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**Ageing in urban neighbourhoods in Beijing, China: An
ethnographic study of older Chinese people's
neighbourhood experiences**

By

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Built
Environment, Health and Wellbeing**

University of Warwick, Centre of Lifelong Learning

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Contents

Contents	I
Acknowledgements.....	VII
Declaration.....	IX
Dedication.....	X
Abstract.....	XI
List of Tables.....	XII
List of maps.....	XIII
List of Appendices.....	XIV
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Overall aim of the research.....	1
1.2 Personal account	2
1.3 Background of the research.....	4
1.3.1 Population ageing and urbanisation.....	4
1.3.2 The Chinese case	7
1.4 Structure of the thesis.....	12
Chapter 2: Literature review.....	15
2.1 Introduction	15
2.2 Social theory of ageing	16
2.2.1 Development of the social theory of ageing	16
2.2.2 Social construction of ageing	18
2.2.3 Deficit-module of ageing.....	19
2.2.4 Active ageing.....	21
2.2.5 Resilience in later life	25

2.3	Ageing in place	28
2.3.1	Definition	28
2.3.2	Rise of ageing in place and political intervention.....	30
2.3.3	Physical environment and AIP	32
2.3.4	Social engagement and AIP	35
2.3.5	The meaning of AIP.....	38
2.3.6	Problems of AIP	40
2.4	Urban ageing in China	43
2.4.1	Traditional value on ageing and concept of filial piety	43
2.4.2	Reconstruction of old and age care in contemporary China .	47
2.4.3	Urban ageing and social exclusion.....	57
2.5	Gaps in the knowledge and the research questions	60
2.5.1	On AIP.....	60
2.5.2	On urban ageing in China	61
2.5.3	Research questions.....	63
Chapter 3: Methodology.....		65
3.1	Introduction	65
3.2	Constructionism	66
3.3	An ethnographic approach.....	67
3.3.1	Definition of ethnography	67
3.3.2	Why ethnography	69
3.3.3	Constructionism and reflexive ethnography	74
3.4	Data collection process.....	76
3.4.1	Research settings.....	76
3.4.2	Access and recruitment.....	81
3.4.3	Core methods.....	85

3.5	Data analysis	95
3.6	Reflexivity	101
3.6.1	How self-censorship shapes fieldwork	101
3.6.2	Stance of the researcher	105
3.6.3	The unforeseen incident and challenge.....	109
3.7	Ethical considerations	110
3.8	Trustworthiness and rigour of the research.....	112
3.9	Conclusion	115
Chapter 4: Neighbourhood changes and AIP		117
4.1	Introduction	117
4.2	Changing policy and changing life	119
4.2.1	Winners in the policy transitions.....	123
4.2.2	Housing as commodity	128
4.2.3	'Bad luck' or systematically determined inequality	130
4.3	Positive influences on older people's attachment to their neighbourhoods.....	135
4.3.1	Meaning of home.....	135
4.3.2	Housing ownership and attachment to place.....	138
4.3.3	Location, location, location	141
4.4	Negative influences on older people's attachment to their neighbourhoods.....	151
4.4.1	Accessibility.....	151
4.4.2	Sense of security.....	170
4.5	Neighbourhood identity and the ageing self.....	177
4.5.1	Historical superiority	177
4.5.2	Spatial stratification through redevelopment	182

4.6	Conclusion	192
Chapter 5: Social engagement and AIP		194
5.1	Introduction	194
5.2	Social and physical activities at the neighbourhood level	195
5.2.1	Social engagement and physical health	195
5.2.2	Need for social engagement following retirement	201
5.3	Benefits of social engagement.....	206
5.3.1	Promoting emotional wellbeing	206
5.3.2	Instrumental support.....	215
5.3.3	Information exchange.....	220
5.3.4	Social engagement and sense of self.....	223
5.4	The role of religion	229
5.5	Relocation conflicts.....	231
5.6	Conclusion	233
Chapter 6: Ageing and age care in urban Beijing.....		237
6.1	Introduction	237
6.2	Co-residence and AIP	238
6.2.1	Filial piety	238
6.2.2	Housing and AIP	240
6.2.3	Childcare and AIP	244
6.3	Institutionalisation and AIP.....	246
6.3.1	Attitudes towards institutional care	246
6.3.2	Changing family structure.....	252
6.3.3	Pensions and medical insurance: the implications for AIP .	254
6.3.4	Gender and later-life care.....	259
6.4	Community care and AIP	262

6.4.1	Perceptions on community care	262
6.4.2	Community care and collective responsibility	266
6.5	The past, present and ageing self.....	267
6.6	Conclusion	272
Chapter 7:	Discussion.....	276
7.1	Introduction	276
7.2	Role of neighbourhood and ageing in urban Beijing	277
7.2.1	Interrelated physical and social environment and ageing experiences	278
7.2.2	Role of social engagement in ageing	285
7.3	Active ageing and resilience in later life	292
7.3.1	From Deficit model to active ageing in urban China	292
7.3.2	The relationship between active ageing and resilience in later life	298
7.4	Ageing in a rapidly changing world	304
7.4.1	The continuing influence of filial piety on ageing and age care in China	304
7.4.2	Urbanisation and changes in ageing and age care	310
7.4.3	Spatial stratification, urban poverty and AIP	316
Chapter 8:	Conclusion	322
8.1	Introduction	322
8.2	Key findings and contributions	323
8.3	Evaluation of the methodology.....	326
8.4	Recommendations for future research.....	327
8.5	Concluding remarks	330
Bibliography	334
Appendix 1:	Interview schedule	372

Appendix 2: Safety procedure.....	376
Appendix 3: Consent form (Chinese)	377
Appendix 4: Consent form (English)	378
Appendix 5: Participant information sheet (Chinese)	379
Appendix 6: Participant information sheet (English).....	383

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Declaration

I, Marian Sun Orton, hereby declare that this thesis is submitted to the University of Warwick in support of my application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It has been composed by myself and has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree.

Signed:

Date:

Dedication

For Steve

Let's grow old

together

Abstract

This thesis explores Chinese older people's perception and experiences of ageing and age care in an urban neighbourhood in Beijing China. It is informed by a growing body of theoretical and empirical research regarding ageing and also draws upon research that has made linkage between ageing and place. However, little research has investigated older people's experiences of ageing in a rapid changing urban neighbourhood and how these environmental changes affect their day to day lives in China. Thus, by conducting 34 in-depth interviews, participant observation in three urban neighbourhoods in urban Beijing and photography produced by the researcher, this study took a social constructionist stance and ethnographic research design to explore older people's ageing experience in a rapidly changing environment, in this case, the role of the neighbourhood outdoor places in their day to day lives. The findings from this study demonstrate that the Western understanding of AIP is not sufficient to apply to the current social, economic and cultural context in urban Beijing. As the nascent concept of Ageing in place (AIP) has been embedded within broad socio-cultural institutions, numerous institutional legacies and socio-cultural factors directly and indirectly related to AIP serve as the discursive resources that shape and inform individuals' disputant discourses. These factors not only frame their basic logics, vocabularies and moral reasoning but also shape their structural positions on housing access, pension rights and later-life care. Participants in these three neighbourhoods have been constantly constructing and reconstructing their understanding of ageing and AIP with the wider economic, political, social and cultural influences. These interesting perceptions of and attachment to neighbourhood engagement invite further theoretical reflections, as ageing and age care for older people in China have been greatly influenced by existing cultural norms, as well as new social trends, in a far more complicated and ambivalent fashion than commonly assumed and observers have envisioned.

List of Tables

Table 1: Research methods associated with the research questions and justification.....	86
Table 2: Data analysis strategy	97
Table 3: Participant profiles, N1.....	120
Table 4: Participant profiles, N2.....	121
Table 5: Participant profiles, N3.....	122
Table 6: Different age groups and their living arrangements.....	238

List of maps

Map 1: Neighbourhood locations.....	80
Map 2: Relative distance between Mrs Lu and her husband's Danwei location.....	134
Map 3: Locations of public hospitals in Beijing.....	142
Map 4: Inner and outer city of Beijing.....	178
Map 5: North–south central axis.....	179
Map 6: Projects location developed by Beijing Tianhengzhengyu Investment Development Limited Company.....	187
Map 7: Location of the care home.....	251

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview schedule.....	372
Appendix 2: Safety procedure.....	376
Appendix 3: Consent form (Chinese).....	377
Appendix 4: Consent form (English).....	378
Appendix 5: Participant information sheet (Chinese).....	379
Appendix 6: Participant information sheet (English).....	383

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overall aim of the research

This thesis draws on a qualitative ethnographic study undertaken in three neighbourhoods in Beijing, China, to gain an in-depth of understanding of older residents' experience of ageing in place in the context of rapid social change and urbanisation. This research employed an ethnographic research design, and observational data and interview data were collected between July 2013 and September 2014 in three neighbourhoods in Beijing. The study conducted a total of 34 in-depth interviews with older people who were 60 years old and above and who had lived in these neighbourhoods for a long period of time. Drawing on the social constructionist perspective, this research explored ageing in place in the Chinese context and specifically focused on urban older people's experiences and views about their ageing and age care experiences in the urban neighbourhood during rapid physical and social changes. By drawing on both interview and observational data, this research explored how participants experienced and perceived the changes that happened in their neighbourhood and how these changes affected their ageing process and age care. These experiences and interpretations were examined against the Chinese social and cultural context, as well as individual and generational biographical backgrounds. This research contributes to the emerging field of enquiry in China and adds a Chinese perspective to current debates regarding ageing in place in the context of population ageing and urbanisation across the globe. This introductory chapter provides a brief background and description of the rationale that initiated this study.

1.2 Personal account

The initial interest in this research topic was triggered by my own personal experiences. I migrated to England more than 15 years ago and started my own family here. I regularly visited my parents in Beijing, the capital of the People's Republic of China (PRC), where I originally come from. However, I continue to consider Beijing as my home. Nevertheless, my feeling of strangeness on each visit has increased and I feel more and more like an outsider to a place where I have spent more than 30 years of my life. The city I was once so familiar with seems to have changed right in front of my eyes. Many of the courtyard house areas that I had so many good memories of have been replaced with high-rise buildings, and many of them have changed from residential to commercial usage. My parents' neighbourhood, which they moved into in the late 1980s, has also changed dramatically. On each visit, there is something new and some things no longer exist. It was once only a single road; it has now turned into eight-lane carriageway. It seems that countless new buildings have appeared within a very short period of time; in my mother's words, it is just like 'yuhou chun sun' (sprung out of a bamboo shoot after the spring rain), so many and so fast. These changes have also affected my parents, and they often complain about how bad the air quality in Beijing is and how unhappy they are about these changes in their neighbourhood and in the city. They complain about the noise caused by so many people and so many cars on the street when they are out. They find it difficult to cross the roads in their neighbourhood, as well as across the city, as many of them are too wide and my parents are too slow.

My parents visited my home in England in 2009. During their visit, they went out at least twice a day for a walk around the neighbourhood, and they told me that they could stay outside the whole day if the weather permitted. Outdoor walking was an essential part of their daily routine at home in China. Whether within the neighbourhood or a short distance of travel on public transport, they strongly believed that it was a crucial part to maintaining their

overall health. In particular, since my father had a stroke, my parents have taken the view that these outdoor activities have become vital for his recovery and maintaining his functional capacity.

The neighbourhood I am living in now is an English suburban area with plenty of greenery and open spaces, and the actual physical structures have not changed much in the last 50 years. According to the local council, my neighbourhood and the three bordering neighbourhoods all in fact have a higher range of concentration of people aged 65 and over than the rest of the neighbourhoods in the city (Coventry City Council, 2016). Although there are plenty of outdoor public spaces around my neighbourhood, regular social gatherings in these places are rare, and my parents were puzzled by the lack of use of these spaces by the older people. However, after three months, by going out nearly every day, without any language skills, my parents had surprisingly familiarised themselves with the neighbourhood environments, knowing where the corner shop was and who normally took the bus at certain times of the day. I was happy with their progress. However, to my surprise, they rejected the idea to move here to live with me in the near future. They enjoyed the greenery and big open spaces, which were lacking at home, but they missed home terribly and longed for more human interactions at the neighbourhood level. This time, it was me being puzzled. They had complained how those changes have affected their lives, but to me, they rejected a perfect opportunity to upgrade their living environment by join me in England.

Triggered by my parents' decision, I used my sociological training to ask further questions and seek answers. I am aware that there are many older people in my parents' neighbourhood and across Beijing who have also experienced many changes. I was interested in their experiences, understanding and perceptions of the changes that have happened in their neighbourhoods and how these had affected their ageing and later-life care. As a result, two interrelated issues arose and formed my initial research

question: what are the changes in their neighbourhoods and how have these impacted older people's lives in Beijing?

1.3 Background of the research

1.3.1 Population ageing and urbanisation

Population ageing is a global trend and has a recognised great social and economic impact on all societies (United Nations, 2013). Kalache et al. (2005) views this as a demographic revolution in all cultures and societies that creates many challenges. It was reported that older people (aged 60 years or over) constituted 11.7% of the global population in 2013, which will reach 21.1% by 2050 (United Nations, 2013). Many developed countries have already faced this demographic transition. By 2050, Japan and Switzerland will top the list of 'oldest countries' with 35% of their population aged 60 and over, followed by Italy and Germany (Kalache et al., 2005). However, the less-developed countries are now catching up rapidly, and projections show that nearly 8 in 10 of the world's older population will live in developing regions by 2050 (United Nations, 2013).

As Kalache et al. (2005) point out, one of the factors that drives the process of population ageing is increased life expectancy, which itself is the result of epidemiological transition. In other words, the major cause of death has shifted away from infectious diseases towards non-communicable diseases, due to better health care. However, greater longevity also means an increased demand on healthcare resources and increased duration of pension provision. Through years of development and modification, the more advanced health and welfare systems (Cook and Halsall, 2012) have provided developed countries with a much more solid foundation and greater healthcare resources to face the increasing demand. However, this has not diminished Western policy makers' and health care providers' concerns on the negative impact of population ageing on institutions and resources. An ageing population has been viewed as a 'problem' or

'economic burden' to society (Yi et al., 2016; Bai et al., 2016; Phillipson, 2013a). It seems inevitable that negative and pessimistic attitudes to ageing populations will continue to increase, as Phillipson (2013a) argues, if we only view them from a public accountancy perspective and with an exclusive focus on financial and public costs. Similar to their Western counterparts, developing countries also benefit from better health services, and the ageing population worldwide means that infectious diseases are much better controlled. However, Kalache et al. (2005) state that in 1990, around 40% of all deaths in developing countries were still attributable to communicable diseases. Therefore, many developing countries have to face the double burden on their healthcare systems from existing infectious diseases such as AIDS and from non-communicable diseases (e.g. cardiovascular disease and cancer) alongside a fragmented health and welfare system (Kalache et al., 2005).

Urbanisation is another global phenomenon that has occurred in recent decades. However, the definition of urbanisation is rather confusing, and even the statistics from the United Nations (United Nations, 2014b) rely on individual countries' classifications. The term 'urbanisation' is often loosely used and refers to various societal changes, such as urban land expansion and general population growth (Zhao, 2013b; McGranahan and Satterthwaite, 2014). 'Urban' is often compared to 'rural' and their dichotomy. However, as Godfrey and Julien (2005) point out, there is no consensus on the definition of what constitutes an urban environment. The most popular choice of definition of urban area was population size (Gong et al., 2012) and with some countries adds additional criteria such as non-agricultural activities, transport systems, built-up areas, industrial/manufacturing structures, as well as political or administrative function (United Nations, 2014b). Furthermore, as Godfrey and Julien (2005) argue, the sheer numbers of a population do not convey other important factors, such as the standard of infrastructure or the provision of healthcare. McGranahan and Satterthwaite (2014) also argue that the boundary between rural and urban

has declined greatly as the dichotomy between the two has become increasingly blurred as a result of changing cultures, changing lifestyles and industrial degeneration.

Despite the confusion and variation on the size of population that can be classified as urban, urbanisation generally refers to a shift in population from rural to urban settlements (McGranahan and Satterthwaite, 2014). This population shift is clearly happening in many Asian and African countries and at a much faster speed than in well-urbanised regions, like Europe and North America (McGranahan and Satterthwaite, 2014; United Nations, 2014a). The United Nations estimates that in the decades ahead, the majority of global population growth and drastic urbanisation will take place in developing countries, with nearly 90% of the increase concentrated in Asia and Africa (United Nations, 2014a). Already, the majority of older people in developed countries live in urban areas, and the rapid urbanisation in the developing world also means that an increasing proportion of the older population will live in urban areas (Fund, 2007).

Urbanisation brings both physical and social changes to a city, and there are many possible ways in which the urban environment may influence the health and wellbeing of older people. As Phillipson (2011) stresses, these influences can bring both positive and negative consequences for older people. In well-urbanised areas, easy access to medical services, cultural and leisure facilities, shopping, and general necessities for daily living are the main attractions for older people. However, the urban environment is also seen as having potential threats, often creating insecurity and feelings of vulnerability arising from changes to neighbourhoods and communities. As Beard et al. (2012) point out, with the decline of physical health, older people may spend more time in their immediate neighbourhoods, and any environmental changes may have higher levels of effects on older people directly than on any other age group (Lager et al., 2013; Temelová and Slezáková, 2014). The built environment's aspects, including

neighbourhood characteristics (Van Dijk et al., 2014), housing quality (Oswald et al., 2007; Yeo and Heshmati, 2014; Pandelaki et al., 2014), transportation (Lehning, 2012; Zhang et al., 2007) and building features (Burton et al., 2011) have been identified as possible determinants that can influence older people's activities both physically and socially, in turn impacting on their health, wellbeing and quality of life. With better health facilities, age care services and recreational resources and convenient access to information and technology, urban environments can provide a greater chance for older people to maintain their autonomy and independent living (Fund, 2007:30). Urban environments can also have a negative impact on older people's lives. As Phillipson (2013b) asserts, in many developed countries, declining industrial activities in many big cities have resulted in a decline in population, with reduced investment and resources and deteriorating public services and housing environments. In the process of urbanisation and city redevelopment, older people's needs are often invisible, and a lack of resources also means a reduction in economic security and social protection (Fund, 2007). With the rapid urbanisation that has taken place in many developing countries, together with population ageing, social life in the 21st century will be shaped by these two dominant forces (Phillipson, 2013b; WHO, 2007a). The WHO (2007a) also makes a specific link between the two and points out that they are no longer separate issues to be examined.

1.3.2 The Chinese case

1.3.2.1 The Chinese definition of urbanisation and urban neighbourhoods

As mentioned earlier, there is no agreed definition of urbanisation internationally, and individual countries around the world have defined urban and urbanisation according to their own socio-cultural backgrounds and development stages (Gu et al., 2012). The most common features used are to define urban against rural and to define urbanisation as a pattern of an increasing urban population. However, what constitute urban and urban

population are also problematic, as different countries employ different criteria. This problem is particularly notable in the Chinese context. Researchers who are interested in urbanisation in China have faced a very complicated dilemma, as official documentation in China in different periods and among different regions and cities is also inconsistently defined (Qin and Zhang, 2014). As Qin and Zhang (2014) point out, in Chinese, 'shi' (city) and 'urban' do not always carry the same meaning as perceived in Western society. In China, an administrative boundary of a city may well include rural land, which includes both urban and rural populations. In contemporary China, the most obvious distinction between urban and rural is the *Hukou* residency system that was introduced by the Chinese Communist Party in 1955 (Wong and Han, 2015). The Hukou system served the government's need of controlling the physical expansion of cities, as well as population mobility. Employment, housing provision and medical insurance are all allocated according to individuals' Hukou registration, and urban residents have enjoyed a privileged status over rural populations based on such a distinction. Thus, the term 'urban population' has referred to "the number of people with urban Hukou and permanent residents in urbanised areas" (Qin and Zhang, 2014:498).

Defining urban neighbourhood base on Hukou registration is problematic. Although urbanisation was not new in China, as many of its cities are among the oldest in the world, nevertheless, rapid and unprecedented urbanisation has happened in recent decades at a scale and speed that no other societies have much experience of (Friedmann, 2006). The most recent sixth census (taken in 2010) considered continuously built-up areas with urban facilities as a key criterion to define urban areas, and it revealed that there were 666 million living in urban areas (Qin and Zhang, 2014). Thus, definition of urban neighbourhood based on Hukou registration and urban population showed its shortfall of accuracy and many rural areas already developed into urban neighbourhoods yet still classified as rural and with rural Hukou registration. In other words, the

physical environment of these neighbourhoods may appear to be urbanised, but with different administration channels, residents from these neighbourhoods still face different outcomes in welfare provision such as pension, medical insurance and housing. Furthermore, as a result of loosening of the Hukou restriction, a huge number of rural migrants moved into urban areas, and many of them stayed. Such social and population change brought new problems for the definition of urban populations in China, as many of these migrants have no urban Hukou and have no permanent resident status, yet they work and live in the urban areas and are part of them in every possible way. Qin and Zhang (2014) assert that this group of migrants may be classified statistically as part of the urban population, but their rights to and share of public services and resources are far from equal to those of their urban counterparts. Against this background, in this research, to make sure the problem is properly addressed, the definition of an urban neighbourhood in the sixth census is adopted, which includes all built-up areas with urban facilities, including suburban areas. Thus, urban neighbourhood in this research defined as: “An urbanized area is continuous built-up area with urban facilities, using residential committee and rural committee as the basic unit” (Qin and Zhang, 2014:500).

1.3.2.2 Growing old before affluent

Urbanisation and population ageing are recognised as unprecedented demographic changes in China (Yi et al., 2008; Liu, 2014; He and Ye, 2014; Chan, 2012; Liu et al., 2003). In addition to the ongoing urbanisation strategy, the Chinese government prioritised urbanisation in its 10th Five-Year Action Plan¹ (2000–2005), and urbanisation has taken centre stage in all economic and development activities (Liu et al., 2003; Woetzel et al., 2009) ever since. Based on the speed of China’s development during the 1990s, the Chinese government anticipates that half or more of China’s

¹ Social, economic and political goals.

population will be urbanised before 2020 (Lin, 2004) and 70% by 2050 (Wong and Leung, 2012). According to Chen et al. (2011b), urbanisation in China only picked up speed in the 1990s as a result of the Hukou system² reform, and the total net migration was almost equal to the sum of the previous four decades. Economic reform provided greater job opportunities in many big cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai, and migration in these cities increased dramatically and put more pressure on the existing housing stock, which had already been in short supply since the Communist Party took power. In order to ease the pressure and to provide housing for migrants, as well as to upgrade the living standards of urban residents, building more houses and redeveloping and expanding urban areas became good choices for many municipal governments. As a result, urban redevelopment and expansion in many Chinese cities have been visually striking during the last two decades, and significant physical and social transformation has taken place at a scale and speed incomparable with anywhere else in the world (Pannell, 2002; Zhou and Ma, 2003). According to the Economist Intelligence Unit's report (Unit, 2011), the speed of housing construction in China can build a city the size of Rome in only two weeks. In the decade leading up to 2010, China built about twice the total number of houses currently in the UK.

The rapid urbanisation in recent decades has also brought many changes and implications for people's lives. For example, the changes to the physical structure of Beijing, the capital of China, are closely linked with the city's urbanisation process. Its main planning features, which were inherited from ancient China, did not change until the mid-1990s (Gu et al., 2010). It is only during recent decades that rapid urban sprawl and city redevelopment have taken place. The change of the physical structure of Beijing since the communist party took power in 1949 has been through different phases (Qin and Zhang, 2014). The implementation of the second master plan 1983 changed Beijing's infrastructure dramatically and accelerated even further

² Household registration system in China with a rural/urban distinction.

during the 1990s. In order to meet the demand to be a political and cultural centre, as well as an international financial, educational and service capital, Beijing has witnessed massive urban sprawl and urban renewal during the last 20 years (Ren, 2009). From the large scale construction of ring roads, highways, commercial housing projects, luxury apartments, commercial estates, office buildings and international hotels, nearly every corner of Beijing has experienced demolition, reconstruction, or some sort of uplifting or redevelopment. A major impact has been that majority of traditional courtyard houses and alleyways were demolished to make way for high rise buildings and commercial developments. The process of renewal of the old city areas has often resulted in the relocation of their inhabitants. Voluntarily or forced, thousands of families have been removed from their homes and resettled elsewhere, far from the centre city areas (Acharya, 2005; Abramson, 2007). Just in the decade between 1990 and 2000, the population of the core area decreased from 2.337 million to 2.115 million (Feng et al., 2008).

Like in other societies, population ageing is also affecting China economically and socially, as well as older people's basic needs, such as healthcare (Wang and Chen, 2014), housing (Yang and Chen, 2014; Li and Chen, 2011) and pensions (Wang et al., 2014; Dong and Wang, 2014). However, as Wang (2012) points out, the rapid population ageing that has occurred in China is unusual because population ageing in other societies has taken much longer. It has taken 45 years for the UK, 85 years for Sweden and more than 100 years for France to shift the structure of the population from a young-adult-dominated type to an elderly-dominated type, but it has taken only 18 years in China (Wang, 2012). According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2011), with an annual rate of increase between 8 and 10 million, the number of people aged 60 and above had reached 178 million in 2010 and was estimated to reach 216 million by 2015; more than 40% of China's population will be 60 or older by 2050 (Li and Yang, 2012). However, China's modernisation process is still in a

premature stage, and urbanisation and economic development are occurring unevenly across different regions (Chuang, 2015; Gu et al., 2012). As a result, urban populations are concentrated in a few large regions and municipal cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. The spatial distribution of population ageing also shows disparity among regions, and inequality is widening (Liu et al., 2014a). Due to China having the fastest increase in population ageing in the world, some commentators (Chen and Powell, 2012; Wong and Leung, 2012) argue that the greatest challenge that China faces is that it became an ageing society before an adequate infrastructure could be put into place. The increased demand on housing, pension funds and healthcare has put further pressure on the existing system and has created more challenges for these cities. Additionally, China has had much less time to deal with this than other countries have had (Cook and Halsall, 2012; Beard et al., 2012). A popular phrase used by scholars to describe such phenomena is 'wei fu xian lao', growing old before affluent (Li et al., 2009a). The rapid environmental changes also effect older people's life. For example, the consequence of relocation often means the loss of the social networks and resources that were built up through years of residence in the same community (Day, 2013). For those stay in the same neighbourhood are too need to face the constant changes and disruption to their day to day lives. Thus, the study of ageing is inexorably bound to understanding the lives of older people within the context of the urban environment (Phillipson, 2013b).

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis provides the contextual and literature background to the research, as well as the theoretical rationale of the chosen methodology. These are followed by a presentation of the findings and a discussion of the implications derived.

The thesis consists of eight chapters, including the present chapter (Chapter 1). Chapter 2 discusses the theory of ageing and the concept of ageing in place in greater depth, provides a literature review, and highlights key aspects of previous research, which has mainly been conducted and developed in advanced industrial societies, such as the UK and the US. The main theoretical debates on the construction of ageing and age care and recent developments of the concept of ageing in place are outlined. The Chinese historical, social, economic and cultural context on the understanding of ageing and age care in China are also outlined in this chapter. Most of the recent studies on ageing and age care with a Chinese focus are also highlighted to provide a sense of the type of data available in order to highlight the relative scarcity of data on this topic in the Chinese context. Chapter 3 presents the chosen methodology and the theoretical rationale for that methodology. It also outlines the practical steps of participant recruitment and the ways in which the data collection and data analysis were undertaken. Reflections on the research process are also presented in this chapter. The findings are presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Chapter 4 focuses on the social and physical changes that have happened in the participants' neighbourhoods and the participants' experiences. Important factors that influence their daily lives both positively and negatively, as identified by the participants, are also highlighted. Chapter 5 examines how neighbourhood-level social engagements have played a crucial role in the participants' daily lives. How older people link these engagements to their ageing process and age care is also outlined. Chapter 6 focuses on how older people's perception of ageing and age care influence their understanding of institutionalised age care and their preference of place for ageing. The factors that influence their perceptions on ageing in place are highlighted. Finally, Chapter 7 brings together the main issues raised from the three findings chapters and examines them alongside the existing literature and knowledge of urban ageing and ageing in place through a constructionist viewpoint. Chapter 8 summarises the findings and provides a conclusion. Some proposed avenues for future

research are also presented in this chapter, followed by outlines of both the contributions and the limitations of this thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Gerontology, as an academic field on the theorising of ageing and age-related issues, is much more advanced in developed countries, with the UK and the US leading the field. Thus, gerontology has been a Western development and was absent from China until the late 1980s. This slow development may be due to the slow re-establishment of social science in general, as it was heavily criticised and removed from Chinese universities' curricula during the Cultural Revolution (mid-1950s to late 1970s). As a consequence, theory development and empirical research on ageing and associated issues with a Chinese focus are scarce (Li and Du (2005)).

The number of ageing-related studies continues to increase, as does the number of studies in disciplines such as geriatrics, biology, psychology and sociology, as well as policy, finance, nursing, medicine and public health (Zhang et al., 2012). However, this wider coverage in a short period of time reflects the fragmented nature of the field as a whole. In this sense, the pool of knowledge produced by industrialised countries is a great resource for any research project. With this situation in mind, the following literature review draws from two different groups of literatures: existing social theories of ageing and empirical evidence from the most industrialised and urbanised countries and current knowledge with a focus on urban older people in China. Due to the social, economic and political differences between China and Western societies, grouping the relevant literatures in this way will provide a wider picture and some level of comparison to help to identify the research gap in the context of China, as well as in the field of gerontology at a global level. Furthermore, as gerontology is multi-disciplinary and is relevant to this research, studies from the field of social gerontology were the focus.

Thus, Section 2.2 will present a review of the theoretical framework employed in this research, with emphasis on the social construction of

ageing. This will be followed by an exploration of the concept of ageing in place, with a more detailed analysis of the possible factors identified within the existing research that influence older people's ageing in place in Section 2.3. Section 2.4 starts with a brief introduction to the conceptualisation of ageing in a Chinese context, with a focus on the tradition of filial piety and its consequences on aged care. This will include an evaluation of recent shifts in the influence of the concept of filial piety. In the final part of this section, the limitations in the current knowledge relating to ageing in place in the context of rapid urban change are reviewed and the research questions are formulated. Where is research that presents older people's own perspectives located within this field?

2.2 Social theory of ageing

2.2.1 Development of the social theory of ageing

It has been widely acknowledged by scholars (e.g. Phillipson, 2013a; Dannefer, 2013) that the Western cultural understanding of age and ageing has been greatly influenced by Western medical science. As a result, ageing has been treated as an innate and immutable process (Powell and Hendricks, 2009), common to everyone and following a particular chronological order. In other words, growing old is an inevitable stage of biological and psychological decline full of fragility, whereby the individual is unable to be economically productive, with death at the end. However, biologically driven theories are not the only accounts of ageing; from the 1950s onwards, theoretical approaches began to develop, and greater attention started being paid to the relationships between ageing and various social factors, and the rise of social gerontology brought our understanding of ageing into a new era (Bai, 2014; Phillipson, 2002).

In its early development, the rise of social gerontology brought focused attention to the social factors of ageing, such as gender, education, health, social economic status. The early development of social theories of ageing

enabled research to move away from primarily medical perspectives of ageing. In other words, scholars were starting to look at the relationship between society and older people. Ageing started to be understood through a multidimensional lens to avoid homogenising older people and to recognise the diversity among them. Thus, broader models that include biological, as well as social and environmental, facets of the ageing process have been considered (Bennett and Windle, 2015; Stephens et al., 2015; Annear et al., 2014). However, as Phillipson (2013a) pointed out, early social theories (e.g. disengagement theory and role theory) were still developed on the basis that whatever happened in later life was part of the ageing process, without challenging the given social arrangements, retirement and institutional care arrangements, for example (Morgan and Kunkel, 1998). In other words, the early social theory of ageing was influenced by the medical understanding and conception of ageing criticised for its universal and stereotypical assumption that everybody experiences at same stage and cultivate similar changes to be able to age successfully. For example, the precisely given age of 50-years old as the starting point of change claimed by the role theory (Havighurst, 1954) may be questionable in contemporary society. In particular, retirement ages are now being delayed further in many countries, including the UK. Nevertheless, retirement is perceived as the landmark for individuals entering old age, again reflecting the narrow understanding of 'old age' only based on a chronological order. As Baars et al. (2006) argue, without questioning the assigned meaning, age-related categories face the danger of generalising people towards superficial clarity, reinforcing prejudice. Further, as Phillipson (2013a) points out, both role theory and disengagement theory are influenced by functionalism, only seeing society as a system and considering that all parts of society exist interdependently, and their understanding of ageing is narrowly confined to the issues relating to 'social integration'. Thus, these theories continuing reinforce the ideas that later life is just another stage of ageing and that 'growing old' represents "a significant degree of discontinuity from prior life events and experiences"

(Phillipson, 2013a:34). As a consequence, functionalist researchers acknowledge that structural changes can impact on older people's lives but only individual but structural viewed as problematic and have to adjust and change (Phillipson, 2013a).

In the past 50 years, social theories of ageing have continued to flourish, and it is beyond the scope of this report to review them all. However, one particular strand of this development is important in relation to this research: the social construction of ageing. The following section will provide a more detailed review.

2.2.2 Social construction of ageing

It can be said that one major shift in the Western understanding of ageing was the emergence of critical gerontology (Baars, 1991) and the application of constructionism to studying the process of ageing. A critical perspective means that researcher need to go "beyond everyday appearances and the unreflective acceptance of established position" and examine "the structural inequalities that shape the everyday experience of growing old" (Biggs et al., 2003:3). As Biggs (2003) assert we cannot take for granted any particular analogy or metaphor which is used to explain ageing and it necessary to question in what way that the assumptions contained within theory and policy influence our understanding of the position of older people in society as well as the personal experience of ageing. With a critical approach, social construction theory of ageing also recognises that "meaning of the state of things, practices, conditions, behaviour", in case of this research, meaning of ageing and its associated practices, conditions and behaviours is not simply given, it is "always interpreted or constructed in specific linguistic (discursive), social, historical, and material context" (Schwandt, 2008:93). Thus, Phillipson (2013a) and many other social scientists (e.g. Johnson, 2005; Kaufman, 1994) assert, "ageing can only be understood within the context of social environments, with the two working together in complex ways that shape the individual's journey through the life

course” (Phillipson, 2013a:30). Social construction of ageing recognising that the social context shapes an individual’s ageing experience influences our knowledge and conception of ageing and older people. Thus, the social constructionism challenges the very core concept of the bio-medicalisation of ageing and argues that human ageing is not reducible to biology and that old age cannot be simplified to a distinctive, chronological stage of human development (Dannefer, 1989). By looking at how ageing is constructed through political, social and cultural institutions, the social constructionist aims to address the structural impact on ageing and older people. According to Powell and Hendricks (2009:85) “the social construction of ageing highlights the contention that ageing has no existence independent of social interaction and power relationships in society”. In other words, different societies with different cultural factors can determine how ageing is perceived and how older people are treated by society, as well as how older people’s identities are constructed.

2.2.3 Deficit-module of ageing

In contemporary Western societies, based on a biological understanding of ageing (Phillipson, 1998; Phillipson, 2013a), ageing was first constructed into a chronological order, with infancy as the beginning of the life course, followed by different stages of education and employment. As mentioned early, medical understanding of ageing in the western societies, in this case, the US, closely entwined with the cultural construction of ageing and one constitutive to the other (Talarsky, 1998). Therefore, ageing was treated as medical problem and pharmacology and technology are the best way to dealing with age related issues (Talarsky 1998). In other words, regardless of their individual differences, older people are treated as stereotypical group who are vulnerable, non-functional, unproductive and over consumptive collective resources that codified as ‘risk’ (Talarsky 1998). In fact, such ideology deeply embedded in our everyday interactions. As Fealy and McNamara (2009) found in their study of print media that in these newspapers, older people were named and referenced as a distinct

demographic group, outside of mainstream society. They also identified ageism within these discourses and often older people categorised into negative stereotypical groups such as 'frail, infirm and vulnerable' or 'deserving and undeserving old' (Fealy and McNamara, 2009:4). As Talarsky (1998) argue the medicalization of ageing also ignored the social causes of older people's mental health issues such as depression and loneliness. As a result, on one hand, cultural perception of age treated ageing issues as individual and private misfortunes and only can be solved through medical care, and on the other, older people were blamed for overuse of the resources.

In the UK, the discovery of an under-served and under-resourced sector for aged people through war time together with the establishment of the NHS and a mandatory retirement policy made the re-conceptualisation of ageing possible (Phillipson, 1998). As a result, the life course was reconstructed into distinctive stages associated with education, work and retirement (Phillipson, 1998). Thus, retirement can be viewed as a social intervention that only serves the purpose of removing older people from the labour force and increasing older people's dependency in later life (Walker, 1983). Similar trend also happened in US as Talarsky (1998:104) asserts that 'the cultural stereotype of the feeble, unproductive, over-consumptive elder is integrally linked with the social creation of dependence'. In consequence, increased concerns and anxiety about the costs of support for older people, such as pension, medical and long-term care costs, in the context of economic crises and population ageing in recent decades, have once again reconstructed the concept of age and ageing. Thus, older people are inevitably viewed as a collective social and economic burden and 'problem' to society, and this idea has spread quickly in developed countries (Johnson, 2005; Talarsky, 1998; Powell and Hendricks, 2009). As Phillipson (2013a; Phillipson, 2008a; Phillipson, 1998) asserts, social arrangements for older people were created in light of specific ideologies and with particular social relationships in mind. In this sense, a shift in the conception of age and ageing would greatly influence how we treat older people, as well as how

older people perceive themselves and the world they live in. Therefore, as Beard and Petitot (2010) assert, 'this negative perspective on ageing populations is based on an assumption that older people are inevitably dependent and a burden on society. If older people can maintain their health until the last years of life, and if they live in an environment that allows their ongoing productive engagement in society, ageing populations might instead be considered an overlooked societal resource'.

2.2.4 Active ageing

It can be said that the increasing attention being given to the concept of active ageing can be viewed as a new turning point on how age and ageing are being constructed and reframed in contemporary gerontological discourse (Boudiny, 2013). The concept of active ageing has been developed by major international organisations such as World Health Organisation (WHO) and the European Union in recent decades, but its ideas had already emerged in 1982 in the action plan of the first United Nations World Assembly on Ageing (Moulaert and Paris, 2013). The concept was quickly adopted and developed through WHO and several other governmental and nongovernmental organisations' initiatives (Boudiny, 2013; Moulaert and Paris, 2013). As Boudiny (2013) points out, from the 1980s and especially throughout the 1990s, the previously negative view of old age generally shifted towards more-positive models. In other words, it moved away from deficit models, and more recent development of the active ageing discourse has placed emphasis on older people's competence and knowledge in later life, rather than focusing on their limitations (Bowling and Dieppe, 2005; Boudiny, 2013). Thus, Moulaert and Paris (2013) point out that active ageing has been described as a conceptual and aspirational ideology that has appeared in international social policies on ageing.

The concept of active ageing suggests that by maintaining participation in a range of activity domains in later life, older adults are able to sustain health and wellbeing (WHO, 2002). The concept of active ageing is a unified recognition of the importance for older people to 'continue to participate in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs in their later life, in addition to the ability to be physically active or participate in the labour market' (WHO, 2002:12). Active ageing emphasises the links among activity, health, independence and successful ageing by recognising that 'active ageing is the process of optimising opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age' (WHO 2002:12). However, as Boudiny (2013) points out, there are several shortfalls in the conceptualisation of active ageing. Firstly, common usage of the concept in policy, research and practice does not conceal the lack of clarity in its defined meaning. For example, Aceros et al.'s (2015) research on telecare services at home revealed that people hold different ideas on what active ageing means. For many older people, active ageing also means participation outside of the house, rather than being confined in the home, but this does not necessarily mean that they have to be in employment or participate in productive activities. Not only is there no consensus among different authors about what constitutes active ageing but also other concepts, such as healthy ageing and productive ageing, are often used interchangeably with active ageing (Bowling and Dieppe, 2005; Boudiny, 2013).

Secondly, there is still a tendency towards applying active ageing to a mere economic or physical framework (Boudiny, 2013:1080). As Boudiny (2013) argued, narrowly applying the concept of active ageing to labour-market participation and physical activities may contribute to the devaluation of those who do not wish to or are no longer capable of further attainment in the labour market or youthful physical activities. For example, the oldest age group are often not required to participate in the labour market and are also incapable of youthful physical activities. Further, the economic orientation

also means that those older people who do not engage in paid employment but continue contributing to their families or communities through other types of activities, such as voluntary work, childcare and caring for older parents, are being ignored (Shang and Wu, 2011; Boudiny, 2013). The different interpretations among different authors and the divergent understandings of what constitutes an active lifestyle among older people themselves clearly demonstrate that such limitations increase the risk of exclusion of certain groups of older people and move away from the original social understanding of ageing and later life. Ageing and later life should not be treated as homogeneous outcomes without recognising their diversity and differences, such as health status, financial ability, emotional and cultural needs, gender, race, and disability (Walker, 1983; Wiles et al., 2011). In fact, the concepts of both healthy ageing and productive ageing have been criticised for homogenising, oppressing and neglecting the physical realities of older age and have the tendency to place the responsibility on individuals for achieving good physical health, ignoring their broader circumstances (Stephens et al., 2015).

Active ageing has many facets, such as the ability of older people to be employed, to contribute actively to society as volunteers and family carers and to live independently. This line of thought clearly recognises that the goal of 'active ageing' is to empower older people to be active and independent in later life, and it avoids the morally negative implications of ageing and dependency in old age (Moulaert and Paris, 2013). However, many scholars (Boudiny, 2013; Annear et al., 2014; Wiles et al., 2012; Barrett and Sargeant, 2015) assert that this goal cannot be achieved by individual agency alone. Although being able to live independently is one of the primary attractions for older people to stay in their own homes (Kwon et al., 2015), for many older people, this has to be made possible through the provision of housing and infrastructure (Yeo and Heshmati, 2014; Pandelaki et al., 2014). Nevertheless, until recent decades, the environmental resources and their interactions with other elements in determining older

people's ageing experiences and later life were still scarce (Phillips et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2012; Rosso et al., 2011). The WHO 2002 report 'Active Ageing: A Policy Framework' clearly outlines six determinants of active ageing, namely:

- (a) health and social service system;
- (b) behavioural factors;
- (c) personal factors;
- (d) physical environment;
- (e) social environment; and
- (f) economic factors.

As it clearly demonstrated, active ageing is one of the terms used by the WHO in the promotion of age-friendly environments. As Abdullah and Wolbring (2013) point out, ageing well is a dynamic process involving the use of resources and engagement within specific contexts. WHO (2007a:1) defines an ageing-friendly city as one that 'encourages active ageing by optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age. An age-friendly city adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities'. Further, in many developed countries, there is a common understanding now that public health outcomes are 'shaped by complex interactions between individuals and the environment' (Clarke and Nieuwenhuijsen, 2009:14). There is growing evidence that the environment, including the built environment, may have a substantial influence on wellbeing and quality of life in later life. For vulnerable older people, as Annear et al. (2014:591) assert, there is strong published evidence from the studies they reviewed concerning the potential influences of environmental conditions on health and activity participation in later life, whereby 'environmental attributes can present many barriers to an active engagement with life, which may ultimately affect health outcomes'. However, Annear et al. (2014) also identified that there are many gaps and

limitations within the existing pool of knowledge that urgently need addressing. For example, the limited number of research articles from Asia, including China, requires more evidence to aid our understanding of older people's experiences and the impact of the environment on later life in developing countries. Further, qualitative evidence is also needed to provide older people's viewpoints.

2.2.5 Resilience in later life

In line with active ageing, the increasing interest in the concept of resilience in recent decades has also supported a positive approach and demonstrated a clear shift in the conceptualisation of ageing and late life (Stephens et al., 2015; Wild et al., 2013; Wiles et al., 2012). Wild et al. (2013) state that the resilience literature explicitly focuses on exploring experiences of vulnerability and providing greater opportunity to acknowledge the positive aspects of the ageing process and experiences of ageing in later life. It was originally rooted in developmental psychology and was mostly applied to understand how children negotiate adversities in their lives (Wild et al., 2013; Poortinga, 2012). In other words, as Wild et al. (2013) point out, despite the emphasis placed on adversity in the early development of the resilience literature, the concept is also used to explore how people cope with negative life events, such as disasters (Chen et al., 2014a), as well as normal life transitions. It is also useful for exploring how older people negotiate the adversities associated with later life (Yang and Wen, 2015; Lyon, 2014), and there has been recent interest in gerontology research to seek an understanding of ageing and later-life experiences related to the concept of resilience. This has been particularly the case for researchers who are 'concerned to identify possibilities for emancipatory social change, including positive ideals for the last stage of life' (Moody, 1993:xv). Nevertheless, as Bennett and Windle (2015) assert, little work has focused on resilience among older adults, and we are still lacking knowledge on the factors that promote resilience in later life and why some older people are resilient whilst others are not.

