

Everyday objects as therapeutic elements in psychiatric wards

How to reduce institutionalisation in mental health facilities

Jonas Rehn¹, Helena Müller¹, Evangelia Chrysikou²

¹Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences, Germany
²University College London, UK



The role of the built environment in the context of psychiatric facilities

Meeting high safety and anti-ligature standards, many acute mental health facilities are designed as highly institutionalised settings. These often lacking essential psychosocially-supportive elements which promote health, wellbeing and social interaction of patients and staff.

The SCP model (see Fig. 1) was developed for the planning, design and evaluation of psychiatric facilities, named from the acronyms of the main design issues –Safety and security, Competence

and Personalisation and choice (Chrysikou, 2014). It addresses the ability of facilities to cater for clients' needs, as those are expressed by the jurisdictional, medical and psychosocial models of care that still play a dominant role in care regime and architecture. The model is three dimensional (each parameter corresponds to an x, y, z axis) with increased flexibility and versatility. In this respect, increasing for instance personalisation does not contradict increase in safety or competency at the same time.

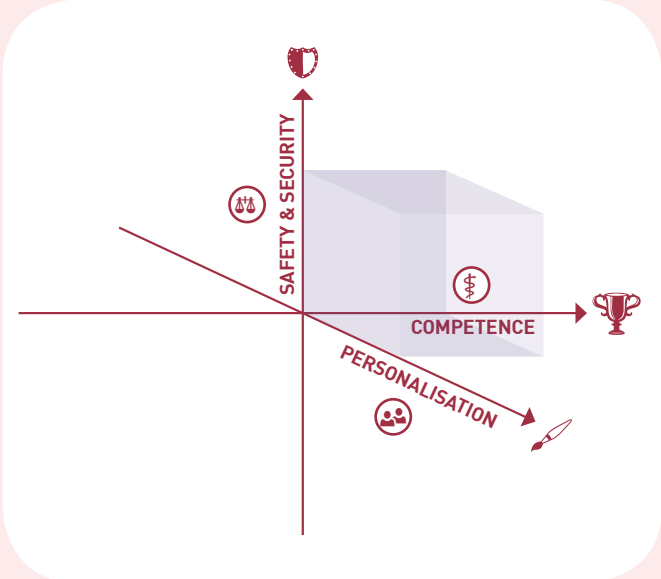


Fig. 1) The SCP-model according to Chrysikou (2014)

Valorisation and control as fundamental human needs

Psychological theories and empirical findings state control as a basic human need (Grawe, 2000) captured in different concepts underscoring the individual as powerful agent in its surroundings.

Yet, as humans, we often depend on others. In social interaction, valorisation (i.e. a fundamental positive attitude towards another, respect, appreciation) poses a powerful element acknowledged across various psychological schools of thought.

Effects of everyday objects on thoughts and behaviour

In psychiatric facilities everyday objects can be useful to strengthen feelings of control and valorisation. Following up the research on material priming and consumer psychology, two mechanisms might account for these effects. Formal-aesthetic appearance of these everyday objects can act as a material primes (Kay et al., 2004) to activate the concept of „valorisation“ and „domesticity“ while having actual choices concerning the objects and styles (e.g. colour) strengthens patients' internal locus of control (see Fig. 2).

Co-Creation and user involvement

When deciding on useful object, aesthetic properties and varieties, co-creation and service user involvement are important approaches in order to come up with effective solutions.

