knowledge-gathering phase were transposed on a socio-physical environment, objective information would include the location of the home, physical parameters (narrow, spacious, family house, block of flats etc.), layout and furniture (premises, functionality etc.), objects, and habits and characteristics of the object and space use.

“The family lives in a three storey, red brick terrace home, on the third floor.” (F, 3)

Consider this excerpt from another report, where the observer registers objective information:

“In the little room where they live (this is a circa 20 m<sup>2</sup> oblong room above the garage, a kitchen corner on one side, two bunk beds on the other, the cot is at the end of one of the bunk beds) I can see a scene of a family with four children leaving home after breakfast.” (A, 102)

Just like in the special context of the initial interview, when coming in contact with the socio-physical environment, we try to look behind the objective information and search for the subjective meaning. Argelander (1976) calls this *subjective information*, which means data to which the client attributes significance in one way or another, and projects this to socio-physical environment. A good example is when one of the observers reports that according to the mother, the 120 m<sup>2</sup> apartment where the newborn arrived as a second child to his 1.5-year-old sibling is too small, and the baby does not have a room of his own.

“It turns out that Dani doesn’t have a room because it is a small flat. (120 m<sup>2</sup> at least.)” (B, 4)

One of the most impressive findings of Argelander’s theory is emphasizing *scenic behaviour* (Buda, 2006), which Argelander considered the third source of information – those situations where the experience of the context dominates. This situative information is to be understood here as, for example, the appearance of the subject, their self-presentation, and their behavioural and communication style. These are viewed through the lenses of the therapist’s feelings and emotional resonance<sup>7</sup>. When it meets with the socio-physical environment we call it *Symbolic objects and phenomena*. These descriptions always refer to phenomena that manifest in the socio-physical environment, but provide additional interpersonal or intrapersonal interpretations.

In one of the observation reports, the following scene regularly occurs: the father arrives home, drops his keys on the table and the keys are then taken away by his wife soon after. This scene is not at all unusual, yet the observer is still astonished by the movement and registers the action in the report. Somehow the sequence does not fit in

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<sup>7</sup> Scenic behaviour as a concept is an important element of psychoanalytic, psychodynamic therapy trainings, moreover, terming it differently, but all kinds of approaches of psychotherapy is concerned with the phenomenon.

the family's normal routine, and it makes the observer feel that it is a distinctive action.

“I noticed that Dad drops his keys on the table, and Mom stows them away in a sec.” (J, 298) “Mom grabs Dad’s keys and puts them away again [...]” (J, 312) “The pink key-tainer tossed down on the table again, it catches my eyes on my way out. Mom stows it away. It feels good to leave.” (J, 333)

Reading the text it could be seen as a simple series of facts, yet in the text body an intense tension is tangible based on the context. As if tension was projected, as if dropping the keys on the table represented an aggressive, tense act that is always “put away” or “smoothed over” by the mother so that the tension is not visible, tangible, or manifest. This is congruent with what is otherwise registered in the observation report: constant, hidden tension. The father’s strong anxiety. An uneasy verbalization of the mother that makes it difficult for her to speak about problems, or even to notice them. In this context, this simple action with an object (the keys) is an indicator of the father’s intrapersonal processes, and gives an insight into the relationship of the couple. It reflects on their ability to cope with challenges as well.

Another expressive scene is when the observer realizes that what he/she had heard was not the mother’s sigh as he/she thought, but the sound of ironing further away. The mother is sharing her worries about her baby’s development with the observer, when noises from upstairs (sounds of the babysitter ironing and the steam from the iron) interfere with the mother’s voice downstairs. When the observer realizes it, he/she drew a parallel between this phenomenon and the mother’s feelings of loneliness that the observer sensed, and the observer thinks the “sigh” of the steam intensifies the mother’s hidden negative emotions and worries. (B, 41, 44)

“Upstairs Vali is ironing with that “sighing” steam iron. This sound catches my ears again and I hear it as a sigh, not the noise of ironing.” (B, 134)