Nevertheless, this development also raises some concerns, and, as Wild et al. (2013) point out, there is a lack of consistency in how the concept, as well as the related vocabulary (such as 'risk', 'assets', 'vulnerabilities' and 'protective factors'), is defined and employed. Further, as Yang and Wen (2015) suggest, the operational definition also 'varies according to the specific context in which it is applied in the literature'. Thus, as Windle (2011:153) argues, there is a need to 'clarify the meaning of the concept of resilience from a multi-disciplinary perspective as well as to develop an operational definition that is meaningful across different disciplines and stakeholders, and can be universally understood and applied across research, policy and practice'. It is amid this ongoing debate, according to the context of this research, that the following definition from Windle (2011) was adopted:

Resilience is the process of effectively negotiating, adapting to, or managing significant sources of stress or trauma. Assets and resources within the individual, their life and environment facilitate this capacity for adaptation and 'bouncing back' in the face of adversity. Across the life course, the experience of resilience will vary.
(Windle, 2011:163)

As shown in the above definition, instead of focusing on adversities, deficits and negative outcomes related to the ageing process in later life, the concept of resilience emphasises the 'strengths' and recognises the inherent power and resilience of individuals and communities (Wild et al., 2013; Windle, 2011; Poortinga, 2012; Lou and Ng, 2012). As Wild et al. (2013) state, the resilience literature needs to pay more attention to the experiences of all older people and their everyday processes of human adaptation and how they thrive in later life, rather than focusing on the negative aspects of ageing only.

Despite the popularity of the concept of resilience in recent decades, some researchers argue that we need to be cautious when applying it. As mentioned earlier, the inconsistencies in its definition urgently need to be addressed. Further, recent developments on resilience emphasise the combination of individual and environmental factors because resilience happens at an individual level, as well as at the social or community level (Wild et al., 2013). However, with its heavy psychological influence (Yang and Wen, 2015), research on individual resilience often suggests that interpersonal and socio-environmental factors are distant and not central influences (Kalisch et al., 2015), drawing much less attention to them. Thus, as Wild et al. (2013) point out, the early research on resilience often addressed the issue at the macro level (socio-economic and environmental resilience) or at the micro level (how individuals deal with adversities), without think about resilience 'in place' for older people (Wild et al., 2013). In other words, the 'interdependent' (Wild et al., 2013) nature of resilience between an individual and their environment seems missing in the discourse of the concept of resilience. As Bennett and Windle (2015) argue, community and societal influences are as important and proximal factors as intra-individual mechanisms for older people's resilience to adversity and enable them to achieve successful later lives. Protective factors that influence older people's resilience can be viewed as resources, and these resources can be categorised into three non-hierarchical, interacting levels, which are the individual, community and societal levels (Bennett and Windle, 2015; Stephens et al., 2015). As Windle (2011:157) asserts, it is the interplay between individual and protective factors that provide the ability to respond positively to risks and to alter or reduce the effects of adversity. These factors facilitate resistance to adversity and underlie the process of adaptation.

Another issue that requires caution when applying the concept of resilience, as Wild et al. (2013) argue, is that resilience is not a 'zero-sum' equation because an increase or decrease in the resilience of one person can

strengthen or weaken the resilience of others. In this case, researchers need to address the social structures and systems of inequality, for example gender and socio-economic status (Jang et al., 2009; Park et al., 2010), and provide adequate recognition of the power differentials in access to resilience resources (Wild et al., 2013). Older people's diverse experiences of resilience and adaptation are important in the discourse and debates about resilience (Wiles et al., 2012; Lou and Ng, 2012). Thus, as Wild et al. (2013) assert, it is necessary for researchers to be reflexive and avoid the tendency to romanticise the individual's capabilities to overcome adversities and to underplay the real struggles and disadvantages. Overemphasis on resilience in later life may face the danger of reducing necessary social services by the policymakers and viewing the positive outcomes of resilience as universal to everyone, consequently blaming victims who are viewed as not sufficiently resilient (Wiles et al., 2012).

2.3 Ageing in place

2.3.1 Definition

There is growing concern on how space and place affect older people's quality of life and opportunities to age well (Chapman, 2009; Andrews and Phillips, 2005b). This concern is based on the increasing understanding and recognition of the importance of space and place in shaping human experiences, behaviour and activity (Andrews and Phillips, 2005a). Thus, "we need to study not only those who are ageing and how they are ageing but also the places within and with which people are ageing" (Chapman, 2009:27). As outlined earlier, from a social constructionist viewpoint, the meaning of ageing can be constructed through social, cultural and economic institutions (Campbell, 2015). Therefore, the environmental context is important to our understanding of the ageing process. In addition to personal influences such as ethnicity, education and gender, environmental factors such as street lighting, traffic conditions, community life and social networks also influence health and activity participation in later life (Annear

et al., 2014). Further, over the past 40 years, there has been a growing interest in human attachment to place, with interest accelerating in the last decade (Husband, 2005; Lewicka, 2011). It has captured attention from policy makers, professionals and various research traditions, such as environmental psychology, human geography, sociology, anthropology and urban studies. From early work, such as Tuan's (1979) work on the meaning of place and space, to recent research on the influence of home ownership on place attachment (Windsong, 2010) or the roles of place attachment and environmental concerns (Brehm et al., 2013), one thing is certain: place is an important topic of study that bridges human geography and gerontology. In this sense, the concept of ageing in place aims to understand the process of ageing in a familiar environment (Smith, 2009).

Concerning the effect of the dynamic interactions between the ageing person and the environment, the existing research on ageing and the environment is still dominated by environmental gerontology, which is rooted in behavioural psychology. As a result, the "initial efforts to conceptualise and define ageing in place very much focused on understanding older adults in terms of changes occurring both in themselves and in their surrounding environment" (Vasunilashorn et al., 2012:1). Thus, over the past 40 years, Nahemow and Lawton's (1973) ecological model of ageing (EMA) became the most influential and prevalent: "by far, the most referenced, interpreted, and applied theoretical framework" (Golant, 2003:640). The ecology of ageing sees old age as a critical and more sensitive and vulnerable phase in the life course that is profoundly influenced by the physical environment (Wahl et al., 2012). Hence, environmental changes can have both positive and negative influences for older people (Iecovich, 2014). However, it is generally agreed among scholars that place is not just a physical setting but also has a social dimension (Chapman, 2009; Windsong, 2014). Iecovich (2014) provides a more detailed definition:

The term place has several dimensions that are interrelated: a physical dimension that can be seen and touched like home or neighbourhood, a social dimension involving relationships with people and the ways in which individuals remain connected to others, an emotional and psychological dimension, which has to do with a sense of belonging and attachment, and a cultural dimension, which has to do with older people's values, beliefs, ethnicity, and symbolic meanings. (Iecovich, 2014:22)

As outlined above, recognition of the multidimensional nature of place is important for our understanding of the ageing process in an urban neighbourhood environment. Our ageing experience can be shaped by where we live and how long we have lived in a place.

2.3.2 Rise of ageing in place and political intervention

A review of the literature has shown that there has been a sharp rise in interest in the concept of ageing in place (AIP) in recent decades, driven by two sets of influences: political movements on the issues of ageing populations and greater understanding of the importance of place to older people. The combination of these influences has resulted in AIP becoming a popular topic among academics, policy makers and service providers. The following analysis focuses on the literature under these two sets of influences.

With the increased demands of aged populations in recent decades, concerns about whether there are enough social and economic resources to support and care for older people as a social group have seen them increasingly being viewed as a problem and burden to society (Phillipson, 1998; Phillipson, 2013a). Thus, responding to such problems, the concept of AIP has quickly been adopted by the governments in many developed countries, such as US (MetLife, 2010), Australia (Stones and Gullifer, 2014) and the UK (Lofqvist et al., 2013; Hammarström and Torres, 2012; Sixsmith

et al., 2014) as a policy strategy in an effort to conserve resources (Greenberg and Schwarz, 2012). For example, the Australian federal government has responded to population ageing by expanding funding and service options since the early 1990s. More recently in Australia, aged-care sector reform in 2011 has employed AIP as a policy framework to empower older people through providing access to a greater range of support service choices, allowing them to remain at home as they wish and to live independently (Stones and Gullifer, 2014:2). Other governments have tried to address population ageing by looking into housing-related issues, and AIP is also a key component of UK policy (Hillcoat-Nalletamby and Ogg, 2014; Sixsmith and Sixsmith, 2008). In order to enhance older people's 'choice' (Tinker, 1999) in relation to ageing in place, the UK government developed the Home Improvement Agencies programme and community-based services to help older people to maintain and improve their houses to enjoy a longer period of independent life at home.

Enabling a longer duration of an older person staying at home was partly based on the assumption that the provision of informal care by friends, neighbours and families would be more cost-effective than providing them with institutional facilities (Ball, 2000; Byrnes et al., 2006; Greenberg and Schwarz, 2012; Wiles et al., 2011). This line of study often covers evaluations of the policies and programmes that support AIP (Greenfield et al., 2013; Vasunilashorn et al., 2012; Scharlach et al., 2012), which often focus on housing quality and physical modification (Afacan, 2008; Golant and LaGreca, 1994; Iecovich, 2014). However, the assumption that AIP will reduce the cost of health and welfare services has not been properly tested by empirical evidence. One may argue that this is due to the majority of research on older people and their environments being centred on the impact of micro-environments, such as special accommodation and care settings, even though the majority of older people live in the community, in non-specialised or ordinary housing (Peace et al., 2011:737). Although many scholars have mentioned that cost-effectiveness is the key to an AIP

initiative, very few have discussed this issue further. As Smith (2009) asserts, discussion on the issue seldom goes beyond a couple of descriptive lines. Some scholars consider AIP as a care model to be just too costly in practice and have argued that it would be difficult to oversee the quality of care, in particular for those frail and impaired elderly living at home (Calkins, 1995). In their review on the cost of assisted living technologies, Graybill et al. (2014:4) also assert that “focusing solely on monetary change as an outcome is problematic as it is possible for an intervention to have an ‘economic benefit’, but without the health and wellbeing of participants being improved”. They further argue that cost-effective evaluation also needs to consider the overall wellbeing of older people under the service provision at home, rather than being limited to specific areas of their lives (Graybill et al., 2014).

2.3.3 Physical environment and AIP

Many international organisations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), have also played a role in promoting AIP initiatives since the mid-1990s, with strong emphasis on environmental factors. Through Global Age Friendly Cities Projects in 2005, the WHO explicitly endorsed AIP through the idea of age-friendly environments (Buffel et al., 2012; Buffel et al., 2014b; Menec et al., 2011) and emphasised that an age-friendly city needs to adapt its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities (WHO, 2007b; WHO, 2007a). There are alternative names developed within the same ideology in different countries (e.g. liveable communities in the US and lifetime neighbourhoods in the UK) (Burton et al., 2011). Nevertheless, the ideology that underpins these concepts in many ways overlaps with the AIP initiative and explicitly emphasises that the home is best for older people (Bryant and Lim, 2013), and the environment where home is located is equally important to older people’s wellbeing and later-life care.

The importance of place, in this case the urban built environment, to public health, including older people's health (Fried and Barron, 2005), is starting to gain more attention in the context of globalisation (McMichael, 2000), as rapid urbanisation and industrialisation have also taken place in many developing countries in recent decades. Nevertheless, experience from industrialised countries has clearly shown how important the urban built environment could be to public health. For example, the famous Chadwick's Report (1842) on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain was viewed as crucial to providing statistical evidence of the link between the built environment and disease (Fraser, 2003). According to Fraser (2003), the central element in Chadwick's report was the revelation of the links between insanitary housing, deficient sewerage and deficient water supply with disease, death rate and life expectancy. Similar trends are also evident in the US, where urban public health was improved through urban infrastructure development (Perdue et al., 2003). After years of development, adequate urban infrastructure had brought infectious disease under control and evidences continually emerged on the connections between the built environment and public health. As Perdue et al. (2003) assert, in contemporary societies, increasing evidence has shown connections between injury rates and building features, between toxic environments and mortality, between building or housing design and crime and violence, and between the built environment and physical activities. The built environment continues to take an important role in determining public health outcomes (Perdue et al., 2003; Kaplan and Kaplan, 2003). Areas such as urban planning (Corburn, 2004), land use (Barton, 2009), and urban form, features and transportation (Frank and Engelke, 2001; Burton et al., 2011) have also been identified as possible pathways that influence people's physical and social activities, in turn impacting on their health and wellbeing.

As for any other age group, going outdoors provides a greater opportunity for older people to be physically active, in turn benefiting their health.

Despite the fact that physical inactivity is a preventable risk factor (Sugiyama and Thompson, 2008) for older people's health, sedentary lifestyles were still identified by (Edwards, 2002) as a serious health risk for older people in contemporary societies. Studies (Singh, 2002; Keysor and Jette, 2001) have found that physical activity prevents the onset of common chronic diseases and improves older people's physical condition, such as muscle strength, balance and flexibility, thus reducing falls and injuries (Sugiyama and Thompson, 2006). However, going outdoors is also the first set of activities that older people find too hard to perform due to increased environmental barriers caused by their functional decline (Sugiyama and Thompson, 2006). According to Chui (2001), there are different aspects of space (personal space, neighbourhood space, activity space and action space) in relation to a person's environment. Older people who become increasingly restrained by physical deterioration would experience shrinkage in all these four spaces. Nevertheless, there are different ways to be active, and walking can be an effective means for older people and is considered one of the most important health initiatives at an international level (Sugiyama et al., 2010; Sugiyama and Thompson, 2008). In fact, as Newsom et al. (2004) suggest, walking is a particularly appropriate method of exercise for older adults, who are often less confident than younger people in trying other forms of physical activity. Furthermore, with a decline in functional capability, older people tend to spend more time close to their homes and in walking distance. In this case, the immediate neighbourhood environment becomes very important to older people, and one benefit of AIP is that older people can continue to have an active lifestyle by living in a familiar environment.

The benefit of AIP, according to Rowles (1983), is that older people can develop 'a sense of insideness' about their homes and neighbourhoods. It is this lifelong familiarity and knowledge with a single physical setting that can help them to continue navigating in their neighbourhoods, even with their progressive sensory decrement and sometimes beyond their level of

physiological competence (Rowles, 1983). Based on a study of a group of US elderly people, Rowles (1983:302) concludes that over many years of their residency, the older people “developed an inherent ‘body awareness’ of every detail of the physical configuration of this environment”. They knew where the environmental barriers were and their familiarity with these barriers provided compensation for their declining functional capacity. Together with familiarity about bus routes and places to go for leisure activities, shopping trips, entertainment and civic engagements, this insider knowledge enables older people to manipulate and control the physical environment by restructuring it (Peace et al., 2011). As a result, remaining in a familiar environment makes the process of ageing easier and enhances autonomy and control, as well as continuing participation in the community. Based on her own study, Smith (2009) also confirmed that this intimate physical knowledge about their homes and neighbourhoods enables older people who live in deprived neighbourhoods to maintain greater functional competence, which enables them to maintain their daily schedules despite their declining physical health.

2.3.4 Social engagement and AIP

The existing studies provide strong evidence that social isolation is one of the major threats to older people’s health and wellbeing (Rossall et al., 2015; Cornwell and Laumann, 2015). According to Morrow-Howell and Gehlert (2012), social isolation can be viewed as the absence of social engagement. Social engagement is a distinctive concept from social networks and social support and it “results from the enactment of potential ties in real life activity” (Berkman et al., 2000:849). Based on this definition, this research took the view that civic engagement is a part of social engagement. Civic engagements, such as volunteering or political involvement in the community, are not viewed differently but as a type of social participation under the definition of social engagement (Morrow-Howell and Gehlert, 2012). Social engagement creates opportunities and spaces to develop social networks and, in turn, provides social support. Morrow-Howell and

Gehlert (2012) further emphasise that engagement has to happen when a person is actively involved with something and with someone or in a group outside of their immediate family circle. It is through these social contacts that mutual understanding or reciprocal relationships are established. In this sense, neighbourhood social engagement provides older people with opportunities to build their social networks through different types of social activities.

It has been argued that older people may “depend to an even greater extent than younger people on what their local environment and personal social networks have to offer” (Janevic et al., 2004:315), as they travel outside their own neighbourhoods less often than other age groups due to their decreased mobility (Rosso et al., 2011). Thus, in addition to providing physical activities, neighbourhood outdoor places also provide community-based social interaction, which impacts on older people’s health (Leyden, 2003; Tan et al., 2006; Michael et al., 2008). Neighbourhood outdoor environments with better walkability are also associated with more-frequent contact with friends and neighbours (Bertera, 2003), and this social tie has been found to make a significant contribution to the mental health and wellbeing of older people (Bowling, 1991; Bowling and Stafford, 2007). For example, a lack of daily walking is associated with depression (Berke et al., 2007) – the most frequent mental health problem among older people (Blazer, 2003). Bowling and Stafford (2007) also found that neighbourhood characteristics influence older people’s social and physical activities, and older people who live in affluent areas are likely to have more social activities. Clearly, neighbourhood spaces are prominent places and venues for social interaction and community participation from which older people can gain many benefits. In fact, older people who live in the same communities throughout their lives generally have a greater number of friends in the neighbourhoods and have better social networks, in turn positively influencing their health and well-being (Schutzer, 2004; Walsh et al., 2001; Wang et al., 2012; Gardner, 2011). Better social environments

can also promote physical activities through community interactions (Norstrand et al., 2012; Van Cauwenberg et al., 2014). For example, research has found that engaging in social activities is associated with increased physical function among community-dwelling older adults (Unger et al., 1997) and more active lifestyle (Lewicka, 2005; Leyden, 2003). Some scholars (Unger and Wandersman, 1982; Unger and Wandersman, 1985) also suggest that neighbours are a prime source of aid for short-term emergencies and a source for informal referrals to needed resources. Thus, informal activities between neighbours can further increase participation in neighbourhoods and mobilise neighbourhood resources to a further extent. Studies focused on the relationships among social support, health and wellbeing also suggest that older people who are embedded in active social networks tend to have better physical and mental health than older adults who are less involved with other people (Krause, 2011; Cornwell and Laumann, 2015; Chan and Cao, 2015; Matsuo et al., 2015)

Social exclusion has been a popular topic in recent years among scholars concerned with the effect of urban changes. However, this does not mean that social exclusion only happens in urban areas during the process of urbanisation. Research has also found that urbanisation can have an impact on elderly groups from rural communities (Walsh et al., 2012; Walsh et al., 2014). In urban neighbourhoods, social exclusion is often apparent when people or areas experience a combination of high unemployment, poor housing and high crime (Phillipson 2013b). Older people in particular are more vulnerable to such changes, as they can be excluded in multiple ways, including social relations, services and civic engagement (Phillipson, 2007). Thus, the impact of urban deprivation brings particular attention to older people in these neighbourhoods (Scharf et al., 2005). Many scholars (e.g. Berkman et al., 2000; Bertera, 2003; Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Gu et al., 2008) place the contexts of networks, social cohesion, and social engagement and control as crucial to older people's health and wellbeing, and these factors may even help to keep many people alive. Erick

Klinenberg's sociological analysis of the 1995 Chicago heat wave (Klinenberg, 2003b) is a strong reflection on how influential social networks and community interaction can be, in particular for those deprived of social contacts, social networks and community interactions. As Klinenberg (2003a) suggests, the high number of deaths among older and single people during the heat wave evidently reflected the isolation and indignity of their lives and failure of the city to provide necessary service and support. When someone dies alone and at home, such a death can be a powerful sign of social abandonment of a society. Klinenberg (2003a; Klinenberg, 2003b) also points out that the degradation, fortification or elimination of public spaces during spatial transformation is a key trend that contributes to the vulnerability and social isolation of older people in a city.

2.3.5 The meaning of AIP

In addition to economic gain, policy makers and many AIP studies have emphasised the fact that the majority of older people live independently in the family home as long as possible or as long as they have the desire to do so (Sixsmith et al., 2014; Stones and Gullifer, 2014). This is also the case across many industrialised countries, such as the US (Gitlin, 2003), Germany (Oswald et al., 2010), Belgium (Buffel et al., 2014a) and the UK (Sixsmith and Sixsmith, 2008). In the UK, 95% of people aged 65 and over live in their own homes (Tinker, 1999), and the majority of older people, including those over 75, express their desire to stay at home as long as possible (Sixsmith and Sixsmith, 2008; Gitlin, 2003). The underlying reason for this desire is that older people are attached to their homes and neighbourhoods (Kamalipour et al., 2012). Attachment to place is defined as a set of feelings about a geographic location that emotionally binds a person to that place (Rubinstein and Parmelee, 1992), and this bonding can be functional and emotional (Livingston et al., 2010; Livingston et al., 2008). As Lewicka (2011) asserts, the mounting evidence concerned with place attachment continues to show that place is still important for people's emotional and physiological wellbeing, despite the fluidity of the

contemporary world caused by widespread mobility and globalisation. Place attachment continuously shows a positive and beneficial outcome to individuals when the place meets their practical and psychological needs (Livingston et al., 2010). However, scholars (Peace et al., 2011; Sixsmith et al., 2014) also point out that home and community are integrally intertwined; thus, the meaning of home should not be confined to the structure of walls without placing it in its immediate context or setting (Wiles et al., 2011). Home is the constellation of both the built and social communities (Stones and Gullifer, 2014). Iecovich (2014) also asserts that home is considered as a place with different but interrelated dimensions, including physical (home and neighbourhood), emotional (sense of belonging), and social and cultural dimensions (relationships, connections, values and beliefs).

To older people, home provides comfort, privacy, and a sense of independence and control, as well as a platform for their social activities to maintain their existing social networks (Cristoforetti et al., 2011; Wiles et al., 2011; Sixsmith et al., 2014). After studying a group of very old people who lived independently, Stones and Gullifer (2014) found that independent living provided the older people with maximum autonomy and privacy, sustained their self-identities and gave purpose to their lives. Although there were obvious challenges as a result of age-related health problems, institutional care was negatively perceived by the older people regarding their self-autonomy and control. With continuing adaptation to changes, home and community environments provide older people with opportunities to pursue specific interests and express their individuality (Stones and Gullifer, 2014). As Sixsmith et al. (2014) also assert, for older people who need some level of assistance, being cared for in one's own home has positive implications for the older person's sense of control and empowerment compared to an institutional-based service.

Sense of self is also recognised as central in the construction of the meaning of place (Cristoforetti et al., 2011), in turn reinforcing older people's

attachment. Rowles (1980) describes this attachment as “autobiographical insideness”, which arises from a lifetime of experiences. As Rowles (1993:66) asserts, “our images of self and sense of identity as we grow older, and as those around us age, are inextricably intertwined with the places of our lives” and “as we grow older and remember the events of our lives, places are selectively recalled as we reinforce our image of who we are”. Rubinstein and Parmelee (1992:139-140) list several reasons why place attachment is particularly important to older people’s identities: firstly, feelings about one’s experiences in or of key former places may be an important part of remembering one’s life course and thus of organising and accessing a lengthy lifespan. Attachment to key former places is one way of keeping the past alive and thus relates to the later-life tasks of maintaining a sense of continuity, fostering identity and protecting the self against deleterious change. Secondly, attachment to a current place may be a way of strengthening the self: a means of retaining a positive self-image. Thirdly, attachment to a current place may be a way of acting or representing independence and continued competence.

2.3.6 Problems of AIP

As outlined above, there are many benefits for older people of AIP, and the concept has been adopted by many governments across the globe in response to population ageing. However, not everyone sees place attachment as a fundamental human need and always positive. There are a great number of older people who do not want to AIP (Hillcoat-Nalletamby and Ogg, 2014). Increasing evidence now shows that some older people reject ageing in the same neighbourhoods and express a desire to relocate and seek new experiences (Livingston et al., 2010). Studies have been conducted under the concept of assisted living, which is viewed as a practical and positive intervention from governments to enhance older people’s level of independence. However, these studies have also unveiled the complex nature of AIP initiatives and have revealed some contradictory facts, arguing that the reality is a long way from the ideology and rhetoric

found in policy statements (Sixsmith and Sixsmith, 2008). According to Sixsmith and Sixsmith (2008), the negative attitude towards dependency in Western cultures has created pressure for older people to seek necessary help, and AIP has become problematic rather than enhancing their quality of life. As a result, many older people experience loneliness, fear and increased vulnerability, and with their continuing declining functional health and increasing frailty, home becomes a place of social exclusion and isolation (Sixsmith and Sixsmith, 2008), rather than a desirable place to age. Moreover, within this literature, the meaning of AIP and its relationship with assisted living also vary. To some scholars, AIP is “a process where the older individual constantly adjusts to declining health and other age-related changes to be able to remain in the home” (Granbom et al., 2014:10). Therefore, assisted living enables older people to continue to age in their long-lived homes by providing them with necessary medical care and advanced technological equipment (Aceros et al., 2015). Others take a different approach to AIP, for example examining assisted living under a long-term residential environment, focusing on how to build these places to be more home-like for the users (Chapin and Dobbs-Kepper, 2001; Cutler, 2007). The underlying idea of this literature stream is to view long-term residential facilities as a place for older people to AIP without relocation to nursing homes. Therefore, the meaning of place is being defined with much wider geographical coverage.

An increasing number of studies (Phillipson and Scharf, 2005; Byrnes et al., 2006; Byrnes, 2011; Smith, 2009) also provide evidence that AIP may not suit all older people, such as impoverished urban elderly or those who live in deprived urban areas. As Phillipson (2013b) argues, older people may perceive the rapid urban changes in their neighbourhoods as negative, and this reduces their sense of belonging and attachment. For some, in particular older people who have a lack resources to move or adapt successfully (Byrnes et al., 2006), the meaning and definition of AIP should be carefully reconsidered. Byrnes et al. (2006) strongly argue that AIP

should not be narrowly confined and examined as the ability to stay in one's home and that the dimensional nature of a person's 'home' should be considered. After examining the lives of older female African Americans who lived in a deprived urban neighbourhood in the US, Byrnes et al. (2006) suggest that different types of urban neighbourhoods pose different external risks both physically and emotionally to older people's health and that older people who live in deprived urban neighbourhoods face different challenges. Therefore, AIP may be the best choice for some but not for others. The limited ability of older people who live in deteriorated and impoverished neighbourhoods to change or move away should not be ignored, and their specific understanding of home as influenced by their race, class, gender and sexuality also needs to be carefully examined within the context of AIP (Byrnes, 2011). The perception of environment can be influenced by cultural values, in turn affecting the participation of older people in outdoor activities and their wellbeing. Alves et al. (2006) linked outdoor greenery, the quality of life of older people and the role of culture together and found that ethnicity does have an impact on the choice of different types of outdoor environments among Hispanic and Anglo-American elderly. Alves et al. (2006) argue that outdoor greenery can be considered as enabling quality of life by facilitating engagement to decrease boredom, by helping to gain a sense of control to decrease helplessness, and by creating more social interaction to decrease loneliness. Therefore, more culturally responsive environments facilitate more-meaningful engagement and opportunities for personal control and social interaction, in turn improving older people's wellbeing.

Individuals' perceptions of their neighbourhood environments are key elements in determining the level of their satisfaction and attachment with their neighbourhoods, which impacts on their physical and social activities (Browne-Yung et al., 2016; Miller and Olson, 2015; Belon et al., 2014; Buffel et al., 2013). Different perceptions influenced by different cultures or under different social contexts may lead to different outcomes. As Bowling and

Stafford (2007) suggest, perception of poor neighbourhood environments is associated with a greater likelihood of low social activities. Livingston et al. (2008) suggest that greater civic engagement leads to stronger place attachment. Thus, for older people, how they perceive their local physical neighbourhood environments may have a stronger influence on their social functioning and may play a bigger role than perceptions of social and service environments in contributing to the link between neighbourhood and health (Wen et al., 2006). For example, some of the outdoor environmental barriers perceived by older people include poor accessibility and street connections; discontinuous or uneven pedestrian footways (Wennberg et al., 2010); and inadequate facilities, transport and lighting (Holland et al., 2007; Holland et al., 2008), clearly reducing the level of outdoor activity of older people (Wijlhuizen et al., 2007). Studies (Quinn, 2008; LaGrange et al., 1992; Wilcox et al., 2003) have also confirmed that perceptions of unsafe neighbourhoods and fear of crime also reduce older people's level of walking and participation in outdoor activities in their neighbourhoods. Laws (1994) argues that the urban built environment can be oppressive towards marginalised groups, including older people. Planning and design decisions that are not sensitive to the needs of older people deny older people's rights to use the neighbourhood spaces as they wish. Older people may suffer from being unable to participate easily and freely in many social and physical activities because of fears of crime, falls, injuries and social exclusion. Social exclusion may also happen to older people when their own biographies and values are in conflict with the overall environment. This makes older people feel alienated and discordant.

2.4 Urban ageing in China

2.4.1 Traditional value on ageing and concept of filial piety

It is commonly known that how Chinese people treat older people is greatly different to how they are treated in Western societies. From a social constructionist perspective, this is a telling example of how different

historical and cultural factors can influence people's understanding of ageing and society's treatment of older people. In contrast to the dominance of the Western medical understanding of ageing, it is Confucianism that has played a fundamental role in shaping the understanding and cultural conception of ageing and value of older people in China. Following Confucian practice, an individual in Chinese society is defined as a relational being (Chou, 2009). Relationships are organised in hierarchical order, and individuals have to act upon this order according to the role they are assigned within the specific context, such as father–son, husband–wife, king–courtiers and elder–younger. It is through these hierarchical relationships that Chinese elderly are respected as knowledgeable and wise, establishing a high social status and absolute authority (Powell and Hendricks, 2009; Johnson, 2005). This positive attitude towards older people has been reflected in all sectors of social life through Chinese history. Based on Confucianism, a set of norms and rules was also established to guide individuals' ageing processes. For example, Confucius's most famous account of his gradual ageing progress and attainments is still popular in everyday discourse and is frequently quoted in everyday interaction and dialogue. As the Master said:

At fifteen, I set my heart on learning.

At thirty, I could stand firm.

At forty, I had no doubts.

At fifty, I knew the Decree of Heaven.

At sixty, I was already obedient (to this decree).

At seventy, I could follow the desires of my mind without overstepping the boundaries (of what is right). (Pan et al., 1993:11)

From the initial reading of the quote, it seems similar to the Western belief in accepting the chronological order of ageing, from infancy to death, as an inevitable fact of human life. However, with a closer look at the quote, one might argue that under Confucianism, old age is not perceived as a separate and independent stage of one's life. Growing old means maturity, wisdom

and reaching the best of oneself. The whole process of ageing is set to achieve this ultimate end goal. Thus, each stage in the life course is assigned with a specific meaning and task in response to achieving glory in the end. Together, these tasks form a principle to guide the whole ageing process.

The concept of filial piety, viewed as the cornerstone of Confucianism (Ho et al., 2012), has played a crucial role in establishing social norms and values that define the status of older people in society and in the family. The family is regarded as the most basic and fundamental social institution of Chinese society, and the harmony of family relationships is seen to be the very basis of the harmony of society (Wang, 2015; Du, 2013). This harmony is achieved with the supremacy of seniority and calls for the absolute power of parents over offspring (Treas, 1979). As Ho et al. (2012) assert, fulfilment of one's filial duty to one's parents is crucial to be accepted by society. Sung (1998) also points out that Confucianism views being filial as a manifestation of human nature that distinguishes humans from animals. Thus, if one cannot devote love and respect to one's parents, then we are no better than animals. As the Master said, "filial piety nowadays means merely to support one's parents. But even dogs and horses can be cared for to that extent. Without the feeling of respect, wherein lies the difference?" (Pan et al., 1993:13). Although the Master himself recognised the difficulty of having a cheerful countenance all the time in doing filial duties, he still emphasised that material support alone does not count as filial (Sung, 1998). Parents have given birth, cared and been concerned for, and sacrificed for the child; therefore, to practise filial duty is to repay the debt by looking after them with respect and compassion. Through Chinese history, filial piety has been viewed as a moral relationship between parents and their children. To older people, to have filial children is viewed as ageing successfully. This deeply rooted filial piety tradition has determined Chinese elderly people's high social status and has provided a safety net for their wellbeing in later life.

AIP is a new concept to Western gerontology in recent decade, but the preference to be cared for in the family home and long-lived community in one's later life is not unique in the 21st century, nor is it just a Western ideology. However, the crucial factor that determines Chinese elderly people's choice of age care and why the majority of the elderly people in contemporary China have to rely on their family members for later-life care and AIP is the filial piety tradition. In fact, as Izuhara and Forrest (2002) point out, one of the distinctive features of East Asian societies is the deep-rooted family ethnic tradition of filial piety. As outlined earlier, under Confucianism, Chinese culture places strong emphasis on family values; filial piety still holds a central status in contemporary China (Qi, 2014; Zhang et al., 2014). This is reflected in traditional phrases such as 'gao yang gui ru shang zhi xiao, wu ya fan bu xiao qin yan, wei ren ruo shi bu zhi xiao, bu ru qin shou shi ke lian'³ ('even lambs know filial piety as they suckle on bent knees, and crows feed their parents to show filial piety. If a person has no sense of filial piety, he is truly pathetic and inferior to animals'); such phrases are still highly praised and promoted in everyday life. Older people have enjoyed a high social status throughout Chinese history. Thus, care by one's children in the family home continues to be preferred and expected by older people and their family members in contemporary China. As a result of this deeply rooted filial piety tradition, the family care system still holds a primary position and continues to operate in contemporary China (Qi, 2015; Lin, 2014). However, this deeply rooted tradition continuing to meet new challenges: conception of old age and later life care for the elderly face many dilemmas as a consequence of rapid urbanisation and modernisation in recent decades (Cheung and Kwan, 2009).

³ Originated from a poetry called 'Bai Shan Xiao Wei Xian' 《百善孝为先》 All goods started with filial piety. Composed by a Qin dynasty poet Wang Yongbin (王永彬) in his anthology *We Lu Ye Hua* 《围炉夜话》).

2.4.2 Reconstruction of old and age care in contemporary China

2.4.2.1 Filial piety and age care

Since the Communist Party took power in 1949, care for older people has predominantly taken two forms: care in the family home by one's children and family members (consistent with the ideology of filial piety) and institutional care, which has been provided by the government since before economic reform took place in the 1980s (Wong and Leung, 2012). However, one has to be clear that government-subsidised institutional care is limited and is only available to the commonly known 'three nos' elderly (those with no family support, no ability to work and no source of income) (Wong and Leung, 2012). In other words, the state only provides basic institutional care (shelter, food, clothing and minimal funds for medical and burial needs) for those who are living alone without any family members, those on low incomes and those with disabilities. As a consequence, attitudes towards institutional care are negative and with deep resentment. Furthermore, in practice, this regulation often applies to rural residents but not to the urban population, as only urban elderly people have access to pensions. Institutional care facilities in urban areas are also lacking, and equal access to them is problematic (Davis et al., 1995; Tao et al., 2014).

It also worth noting, before the establishment of socialist China, Confucianism was already under attack by the reformers and criticised for "advocating superficial ceremonies, moral complacency, feudalism, and the cast system, the denial of individuality, the oppression of women, and the cultivation of a weak and passive personality" (Chou, 2009:44). Filial piety was officially attacked during the Cultural Revolution. However, it subsequently became embraced in recent decades through law and government propaganda. For example, the intensive establishment of Confucian institutions both nationally and internationally and academic resources sharing outside of China can be viewed as a shift towards the promotion and the reinforcement of Confucian ideology (Tan and Louie, 2008). In fact, the Chinese government has made deliberate attempts in this

regard, and the value of filial piety is clearly articulated in the Constitution (Jiang, 1995) and in a legal framework that oversees the delivery of filial duty by adult children to their parents (Du and Xie, 2015). In order to ensure filial piety practice, the Chinese constitution, criminal law, marriage law and the establishment of the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Older People in 1996 all clearly assign the responsibility of care for the elderly to family members (Powell, 2012). There is no reward, but penalties will be imposed if families do not fulfil their responsibilities.

In addition to law, Cheung and Kwan (2009) argue that education has been used to cultivate filial piety in China over many centuries and seems effective even through a period of modernisation. They found in their study that although city-level modernisation appeared to have stronger negative influences on the filial piety of those with lower educational attainment, the reduction was less among people with higher education (Cheung and Kwan, 2009). Thus, with all these reinforcements of the filial piety tradition, it is not surprising that recent studies (Zhang et al., 2014; Gilroy, 2013; Wong and Leung, 2012; Li et al., 2012; Sereny and Gu, 2011; Zavoretti, 2006) continue to find that care for the elderly in China still rests primarily with the family and that older people still rely heavily on their family members to meet their needs regarding living arrangements, financial support, physical support and emotional support. For example, Zhang et al. (2014) found that 45% of the adult children in their study co-resided with their parents, and 65% of older people in their study reported that their major sources of income were from close family members.

2.4.2.2 Deficit-module of ageing and inadequate welfare provision

Concerns about population ageing without an adequate infrastructure seem to have intensified in recent decades (Zhang et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2014a; Lin, 2014). There has been a similar trend to that in advanced industrialised societies, where Chinese older people, too, are being highlighted as a burden to society by both the government and scholars, with concerns about

economic resources and the increased demand from an aged population on pensions, housing, welfare provision and medical insurance (Chen, 2009; Chen, 2011; Chen et al., 2010; Lu et al., 2014). According to Phillipson (2013a; 1998) old age is a product of social construction in advanced capitalist countries “through the social and economic institutions linked with mandatory retirement and the welfare state. These became crucial in shaping the dominant discourse around which ageing was framed, and the identities with which it was associated” (Phillipson, 2013a:71) in many Western societies. This understanding of old age is also useful for our understanding of ageing and old age in contemporary China, in particular in the rapid process of urbanisation. However, with the urban and rural Hukou registration and the complexity of these systematically divided social categories, researchers who are interested in ageing discourse in China need to be cautious when applying this viewpoint in the Chinese context.

As mentioned earlier, a pension system was established in the 1950s and was narrowly applied to urban residents who were employees of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), employees of collectively owned enterprises in urban areas and civil servants. In addition to pensions, these groups of urban populations were also guaranteed a ‘cradle-to-grave’ social security system that covered all basic social security services, including healthcare and employment (Lu and Piggott, 2014; Dong and Wang, 2014; Wang et al., 2014). As a result, only for the urban elderly in China was the life course reordered into distinctive stages, with statutory retirement at age 60 years for men, 55 years for female civil servants and 50 for female employees (Wang et al., 2014). Indeed, many rural elderly people continue working through later life. Thus, one may argue that these reforms reinforce the ageing structure and that older people continue to be viewed as a distinctive social group more than ever. Furthermore, the inadequate welfare provision between rural and urban populations cannot be ignored. Although a series of pension reforms has taken place since the 1980s, further expansion of the pension scheme took place in 2004, and rural social endowment

insurance was established in 2009. Nevertheless, to date, only a quarter of older people in China have pensions (Hu and Yang, 2012). Thus, the insufficient social security coverage in China creates complex situations where many older adults in China, in particular the rural elderly, have to depend on their children for financial support and care (Yi et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2014; Hu and Yang, 2012).

Concurrent with the ageing population, vast urbanisation and rapid economic growth have happened across many regions and cities in China. Property and housing development have been substantial economic activities since the reform of the 1980s. However, as Li and Yang (2012) argue, housing marketisation has worsened the living spaces of the Chinese elderly. Soaring housing prices exclude the majority of older people from the housing market. As Li and Yang (2012) point out, few of the older people aged 60 and above live in the newly built high-quality communities; they tend to still live in the old communities built before and during the economic reform period. Housing shortages, high price and limited space also prevent many older people from co-residing with their children, even when the younger generation are willing to provide care and support to their parents (Zimmer and Kwong, 2003; Yang and Chen, 2014; Yu and Cai, 2013; Zhang, 2004; Zhang et al., 2014; Du and Qu, 2013)

In response to the ageing population, in recent years, the Chinese government has started to emphasise the role of community services for later-life care. This is a clear reflection of, as Wong and Leung (2012) assert, the shift from a state-orientated welfare service, which was predominately provided and funded by work units and governments for urban residents, towards the socialisation of a social welfare system that promotes diversified funding sources and service providers and attracts public service users. This shift also sets the tone for the future of age care in China and has extended the welfare responsibilities beyond the government to the wider society in the forms of businesses, the family and charities (Wong and

Leung, 2012:574). Although in recent decades the market economy has led to many private care institutions being established to provide age-care services under market rules, those who cannot afford it are once again denied access to formal age-care services (Liu et al., 2013; Wong and Leung, 2012). In this sense, those who can afford it are not always ‘those who need the service most badly’ (Li and Yang, 2012:218). As a result, for many old people, without government subsidy and with no affordability, seeking long-term institutional care becomes difficult or impossible.

In addition to the existing family and institutional care system, the recently developed 973 aged care framework also reflects the government’s intention to continue adopting the family care system as the primary source for aged care. The 973 framework is a national guideline and strategy for coping with the increasing ageing population. It sets the goals for local governments to achieve 3% of older people to be cared for by age care institutions and 97% to stay within the communities. Underlying these actions, filial piety is highlighted as a unique aspect of Chinese culture (Chappell and Kusch, 2006); it has become part of the strategy to solve the societal crisis of an ageing population and age care. Thus, one may argue that this movement is similar to those of many industrialised countries, with their encouragement of AIP as a strategy to reduce demand on institutional care and public spending. Although, the Western concept of AIP has never been explicitly used by the Chinese government, similar phrases, such as ‘jujia yanglao’ (home care) ‘shequ yanglao’ (ageing in community) and ‘shequjujia yanglao’ (community care), are often used interchangeably and in parallel for the same policy trends.

2.4.2.3 Changing family structure

Economic reform, urbanisation, rural migration, the marketisation of urban land and the demand for better living standards have resulted in significant urban expansion and housing reform in many cities, including Beijing. As a result of the one-child policy and urbanisation, the family structure has

changed dramatically in China over the last 30 years. Between 1982 and 2010, the size of the average family decreased from 4.41 to 3.10 persons per household (Zheng et al., 2012). It also created a 4-2-1 family structure (Chen, 2011; Zavoretti, 2006) of one child, two parents and four grandparents in a household. There were six children for every Chinese elder in 1975 (Glass et al., 2013), and by 2035 there will be two elders for every Chinese child (Jackson et al., 2009). Thus, as Zavoretti (2006) argues, the collapse of the state-provided social security system and the shrinking family size in urban areas have made the home care model unrealistic. In addition, the loss of entitlement for housing provision and welfare benefits has created a sense of insecurity in urban areas (Cao et al., 2014).

Furthermore, economic reform and modernisation are not only boosting living standards but also bringing a Western culture of individualism (Hansen and Svarverud, 2010) into Chinese society. As a result, the values of the filial piety tradition and family members caring for older people are being challenged and are starting to decline (Du, 2013). Thus, the family caring system is being weakened by the younger generation, who perceive that they should have a lesser role in care-giving to their parents (Wang, 2012). This shift in attitudes may be interpreted as a consequence of individualisation (Qi, 2014) in Chinese society and the erosion of the filial piety tradition (Wong and Leung, 2012).

Despite China's fast economic growth in recent decades, studies on age care (Song, 2014; Cheng et al., 2011a) suggest that the country's elderly care facilities and personnel are still in severe shortage and are inadequate. Although increasing expansion of residential care has occurred in recent years, the quality of care in general is far from satisfactory. As a result, older Chinese people continually rely heavily on personal resources, seeking support mostly from their spouses and adult children (Yang and Wen, 2015). Moreover, the Chinese government explicitly encouraged and 're-emphasised' (Zavoretti, 2006:215) home-based care for elderly parents

through the 1980s and 1990s. Family members have been assigned with responsibility and are to play a significant role in the care of the aged population. Legislation has also been established to ensure the fulfilment of adult children's duty. The most recent policy change of abolishing the one-child policy, permitting single child couples to have second child, clearly reflected the government's tendency towards promoting a home care initiative (Cao et al., 2014) by reviving Confucian family values as the key to easing the increasing demands of an aged population (Zavoretti, 2006). However, for the first generation after the implementation of the one-child policy, this change seems too late to solve their problems. According to Song (2014), families who have lost their only child or who have an only child who is disabled have a higher risk of facing economic constraints or difficulties. In practice, children are not only the sole sponsors of their parents' financial needs; they are also the guardians of their parents' assignment to care homes or any medical treatment, even though their parents are still independent and capable of decision making.

Furthermore, due to the rising economic activities and employment in larger cities, higher internal migration also impacts on the family care system (Zimmer et al., 2014). Young people are seeking employment and new lives away from their rural origins or cities. In addition, family size in China has reduced significantly as a result of the one-child policy (Hu and Peng, 2015; Wang, 2015). As Qi (2014) points out, the result of the one-child policy had led to changes in family structure towards the 4-2-1 family structure (four grandparents, two parents and one child). Unlike the previous generations, many people who were born in the 1980s have no siblings with whom to share the caring responsibilities. Thus, urban living may provide better access to employment and modern lifestyles, but higher costs of living and increased consumerism leave families overall less able to meet the medical, social, financial and psychological needs of their elderly relatives (Ren and Treiman, 2014; Patel and Prince, 2001; Ng et al., 2002). These burdens are increased further by the lack of welfare support for elderly care from the

Chinese government. Thus, together with inadequate public age care facilities, this group of elderly people have already experienced the impact of family structure changes and face an uncertain future in relation to their care arrangements. Prior studies (Wang and Chen, 2014; Liu, 2014; Cai et al., 2014; Glass et al., 2013; Wong and Leung, 2012) on population ageing and aged care in China have explicitly pointed out that providing appropriate care for older Chinese people is already a challenge to the Chinese government, as well as for individual families.