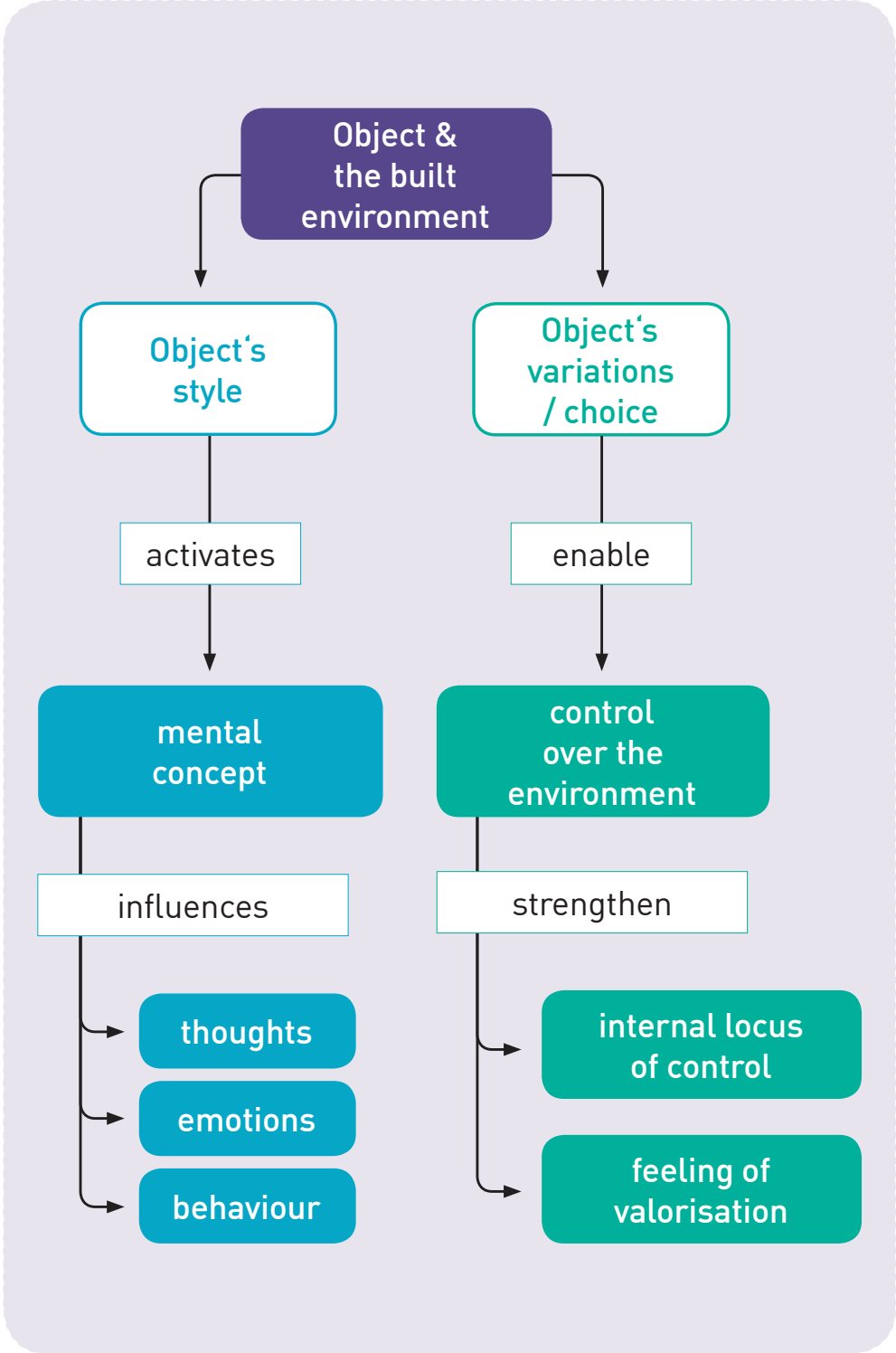


Fig. 2) Two mechanisms by which everyday objects might decrease institutionalisation in psychiatric facilities

References:
Chrysikou, E. (2014). Architecture for psychiatric environments and therapeutic spaces. Amsterdam: IOS Press.
Grawe, K. (2000). Psychologische Therapie. Göttingen: Hogrefe.
Kay, Aaron C.; Wheeler, S.Christian; Bargh, John A.; Ross, Lee (2004): Material priming: The influence of mundane physical objects on situational construal and competitive behavioral choice. In: Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes 95 (1), S. 83-96. DOI: 10.1016/j.obhdp.2004.06.003.

Contact Information:
• jonas.rehn@h-da.de
• helena.mueller@h-da.de
• e.chrysikou@ucl.ac.uk