“Sitting on the mother’s lap [the baby] notices something in the mirror door covering one wall of the room, and is scanning my face [...] He is paying attention to the snuffling, too – Vali is ironing in the bathroom next door – turns his face to the direction of the noise and is listening. Then »he gets tired«. This situation recalls in me when months ago I believed that the sound of ironing was Lili’s sigh. From a certain aspect – considering the mother’s state of mind – the situation is similar to when she had fears for Dani because of Kata’s »unpredictable« actions. Now she is worried about Dani’s development, [...] because he is not doing what is in his textbook.” (B, 118)

Argelander’s conception is somewhat relative to Soja’s (1996, cited by Berki, 2014) theory, who, adapting and further elaborating on Lefebvre’s work (1991, cited by Berki, 2014), proposed three types of spatiality. In other words, three different aspects of space. *Firstspace* is perceived space, the way we empirically perceive the physical space, which is accurately describable and the same for everyone, and thus objective. *Secondspace* is a conceived space, a concept in our minds about the space. This spatiality has a different meaning for everyone, so its content is subjective. To provide contact and permeability between these two types of spatiality, Soja (l.c.)

introduced *thirdspace*, which is lived and experienced space. This is dynamically changing, objective, realistic and imagined space. It integrates the aspects of firstspace and secondspace, and focuses on experienced reality (Berki, 2014). It is apparent that Argelander's concept of objective information is very similar to Soja's term firstspace, and, similarly, subjective information corresponds to secondspace as well. In the same way, scenic information as the personal experience of the space resembles the individual experience of the objective and subjective world.

### 3. Describing the social environment of the home

The third axial code was named *Describing the social environment of the home*, where we can find descriptive and associative presentations about people who are present in the home. Beyond parents and babies, any siblings, grandparents and other helpers who have a regular relationship with the family, are present in these reports. This is natural because observers would like to introduce the actors of their future observations, so this includes their appearance and impressions about them. Descriptions of mothers in the following observation reports always express something more, a kind of general interpretation based on the mother's external appearance. In the first example, the observer refers to intellectualism as the most significant aspect of their first impression; in the second one the observer depicts the mother as the allegory for an unreachable, unapproachable beauty:

“Comfortable wear, blue top. Glasses. No striking jewellery or make-up. She seems intellectual as she speaks.” (C, 4)

“I shake hands with Mom, I introduce myself. Her handshake is limp and it seems she is unwilling to do so. She is tall and thin, she has a slightly longer than medium-length hair [...] She reminds me of Tímea in Jókai's *The Man with the Golden Touch*.” (J, 3)

There are reports in which the descriptions of the external appearance of the parents show their actual state, partly as a comparison:

“Magda is a medium-height woman with a normal figure and a pretty face, around 25. She wears glasses. Her hair is blonde. She seems a bit tired and slatternly, very pale, with circles round the eyes. She is wearing a white T-shirt and tracksuit pants, practical home wear. Károly's features seem more tender, as if he didn't change in the past twenty years. He is a tall, thin, 30-year-old young man.” (F, 5)

It is interesting to read the description of the father in the following observation report, who provokes ambiguous feelings in the observer:

“The father is at home, he answers the entry phone. [...] I hear his voice slightly feminine in there. [...] He is standing out in the gangway smoking. (This initiates associations in me about my relationship with smoking [...]) He is taller than me, thin, a bit pot-bellied (just daddy bellied), he has brown hair, mildly unshaven [...]” (C, 11)

This observer meaningfully describes the figure of the babysitter, and an interpretation of her behaviour:

“[...] a member of a family with 10 children, where there are 19 years between the eldest and the youngest. Vali is very quiet, timid, disciplined, she looks older than her years (I think so, though I don’t know her age). In her simple clothes she wore on her »spindle-shanked« figure, with a kerchief on her head (!), with her pale face and dark circles round the eyes as if she didn’t sleep for many days [...] I remarked to myself that I couldn’t imagine a babysitter like her for my children [...]. It is not only her appearance that is not attractive, but her obedience, subservience, discipline, gracelessness, the lack of spontaneity and playfulness also make her very strange. She reminds me of a plain-clothes nun or at other times a fairy creature.” (B, 34)

In terms of self-related subjective feelings, the social and physical importance of the home, and the transactional relationship of these, described well by Proshansky et al (1983) are not just a result of others in the home but our relationship with the socio-physical environment itself. This makes sense, because it is this environment in which we live and that provides structure to our day-to-day lives.

