

Platform to enhance the communication of elderly persons – differences of rural and urban regions



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Introduction

The socio-demographic change in Germany is accompanied by a shift in the age pattern to higher age groups, increasing expectancy of life and coming with that a higher demand for preventive-, healthcare-, caring and nursing services. Due to the paradigm "ambulant over stationary" the question how older people can shape their lives and living environments more independently and more senior-friendly gains importance. The project SONIA tries to tackle this issue in the context of modern technology. What kind of technologies and communication offers, that are easy to use and suitable for daily use, can effectively be used in real living environments?

Approach

The projects tries to enable social inclusion through an enhancement in communication. Therefore a market research as well as an analysis of needs in rural and urban regions has been conducted. Based on that a flexible platform, running on Android 10" tablet devices was picked for the field tests.

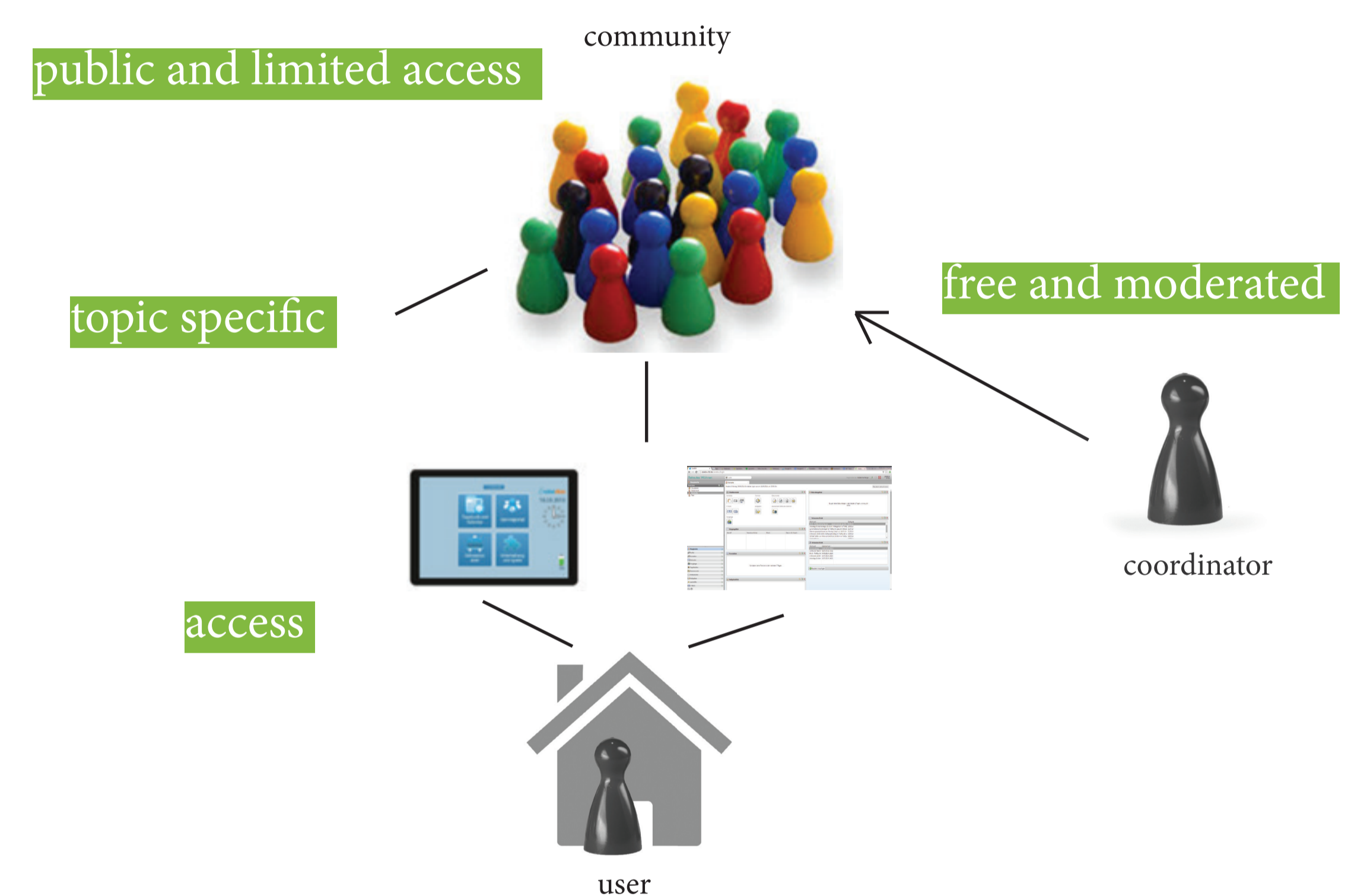
The field tests take place in three different regions in Baden-Württemberg (Germany) - one rural, one urban and one rural area close to a city. The number of proband is around 40 in each test region. The field test are conducted for at least six months in each test region. Questionnaires have to be answered by the test users before the start of the field test, three times between the field test and after six months. The test users can keep the tablet device for at least as long as the runtime of the project. A special add-on tracks the activities of the application. Therefore data can be collected for the whole runtime of the project.