2.4.2.4 Changing attitude

The social changes have been rapid in China since the economic reform in 1979 (Chuang, 2015). However, with the limited research on the Chinese urbanisation process, we may not have sufficient evidence to have an in-depth understanding of how these changes have affected Chinese older people's lives. Nonetheless, changes on the individual and societal levels of conceptions of age and ageing have become more apparent in recent decades. For example, the common assumption that Chinese people tend to have a more positive attitude towards ageing and older people than Western societies do has been challenged and has been found in reality to be the contrary, at least among university students (Luo et al., 2013). Empirical findings have revealed that Chinese students hold more-negative attitudes towards ageing and older people compared to their US peers. Luo et al. (2013) suggest that Chinese students' more-negative attitudes towards ageing and older people may be a result of a combination of educational, social and economic factors, as well as a lack of gerontological curricula in the Chinese educational system. Furthermore, economic reform and modernisation are not only boosting living standards, but also bringing a western culture of individualism (Hansen and Svarverud, 2010) into Chinese society. As a result, the value of the filial piety tradition and caring of older people by family member is challenged and starting to decline (Du, 2013). Thus, the family caring system is being weakened by the younger

generation who perceive that they should have a lesser role in care-giving to their parents (Wang, 2012).

Negative attitudes towards older people are also expressed through social media and captured by journalists. The researcher argues that the particular trend in the social media coverage of older people in recent years clearly reflects changing perceptions and values of older people in contemporary China (Chow and Bai, 2011; Chow and Xue, 2011). There are great numbers of incidents being reported on social media, on national and regional television, and in newspapers whereby older people are in conflict with younger generations. For example, the ongoing dispute between public square dancing grannies⁴ and their neighbours (BBC, 2013) because of the loud music played in public or shared places eventually led to the Chinese government beginning to address these as public nuisances. China's General Administration of Sport and the Ministry of Culture released a joint statement saying that public square dancing would no longer differ from place to place and must follow 12 sanctioned dance routines, which need to be taught by approved fitness instructors with approved songs (Vincent, 2015).

A new phenomenon of not helping older people in need in public areas has also arisen recently. For example, in Wuhan, an 88-year-old man fell in the street and injured his nose; people passed him by but no one helped as he lay on the floor suffocating on his own blood. In recent years, many similar incidents have been reported (Liu, 2011) and in an online poll ran by People's Daily, more than 80% of respondents chose the option not to help if they see an older person in a similar situation or in need of help. This phenomenon became more apparent after the high-profile case of old lady Xu in 2006 (Minter, 2011). A young man had helped an old lady but was

⁴ Older ladies who gather in a public park, open space or any space that they can find in public or around their neighbourhoods to dance or do light exercise together. They often bring their own music speakers. The dances usually take place in the early morning or after dinner.

blamed by her that he was the one responsible for her injury. The China Health Institute published a guide on how to help older people who fall and an online poll conducted by one of the biggest social media company Sina also revealed that 42.1% would choose not to help, 37.5% were undecided and only 20.5% would choose to help (Lv, 2011). News or media coverage of young people being physically or verbally assaulted by older people for not giving up their seats on public transport (Liu, 2011; Ifeng, 2015) has become more frequent. As a result, one popular phrase that has circulated quickly and frequently appears in news reports, newspaper articles and on social media is ‘不是老人变坏了，而是坏人变老了’ (it is not older people becoming bad, it is bad people getting old). It seems that all these negative attitudes point a finger at the group of older people who are from the generation of *honweibing* militants (Red Guards) during the period of the Cultural Revolution. They were in their teens and 20s at the time, and now the majority of them have reached retirement age. They are now referred to as the ‘lost generation’, as they missed out on a proper education (Lin, 2013). It is unclear how much this claim is valid or whether the whole phenomenon is just a reflection of the unique rebellious disclosure that is encouraged by Internet culture (Huanqiu, 2014). A warning from one of the state’s newspapers summarised some of the urgent issues and problems that Chinese society has to face. It stated:

the moral judgement of older people should not be encouraged. Older people should not be generalised based on the specific behaviour of individual elderly people and should be respected at all times. In fact, older people are the minority group who have been marginalised by society and many of them have fallen behind the rapid growth of economic and technological innovation. As a group, older people have no voice or agency in the society. The more and the faster that the society develops, the greater the distance that older people would experience with the modernisation. (Huanqiu, 2014)

The negative attitude towards older people in recent years may also be viewed as the expression of ageism as a result of rapid social economic changes. According to Bai et al. (Bai et al., 2016) the changing traditional values and beliefs about ageing and older people due to China's modernisation and urbanisation in recent decades are apparent. Exposure to negative stereotypes about older people as a group have started to damage older people's own self-perception and self-esteem and have created a higher risk of mental health challenges (Bai, 2014; Bai et al., 2016).

Interestingly, the changing conception of age in urban China did not have a profound impact on the age care pattern. Studies have shown that child and family care has been the primary care model serving the needs of the Chinese elderly. At present, the majority of Chinese elderly, including urban residents are still ageing at home (Zhang et al., 2014; Du and Qu, 2013; Zhan et al., 2008b).

2.4.3 Urban ageing and social exclusion

Ageing in an urban neighbourhood can be both positive and negative to older people. There is increasing attention being drawn to the effect of urban neighbourhood deprivation, as well as other aspects of disadvantage, on older people's wellbeing. These matters are also important in a Chinese context. According to He et al. (2010), older inner-city neighbourhoods have the highest poverty concentration, as many of these houses are social houses and rental properties in poor physical condition. However, Song and Zhu (2011) also suggest that through government-supported city renewal projects of dilapidated houses, the housing standard has been upgraded and many neighbourhood environments have been improved, effectively restraining the urban decline.

The change of the physical environment at the neighbourhood level has brought better public transportation and easy access to other places. However, Song and Zhu (2011) also recognise that these gains have been

at the cost of deprivation of the social and spatial interests of lower-income groups, with them moving out of the city centre and being replaced by middle-class and higher-income groups (Bian et al., 2005; Chen and Hamori, 2013). Rapid urbanisation in many Chinese cities has often resulted in the relocation of inhabitants and the loss of homes in which families have lived for many generations, as well as the loss of social networks and older friends in the neighbourhood. According to Gilroy (2012:473), the neighbourhood can be viewed as a material experience and a set of relational resources and practices that support a good old age. She found that for older people from Wuhan, their lives were enriched by their inside knowledge about their neighbourhood; to some of the older people, the attraction of existing social networks and support overrode the need for a better living environment (Gilroy, 2012).

Consequent to urbanisation and the one-child policy, the change to family structure in recent decades has also created a trend of an increasing number of empty-nest elderly people⁵ in China (Su et al., 2012; Wu et al., 2010b; Yuan and Ngai, 2012). Increasing concerns have also been given to empty nesters (Chen et al., 2014c; Luo and Waite, 2014; Wu et al., 2010b; Xiaoming, 2010; Yang and Victor, 2008; Song, 2014). Social isolation has been identified as one of the main health concerns among this group of older people (Yuan and Ngai, 2012), and its effect on older people's health is starting to show its negative consequence. Social isolation is closely linked with loneliness; Wu et al. (2010b) found that the majority (80.94%) of empty-nest elderly people in their study had moderate to high levels of loneliness. Social isolation also impacts on empty-nest elderly people's social support and puts them at risk of depression (Yuan and Ngai, 2012; Su et al., 2012; Tian et al., 2010b).

⁵ Older people who live alone or with a partner without their adult children living with them or nearby.

It is important to note that psychology has only been introduced to China in recent decades. Thus, unlike in Western countries such as the UK and the US, professional psychological support for people who experience life crises and mental health issues is extremely lacking in China. Furthermore, mental health research in general and particularly for older people is scarce, and relevant support and resources directly targeting older people are lacking in practice (Cao et al., 2015; Luo and Waite, 2014; Hector Tsang et al., 2011). Nevertheless, the traditional conception of mental health issues still creates many barriers for older people to take the initiative in seeking help (Gong and Furnham, 2014). The stigmatisation and discrimination of people with mental health problems and the inadequate access to mental health services have made many older people scared to express their emotional issues, causing them to suffer in silence. Increased studies have also shown that loneliness and a higher prevalence of depression among the elderly population across China (Ma et al., 2009; He and Ye, 2014; Chen et al., 2014c; Lei et al., 2014). According to Jing et al. (2011), long-term illness and family conflict are the two leading causes of suicide among the urban elderly in China, and between 1991 and 2009, the suicide rate among the urban elderly was consistently higher than in all other age groups (Jing et al., 2011). According to Yuan and Ngai (2012), neighbourhood-level support is crucial to reducing the risk of social exclusion for empty-nest elderly. They found that neighbourhood social engagements reduce older people's loneliness and that a good social network with neighbours increases their emotional support when they need it. Research on successful ageing (Lewis, 2014) has also found that in addition to engagement with family members, interaction at the community level contributes to older people's definition of successful ageing. In other words, community involvement makes older people feel supported by wider society and at the same time provides them with opportunities to contribute. This reciprocal relationship makes them feel valued and productive, in turn contributing to their overall health and wellbeing (Lewis, 2014).

2.5 Gaps in the knowledge and the research questions

2.5.1 On AIP

As Vasunilashorn et al. (2012) assert, the relationship between older people and their living environments has been one of the main focuses of environmental psychology for the past 50 years. The consequence of this domination means that a great number of AIP studies have relied heavily on the theory developed from environmental gerontology, which is mainly concerned with the physical environment and an individual's adaptation to the challenges created by the environment in their later life. On the outdoor environment at the neighbourhood level, attention is mainly paid to institutional settings, but older people and their residential environments, in particular urban neighbourhoods, have largely been ignored (Smith, 2009). The notable increase in recent studies on health, service and technology has also been influenced by recent political concern on the impact of the ageing population on existing economic and welfare resources (Graybill et al., 2014). As a result, attention has mainly been paid to the reasons for AIP and how best to support it. Thus, the experience, meaning and modification of home environments have consumed much of the research attention, rather than the public places of ageing in residential neighbourhoods (Gardner, 2011).

Furthermore, the concept of AIP evolved in Western societies, and the topic has been studied mostly by Western scholars and research has been conducted in developed countries such as the US (Jackson, 2013), Canada (Hwang, 2008), Australia (Stones and Gullifer, 2014), the UK (Hwang et al., 2011) and other countries in Europe (Aceros et al., 2015; Sixsmith et al., 2014). In this sense, it is questionable whether this knowledge can be applied across different cultures, and further empirical analysis is needed globally. As Lagacé et al. (2012:412) assert, "ageing and old age are historically and culturally determined. Old age can be a privilege in a given space and time, whereas it can lead to social exclusion in another. Similarly, according to a specific cultural context, ageing can be understood and

experienced either as a regression or as a progression”. Our perception of the environment can be influenced by cultural values, in turn affecting our interaction and relationship with the environment. Therefore, the diverse cultural influences on the perception of the ageing process and its influence on our interaction with the environment may well draw our attention to the wider applicability of the theory and concepts that were developed mainly within the Western context. As Smith (2009:32) states, “understanding experiences of older people in different social, political and economic contexts can allow exploration of existing knowledge and new knowledge to emerge”. This is the only way to develop more culturally responsive environments and to provide opportunities for more meaningful engagement.

2.5.2 On urban ageing in China

Despite the political constraints and their late development, ageing studies in and about China have increased in popularity. These studies cross a variety of disciplines, such as geriatric, biological, psychological and sociological studies. During the last two decades, the number of articles has steadily increased with varying topics. In the field of public health, scholars have started to pay attention to older people’s mental health (Chou et al., 2006), studying topics such as depression (Dong et al., 2008; Su et al., 2012) and accessibility to health services and age care services (Tao et al., 2014; Sun et al., 2014; Cheng et al., 2011a; Gu et al., 2009b). These trends may be viewed as a reflection that there are many social issues starting to arise as a result of the changing welfare policy on housing, pension and health insurance (Liang et al., 2013; Feng et al., 2013; Du, 2013). It also provides a glimpse of the overall societal changes in the traditional family structure (Zimmer and Korinek, 2010; Sun, 2013) and social division, such as declining urban rural Hukou restrictions, as none of these issues exists independently and their interactive nature is apparent. It is also important to note that the wide coverage of topics also represents the fragmentation of existing knowledge on ageing in China. Nevertheless, economic concerns

have dominated ageing studies, and a great number of studies are policy evaluations on pension, medical and public health spending (Zhang et al., 2012). As a result, coverage has narrowly focused on pension policy (Wang et al., 2014; Williamson et al., 2012; Ebberts et al., 2009), with particular attention paid to the rural population (Lu and Piggott, 2014). As Logan et al. (2010) argue, too often the actual residents of the city are a forgotten or overlooked factor in the urban development process.

I argue that this trend is a reflection of the focuses of the Chinese government and academics, whose concerns with economic and policy development outstrip the micro-level analysis of social changes and its impact on older people's everyday lives and experiences. In particular, concerns with the issues of environmental problems, ageing and older people are rare. This may be due to the global influence on the Chinese government's perception of old age as an economic and social burden and a problem of society to be solved (Powell, 2012). Currently, the ageing population is perceived as a threat to further economic gain. These perceptions are clearly reflected through these studies. As Zhang et al. (Zhang et al., 2012) assert, most of the ageing research in China is conducted in public institutes and government agencies. The government agencies and organisations are still the largest funders of ageing research and often guide and participate in ageing and elder care research. Population studies have been a leading trend in relation to ageing studies in China (e.g. Xie et al., 2015; Zimmer et al., 2014; Wang and Chen, 2014; Li and Zhang, 2014). As a result, many of these studies are heavily descriptive and often ignore the interrelationship between older people and environmental factors and the causal effects between the two.

Furthermore, the close political involvement in the higher education sector is also a driving force of this trend, and it is the dual administrative structural of China's higher education system that makes this involvement possible. Specifically, "each academic institution has an academic administration

headed by a rector or president and a Communist Party administration headed by a party secretary or executive vice president” (Altbach, 2009:15). Thus, as a consequence of a lack of academic independence in Chinese higher education, many research projects focus on meeting the government’s demands, instead of providing evidence on ageing issues and for urban planning and development. Thus, many aspects of the urbanisation process; its impact on Chinese older people’s lives, health and wellbeing; and aspects of older people’s rights and interests during these social changes are hardly known, and very little literature and research has been produced in this area (Wang, 2012). However, a positive trend has emerged in recent years. For example, studies on the changes in the value of filial piety (Zhan et al., 2008b), on family structures such as child care (Goh, 2009) and on the loss of an only child on later-life care (Song, 2014) are beginning to paint fuller pictures by providing older people’s perspectives. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that such studies among Chinese scholars seem to have high repetitiveness (Mao and Chi, 2011; Du and Qu, 2013) and be conducted by the same group of scholars (e.g. Zhao, 2013a; Zhan et al., 2013; Song, 2009). One may argue that this again reflects the urgent need for empirical evidence on older people’s lives and perceptions, as well as many issues in relation to their quality of life and wellbeing.

2.5.3 Research questions

To social constructionists, paying attention to the cultural and institutional influences on the meaning and experiences of ageing is to seek a better understanding of the diversity across the globe (Dannefer and Settersten, 2013). Concern on the impact of an ageing population and urbanisation is increasing in China; however, the problem is a complex one. Beijing, like many cities in China, has to face the challenge of how best to house and care for the growing number of older people, many of whom are frail and require some level of support or care. The importance of a sustainable environment for a harmonious society has been recognised by the Chinese

government since the millennium. The 11th Five-Year Action Plan on Environment and Health (2007–2015) placed greater emphasis on the environmental impact on public health and research programmes across areas such as pollution, climate change and diseases. The Chinese government is clearly demonstrating its effort of putting ageing, environmental and health issues high on the policy agenda. Recent amendment on ‘Law of the People’s Republic of China on Protection of the Rights and Interest of the Elderly’ (‘Old-Age Law’) clearly indicates that the government’s intention on promoting age-friendliness in the environment (Du and Xie, 2015). However, to date, very little has been written to systematically document the ongoing process of urban transformation and its impact on older people’s lives in large Chinese cities and how these regulations and legislation being carried out in practice. The implications on older people’s lives of rapid environmental change at the neighbourhood level are, as yet, unexplored.

It is against this background that this research set out to empirically investigate AIP in the Chinese context with a specific focus on older people living in three urban neighbourhoods in Beijing. The overarching objective was to explore how their lives and perceptions on age and ageing are being affected by the rapid changes that have occurred in their neighbourhood environments as a result of urbanisation. The following questions guided both the data collection and analysis:

- What are residential neighbourhood environments like in Beijing?
- What do older people do in residential neighbourhood places?
- What physical/social factors influence older people’s participation in residential neighbourhood places?
- How do older people perceive their residential neighbourhood environments?
- How do older people perceive AIP?
- How do older people make connections between neighbourhood environments and AIP?

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methodological strategy that underpinned this research and the application of an ethnographic method. Firstly, the potential paradigms within which the research questions might have been asked are considered and the choice of constructionism is explained and justified as the most appropriate paradigm to provide a philosophical foundation for this research. Sections 3.3.1 to 3.3.3 outline the main features of ethnography, its historical background and the theoretical underpinning for this research. The main reasons behind selecting an ethnographic methodology are outlined in Section 3.3.4. In Section 3.3.5, consideration of other possible approaches and a rationale for their non-selection are also provided. The practical design of this research is presented in Section 3.4.1, along with the core methods used for data collection. A table is used to show how different research methods were used to address particular research questions, along with justifications for the selected methods and their appropriateness for this research. The selection criteria for research sites, sampling, data collection process and analysis issues are presented in Sections 3.4 and 3.5.

In the following Section 3.6, the research process is reviewed with a reflexive analysis in terms of the access and recruitment of participants from the targeted neighbourhoods. This is followed with a reflection on the fieldwork, focusing on political censorship and its role in shaping participant recruitment and the interview process. The stance of the researcher during the fieldwork period is also reflected upon, with a focus on the factors of the researcher's biographical and educational background. Last three sections, the ethical issues and trustworthiness and rigor of the research are presented in Sections 3.7 and 3.8 and followed with the conclusion.

3.2 Constructionism

The way we design and the way we conduct our research are closely linked with our epistemological stance. Underpinned by different philosophical grounds, different epistemological standpoints hold different assumptions about the human world and what knowledge is available and how one as a researcher can study this knowledge adequately and reliably. In other words, the methodological strategy and research methods and techniques employed through the research process to generate this knowledge inevitably depend on the basis of the chosen epistemology.

Concerned with the social world, scholars often divide themselves or are divided by others into three epistemological positions based on their philosophical understanding of reality: objectivism, subjectivism and constructionism (Crotty, 2012). Objectivism, grounded in the positivist paradigm, sees reality as a single, fixed and measurable phenomenon that has objective meaning and already exists outside of the human mind and is waiting to be discovered (Merriam, 2002 ; Tracy, 2013a). Thus, it is possible for the social researcher to discover objective truth with quantified measurement and to standardise and generalise a social phenomenon. In contrast, subjectivism denies that objective reality exists independently; rather, the meaning of reality is imposed merely by the subject (Crotty, 2012). Opposing both claims, social constructionism argues that there is no independent meaningful reality that exists, nor is it a purely subjective creation; instead, we construct it. The distinctive character of constructionism is the recognition of the interaction or interplay between human beings and their social world. Thus, our knowledge about the world depends on how we interact with it. It is during the ongoing engagement with the world or object that meaning and knowledge are constructed and derived.

By recognising the partnership between human beings and their social world, constructionists argue that “because of the essential relationship that

human experience bears to its objects, no objects can be adequately described in isolation from the conscious being experiencing it, nor can any experience be adequately described in isolation from its objects” (Crotty 2012:45). This line of argument is clearly echoed in the field of gerontology. As Dannefer (2013) strongly argues, age cannot be understood entirely as a self-contained individual process. It is also necessary to recognise socio-cultural factors (e.g. social change, history, cohort location and social status) as dimensional forces that influence individuals’ physical and mental health, in turn shaping the very meaning and significance of age. Thus, as (Crotty, 2012:9) asserts, different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon, and this construction process can be influenced by time, place, and different structural and/or ideological factors. In this sense, by taking a constructionist stance, this research also recognises the reciprocal interaction (Smith 2009) between older people and their environments. For example, if we recognise that older people’s attachments depend on the interactions between themselves and their homes or neighbourhood surroundings, we surely need to look at what ways, during these engagements, older people’s own identities, as well as the meanings of ageing and place, are derived, in turn affecting their perceptions about the world and life. Thus, in considering the epistemological stance of both objectivism and subjectivism, as well as the interactive nature between older people and their living environment, the constructionist stance was consistent with this research’s conceptual framework and best suited to this study.

3.3 An ethnographic approach

3.3.1 Definition of ethnography

An ethnographic approach was adopted to guide this research process. Ethnography has its roots and influence in 19th-century Western anthropology, which was employed for understanding different societies and cultures considered at that time to be exotic (Harrison, 2014). However,

through its development, ethnography has been diffused from its root discipline into many disciplines and subject areas, such as sociology (Deegan, 2001), organisational study (Ybema et al., 2009), communication (Dourish, 2014), education, and nursing and healthcare (Ryvicker, 2011; Couser, 2005). As a result of this expansion, its paradigmatic classifications have also been moved, transformed and continually shaped by social science, arts and humanities while at the same time influenced by a range of theoretical stances, such as positivism, interpretivism, Marxism and phenomenology (Harrison, 2014; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Thus, more broadly, ethnography has been viewed as a form of research that studies people or cultural life in naturally occurring settings, with the researcher directly or indirectly involved with the people in their ordinary activities (Brewer, 2000). The vital aim of the researcher is not only to describe and understand what people do and the meaning they ascribe to their actions but also how they experience what they do (Wolcott, 1999). Different researchers have their own emphasis. For example, Brewer (2000) suggests that data should be collected “in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally”. In a similar vein, Hammersley (1985) placed greater emphasis on the researcher’s position by saying that however familiar the social world under study is to the researcher, the researcher “must be treated as an anthropological stranger... to ‘get inside’ the way each group of people sees the world” (Hammersley 1985:152). To Wolcott (1999), ethnography was always more anthropologically orientated and has always been associated with and intended for studying culture. Thus, it is not at all surprising to find the term ‘ethnography’ often being defined inconsistently, since it is not often used in a wholly orthodox way and does not fall under the auspices of one epistemological belief (Lambert et al., 2011:17). As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) assert, one single standard definition cannot capture all of its meaning in all contexts.

In responding to this historical complexity, many scholars have focused on the practical level of what ethnographers do and have identified some

trademark features when embracing an ethnographic approach (Lambert et al., 2011; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Lambert et al. (2011) identified the two core criteria of ethnography: it is a field-orientated activity that has cultural interpretations. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) highlight five main features that ethnography should contain:

- 1) People's actions and accounts are studied in an everyday context.
- 2) Formal/informal conversations with research participants and observation are the main data sources.
- 3) The data collection process is relatively unstructured.
- 4) The research is conducted on a small scale or with groups of people.
- 5) Data analysis focuses on the interpretation of the meanings of human actions and its implications in wider contexts.

In this instance, in line with the epistemological stance and theoretical framework for this research, the following section will focus on ethnography underpinned by constructionism. Thus, the ethnography defined for this research is a form of qualitative research that needs to be conducted in a social setting; it studies culture, people's perceptions, the meaning of social life and human actions through observation of their everyday activities. In order to document these cultural patterns, the researcher must personally enter the social setting or the field, being involved with the participants and settings directly or indirectly; there are no presumptions and categorisations before the data collection process – concepts are born out of the data analysis. The final result of an ethnography will be a detailed analysis of unstructured data with representation and illustration of directly quoted extracts from the participants' own accounts (Hammersley, 1989).

3.3.2 Why ethnography

Several factors contributed to the choice of an ethnographic approach for this study. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, ethnography was once used to explore and understand Western colonised countries to explore the

unknown worlds and cultures of others. In the 21st century, more-advanced technology provides greater resources, and the information available through the Internet and increased international travel and migration may have helped to reduce the great level of dichotomy between East and West. However, gerontology as a scientific discipline was only developed in industrialised countries, and concepts of ageing and empirical evidence are dominated by and derived within these societies. As a result of its late development, gerontological knowledge about ageing and older people in most developing countries, including China, is still scarce. Although population ageing has been recognised as a global trend that impacts on most societies, these demographic changes have occurred at different times and different rates under different political, historical and social contexts. In this sense, the impact of these changes on ageing and older people's lives, concerns and experiences cannot be generalised, and it is necessary to examine the context specifically (Lloyd-Sherlock, 2013). The recognition of diversity among older people's ageing experiences and of the fact that these experiences can be shaped and influenced by structural and cultural differences represents a fundamental shift in the study of ageing. Whether this is a conception of ageing or ageing experiences, there is no single universal or dimensional outcome that is not influenced by a person's social circumstances, opportunities and experiences through their life course (Dannefer and Settersten, 2013). As Cohen (1992) strongly argues, without placing gerontology into a historical and culturally specific context, there will be a danger of defining the 'universal' old person claimed by gerontology with a Western-derived agenda. Hammersley (1998) also states the need to gain in-depth knowledge about the culture of a group before one can produce valid explanations for the behaviour of its members. This is particularly important if one's aim is to understand the conception of age and ageing experiences not only at community and regional levels but also in a global context.

The diverse historical, social and cultural contexts create diverse understandings and perceptions of ageing, identity, environments and life experience (Phillipson, 2008b). It is only through such recognition and in-depth understanding that we can hope to address the social disadvantages and oppressions that are embedded among these differences. The rapid social changes that have occurred as a result of urbanisation and modernisation call for more research and analysis on the individual level, in order to better understand how older people, react to these changes. As Phillipson (2011) argues, there is a strong case for more research in 'urban ethnography' to capture the disparate experiences of those living in cities. In particular, as outlined in the literature review, in developing countries, intense global change, complex patterns of urbanisation and population ageing are the main influential elements of these experiences. Detailed fieldwork is a "necessary step in capturing many aspects of the urban condition" (Sassen, 2000:146) and will be especially valuable for understanding the impact of urban growth on different groups in the city, as well as older people's relationship with urban changes (Phillipson, 2011).

Secondly, ethnography enabled this research to take on a participant-centred approach to the study of AIP through a close encounter with the social world under study (Fassin, 2013; Gans, 1999). A key principle of ethnography is that the investigation needs to take place in the actual social setting from the participants' viewpoints. From a constructionist stance, the meaning of reality and knowledge about the world are only derived from interactions and engagements with others. In this sense, it is not only necessary to study where these interactions take place (the natural context in which these interactions occur) but also to get as close to the area and people as possible. Ethnography emphasises the importance of experience in an everyday context. For older people, their declining health status makes their use of space very much around their homes and neighbourhoods instead of the wider public sphere of work and distant places. The neighbourhood is one such setting in which these interactions take place.

Thus, by locating oneself in the position of older people, the researcher seeks to uncover the meanings and perceptions that older people hold and to view these understandings against the backdrop of the overall world view or 'culture' (Crotty 2012).

Thirdly, ethnography has been used as one of the key strategies by many urban sociologists to examine the impact of urbanisation and industrialisation in many well-urbanised societies. The rise of urban sociology at the University of Chicago from 1917 to 1942 played an important part in the development of ethnography (Deegan, 2001). A series of well-known urban ethnographies were produced during and after this period, and these demonstrated the advantage of using ethnography to capture different social groups and their experiences during the urbanisation process. For example, by living for a long period of time in a Boston neighbourhood, Gans (1962) successfully captured the process of city redevelopment and its impact on people's lives. Detailed ethnographic accounts enabled Gans to develop different ways of representing how people made sense of their experiences during the process of urban renewal. At the same time, his findings challenged the general perception about what were described as slums. His ethnographic account helps to reveal the contradictory understandings of a place between the people who live there and urban planning professionals. The more-recent ethnographic studies of urban music culture (Parker, 2014; Black, 2014; Beer, 2014), middle-class parenting (Francis, 2011), the lives of homeless people in the US (Borchard, 2009; Irvine, 2012), multiculturalism in academic works and media accounts (McCabe, 2011), and youth culture (Glass, 2012) show the wider coverage of topics on urban life. These studies demonstrate the strengths of ethnography in portraying all sectors of urban life through observation and participation, and they were a valuable source in considering the ethnographic approach for this research. Ethnography enables the researcher to reveal the perceptions of informants and their

experiences with greater scope and depth, allowing us to know and share a reality with those in the study.

Fourthly, if we can see a city as a place that has “manifestations of ideas on how society was, is and should be” (Beall, 1997:3), in this sense, older people’s accounts of the city should also be valuable sources to provide us with a fuller picture of all the ideas that are being reflected upon. Phillipson (2013b) asserts that ‘urban ethnography’ is urgently required to capture and reveal the motivations, attitudes and experiences of older people who are AIP. The literature review has already demonstrated that few studies have explored the experiences of Chinese older people in the context of urbanisation and AIP. As Climo (1992:42) states, ethnography allows the researcher to “examine the diversity within a culture and its meaning to the people who live in it”. Hence, an ethnographic approach is well suited to ageing research, as older people are enabled to engage and can be engaged with the research. Ethnography gives older people a more direct voice and participation in the knowledge-production process. Ethnographic accounts can reveal the attitudes, motivations and experiences of older people during the process of urbanisation and city redevelopment. Entering the field, observing and trying to understand from the user’s perspective deepened the researcher’s understanding about the way that older people interact with their neighbourhood environments and about the positive and negative influences that the neighbourhood environments have on the daily lives of Chinese older people. In turn, it allowed the researcher to understand how AIP can be possible. The detailed fieldwork can help the researcher to gain a better understanding of how different aspects of urban conditions contribute to older people’s lives and their ageing selves. As defined, an ethnographer needs to document not only the cultural patterns about the people and events from a particular setting but also the perceptions and meanings that they ascribe to their actions and behaviours (Hammersley 1985, Brewer 2000, Wolcott 1999). To ethnographers, the interpretations that people hold of their identities and lives are the pathway

to understanding the meanings underpinning their behaviours and actions (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Thus, social experiences, personal perceptions and contextual meanings are all crucial elements for understanding urban life, including the older age group.

3.3.3 Constructionism and reflexive ethnography

As mentioned above, through its development, ethnography has endured a turbulent time, and the most notable criticism is about its objectivity and tendency towards a naturalistic stance. The naturalistic approach emphasises and respects the natural integrity of the social phenomena under investigation (Athens, 2010) and believes that the researcher can avoid imposing any external propositions on the settings or the participants. Thus, the early ethnographic studies also reflected the assumption that there is an objective reality that social scientists can reveal through an objective, systematic way of investigation (Denzin, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 1995). For early ethnographers, by describing them through 'thick descriptions' (Geertz, 1973), the social meanings and ordinary activities in naturally occurring settings (Brewer, 2000) can be captured. This claim of a privileged representation of the social world produced by the early ethnographer was heavily criticised throughout the postmodern movement (Brewer, 2000). Indeed, being close to everyday interactions, the investigator can observe and initiate conversations with participants; the researcher is able to collect first-hand information about the participants' interpretations of the social settings to produce 'thick descriptions' of the social interactions under investigation. However, from the constructionist standpoint, a 'thick description' is not just the researcher copying down descriptions of what has happened; it is the result of active involvement, interpretation and making sense of the world under study. It is the reflection of why and how certain elements are left out and others are not. (Emerson et al., 1995b:8-10). It is "the peculiar practice of representing the social reality of others through the analysis of one's own experience in the world

of these others” (Van Maanen, 1988:IX). This reflects an awareness of how social construction affects the research process, the research participants, the data and the analysis (Charmaz, 2008:399). In response to the criticism, a divorce from the naturalistic stance of a possible objective understanding of the social world was assured (Brewer, 2000), giving rise to reflexive ethnography.

Compatible with constructionism, reflexive ethnography also disputes the assumption that there is an objective truth or meaningful truth that exists independently out there; theorists do not claim that an objective knowledge of the social world can be produced by the researcher, despite the intimate and close involvement claimed by the ethnographer. By “accepting the possibility of alternative valid accounts of any phenomenon”, it also means that “all theories about the world are seen as grounded in a particular perspective and worldview, and all knowledge is partial, incomplete, and fallible” (Maxwell, 2012:6). In other words, as researchers, we are part of the social world under our study. Even a non-participant observer cannot totally detach from the social setting under his or her investigation. We interpret as well as construct during our interactions with the social settings and our participants. By interacting with the people in the field, we may well change how the participants behave normally or interfere with the normal activities that would be carried out without the researcher’s presence. The researcher’s interpretation and choice of action will certainly be influenced by their personal biography. For example, even within the same family, perceptions and meanings of filial duty or ageing can be very different between siblings or have divergent interpretations between generations (Ng et al., 2002; Zhan et al., 2008a). Researchers originally from China or with Western origins, male or female, old or young, will have different impacts on the social settings and participants, in turn affecting the data collection. With this in mind, ethnography underpinned by social constructionism asks the researcher not only to examine the participants’ social construction process about their social world and actions but also to view the research

world as equally socially constructed. In other words, the researcher's own construction of the methodology throughout the entire research process is also placed under scrutiny (Charmaz, 2008). Thus, reflection on the construction process is necessary to capture the different voices in the same settings, including the researcher's own position and constructions.

In summary, in order to address the study's research questions, a reflexive ethnographic approach was adopted. In particular, during the data collection process, observational field notes were collected and further reflective notes were produced. A set of photographs of the research settings was also produced by the researcher. Together with the interview data, these three sets of data formed a coherent, sometimes contradictory, account of the experiences of the participants and the researcher in the given social settings.

3.4 Data collection process

3.4.1 Research settings

Beijing was selected as the study city for three reasons. Firstly, like many other large cities in China, the city has experienced rapid urban development and regeneration in recent decades (Zhang and Lu, 2016; Zhou et al., 2006). The city has thus experienced great physical and social changes. Secondly, Beijing is one of the few municipal cities and regions where the urban population has become concentrated due to China's uneven economic development (Liu et al., 2014a). Thirdly, as the capital city, Beijing can be seen as a reflection of all economic, political and social policy movements in China. The problems faced by the municipal government and experienced by the aged population in Beijing may also be faced by other cities and regions in the continuing process of urbanisation both in China and in other developing countries. Therefore, it will be beneficial to study Beijing as an example. Fourthly, the practical considerations of access to the research site and the recruitment of the

participants also contributed to the decision-making process. Fieldwork in China for social science researchers is still limited and access to the field and recruitment are big issues to overcome (Heimer and Thogersen, 2011). For example, access to locations such as Tibet, Xinjiang province, government organisations and academic institutions is often denied or has to pass through an extreme process of approval and surveillance with a great deal of time consumed (Yeh, 2011; Thogersen and Heimer, 2011). However, it is also commonly known that *guanxi* (social network) is an aspect of Chinese people's everyday activities. As the researcher originally came from the city, the researcher's personal connections enhanced the possibility of recruitment and smooth access to the field. In fact, this proved crucial to the completion of the fieldwork. Further analysis about this issue is given later in this chapter.

The existing research on urban studies in Beijing (e.g. Qiao, 2004; Barros et al., 2012; Tao, 2015b; Fang et al., 2015) reveals significant differences in urban neighbourhood types with different living environments. Although, for this research, the selection of the neighbourhoods heavily relied on the recruitment of the participants, factors including geographical location, architectural character, the physical environment of the neighbourhood, housing type and ownership, and the timeline of the urbanisation process in Beijing were considered during the participant recruitment process to ensure that, not all, but different types of neighbourhood environments were included. Through the researcher's own personal connections, she was introduced to two gatekeepers who worked in the street committee offices in two different neighbourhoods. Participants from the third neighbourhood were recruited through the researcher's own family members where she had lived for a considerable period of time. The researcher's personal acknowledgement about the location of these neighbourhoods and initial research on the development of these areas provided her with an idea that the environments of these neighbourhoods would be different from each other. Based on her initial information and evaluation, she took an

opportunity presented by a friend without further quarry on other neighbourhoods or different locations. Thus, all of the participants came from three neighbourhoods located within city centre areas.

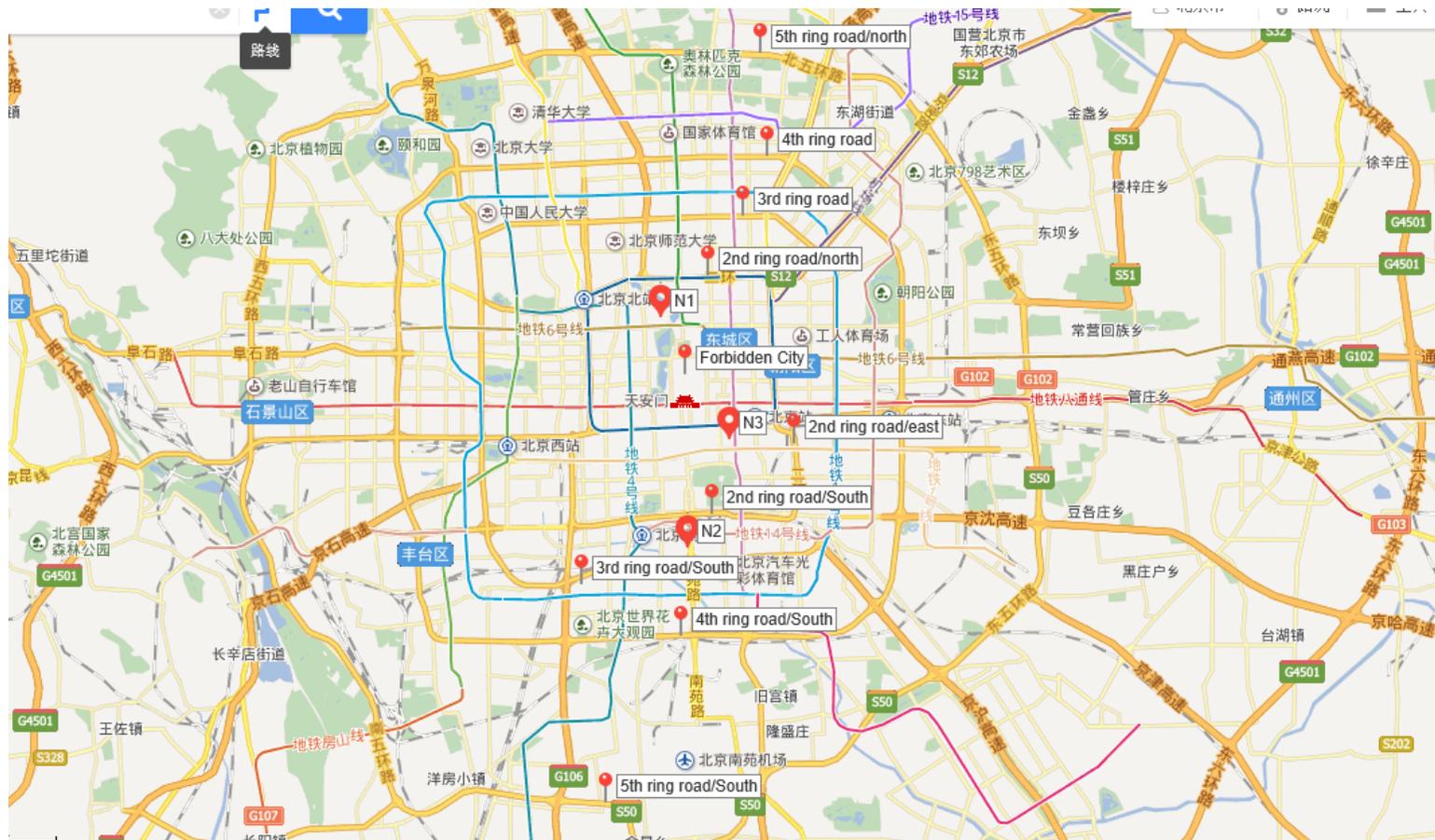
Neighbourhood 1 (N1) was a traditional courtyard housing area in the inner city. As mentioned in Chapter 2, after the Communist Party took power in 1949, the infrastructure in Beijing did not change much, and courtyard houses with Hutong were still the main residential housing type before the economic reform. However, after the Communist Party took power, housing provision became a form of social welfare only available to urban residents. The system was facilitated primarily through a system of low-rent housing distribution by either work units or municipal governments, and this system ended in 1999 (Wu and Rosenbaum, 2008; Chen and Wills, 1996). At present, the majority of these houses are still owned by the government or work unit and are still classified as welfare housing with very low rental prices. To date, only a few remaining areas (most of them within the city core) are still occupied by the traditional courtyard houses, providing a glimpse of this once highly praised Chinese architecture, as well as the culture embedded within them. The older people in this neighbourhood were mostly established Beijing residents: many of them were born and had lived in the same area for their entire lives. Many households are shared by multiple generations.

Neighbourhood 2 (N2) was located in the south of the city centre circle. The three 21-storey buildings were built through 1989–1991. This neighbourhood is commonly known in Western literature as ‘work unit compounds’ (Yan et al., 2014). Thus, residents in this neighbourhood were colleagues from the same SOEs or public institutions. As mentioned above, after the Communist Party took power in 1949, all property owned by the government and distributed mainly through work unit. The central government also located funds to local municipal governments and enterprises (work units) to build urban housing and then rent it to their

employees at a remarkably low price (Kim, 1987). In 2000, many of the residents from this neighbourhood purchased their apartments from their employer. The surrounding environment of this neighbourhood has undergone a great physical transformation. Having worked in the same institution and lived in the same neighbourhood through most of their adulthood, the older people in this neighbourhood were extremely familiar with each other.

Neighbourhood 3 (N3) is also located in the city centre area but in the eastern district. Along with all surrounding neighbourhoods, this neighbourhood was a dilapidated courtyard housing area that was redeveloped through a city renewal project in 2004. The city renewal project took place after the economic reform in the 1980s and accelerated in the mid-1990s. The introduction of the Land Administration Act in 1986 led to the right of land use being commoditised. As a result, urban redevelopment often meant demolishing existing courtyard houses (termed 'dilapidated housing' in the renewal projects) and creating completely new neighbourhoods and communities. In addition, the success in winning the host city of the 2008 Olympic Games resulted in the demolition of these neighbourhoods to an even greater extent (Haugen, 2003; Ren, 2009) in order to make Beijing into a global city. N3 is the product of these developments, in which the entire neighbourhood was re-established both physically and socially. Although N3 was developed under an economic housing scheme, part of its housing stock was still sold at market price. As a result, there are two types of ownership. In contrast to traditional courtyard neighbourhoods, these newly established neighbourhoods are often modern in their architectural designs and layouts, with consideration for automobiles and other contemporary features.

Map 1: Neighbourhood locations



Source: Baidu map 22:06, 10/08/2016, URL: <http://map.baidu.com/>

3.4.2 Access and recruitment

From July 2013 to September 2014, the researcher visited Beijing three times in order to carry out the fieldwork. In 2013, the researcher stayed in Beijing for six months from July to December and went back twice in the following year, spending a further five months there in total. For qualitative research, one guiding principle of accessing the field and sampling is convenience (Lincoln and Guba, 1985a). Thus, being able to access groups of older people also determined the success of data collection for this research.

I considered different ways of entering the field at the initial stage of the fieldwork. Methods such as through officially authorised channels, through non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or just entering a neighbourhood without any affiliations were all evaluated. However, after initial observation in the field, the researcher quickly realised that entering a neighbourhood without any affiliations would not be effective for recruitment. One must bear in mind that China is a *guanxi* (relationship network) society (Chen and Chen, 2004; Krauß, 2010), and this unique cultural system is an important part in Chinese people's everyday lives, guiding all levels of social economic activities (Bian et al., 2005; Troilo and Zhang, 2012). Thus, as a complete stranger suddenly appearing in a neighbourhood, the researcher found it extremely difficult to gain trust, and it was impossible to find channels to build rapport with local residents. The researcher also considered officially authorised establishments, such as a university research centre, as those institutions may provide established contacts and help to gain access. As Turner (2010) points out, these channels take time and patience; for those who have limited research funds and time, it can be extremely stressful. Without the correct 'red stamps' that adorn letters and authorisations provided by all levels of the apparatus, access to the field is often denied. Nevertheless, this route also required some level of connections, which was difficult to achieve as an individual researcher. Consequently, this route was abandoned. The researcher also tried to negotiate access through NGOs.

However, NGOs' own agendas and possible claims to the research results after the fieldwork and analysis (Turner, 2010) were part of the researcher's concerns. In particular, in China, NGOs have complex political backgrounds and often have affiliations to and close links with local government. Eventually, the researcher chose to discard this route too.

Owing to the frustration and worries that the researcher encountered during the initial stage of the recruitment, she cannot agree more with Irvine's (2012) assertion regarding how important a gatekeeper's role can be to recruit participants that are difficult to reach from other channels and in the success of research. In fact, the fieldwork experience further confirmed that in Chinese society, *guanxi* still plays an important role in all sectors of life, and this made the gatekeeper's role more significant during the process of the fieldwork. Whether through family ties, former classmates or colleagues, *guanxi* networks can provide resources or, in Krause's description, a kind of 'social capital' to get things done. In this researcher's case, this was the crucial part for the success of the recruitment (Krause, 2010). After initial attempts at recruitment failed, the researcher started to phone her friends and relatives and provided them with some general information about the research. The aim of doing this was to try to generate a snowball effect that may lead to the next step. One friend said that although that she could not help directly, she would look into her contacts for possible assistance. The result was positive. She introduced two of her friends that were working in the neighbourhood/residents' committees (*Jumin weiyuanhui*) at the time of the fieldwork. In China, neighbourhood committees are the most basic social organisational unit under a street office (*Jiedao banshichu*) and are directly controlled by the local government. It is the first line of communication between residents and the government and helps to deliver and oversee social welfare services. It is also perceived as a grass root organ of state power, mediating civil disputes and helping to maintain public order but without any formal coercive power (Choate, 1998). Through them, the researcher gained first access to N1 and N3. Access to N2 was also

achieved through personal connections; this time, it was the researcher's own family connections.