#### ***4. Describing the external characteristics of the socio-physical environment***

The fourth axial code, *Detecting the external appearance*, includes open codes that refer to various descriptions of the socio-physical environment, not only with the purpose of introducing these, but with supporting descriptions about intra- or interpersonal situations and with metaphors. We found descriptions of a flat or a person’s clothes that indicate deeper deduction, e.g. functional characteristics or physical-psychological wellbeing.

“I enter a pleasurable, very clean, ordered, carefully furnished, cosy flat. I remark at the predominance of pastel colours (butter, light yellow). (Not too practical for a family with children.) [...] I get to know the baby and his mother on the changing table of a light pink and butter coloured room. Lili and the baby both wear pastel clothes.” (B, 3)

In this family, pastel colours (besides the fact that the observer does not consider them practical for a family with small children) became a metaphor for moderation, elegance and adaptation to external references. Diverging from the average as well as intense emotions were feared and preferably avoided by the mother.

We saw cases where decoration and the order of the flat served as a measure of the maternal state for the observer:

“On the glass door I can see the contour of a reindeer-shaped Advent calendar with small sachets. The door is closed. It comes to my mind that the mother cannot be in a very bad mental state if she had the energy to make it.” (J, 478)

The observers witnessed what Proshansky et al (1983) also highlighted that the environment also has meaning, and that observers detect these, and their effects are linked to the related norms and rules. In the above example, we can see that the observers noted the pastel colours dominating the children’s room and among the child’s clothes. And that these colours are codes for restraint and gentleness, as well as where calmness in interactions is more valued than free movement, and a sense of freedom.

## The observer's experience of locality

The other main topic that emerged through the coding process, which connected closely to environmental factors, was named the *Observer's experience of locality*. The concept of experience of locality<sup>8</sup> was coined by Dúll (2017) and refers to settlement. In this research, we applied the concept to the socio-physical space of the home. In other words, locational quality with socio-physical content, experienced consciously or without apperception by the residents of the home. Under this meaning, the content of this category of observer experiences provide information about the observer's consciously or non-consciously lived experience of locality along the socio-physical aspect (cf. Dúll, 2017). According to our content analysis, this main concept (or selective code) includes the following axial codes:

### *The observer's experience of locality*

1. *Conditions of entering the home (difficult/easy)*
2. *Finding a place in the space of the home*
3. *Order–untidiness relation*
4. *Feeling of cosiness*
5. *Ambient stimuli*

### **1. Conditions of entering the home (difficult/easy)**

The entry to the home of the observed family being difficult or simple is a frequent topic in the reports. From the context given in the observation reports, it appears that although each family knowingly agreed to receive an observer, they still unconsciously feel ambivalent about his/her presence. This informs us about unconscious motivations and sometimes the challenges faced in connecting. This appears literally, too, as in when it is hard to reach the subject by phone, or when there are blocks to emotional availability and acceptance.

In some cases, the observer was always welcome:

“They noticed me by the window, and came to open the gate.” (B.7)

There can be a similar interpretation if the observer's experience is that it is easy to make an appointment with the family, or to reach them by phone or personally, or if they call him/her back, or if they are happy to have him/her over at an alternative time.