Concept

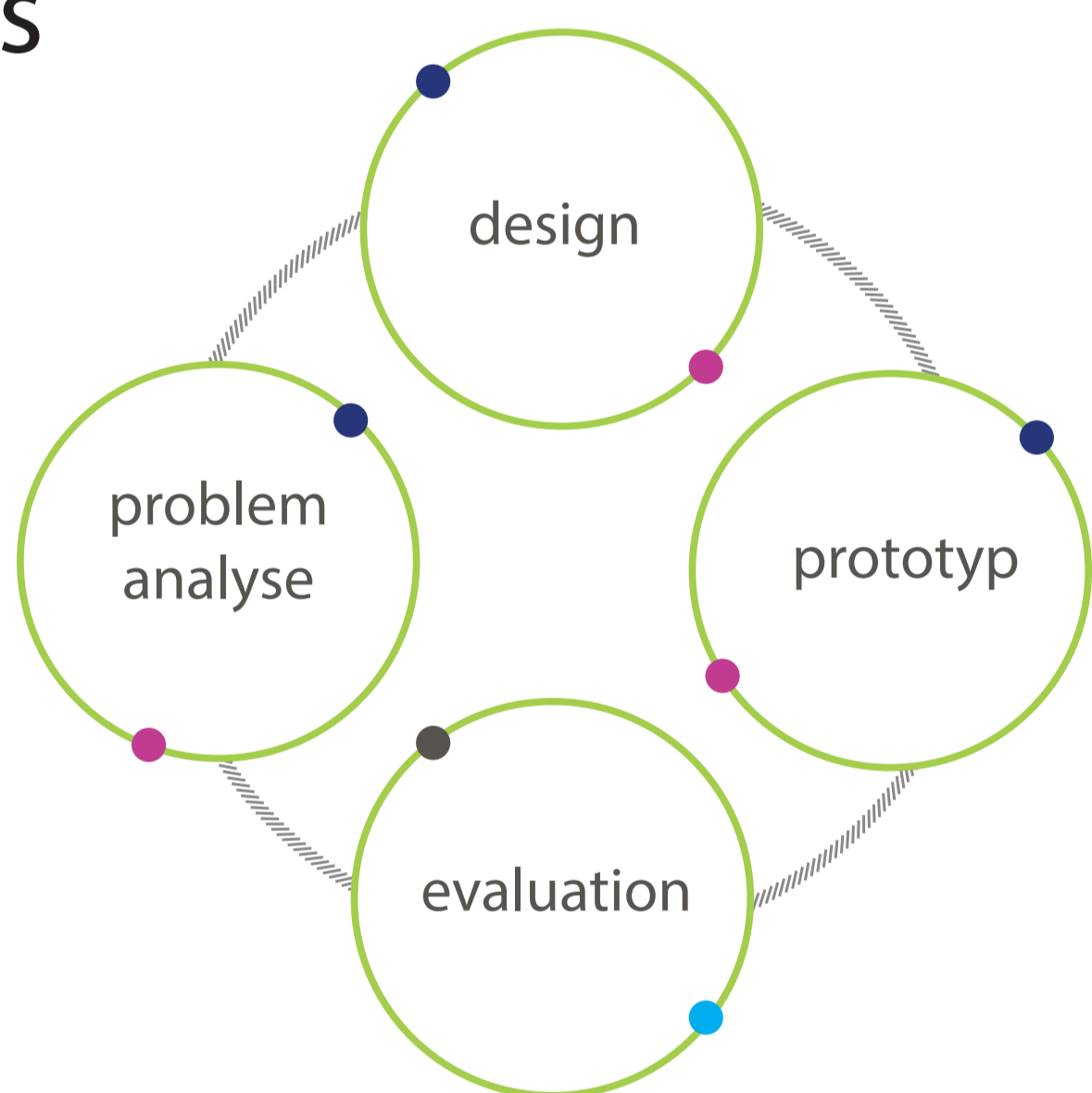
The project uses an iterative participatory design approach. It is important that the users can influence the platform according to their needs. Especially elderly people prefer situations and things they are used to and which they already know. Through their participation in the development process the platform is configured according to their needs and the acceptance and the use of the platform is higher.