As Chen and Chen (2004) assert, *guanxi* can be defined and practised at different levels depending on the perceived level of trust, loyalty and obligation between two people. During the recruitment process, these different levels of *guanxi* played out. For example, Gatekeeper A, who had worked in N1 for many years, had already built strong relationships with many residents. As recently assigned to the job, Gatekeeper B's rapport with the locals was still in its early development. Their relationships with the locals were also reflected in the process of the researcher's recruitment and interviews. For example, many participants from N1 expressed their deep gratitude towards Gatekeeper A about how much he had helped them in their everyday lives. With him as the middleman, they welcomed the researcher into their homes with trust and willingness to help. Clearly, their trust in the gatekeeper alleviated their wariness towards the researcher. The less-close relationships between Gatekeeper B and the residents may have helped the researcher to gain access to the neighbourhood, but the actual recruitment of the participants was carried out through a long-term volunteer worker who was also a resident in the neighbourhood and had closer relationships with the residents. This also showed that access to the field can be a constant process of negotiation.

Basic recruitment information was also provided to gatekeepers and three key elements included: older people who are 60 years old or above, older people who lived in the same neighbourhood for at least five years or more, older people who still have relatively good functional health and be able to go outdoors. The researcher also made clear to gatekeepers that there was no preference on gender or specific age group or social-economic background. As was mentioned previously, the initial recruitment of interviewees was not easy, as everyday lives in China are still organised as 'shu ren' (friends outside family members) or 'guan xi' (social network)

systems. Thus, through the researcher's personal connections, three gatekeepers were recruited across three neighbourhoods. Two of these gatekeepers were friends of the researcher's friend. One was researcher's relative. It was through these gatekeepers that the researcher managed to recruit interview participants. After an initial introduction to the gatekeeper by a friend of the researcher, each gatekeeper was left with a detailed research information sheet, basic criteria for potential interviewees and preference of interview place and time (see Appendix 5 and 6). The researcher was informed that the gatekeepers had passed these information sheets on to some of the potential interviewees. Although it was through a non-official channel, the gatekeepers also introduced the researcher to the street committee officials and relevant administration personnel. This was also a great help to recruitment at the time, and the researcher argues that such acknowledgement by these official personnel provides further reassurance to the participants about the research. However, the role of gatekeeper did not always guarantee successful recruitment. On one hand, the trust and rapport that they had with the local residents may have had a negative impact on the participants as they may have found it difficult to refuse participation. In relation to this matter, more in-depth analysis and reflection on the shift of power relationships in the field will be given later in this chapter. At this moment, I would argue that since everyday life was carried out in a 'guan xi' and reciprocal manner, those participants who were willing to take part may be interpreted help out for interview as an opportunity for their future gain with the gatekeeper.

Furthermore, during the recruitment process, some participants preferred to accompany each other to the interview rather than attend alone. Although group interviews were not originally proposed in this research, I feel that such an outcome also reflected the necessary readjustment of the research method in the field to achieve the best possible data collection result. The data showed that these participants were good friends from the same neighbourhood. In this case, with friends and familiar faces around during

the interview process, participants felt less nervous and more comfortable talking and following others' topics and conversations. They provided each other with a sense of security as well as encouragement on the topic discussed during the interview process. This may not have been achieved if the participants were alone with the researcher.

3.4.3 Core methods

Having selected ethnography as the research strategy, data collection for this research adopted three core methods: face-to-face interviews, photography produced by the researcher and observational data (Pigg, 2013; Forsey, 2010). As Wolcott (1999) asserts, ethnography is a way of looking that embraces multiple techniques for data collection and fieldwork. Different techniques provide the researcher with opportunities to experience as much as possible, enquiring and examining "the beliefs, the values, the material conditions and structural forces that underwrite the socially patterned behaviours" (Forsey, 2010:567). In order to better illustrate how different elements of the methods facilitated the process of addressing the research questions, table 1 lists these, along with the particular approaches to each aspect of the investigation.

Table 1: Research methods associated with the research questions and justifications

Research question	Methods	Justification
1. What are residential neighbourhood/outdoor environments like in Beijing?	Observation Photography In-depth interviews	The site observation provided general information on individual neighbourhoods' locations, features of outdoor environments and surroundings / participants' own accounts
2. What do older people do in residential outdoor places?	Observation Photography In-depth interviews	Through observation, the activities, events and interactions that took place in the selected neighbourhoods provided first-hand experience of what older people actually do. What kinds of regular/irregular activities took place + participants' own accounts
3. What physical/social factors influence older people's participation in residential outdoor places /neighbourhood environments?	Observation Photography	Physical factors that constrained or encouraged older people's participation in the outdoor place were identified through observation by the researcher / photography produced in the neighbourhood
	In-depth interviews	Factors that constrained or encouraged participation were identified by the older residents according to their own perceptions and needs
4. How do older people perceive these residential outdoor places / neighbourhood environments?	In-depth interviews	The interviews provided older people's perceptions and experiences of their outdoor places and their needs associated with the outdoor environment
5. How do older people perceive AIP?	In-depth interviews	The in-depth interview data provided older people's understanding on 'ageing in place'.
6. How do older people make connections between neighbourhood environments and AIP?	In-depth interviews	The in-depth interviews provided the participants' perceptions and experiences of their neighbourhood environments in association with AIP
	Observation/photo	Through observation, the features and elements of the neighbourhood environments that contribute to AIP as identified / not identified by the participants were cross-examined by the researcher

3.4.3.1 In-depth interviews

A great number of ageing studies (Borglin et al., 2005; Cloutier-Fisher et al., 2011; Randall et al., 2006) have employed in-depth interviews to find out people's subjective experiences and their perceptions of the world. These studies have provided strong evidence that as a data collection technique, interviews can provide an opportunity to gain knowledge on people's subjective meanings and to get closer to their points of view. As Schultze and Avital (2011) state, what distinguishes the interview method from other approaches is its ability to allow the researcher to engage with participants directly through a conversation and generate deep, contextual nuances and authentic accounts of participants' outer and inner worlds. By doing so, participants' experiences and how they interpret them are revealed. In this instance, the advantage of the interview was that it allowed the researcher to collect data that not only revealed older Chinese people's experiences of living in rapidly changing urban environments but also showed how these changes had affected their experiences and their meaning-making processes of their lives and their perceptions of themselves. Observation may tell us what is happening in these neighbourhoods but cannot tell us why they do the things they do or the meanings they have attached to the particular event and activity. Therefore, the observational data and interview data supplemented each other.

Primarily, interviews were conducted in a casual conversation style, rather than using a strict set of questions, to reduce the anxiety of the participants. However, developing a semi-structured interview schedule with open-ended questions before entering the field helped to inform the interview process suggesting themes of interest to explore (Tracy 2013). The benefit of developing structured questions is that it is easier for the researcher to control the process of interviewing and ensure that the research topic is covered and

discussed properly by narrowing the possible answers. Structured but open-ended questions also allow participants the freedom to express and space to elaborate on issues that the researcher may not have paid attention to but are important to the research questions. As Schultze and Avital (2011) assert, a semi-structured interview is open to the participants' decisions about what is important and relevant to talk about and how they choose to express themselves. Thus, interview questions were organised into four sections (Appendix 1): demographical information of the participant; their everyday usage of the outdoor environment around their neighbourhood; the participant's view of their neighbourhood environment; and the participant's perception of the neighbourhood environment regarding AIP.

In total, 34 participants from three neighbourhoods were interviewed. Before the interviews, recruitment was done through gatekeepers. All of the interview times and locations were pre-arranged by the gatekeepers with the participants, and the participants were introduced to the researcher on the day of the interview. In terms of times and locations, all interviews for N1 and N2 took place at the participant's home. The gatekeeper accompanied the researcher for the initial introduction and left afterwards. Conducting interviews in the participants' homes provided the researcher with great opportunities to collect first-hand information on the participants' living conditions. It also showed their trusting relationships with the gatekeeper and again proved how crucial cultural understanding of the research setting was to the successful outcome of this research. Furthermore, staying in their homes provided the participants with the familiarity of their home environments and comfort and confidence during the interview process. By being offered tea and drinks, the researcher became an outsider and visitor of the place; this arguably enhanced the participants' power, balancing between the researcher and the researched. It also provided a good opportunity to start the

conversation, build up rapport and get into the topic area by asking questions such as “how big is this room?” In fact, many of the participants brought the topic up by themselves without prompting.

All interviews from N3 were arranged at the community centre; the participants normally waited at the resident committee office for an initial introduction. The gatekeepers were informed as soon as the researcher had finished the interview and left the participant’s home or community centre. None of the participants from N3 considered the home as an interview location. Their preference for not using their homes was clear. This may have been due to the housing type of the neighbourhood. It also reflects the more-distant relationships between the gatekeeper and the participants in N3. This is also in contrast with the more-personal connected relationships with the participants in N2, which made conducting interviews in their home environments possible.

All interview times varied between 40 and 90 minutes. Nearly all of the participants signed the consent form for the interview except one participant, who was illiterate. In this case, oral consent was recorded and all needed information about the nature of the research and interview was given before the interview. In line with the gatekeepers’ requests, small gifts were purchased at the researcher’s own expense and presented to the participants after the interviews. The participants did not learn about the gifts before the interviews in order to avoid incentivising participation.

As shown in the appendix 1, semi-structured interview questions were prepared before the interview took place (Hoffmann, 2007; Leavy and Brinkmann, 2014). The majority of participants were willing to answer the questions that the researcher asked during the interview process. Through the interview process, the interview schedule also shifted and

changed in light of earlier interviews, a recognised aspect of qualitative research (Leavy and Brinkmann, 2014; Van Den Hoonaard, 2005). For example, the questions were not always asked in chronological order as presented in the appendix 1. The researcher found that after the initial introduction it was easier to start the interview as a casual conversation rather than proceeding straight to the questions and answers. By doing this, participants often started to talk about the issues related to the research topic without the researcher directly asking the question, and many times they talked beyond what the questions planned to seek. Other times, for some participants, the researcher had to ask the questions directly, in order to give the participant some direction, or ask questions to refocus. Through the interview process, the researcher was also aware that the gatekeeper's presence in the room may have had a certain level of influence on participants' willingness to talk. Thus, the recording of the interview normally started after the gatekeeper's departure in order to provide a sense of security and privacy to the interviewee. Nevertheless, as many participants have a close connection with the gatekeeper, sometimes, the gatekeeper's presence also provided a chance to talk beyond what they might have planned to divulge. It seems that the presence of the gatekeeper also provided a sense of empowerment and reassurance to the participant. However, the researcher was fully aware that this was not always the case as the level of trust between the gatekeeper and the participant varied. Thus, by carefully evaluating the conversations that were exchanged during the interview, participants were encouraged to talk more, or sometimes to just leave it as a free talk without precise direction.

3.4.3.2 Observation

As noted earlier, observation for this research was conducted from 2013 to 2014. All of the observations were conducted in the selected neighbourhoods. Observations focused primarily on older people's

usage of neighbourhood places in their everyday lives. The methods of recording were field notes and researcher-produced images. To find out what people do with and to each other (Gans, 1999), participant observation (Kenen, 1982; Jacobs, 1974) is a long-used data collection technique in the study of society. In the development of ethnography, observation has been one of the core methods adopted by ethnographers in urban environment and community studies, as well as ageing studies (Calnan et al., 2013; Ryvicker, 2011). For example, in search of an understanding of youth culture and identity, Glass (2012) actively participated in events such as social gatherings, dinner parties, musical shows and concerts where only the researched attended. Borchard (2009) chose to hang around with homeless people in public parks, public libraries and soup kitchens, sometimes over the course of several weeks, in order to gain an insight into their lives on the street. The experiences provided by these researchers were all valuable knowledge during the course of the fieldwork in China.

During the data collection process, different forms of observation took place. The role of the observer changed according to the situation and context, as there was no clear distinction and boundary between 'non-participant observer' and 'observer as participant' (Bryman, 2008). The researcher's position constantly changed among being a participant, an active observer and a passive observer according to the situation. For example, when observing how places were occupied by older people and their interactions with each other, the researcher one minute took the position of an outsider and distance from the participants was maintained, but the next minute chose to join others in watching and chatting around the game being played. There were also times when the researcher was approached by local residents for conversation or as a regular customer to the corner shop, newspaper stand and coffee shop.

In order to collect more-insightful data on older people's experiences with their environments, the observation was not located within specific guidelines and was unstructured (Bryman 2008), but different time periods (e.g. morning, afternoon and evening) were covered. Nevertheless, seasonal elements such as rain, heavy smog and dust pollution significantly influenced the usage of outdoor environments; therefore, adjustments were made accordingly. Field notes of all observations and activities took two forms: hand-written and photo recordings (ethical issues will be discussed later). The observation was carried out to overcome possible discrepancies between what people say they do and what they actually do, avoiding the apparent 'bias' inherent in individual accounts of actions (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). During the fieldwork period, particular aspects of the observation were also discussed with some participants during the interviews to check the researcher's interpretation of events.

3.4.3.3 Visual data

The ethnographic film and photography method has long been used in anthropology (Pink, 2003), and the collection and use of visual materials has also gained status in social ethnographic research (e.g. Gauntlett and Holzwarth, 2006; Becker, 2002). This research also employed visual methods during the data collection process. All photographs were produced by the researcher. Most of the walks in the neighbourhoods and photos taken took place before or after the interviews in the neighbourhoods. There were also times when the researcher entered the field with the direct purpose of collecting the photographic data. All photographs were taken using a mobile phone camera during the observation process in a specific location within each site and on periodic walks in each neighbourhood.

The advantage of using the visual method and visual materials is that they can assist the researcher in the following ways: gaining orientation, developing rapport and communication, and improving analysis (Gold, 2007). If emphasis in ethnographic research lies on the level of closeness between the researcher and the investigated community, photography can help the researcher to gain orientation and get overall knowledge of the community quickly and in depth. In her field notes, the researcher noted:

First day in the field, walked so much, so tired, so many things to look at [...] There was confirmation as well as surprises. The existing built environment in the Hutong neighbourhood invoked one question: is this still good for older people to live in? (Fieldnotes N1, 29th Aug 2013)

As Gold (2007) argues, by physically going out and taking pictures of the community one is studying, the act requires and encourages the researcher to confront individuals and aspects of the social world from which the researcher might have otherwise remained at a distance. Photography is very useful for recording information not only about people and events but also about the buildings, forms and layouts of neighbourhoods, helping the data presentation in a way that text-based descriptions could not achieve. Visual materials can provide unique forms of data and have their own capacity to communicate knowledge (Banks, 2001; Pink, 2001). "While images should not necessarily replace words as the dominant mode of research or representation, they should be regarded as an equally meaningful element of ethnographic work" (Pink 2001:4). Without the photographs, relational and contextualised meanings emerging from the interviews might be overlooked by the researcher and they also give the researcher some visual grasp of knowledge that could not be achieved

from other symbolic models of communication (Clark-Ibanez, 2007; Pink, 2001; Ball and Smith, 2006). As Emmel and Clark (2011) suggest, the visual data of the research site act like a research diary, offering more than just information; they encourage the researcher to reflect on, categorise and interpret the geographical place under investigation.

In addition to the images produced by the researcher in the field, this study originally proposed that the participants would walk with the researcher and take photographs prior to the interviews (Leavy and Holm, 2014; Pink, 2011). However, when this option was presented during the recruitment process and mentioned to the participants, no one was interested in this option. There are three possible underlying reasons for such an outcome. Firstly, the option of taking photographs prior to the interviews and undertaking an accompanied walk with the researcher would in fact be time-consuming. The majority of the participants lead active lives and were busy with their own scheduled activities. Secondly, many participants expressed their lack of skill in photography when the researcher pointed out this option as an alternative to interview only. Thirdly, I would argue that political sensitivity played a role in the participants' choice of not walking with the researcher in their own neighbourhood; as the old Chinese proverbs state, 'shu da zhao feng' (a big tree attracts the winds), 'qiang da chu tou niao' (the first bird that flies out gets shot first) suggests this could draw unwelcome attention to the participants. Social science research activities are still not common in these participants' everyday lives. As mentioned earlier, political sensitivity was the main reason for the refusal of participation in this research. In this sense, those who were willing to participate were still aware of certain risks, and this strongly influenced their choice.

3.5 Data analysis

All digitally recorded interviews were transcribed after the fieldwork was terminated and later inserted into a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis programme, NVivo 10. NVivo was used mainly for managing, sorting, organising and coding the data, as well as indexing and retrieving established themes and sub-themes. During the transcription process, participants' real names were changed and pseudonyms were given to preserve anonymity. The participants' genders, ages and residential locations are included in all quotations for a better understanding and illustration of the findings.

It is also important to note, as the interviews were conducted in Chinese, all of the interviews were transcribed in their original language and stored as Word documents on a computer. During the transcription process, two interviews were translated into English; however, the researcher found that it was not only time-consuming but also, most importantly, lost the originality and power of expression of many concepts and vocabularies that contained in its original language. In fact, such issue also encountered by other researcher and as Xian (2008) asserts, translating was never a straightforward process and the translator actively interpreting social concepts and meanings which constitutes a (re) construction of the social reality of a culture in different language. Thus, in order to enhance the validity of the data, to ensure the distance between the meanings as experienced by the participants and the meanings as interpreted in the findings is as close as possible (Van Nes et al., 2010), to preserve as well as highlight the cultural differences (Xian 2008), the data were analysed in Chinese. Only selected quotes were translated into English, respecting their original phrases and cultural expressions to ensure meaning equivalence as much as possible. As Van Nes et al. (2010) suggests staying in the original language as long and as much as possible.

Like all qualitative methods, ethnography also requires a long, demanding data analysis, which is sometimes a mass process throughout the research. As is commonly known, there are no universal rules or formulae that one can follow to analyse ethnographic data, although considering previous experiences and models developed by other ethnographers is a good way to start. However, it is also necessary for the researcher to have an open mind towards the guidelines or procedures from textbooks. One needs to be aware that the standard process also risks managing and manipulating the data. Thus, the researcher took the stand that analysis of data is not a distinctive process of research; rather, analysis pervades all phases of the research enterprise (Emerson, 1995a; Emerson et al., 1995a; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) from formulating the research questions, clarifying the research problems and topics, carrying out the observation and interviews, and writing field notes to coding and writing the final report. It could be argued that recognition of the interactive nature between the collection and analysis processes was the key to the successful outcome of this research.

Inspired greatly by Emerson's (1995a) view on how to analyse ethnographic data, the researcher adopted two levels of data analysis, which were employed at different stages throughout the data collection and data analysis processes (see table 2) for this research.

Table 2: Data analysis strategy

Data analysis strategy				
Level	Steps	Stage 1) storage	Stage 2) each dataset	Stage 3) all datasets
Level 1	Reading	Reading	Reading	
	Asking questions	Asking questions	Asking questions	
	Open coding	Open coding	Open coding	
Level 2	Selecting themes		Selecting themes	Selecting themes
	Focused coding		Focused coding	Focused coding

As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) assert, the analysis of ethnographic data will rely on interpretative and reflexive reading of the raw data. In other words, close reading of the data is essential to avoid thin descriptions and unconvincing analysis. The researcher was also aware that the steps in both levels of analysis might not be rigidly confined to one procedure at a time or to undertaking them in a strict order. Although more-concentrated analysis was carried out after returning from the field, as noted above, the data analysis was not a separate process. Thus, it can be said that the first level of data analysis started during the fieldwork period. The concerns and ideas that emerged during the observation period provided some ideas as to whether further observation was required. In addition, in ethnographic research, the interview transcription and data storage processes are often carried out in a manner of selection, interpretation and analysis. In this sense, the transcription process was also considered as part of the data analysis, as some events, themes and concepts emerged and helped to form the final coding or categorisation. After close reading of each dataset and open coding, second-level coding and more-specific analysis was carried out. At this stage, more-focused analytical themes were pursued. Priority was given to certain themes and events

over others by utilising different methods of selection. For example, priority was given to the themes that were important to the participants or to the most recurrent patterns of activities in the research setting.

As mentioned above, after transcribing the interview and familiarising myself with the data, I started coding it by using NVivo and creating free nodes. In this process, I ran through all transcripts and began the coding by identifying the basic themes, such as demographic characteristics of the participants and neighbourhoods, the derived keywords from the conceptual framework, a list of research questions and problem areas. I chose to code each neighbourhood separately and compared and cross-examined the derived themes and patterns at a later stage of the coding process again. This process ensured that I was giving equal attention to each data set and allowed me to go back and check the previous data set to make sure no data resources were omitted (Hein and Austin, 2001). This helped me to gain a more in-depth and detailed understanding of the data. After initial coding, I moved to the second level, which was pattern coding. As Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested, 'first level coding is a device for summarising segments of data. Pattern coding is a way of grouping those summaries into a smaller number of sets, themes, or constructs' (Miles and Huberman 1994:69). I collected all text segments, allocated the same code and compared these segments to see if any adjustments were required or new information could be derived. Thus, an index of codes was created using NVivo, to show the component codes of each theme. The focus of second-level coding was on looking for patterns and connections between themes across the data set and between the three neighbourhoods. For example, different segments that were tagged with the same code from different neighbourhoods were identified and grouped. During this process, I also searched for the most frequent codes and looked for conceptual similarity between them. I also organised the themes in a logical way by categorising the

codes from all three neighbourhoods together. Categories and their content and patterns were compared, some were broken down, some were integrated, and some sub-categories were also created for further clarification. For example, 'positive attitude', 'negative attitude', and 'neighbourhood stratification' were eventually integrated into one theme of 'neighbourhood attachment' but were kept as sub-categories with different neighbourhoods. Different keywords related to themes were also used to search through the transcripts to ensure all relevant information was included. Codes, themes, and patterns were also checked against the research questions.

In this study, as the field notes were recorded both in English and Chinese, thus, they were manually coded. As Emerson (1995b) asserts, the field notes produced by the ethnographer evolve over time. My field notes also echoed his suggestion as the content of the notes at the beginning of the observation was heavily descriptive and messy. It gradually became more analytical and some themes and patterns started to be identified during the fieldwork period. Based on this initial understating of the fields and the social world under investigation, I categorised the notes into two folders, descriptive and analytical. Like the analysis of the interview transcriptions, additional close reading of the content was carried out in order to gain more in-depth knowledge of what had been recorded. The field notes were further coded in a two-level analysis process. On the first level, data was again read repeatedly, familiarised, and manually coded by rewriting it on to different sheets of paper coded with different colours and symbols and with analytical memos attached. Themes, patterns and incidents were identified and connected that linked to the research questions.

The photographic data was coded using a similar procedure to that of the field notes with an initial reading and open coding of the image and simple quantification, such as the time and season when the

photographs were taken. These were also categorised into the three neighbourhoods. During the second-level coding, I further identified the themes that emerged, such as traffic issues that related to physical structure as well as social interaction and engagements. The photographic analysis was not a separated analysis process distinct from the interview and field notes analysis. As Emerson (1995b) stated, 'We insist that data do not stand alone; rather analysis pervades, records them in Fieldnotes, codes these notes in analytic categories' (Emerson, 1995b:144). Thus, similar to the other two sets of data, the collection of photographic data also evolved, analysis was already started in the field and the process was of both an inductive and deductive nature. Thus, with the initial goal of understanding the relationship between older people and the built environment in urban Beijing, there were a high number of photographs directly targeted to recoding the physical appearance of each neighbourhood. Furthermore, I also found the set of questions suggested by Emerson (1995b:146) useful during the field notes analysis when reading the images, I took whilst in the field:

- What are people doing? What are they trying to accomplish?
- How, exactly, do they do this? What specific means and/or strategies do they use?
- What do I see going on here? What did I learn from these images?
- Why did I include them?

For this research, the data analysis process was never a straightforward procedure that rigidly followed a particular order of first- and then second-level analysis. In fact, after returning from the field, between open coding and the second-level analysis there was an ongoing process that was repeated at different stages of the data analysis process, and between different data sets. On many occasions, when I analysed one set of data I had to search information from the other two data sets again. This was particularly prominent during

second-level coding. It was during this ongoing interaction between the data sets that themes and patterns that contained the same segments started to appear, as did incidents and events that were only present in one or two of the data sets. For example, when the theme of 'a gated Hutong' started to emerge in the photographic data, I also checked in the other two data sets for a similar theme. By utilising different keyword searches in the interview data, the participants' fear of crime and attitude towards the migrant population emerged as new themes, and a more in-depth understanding and interpretation was then required.

3.6 Reflexivity

3.6.1 How self-censorship shapes fieldwork

Doing fieldwork was a fascinating part of this research, but the researcher shared a similar "eye-opening but sometimes also deeply frustrating experiences" (Thogersen and Heimer 2011:1) to that of other scholars who have also undertaken fieldwork in China. The difficulty for foreign social science researchers accessing the field and the political constraints imposed during the fieldwork period are well-known concerns (Heimer and Thogersen, 2011). In developed countries such as the UK, fieldwork-based studies provide a large part of the knowledge used to understand many social issues. Social research is common in everyday life. Unfortunately, this is not the case in China. The consequence of removing social science from the universities' curricula during the Cultural Revolution period created great distance between academia and the public. As social scientists' primary goal is concerned with society and social issues, social research is perceived as having a tendency of criticising the government and challenging authority. Although, following the economic reform, many top universities re-established sociology and humanities courses and provided opportunities for many foreign

scholars to conduct their fieldwork in China, the close political control over educational institutions continues to exist and plays a substantial part in shaping the experience of fieldwork in China (Turner, 2010). At the same time, it continues to constrain public involvement with social research projects. Although the researcher anticipated the participation of governmental authority during the data collection process and the possibility of this shaping the fieldwork experience, until it occurred there was no indication as to how it would play out.

On one occasion, the gatekeeper negotiated first access with a potential participant and arranged a time and place to meet for the interview. On the day, the gatekeeper took the researcher to meet the participant. The first five minutes consisted of a casual chat about the weather, and then the participant asked a few questions about who the researcher was and where exactly she was studying. Upon hearing the truth, the participant immediately refused to carry on, even after the researcher told him that this was just a student project. "What do you want to know? I am not going to let you expose us to the Western world" were his last sentences to the researcher. He waved his hand and shook his head with a resolute expression. Refusal to participate in research may be due to different factors. Koivunen (2010) viewed this in terms of power and gender relations and suggested that the refusal of participation in her research was a practice of masculinity. However, as a female, what happened to the present researcher in the field was more politically related than a gender issue. To the refusing participant, involvement with foreign affairs was politically sensitive enough to keep his distance. Why? The researcher's interpretation is that the lingering fear of the Cultural Revolution is still clearly present in everyday life. During that period, *haiwai guanxi* (have family members live overseas) was a tag that no one wanted to be associated with. For those who have the connections outside of mainland China were perceived as having complicated political backgrounds and

treated as untrustworthy and many of them were accused of having a tendency to become or being a spy of Western enemies. Although 'haiwai guanxi' was never a criminal offence, many people who had family, friends or any other connections overseas still suffered imprisonment, unemployment and discrimination (Xuekewang, 2005).

Therefore, the best way to avoid trouble is silence and disassociation, as many people did during the Cultural Revolution. However, interestingly, in the same neighbourhood, many others were happy to help and expressed no concern about the political sensitivity of the topic, as the government is also talking about ageing issues and population ageing in China. Thus, they were happy to tell what they knew. Further, their ease with the subject arguably had something to do with the gatekeeper, as he was a government official working in the welfare sector. To the participants, the researcher's introduction through him could have symbolised government approval and granting some kind of permission to them. However, as outlined earlier, from a constructionist view point (Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Crotty, 2012), both the subjective dimension and social context are fundamental in the process of meaning making. The following example clearly demonstrates how meaning was negotiated in a different context.

After the initial negotiation by the same gatekeeper mentioned above, he took the researcher to a couple's house and introduced them. After exchanging greetings and further introduction about the research project, the gatekeeper was ready to take his leave. Strangely, just before he reached the door, he turned around and said to the couple "you don't have to follow me out; it is cold outside. Don't worry and talk to her freely. But please do speak more about our community's achievements rather than failures". Everybody laughed. Before the researcher was introduced to this couple, she had already completed several interviews in the same neighbourhood arranged through the

same gatekeeper, but this was the first time he had passed on his suggestion. The researcher did not realise until later in the interview how much his words had affected the couple and what they might or might not have said because of them. During the interview, every time the old gentleman started to speak about his feelings of unhappiness or with a negative tone about his current medical and pension coverage, his wife would try to take over or just stop him. The old lady winked at him, lightly kicked his chair many times and eventually spoke about her concerns about his negative attitude. At that point, the researcher stopped the interview and tried to reassure them, emphasising the confidentiality and anonymity of the interview. As previously pointed out, although all of the participants understood that the relationship between the gatekeeper and the researcher was personal, his occupation and his connection with the participant were still through an official channel. In this sense, symbolically, he was an official figure representing the party and the government. They interpreted his words “speaking more about achievements” as “you cannot, or better not, say anything negative, otherwise you will be in trouble”.

The above two examples clearly demonstrate that self-censorship was part of these participants’ interactions with others. The data collected from face-to-face interviews were important to the success of this research project. The participants’ accounts of their experiences and their explanations and opinions about their environments and past events in their neighbourhoods were all valuable information on their subjective life experiences that could not be accessed through observation in the field. However, from a constructionist stance, understanding the construction process of the knowledge production is arguably as valuable as the data collection itself (Andrews, 2012). Therefore, a reflexive observer “does not simply report ‘facts’ or ‘truth’ but actively constructs interpretations of his or her experiences in the

field and then questions how those interpretations came about” (Hertz, 1997:Viii). Thus, Tracy (2013b) emphasises, interviews cannot be simply perceived as natural exchange of question and answers but an active processes (Fontana and Frey, 2005) and it is necessary for the researcher to examine not only what data is collected in an interview but also how the interview is accomplished through active negotiated interaction (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). In the case of this research, the recruitment and negotiation of access were equally as important as the actual conversations. These ‘unsuccessful’ recruitments and actions that occurred during the interview process provide valuable insights into how political censorship was embedded in the older people’s everyday lives and its effect on the meaning-making process about their surrounding environments and interactions with others. Their self-censorship also draws further attention to the current political climate in China. For example, promotion of stop ‘ill Western-valued’ textbooks entering Chinese universities both on national television and in the written press as well as further control of social media (Creemers, 2015) are the reflection of clear aim to imposing ideology that only recognised by the communist party. It can be argued that the refusal of the interview shows the unique political sensitivity of this generation and how their past has shaped their present perceptions and value judgements.

3.6.2 Stance of the researcher

According to Hertz (1997), reflection on subjectivity should be considered one of the core components in the evaluation of a piece of ethnographic research. This research recognised the subjective nature of all social enquiry, in particular the effects of the researcher’s own biography and positioning of self on the outcome of the study. Factors such as the researcher’s political stance, gender, educational level and ethnicity may influence the production of knowledge. However, the outcomes that are affected by these factors are varied.

For instance, the researcher's educational background and childhood family location both had a positive effect and helped in opening up more-interactive communication during the interview process. On several occasions, after the participants had acknowledged that the researcher was not a migrant from another city and had grown up in a nearby neighbourhood, conversations on the topic of migrant workers were often elaborated further. They expressed their disagreement, dislike and even anger, which the participants claimed that they would not do with others because they did not think that anyone other than locals would understand. On those occasions, by simply knowing that the researcher was also Beijinese, the participants automatically considered her an insider with the same stance as them. Even when the researcher was perceived as an outsider, her educational background still helped her to build a rapport and trust with many participants. They perceived her as a very knowledgeable and capable person who could speak two languages and had studied overseas. At the same time, she was also perceived as a nice person who cared about and was willing to listen to their problems, which they thought had no connections to her personal life. In particular, the guardian and younger sister of a disabled old lady expressed her deep gratitude that an academic person would pay such attention to their lives. In ethnographic fieldwork, the close emotional involvement during the research process and interview situation has been challenged with the assumption that the blurred boundaries of participant and researcher could run the risk of tainting the data (Omel'chenko, 2010). However, as Garifzianova (2010) argues, if a researcher's aim is to reveal the social world and understand the lives of participants under study, remaining a detached observer is an impossible task. In this sense, the researcher argues that revealing her childhood home location became essential for her in gaining trust, building rapport, and gaining first-hand information on older people's experiences and perceptions of their surroundings.

Somewhat surprisingly, the advantage of social background did not occur when conducting the participant observation around the neighbourhoods. In fact, it was rather the opposite. Since the researcher could not tell people in advance her biographical information, many locals, often older people, mistook her for a tourist or migrant worker. She was seen as a threat and treated without much respect. In one instance in a Hutong neighbourhood, even a little boy came to me try to push me away from their front gate and shouted for me to go away 'wai di ren'. In the beginning, I tried to explain myself but in the later stages of the field work I chose to say nothing. I found that even if I took out my identification and identified myself, most of the people, most of the time, never listened. They had their presumption and I was a stranger and an outsider to them. Thus, my confidence that as a Beijinese with sufficient cultural knowledge, was tested during the fieldwork period and presented me with two opposing answers. These incidents were also in conflict to my own childhood memories of a vibrant, helpful and friendly street atmosphere that I had grown up with. In order to find the answer, I have added the question to addressing these problems during the interview process.

Establishing trust between the researcher and participant is important for data collection but it was also a complex process. Sometimes it was easy while at other times it was impossible to establish such as the example given earlier. However, trust can be established through time and interaction during the interview and fieldwork. As I have already outlined, the different gatekeepers had already established their own level of trust with the participants. This also had a profound influence on my relationship with the participants. For example, in neighbourhood three, when asked to choose whether to conduct the interview at their home or another place, home was never chosen. Many participants did not know the gatekeeper well. Many times they

confused me as a friend of the volunteer. As my presence in the neighbourhood became a regular occurrence and more participants were being interviewed, some of the older people from the neighbourhood became friendlier and also invited me to their home even though they had already been interviewed. Older people have been perceived as a vulnerable group in society. Many participants expressed their concern on the changes of their environment and fear that arose with these changes. If the researcher is also being viewed as part of the social world we are studying and part of the interactions that older people have with others, in this instance, I am also a stranger/outsider. Even for those participants from neighbourhood one who welcomed me to their home on first acquaintance, there were also different levels of trust expressed.

The above situations revealed that the interrelated positionality, power, and knowledge construction (Merriam, 2002) means that a researcher's stance and the relationship between participant and researcher is never fixed. It is a continual construction process throughout the research process. As I did during the interview process, sometimes, in order to reduce the outsider effects, the researcher may reveal one's true identity or try to foster a more acceptable and appealing identity according to the needs of the social environment one is investigating. At other times, just as I have encountered, I just simply cannot control how participants perceive me. Sometimes it was just impossible to eliminate tensions, contradictions and power imbalances between the researcher and researched (Jarzabkowski 2001), but by acknowledging them, it helped me to better understand the participants' viewpoint. There is also the issue on how to end or come out of the field. For example, even though my fieldwork finished several months ago, I do feel obligated to keep in touch with the gatekeepers as they were introduced to me by my friend. The research was professionally conducted and finished at the point of departure

from the field. However, the relationships that were built during the fieldwork may not necessarily end too. Therefore, conscious recognition and constant reflecting on issues of power in the researcher-researched relationship, emotions at any and every stage of the research process will enhance the trustworthiness of the research. It is the way to show our work 'to meet the criteria of validity, credibility, and believability of our research-as assessed by the academy, our communities, and our participants' (Harrison et al. 2001).

3.6.3 The unforeseen incident and challenge

As mentioned earlier, the choice of neighbourhood was closely linked with the possibility of recruitment of participants, and the initial recruitment process was slow. Luckily, the researcher's own social network eventually paid off and interviews were arranged. However, the sudden death of her mother, who acted like a gatekeeper in N2, made further recruitment and interviews impossible to carry on. According to Chinese tradition, close relatives of the deceased should not visit others. As a consequence of close social networks in the neighbourhood, the news travelled quickly and further interviews could not be easily arranged. In order to overcome the situation, informal conversations were carried out with some residents from the same neighbourhood and older people who were residents in a similar work union compound but in another area of the city. However, this made the researcher realise that power relations between researcher and researched can take on different forms and that the researcher does not necessarily have absolute control over the research setting. Access to the field was a constant negotiation process until the end of the data collection. Furthermore, cultural understanding of a particular research setting is also important during the fieldwork. Her insider understanding of the perceptions of death, illness and related issues

provided the researcher with the knowledge needed to avoid unnecessary conflict in the field.

3.7 Ethical considerations

There are ethical issues surrounding social research, just as there are with any other form of human activity. If the goal of research is the production of knowledge, then it is not to say that this goal should be pursued at all costs. As we are dealing with human participants, ethical considerations and moral and cultural appropriations must be addressed (Banks 2001) for the success of any research. However, the long period of absence of social science research and ethnographic field study in China means that, to date, there is no standard guideline on the ethical issues involving human participants in the field of social sciences. Therefore, Warwick University Guidelines for Research and the Ethical Guidelines from the British Sociological Association and Social Research Association were closely followed for this research. In terms of ethnography, ensuring informed consent and privacy; avoiding harm and exploitation both to the participant and the researcher; and ensuring confidentiality of the data are the main elements to address during the research process. The practical steps outlined below were taken to ensure that these goals were met.

All interviews and direct participation were started on the condition of full ethical approval from the University of Warwick: Biomedical and Scientific Research Ethic Committee (BSREC), reference number REGO-2013-329.

At the start of each interview, the researcher provided both verbal and written explanations of the study to all participants (Appendix 5 and 6). The researcher took time to explain to all participants about the nature

and aims of this research and the content of the consent form (Appendix 3 and 4). The researcher confirmed that all participation was voluntary, and all participants were made aware that they had the complete right to withdraw from the research at any time. Information sheets were provided in the appropriate language and writing format to suit the needs of the older Chinese people. The researcher obtained informed consent from each interview participant, including the use of images, audio recording of interview data and other relevant materials, before the interviews took place. With illiterate participants, consent was orally recorded. The researcher also informed all participants about the confidentiality of the data.

As foreseen in the planning stage, during the fieldwork period, unexpected circumstances arose. Firstly, obtaining informed consent from all participants during the observation period became impossible, as participant observation took place in public or semi-public neighbourhoods. To overcome this issue, the researcher contacted neighbourhood committees to inform them of the research, as they have close contact with local residents. Therefore, information was passed on to others that a research observation may be in progress during different periods of the day; if anyone refused to be observed, they could contact the gatekeeper and their wishes would be respected. Secondly, similar to the researcher's previous research experiences in China, although many participants expressed their wish to participate, sometimes it can be difficult to obtain written / hard copy consent from older people in China due to political and cultural sensitivity, the lack of experience of social research, or illiteracy. In order to overcome these problems, continuous enquiry, reassurances and detailed explanation of the consent form during the research process were carried out. However, as constant and continuous enquiry may also bring anxiety to the participant, the researcher also advised the participants that the use of recorded oral consent was

available if they wished. As a result, only one illiterate participant used oral recorded consent, and all others signed a hard copy.

All research data were kept securely and accessed only by the researcher. All hard copies stored in a locked filing cabinet both during and after the field work. All soft copies kept securely on the researcher's password controlled laptop. Only the researcher has access to these. Data generated in the course of the research will be kept securely in paper and electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of the research project and retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity.

As a lone researcher, the researcher's personal welfare during the data collection process also needed to be considered at all times, and precautions needed to be taken to ensure her personal safety during the fieldwork. A safety procedure (Appendix 2) was developed and carried out during the fieldwork period. This included ensuring she always carried her mobile phone; informed someone of where she would be, at what time and for how long; and contacted that person when the data collection session had ended. In addition to following the safety procedure, informing the gatekeeper after each interview also enhanced her personal welfare in the field.

3.8 Trustworthiness and rigour of the research

What constitutes a good piece of qualitative research has been an ongoing debate among scholars. On the one hand, scholars such as Deegan (2010:11) argue that "openness to people, data, places and theory is intrinsic to the ethnographic process, so a strict set of criteria cannot and should not be applied". In a similar vein, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) assert that making a whole ethnography conform to a single theoretical framework is a mistake. On the other hand,

researchers such as Tobin and Begley (2004) argue that the issues of the rigour and trustworthiness of the research cannot be avoided even for qualitative research because they are crucial to ensure the validity and reliability of a qualitative investigation and play an important role in the “acceptance of qualitative research as a systematic process that can contribute to the advancement of knowledge”(Tobin and Begley, 2004:388). Resulting from this ongoing debate, to date, there is no consensus concerning the evaluation criteria for the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Cohen and Crabtree, 2008; Tracy, 2013a). Tracy (2013) also argues that traditional conceptions of objectivity, reliability, and formal generalisability may be useful in much quantitative enquiry but do not serve most qualitative research well. Furthermore, Cohen and Crabtree (2008) assert that having one set of criteria for evaluating qualitative research is not suitable, as standards of excellence need to be tied to a particular qualitative tradition, of which there are many. Hence, evaluative criteria should suit the particular qualitative tradition and methods. Thus, based on the experiences of previous scholars (Tracy, 2013a; Tobin and Begley, 2004; Cohen and Crabtree, 2008; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Lincoln and Guba, 1985b), the researcher adapted and proposed six key techniques to enhance the rigour and trustworthiness of this research.

- Prolonged engagement – for ethnographic studies, spending sufficient time participating in the social settings under investigation, observing various aspects of a setting, gaining trust, and collecting information from a range of people are crucial to enhancing the credibility of the research. The adequate time spent in the field will ensure that the context is appreciated and understood. For this research, from July 2013 to September 2014, the researcher visited Beijing three times in order to carry out the fieldwork. In 2013, the researcher stayed in Beijing for six months from July to December and went back twice in

the following year, spending a further five months there in total.

- Persistent observation – as Lincoln and Guba (1985:304) asserts “the purpose of persistent observation is to identify those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued and focusing on them in detail”. For this research, the sufficient time and different time periods through the day and different times of the year spent in the settings ensured the in-depth understanding of the neighbourhoods.
- Triangulation – as Wolcott (1999) asserts, ethnography’s unique way of looking combines different data collection techniques in a study of the same phenomenon. However, Tobin and Begley (2004) assert that triangulation does not mean the use different methods to confirm one reality but rather, as a means of enlarging the landscape of the enquiry, offering a deeper and more comprehensive picture. This research employed three core data collection methods: visual images produced by the researcher, participant observation, and in-depth interviews. This provided richness and enhanced the findings. These different forms of data may confirm, contradict, or enrich each other, thereby increasing the trustworthiness of this research.
- Thick description – by providing a detailed account about a phenomenon during fieldwork, thick description is seen by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as a way of achieving a type of external validity. It is a way in which the researcher makes explicit the patterns of cultural and social relationships and puts them into context (Holloway, 1997). Therefore, detailed field notes were produced to ensure a thick description and to enhance the data collection and analysis, in turn increasing the validity of the research.

- Reflexivity – this research recognised the subjective nature of all social enquiry, in particular the effects of the researcher’s own biography, interpretations, and errors during the research process on the construction and production of knowledge. To ensure that constant reflexive engagement took place, coupled with the field notes, a research diary was also employed during the research process. Daily schedules and problems and issues encountered in the field were recorded. The aim of the diary was to reflect the researcher’s thoughts, feelings, and development of ideas before, during, and after the fieldwork. In addition, questions, difficulties, and concerns during the research process were also the main information in the diary. By doing this, the researcher was able to constantly reflect upon and be aware of bias or preconceived assumptions and had opportunities to modify the method during the data collection and research process, enhancing the credibility of the research.
- Ethical – as outlined previously, political influence still plays a major role in people’s daily lives, as well as academic development. Thus, throughout the research process, not only were appropriate regulations applied and followed but also ethical decisions were constantly reflected upon to ensure mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between the researcher and the researched (Tracy 2013).

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has provided both the ontological foundation and the epistemological reasoning for the methodological approach adopted in this study. A qualitative ethnographic approach was employed to provide a deeper understanding.

A thorough examination of the research design, recruitment process, and methods of data collection and data analysis was also provided in this chapter. The chapter has addressed the issue of reflectivity in the field, and the researcher's position and the power relations between the researcher and the researched were examined in detail. The following chapters will present and discuss the findings of this study.

Chapter 4: Neighbourhood changes and AIP

4.1 Introduction

The next three chapters present the findings from the ethnographic study with people living and growing older in three areas of Beijing. They draw on thematic analysis of the data generated from three sources within the study: interviews with older people, field observations and still photography records. Overall, the findings provide a rich and nuanced understanding of the lives and experiences of growing older in different urban neighbourhoods against a context of urbanisation, personal and social history, and social and political change in Chinese society. The analysis is based on a social constructionist viewpoint by acknowledging that the meanings and experiences of old age and the ageing process can be constructed through social institutions and cultural systems. Thus, for the next three chapters, different issues will be presented to demonstrate the complexity of the concept of AIP in the Chinese context. As the data show, the meaning of AIP perceived by elderly Chinese people has some unique Chinese characteristics in comparison to the evidence provided in Western societies (Wiles et al., 2011), as a result of traditional Chinese concepts of ageing and age care. Coupled with modernisation, the rapid urbanisation in recent decades as a result of economic change has inevitably impacted on the existing social norms and lifestyles of Chinese people. For example, together with urbanisation, the one-child policy introduced by the Chinese government during the late 1970s to control population growth not only changed the family structure but also created greater issues for individual families and older people in terms of their care arrangements at home. Despite the government's ongoing promotion of the family care model, the data show that for many older urban Chinese people in Beijing, ageing at home may just be impossible to achieve. Furthermore, the rapid urbanisation has brought so many

structural and institutional changes to older people's living environments, in particular the neighbourhoods where their homes are located. The data also show that these institutional and structural changes have not always been positive and in many ways have deprived these elderly people's needs and have affected their quality of life, as well as their opportunity to age in place.