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<sup>8</sup> Experience of locality is “locational quality impregnated with socio-physical content, experienced consciously or without apperception by the inhabitants of the settlement.” (Dúll, 2017. 255) The environmental psychological concept of experience of locality is based on use of the term locality in anthropological literature: the “community- and power-dependent local societies are always determined by certain geographical, social, economical, cultural etc. dimensions [...]. In locality, local interest, size of the settlement, social cohesion and proportions of particular fields of activities are quite strong gradients. Spatial openness or closedness makes the residential district local social field of force, it can conserve a traditional living-space, can settle cultural and mental dimensions, common or individual contents, possibility of economical enterprises, in one word: the locational quality.” (A. Gergely, 1993. 55)



“I couldn’t go to our second session at the agreed time due to a work engagement, so I randomly rang the bell to see whether I could go up. Magda was very nice and told me to come up, no problem, I wouldn’t disturb her. [...] By the time I got up, Magda was waiting for me at the door.” (F, 10)

In other reports, there were examples of the family leaving the observer on his/her own at arrival or when leaving, ignoring the observer, and by leaving unclear physical boundaries (see Halász, 2018). The observer’s feeling of being alone shows difficulties in connecting with the mother. In some observation reports, the family being unavailable is regularly present, and the observer feels unwelcome even at the end of the observation process.

“I can’t get through the gate, though I ring the doorbell three times. I call her. She hangs me up and opens the gate. I am standing for quite a long time at the front door. I don’t want to ring the bell. I knock on the door three times so she knew I had arrived. (J, 63)

[Even after five months] It is difficult for me to get through the gate. [...] It is thought provoking why I still feel this anxiety that I am not welcome, a *persona non grata*? I have called the mother two times. I can’t get in.” (J, 289)

At other times, impatience and anger dominate the feelings of the observer, in which the presumed emotions of the baby are also present at times:

“It seems that the doorbell doesn’t work. Especially in the rain. I ring on the phone. The gate still doesn’t open. I try to be patient. I know the mum is slower. [...] She doesn’t answer the doorbell of the stairway, either. I think they aren’t at home. The door is open, I go up, and I don’t know whether I should ring the bell. [...] I call her on the phone again. I can hear clearly now that she is coming to the door. I try to make noise for her to notice I am already standing there, she opens the door, she may have not heard the bells [...]. I feel the need to clarify the situation, but yet I remain silent. The mother greets me and goes right back to the other room while I take my boots and coat off.” (J, 451)

At the same time, it is no less important that sometimes the observer’s own worries are present beyond a difficult entry. At the anxious time when one of the observed babies became seriously ill, it was particularly difficult for the observer to get into the home of the family.

“It is always so difficult to get in here. Standing in the door. Anxiety comes over me again, when there is a trouble in there.” (J, 373)

Beyond difficulties with entering the home, there is sometimes ambivalence because the observation is less important for the mother:

“I knock on the windowed door through which I can see Era sitting beside the playpen, on the phone. My knocks are not answered, so I knock on the door again, and wait for some time. Nothing. I turn the handle to say hello, but the door is closed. I don’t feel like assaulting the door anymore... but then I can suddenly hear the keys, the door opens, »oh, hi« says Era, surprised. »I have to hang up, the psychologist has come and I totally forgot she was coming, I’m going to hang up, I’ll call you later...«

[...] I was forgotten, unwelcome. I come every week at the same time. Regularly, as expected, precisely knowable [...] I am disappointed that I can absolutely drop out of her mind in just one week.” (A, 704)

How the observer is greeted, shows more than the observable facts. This is because the observer deduces information about how the subject feels about the observer. This gives important information about the observers’ connection to the place and how they observe the place as a result. As a result of returning to the same place for months on end, it is natural that the observer also forms a relationship with the space and gets involved in the place (Tuan, 1977/2001). Of course, it is not irrelevant what kind of relationship is formed. Because whether it is stable or unstable, this has an effect on how the observer feels in the family’s home.

## ***2. Finding a place in the space of the home***

Whether the observer finds his/her place in the home of the observed family can be the result of something different each time. And it definitely has important consequences. It depends on the attachment abilities of the family and of the mother; their conscious and unconscious motivations for the observation; lifestyle and habits; the spaces and places, and even their size; and their interactions. All of these can play a role in the process of the observer finding his/her place (if he/she finds it) in the particular home. This searching for a place and finding the observer’s place(s) plays an important role in the development of place attachment. I.e. certain elements, objects, spaces and their availability provided (or not) by the family play a significant role in developing attachment. Pastalan (1970) argues that there is psychological identification with the spaces we use that provokes attitudes of possessiveness. As if the place and its objects were ours (Dúll, 1996, 2009). This frequently appears in observation reports as the observer’s chair or usual place of observation.