The project tries to build and strenghten local communities. Due to decreasing mobility, the radius of communication shrinks with the age. The personal network decreases to close friends and the family. Through the platform new social contacts can be established and neighbourhood networks can be strengthened. Thus, participation in the local community is enabled.

Through a multichannel approach communication is faciliated for all participants. The platform includes single channel communication offers like e-mail or telephone (via skype) as well as multichannel offers like chat (ChatOn) or a moderated notice board.



Methods



- Collection
- Evaluation
- Planning
- Analysis

- analysis of needs (interviews before field test)
- market research (before field test)
- informative meetings (before field test)
- design workshops (before, during field test)
- user workshops (before, during field test)
- courses of instruction (during field test)
- questionnaires (before, during, after field test)
- activity tracking via add-on (from the start of the field test untill the end of the project runtime)

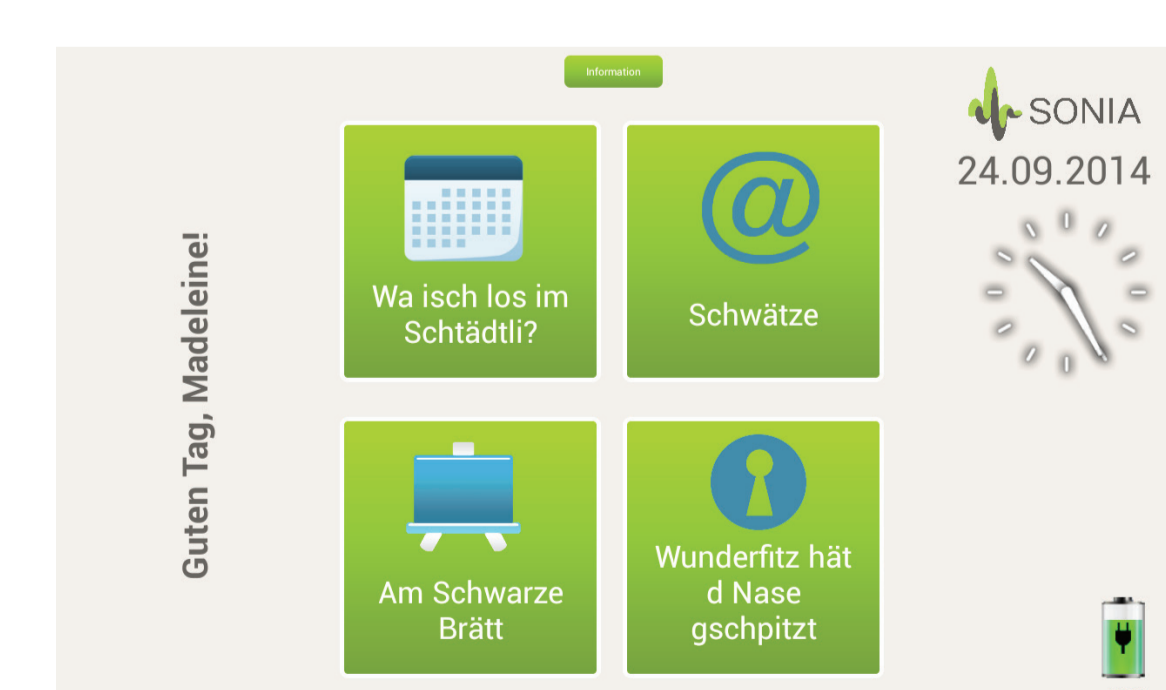
Differences and Similarities

Mobility is a big issue in all three regions. Due to the different infrastructures the mobility offers vary in all three regions. It includes public transport schedules as well as car-sharing and go-together chat rooms.

All three platforms include an event calendar. The events can be administrated by the quarters manager.

A special room for exchange is formed by the different notice boards. Here participants can for example search for services, offer objects or receive general information.

The design of the three platforms is adapted to the local designs of the quarters. The recognition factor is of high importance for the acceptance of the platform.



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Current Outcomes

The different interviews and workshops showed that the aim of the project can't be achieved through one platform. Linking the application to local needs is important to reach the majority of the participants. In order to build a regional community for elderly it is important to identify the local social groups and to find moderators to keep communication alive.