As such, in the following section of this chapter, how the lives of older people in urban Beijing are affected when their neighbourhood environments are rapidly changed both physically and socially will be presented. Through observational data, interviews with older people and recorded visual images, the findings in this research reveal that older Chinese people continue holding the desire to age in place but with very strong institutional and cultural influences. Their familiarity with their neighbourhood environments brings great benefits to their physical and social activities, in turn enhancing their function and mental health. In this chapter, the data also reveal the most concerning issues to older Chinese people in these three neighbourhoods during the process of urbanisation and city redevelopment and how they perceive such changes in relation to AIP. Therefore, Section 4.2 begins by examining how the systems of housing policy and provision that are particular to China's recent history have constrained the participants' housing mobility and their choice of place to age. Section 4.3 presents the findings on the most salient factors that have contributed to the participants' attachment to their homes and neighbourhoods and the reasons why they want to stay. However, any environmental changes within a neighbourhood can also create problems and, with declining health, older people may find even greater challenges when encountering these changes. Therefore, Section 4.4 presents the findings on the issues that have affected the participants the most.

4.2 Changing policy and changing life

All of the participants in this research had lived in their neighbourhoods for a long period of time (detailed profiles given below in Tables 1, 2 and 3). The average length of residency in N1 was 42.4 years, and six (35%) participants had lived there most of their lives. Older people such as Ow, Zun and Man had spent their entire lives in the same neighbourhood. As shown in Table 2, the participants from N2 had the same length of residence as one another, as they had attained their apartments through their work units under the welfare housing provision system in the late 1980s. Their previous housing conditions were similar to those in N1. Although the participants from N3 had moved to their newly constructed accommodation in 2004, the majority of them viewed themselves as *yuanzhumin* (indigenous) *laobeijing* (people who have lived in Beijing for many years or many generations), as the new community was re-established in the same location and many residents had lived in the same neighbourhood previously for many years. The neighbourhood was originally occupied by traditional courtyard houses, similar to N1.

Table 3: Participant profiles, N 1

N1	Participant	Gender	Age	Education	Marriage status	No. of children	Living with	Previous occupation	Present	Housing Status	Years of Residency	Childcare duty
1	Zun	M	65	H	ma	1	coup	worker	retired	LHA	65	N
2	Xiu	F	75	M	ma	1	3G	worker	retired	WU	30	Y
3	Chuan	M	80	NFE	ma	2	2G	manager	retired	LHA	30	N
4	Feng	F	80	NFE	w/10	2	A	worker	retired	LHA	63	N
5	Cai	F	76	P	w/15	2	A	worker	retired	WU	43	N
6	Lu	F	72	M	ma	2	3G	worker	retired	LHA	60	N
7	Gan	M	74	H	ma	2	coup	manager	retired	LHA	40	N
8	Ow	M	70	D	ma	2	2G	manager	retired	P	70	N
9	Jiao	F	71	H	ma	2	coup	HR	retired	WU	61	Y
10	Man	M	71	M	ma	1	2G	worker	retired	LHA	71	N
11	Mu	M	71	H	w/5	1	2G	ass. prof.	retired	WU	38	N
12	Dang	M	72	H	ma	2	3G	engineer	retired	LHA	32	Y
13	Jing	M	67	H	ma	2	3G	police	retired	LHA	33	Y
14	Yu	F	76	NFE	ma/2nd	3	A	worker	retired	LHA	30	Y
15	Hong	F	75	P	ma	2	2G	worker	retired	P/son	6	N
16	Pai	F	63	H	ma	2	2G	worker	retired	P	29	Y
17	Ye	F	78	NFE	w/6	2	3G	worker	retired	unknown	20	N

Table 4: Participant profiles, N2

N2	Participant	Gender	Age	Education	Marriage status	No. of children	Living with	Previous occupation	Present	Housing Status	Years of Residency	Childcare
1	Guan	F	69	D	ma	2	coup	HR	retired	P	24	N
2	Chang	F	72	D	ma	1	coup	Head of an institute	retired	P	24	Y
3	Fan	M	90	D	W	2	A	Translator	retired	P	24	N
4	Yang	M	80	H	ma	2	coup	Manager	retired	P	24	N

Table 5: Participant profiles, N3

N3	Participant	Gender	Age	Education	Marriage status	No. of children	Living with	Previous occupation	Present	Housing Status	Years of Residency	Childcare
1	Zhi	M	60	M	M	2	coup	Worker	E. retirement	P	40	N
2	Shu	M	61	M	M	1	3G	worker	E. retirement	P	Return/10	N
3	Dou	F	78	M	W	2	3G	worker	retired	P/s	60	N
4	Shuai	F	73	M	M	2	coup	worker	retired	P/d	60+	N
5	Fu	F	78	M	W	3	2G	worker	retired	P	44	N
6	Yuan	M	64	H	M	1	2G	worker	retired	P	10	N
7	Tiao	F	62	M	M	1	coup	worker	retired	P	33	Y
8	Ding	M	68	H	M	2	2G	worker	retired	P	10	Y
9	Mao	F	64	H	M	1	coup	worker	retired	P	2009	Y
10	Lin	F	66	P	W	2	3G	N	Non	P	Return/10	Y
11	Nong	F	60	M	M	2	coup	N	non	P	40	Y
12	Pan	F	60	H	M	1	2G	worker	retired	P	Return/10	N
13	Chu	F	61	H	M	1	2G	worker	retired	P	Return/10	N

4.2.1 Winners in the policy transitions

As outlined previously, one unique characteristic of urbanisation in China is its high level of rural–urban migration in a short period of time (Huang, 2012). This concentration of population has put great pressure on many Chinese cities and has led to many stages of housing reform and policy changes (Song, 2010; Wong et al., 1998) in the last two decades in order to ease the housing shortage and meet the demands of public needs.

In well-urbanised societies, housing is consumed through the market status and people's housing status, determined by their income level, location preference and lifestyle. In China, before 1998, housing was a form of welfare provision and distributed to urban residents only. Through work units or local housing bureaus, housing was bonded with employment and acted as a mechanism for the government to control population mobility (Wang et al., 2011; Lin et al., 2014). The abolition of private housing ownership during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) means that there was no private housing exchange available on the market until the welfare provision system was formally abolished in 1998 (Kim, 1987; Yang and Chen, 2014). As a result, the participants' choice of where to live and the conditions of their living environments were profoundly constrained and controlled by the homogeneity of the housing system (Wong et al., 1998).

As the data reveal, the majority of the participants had experienced housing shortages and had lived in courtyard house areas at some stage of their life courses. The housing welfare system aimed to help to equalise housing conditions (Hui, 2013). Nevertheless, a hierarchical ranking order, which was established in the early 1950s, created a different reality. The policy favoured *shiye Danwei* (nonproduction, non-profit units; e.g. research and educational institutes), SOEs and *zhongyang Danwei* (central units) over *qi ye Danwei* (production units; e.g. factories, retail), and local government and collectively owned enterprises (Zhou, 1999; Lii and Perry, 2015). Therefore, “personal economic wellbeing largely depended on the power, prestige, and

resources of one's Danwei" (Ren, 2013:45). In other words, as all Danwei (work unit) are assigned certain administrative ranks by higher authorities, employees' social statuses and material benefits, such as pensions, housing and medical insurance, are closely linked with their Danwei ranking (Lii and Perry, 2015). The companies were generously allocated housing investment funds by the state, which directly benefited their employees. Thus, even among *gongxin jieceng* (the salary stratum), a housing disparity already existed before the economic reform. Ordinary clerks, middle management and factory directors may live in the same Danwei compound or courtyard areas, but their occupied space was much different, in spite of their actual needs.

I have lived here more than 38 years now. This is my university's house and I pay rent. As it was constructed many years ago, the government did give me permission to sell. My wife passed away five years ago and I live with my only daughter. This flat is 60 square metres, but I am entitled to have 110 square metres or a minimum of 90 square metres. That is why I have another flat elsewhere, which was provided by the Ministry of Higher Education. They sold it to me in 2006 but with some deductions, based on my occupational ranking and years of service. I had to pay for the extra space myself, with a market price of 4,000 RMB per square metre. But, after all the deductions, I only paid 18,000 RMB [£1,800]. (Mr Mu, 71y, N1)

As Hui (2013) points out, the policy shift between 1979 and 1991 created an opportunity for many SOEs or government institutions to self-finance their housing construction and provision. As a result, the social hierarchical order and housing disparity were further reinforced by the provision system before it ended in 1998.

We lived in a courtyard house before we moved here. It wasn't good at all. It was the Danwei's dormitory for government employees. We got the provision and moved here in 1989. (Mr Fan, 90y, N2)

As recalled by the participants, their work unit compound was self-financed and built by their unit. Again, not everyone obtained the opportunity, and the size of the apartment provided was calculated not according to the individual family's actual needs but on a points system based on the employee's occupational rank, length of service and contributions. The condition of these houses significantly improved in their quality, size and facilities. Many of the residents perceived themselves as the lucky ones who worked for a Danwei, which had enough resources and was able to provide more houses. However, their luck did not end there. As previously mentioned, the shift from planned economic growth to marketisation and the government's clear intention of economic gain from property development pushed the social welfare housing system to its end in 1999 (Wu et al., 2010a). It was based on the socialist ideology that housing was considered a basic need and right for all urban residents (Chen et al., 2014b), which made housing become a consumer product. During the shift, the government allowed work units to sell their houses to their employees at a very low price. Many previous public housing tenants benefited during this transition period.

We have ownership of this house. Based on mine and my husband's length of service, we paid around 30,000 RMB [£3,000] altogether. There was a preferential policy for welfare housing purchases. (Mrs Guan, 69y, N2)

As demonstrated, Mrs Guan purchased her house in the year 2000, and the majority of the residents in the same Danwei compound took the opportunity.

The recent market price for their property was around 45,000 RMB per square metre (around £4,500). Thus, in just over 15 years, one would need around 3.5m RMB (around £300,000) to be able to purchase the same property. The previously quoted Mr Mu lived in N1 and belonged to this same group of people who benefited from the provision system – he became the biggest winner (Logan et al., 2010). If one searches property agents' websites in Beijing, for second-hand properties below 1.5m RMB (£150,000), the available housing stock list is empty (Tongcheng58, 2016). In fact, N2 has been in the lower price range since it was built more than 20 years ago.

We moved in 1990. It was 200 metres from the compound to the main road. But now, we're right at the edge of the buildings [...] You study overseas; you should know this is a very Chinese characteristic. The speed of planning never catches up with the changes that happen. (Mr Yang, 80y, N2)



Image taken 09/09/2013, 1:15pm in N2

Image description: Outside of the N2 compound. These apartments were the only high-rise buildings in this area when the compound was built in the late 1980s.



Image taken 28/07/2013, 7:36pm, in N2.

Image description: Looking out from Mrs Guan's balcony in N2. Most of the buildings under the skyline were new residential compounds built in recent years. Many of these areas were agricultural land just a decade previously.

As expressed by the participants, N2 and its surrounding areas have changed so many times and so fast. In its surrounding areas, many places have been developed and redeveloped into newly built residential compounds with much higher prices. With the continuous rise in house prices, any participants in N2 who wish to further upgrade their houses or intend to move have to have strong finances. According to Yao (2011a), the average selling price of residential housing across urban built up areas of Beijing was already 11 times the average Beijing urban household's annual disposable income in 2000, and housing purchase ability remains low for the overwhelming majority of Beijing residents.

4.2.2 Housing as commodity

Not everyone had the opportunity to work in an SOE or central Danwei. For those Danwei that could not provide their employees with houses, the local housing bureau was the only resource they could rely on, like Mrs Lu did. However, within this group of residents, where one's home was located also became an advantage during the policy shift and transition period. As mentioned previously, the introduction of the Land Administration Act in 1986 not only pushed the welfare housing system to its end but also created many opportunities for private real estate developers to undertake inner city redevelopment projects to fulfil the government's aims to upgrade living standards (Chen et al., 2005). Under this scheme, developers were permitted to sell some of this housing stock at the market rate, and parts of the stock had to be allocated to local residents who were not able to purchase housing at the prevailing market rate with government subsidies. This is classified as economic housing (Yao, 2011a). It was through one such project in 2004 that participants from N3 got the opportunity to leave crowded courtyard houses in poor conditions and moved into a completely new neighbourhood with better facilities and ownership of their apartments. These projects further reflect the government's strong intention to commodify housing. Nevertheless, ownership and mortgages were still new to the urban residents, who were used to welfare provision. Between

borrowing a big amount of money to go back to the same neighbourhood and taking the settlement houses elsewhere in the suburban areas, the options were equally popular. As a product of inner city redevelopment, all of N3 was re-established both physically and socially. As a result, during the period from 1990 to 2000, the population of the core area of the city decreased from around 2.3 million to 2.1 million (Feng et al., 2008); up to 2002, over 168,000 households were evacuated and relocated to suburban areas (Meng et al., 2004). Nonetheless, for the N3 participants in this research, returning to the same neighbourhood seemed a much more attractive option. They may not be the biggest winning group like N2, and taking on a mortgage seemed a daunting task for most families at the time; however, by simply comparing the housing prices now and then, one may still consider them the lucky group. In fact, the market price for the same flat now is around 78,000 RMB (around £7,800) per square metre (Tongcheng58, 2016).

It happened so quickly. The notice was up overnight and within weeks, we entered the actual room and floor selection process [...] If you want to return here rather than take the resettlement housing elsewhere, you have to buy it. In terms of economic housing, each person is entitled to 15 square metres at the price of 1,500 RMB per square metre. Any extra space one has to pay at 4,700 RMB market price [...] We were entitled to 60 square metres; I bought 80 and altogether had to pay 210,000 RMB [about £19,000] at the time. Although my son was already working, my daughter was still at university and my wife was unemployed. It was so much pressure at the time. (Mr Zhi 60, N3)

Yes, we chose to come back, and we all lived here before. Since the Lin Biao⁶ incident. Still the same spot. You know, this centre was part of our yard. The reason they left it here is as a memorial to what it was like before. (Mrs Fu, 78y, N3)

4.2.3 'Bad luck' or systematically determined inequality

The first day of the fieldwork, the researcher wrote this:

Field notes, 29th August 2013: First day in the field, so tired. So many things out of my expectations and some predicted. One thing that stands out was my feeling of strangeness towards what I was so familiar with. About the Hutong and older people, maybe I have to overturn my memory. Already, I am in conflict of my own thought.

As mentioned in the introduction, I was born and raised in Beijing, China. The Hutong we lived in was not far away from N1, and the whole area was once my playground. Not only am I familiar with the surroundings but I also have a rather good memory of these places. However, the strangeness I felt in the Hutong neighbourhood was not because of the changes that had happened in these places; it was what had not changed and my position when I examined these places, as I was no longer a child nor a resident. Instead, when I was there, I tried to look at these places as a researcher

⁶ Lin Biao was a marshal of the Chinese Communist Party and a powerful political figure during the Cultural Revolution. The Lin Biao incident refers to when his plane crashed in Mongolia on September 1971 and died.

and constantly put a link between older people and the environment under study. As a result, by capturing different features of the courtyard houses and Hutong environment, the photography that I produced revealed a clear pattern of the poor physical environment of these places.

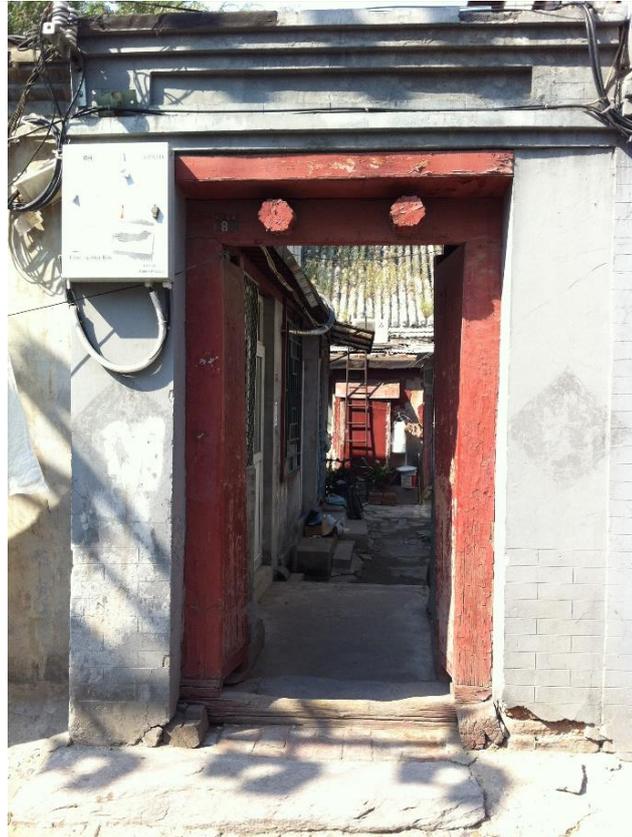


Image taken: 01/09/2013, 2:31pm in N1.
Image description: Entrance to a courtyard.



Image taken: 01/09/2013, 3:55pm in N1.

Image description: The basic infrastructure is still lacking in courtyard residential areas. The bin was shared by many families.



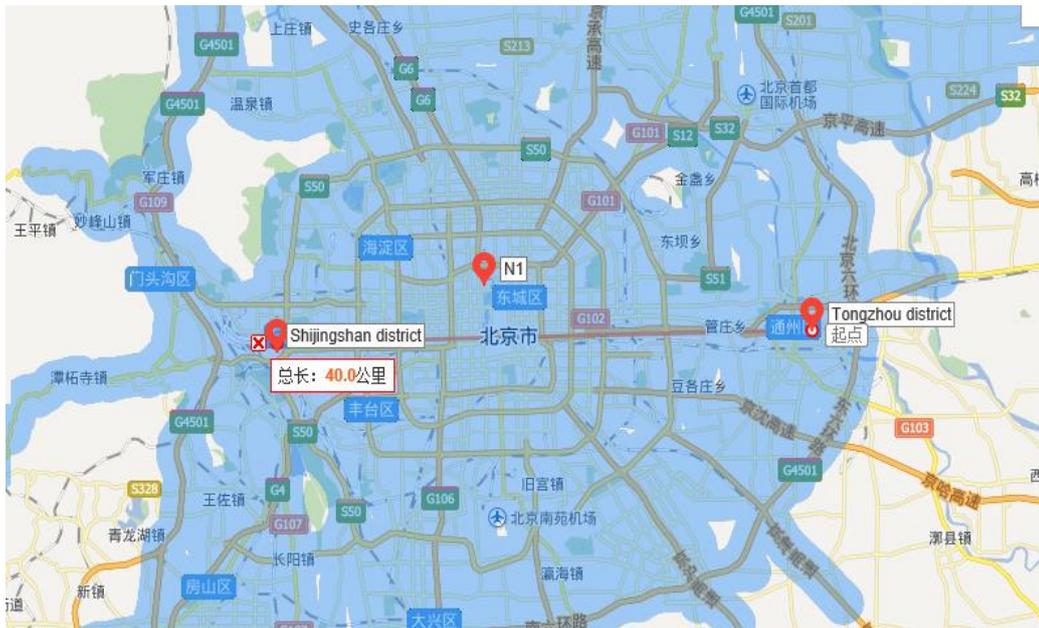
Image taken: 22/09/2014, 11:37am in N1.

Image description: Inside a courtyard house.

As noted before, courtyard housing was a traditional residential housing type in Beijing. Although the city had experienced many wars and disruptions before the Communist Party took power in 1949, its overall structure, street networks and buildings hardly differed from those of previous imperial cities built through many dynasties, and the majority of these houses were privately owned (Abramson, 2007; Li et al., 2008). However, private ownership was stigmatised as feudal and portrayed as being a tendency towards capitalism during the Cultural Revolution (mid-1950s – late 1970s) and was abolished by the government. Taken over by the state and through redistribution, the majority of the courtyard houses were transformed into public housing and shared by different families with very low rental fees. 'Daza yuan' (large miscellaneous tenement) was the name that perfectly portrayed this newly emerging phenomenon in the 1950s.

The year my younger daughter was born. According to the policy at the time, below 2.5 square metres average per household was classified as overcrowded, and we had the priority to get the house upgraded. But my husband and I had to give up our provisional rights from our own Danwei, as they were located too far from each other (map below with demonstration). Either way, if we got the provisional housing, we had to give up our jobs because it was just too far to commute. By giving up our provisional right, the local housing bureau provided us with this place in 1971. There were three rooms at 9 square metres each. There were seven of us when we first moved here: my mother, brother and sister also lived with us. We moved from 11 square metres to 27 metres; I was really pleased. (Mrs Lu, 72y, N1)

Map 2: Relative distance between Mrs Lu and her husband's Danwei location.



Source: Baidu map [url: <http://map.baidu.com/>] [Last accessed: 11/08/2016]

Support for AIP initiatives has emphasised that it is based on older people's own desires to live as long as possible in their own homes and neighbourhoods (Bigonnesse et al., 2014; Sixsmith et al., 2014). It is worth noting that the literature on AIP provides much evidence that staying in a familiar environment in one's old age is beneficial to older people's wellbeing and health. Nonetheless, as shown in the previous section and the above quote, in the Chinese context, the factors that determine whether older people can stay in the same place for a long period of time must not be ignored.

I have been worried about the house my whole life. We lived on the opposite street before, only 18 square metres. This one is 31 metres for six of us. Unlike others, my Danwei was incapable of providing houses. (Mr Jing, 67y, N1)

I have lived here more than 40 years now, with my wife and children. Two rooms – one was built by us. Together about 40 square metres. It belongs to the local housing bureau and we pay rent every month. My Danwei did not have many welfare houses, so I didn't get my provision. My wife's factory was even worse.
(Mr Gan, 74y, N1)

As the existing public housing stock was limited and concentrated in the inner city areas, their choice of home location and where to age were limited too. As a result, the majority of the participants in N1 were public housing tenants, which often causes anxiety to residents as they age in housing that is too small or otherwise inadequate.

4.3 Positive influences on older people's attachment to their neighbourhoods

4.3.1 Meaning of home

As demonstrated, participants in all three neighbourhoods were ageing in the same place as a result of mobility control through welfare housing provision, rather than their own choice. Nonetheless, years of long-term residence had made them more attached to their homes and neighbourhoods. This corresponds with what prior research suggests: that residence length is the most consistent positive predictor of place attachment (Lewicka, 2011). The longer people stay in one place, the more likely they will be attached to it. On the one hand, the findings in this research echo the existing knowledge, as the majority of the participants expressed their strong attachment to their homes and neighbourhoods. On the other hand, the data also reveal that this attachment was much more complex than it appeared, and there were some unique insights with Chinese characteristics. Firstly, Chinese traditional concepts on both migration (within China) and ageing evidently influenced the participants'

perceptions of their homes, in turn contributing to their feelings of attachment.

For older people, things one must have are: laowo' [long-lived house], laoban [long-term partner], laodi [lifetime savings] and laoyou [old friends]. (Mr Yuan, 64, N3)

As demonstrated in the above quotes, a long-lived home symbolised and was perceived as a major part of the ageing self, and this perception reflects a Chinese view on migration. In Chinese history, internal migration has often been associated with war, natural disaster or forced relocation. Thus, *antu zhongqian*⁷ (reluctance to move elsewhere from one's long-lived place) has influenced Chinese people's migration behaviour (Gilroy, 2012). The ability to stay with one's roots on the one hand symbolises a good life and a successful ageing process; on the other, it reflects in favour of *guo tai min an* (the stability of the country with peace and prosperity). Furthermore, the importance of family values and filial tradition and duty influence people's choice of migration. This sentiment is specifically emphasised by Confucius, as Master said: "while a father or mother are alive, a son should not travel far. If he travels he must have a stated destination" (Book IV: LiRen) (Pan et al., 1993). One widely circulated story in the written media and across social media may well reflect the increasing conflict between the tradition of filial piety and modern life. The story showed a young man who kneels before his parents on his return to Beijing from Shandong province following the Spring Festival holiday (BBC, 2016). Since the economic reform, an increasing number of young people have sought employment in the big cities, away from their roots, and this has made the filial tradition harder to practice. However, the sentiment is still strong towards filial tradition.

⁷ Book of Han: Biographies of Emperor Yuan: being attached to one's native land and unwilling to leave is ordinary people's disposition. 《汉书·元帝纪》载:帝安土重迁,黎民之性;骨肉相附,人情所愿也。”

Nevertheless, to the participants, the place one was attached to and was viewed as one's roots does not have to be one's homeland: it could be just their long-lived neighbourhoods or communities. This may also explain why many of the participants from N3 chose to *huiqian* (move back) after their courtyard neighbourhood was redeveloped. For many of the participants who had lived in the same neighbourhoods for more than 20 or 30 years, with some even born in the same neighbourhoods, it was not difficult to understand why their attachment was strong and why moving to a strange place seemed an unthinkable fate to many of them.

For me, I don't want to move away from here [...] why? 'gutu nanli' [difficult to leave one's roots and emotionally attached]. (Mr Dang, 72y, N1)

They moved to a care home because of family conflict. It seems they had no alternative choice but to sell their house and move there [...] When they were moving, I cried and said to him, "how come you've lost your home at an old age like this?" And the cause was his children. (Mrs Chang, 72y, N2)

The physical condition of their homes also played an important part in the participants' feelings and attachment. All of the participants in this study had experienced poor housing conditions during their life courses, but only participants from N1 still lived in poor housing conditions. As a result, a better living environment was one of the main motivations for participants in N1 to move elsewhere, and it created a strong bond for many participants in N2.

The rooms are lovely and nice just by looking at them. Although we are in economic housing, it is much better than what we had before. (Mrs Shuai, 73y, N3)

If the decentralisation comes to us, I will go. At least I can have a taste of living in an apartment in my lifetime. The neighbourhood environment is unsatisfying. During the weekend, it is like a garbage disposal site. Empty bottles, vomit. Also the noise. I don't mind going. Yes, we are indigenous Beijingers; they said we are the treasure of Beijing city. But I don't care. (Mr Man, 71y, N1)

4.3.2 Housing ownership and attachment to place

As Bigonnesse et al. (2014) assert, the home includes physical, social and personal dimensions, and different people may attribute different meanings to the same place or neighbourhood because of their own perceptions, as well as cultural or even political influences. The data in this research reveal that housing ownership played a significant role in the participants' attachment to their homes. The data also show that there are two types of ownership attachment in the Chinese context. Unlike in advanced industrialised societies, private housing ownership has only been re-introduced in the most recent decade, after it was abolished during the Cultural Revolution. After the economic reform took place, the Chinese government returned many courtyard houses to their original owners or their family members. In this sense, the ownership of the house is closely linked with an individual's history and family identity. As noted previously, Chinese culture greatly emphasises family values and traditions. The participants' strong attachment to their long-lived homes reflects a sense of responsibility and the need to protect the family history.

I have lived here all my life. This has been a family heirloom for more than 100 years. The government officials came over to try to buy us out; we refused. As old Beijingers, this is our ancestral home to pass down. Our ancestors all lived here, and we don't want to move or sell. (Mr Ow, 70y, N1)

The old courtyard house was a family inheritance shared between my late husband and his brothers. We have been the long-term residents here for more than 100 years [...] The old houses were much wider and with high ceilings and windows on both sides. Even the local officials agree that our house can stand for another 70 years, no problem at all. It was one of the best. I don't like apartments, but there's nothing we can do about them. (Mrs Dou, 78y, N3)

Ownership of capital, in this case, property, did not exist before 1998 in socialist China and majority of the housing in urban China were state owned. In this research, the majority of the participants from N1 were still in public rental status. Although the participants from both N2 and N3 have ownership of their apartments, their perceptions of that ownership were different. To all of the participants in N2, although they had obtained their apartments from their work unit as welfare provision, they expressed a sense of pride, as the provision was not only based on one's occupational rank but also years of service, contributions and relationship with others in the workplace. To be able to have the provision symbolised one's work achievement and success and the recognition of one's Danwei.

I am a senior electrical engineer. You know, I also have another title: 'outstanding contributions expert of

state', and I receive 600 RMB per month [around £60] special allowance straight from the state council. I feel that my whole life has been recognised. I have two flats and have the ownership of both. (Mrs Chang, 72y, N2).

However, not everyone felt such recognition; for many of the participants from N1, a sense of resentment and bitterness was present.

The insecurity about the house and material needs is a big emotional burden to me. I hope that the government pays a little bit of attention to us too. [...] You don't have a house of your own, you belong to a vulnerable group. Some of them are provided, but not for us. For us, we also worked for the country for our whole lives but we have nothing. I don't think this is fair at all. (Mrs Jiao, 71y, N1)

As the early group of urban citizens who took on mortgages to buy properties, participants from N3 viewed their ownership a lot differently, giving it less sentimental value and considering it more as a reflection of one's economic status and economic value. Although they purchased the apartments through an economic housing programme and partially with government subsidies, the ownership was viewed more as a self-achieved investment and a legacy that one could leave to one's children.

On top of our entitlement, we bought some extra floor space. We didn't have the money ourselves; we had to borrow. Unlike now, in those days, a mortgage was rather easy to obtain. You just sat in the same room as the property developers. You signed the housing contract there and they calculated it for you based on

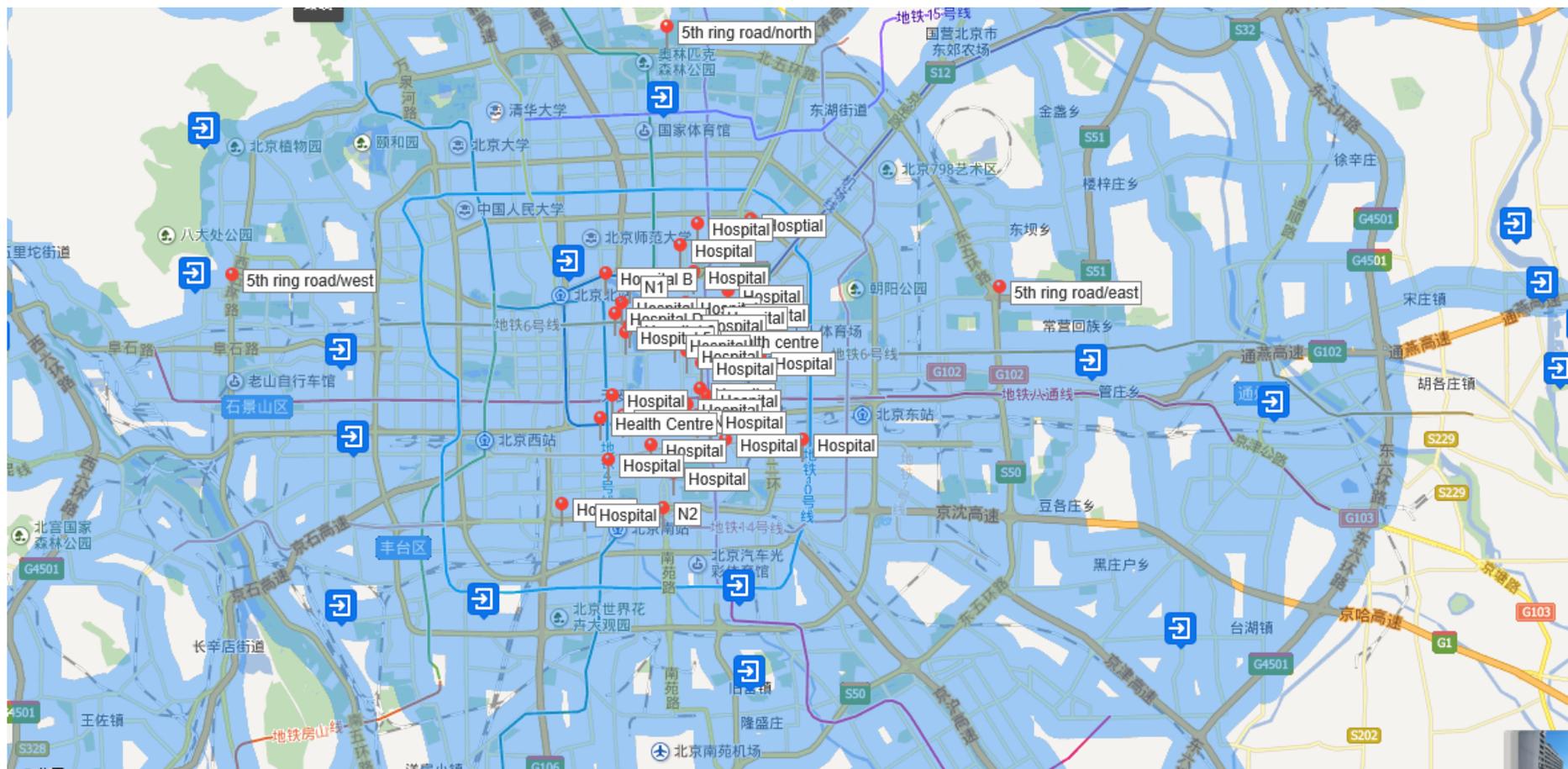
your income and family background. It was like a production line – it took less than half a day to get it all done [...] This house also allows us to put it on the market if we needed to sell it. (Mr Zhi, 60y, N3)

We bought some extra floor space as well. But my son doesn't have a house now. We regret that we gave up the opportunity to buy two flats. We only have one son – we thought he would be alright living with us and then us passing the house on to him. But, financially, it would have been too much of a burden to buy two. (Mrs Mao, 64y, N3)

4.3.3 Location, location, location

The findings also show that when the participants talked about home, they were not only talking about the physical form of a house but also the neighbourhoods and communities where their homes were located. To the participants, when practical matters were considered, the locations of their homes and neighbourhoods and ease of access to places were the standout factors influencing their preference of place to live. First and foremost, what mainly attracted these older people was access to hospitals. The majority of hospitals in Beijing are public hospitals, and nearly all of the participants had their own allocated hospitals under the Urban Employee's Basic Medical Insurance (UEBMI). As shown in the map below, the majority of the public hospitals are located within the second ring road, and all of the participants were happy with their easy access to these hospitals.

Map 3: Locations of public hospitals in Beijing



Source: Baidu map [url: <http://map.baidu.com/>] [Last accessed: 17/08/2016]

The location is the best for healthcare resources. For older people, this is the top concern. There are several big hospitals all within walking distance. If anything happens, they are easy and quick to get to. (Mr Man, 71y, N1)

As most of the participants perceived themselves as having relatively good functional health, they tended to take the advantage of having several national parks close to their homes and used them on a regular basis. Although walking was the primary transportation method for most of the participants, public transportation is available; for some of the participants, cycling was also used and was sometimes the preferred method for a slightly longer distance.

The environment in the park is great – good air quality. It makes everyone happy by singing together, in turn making them stay healthy and have longevity. (Mrs Yu, 76y, N1)

Field notes, 31st October 2013: Went to the park with Mrs Chang this morning. We took the bus just outside of the compound, two stops. She had a senior bus pass. She was happy, very chatty and willing to show me what she normally does in the park. She also introduced me to her group that exercise together on a daily basis. They are all older people who live near the park. (Mrs Chang, 72y, N2)

I think 60% of older people in this neighbourhood go to Tiantan Park. Don't need to take a bus – walking

distance. Starting from my block, it's 1,380 steps. If you walk fast, it's less than ten minutes. (Mr Shu, 61y, N3)

The regular use of the parks was also captured by the visual data produced in the field. Patterns of older people spending time in the parks were derived from these pictures and showed great usage of the existing resources in the residential neighbourhoods.



Image taken: 26/10/2013, 9:54am.

Image description: Inside a national park near N1. There were many older people in the park in small or big groups doing all kinds of physical activities. Two older men were practising Chinese calligraphy on the floor together. This was a very popular activity among the older people.



Image taken: 26/10/2013, 9:45am.

Image description: In the same park, a group of older people were practising t'ai chi.



Image taken: 26/10/2013, 9:50am.

Image description: In the same park, different groups of elderly people were reading newspapers.

Both observational and interview data show that not only were the national parks used frequently by the participants and other older people who lived nearby but also any available open spaces and street parks in their neighbourhoods were also regularly visited at different times of the day and used for all kinds of physical and social activities.

I only do liuwan [take a walk]. Morning and after dinner. In the morning, I go to the leisure park, and I walk around near the canal bank after dinner for about an hour. (Mrs Hong, 75y, N1)

It is worth noting that the visual data also revealed an interesting pattern of usage of outdoor areas close to homes in N1 and similar traditional courtyard residential areas. In many places, residents set their own personal spots in the public areas outside their courtyards. Regular usage of these spots by older people was apparent.



Image taken: 17/03/2014, 9:00 am in N1

Image description: A corner of the ally way with several courtyard houses sharing one public area.



Image taken: 22/09/2014, 11:49 am in N1

Image description: Passer-by use the couch to have a rest.



Image taken 29/08/2013, 1:35pm
in a hutong.



Image taken 20/08/2013, 1:38pm
in a hutong.



Image taken 20/09/2014, 4:14pm
in a Hutong.



Image taken: 03/11/2013, 2:49pm
in a Hutong

Although, this phenomenon did not appear as frequent in other neighbourhoods with high-rise buildings, but it was not absent.



Image taken 15/0s/2014, 1:41pm in N3

Image description: chairs being setup near entrance of the basement.

The older people not only used the places right on their doorsteps but also used other resources in the neighbourhoods on a daily basis, such as neighbourhood parks and leisure places.



Image taken 17/03/2014, 3:37pm.

Image Description: Outside a Daoist temple near N1, some older people gathered to play cards, or have a chat.



Image taken: 15/04/2014, 2:30pm in N3.

Image description: A street park near N3 outside of their compound. It was shared by the residents around this area.



Image taken: 18/10/2013, 4:39 pm in N2.

Image description: older people using the leisure area next to their compound.

As demonstrated, places that were only walking distance from the participants' homes were popular choices. As Rowles (1983) argues, through years of residence, older people internalise a sense of the pathways that they have traversed during the regular rhythm and routine of their daily lives. In other words, older people know where they can or cannot go because they are so familiar with their neighbourhood environments. This knowledge can help them to arrange their daily lives according to their own needs. Furthermore, coming from a generation for whom private car ownership was rare, in addition to public transport, cycling and walking were the predominant methods used by the participants to travel. In fact, prior research (Newsom et al., 2004) has already pointed out that walking is more appropriate for older people than other forms of physical activities due to their declining functional capacity. In this case, familiarity with their neighbourhood environments provided the participants with knowledge and information to measure their health conditions against their environments and enhanced their confidence to go out.

I cannot go too far from home because of my illness. I go to the leisure park close by. I love it. Those old folks go there too in summer and winter. It is useful. If you sit in the house the whole day long, your legs will be wasted. I love to be active. (Mr Chuan, 80y, N1)

We have a senior discount for public transport; we don't have to pay. We rarely go places too far from home. It's only two stops to the parks and we normally walk back. If we feel too tired to walk, we just get on the bus. It is very close. (Mrs Guan, 69y, N2)

4.4 Negative influences on older people's attachment to their neighbourhoods

4.4.1 Accessibility

Prior studies provide strong evidence that outdoor places are important to older people's physical and mental health, in turn contributing to their quality of life and wellbeing (Whear et al., 2014; Eusuf et al., 2014; Phillips et al., 2013; Sugiyama et al., 2010; Zhang and Lawson, 2009). There is also substantial evidence that demonstrates how aspects of the built environment such as street condition, traffic and noise have a great impact on people with impairments and reduce their mobility level (Buffel et al., 2014b; Buffel et al., 2012; Kerr et al., 2012; Rosso et al., 2011; Burton et al., 2011). Thus, appropriate public places and spaces in neighbourhoods were essential to enable the participants to carry out their social and physical activities in a safe and secure environment. The data reveal that although the older people made use of outdoor spaces and places, they considered that, in general, there were insufficient outdoor places and open spaces in all three neighbourhoods' immediate surrounding areas.

Enough? Build another 100 places and it will still not be enough. Absolutely not. Why? There are pensioners as well as migrants. The migrants are three times more than the locals are. Altogether, it will not be enough. It was full in the morning, at noon, or in the afternoon. There are no other places and lacking equipment too. One is not enough. (Mr Jing, 67y, N1)

In my opinion, I am not satisfied with the current situation. I would give the lowest score for the outdoor environment. Because there are hardly any spaces for us at all. The road in the yard is so narrow, with more than 100 cars parked around. There is no space for people. (Mr Fan, 90y, N2)

For a big residential neighbourhood like ours, there is no place for us to use it for leisure. There was one but it is locked up and deserted. There are no seats for older people either. We could use the community centre for ping-pong before; now they changed it to a library. They used that more for political gain. (Mr Yuan, 64y, N3)

The participants' perceptions on the lack of public areas and accessibility to the existing facilities were also confirmed by the researcher's observational data and the visual data captured during the fieldwork. In general, the built environments in these neighbourhood outdoor areas showed no consideration of older people's functional capacity and needs. As the visual data show, in some areas, older people's accessibility to facilities was severely undermined.

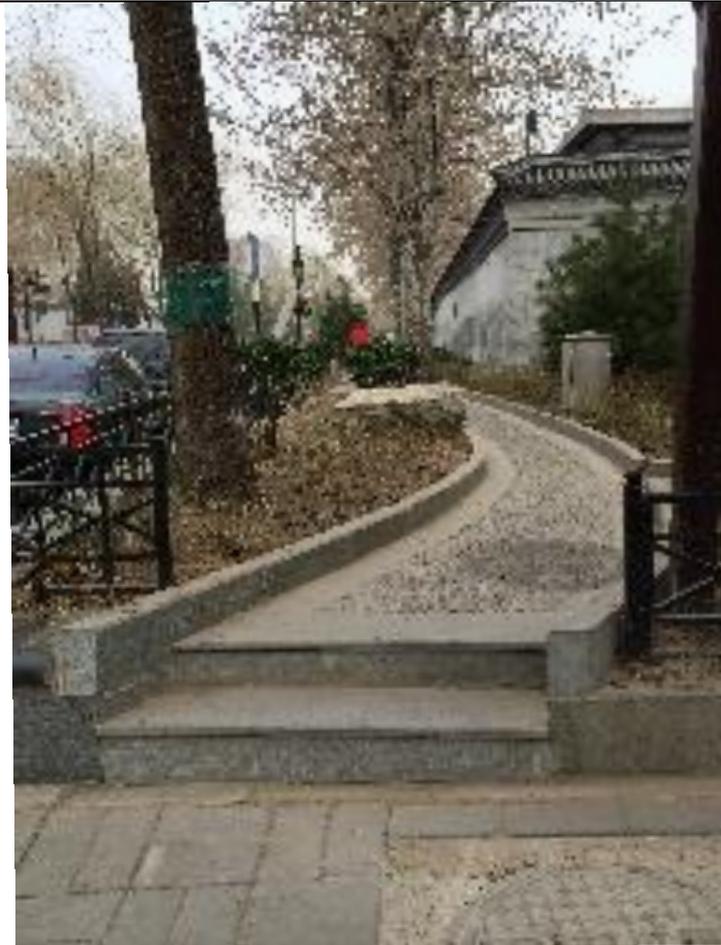


Image taken: 29/08/2013, 6:53pm in N1.

Image description: Designated pedestrian path without considering wheelchair users' needs.

Furthermore, one of the main issues identified by the participants and later confirmed by the visual observation was the lack of maintenance of existing places and necessary facilities to support the older people to carry out outdoor activities. For example, public toilets and seating areas were the two major issues that the older people were concerned about when they go out. In both N2 and N3, public toilets are not included in the compound, and the only accessible toilet is outside in the main street, or they have to rush home. Although the standard of public toilets in N1 has been upgraded in recent years, the majority of them are old style without lavatories.



Image taken: 17/03/2014, 8:15am in N1. Image description: A dedicated gym area in N1. Some older people use it for their morning exercises. In comparison to those in other neighbourhoods, it was the best maintained.



Image taken: 16/07/2013, 3:41pm.
Image description: The only designated public area in N2. It is next door to the compound and was originally part of it. Some equipment was missing and some was damaged.



Image taken: 15/04/2014, 1:28pm in N3.

Image description: The only designated public area in N3 within the compound. It looked like it had been deserted for a long time. The gate was locked and equipment was missing or damaged. The floor was covered with animal excrement, empty beer bottles and rubbish.

The gem area is deserted because the juweihui [resident committee] does not manage it properly. They should set opening hours and assign someone to looking after it. Because we have too many floating populations in the community, they drink and shout in there and cause too much disturbance to the lower-floor residents. Big objections. That is why it has never really been put into use since it was first installed in 2006. Originally, we were told by the developer that we could put the equipment in that little park; in the end, we could not put it there, as the property belongs to someone else. (Mr Shu, 61y, N3)

As demonstrated, the participants' accessibility to outdoor places was reduced by the inadequate physical features and basic facilities of the built environment around their neighbourhoods. To complicate the issue further, a pattern of conflict between automobile and pedestrian usage of the road was also derived from the photography captured in the field and was later confirmed through interviews with participants. In fact, this conflict seems to be happening in all three neighbourhoods.



Image taken 17/03/2014, 8:07am in N1.

Image description: Older people navigated between cars and bicycles.

Yes, people's living standards are getting better, and the fact that they all have cars now is a good thing. But there are no parking places for the cars, and they are just parked on the side of the road. It is inconvenient for us older people. In the beginning, they only parked on one side of the street; now, they park on both sides. Not only is it not safe but it also creates traffic jams.

Many times, you have to wait to get through. In the old days, we used to like to go out for a walk after dinner. But not anymore: there is too much disorder and it is messy. (Mrs Jiao, 71y, N1)



Image taken 16/07/2013, 3:41pm in N2.
Image description: cars parked everywhere is possible.

The observation later confirmed from interview data, as revealed by the participants, parking was a major issue in N2, as the number of private automobiles has increased in recent years. Residential planning never anticipated the needs of parking. As a result, people try to park anywhere, and the pedestrian pavement is often the first place to be invaded.