“I bring my »usual« chair from the kitchen, put it down to my »usual« place by the door and begin to mentally prepare myself for the observation.” (C, 33)

If this feeling evolves, it may allow the feeling of continuity – a kind of stability that strengthens the observer’s sense of belonging, and it will form part of his/her professional identity, just like an office, desk or chair at a steady workplace (cf. Frankó & Dúll, 2017).

The sense of one’s “own place” can be found in descriptions about the observer having no access to his/her steady (or believed to be steady) place. This means, the experience of the loss of place is a factor that shows place attachment – the place’s assurance of safety.

“[the sibling] always tries to push me out of the observer armchair” (V, 24)

In some cases, finding one’s own place is not evident or routine, and the observer meets obstacles that suggest he/she does not have a place there at that time:

“There was no chair. My back hurt from standing.” (F, 9)

“I can’t sit down, I haven’t found out what to put away so I can sit. That’s why I stood still by the crib, flatten myself a bit against it, so as not to be underfoot, and to disturb as little as possible in this tense situation.” (A, 105)

Difficulty of access results in thought-provoking and uneasy situations, especially when it becomes repetitive and dominant. At the same time, in line with the development of the baby, the observer can always conclude whether he/she is in the right place:

“[...] the little baby lay down on a muslin square, there where I usually sit, with a colourful playing frame above him/her with various colourful objects hanging from it. I suddenly don’t know where to sit. I sit on the side of the sofa, a bit more to the side, farther from where the mother was breastfeeding earlier.” (J, 33)

The stability of place attachment is presumably stronger and more secure if it does not attach to one (or some) particular place(s), but in the flow of events, despite changing circumstances, the observer still finds his/her comfortable and secure place from where the observation can take place, and where he/she feels good in the space. The observers of infants who have a more stable and secure attachment to their mother rarely or never registered sentences about difficult accessibility. In their cases, a secure place was not linked to a particular chair or a particular part of the space. They were flexible and could always find themselves in the space, adapting to the situation with ease.

“It’s almost like coming home. They don’t offer me a seat. I find my place automatically.” (V, 17)

Once again, the importance of the connection to the place is a reoccurring aspect; the meaningful spheres encourage the relationship with the place whether it is in a secure or an insecure direction. Naturally, this is connected to the emotional connection experienced with those who live in the home (Dúll, 2009). Place connection plays an important role in the sense of security, in the feeling of control of the environment, in the sense of being able to predict what will happen, and it also plays a role in the forming and maintenance of identity (Dúll 1996). Finding one’s place and the sense of relief from this is another indicator of the relationship forged between the observer and the mother/family, just as the layout and design of the space plays a role in reflecting on this relationship.

### ***3. Order–untidiness relationship***

Order–untidiness (cf. Polcz, 1987) as an open code emerged in different forms and variations. Observers often mention impressions that can be expressed on a scale of order to untidiness. From strict order to cosy untidiness and chaotic conditions – all can appear.

“[...] I could say I am used to untidiness and mess. I don’t really look around or steal a glance at the place. I don’t look at details with my eyes, otherwise I would feel I came to observe the order and not the mother-infant pair... and, of course, I wouldn’t like to embarrass Era either [...]” (A, 703)

In this report, the observer mentions another situation as a striking contrast to this one. It is when the family received the observer in the home of the grandparents, where they often spend time because their flat/apartment is small:

“In the grandma’s bathroom there is a regular changing table as well, [...] Era claims that she feels more at home here than she does at her own home (I believe her, because this is a normal-sized flat, where everything has a fixed [place].” (A, 303)

Beyond the order–untidiness relation as a general characteristic, changes in this aspect of the flat are extremely interesting, too. The following excerpt shows the rigidity of a very strictly tidy mother eased as her baby grew and development, as time passed, and as her anxiety lessened.