There are too many cars in our compound. When I first moved here in 1989, there were no more than ten cars. There are more than 120 now – I counted last year. The

changes have happened too fast in this neighbourhood and have increased many risks for older people. Older people should not go to places that have too many cars and too many people. It is easy to have an accident and create trouble for others and oneself. (Mr Fan, 90y, N2)



Image taken: 18/04/2014, 1:57pm.

Image description: The recently established N3 also faces parking issues. All pedestrian pavements were used for parking.

This pattern of conflict was also confirmed through the interview data. The majority of the participants felt that their public areas had been reduced by the rise of automobiles and perceived this as a big problem threatening their access to outdoor activities. The ownership of personal automobiles has only become more widespread during the last decade or so (Feng and Li, 2013). In fact, private automobile ownership was previously only available to high-ranking government officials or company cars. Private ownership prior to 1990 was negligible (Holweg et al., 2009). As a result of the fast-growing economy and changing lifestyles, car ownership has increased

dramatically within a decade in Beijing. It was estimated that 30% of all households in Beijing owned a vehicle in 2009 (Holweg et al., 2009). By the end of 2010, Beijing had attained a total of four million motor vehicles, and car ownership reached about 0.229 per person in 2011 (Feng and Li, 2013). The rapid increase in the number of private cars over a short period of time as an aspect of urbanisation has led to parking becoming problematic across the city. Thus, any open spaces that are available, including pedestrian walkways, have become parking spaces and completely taken over by cars. For the participants, they were constantly worried about being hit by cars or bicycles when out walking on the street. Many of the participants from all three neighbourhoods expressed their anxiety about going outdoors.

As demonstrated above, despite the differences in housing types, accessibility to different outdoor places in these neighbourhoods was a major concern to many of the participants as they continued to age. However, changing lifestyles and the increase of private automobiles cannot be taken as the only causes and contributors to the inconveniences in these neighbourhoods. In fact, the problem is much more complex. The findings show that continuing renewal and redevelopment of the city have favoured and supported economic activities and have often ignored local residents' needs. As Song and Zhu (2011) point out, the government has played a major role in this process and has invested a great deal in beautifying the environment and constructing the infrastructure for the purposes of attracting more investment and gaining high profit from the land. As a result, not everyone has an equal share of the rights to use certain spaces; in many cases, local residents' needs are being ignored and denied.

We got the planning sketch. It was rather a good one. Both ground-level and basement parking were on it. Public spaces in front of the blocks, a community centre and a little park were all included. But if you compare

that to what it is now, the property developer took away many public spaces and rented them out or simply sold them for quick cash. Nothing left for us. Most of the public spaces were invaded and occupied by them. They are the developers: of course they want maximum profit. (Mrs Mao, 64y N3)



Image taken: 28/08/2013, 5:18pm in N2.

Image description: Entrance to the gym area (on the left). According to the locals, the neighbourhood's compound was much bigger before. Part of the space was used for a public road, and many places were sold or rented out by the work units who own the properties. The majority of the places are rented out by the businesses for storage, and spaces are being used for loading and unloading the goods.



Image taken: 20/09/2014, 3:45pm N3.

Image description: A corner in N3. The ground floor was built out to the pavement and rented out to several businesses, including an interior decoration company and a small grocery shop. The pedestrian pavement has been completely taken over by the business for storage and other daily activities.

In comparison to the other neighbourhoods, the findings show that N1 demonstrated more signs of the prioritisation of economic activities due to the recent development of the area as a historical tourist attraction. All kinds of economic activities, in particular restaurants and bars, have flourished in the area. As a result, many places have displaced from their original functions, and most of the participants had experienced a decline in outdoor spaces. The rapid and constant physical changes in their neighbourhoods resulted in the places becoming unfamiliar and their daily routines being interrupted. The data reveal that as older people spend most of their time around their neighbourhoods, the participants became more aware when their daily routines were interrupted by the changes.

I don't go to bar street either – too chaotic and I like peace and quiet. We were able to have a seat by the lake and chat when I took my early evening walk, but not now. The place has been taken over by commercial outlets. It is no good and no use to us anymore. It causes too much inconvenience for us – we have to walk around it or not go to that side of the neighbourhood at all. (Mr Mu, 71y, N1)



Image taken: 21/03/2014, 4:53pm in N1.

Image description: Side of the bank taken over by a nearby business.



Image taken: 22/09/2014, 11:34am in N1.
Image description: Pedestrian pavements have been claimed by a business and used as a parking space.



Image taken: 18/03/2014, 5:32pm in N1.
Image description: A snapshot of the bar street in N1. Tables have been set up for evening business.

Public places, such as pedestrian pavements, being occupied by cars or commercial outlets is common in Beijing. The observational data show that the street environments in general were difficult for older people to navigate; in particular, wheelchair access was poor. As also expressed by the participants, the priority given to greenery construction has overridden the basic functions of the streets. Street refurbishment projects have been *zhengji gongcheng* (political performance engineering) for good face, rather than according to the needs of the locals.

They planned so many shrubs on the pedestrian pavements to increase the greenery, but it occupies most of the space. We cannot use them because there are also cars parked. I have to walk around them and dodge between the cars. It is not safe to walk out there. That is why I tripped over and hurt myself. (Mrs Shuai, 73y, N3)

Those projects were more for face value for their political achievement. Our residential committee is just a puppet without any power. Property developers and street officers are the ones in control of everything and rent out all those places to make profit. (Mr Yuan, 69y, N3)

Field notes, 1st September 2013: Met a few older people sitting in the business area. Three of them were 86 years old and one was 81 years old. They told me that they had all lived in the same area for more than 40 years. They complained about too much space being used for greenery and there being no place for social gathering and resting. They also pointed out that the public toilet was on the opposite side of the street. The

street had been widened in recent years to ease the traffic congestion as a result of tourists. They found that the tourists bring too much noise, and the pavements have been taken over by shops and restaurants for business use. Although the participants take advantage when nobody is there, most of the time they have no place to go.

Inconvenient transportation was only an issue to the participants from N1. Due to its inner city location and historical buildings, the area is served by public transportation only at its perimeter, and many of the participants found this a major issue in terms of connecting them to the rest of the city.

I don't go far, as I cannot walk for too long. And all the bus stations are too far to walk to. You see, all the national parks are quite close to us, but I cannot manage it anymore. (Mrs Cai, 76y, N1)

The transportation is not good. It doesn't matter which way I'm going – I need more than ten minutes' walk to reach the bus station. For the older one, might need to walk for almost 20 minutes. (Mrs Xiu, 75y, N1)

According to Du and Xie (2015), age-friendly urban environments in China are still in the early stages of development, and the need for “barrier-free environment ordinances” was only promulgated in 2011. As a result, easy and convenient access in residential areas to public places and transportation is still limited for physically disabled and older people (Pan, 2011; Du and Xie, 2015). The data clearly demonstrate that this shortfall is an ongoing issue faced by the participants.

In N1, the rent for public housing continues to be much lower in comparison to private rental, but the housing condition is far from national standards. The majority of these homes still lack basic facilities, such as a private toilet, shower, kitchen and tap water. Many families have to share these facilities between them, despite their elderly family members' physical conditions. Many of them moved into these places in their early adulthood and have aged in the same places. With their declining functional health, environmental barriers have become obvious. Both interview and observational data show that environmental deficits were clearly present in N1 and that the overall housing condition was not age friendly (Handler, 2014), and participants' quality of life has been challenged.

We have lived here for nearly 31 years now. It belongs to the local housing bureau. They told us that the building will soon be demolished and rebuilt. All these years, nothing has happened. Just look at that wall and ceiling – not good quality at all. It was built during the Cultural Revolution and supposed to have 30 years of usage, but now it is 50 years and more. There is no kitchen and we just cook out there in the pathway. Eight families share one toilet and one water tap. And the staircase is far too steep – it is very difficult for me to manage now. (Mr Chuan, 80y, N1)

Field notes, 1st September 2013, afternoon, N1: Talked to two middle-aged ladies. One of them worked on the street committee and told me that the entrance to the courtyard had created difficulty for many older people; thus, families who had people of 80 years or older could apply to the local authority to install access bars. It was a government project. However, I noticed that many of the bars have become loose and seem lacking

in maintenance. She said that the path inside of the courtyard is in poor condition and becomes very muddy in the rainy season. She also mentioned that she spends a lot of time outside on the street near her house because the rooms are too dark and damp. The lights have to be switched on at all times.

The most urgent issue identified by the participants from N3 was access to their apartments. According to the National Residential Design Code, for residential buildings over 16 metres in height, elevators must be installed (ChinaBuildingCode, 2016). However, there is no requirement for buildings of 16 metres or less in height to install elevators. In this case, although only redeveloped in 2004, none of the buildings in N3 have elevators. In fact, this issue is a common problem among buildings that were constructed before the 1980s, and many older dwellers have been trapped inside their homes (Chi, 2015). as their functional capacity has reduced through ageing. One may presume that buildings constructed after the 1980s would consider the needs of older people. However, residents in N3 still face the same issues, and they have their own perceptions on the matter.

This is not a place where we will stay for the long term. My wife's leg already cannot cope with the stairs. The consultant told us to use the stairs as little as possible. But we don't have a choice here, do we? This is the reality, and sooner or later, we'll have to do something about it. (Mr Shu, 61y, N3)



Image taken: 16/09/2014, 4:20pm in N3.

Image description: Entrance to one of the units in N3. There are 18 buildings with 95 units; each unit has eight floors (including a basement and duplex accommodation on the top floor). There are approximately 2,000 households in total.

In addition to the barriers created by specific building features as demonstrated above, the researcher argues that housing type may play an important role regarding this issue. Although the housing condition in N1 may not reach the national basic standards, the access from home to public places seems more convenient for older people, including wheelchair users. In contrast, without elevators, even in a newly established neighbourhood, participants from N3 found going out more and more problematic with the continuing decline of their functional health. For older people who have lost

their ability to walk and rely on other people's assistance, their access to the outdoors from the high-rise buildings is difficult to manage and is being denied. Furthermore, it is worth noting that a significantly higher number of older people were engaged in outdoor activities in N1 than in the other two neighbourhoods. The researcher also noticed that the participation of wheelchair users was common in N1 but barely present in the other two neighbourhoods. One may assume that with the worst living and housing conditions, N1 would provide least access for older people whose functional health has dramatically declined or who are wheelchair bound. For these groups of older people, their outdoor activities would be very limited. However, the findings show otherwise.

It is also interesting to note that negative attitudes towards high-rise housing were apparent among the older people.

If the renewal comes to us, I will move if the prerequisites are met. From the bottom of my heart, I don't want to move away. Because I am laobeijing [people who have lived in Beijing through many generations]. I still think that high-rise means feeling trapped inside. Doesn't feel good. But the courtyard house and Hutong feel different. The high rises often have gates, and the outside doesn't feel good either. Loss of the 'taste of Beijing' or familiarity. People are talking with different accents. Only laobeijing can tell the difference. (Mr Zun, 65y, N1)

Field notes, 3rd November 2013: Walked around N1. Met an older man who was doing exercises in front of a courtyard house. Had a little chat with him and he told me that he prefers courtyards over high-rise buildings because of jiedi qi [connection to the qi from the earth].

Such concerns were also expressed by other participants, clearly revealing that many older people have negative perceptions on high-rise buildings in comparison with traditional courtyard houses.

We have both reached 80 now. It became inconvenient to go upstairs and downstairs. If there is an emergency, we cannot get help quickly enough. Sometimes, it takes a long time for an ambulance to reach us – two hours. Also, the elevators are not always in use. Even the ambulance crew cannot go upstairs. My wife's heart is not in good condition. (Mr Yang, 80y, N2)

4.4.2 Sense of security

The data show an overwhelmingly negative attitude towards migrants and *waidiren*⁸ (outsiders) in the city. Whether they are long-term residents or tourists and visitors, it can be said that all of the participants had some level of dissatisfaction towards these groups of people. This attitude was revealed by both the researcher's field experiences and the interviews with participants.

There are just too many waidiren now. They don't follow the rules: traffic rules for example. They ride as they please and it is very dangerous to others. (Mrs Guan, 69, N2)

⁸ 'Waidiren' is a general term used to describe people who do not have a Beijing Hukou but live and work in Beijing. In recent decades, many phrases have been used to describe the migrant population. 'Mingong' is used to describe rural migrant workers who often seek jobs on construction sites or low-paid jobs. 'Beipiao' is often used to describe young people seeking job opportunities and further career development in Beijing. 'Liudong renkou' (floating population), is often used as a general term to describe the migrant population.

Field notes, 9th September 2013. Incident happened in N1 between 4:02 and 4:15pm. There was a barber stool set up by an old man in front of the market. A younger man was standing on the side, watching an older man having a haircut. They were both in pyjamas. I took out my phone to try to take a picture. The younger man saw me and shouted at me straight away “stop taking pictures of my father and [...]”. He was so upset and started to swear at me by saying “you waidiren are just unbearable. I feel so disgusted by all these [...]”. I was shocked and quickly walked away.

One of the most significant changes as a direct result of urbanisation and rapid economic growth was rural-to-urban migration, which changed the density of many cities, in particular mega cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou (Chan, 2012). In the context of reduced Hukou restrictions after the economic reform, a great number of migrants from rural areas and small and underdeveloped cities migrated to urban areas and metropolises like Beijing to seek employment and better lives (Zimmer et al., 2014; Liu, 2014). Consequently, the social structure based on the two-tier urban rural system was quickly replaced with a new social stratification based on income and economic status and housing played an important role in this process (Logan et al., 2009; Logan et al., 2010). This division and social change have been reflected in all sectors of social life (Feng et al., 2007; Joseph and Phillips, 1999; Wu et al., 2014) , and once-privileged urban local residents are clearly aware of this disparity and their new socio-economic status; their anxiety over such changes is clearly shown in the data.

It was not only the migrants' lifestyles or perceived socially inadequate behaviours that the older people found difficult to adjust to and accept but also the increased crime in the neighbourhoods, which had made many of the participants feel unsafe in their long-lived neighbourhoods. Many of the

participants believed that migrants were the root cause. However, not just migrants were unwelcome; it seems that all strangers or people who do not look like or sound like Beijingers are labelled waidiren, considered low in manners and not welcomed. Many of the participants deliberately drew the boundary between 'them' and 'us': between Beijingers and waidiren. The researcher's personal experience in the field reflected this widespread anxiety and negative perceptions towards waidiren, in particular the migrant population. In fact, such attitudes were also apparent at the institutional level, as specific measures for physical environments and surveillance programmes had been introduced at the neighbourhood level in order to control migrants.

Field notes, 14th September 2014, late afternoon. In a commercial street in N1. Although the day was getting darker, as both sides of the street were full of restaurants and shops with plenty of lights, the street was still bright enough for the crowds to navigate. There was a courtyard with a big door wide open, so I wondered what was inside. I entered the gate and was stopped by an older man from a room with the door open to the path. He shouted at me and asked who I was and what I wanted. Before I could respond to his questions, he continued and told me that their yard was a private residence not a tourist site and that I should leave immediately. At that time, an older lady and a toddler walked out from another room. She told me that they had CCTV cameras installed that recorded day and night. I tried to explain but was interrupted by her telling me I'd better just leave immediately. To my surprise, even the toddler came over to try to push me out. As soon as I walked out of the door, they shut the gate straight away.

Yes, there was a CCTV camera at the top-right corner of the gate, and now I saw it.

Such attitude and feelings also captured by the researcher through photography produced in the field and a pattern of physical representation also derived from these images. Bared windows, newly installed street gate, memos on the front door reflected one thing, sense of fear and insecurity.



Image taken: 17/03/2014, 9:01am in N1.

Image description: Entrance to one of the participant's Hutongs in N1. Later told by the participants that the gate was installed by the local council as part of a crime-prevention programme in the neighbourhood.



Image taken: 18/04/2014, 2:00pm in N3.

Image description: The majority of the lower-level residences in N3 had their windows covered with bars for extra protection. In fact, this was not unique to this neighbourhood. In order to prevent burglary, this kind of measure is common across the city.

The prior research on older people's quality of life (Gabriel and Bowling, 2004) has found that older people's perceptions of a safe and secure neighbourhood contribute to a good quality of life. Studies (Quinn, 2008; Cerin et al., 2013; De Leon et al., 2009) have also confirmed that perceptions of unsafe neighbourhoods and fear of crime can reduce older people's level of walking and participating in outdoor activities in their neighbourhoods. Research on AIP (Wiles et al., 2011) indicates that social cohesion and feelings of security at the neighbourhood level are important for older people's choice of place to age. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the community cadres from N3 mentioned that actual crime cases reported to the police in their neighbourhood were rare.

Furthermore, urbanisation and modernisation have inevitably brought privatisation and individualisation. The previous urban residential pattern

based on work units was replaced with economically determined spatial segregation. Thus, people have become more private in their everyday lives. Many of the participants have found it difficult to adjust to this change. As a result, their fear seems not to come from big crimes but from perceived anti-social and deviant behaviours and unreported petty theft, which older people pass on and which influences their perceptions of the neighbourhood environment and their sense of security. The strangers in the neighbourhood, such as unknown neighbours, also make them feel a lack of control, contributing to their anxiety.

Our neighbour has rented their house since we first moved back, ten years ago. Although there are only two families per floor, the tenant has never spoken a word to us. Even when their door was open and we tried to talk to them, they just pretended they didn't hear us. You open the door for them and they don't even bother to say 'thank you', just go. I would like to know who they are and what they do. I would feel safer. (Mrs Fu, 78y, N3)

I don't feel safe anymore. I don't go out at night at all. Where could I go? I used to go to the lake, but now it has turned into a bar street and there are far too many people. I also knew most of the faces in the park before, but now there are too many strangers and young men. I don't know why they are here, and if they want to rob me, there is nothing I can do. It makes me worried. (Mr Gan, 74y, N1)

Internal migration has been experienced by many industrialised and urbanised societies in the West (Moch, 2011), but the sheer number of human geographical movements that China has experienced in the last two

decades has made it unique (Chan, 2012). To many of the participants, the increasing number of migrants in the city also means sharing resources such as public transport, medical facilities and housing.

There are too many people in Beijing, creating too much pressure. Those idlers should not be allowed to stay, such as the waste recyclers. They are the ones with low suzhi [quality], who are difficult to manage. Those who have better value and can contribute may stay. (Mr Dang, 72y, N1).

When there are too many people, we won't have enough resources to share. For example, if too many people use public transport, I always got squashed. If you want to take the metro, you have to choose the right time. This time of the day, you'd better not go. You will be squeezed like a piece of photo, and they have to push you to get on. (Mr Zun, 65y, N1)

The perceived cultural changes have also impacted on the older people's sense of belonging. The conflict between modern life and tradition was clearly expressed by the participants from N1. They felt a threat to the culture they were familiar with and a loss of identity, as migrants have diverse social and cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, the apparent physical changes have changed the functions of places, making them unknown to them or conflicting with their values and lifestyle. Some of the participants felt rejected by the places where once they felt they belonged. They felt out of place.

No older people like the bar street. We dislike it very much. This kind of culture is high consumption and far

too expensive for ordinary people like us. The music is too loud – nothing but rock and roll. Too noisy and not accepted by us. This kind of culture is incompatible with our history and Chinese culture. (Mr Zun, 65y, N1)

The preservation of historical areas needs clearer definition and identification. What kind of development is needed, and how can we maintain traditional Beijing culture? For example, the bar street – I will never agree with what they did. This is an imported culture that has nothing to do with our history and what needs to be preserved here. I don't think it suits here at all. (Mr Zun, 65y, N1)

4.5 Neighbourhood identity and the ageing self

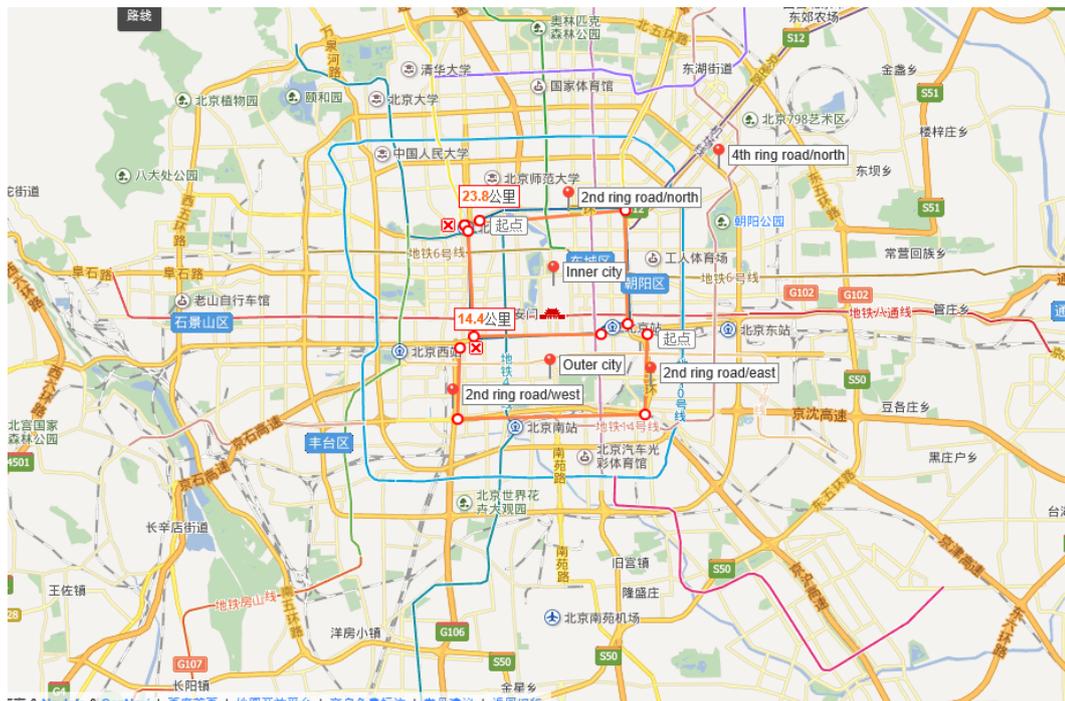
4.5.1 Historical superiority

The data reveal that the majority of the participants viewed their neighbourhoods as part of their sense of self. Whether they lived in one of the preserved historical areas like N1, a newly established community in N3 or a work unit compound in N2, the majority of the participants had close and intimate connections with their neighbourhoods. However, it is important to note that social stratification through spatial segregation is not new in Beijing, as the city was originally built in two parts: northern (inner city) and southern (outer city) along a north–south central axis (map4). All three neighbourhoods are located within the old city circle and are considered the very core of Beijing city. Therefore, coupled with long-term residency, the locations of their neighbourhoods have created a very positive outcome for the participants' attachment to the place.

The reason we chose here was because of the location. I checked many places at the time. The price was similar. But when we put location and neighbourhood surroundings into consideration, here was the best.
(Mr Shu, 61y, N3)

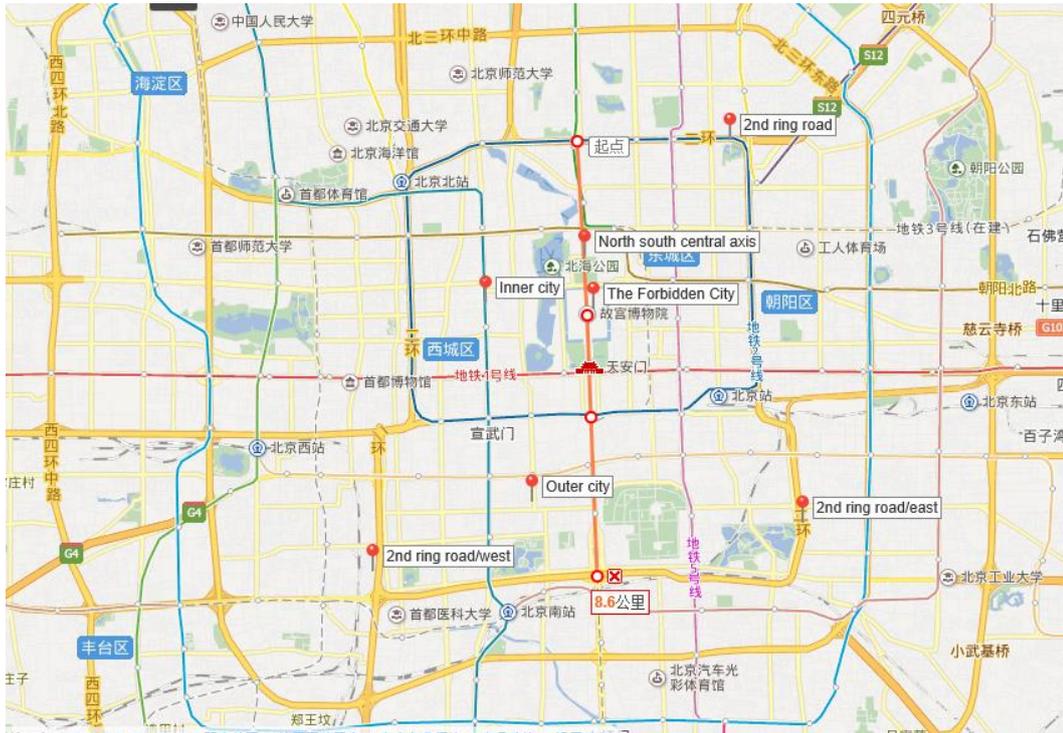
This strong historical connection was expressed further by the participants from N1. In comparison with the other participants, the majority of the participants from N1 showed a stronger sense of superiority over other neighbourhoods. As Li et al. (2008) point out, historically, the northern side of the city (inner city) was considered most desirable and the southern side (outer city) the least (map 5).

Map 4: Inner and outer city of Beijing



Source: Baidu map [url:<http://map.baidu.com>] [Last accessed: 17/08/2016]

Map 5: North–south central axis



Source: Baidu map [url:<http://map.baidu.com>] [Last accessed: 17/08/2016]

Thus, houses in the northern side were often occupied by privileged social groups, such as members of imperial families and the elites of emperors, while peasants from the lower social strata were concentrated in the southern parts of the city. These spatial segregations continued when the Communist Party took power in 1949, as these houses were allocated as welfare provision to government officials, military personnel and professionals of the new regime.

This is the best area to live in: the centre of the district and the city. When we first moved here, General X still lived here, and you could see the soldiers guarding the gate. The overall environment is very good. (Mr Chuan, 80y, N1)

The sense of superiority and high satisfaction was further reinforced when N1 was classified as a historical preservation area and redeveloped into a

tourist attraction. The whole area has been through different phases of clean-up, reconstruction and upgrading. In fact, the photography produced in the field shows a great physical contrast between different neighbourhoods. The attractiveness of the overall environment in N1 has not only contributed to tourists' attachment (Cheng et al., 2013) but also to the participants' sense of pride and privilege, despite their poor and overcrowded housing conditions.

Those tourists from the south are so impressed by it; they think it is a place compatible with immortals (Mr Man, 71y, N1)

This is one of the best areas in the city. There are good schools too. Schools since the Qing Dynasty. People with high intellect were once concentrated here. You see opposite us, that was Prince Gong's mansion, and now it is a tourist spot. (Mrs Jiao, 71y, N1)

In Chinese culture, water is one of the crucial elements that contributes good feng shui to a place, benefiting residents' health and wealth (Su, 2013). Thus, together with its northern location, the water features that surround N1 were also identified by the participants as an aspect of the superiority of their neighbourhood over other places in the city.



Image taken: 17/03/2014, 7:47am in N1.

Image description: The canal on the northern side of N1.



Image taken: 20/03/2014, 6:18 pm in N1.

Image description: Late afternoon on the east side of N1.

4.5.2 Spatial stratification through redevelopment

As demonstrated earlier, in the Chinese context before the economic reform, it was not purely an individual's economic status and purchasing ability that determined their residential location and living conditions. Rather, the residential pattern and structure were fundamentally shaped by the socialist welfare housing provision system, as it was based on an occupational and institutional ranking system. Therefore, social stratification was reflected and reinforced through housing provision. Nevertheless, before rapid urbanisation took place, there was no obvious social spatial segregation between urban residents before the 1980s. Although there were rankings and occupational grades, the 'iron rice bowl'⁹ system provided lifelong employment, housing and medical coverage for all urban citizens. Residents may have struggled to afford luxury goods and entertainment, but the socialist welfare provision acted like a safety net that provided them with a sense of security, conformity and satisfaction. To many of the participants, although not everyone was the same, they perceived themselves as fairly equal. They lived in the same neighbourhoods and worked in the same factories or enterprises. They had similar experiences and understood what it was like to have two or three generations sharing one room.

I earned 41 RMB per month for 21 years – I didn't have a penny pay rise. Dared to have more children. Spent it with great care. If we were in trouble, we just went to huzhuhui¹⁰. We all experienced the same. (Mrs Cai, 76y, N1)

Materialistically, we are better off. But psychologically, I prefer the old days [...] the young people these days

⁹ Before the economic reform, the urban population who worked in SOEs and the government sector held 'iron rice bowls' because they had job security and welfare provision, including housing, healthcare and guaranteed pensions.

¹⁰ A type of mutual aid association with rotating savings and credit. Many of them were established during the 1970s among employees and were gradually dissolved after the economic reform.

have far more pressure than we did at the same age. Pressure from work, from children's education, housing, medical and age care. We didn't worry about these much. In the old days, if you were ill, you could go and ask your work unit for help. They even sent people to care of you. One sanliandan [medical system during the socialist period] solved everything. (Mr Man, 71y, N1)

However, after the marketisation of land and the commodification of housing, as the only land owner, the government still took a central role in upgrading living standards, but with a clear aim of economic gain also apparent (Song and Zhu, 2011). As a result, city renewal and redevelopment projects were assigned to private property developers. Many residential areas in or near the city core area have been completely replaced with commercial usage, tourist attractions or reconstructed courtyard houses with high profit. Coupled with urban sprawl (Yao, 2011b), the large scale of inner city renewal and decentralisation (Zhao, 2010) has changed Beijing's spatial structure dramatically. At the same time, it has led to a greater degree of social spatial segregation and social polarisation becoming apparent (Gu et al., 2006). The visual data also capture this ongoing process of demolition, relocation and reshaping of the population in the city core area.



Image taken: 01/09/2013, 2:17pm in N1.

Image description: An ongoing reconstruction of old courtyard houses.



Image taken: 29/08/2013, 3:55pm, courtyard areas in N1.

Image description: Areas near the canal bank. Several Hutongs were demolished and rebuilt. Most of these houses were unoccupied.



Image taken: 14/09/2014, 5:12pm in N1.

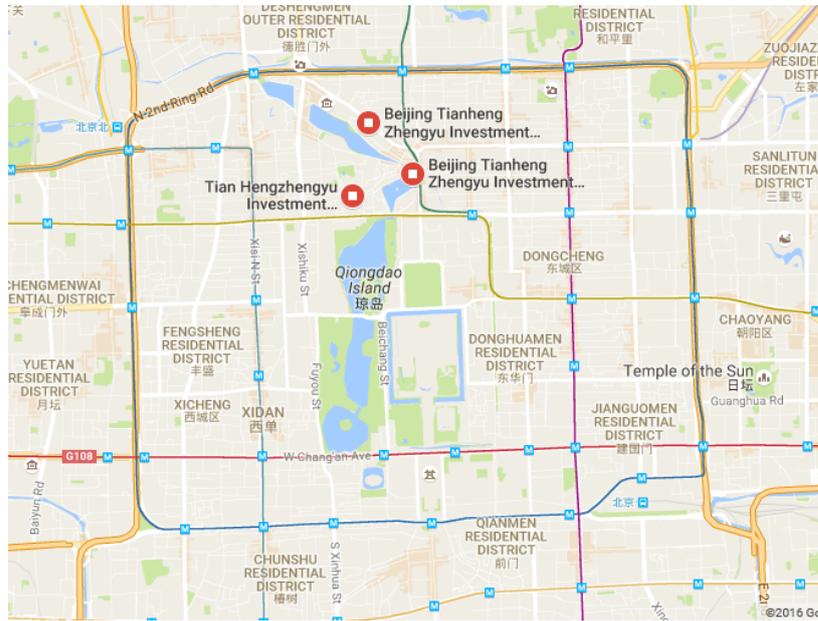
Image description: The courtyard houses were still there when the researcher left in April 2014.



Image taken: 22/09/2014, 11:26am in N1.

Image description: A new sign has been put up for the direction of the resident consultation office for the redevelopment project. The responsible property developer is Beijing Tianhengzhengyu Investment Development Limited Company. The Hutongs that the participants lived in are not included in this project. Other projects developed by the same company are shown on the map 6 below. The bottom-left marker indicates the project mentioned above.

Map 6: projects areas developed by Beijing Tianhengzhengyu Investment Development Limited Company



After housing was commoditised, it started to be perceived as a symbol of wealth, achievement and a successful life. The location and size of a property became important elements that represented one's social and economic status. Consequently, the housing prices in the city core, in particular places like N1 and its surrounding areas (classified as historical preservation zones), all quickly increased. The soaring housing prices mean that only a small group of people can afford to buy houses in these places, and the majority of households have had to relocate to suburban areas. To list just a few, Wendi Deng, ex-wife of Rupert Murdoch; Jingjing Guo, retired Olympic diving champion who married Kenneth Fok Kai-Kong, the son of Hong Kong tycoon Timothy Fok Tsun-Ting; and famous Chinese actor Xiaoming Huang are among many of the rich people who have purchased courtyard properties here. According to the Daily Mail, Murdoch purchased and refurbished the property for at least 10 million RMB in 2004, and the property was estimated to be worth as much as 100 million RMB (£10 million) in 2014 (DailyMail, 2014). On the other side of the social divide, most of the participants in N1 have no choice but to wait for the government's redevelopment project to eventually reach them in order to upgrade their

living conditions. It is also important to note, despite their attachment to their long lived neighbourhood, their chance to stay in the same neighbourhood after redevelopment is just impossible to achieve.

My pension grade was the lowest one: only 570 RMB when I first retired. I worked for 40 years. After the pay rise, I got just a little over 3,000 RMB per month. My wife's factory was even worse: only 2,800 RMB per month. You know how much I earned over the 40 years before my retirement? About 80,000 RMB [around £8,000]. Looking at the prices of houses now, I cannot afford a place with a toilet. It is just a wild wish to buy a house anywhere. (Mr Man, 71y, N1)

That is why I think the policy is unfair. Now, my dream is to have the ownership of this house, like others. But now I am only allowed to live here. We don't have the rights of ownership. My Danwei did not provide me welfare house; we did not get it from my husband's Danwei either. I believe we should be covered by the policy too. We should have the same right. It worries me that one day we will be forced to move out and relocated far from the city centre. (Mrs Lu, 72y, N1)

This juxtaposed coexistence has not only happened to historical preservation neighbourhoods like N1 in the inner city area but also during the process of new residential redevelopment. Although N3 was only developed in 2004, its physical appearance is visibly different in comparison to other compounds on the same street. This difference stood out to the researcher on the first day of her entrance, as recorded in the field notes and photography produced in the field.

Field notes, 15th April 2014: appointment with gatekeeper at 2:00pm: I was surprised to see the condition of the buildings in this compound, as I have been told that the community only formed in 2004. The buildings have not weathered well. Most of the public areas are being used by the residents for some kind of storage. Some of them have built extensions with different types of materials and different designs. Most are just simply fenced up. The whole compound looks chaotic. I had expected a much more modern and newer neighbourhood, more like the community I saw on the other side of the street before I entered here. The contrast between the buildings is big and obvious.



Image taken: 15/04/2014, 1:14pm outside of N3.

Image description: One of the gated residential compounds near N3.



Image taken: 16/04/2014, 9:04am, outside N3.
Image description: View of one corner of the gated residential compound. There are plenty of greenery and open spaces. The picture was taken over a fence because access is for residents only.



Image taken: 15/04/2014, 1:27pm in N3.
Image description: Buildings in N3.

The participants in N3 were fully aware of the difference between their neighbourhood's condition and that of other neighbourhoods close to their compound. They had their own perceptions on the issue, as summarised well by Mr Zhi:

The neighbourhood environment is just so-so. If I said it is bad, it should have a comparison, shouldn't it? If we compare ours to the communities on the other side of the street, they are all top grade with superior quality. Look at ours: just like a slum. The price, décor, architectural design, planning, public space in their community, greenery and building materials of those flats are all hugely different to what we have here. Why? They are not economic housing. (Mr Zhi, 68y, N3)

As demonstrated above, in both N1 and N3, the social economic differences between the people who live in these houses are reflected by their housing conditions. They are further reflected in the limited choice of these older people's place of ageing, including participants from N2. As noted earlier, although participants in N2 have better social economic statuses and housing conditions and have benefited greatly during the policy transition, their housing mobility is still limited under the current housing market. Coupled with their limited purchasing ability, the participants' preferences for living in city centre areas are continuously under the threat of city redevelopment projects.

4.6 Conclusion

The older people who participated in this study had lived through and were able to reflect on how the unusually rapid processes of urbanisation and industrialisation have impacted on their neighbourhoods, housing and lives. This has provided particular insights into the interrelationships among ageing, changes in the built environment and other social factors. Participants from all three neighbourhoods had experienced some great physical and social changes at the neighbourhood level and city level. However, their experiences had left them with mixed feelings, with both negative and positive attitudes towards the changes.

The neighbourhood was an important venue of their daily lives and acted like a platform that connected these older people with the rest of the world. Most importantly, through years of residency, their attachment has grown. They have learned places inside out and the familiarity with the neighbourhood surroundings provided them great advantage for them to manage their day to day lives. As Laws (1994) argues, the urban built environment can be oppressive towards marginalised groups, including older people. It is clearly demonstrated by the data that some of the planning and design decisions were not sensitive to the needs of older people and on many levels denied their rights to use the outdoor spaces as they wished. Many of the participants have suffered from being unable to participate easily and freely in many social and physical activities because of a fear of crime, traffics, lack of open spaces, age-friendly facilities such as toilet, seat.

Both observational data and interview data demonstrate the geographical disparity and polarisation of neighbourhoods in Beijing as a result of decentralisation and structural discrimination. The data demonstrate that, during the urbanisation process, new types of social and spatial inequalities have emerged in recent years. The participants were aware of a large and increasing gap in their social status in comparison to the newly emerged urban middle class as a result of migration and economic gain (Tomba,

2004). Based on their current neighbourhood environments and their own social economic status, the majority of the participants, particularly participants from N1 and N3, understood that their housing conditions and neighbourhood environments would create further challenges for their ageing process and later-life care arrangement. It is also important to note, this lacking of control also reflected on their choice of place to ageing. As housing choice was determined by the system previously and now, heavily influenced by their purchasing ability. As the price of housing has risen dramatically in the last decade, the majority of participants in this research have very limited access to housing market and in particular, a majority of participants in N1 must rely on government assistance to upgrade their poor living condition.

The data also reveal the participants' high prejudice towards rural migrants and that such attitudes may be due to their neighbourhood locations and the actual migrant population they encounter on a daily basis. Their understanding of social discrimination and political correctness seems very lacking. However, their prejudice may be viewed as a defence mechanism, as they feel threatened by the changes and their lives have been interrupted. The growing sense of insecurity clearly impacts on their quality of life, as they view migrants as threats to resources and social capital. Their awareness of their own social division seems to have increased as a result of their own life changes. For some, the two-tier pension system and housing provision system were perceived as unfair treatment. As a result, they felt that their dignity was degraded and that increased social anxiety was apparent. This anxiety affected their sense of belonging and sense of self and further increased their sense of insecurity and lack of control.

Chapter 5: Social engagement and AIP

5.1 Introduction

In almost every issue of the parish magazine for the area where the researcher resides in UK, there is a page relating to activities or support groups held at the local village hall for a variety of groups, including for bereavement, flower arrangement and computer skills, most of them targeted at older people. Many of these events and activities have been organised by charity organisations in order to enrich older people's social lives and to encourage social interaction in the neighbourhood. In fact, according to Age UK, "over 1 million older people have not spoken to a friend, neighbour or family member for at least one month" (AgeUK, 2016). In order to tackle the issue, Age UK has made ending loneliness among the elderly one of its major campaigns. It investigated loneliness at a neighbourhood level and found significant variations in the prevalence of loneliness in many areas, despite similar geographic locations or local area characteristics (Iparraguirre, 2015). As previously outlined, there are also increasing concerns on social isolation among elderly people in China, in particular among empty-nest elderly (Liu et al., 2014b; Wu et al., 2010b; Yuan and Ngai, 2012). The importance of an age-friendly environment for older people for their continuing independent living, sense of autonomy and active lifestyles has been greatly emphasised by the supporters of AIP initiatives. As the WHO (2002) points out, having an active life is not simply determined by the older person's ability to be physically active or participate in the labour market; older people's continuing participation in social, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs in their later lives is equally important (Edwards, 2002).

The rapid urbanisation in China has inevitably affected older people's living environments both physically and socially, and this impact is complex. While the previous chapter focused on this, this chapter will pay close attention to their social engagements at the neighbourhood level. It starts

with a presentation of the overall picture of older people's social engagements at the neighbourhood level in Section 5.2, followed by their perceptions of the benefits of neighbourhood-level social participation in Section 5.3. This section also demonstrates how social engagement and participation have influenced older Chinese people's self-perception. After older people's perceptions of the benefits and disadvantages of relocation are presented in section 5.4. Section 5.5 outlined the conclusion for this chapter.

5.2 Social and physical activities at the neighbourhood level

5.2.1 Social engagement and physical health

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, there have been many environmental difficulties as a result of continuing urbanisation. The lack of public and open spaces in the neighbourhood and the inadequate physical features and facilities (which do not support older people's needs) have created many barriers for older people to access the outdoors and connections with the rest of the neighbourhood and community. Despite these difficulties, the observational and interview data reveal that outdoor activities at the neighbourhood level in all three neighbourhoods were relatively high. The differences in the physical characteristics of the individual neighbourhoods do not seem to change the fact that outdoor places were frequently used by older people, as demonstrated in the previous section. It was common to see older people spending time in all kinds of outdoor places close to their homes.

The data reveal that maintaining physical health was one of the primary reasons that motivated the participants to go out. They were fully aware that their good functional health was a fundamental factor that enabled them to lead an independent life. Different levels of physical capability were viewed by the participants as symbols of different levels of health. Thus, being able to carry out regular physical activities such as walking or cycling provided

the participants with a kind of reassurance and motivation. However, an important finding in this research was that the participants' strong desire to keep fit did not lead to a significant amount of separate physical activities. In fact, physical exercises and social activities were considered as one, and social activity and a desire to engage with other people often played crucial roles in older people going out.

Older people should go outdoors often. It is good for both physical and mental health. Physical and mental health means, you go out, see the good changes and chat with people who make you feel positive. You will have less illness if you are always happy. (Mrs Guan, 69y, N2)

As a result, the observational data both from the fieldnotes and photo captures revealed that the use of outdoor places for social gathering was more common than for physical exercise. The visual data produced in the field show a pattern of similar activities carried out at the neighbourhood level to serve social needs. However, the observational data also revealed that variety of the activity were only limited to play 'Mah-jong' 'cards' and 'chess' and some limited physical activities. These may be reflected the less needs of older age group on high-intensity exercise. The data also showed non-participative outdoor activities were also apparent. To many older people, in particular oldest old, their outdoor activities can be simply just watching others or watch the world go by.



Image taken: 03/11/2013, 1:13am in N1.

Image description: one of the regulars stand by watching others play cards.



Image taken: 08/09/2013, 2:12am in N1

Image description: an older gentleman sits outside of his house watching the tourists.



Image taken: 08/09/2013, 1:51pm in N1.
Image description: Regulars play cards or mah-jong together.



Image taken: 20/09/2014, 3:47pm in N3.
Image description: People play chess in front of a corner shop.



Image taken: 20/09/2014, 3:48pm. West entrance to N3.
Image description: Residents have set up a table on the pavement to play card games.



Image taken 16/09/2014, 4:29pm inside N3 compound.
Image description: Some older women have used the pedestrian pavement to play a card game.

Field notes, 9th September 2013, Tuesday, arrived 2.50pm, N1: In the small open area, there are four groups and around 35 people. Most of them are regulars, such as 'the old folks' and ladies who always push bamboo pushchairs. Again, the old man who wears a green jacket quietly stands to the side, watching. 5:24pm: An older lady bought some vegetables from the street vendors and stopped, watching for a little while before she took her leave. I walked back to the other side of the street and there were still people playing cards and kicking shuttlecocks. In the far corner, some regulars were having a chat.

Even among the activities that demanded greater physical involvement, it was often group activity rather than individual activity. In fact, a similar pattern was observed by the researcher around the city in different neighbourhoods.

Dancing and walking are good for health. If you stretch out your arms, it will make a difference through time. I want to keep it the same. Happy forever – that is my goal. They all love interacting with me. (Mrs Tiao, 62, N3)



5.2.2 Need for social engagement following retirement

One of the existing theories of ageing developed by Western scholars, the disengagement theory, claims that as people get older, their needs for societal engagement will decline and they will voluntarily withdraw from society (Morgan and Kunkel, 1998; Phillipson, 2013a). As demonstrated, the findings indicate that this was not the case in a Chinese context. In fact, the majority of the participants regularly attended formal or informal social activities at the neighbourhood level. As in participant's own words: "older people's life cannot be 'suzhi gaoge' (shelved, mothballed, neglect). We need communication and care" (Mrs Chang, N2). Although the living conditions, local environments and accessibility to open spaces were different across the three neighbourhoods, there was a strong desire for engagement with others and for participation in outdoor activities. When personal factors such as education, economic and health status were

considered, the desire for engagement and companionship was still strong. Furthermore, the observational data also revealed that this pattern of social engagements were in fact apparent across the city of Beijing.



Image taken: 24/07/2013, 7:49pm.

Image description: A group of older people using the open space in front of a commercial building for a traditional Chinese dance. Square dances are popular exercises for older people in Beijing.



Image taken: 14/03/2014, 4:02pm at the entrance to a residential compound.

Image description: Several groups of older people have gathered to play cards or chess or just to have a chat.



Image taken: 27/04/2014, 3:45pm in a street park.

Image description: Different groups of older people, including some wheelchair users, have gathered in a street park.

The findings show that all of the participants held positive views towards their social engagements outside of their family circles in their neighbourhoods. As expressed by many of the participants, they love to go out, meet with others, have a chat and communicate because these engagements make them feel happier.

[...] we have two houses and this one is in the middle range and not too bad for older people. However, I prioritise the convenience of the environment around the neighbourhood and interpersonal connections. I have many acquaintances in this neighbourhood. For older people who live in luxury apartments, once the young people have gone to work, there is no one around. But here, I know who they are and can talk to everyone [...] I live comfortably and we have everything: grocery, vegetables. I believe that emotional needs are very important, and I need mental stimulation. Maybe older people just need it. In fact, I do not feel lonely here, and I am very active [...] (Mrs Chang, 72y, N2)

Being involved with others makes me feel fresh and interested [...] Communication makes people happy. Moreover, the choir, my voice is not that good, but that is not the point. The point is to see others and have a good chat and a laugh. It has brought pleasure to my life [...] (Mr Gan, 74y, N1)

Although the findings do not show a distinction between men and women regarding their willingness to seek emotional support from their neighbourhood friends, group activities were clearly separated based on gender.

People have complained that the music is too loud. But there is no other place we can use. We just try to turn it down, and at least for us to have something to do. It's all dama¹¹ and not many men, hardly any. This is for women, but not for men. They go walking. We only do square dances, not ballroom dances or group dances. (Mrs Tiao, 62y, N3)

The data also indicate that for the older people who were finding it increasingly difficult to go outdoors due to their ill health and barriers of the physical environment, social engagement had become a greater encouragement for their physical activities. This also meant that their need for social engagement was not diminished with their declining functional health.

I do not go out every day; I would love to, but I cannot. Sometimes I go to the community centre. Although there are quite a few steps in that building, they all help me with it. I like to go there. I am the only one using a walking stick. Nevertheless, I still like to join them for a chat and to socialise. Otherwise, I would just watch the television alone at home. (Mrs Cai, 76y, N1)

Financially, life is fine. Only going outdoors and going upstairs and downstairs have become difficult, and I cannot go too far from home. I go to the leisure park close by. I love it. Those old folks, old men and women, all go there in winter and summer. It is useful. If you sat in the house the whole day long, your legs would lose

¹¹ Chinese term for older women. According to the context, this phrase is often abusively used to describe women who have lost the beauty of youth.

their strength [...] I love to be active. Everybody gathers to have a talk and a laugh, which makes me happy. If I did not have this illness, I would join them every day. (Mr Chuan, 80y, N1)

As demonstrated previously, the access to and availability of outdoor places were limited, and there were many barriers creating challenges to the older people's outdoor activities. However, the data clearly reveal the older people's resilience, ability to adapt to changes in their environments and desire to engage in social activity. It can be concluded that the majority of the participants led relatively active lives, and outdoor social activities took up a major part of their daily schedules.

5.3 Benefits of social engagement

5.3.1 Promoting emotional wellbeing

The data in the present research reveal that emotional support was another beneficial outcome gained by the older people through their engagements with others at the neighbourhood level. The existing literature defines emotional support as the provision of love, trust, empathy and caring to an individual, and this type of support often comes from family members and close friends (Heaney and Israel, 2008). However, the most interesting finding in this research is that among older Chinese people's support networks, neighbourhood friends take an essential role in their emotional support.

Mrs Fu: We are like a pair of good old sisters. We were good friends and doing things together before the renewal took place. We have a lot of devotion to each other.

Mrs Shuai: Sometimes, talking to her a bit helps to shake problems off. The heart feels lighter.

Mrs Fu: Women like to talk about things.

Mrs Shuai: Men are the same. They gather and talk too. If you have something bothering you, have a chat and it will smooth it out. Bottling it up will create illness. We are a good match. I know what she thinks and she knows my mind too.

Mrs Fu: Yes, when we go out, we always think of the same place to go.

Mrs Shuai: Actually better than my husband. Haha. Even my husband cannot have such an understanding of me. You ask east, he will say west. But with her, it's no problem. To be honest, if I really moved away, I would be in trouble. I would be lonely. I don't want to move [...] (Conversation between Mrs Shuai, 73y, and Mrs Fu, 78y, from N3)

The above conversation demonstrates that there was an intimate relationship between the two participants. We can clearly see the mutual trust, understanding and support between them. It was simply an enjoyable and comforting experience when they were just in each other's company. In fact, the data reveal that many of the participants in all three neighbourhoods had formed similar friendships with others in their neighbourhoods. They visited each other at home, met in the park or public spaces, and had similar schedules. They accompanied each other to hospital and on shopping trips, exchanged information about events in the community centre, and shared many aspects of their daily lives. Whether it was Mrs Fu and Mrs Shuai from N3, Mrs Guan and Mrs Chang from N3 or Mr Yuan and his 'old bro group' (a group of friends acting as siblings

according to their age differences), their relationships reflected the strong bonds that the participants had with each other. They clearly understood that their social engagements at the neighbourhood level contributed greatly to their emotional wellbeing. In fact, such companionship also captured by the researcher and derived from observational data.



Image taken 17/03/2014, 8:08am in N1.

Image description: two older ladies accompany each other.



Image taken 03/11/2013, 2:33am in N1.

Image description: three older ladies gathered near their houses.

It is also interesting to note that in these social engagements, mix gendered groups were rare and such pattern was revealed through observational data and later confirmed by the participants.



Image taken 10/3/11/2013, 2:33am in N1.

Image description: group of older men gathered in the small square and talking about the bird training.

There are always people one can have a chat with. Normally, a few old men sit with their birdcages hanging at the side. The birds whistle, and people chat. We talk about everything, such as what happened on the television, the news... we can chat for many hours. We have also named this 'speaking therapy'. Anything that makes you uneasy, you can come for a chat about it. It does not matter for older people not having money or a big house, but one cannot afford to have no friends. Things you may not be able to talk to your siblings or children about, you can always talk to your friends about. (Mr Man, 71y, N1)

Consistent with Mr Man's attitude, in addition to companionship, many of the participants viewed engagements with others as an opportunity for problem solving. They believed that through such interactions, the anxieties and worries from their daily lives were reduced. This finding corresponds with Zhang and Chen's (2013) suggestion that the reason there is a beneficial effect of exercise on older Chinese people's mental health is because the elderly people engaging in exercise are more likely to receive social support from others. These groups of older people feel relatively less deprivation and enjoy a better quality of life, which are associated with lower levels of distress (Zhang and Chen, 2013:48). As demonstrated in the previous section, many of the participants in this research combine their physical activities and social engagements. The above quote further demonstrates this and shows that emotional gain is often the underlying motivation for social engagement and physical activities.

As for any other age group, in addition to everyday companionship and emotional wellbeing, social engagement at the neighbourhood level had helped the participants with illness and family bereavement. The older Chinese people accepted that as one becomes older, one will experience more death and illness. However, the data reveal that although illness and death were accepted as part of ageing life, discussions about the surrounding issues were often avoided between family members and the participants.

Mrs Dou: When he first passed away, I found it difficult for quite a while. I thought about him a lot. During meal times and before I go to bed. [She cried and the researcher stopped the conversation to comfort her.]

R: Do you talk about this with your family, such as your son?

Mrs Dou: [sigh] What can we talk about? I do not talk to my son much these days. My daughter-in-law is busy with her work too. My daughter-in-law is not bad. If you get one who scolds you, there is nothing you can do. My daughter comes to visit me, but not very often. Her husband passed away five years ago this September; he was only 46 at the time. I feel for my daughter.

(Conversation between researcher and Mrs Dou, widowed since 2005, N3)

People like us never think to rely on others. But what can you do when you get old? I will try to be independent as much as possible, not burden others [...] You see, I need someone [to help her out]. But when they [her sons] were here, I didn't mention it. I planned to, but in the end I didn't. (Mrs Cai, 76y, cancer patient, N1)

Under the existing aged-care system in China, all participants have to rely on their children for their old age care. For older people who face bereavement or major illness, such as cancer, family members are often the primary, sometimes the only, resources that they rely on. In this research, eight participants had cancer and eight were in widowhood. The findings show that these participants separated the support they gained from neighbours and friends from their close family ties. It was also revealed that when family support was absent, the older people actively sought help from outside of family ties and believed that they gained great support and comfort from their engagements with others in their neighbourhoods. The interactions with neighbours were viewed as important to help the older

people to overcome sudden changes in their lives, in turn benefiting their recovery and wellbeing.

For example, they had not seen me for a while and were asking about me. When they knew my condition, they were all trying to persuade me not to worry too much, not to be scared. Every time when I was out, many of them asked how I had been and comforted me, telling me not to worry too much and to take it slowly. It made my heart feel lighter. I felt good after hearing their concerns and thoughts about me. You see, by knowing all those people still cared about me, it made me happy and I gained great comfort from it. It is very important for a person with illness. Your own family members ought to take care of you. However, concerns from others outside of your own family are different. (Mr Guan, 69y, diagnosed with cancer in summer 2013, N2)

The above quotes demonstrate that the family might be perceived as the primary care resource for older people in urban China but that the emotional support that older people need may not always be provided by family members. These findings are consistent with those of a survey conducted by Freeman and Ruan (1997). After comparing nine countries, including China, they found that Chinese people's behaviour towards their neighbours was strikingly different to that in nations with a Euro-centric tradition. Freeman and Ruan (1997) indicate that Chinese people tend to seek emotional support from outside of their family circles and do not make a distinction between these groups, clustering all of the non-familial roles (friends, co-workers and neighbours) closely together. This view is supported by (Lee et al., 2005), who studied social networks in Beijing and Hong Kong. Both studies argue that the reason that Chinese people do not separate non-kin ties is because they perceive close kin ties as a network

of instrumental support but not personal and emotional (Lee et al., 2005; Freeman and Ruan, 1997). In other words, when in need of money or care, Chinese people prioritise their close kin ties, rather than non-familial networks. In the case of this research, the findings show no substantive distinctions made among co-workers, neighbours and friends (Freeman and Ruan, 1997), particularly among older people from N2. This may be due to their overlapping social networks, which were the result of the welfare housing provision in urban China. The participants in N2 had previously been colleagues at the same enterprise, and many of them had spent the majority of their adult lives together in and out of the workplace. Thus, this AIP preserved interconnected relationships and ongoing engagement from the workplace to the neighbourhood and might have provided many opportunities for their involvement in each other's lives, reinforcing their bonds and trust.

A popular Chinese proverb was mentioned by many of the participants in this research: 'Yuan qin buru jinlin'¹², which translates to 'a distant relative is not as helpful as a near neighbour is'. Behind this proverb is a deep understanding of reciprocal relationships with one's neighbours in Chinese culture. Good relationships with one's neighbours are highly valued and are developed in everyday life. Further, as demonstrated, the extent of the bonds and trust that the participants had towards their neighbourhood friends was deep, and these emotional bonds provided the participants with the support and comfort they needed. Receiving and giving help to others were part of the engagements that took place in the older people's daily lives.

We have known each other for more than 20 years. If the neighbours have not seen me for a while, they will say, "we have missed you a lot". How do you feel if you

¹² The phrase was originally from the Yuan Dynasty: 元, 秦简夫 <东堂老> 第四折: "岂不闻远亲呵不似我近邻, 我怎敢做的个有口偏无信".

hear that? We can feel lonely too. I often call Mrs Guan for a chat. If a relative visit you maybe once a year, they are no better than a close neighbour. I love the social environment here, not only its location. (Mrs Chang, 71y, N2)

According to Cao et al. (2015), trust and reciprocity are two significant factors when measuring depression among urban Chinese elderly because they are positively correlated with social support. However, trust and intimate relationships need time to develop. In the case of this research, the long-term residency in the same neighbourhood provided most of the participants, particularly participants from N1 and N2, with opportunities to build their trust and a close network with their neighbours. These neighbourhood friends had been involved in their lives through most of their ageing process. To many of the participants, their neighbours had been there when they first started their families; they had been there when their children had grown up and moved out. They had shared so much through their lives, and these collective memories made their emotional attachment to the neighbourhood and to each other stronger. In fact, they had been growing old together.

Mrs Feng: Remember in those times when we worked, we only gave 5 Jiao for a wedding gift – that was already too much for us.

Mrs Cai: Yes, but those days, money had much more value. A wedding gift was normally a Chairman Mao statue, a washing pan or a bathing tub, and the expenses had to be shared. (A conversation exchanged between two participants, N1)

5.3.2 Instrumental support

The existing literature suggests that Chinese people have a tendency to seek instrumental support and tangible help, such as money and care (Heaney and Israel, 2008), from their close family ties. Although in China, due to the deep-rooted age-care arrangement, the available services and resources outside of the family are limited, the data in this research reveal that instrumental support at the neighbourhood level was apparent. In fact, the researcher argues that the lack of choice of resources can be viewed as the underlining reason why the participants in this research had a tendency to build good relationships with their neighbours. In addition to cultural values, the reciprocal nature of arrangements with neighbours was evident.

My wife worked in another city and I had to take care of my parents, as well as my son. He was only 100 days old. The neighbours helped me a lot, and we have very close relationships. When I cooked, they just came over and took him to their room. Once, he cried so much in the middle of the night and I didn't know what was wrong. The neighbour came over right away to check up on us [...] In those days, if one family ate dumplings, no kid in the whole courtyard would be left out. (Mr Man, 71y, N1)

You see, the old lady from next door, her husband was my co-worker and passed away first. She always kept a lookout from her window, and if she saw me coming back with my grandson, she would bring pancakes over. In fact, she passed away in my arms. Because no one was home. Her only son calls me auntie and we look out for each other. He told me not to hesitate to

*ask him for help, anything, since my son lives far away.
(Mrs Chang, 72y, N2)*

Urbanisation often brings an increase in rural-to-urban migration, and this is apparent in China. Coupled with the one-child policy, urbanisation has played a crucial role in breaking down the traditional family structure in China. As a result, the number of older people who live alone or independently through circumstance or voluntarily has continued to increase in the past decade (Song, 2014; Luo and Waite, 2014; Gustafson and Baofeng, 2014; Tong et al., 2011; Zhang and Liu, 2007). *Kongchao laoren* (empty-nest elderly with adult children who live in urban locations, another city or overseas and cannot have regular visits) and *shidu laoren* (elderly who have lost all of their children) are two newly emerged social groups that have already drawn both the government's and scholars' attention in the last decade. However, due to the sheer scale of rural-to-urban migration, more attention has been paid to the rural elderly (Zhang, 2009) over the elderly who live in urban environments (Yuan and Ngai, 2012). Wu et al.'s (2010b) research on the rural elderly in Anhui province reveals that the majority of the empty-nest elderly had moderate to high levels of loneliness. With the traditional strong attachment to the family and perceptions of filial culture, in the present study, the attitudes towards empty-nest elderly and elderly with no children at all were rather negative.

I am not like her. She has sons and grandsons; they can hold up the sky for her if it fell. But I have no one. The institution will be my only choice. (Mrs Feng, 80y, N1)

About the empty-nest and elderly who lives alone, in particular, the very old, their care is just a big issue. Because the government only allowed one child, now, that child have to look after too many family members. It

is impossible to achieve and one just cannot rely on children for the care anymore. This trouble is no end. You see the old lady in No xx, her children all live overseas and have their own family. Only come back for a short visit. Ove 80 years old and live nearly in solitude. If anything happened to her, no one knows. (Mr Own, 70y, N1)

As outlined previously, care institutions in China have prioritised older people who had no labour capabilities and no children or close relatives to care for them. In this case, empty-nest elderly most likely face institutionalisation rather ageing at home and in their long lived community. However, financially, many participants cannot afford to go to institutional care. Therefore, the help they can get from their neighbours become very valuable resources for their quality of life and enhance their level of opportunity to stay at home and have appropriate care.

[...] Now, incidents always happen to older people. That day we saved another hundred-year-old. Her shower taps broke; I fixed them and bought them over to her. When I arrived, I saw her on the floor with a lot of blood. I rushed out and got others, called an ambulance. They said she could have died if she had not been found. The neighbourhood watch and emergency calling system should be there for older people who live alone, as well as for older people who prefer homecare. (Mr Ow, 70y, N1)

As demonstrated, for the older people who lived alone, help from neighbours had become a great asset for their continued independent living at home because “their close spatial location makes neighbours a prime

source of aid for short-term emergencies as well as a source for informal referrals to needed resources” (Unger and Wandersman, 1982:506). The findings from this research correspond with existing findings that neighbourhoods can play an important role and provide different forms of support to reduce the social exclusion risks that many empty-nest older people face (Yuan and Ngai, 2012). However, not all of the older people who lived alone viewed it as an issue or a problem. The findings show that the older people who were alone felt that what happens at the neighbourhood level satisfies their needs, so their quality of life is maintained and they are emotionally satisfied. This finding clearly shows the importance of neighbourhood networks in older people’s lives, in particular, its compensative role when filial and family support was absent.

I don't really feel lonely. I am used to it. If I feel bored, I just go out. Go to the street park. Going out and playing are effective. If the weather is good, a group of old ladies gets together to have a chat. What has happened to you or to her. Talking a little. It is great. (Mrs Feng, 80y, N1)

For some older people, becoming an empty nester may not be through their own choice but through circumstance. Nevertheless, for others, living alone or living independently is their own preference. Changing attitudes to ageing, autonomy and independent life in combination with the provision of pensions, better living standards and housing availability in China have led many urban elderly to prefer living separately from their adult children (Lei et al., 2011). However, older people may enjoy their independent lives but at the same time find an absence of their family members in their everyday lives to support them, even when they are living in the same city. In this sense, the unique geographical position of the neighbourhood network becomes very important in the absence of their family members.

One day, I fell and broke my nose. I tried to avoid a passing car and did not see a nail on the floor. The blood came out like a tap. Mrs Fu was just coming back from her walk, saw the crowd and recognised that it was me on the floor. It was her neighbour who quickly took me to the hospital and was running around upstairs and downstairs. Good job we had him. (Mrs Shuai, 73y, N3)

They come and visit me when I am ill or in the hospital. Those who are financially capable will contribute money as well. It was not because they gave money – that is not why I feel they are good. I never asked and refused to take it. However, they insisted. They are willing to help no matter what. I started to attend the church meetings since May 2000. Just like taking a lesson and no more than 40 minutes each time. Otherwise, I would be alone at home. I can gain some knowledge from it, as well as the comfort it provides. (Mrs Cai, 76y, N1)

Like many other participants across all three neighbourhoods, Mrs Shuai lives with her husband independently. Although their children live in the same city, she did not inform them until a few days after the incident. From her point of view, she had already received the treatment she needed in the hospital and the help she required at home, so there was no need to trouble her children on the already-resolved matter. Like Mrs Shuai, many of the older people were aware that the absence of their children in their everyday lives means that they must rely on their neighbourhood networks for practical support. In this sense, for some older people, help from neighbours may save their lives.

We saw his wife on her way to the chemists for some blood pressure tablets – that is why we knew he was unwell. Therefore, we went home with her to say hello. When we saw him, his mouth was crooked and he was slurring his words. We called Mr Shu from Block 9 because he has a car and immediately took him to the nearest hospital. After an MRI test, they took him straight in. The next morning, we went to see him: his face was not that badly crooked and he was getting better. He thanked us so much because we saved him. When your children are not with you, people in the community whom you are familiar with will become a great help to each other. (Mr Yuan, 64, N3)

5.3.3 Information exchange

The data in this research show that information exchange was also carried out during social engagements. The use of new technology such as the Internet and social media was uncommon among the participants. Thus, in addition to newspapers, television and radio, social engagement was a very important channel for many of the urban Chinese elderly to obtain information and support. Many of the participants perceived the meetings, volunteer work and entertainment activities organised by the community centre as good opportunities for engagement and information exchange. There were organised trips to care homes for older people to gain some inside knowledge about their alternative route for later-life care. There were also meetings held for Communist Party members about current neighbourhood services, problems and plans for the community. For many of the participants, the motivation to regularly attend these organised activities was to seek information, such as about what had happened in the neighbourhood and events or activities planned in the neighbourhood. Most

importantly, social affairs that may be related to their own personal needs and gains were strong motivations.

They came to me and asked me. I thought, OK then; just think of it as my obligation to the country. In addition, I can find out some national affairs and have a chat. You can find out many things in those meetings. (Mrs Dou, 78y, N3)

Social engagements not only provided the older people with information on what was going on in their communities but also extended their social networks. These extended social networks in turn provided information support when needed by the older people.

Through the rehearsals, I also made a few close friends. Sometimes, they come to my home for a chat or to seek some advice, some suggestions for their troubles [...] one can only give old neighbours some advice. If a few old pals gather together to have a chat, it helps. (Mr Man, 71y, N1)

According to Heane and Israel (2008), information support refers to information that an individual can use to address their problems, and this includes advice and suggestions from friends. In addition to organised activities, informal engagements provide older people with the opportunity to exchange information. In such engagements, older people have more control of the information they are required to know. They can take the initiative to seek information relating to their own lives both now and in the future.

I listen to the news all the time. Everything. I know very well about pay rise issues and policies. If someone can tell me how much their pension is and their length of service and retirement, I can tell them how much more they could get. I love to know about policy. It is helpful for everyone. Talking about it with others makes me happy too. If those old ladies meet me on a walk, they often grab me for a good chat about it [...] About the later-life care, I went to the small park yesterday afternoon. There were two old ladies. Although they have both lost most of their nobilities, they are not paralysed. They were sunbathing with their carer [...] After their carer left to watch the dance group, I asked them how old they were, what kinds of illnesses they had and the extent of them. Then, I asked how much they pay for their carer. I also asked them whether they get support from their children or not. (Mrs Xiu, 75y, N1)

Interestingly, the data in this research show that information support might not always be as apparent and obvious as instrumental or emotional support during engagements. The data provide strong evidence that there are interrelations among different types of support. For example, in the previous section, Mr Man mentioned that the 'speaking therapy' he and his friends had in the park could possibly act as information exchange between them. In a similar vein, Mr Yuan helped to save his friend and avoid the bad consequences of a stroke because his information on the symptoms was better than that of his friend. For many of the participants, not only receiving but also being able to provide information or any other type of support to others could enhance their self-confidence and self-value. This will be further analysed in the next section.

5.3.4 Social engagement and sense of self

One of the existing theories of ageing in Western society argues that elderly people who enter retirement face an identity crisis, as their life until that point was organised according to their occupational status (Havighurst, 1954; Phillipson, 2013a). However, the present data reveal a different outcome in a Chinese context. The majority of the participants in this research showed their desire and willingness to engage with wider society. These desires to remain involved were reflected in their regular formal and informal social engagements, as well as their voluntary work within the neighbourhoods. In fact, most of the participants from N1 and N2 volunteered at the community centres and had taken on new roles in their communities.

I teach them dance in this community. I am in charge of the art activities. I like it. It makes me happy. I teach twice a month. I need to go learn it myself first. (Mrs Tiao, 62y, N3)

Our generation, although we are old, we still like to be motivated and have something to do. In the old days, we experienced starvation. The quality of life was not good at all. With those experiences, now we feel that we all have a good life. We need to help each other. That makes us happy too. That is why we organised a community handyman service team. We gained happiness from it. It also makes you feel motivated and uplifted. Makes you feel capable. Us old folks are willing to help others and solve problems. Through these, it makes me feel that I am ok and that I can do things still. Makes me feel full of energy every day and

*in a good mood. Not too old and fragile on the way to
ba bao shan¹³. Not yet! (Mr Gan, 74y, N1)*

The older people also gained confidence from their social engagements with others. Even the spontaneous interactions with tourists on the street could enrich their daily lives and make them proud to be who they are.

This street park wasn't built for older people only. Everyone can use it, like those tourists. Those tourists love to talk to old Beijingers like us to have a chat. Asking what it was like before. What happened with the nobles, the changes of the street, etc. Others do not know what happened here in this street. (Mr Chuan, 80y, N1)

The fundamental difference between Chinese and Western societies in the perception of the self is that, traditionally, Chinese people do not view the self as an independent being but “defined as a relational being socially situated within a specific context” (Chou, 2009:252). In other words, in their everyday lives, Chinese people act based upon their specific social roles. Whether with family members, at school, in the workplace or within a neighbourhood, in order to sustain appropriate selfhood, one has to maintain a harmonious relationship with others. As Chou (2009) asserts, the self has little meaning outside these social relationships, and compassionate concern for others is the key to achieving meaningful selfhood. In a similar vein, Gilroy and Booth (1999) assert that everyday lives can be considered a web of social relations; these relations help to accomplish our existence through our life course. Thus, as demonstrated above, this deeply embedded Chinese tradition influenced the participants’ perceptions of the self, motivating the participants to actively engage with

¹³ Name of one of the oldest crematoria in Beijing.

others, rather than withdraw from society. Many of the participants objected to the view that retirement means withdrawing from the labour force and society. They strongly believed that in order to continue to have a meaningful life, one needs to remain part of society. Thus, whether it was through volunteer work in the neighbourhood or helping out neighbours, these social engagements helped the participants to connect with the wider community; moreover, self-worth was achieved through helping others in the neighbourhood, often by re-using their professional skills. Thus, these engagements enhanced participants' self-esteem and confidence, and their own worth and social value were defined. They felt a sense of control and success.

I am not bothered with remuneration. I just like doing something. That makes me happy and feel great. I can still be useful and can help others. That enhances my dignity. After my retirement, if I had nothing to do, it would make me feel useless. Just useless. But when you do things for others, you feel you still being value and still have value. (Mr Zun, 65y, N1)

As mentioned earlier, in addition to informal engagement, many participants also attended social activities and voluntary work organised by the neighbourhood committee or street office. These formally organised activities were also captured by the researcher during the field observation.

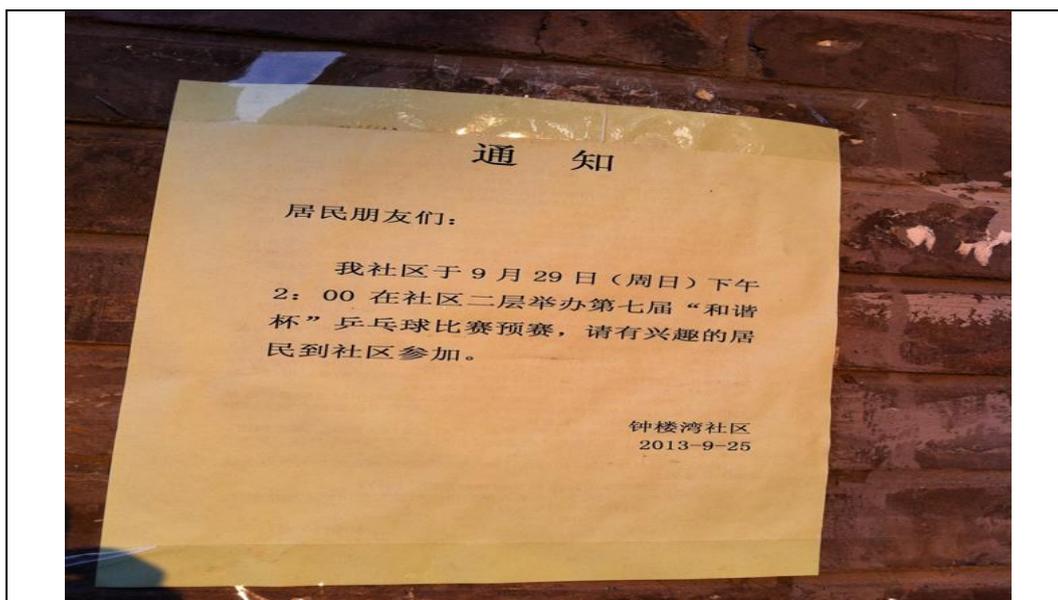


Image taken: 07/10/2013, 5:07pm, in N1

Image description: A notification for the community's 7th Harmonious Cup table tennis tournament, which was held on 25th September 2013.

Tomba (2014) views these as the Chinese government's control at the neighbourhood level to ensure stability and social order. To many of the participants in this research, close involvement with the neighbourhood committee provided them with a sense of security and recognition.

Our community manages well. We have 'yangge dances' [a type of traditional folk dance] and chores. As long as you are willing, they are more than happy for you to join in. You have to write this in your thesis – this is one of the best thing for us [...] If you don't go to the community events, you lose touch with the world. But if there were more organised activities, that would make a lot of difference. Our community has been organising a spring festive celebration for more than ten years now. The directing, choreography, and acting are all done by us. It brings so much joy to us and connects everyone together. The first time you meet

someone, you may feel strange, but several times after, you become familiar with each other, then you will establish a respect for each other unlike two strangers on the street. The respect will bring harmony and connect the hearts. Through these activities, people get to know each other in this way. If anything happens, you can ask for help. I think the government should develop more in this sector (Mr Gan, 74y, N1)

The findings also reveal that the retirees who were Communist Party members expressed more conformity and sense of belonging and responsibilities than non-party members did. As their party membership profile was transferred to their neighbourhood administration, they were still part of the organisation and had their roles to fulfil at the neighbourhood level. It was common that party members became the front line in supporting events organised within the neighbourhoods. In fact, these participants were accepted for their obligation and duty to their neighbourhoods. This transition had helped many of the participants to develop new roles and find new interests through their engagements. By help others, many participants gained sense of belonging and purpose. In fact, prior research found that better social environment at neighbourhood level have positive effect to older people's mental and physical health (Norstrand et al., 2012).

Mrs Hong: I do things the same way. You know, this neighbourhood watch duty, twice a week, or more if there are national events. I think in this way, when I was working, there were people who did this service, making sure of public safety. Now it is my turn and although I am old, I still should do what I can.

R: Have you ever thought that you are retired now and don't need to do all of this?

Mrs Hong: No, I never think that way. They need me and I will do it. As a party member, one has to hold the party member standards until death. We are different to civilians. (Mrs Hong, 75y, N1)

However, as mentioned earlier, no participants from N2 had joined the community volunteering programmes. Two reasons that underline this outcome were observed by the researcher. Firstly, with much better social economic status, these participants showed their attachment to their neighbourhood location and their small circle of friends within their residential compound but much less attachment to the community as a whole. Whether information support or instrumental support, their own personal resources were sufficient to support their everyday lives and needs. This was also why fewer social engagements were observed in N2 than in the other two neighbourhoods. However, to many of the participants in N2 and N3, involvement with the community committee provided an extra opportunity for engagements, which benefited their lives. Secondly, N2 was a work unit compound, and the residents were not only neighbours but also former co-workers. During the city redevelopment, it merged with other work unit compounds, and the newly developed *xiaoqu* became one big community managed under one street administration committee. Not only was the community centre distant from the compound itself but also the community population had become much bigger.

There was a community centre in the compound. But they moved out nearly six years ago. The newly established XX Community Centre is located on the west side of XX Street. I don't go there: nothing interests me. I don't know anyone there. What they have up there, play cards or chess, we can just do that

downstairs in the compound. (Informal conversation with a 78-year-old man in N2, 25th Sep 2014)

5.4 The role of religion

In addition to retirement, this research also found some older people's social network could be reduced or even lost after they lose their spouse. As mentioned earlier, Mrs Cai was one of the widows in this research that found emotional support from neighbourhood social network was helpful for her bereavement process. As she expressed, loss of her husband 15 years ago not only had a great impact on her emotionally, but also on her social network and social support which she previously relied on.

After my husband passed away, I felt isolated and lonely. In those days, I did not go to other people's homes as I do now. I was stuck home alone and only watched television. When I went out to the park, or place we practice taichi, people who knew him would ask about him because we always did things together. I could not handle it anymore so I stopped everything. (Mrs Cai, 76y, N1)

As demonstrated, the social network Mrs Cai previously established together with her husband became an emotional burden because it was constant reminder of her husband's absence. To avoid the pain, she chose not to participate anymore and her social circle shrank dramatically. It is also interesting to note that Mrs Cai was the only one among all participants in this research who attended a religious group regularly. It was through her work colleague that she joined a social group run by a local church.

My colleague took me there and told me to try it. It was around May and I felt that it was not too bad. Therefore, I carried on. I do not have much education, it just like study something new. Now, it has become a habit and it feels not right if I miss one session. It is not far from my house. There are about a dozen of old people in my group. They also came and visited me at home or in hospital when I was ill. Those who are financially capable had donated money to help. It was not because they give me money that is why I feel they are good. I never asked and refused to take it. However, they insisted. They are willing to help no matter what. I started in May 2000, and each session take no more than 40 minutes. Without it, I would be alone at home. I gained knowledge and comfort from it. (Mrs Cai, 76y, N1)

As demonstrated, what she had gained from her local religious group not only helped her through her bereavement but also provided her new opportunity to establish a new social network and support. Not only did this group help Mrs Cai overcome the difficulties and struggles, but also opened a new path for her life. According to Zhang and Chen (2013), whose study did not find supportive evidence on the positive effect of religious participation among Chinese older people. They suggest that in addition to their small sample size, political and cultural environments may well play their role on such topics. In other words, not many people are willing to talk about it. However, Mrs Cai's experience had shed some light on the issue. Firstly, as demonstrated, the actual belief system seems not to have much impact on her wellbeing, but the companionship, emotional support and the money she received from the group had made some positive contributions to her life. The social support that she felt during her struggles with bereavement, terminal illness, and housing issue benefited both her mental

and physical health. Secondly, the religious practice may not openly be discussed but it was not absent in everyday social interactions and it may also have played an important role in many older people's lives as Mrs Cai revealed, there were dozen older people in her group. In such sense, this religious group and their activities played an equal role provided supports to Mrs Cai as other social groups may or may not achieve. However, as this was the only case in this study, more in-depth investigation needed in the future before any generalised conclusion being drawn.

5.5 Relocation conflicts

The previous sections demonstrated the participants' desire to engage with others at the neighbourhood level. The social networks that the older people had built up through their participation and engagement supported them when they were in need of help and assistance. These benefits were recognised by the participants, and these positive experiences contributed to the strong attachment that the participants had to their neighbourhoods. However, this attachment created an emotional conflict for some of the participants between staying in the neighbourhood or relocating elsewhere for better housing. For many of them, on the one hand, they valued the social engagements and support networks in their neighbourhoods, which played a part in making them prefer to stay where they were. On the other hand, their declining satisfaction with their neighbourhood environments pushed them away from their long-lived neighbourhoods.

However, psychologically, if you move houses, change environment, you have to readjust. If you put these into consideration, it is not good. If there were no noise

issue, I would still prefer to live here. I have lived here all my life. (Mr Man, 71y, N1)

Furthermore, they were aware that poor living conditions would bring many challenges to their later lives with their continuing declining health. As a result, many of the participants' attachments to their neighbourhood social environments were strongly opposed with their moving intentions based solely on the housing conditions. For example, Mr Chuan, an 80-year-old who lived on the second floor of a three-storey apartment block with his wife and daughter, had endured a recent deterioration in his lung condition and thus required a constant oxygen supply. His wife had a stroke a few years ago and has only recovered parts of her functional ability. Their daughter was the full-time carer for both of them. The infrastructure of the building was very limited. There was no lift and only one water tap and one single toilet on each floor, shared by four families. As there was no designated kitchen area, each family has adapted part of the passageway outside of their room for cooking and storage. There is only one exit (a staircase with deep steps) for the building.

People like me, third-generation Manchu and old Beijngese, we do not like to move out. This district, I have lived here since I was a baby. If I moved somewhere else, yes, the living space would be bigger and I'd have more space, but there would be too many disadvantages. Lack of hospitals, daily shopping and inconvenient to go out. Among the neighbours, for those who are younger with good health, they do not mind moving to upgrade their living conditions. However, for old folks like me, relocation is a problem. I would like to upgrade my living conditions but I have built very good relationships within the community.

Besides, this neighbourhood's surroundings are very good. In this sense, I do not want to move. This is so contradicting. (Mr Chuan, 80y, N1)

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has drawn on the data to explore the relationship between social engagement and AIP. In doing so, it has demonstrated that the older people in this research had a strong desire for social participation at the neighbourhood level. The participants enjoyed social engagements and were happy to participate in both formal and informal activities. Significantly, the participants tended not to see a clear distinction between physical and social engagement, seeing them as intrinsically linked and beneficial. The findings show that social participation acted as a mediator and helped the Chinese older people to lead active lifestyles. This finding is in contrast with the disengagement theory of ageing developed by Western scholars, which claims that after retirement, older people are more likely to withdraw from society (Phillipson, 2013a). Recent research (Chen and Gao, 2013) on older people's social participation in urban Beijing also found that the willingness to participate in social activities increased from 76.6% in 2000 to 79.5% in 2006 and to 86.7% in 2010. Further, Chen and Gao (2013) found that the percentage of older people who are willing to engage in social participation decreases with age. Chen and Gao (2013) took a similar viewpoint to disengagement theory, which sees ageing as an inescapable, gradual process that for older people eventually leads to less need for social participation, except for some basic survival needs. However, the findings from this research provide an alternative view to this claim. The findings demonstrate that although Chinese older people's functional ability might decline, their desire to participate remains strong, including in productive roles within the neighbourhood.

Like all other age groups, older people need all forms of social support when they face bereavement, illness or other difficulties in their daily lives. In the present study's Chinese context, emotional support was one of the main supports that the older people gained from their neighbourhood friends. Strong bonds were sustained between participants from the same neighbourhoods. Such bonds not only provided the participants with daily companionship and problem-solving opportunities but also supported them through their own illnesses and personal difficulties. Most of the participants were aware of this unique value of neighbourhood friends in their lives. This was also reflected in the significant trust, reciprocity and mutuality embedded in the older people's engagement and relationships with one another. Whether these engagements were on an individual or group level, the trust and support developed through the participation helped to produce positive outcomes for the Chinese older people's daily lives. This finding corresponds with Lee et al.'s (2005) finding that non-kin primary ties (friends, neighbours and co-workers) are equally important in an individual's social network in terms of emotional support.

In addition to emotional support, neighbourhood friends also played an important role when the participants were in need of practical help. It was clear that the traditional Chinese culture of *yuanqin buru jin lin* (neighbours much more helpful than the family members who lives far away) still has a strong hold in contemporary urban China. From the incident where Mrs Chang helped an old woman who did not have to die alone to Mr Yuan saving his friend from a stroke, we saw how neighbours can play a role that other members of their social networks find impossible to fulfil. Clearly, the findings from this research correspond with those of prior studies (Wiles et al., 2011; Cornwell and Laumann, 2015) and provide strong evidence that social engagement benefited the older people's lives in different forms.

As demonstrated, the Chinese older people's desire to participate in wider society was strong, and one motivation behind it was their desire to keep

good functional health in order to have an independent life and continuing enjoyment of their time at home. The findings indicate that Chinese cultural perceptions of the self also played an important role in the participants' engagement with others. The Chinese conception of the self can only be viewed through relationships with others, which influenced the participants' willingness to help out others in their neighbourhoods. It was through their engagement with others that they defined their own self-value and identity, contributing to their quality of life. However, the provision of social support and perceived social support may not always correspond with each other. An individual's own personal circumstances greatly influenced how they felt about the support they had received and from whom they needed it. The findings in this research provide evidence of the divergence in older people's needs, particularly in different cultural contexts and in view of the urban redevelopment processes in different societies.

As mentioned previously, all of the older people in this research had lived in the same neighbourhoods for a considerable period of time. Many of them had lived in the same neighbourhoods or even the same houses for their entire lives. Their attachment to their neighbourhoods was strong. However, not all of the attachment can be considered positive. In fact, for many of the participants, their positive experiences of social engagement at the neighbourhood level had created an emotional conflict between their desire to find a better and more-suitable living environment and their enjoyment of their engagements in the neighbourhood. The existing literature on the issues related to environmental barriers for older people in Western societies has drawn attention to housing modification and home service technology (Johansson et al., 2008; Sixsmith et al., 2014) as part of the solutions supporting older people's desire to stay at home. The lack of social research about urban older people's lives in China means that our understanding of the issue within the Chinese context is limited. However, the dedicated chapter specifically addressing the 'liveable environment' in the newly revised Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of

the Rights and Interests of the Elderly in 2012 has shown some positive development in this area (Du and Xie, 2015).

Chapter 6: Ageing and age care in urban Beijing

6.1 Introduction

As outlined earlier, throughout Chinese history, filial piety has been one of the fundamental cultural elements used to evaluate an individual's success or failure, including successful ageing and old age. Older people's status and later-life care were heavily influenced and constructed through this deeply embedded cultural system. As a result, 'Yang er fang lao' (have children for old age care) is a well-known cultural belief and is the driving force behind reproduction in China. However, in a rapidly changing urban world, there is increasing evidence (Chou, 2010a; Cheung and Kwan, 2009; Du and Qu, 2013) that there is a fragmentation of filial piety norms and values. In fact, attitudes towards ageing and old age are changing (Laidlaw et al., 2010). Furthermore, studies (Zhan et al., 2008b; Gustafson and Baofeng, 2014) have shown that older people's own attitudes towards filial piety norms have started to change. In particular, this applies when practical issues of who will take the duty of care and living arrangements are involved (Chen, 2014). It is against this background of shifting social attitudes that this chapter explores how older people in urban China experience all these changes and their own concerns and perceptions on these issues.

Therefore, Section 6.2 provides an analysis of the tradition of filial piety and its impact on the current living arrangements among the participants, as well as their own preferences and perceptions on the issue. Within this section, the main factors that have determined the participants' living arrangement are identified. This is followed by Section 6.3, which explores the participants' perceptions of an institutional care model. In this section, changes in attitudes and the causes of these changes are also presented. The last section presents how the participants viewed alternative care arrangements in the community, besides a traditional care model and an institutional care model.

6.2 Co-residence and AIP

6.2.1 Filial piety

Older people's living arrangements and care can be influenced by different factors, such as demographic, socio-economic and cultural factors (Tomassini et al., 2004). In the Chinese context, older people's care arrangements have been influenced by the filial piety tradition; consistent with this, co-residence was the dominant living arrangement for Chinese older people through history and it continues to be present in contemporary China. Thus, although AIP may well be a new academic concept and policy strategy adopted by some governments in Western societies to cope with ageing populations, as a type of living arrangement, it has been dominant throughout Chinese history. The data reveal that the family continues to be the primary source of age care. As a result, co-residence still holds a strong position, and older people's preference of place of care is still at home with family members. This finding is consistent with those of prior studies (Zhang et al., 2014; Cao et al., 2014) on elderly care choice, in which family care was still identified as the dominant care arrangement in China. As the data reveal (Table 4), among all 34 participants of the interviews, 19 (55.8%) were living with their adult children in two- or three-generation households. There were 11 participants who co-resided with adult children and were in the age group of 70 years old and over.

Table 6: Different age groups and their living arrangements

Different age groups and their living arrangements			
	60-69	70-79	80+
Number of participants	14	16	4
Co-reside with children	8	10	1
With spouse	6	4	1
Alone	/	2	2

R: Have you worried about your later-life care?

Mrs Ye: There is no other way. Even though you are worried, who can you seek help from? You are just a worker, who can help you? No one will look after you but your own children.

R: Would you like to live with your daughter?

Mrs Ye: No, I don't want to. I have a son – why would I live with my daughter? This is the tradition: in the end, I still rely on my son. My daughter-in-law will take care of me. I've never thought about living with my daughter, never. (Mrs Ye, 78y, co-resided, N1)

Old age care – of course I have been thinking about it. Since I have children, I don't think I will end up in a bad situation. Like now, if I fancy something, they will bring it to me. I never think about going to a nursing home. I don't think I would like that type of life. Even though money is not an issue, I still think my own home is much better [...] Home is better. That is why you have children: for taking care of you when you are old. Otherwise, who would have children? (Mrs Dou, 78y, co-resided, N3)

The above quotes are consistent with prior research findings (Chuanling and Mei, 2001) that many Chinese older people still hold strong beliefs about family values and the filial piety tradition, and these beliefs clearly shaped the participants' expectations of care and support from their adult children. The data reveal that adult children's attitudes also played an important part in some of the participants' living arrangements and care. This finding corresponds with those of a prior study (Zheng et al., 2012) on co-residing that showed that the stronger the filial piety expressed by adult children, the higher their likelihood of co-residing with their parents.

We have been thinking about it. When we can't do anything at all, we won't mind going to institutionalised care facilities. But my children don't like it. My daughter-in-law said, "don't you think people will point the finger at us? Having a son and daughter but going to a care home". (Mrs Hong, 75y, co-resided, N1)

I prefer to be cared for by my own children. You see, our daughter is happy to care for us; I am very pleased. But there are children who do not want to take care their parents – what can one do about it? Going to a care home would be the only choice. Honestly, a carer would not be as considerate as my daughter is. In order to take care of both of us, she took early retirement. She was rewarded with the title 'city filial star' (Mr Chuan, 80y, co-resided, N1).

6.2.2 Housing and AIP

Eleven out of the 17 (64.7%) participants in N1 co-resided with their adult children. Among the 13 participants in N3, 8 (61.5%) co-resided with their adult children. All of the participants from N2 lived relatively independent lives alone or with spouses. The data reveal that in addition to the filial piety tradition, for participants who co-resided with their adult children, housing status was an important factor that influenced the participants' living arrangements.