“Her movements are calm and precise when folding the clothes. She is very silent. The immaculate order of the shelves and wardrobes becomes apparent to me.” (B, 138)

Then, some weeks later:

“This is the first time I have seen [the baby’s] white socks »dirty«. Moreover, it strikes me that the bedcover [the pillow between the sheet and the slats], which is always very clean, now shows Dani’s smeary fingers. Probably the staff usually changes it by this time.” (B, 149) “The flat is full of huge toys. I haven’t seen such a mess before, nor that Lili tolerated it so peacefully.” (B, 172)

One of the important implications and consequences of the order–mess relationship lies in the transactional approach of environmental psychology, according to which not only personal and social characteristics determine the nature of important spaces, such as the home, but space also has an effect on its user. That is, an orderly, clean space has a different effect on the user than a messy, neglected dirty home. To illustrate this, here’s Winston Churchill’s oft quoted line by environmental psychologists: “We shape our buildings, and afterwards, our buildings shape us.” (quoted by Dúll, 1995, 354).

#### ***4. Feeling of cosiness***

We find reflections on cosiness in observation reports when the observer perceives the cosy atmosphere of the family, whether it presents in an emotion, smell, or the way he/she feels. It is useful when identifying with the baby, and when the observer registers how the baby might feel in a given moment. We often find descriptions of the baby feeling very good and cosy in his/her own place:

“A freshly changed bed. Barnabás gets a retro patterned sheet that is not a boring white as usual. It provides something to look at because it is full of shapes and figures. He obviously likes it and his mother also remarks that »he so much likes to be here in this small place«, I think it’s because it is colourful and interesting. »He likes this, too« – she points at a multifunction soft toy that is fixed to the frame of the bed [...]” (A, 416)

“Meanwhile, as she was placed down on the changing table, Rita began to smile. I noticed it at other times, too. I remark that she likes to be here. The mother replies, yes, she always smiles here.” (V, 42)

A striking and very important point of reference is when the observer encounters a lack of feeling cosy.

“Looking at the room she shared with Attila, it came to mind, that it must be difficult for Rita to get used to the new environment. Rita had been hanging on to her own peaceful little room since she was little; here nothing reveals anything about her. Attila’s furniture, toys, books, clothes... Rita only has her own bed. Neither her favourite changing table with the skylight window she used to laugh at so much, nor the breastfeeding armchair she liked to climb up to are here. I looked around and I didn’t see the baby monitor, either... (?) I am sitting here on Attila’s bed and feeling so uncomfortable, too. So I sat over on a small chair, and was uncomfortable there as well. Maybe this is my farewell?” (V, 80)

Beyond identifying with the baby, text bodies often include statements referring to *cosiness* of the socio-physical environment, *family idyll*, emphasizing sometimes social, sometimes physical aspects, but including both in each case, even if impliedly:

“Mum is eating, dad is drinking. I should go, but I don’t move. I stand up, say goodbye, and make an appointment for next week. I feel I break something... some kind of a family tranquillity [...]” (J, 407)

The same thing can show up lacking as well. For example when the flat does not evoke a home-like feeling, when it does not feel good to stay... either because of the furniture, the social environment, or because of the high levels of tension between family members:

“There is relatively little furniture. Though more wouldn’t fit in here. The room doesn’t seem jam-packed, instead rather empty. I miss pictures from the wall.” (F, 4) “[About the hall] I still have the impression that it feels like a stern, unfriendly storage closet” (F, 11)

“It is easy to leave because of the argument and irritation, and because there is no drama. They don’t show me out, I just leave as usual. By the time I get down, I can hear Mesi’s crying through the open window...” (J, 778)

We interpret as one aspect of *cosiness* if, for example, the observer experiences such level of trust that he/she gets the code to the gate, or if he/she is left alone with the baby behind closed doors. This is particularly interesting when the parents have a different attitude to this issue:

“When I go in to O [the baby], É. [the mother] switches off the TV; obviously because with the door wide open, it is too loud, she doesn’t want to wake the baby. As I am the one causing this situation, I offer to close the door. »No, I wasn’t really watching it, there were only recipes« – É. says. [The situation provokes two different feelings in me. One is that she doesn’t need the TV that much anymore, now that she is not »alone«. But the other is that she is not as easy as the father with leaving me with O, just the two of us, behind closed doors.]” (N, 95)



A special form of cosiness is when the observers feel the experience of *intimacy* in the socio-physical space. It does not necessarily mean positive emotions. Observers often feel embarrassed in these situations. They feel their presence and realizations are intrusive. What makes the situation even more difficult is that these emotions are not always conscious, and sometimes these are difficult to notice. It happens that the descriptions of events registered by the observers show that it was difficult to deal with the “spied” experience of intimacy. For example in the following text:

“Under the gallery, to the right of the entrance, there’s the parents’ bed, by and large filling the width of the room. It’s right by the wall on one side and, on the other, there is about a half meter. (The mother must sleep on this side so it’s easier to get up for the child.) On this side, there is big pillow leaned against the wall, the mother must breastfeed there [...] the bed is unmade. Purple sheets. I think there are two separate quilts. (Now that I am writing this, this comes to my mind: Why don’t they use a bigger one? I feel like a peeper. This part of their life is so intimate, and I don’t have anything to do with it.) [...] It annoys me to have to observe the room. I feel pressure to say something. I only do it because I will have to report on it. The baby would interest me more. I haven’t seen him/her nearly enough.” (C, 22)

The way the observer deals with this feeling and how much it is apperceived is expressed in subsequent reports by changes and altered manifestations. For example, after this experience, the observer feels his/her presence irksome and disturbing, and makes the mother – who normally keeps boundaries talk more, i.e. perhaps the mother opens up a little more, perhaps because he/she was touched. The experience of intimacy was not apperceived.

Conversely, when the experienced intimacy can be pronounced, it won’t have other behavioural consequences, and won’t influence the relationship of the observer and the members of the family.

“The atmosphere is intimate and warm. When they are exchanging looks, I feel like peeping in the bedroom.” (N, 61)

The cosiness experience manifests itself, on the one hand, in the routine nature of everyday activities (Seamon, 1979), when activities follow each other in such a way that one does not need to pay special attention to it. This brings a sense of security with it. Such scenes are shown in the description of observers, for example, when it comes to TV usage or the safe little corner of the baby. In addition, the reporting process indicates that some places gain significance by the observer expressing their attachment to the site. This may be related to the use of objects, but may also be related to a sense of control, or reflect on aspects relating to baby care (Dúll, 1998).

### **5. Ambient stimuli**

For ambient stimuli, perhaps the most frequent element in the texts is the presence or absence of *silence-noise*. Silence as a metaphor of tension and lack of bonding can often be found. For example, in the following text:

“The radio is on. [...] there are only pieces of music one after the other. There is barely any speaking. [...] Petike is listening, waiting. The washing machine is on, too. The silence is huge. Between them. This somehow makes the noises louder. Petike is very silent, too.” (J, 712)

Contrarily, the absence of silence is interpreted as signifying a difficulty in tolerating loneliness and solitude, when – according to the observer’s interpretation – sounds, noise and other “company” are needed to fill the hours of being alone with the baby. The TV often plays this role. Here’s one example:

“The TV is on, sotto voce, about 2.5 meters away from O. To see O, I have to sit between him and the TV. The TV disturbs me a bit, particularly later, when we start talking, and it didn’t come to E.’s mind to turn it off. Before sitting down, I asked whether it was OK to sit here because I had the impression that E. had been sitting on that chair before, watching TV. E. says, of course.” (N, 27) “The TV is on all along, not even silently, it is difficult not to pay attention. Since the last occasion, I feel she must relieve her loneliness with it.” (N, 32)

To avoid silence, the radio can serve as a continuous ambient noise, too, as shown in the following excerpt:

“In the background, MR2 Petőfi Radio is on. (I like it) [...] This occasion was boring and tiring, but at least I could listen to high standard music at the same time. Of course, the question is raised, is there ever silence here?” (C, 31)

Another important ambient stimulus appearing in text bodies – for it is about a stressful phenomenon implying a hidden meaning – is when the noise makes the observer conclude that the parents have no regard for the child:

“Petike overslept. [...] Dad comes home. Loudly. Seeing that the baby is asleep, he throws the keys down loudly. He doesn’t care about his voice, either. He doesn’t whisper.” (J, 236)

In the following detail, the observer introduces the father’s noisy presence, when on a conference call at home:

“The father is speaking too loudly into the microphone. The mother even remarks to the baby that »Dad is shouting«”. (C, 40)

While the aforementioned source of noise having no regard for the child’s interests is temporary, another very typical phenomenon in connection with noise is noisy toys:

“Lili hands him his newest toy he got this weekend from the godparents. [...] It is a plastic horse that gives a galloping sound if its saddle is pushed, and its hooves function as rattles. (I find it strange that almost every single toy gives an extra artificial sound, furthermore, at a high volume. See: tutor bear.)” (B, 85)

Remarks regarding unpleasant *temperature* (when the observer experiences a temperature different from what is comfortable) are less stressful but worth mentioning because of their frequency. This, beyond the observer’s own feeling of comfort that obviously reveals individual preferences, tells us about the baby’s needs and actual wellbeing as believed by the observer:

“It’s much colder now in the room. I am a bit cold even wearing warm clothing. The thermometer indicates 22 degrees Celsius. It doesn’t feel that warm.” (N, 21)

“She doesn’t cover O with a blanket in the swing, which I think is missing, because he was covered before. Although it is not cold, I feel that if the purpose is putting him to sleep, then warmth may be missing. This way he will get active.” (N, 49)

The other ambient stimuli we can notice in the reports are remarks about smells-odours. It can appear with a positive connotation as, for example, the smell of (making) food, which is interpreted as a manifestation of cosiness, care and concern (cf. Dúll, 1998). Sometimes it appears as a special, unique characteristic that is only typical to the particular family:

“I can feel the smell of their flat in the stairway.” (J, 683)

Sometimes it appears with an obviously negative connotation. This excerpt bears witness to a stuffy flat that is unpleasant for the observer:

“The stale, bad, thick air always slaps me.” (J, 428)

When describing the effects of the physical environment of the home on children, Chawla (1992) mentions that the complex nature of the home environment promotes cognitive development. This includes, for example, the low level of noise, because if it is too high, it can adversely affect information processing abilities and language development. The possibility of free exploration is also important, which not only relates to physical inhibitors, but may also relate to the level of visual stimuli being too high or too low.

## CONCLUSIONS

In our study, we looked at the descriptions of the socio-physical environment in psychoanalytic infant observation reports that explicitly address the parent-infant relationship. We presumed that although the task was to observe and register social interrelations, we would find rich references and descriptions that do not directly reveal observed interactions, but instead describe the socio-physical environment, inadvertently revealing important hidden motivations. Analysis using the GT method revealed categories in which environmental descriptions were classified. As a result, this study focused on explaining *Localization and presentation/description of the socio-physical environment* and the *Observer’s experience of locality*. We described axial codes in these categories and illustrated them with examples. When describing the socio-physical environment of the home, the system of codes revealed a pattern consistent with Argelander’s theory. It indicated the possibility of transposability of sources of information to the socio-physical environment. According to our analysis of the observers’ experience of locality, codes describing conditions of accessing/entering the home, as well as texts belonging to the codes of finding one’s place in the space often referred to parental motivations of the observation. Various aspects of the experience of cosiness resulted in feelings and statements about attachment. In

summary, we can state that the socio-physical environment as an ineludible context is intensely present in dynamic psychological observations. Moreover, taking the significant relationships' psychologically important physical context (e.g. the home) into account can enrich the interpretation of psychoanalytic observations.

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