I live with my daughter now. I had been living alone for ten years. She moved in recently. August 2013. Her son married and they had to give that place to her son. So, she moved into my place. (Mrs Fu, 78y, N3)

This house is public housing. We have the right to use it, but the owner is the local housing bureau. We have lived here nearly 40 years. It is 31 square metres, including the second floor we added ourselves. We renovated in 2011; there is just not enough living space. We live with my eldest son, my daughter in-law and my grandson. They are all deaf. (Mr Jing, 67y, N1)

The housing shortage has been an issue ever since the establishment of the PRC in 1949 due to the rapid population growth (Zhao, 2011; Hui, 2013). The increasing population mobility after the economic reform resulted in mass rural–urban migration, which put further pressure on the housing demand. However, the problem of soaring housing prices (Li and Shen, 2013) in recent decades has also created a large gap between housing prices and incomes, and only a small group (only 20% in Beijing) of urban residents can afford to purchase the new, standardised residential housing (Ma and Chow, 2006). It is not only the participants who have a lack of purchasing ability; the next two generations after them also have the same issue of housing affordability, in particular participants from N1 and N3. This problem did not occur to the participants from N2.

We cannot afford to buy a house. My son's salary is not that low; still, it is too expensive for him and no one gives him a mortgage [...] If he wants to get married, he has to rent a place. He lives with us and doesn't have to pay us a penny. Just saves up. (Mr Dang, 72y, N1)

Financially, they just cannot do much. My daughter-in-law earns 1,580 RMB per month. 1,500 RMB pays for the nursery. My son earns 2,600 RMB per month. After deductions for his pension and medical contributions, there is not much left either. With our pensions

*together, life is not too bad. We have to help them out.
(Mr Jing, 67y, N1)*

If I didn't sell my house and put the money in, they cannot buy this flat on their own, just don't have the financial ability to do it. But the surrounding and location is too good to miss. For their benefit. If you want me to choose, I still prefer live separately, but close by each other. (Mr Yuan, 64y, N3)

The existing literature (Ye and Chen, 2013) indicates that older people who live with their adult children have better mental health outcomes than those who live alone or with their spouses only. However, the findings in this research reveal some contrasting views. Many of the participants who co-resided with their children in this study expressed their constant worries and feeling burdened by their children's lack of purchasing ability and low housing status. They were happy to provide help and assistance to their children, but this had led to concerns and anxiety about their own later-life care.

Housing is the most urgent issue that needs to be solved. Then, we can talk about whether we stay at home and hire a carer or something else. When you don't have enough space for your own family to live in, you don't even think about hiring a carer, though. (Mrs Xiu, 75y, N1)

I am very worried. We lived opposite before. This one is 18 square metres for six of us. I never get the opportunity to benefit from the welfare housing provision. We cannot afford to buy a house either. My

sons are thinking about buying public rental housing, but I'm not sure about that. Because of this house, I have worried my whole life. I extended it a little bit myself. That solved part of the problem temporarily (Mr Jing, 67y, N1)

Not only did the participants who co-resided with their adult children link their housing status with their future care arrangements but also the participants who lived independently made such connections. To some, it created anxiety.

I would like to stay at home. But, to put it crudely, my youngest son only has a one-room flat. There are three of them and their son is already 24 years old. If I move out, it will leave the house for them. That is my thought on it. I could wait until I die, but I don't know when I will die. I might just move to a care home [...] (Mrs Cai, 76Y, N1)

It is interesting to note that since housing has become a commodity, a housing endowment programme has been promoted by the Chinese government (Wei, 2014) However, the participants' reactions to this idea were not positive.

We just cannot copy the Western way only. Age care in China still needs to consider the Chinese situation. They proposed a housing endowment programme. But I think that the majority of people will not take that option. For those who are rich or who have children but their children immigrated elsewhere, with nobody

relying on them, maybe they can. Otherwise, us ordinary folks still want to keep our houses and age at home. It still is the old ideology to have a big, happy family around you. To have one's own children. But one child is also a problem. (Mrs Mao, 64y, N3)

6.2.3 Childcare and AIP

In addition to housing status, childcare was another factor that influenced the participants' living arrangements in this research. Twelve of the participants were providing childcare for their grandchildren at the time of the interviews. Many other participants had also provided childcare for their grandchildren previously. This finding echoes existing findings (Goh, 2009; Chen et al., 2011a) that it is common in China for grandparents to provide childcare on a regular basis for their grandchildren.

We are the ones taking care of our grandson every day. Sending him to nursery in the morning and picking him in the afternoon. Cooking for him and feeding him. If his mother finishes work late, we need to look after him until bedtime. (Mr Jing, 72, N1)

However, childcare duties did not solely fall on the participants who co-resided with their children; some of the participants who lived separately from their adult children also provided such help. These participants took on day care or weekly care duties too. For some, the young family would just move in.

I don't look after her every day. Her paternal grandmother was ill and needed an operation – that is why I have to do it all. I shared the responsibility with

her other grandmother previously, and her own parents have her during the weekend. I love to do it. I am happy to look after her. This is our responsibility too. Don't we all love our grandchildren? Now, our children are too busy with their careers and we have to help. They're not like us – we could take time off without a problem. But they can't do that now. We must help. (Mrs Tiao, 62y, N3)

To some participants, such as Mr Jing, their children's housing status and financial situation were the main drives behind their co-residence and childcare duty. However, social-economic factors not always play the role to determine such outcome. For participants and their children who are in good social-economic situation, childcare duty still carried out by the participants. The participants who provided childcare perceived it as part of their responsibilities and were willing to provide such help to their children. The data showed participants who provided childcare continue to hold a strong perception on family value and viewed themselves as part of the extended family and one has the duty to meet the needs of the family as a whole rather than the needs of the individual.

Mrs Pai: My eldest daughter lives with me now. They have their own house. But my grandson has started school now, so I could not help him with his homework [...] I told them, just move back. You see, our house here, this room is 20 square metres and that one is 25 square metres, and there is another floor too. We have plenty of space. That is why they all moved back.

R: Do you feel any burden from it?

Mrs Pai: No, not at all. He has brought me unlimited happiness. They brought him to me when he was one

year and three months old, until he was seven years old. Day and night, I looked after him all that time.
(Mrs Pai, 63y, N1)

6.3 Institutionalisation and AIP

6.3.1 Attitudes towards institutional care

Influenced by the filial piety tradition in older people's care, attitudes towards institutionalisation have been negative (Chen, 2014; Chou, 2010b; Gu et al., 2007). With the domination of the homecare model, government-funded institutions are mostly occupied by older people who do not have family members who can look after them or who have failed to do so. Often, it is perceived as a failure of life both to the older people and to their children. It is also interesting to note, according to Gu et al. (Gu et al., 2007) individual's functional health is not a primary determinant of institutionalisation among Chinese older people, and elderly who lack family resources are most likely institutionalised. The findings in this research reveal that such attitudes were apparent and strong among the participants. Societal stigma and cultural stereotypes were important factors influenced their perception.

In our neighbourhood, there are so many of them, such as the one in building X. He could not form a good relationship with his daughter-in-law: she didn't want to cook for him, and his son was also un-filial. They sent him there [to a nursing home] and in less than three months, he died. Also one of my colleagues. He transferred his house ownership to his daughter, not his son. His daughter-in-law was not happy about it. Later, he became ill and his daughter didn't want to look after him either. They sent him to a nursing home and he died in less than a year (Mrs Dou, 78y, N3)

In addition to filial piety, attachment to their homes and neighbourhoods influenced the participants' attitudes towards institutional care in old age. This finding echoes AIP initiatives in that it was considered that homecare provided the participants with a sense of independence and control.

Staying at home is much better. You have much more freedom and feel comfortable and unstrained. I can plan those things I personally like, rather than having to follow what others plan and arrange for you to do or eat. It is nice that others plan it all for you, but still, I don't think I would feel comfortable with it. For those who like to go to nursing homes, it may be due to their dislike of doing house chores. But nursing homes are not much different from a workplace. Same time for dinner, same time to go to bed every day. Go to the activities arranged by the nursing home. It is just like the old working life. I think it is very boring. I had enough governing by the managers during my working life. I do not think I would wish to be governed when I have finally retired and have freedom of my own. I will wait to see when I reach the point of losing all my independence, but still, it's too far ahead to think too much about it. If you can be independent and do things for yourself, that is also good for your health; it is a kind of exercise too. In the nursing home, they do things for you, such as cooking and cleaning. It will reduce one's daily activities so much; I don't think that will benefit one's health. (Mrs Guan, 69y, N2)

As shown in the above quote, the participants often compared institutions with home environments. In addition to providing independence and control, the home was perceived by the participants as a place to interact with family

members and as a reflection of good health. Thus, declining functional health was viewed by the participants as a crucial factor for their living arrangements. In other words, institutionalisation was closely linked in the minds of many of the participants with health decline and was symbolic of the end of life and approaching death.

As long as I can take care of myself, I would like to stay at home because my children are close by. If you move to yanglaoyuan (institution), you will have been discarded from home physically and mentally. The bunch of old people together would influence your thoughts into a state: this is it, the end, no more. (Mr Fan, 90y, N2) You see, even if you are quite OK, you have to watch those who are bedridden, painfully lying there, shouting out in pain and suffering – how miserable. That makes you think about yourself, thinking that you might become that way too. However, if you stay at home, just you and your loved ones, or hire a carer, you won't come across those things. Those things will depress you. (Mr Zhi, 60y, N3)

For those participants who were reluctant to go into institutional care, their negative attitudes were influenced by their perceptions on the quality and type of care provided by these institutions.

There are nurses and doctors in the 'yanglaoyuan', and also they have system in place to make sure always someone on duty. Their facilities also more suitable than home environment. But all these depends on the individual institutions. The good one may provide better care, but too many of them are only look good outside

*and actual aims is to make as much profit as possible.
Older people are not happy to live in these places.
Majority of older people don't want to go 'yanglaoyuan'.
(Mrs Ow, 70y, N1)*

As Cheng et al. (2011b) point out, before the 1980s, institutional care facilities only provided services for the elderly who were without children and the disabled. At present, the service provided is limited to basic physical care, and social and emotional care are often lacking (Zhan et al., 2006b; Zhan et al., 2012; Zhan et al., 2008b). Furthermore, the data reveal that the majority of the participants were unclear about the types and services available in these institutions and the distinctions between them. The term 'yanglaoyuan' was used more as a general description and umbrella term for all different types of institutionalised age-care facilities. It encompasses retirement homes, assisted living in a residential environment, nursing homes, hospices and palliative care. The muddled understanding of the participants reflects the fact that institutional long-term care continues to be an evolving concept in contemporary China and is still in the process of professionalisation and specialisation (Zhan et al., 2012). Thus, scholars (Zhan et al., 2006a; Feng et al., 2011; Chen and Ye, 2012) point out that translating 'yanglaoyuan' to 'nursing home' would appear to be a poor catch-all phrase for the existing institutional care system in China.

I may go to a yanglaoyuan, even though I can still move around by myself. But, for sure, I will stay at home as long as possible. When you cannot go out much, going to live in a yanglaoyuan is the solution. When you reach that kind of age, it doesn't matter how good the outdoor environment is – you cannot use it anymore. You see, both of us are more than 70 years old now; in

*another ten years, we won't be able to go out anymore.
(Mrs Jiao, 71y, N1)*

*Among the elderly nowadays, as long as they can
move about, no one likes to go to a yanglaoyuan
(nursing home). The government should place priority
on those elderly who have lost their functional
capability. (Mr Zun, 65y, N1).*



Image taken: 04/11/2013, 12:46pm.

Image description: Front entrance of a care home and commercial housing development compound. As shown on the Baidu map below (map 7), this care home is located near the sixth ring road, and the straight-line distance from N2 to this care home is around 32 km. It took the researcher nearly two hours on public transportation, including buses and the subway. The nearest bus station to the apartment was around five minutes' walk for the researcher.

Map 7: Location of the care home (source: Baidu.com)

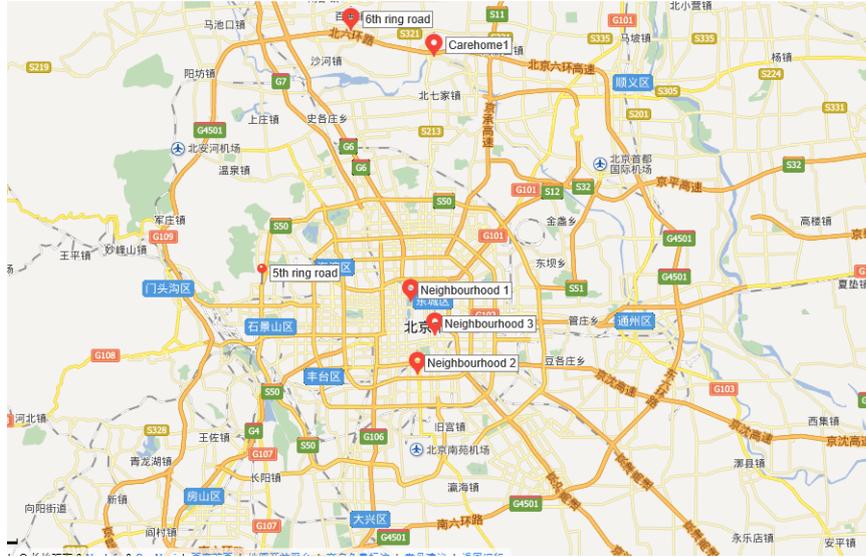


Image taken: 04/11/2013, 12:48pm in front of an Yanglaoyuan.
Image description: A big advertising board hanging on the side of the road near this care home. The writing on the board discusses the top brand of age care in China. It discusses a residential development project in second-layer cities close to Beijing, trying to attract customers.

The type of care home promotion in the photograph above reflects a trend in recent years of older people seeking retirement homes elsewhere in the

country. However, it is closely linked with property development and its affordability only suits a small group of older people.

For sure, I will choose a yanglaoyuan. Because I don't want to burden my son. As long as I am capable of looking after myself, I will stay at home. Once I think I have reached the stage of having to have people with me 24/7, I will go to a laoniangongyu [an assisted residential care home retirement villa]. (Mrs Chang, 72y, N2)

6.3.2 Changing family structure

As outlined above, negative attitudes towards institutional care are still apparent among Chinese older people, and a preference for the homecare model is still strong. However, studies have also shown that attitudes towards institutionalised care are changing (Clark, 2010; Costa-Font et al., 2009; Leviste, 2012). The findings in this research resonate with this claim.

We cannot listen to our children's opinions only. If they are capable of looking after us, that is fine. If they are not, we will take the initiative to ask to go to a yanglaoyuan. (Mrs Hong, 75y, N1)

Yanger fanglao [having children for old age care] is old China. People like my parents think that way. (Mrs Chang, 72y, N2)

As shown above, in addition to filial piety, consideration of the practicality of homecare was an important issue to most of the participants, in particular to one-child families. In this research, among the 34 participants, 11 (32%)

of them were one-child families. Coupled with urbanisation, the family size has been reduced significantly as a result of the one-child policy. Without siblings to share the responsibility to care for their parents, young people would face the financial, physical and emotional burden alone. Many of the participants who had faced such a situation with their children expressed their anxiety and concerns about their own later-life care. They worried that their children may not be able to provide for their daily care needs at home once they have lost their functional capability and that they will become financial and emotional burdens to their children. As a result, many of the participants expressed their willingness to take a flexible approach to institutional care. They were aware that their children were much different from them in perceptions of filial duty. They are not expected to abandon their careers and their own family obligations to be caregivers. Many of the participants expressed their understanding of the pressures that the younger generation have to face. In participant's own words:

Not because they don't want to. It is because they cannot. You see my son works in Guanzhou, flies back at midnight on Friday, and has to leave again on Sunday afternoon. He has his own family too. (Mrs Chang, N2).

As a result, instead of complying with the traditional model of care, many participants preferred option is institutionalised care facilities. Mr Man's words summarised the participants' perception well.

Although I am already 71, as long as I can move around by myself, I would like to stay at home. I can cook twice a day. I can shop. Unless one day I am the one left behind. Even if I could still move about, I would become burdensome to my son and he would be worried about leaving me alone at home. It would put too much

pressure on him. If that happens, I will go to a yanglaoyuan. Also, cooking for two is much more fun than cooking for myself. I might just go and let someone else cook for me. If one of us became very ill, for example had a stroke or got hemiplegia or something similar, we could not afford to hire a carer at home. They are at least a 1,000 RMB per month, plus other terms and conditions. It might be better to go to a yanglaoyuan. I have been thinking about it since I first took my retirement. We only have one son – this is called 2:4, meaning a couple has to look after four elderly. [If I/we go to a nursing home], a visit once a month [from our son] would be good enough. I have been checking the prices of nursing homes and went for a visit behind my wife's back. She does not want to think about it now. (Mr Man, 71y, N1)

6.3.3 Pensions and medical insurance: the implications for AIP

The shortage of institutionalised facilities for elderly care is an issue that many cities have to face in contemporary China. For example, in 2010 in Shanghai, the number of nursing home beds was only enough for 4.32% of the elderly population (Li and Shen, 2013). According to the report from the Department of Beijing Municipal Civil Affairs of 26th September 2014 (People'sDaily, 2014) at the end of 2013, the elderly population (aged 60 and over) in Beijing was 2.793 million. However, the report also shows that at the end of 2013, there were 410 age-care institutions (211 funded by the government and 199 by the private sector), with a total 80,516 beds. All of the participants were aware that the demand for institutional care facilities was much greater than the existing stock, in terms of both the scale and variety of the services and care provided.

You cannot get into care homes anyway. There are not many and most of them are too expensive. (Mrs Tiao, 62y, N3)

Anyway, we don't have enough institutional facilities and there is a shortage. They are building more and more every year. But there are too many older people now. Do you know how many older people there are in Beijing? It says in the newspaper, more than 200,000 over 60 years old. It's an ageing society now. (Mr Fan, 90y, N2)

The shortage of institutional care facilities for older people also meant that care home affordability was a big barrier that most of the participants had found it difficult to overcome based on their pensions and family incomes. For Chinese elderly people, national pensions and support from family members are the two main income sources (Wang et al., 2014) for their later-life care. This was applicable to all of the participants in this study. As pointed out by Whiteford (2003), although the Chinese social insurance system is based on central government guidelines, different adaptations have been made by local governments according to their own local conditions, and this has resulted in a fragmented and stratified pension system (Wang et al., 2014). These different adaptations and pension schemes mean that the level of pension benefits available to each person varies significantly from one type of pension scheme to another and from one city to another (Wang et al., 2014). In this study, the findings show that most of the participants fell under the schemes for enterprise employees at around 3,000 RMB per month (around £300). Two of the participants without pensions had a welfare provision of around 300 RMB per month (around £30). Through government subsidies, the institutionalised facilities charge reasonable fees, but the high demands mean that it is difficult to get in. For some popular state-subsidised institutions, for example, Capital's No 1

social welfare home in Beijing, a 100-year waiting list (Moore, 2013) to be able to get a bed has been reported, which seems ridiculous but sadly is the reality that many of the participants have to face. Furthermore, the government-owned care institutions prioritise older people who are qualified under the government's *wubaohu* (five guarantees) welfare system. This scheme covers older people (women over 55 and men over 60) who had no labour capabilities and no children or close relatives to care for them. It is also for older people who have lost their functional health but due to different reasons and causes cannot be cared for at home by their family members. Due to the increased demand on institutionalised care facilities, many families have no choice but to go to privately owned institutions or hire caregivers at home.

Most of the yanglaoyuan are too expensive. The fees they charge are too high. The cheap ones you have to pay more than 3,000 RMB per month. Those middle- and high-grade ones are even more expensive: 5,000–10,000 RMB and more. How on earth can people like us pay that amount of money? (Mr Gan, 74y, N1)

Nothing is guaranteed. I need to weigh up my financial capability. On the one hand, I don't want to burden my children and make them pay it for me; on the other, I hope that both of us will still have good lives in our old age. But just relying on my pension alone, it is impossible to afford for both of us. (Mr Zhi 60y, his wife was unemployed and has no pension, N3)

In recent years, many *laoniangongyu* (elderly apartments) have been built by property developers in Beijing in response to the increasing demand for age care (Feng et al., 2011). Based on the services provided, these types of facilities are similar to retirement villages in developed societies. In these

apartments, independent living, assisted living, some level of medical care and entertainment facilities are provided. As these types of care facilities are privately owned and have only started to develop in recent years, the locations of these apartments are far from the city centre and the fees are expensive.

Inexpensive and good-quality institutions are rare. For those who are willing to go, if their pensions can afford it, it is fine. You see, with a pension of about 3,000 (£300), and for two together around 6,000, and if their children are in good financial situations and can provide financial assistance, they could afford it, that is great. Plus, there is food and medical spending. Without a good financial situation or without their children's support, what can they do? That is why inexpensive and good-quality different grades of institutions are much needed and should be developed according to older people's needs and their income status. (Mr Shu, 61y, N3)

If the condition of institutional facilities is good enough, I think the majority of older people wouldn't mind going. Fair prices with good care and convenient with meals. If you stay at home, it won't be convenient anymore and will also create trouble for your children. Over 70 to 80 years, children will be worried if they leave you alone. (Mrs Xiu, 75y, N1)

The data also reveal that not all of the participants were concerned about the prices of institutional facilities. For the participants who held a higher pension grade and had better financial situations, the location and quality of the care was more of a concern. With higher-grade pensions, private

housing, and available financial support from their partners and children, this group of older people have more options on their choice of care. In fact, not one of the participants from N2 expressed their financial concerns: only their preferences of a place to live based on their perceptions of institutional care and family relationships. However, the majority of the participants from N1 and N3 were worried that their later-life care and access to institutional care would be difficult based on their pensions and family circumstances.

My wife needs a carer to help her to shower and look after her daily needs. Her pension is not enough to cover everything, and she is 1,000 RMB short per month. But with my salary together, we can cover all the expenses by ourselves; we don't ask for much help from our children (Mr Yang, 80y, N2).

I asked her: she said, "3,000 per month just for the carer". But her pension does not even reach 3,000. So I asked her whether her children give her money. She said her husband earned more than her. (Mrs Xiu, 75y, N1)

Although almost all urban citizens have various medical insurance programmes (Chen et al., 2010), the average disposable income of the bottom 20% income group is 2,622 RMB (Tian et al., 2015). With a little over 3,000 RMB pension as the only income, the majority of the participants from N1 and N3 are in fact in the bottom group and paying of one's medical bills and care arrangements became a much greater burden, not to mention the majority of participants from N1 still face poor housing conditions. For the urban elderly who had pensions and medical insurance, medical costs were still a big burden to many of them. Thus, it was not surprising that many of the participants were worried about their medical bills and future treatment and care.

If you have good health, it is OK. We are scared to get ill. Once you become ill, the money will go in no time. Even though you can claim some back, there is still some money that you have to pay yourself. If one treatment cured it all, that would be good. But it is always worrisome if you need long-term treatment. My colleague told me that she was in and out of hospital twice, 5,000 and another 5,000, with no more money left in her pockets. (Mrs Fu, 78y, N3)

The orthopaedist suggested that I should replace my kneecap two years ago. I said no. First of all, I don't have the money: the medical insurance only covers 10,000, (£1,000) and I would have to pay the balance of 7,000 (£700) myself. I said that my life is not worth that much. (Mrs Cai, 76y, N1)

6.3.4 Gender and later-life care

With the pension system mostly covering employees in urban firms (Luo et al., 2009), until the recent pension reform, many older people who originally came from rural areas were excluded. In this research, women who followed their husbands and moved to urban areas and stayed unemployed or held temporary employment were also excluded. Their pensions and medical coverage were the lowest and very basic. Without appropriate pensions, these groups of women had to rely on their husbands' incomes or support from their children.

I retired in 2002. My wife doesn't have a pension and relies on mine. My pension was only a little over 2,000 RMB [around £200] before, but it recently increased to

3,233 RMB [a little over £300]. Since she's over 60 now, she can claim 311 RMB [about £30] welfare benefit per month. It was 200 RMB [about £20] before but increased to 230, 250 and then 311, which is all she can get [...] I don't have a problem with medical expenses, only my wife does. She didn't have any medical insurance before. She has to pay 300 RMB per year to contribute. She can claim around 50–60% of the spending, and I can claim 90%. My daughter takes care of the rest of my wife's medical needs. (Mr Dang, 72y, N1)

I don't have a pension. The year my husband replaced his father at the factory, we moved here from a rural location [...] After an increase this year, I can claim 450 RMB [around £45] per month under the welfare provision programme. Nothing else. I rely on my husband. For medical expenses, 650 is the baseline: over that, my medical insurance covers 50% for outpatient treatment and 60% for hospitalised illness. I am very worried about my old-age care. You see, if both of us are healthy, all is fine. But if he goes before me, I will have no other way to support myself. I don't think I can rely on my children either; they don't even have enough for themselves. (Mrs Nong, 60y, N3)

If they think it is unrealistic to go to a care home, what about me? I don't even have a pension. Although I worked for 15 years, I don't have a pension because I was classified as a temporary worker. I only have a welfare provision of less than 300 RMB [around £30] per month. (Mrs Lin, 66y, N3)

The above quotes reflect a rather uncertain situation for some of the urban older women. For the rural women, there was a rural cooperative system of medical care that they could rely on before they moved to the urban areas. However, the system was abandoned after the 1980s and did not have any replacement for a period of time (Zavoretti, 2006). Classified as urban Hukou after their relocation, many older women, like Mrs Nong and Mrs Dang, now have to face no pension and very limited medical coverage, as they stayed at home and never had a Danwei. Although Mrs Lin worked, her occupational status does not warrant a pension and healthcare coverage. This situation has several implications on their choice of care in later life. Firstly, as their lives depend on their husbands' pensions, if they became widowed, they would lose a big part of their income support and be left in a very vulnerable position. In fact, studies from China show that women live longer and have longer widowhoods than men do (Gu et al., 2009a; Zheng, 2001; Du and Wu, 2006). In this case, this scenario will most likely happen. Secondly, by law adult children have to support and care for their elderly parents; however, in reality, this may not always be achievable if the adult children are disabled: Mr Jing's son, for example. Furthermore, if the adult children themselves are in ill health or have low economic statuses, the possibility of them providing appropriate support to these older woman is questionable. Thirdly, for empty-nest elderly whose children live far away or families who have lost their only children, family support is just too difficult to obtain. As such, whether these older women choose to stay at home or relocate to institutions, the situation is rather bleak. Without a pension or regular income, coupled with increasing medical spending as a result of declining health, these women face a much higher risk of later-life care crises and difficulty in maintaining their quality of life.

6.4 Community care and AIP

6.4.1 Perceptions on community care

In the UK, “community care describes the services and support which help people to continue to live independently at home” (AgeNI, 2016). The National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 provides a detailed description of how these services are being carried out and the responsible parties for the service delivery, in order to be able to provide the services needed by older people that are crucial for them to age in place. In recent decades, the Chinese government has started to introduce this idea as part of its strategy to solve the increasing age-care demands. As a result, a three-pillar framework was established (Yu et al., 2011; Pan, 2015). The three pillars are family care, community care and institutional care. The family care model continues to be classified as the primary care model and aims to cover 90% of the older population, with 7% of older people continuing to live at home but with community care. Institutional care is still considered with a small target percentage of 3%, mostly targeting older people lacking or without functional capacities. However, it is worth noting that in Chinese, ‘jujia yanglao’ (AIP) ‘shequ jujia yanglao’ (community care) and ‘shequ yanglao’ (ageing in the community) are frequently used interchangeably by different municipal governments, the media and researchers when talking about ageing at home (Li et al., 2009b; Tian et al., 2010a). This confusion was also apparent among the participants.

I think the shequ yanglao is the best way. Familiar with the place and people. If they had care homes in the community, that would be great. (Mrs Yu, 76y, N1)

About the food delivery and day care centre, we have it too, just like ‘yanglaoyuan’. The government promoting the ‘she qu yang lao’ (community care) now. It is very convenient in the community. Not everywhere

are the same as we lived here so many decades now. You see, if I can share a room with her (Mrs Cai) that would be great. It will be better than go to those expensive ones outside of the city. We also have easy access to hospitals here. (Mrs Feng, 80y, N1)

I think community care is a service delivered to one's home. I think this model is great. Most of us are still attached to our homes. (Mrs Tiao, 62y, N3)

As demonstrated in the above quotes, the participants were aware of the recent development in alternative care resources at the neighbourhood level. Many of the participants expressed that it is good to have shequ yanglao, as they did not want to move away from their homes and communities. However, the majority of the participants did not know the services that can be provided at the neighbourhood level, the responsible parties for these services and the places to seek such help.

The need for community care was clearly expressed by many of the participants. Some practical care needs were also identified. The first was cooking. With declining functional health, many of the participants found that the community can spare them from cooking.

There is a meal delivery service for certain groups but it is not available to all. If they could include more people and put those two rooms (some properties once used for day care and the project was abandoned later) into good use, that would be great. For those who don't want to cook or have no children to cook for them, they could all go there or get home delivery. Getting older now, I just don't fancy cooking much anymore. (Mrs Xiu, 75y, N1)

Community care – yes, I am happy with that. They were talking about a ‘little dinner table’ programme. 16 RMB set menu. But I don’t know why it did not happen. If they opened one, I would be more than happy to join. I am too old to cook all the time. My daughter told me that she could cook for me. But that would mean she needs to travel every day. It’s just impractical. (Mrs Fu, 78y, N3)

Secondly, although all three neighbourhood locations provided the participants with easy access to hospitals, some of the participants believed that community clinics could play a better role in meeting older people’s needs.

The community clinic does not have the medication that I need for my high blood pressure. They only have the basics. Not many people in this community take it, so they won’t stock it. If they did it for me, that would save me a great deal of hospital trips. The clinic is very close (Mrs Hong, 75y, N1)

Thirdly, as demonstrated in Chapter 5, social engagements were very important to the older people’s lives, and their attachments to their homes and neighbourhoods were greatly influenced by their positive identification of their neighbourhood social engagement. Further to this issue, some of the participants viewed that community care should provide more opportunities for older people’s personal development.

University for older people. Older people also need to learn new things: new trends such as computers,

mobile phones. They should make it universal. My friends' communities have painting, English classes. But our community doesn't have much. Only better than some. (Mrs Jiao, 71y, N1)

The majority of the participants, in particular, participants from N1 and N3 expressed their positive view on the community care based on their own perceptions.

Community care (nursing home in their own neighbourhood) would be the best way. In the community, everyone knows each other and familiar with the environment. We can no rely on our children anymore. They have their own family. Children are not as reliable as 'guojia' (country/government). Guojia can provide for us. (Mrs Yu, 76y, N1)

There is a need on the development of community care. You see my wife, she only has 300 [around £30] a month, there is no nursing home would take her and she has no choice but stay home. [...] If one become bedridden, there is not many choice and we cannot rely on our children because they have to work too. Very difficult situation and government must develop welfare sector, to cover the grassroots. (Mr Dang, 72y, N1)

However, not everyone thought that a homecare model with community support was feasible for older people. The practical issues on daily care needs were considered as obstacles that were difficulty to overcome.

The government promotes jujia yanglao [the homecare model], but I think there are many difficulties. If two of you are still together, you can take care of each other. What about if you are alone and have lost all of your functional abilities? It is just impossible to stay at home. Or if you have a sudden fall and there is no one around who can help you. A couple in our yard, both of them got carbon monoxide poisoning – it's a good job someone found them. You see, community support cannot be there all the time; they cannot have people check up on you all the time, right? (Mrs Jiao, 71y, N1)

6.4.2 Community care and collective responsibility

The data reveal that the participants' perceptions of age care in fact contradict the Chinese government's position. They believed that the government and the community have the responsibility to provide not only pensions and medical insurance but also practical services in everyday life.

I don't want to trouble our children and I will go to yanglaoyuan. That is why I think the government should strengthen the care sector and build more institutions. Once I cannot look after myself, such as cooking, going out, etc., I will go. (Yu, 76y, N1)

I think they should provide more in the community, such as dedicated outdoor places. Some communities are doing well, but not here [...] I saw on the television: some high-end communities can call doctors to

people's homes for a visit, and they can have drugs delivered to their homes and check-ups there. It was unevenly developed. (Mrs Guan, 69y, N2)

Many participants seem to continue to hold strong socialist beliefs and view themselves as part of a collective whole. As the lowest level of state representation, the neighbourhood can be relied upon. They viewed themselves as part of the community and responsible for building better neighbourhoods and service provision while at the same time demanding more provision from the government for their age care.

When we were young, we sacrificed our youth and strength for our country; I believe we have the right to demand support from the next generation. (Mrs Jiao, 71y N1)

Now that Mr Xi is in power, he has tried to upgrade living conditions and housing conditions. This means that society can move forward and that the fruits of the economic reform should be shared by everyone, including laobaixing (ordinary people), this should be the final goal. (Mr Ding, 68y, N3)

6.5 The past, present and ageing self

One overwhelming theme derived from the data was that, despite their ages, social economic situations and personal differences, the participants from all three neighbourhoods expressed genuine satisfaction with their lives. Throughout history, in Chinese people's day to day lives, 'Zhi zu zhe chang

le' has been one of the most quoted phrase of philosophical interpretations of life and living from 'Tao Te Ching' by Laozi (Stephen, 2016). As it says:

Fame or integrity: which is more important?
Money or happiness: which is more valuable?
Success or failure: which is more destructive?

If you look to others for fulfilment,
you will never truly be fulfilled.
If your happiness depends on money,
you will never be happy with yourself.

Be content with what you have;
rejoice in the way things are.
When you realize there is nothing lacking,
the whole world belongs to you. (Stephen, 2016)

'Tao Te Ching' had a great influence on the nation's everyday lives and the way that people perceive themselves and how their lives are justified under this ideology.

Being honest, reaching our age, we are all very zhi zu [to satisfied with what one have]. We have experienced hardships and very difficult lives. It is much better now than in those days. It has reached a point where we may be worse off than some but better off than many others. (Mrs Ye, 78y, N1)

Life is good. People like us feel zhi zu. We have experienced a lot of difficulties. We got through three years of famine. 80 RMB [£8] per month for three

*children and two elderlies. We got through, didn't we?
(Mrs Fu, 78y, N3)*

Despite the turbulent social and political changes through their life courses and the dramatic physical changes in their neighbourhoods, they have fought their way through and are continuing to do so. They were aware of the problems and issues in their lives; they had resisted, adapted to and overcome them. In a fast-changing world, for the majority of the participants, tradition and family values are still their priorities. Their responsibility for their children and grandchildren played an important part and was a great motivation driving their everyday actions.

Of course, one has to look after grandchildren. School, dinners. Whether it is a burden or not all depends on how you view it. If you only think about helping them as a servant, for sure, there is no pleasure gained. However, the children should be more understanding. Sometimes I feel aggrieved. In particular, if I asked something but they didn't do it. There is no benefit from this. Just endless chores. But it is your own family – you have to take responsibility. (Mrs Fu, 78y, N3)

However, the researcher also found that an expression of contentment towards life was common among the participants, who had been through so many social changes as a generation. For the 70–90-year-olds, they had experienced the rise of the Communist Party, war with the Japanese, war with Guomindang and liberation in 1949 with the establishment of the PRC. Together with the younger generation, they joined the great leap forward in 1958, and many experienced starvation and survived three years of famine between 1959 and 1961. While they may have benefited from the socialist welfare provision of housing, healthcare and education, and expressed high

levels of contentment, some still had the fear of political persecution created by the Cultural Revolution deeply rooted in their everyday lives, which constrained their behaviour and interactions with others.

Regardless of the medical insurance I can get, I will give the highest score of happiness for my life. I have a pension every month. The medical problems just need to wait until the system is rolled out across the country. I just need to wait patiently until then [...] Society is much better now; I would love to live a few more years. It's a good job I am a very tolerant person and there are still years to come. Nothing can affect me. I am satisfied with my life, my pension. I don't have to work now but still get paid over 2,000 RMB. I am very happy. (Mrs Yu, 76y, N1)

As shown earlier, to the contemporary Chinese elderly, there are four long-term elements that help them to achieve a successful old age: *lao wo* (home), *laoban* (wife/husband), *laodi* (savings) and *laoyou* (friends) (Mr Man, 71y, N1). Thus, one does not have to be rich to be happy and successful. One's house would be too big and empty if one did not have family around and friends to spend time with. Most importantly, one does not have to have all worldly materials to be content with life. There is no need to compare one's own situation with the situations of others. Therefore, learning to cope and to live through the best and the worst is considered the best way to have a happy life. However, the question is: are they truly happy and satisfied with what they have? Or, was it just their defence mechanism that they had learned through their ageing experiences because besides 'making a virtue out of necessity' and heavily relying on the government, they had no other option. Thus, quick adaptation to a changing environment can be seen as a survival strategy in order to maintain a stable daily life and achieve harmony and happiness. Instead to seeking externally, they tend to

look inwardly and choose self-adjustment. Thus, the majority of the participants chose to ignore the changes rather than confront them. This may be due to their clear understanding of their disadvantaged social economic status. During the socialist period, there was a social division between rural and urban in China. The rapid urbanisation in recent years has manifested a gap, and visible social divisions were apparent among and felt by many of the participants. Their sense of self was being devalued, and they perceived themselves as a powerless group. The data showed that this powerless feeling had also affected their quality of life and their understanding of the ageing process.

You know, the pension problem for me is a big thing, but from the party, there's still nothing. That is why there is no point talking and thinking about it too much [...] One day I lost it and shouted at the staff in the career office. I said, "You treat us like stepmothers. You classified us as welfare retirement – I don't think this is fair. Because I didn't just work for one or two years. I worked for the same factory for 35 years. Who are those claiming the welfare? Those criminals who came out of the labour reform. This affects my dignity. It is not about how much you pay me." (Mr Zun, 65y, N1)

We are getting old and becoming a burden to society because we cannot contribute anymore. But we did when we were young and we worked and gave. We should not be treated as a burden. We should be given some guarantees now that we are all old [...] But without your own house, you are a minority and just belong to the lower class. For some people, their problems have been solved. But to us, we worked our

whole lives but we have nothing. I don't think this is fair. (Mrs Jiao, 71y, N1)

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter set out to explore how ageing and aged care are perceived by urban Chinese elderly against a context of rapid urban change. The findings show that the filial piety tradition still greatly influences urban Chinese older people's perceptions about ageing and ageing care. Having a meaningful life in one's old age is still closely linked with where one will age and who will take the responsibility for one's age care. Successful ageing not only means good physical and functional health but also having filial children to provide support when needed. Therefore, to many of the participants, co-residence with their children was still a good option for their later lives and care arrangements. For those who preferred to live independently, regular visits from their children and other means of support (such as cooking and hospital trips) were still required. The stigmatisation of non-filial practice is still apparent, and moral judgements on non-filial individuals and their families are still present.

Furthermore, the findings show that negative attitudes towards institutional care facilities are still strong. This may be due to the strong filial tradition for the family care model over alternative care arrangements. Nevertheless, this negative response may also be due to the low quality of institutional care in contemporary China, as well as its very short supply. As shown in the data, many of the participants preferred to stay at home because of their attachment to their neighbourhood resources. Whether it was the ease of access to hospitals and other facilities or the social networks that they had built through many years of residence in their neighbourhoods, from their points of view, institutional settings could not meet these needs. It is interesting to note that most of the participants perceived institutional care

more as nursing homes, with the loss of functional capacity being seen as the main determinant of such living arrangements and necessary relocation. This may be due to the lack of information in the public domain about the functions of institutional care and the different types of services it can provide. The lack of development of the public age-care sector may also have contributed to this confusion. Thus, in a Chinese context, institutional care often symbolises the end of life: a place to wait for death. It is a place one should avoid as long as possible. The ability to stay out of institutions not only means that one has filial children but also symbolises good health and the continuing ability to lead an independent life. However, the deeply embedded filial culture and negative perceptions of institutional care are starting to show some erosion.

The findings show that the changing family structure (as a result of urbanisation and the one-child policy) is the main factor challenging the existing family care model. The findings in this research also echo the increasing concerns over the empty-nest elderly in China, in particular over their care arrangements. As shown in this research, older people who only have one child do not perceive their children as capable care providers when practical issues such as daily care arrangements, financial support and emotional support are considered. They perceive such responsibility as too much of a burden on the only child and his or her own family. In this sense, institutions were perceived by many of the participants as the better option.

Housing is another factor that shakes the very core of the family care model and co-residence. As presented in the data, for those who co-resided, low housing status and low purchase ability were the main causes of co-residence. In other words, many co-residing families in this research had low socio-economic backgrounds. Instead of being cared for by their children, the older people were sharing their resources with and supporting their adult children. Providing this continuing support to adult children in later

life had brought great anxiety to some of the participants and had affected their perceptions of later-life care. In some instances, institutional care was considered a better option for later-life care and as a pathway to ease the burden for their children. The findings show the contrast between older people who are in a better financial situation and those who find it difficult to afford institutional care. As the data reveal, constant worries and anxiety over housing and financial issues may reduce some older people's quality of life.

This chapter also revealed that although the Chinese government has tried to promote the family care model with the support of community-based services, the participants' perceptions of this were mixed. The definition of community care is unclear, and some of the participants confused it with the institutional care facilities located within their current neighbourhood areas or places close by. Others perceived it as a service delivered to the home but were pessimistic about its function and practicality. However, many of the participants praised some of the existing programmes that had been implemented in their neighbourhoods, such as meal delivery services and neighbourhood health centres and pharmacies.

The findings show that a pattern of change was occurring, as many of the participants preferred living independently in their own houses. This was due to their desire for a more individualised lifestyle and their perceptions of the ageing self. Many older people view independent living as bringing autonomy and control, which co-residency and institutions can often deny. Modernisation has also brought opportunities to the older people. The improved living conditions and increased wealth had influenced their perceptions of ageing and the value of life. For a generation who have experienced so many hardships, such as war, famine and the Cultural Revolution, their great resilience that was built through their early years has also helped them to adapt to the changes. They have learned to accept

what they can get in life and to try to live happy lives, even though, there is great uncertainty.

Chapter 7: Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This thesis set out to explore older Chinese people's experiences in urban neighbourhoods in Beijing, China, which to the researcher's knowledge had not previously been the focus of extensive research. It was informed by the growing body of theory, research and social policies developed in Western societies that has dominated the field of gerontology (Rubinstein and de Medeiros, 2014; Powell and Hendricks, 2009; Powell, 2012), in particular the literature on AIP. This body of literature has shown growing recognition of and concerns over older people's ageing experiences and the places that they choose to age: in the case of this research, the neighbourhoods where the older people had lived for a long time.

This research aimed to empirically investigate AIP in the Chinese context, with a specific focus on older people in urban neighbourhoods. By exploring how their lives and their perceptions of ageing and age care had been affected by the rapid changes that had occurred in their neighbourhood environments as a result of urbanisation, the research aimed to provide a theoretically informed and empirically rich contemporary understanding and analysis of older people's perceptions and experiences of ageing and age care in urban Beijing, China. The following questions guided both the data collection and analysis:

- What are residential neighbourhood environments like in Beijing?
- What do older people do in residential neighbourhood places?
- What physical/social factors influence older people's participation in residential neighbourhood places?
- How do older people perceive their residential neighbourhood environments?
- How do older people perceive AIP?

- How do older people make connections between neighbourhood environments and AIP?

This chapter discusses the main themes that emerged from the findings set out in the three previous chapters and discusses them against the relevant theory and debate in the existing literature. This chapter explores in more detail how older Chinese people make sense of their ageing experiences in relation to the wider socio-cultural context and the impact of neighbourhood-level environmental changes. It also takes account of how the notion of AIP, in this case in urban neighbourhoods, can help us to better understand the relationship between ageing and age care in the Chinese context. The discussion is structured according to the theoretically driven themes that illuminate how the aims of the research have been met. It attempts to interweave the different elements in relation to ageing and age-care experiences according to the perspectives of the different older people from three different neighbourhoods involved in this research. The discussion is organised around the three main themes associated with each of the findings chapters, which provide an unfolding picture of old people's ageing experiences in a rapidly changing neighbourhood environment. The significant aspects of contemporary ageing and age-care experiences in urban China are highlighted. The chapter then moves on to outline the original contributions made.

7.2 Role of neighbourhood and ageing in urban Beijing

As show in the previous chapters, one key theme identified was these older people's perspectives and views on the role of neighbourhood-level social engagement in their ageing experiences and age-care choices.

7.2.1 Interrelated physical and social environment and ageing experiences

The data in this research show that social engagement was a crucial element that had contributed to the participants' ageing process during the rapid changes in their neighbourhoods. The findings also suggest that older people's physical activities interplayed with their social activities and that one motivated the other. These findings demonstrate the importance of the built environment to older people's neighbourhood engagements. They show that different dimensions of place were interrelated with each other and had influenced the participants' ageing experiences.

Like those in many neighbourhoods in the city centre areas in Beijing, the older people in this research enjoyed convenient access to hospitals and national parks, which was a great benefit of their neighbourhood locations. Furthermore, contrary to a study conducted in the US that found that access to services was not significantly related to desire to age in place (Kwon et al., 2015), the findings in this research reveal otherwise. In fact, convenient access to services such as hospitals and parks was at the top of their list of reasons not to relocate and had contributed to their attachment to their neighbourhoods. This may also be explained by Rowles' concept of the 'sense of insideness' (Rowles, 1983) that older people gain through years of residency in the same neighbourhood. It is clear that the older people in urban Beijing found that their insider knowledge about their neighbourhoods had benefited their ageing process. It was this insider knowledge and familiarity with their surrounding environments that enhanced their opportunities to lead active lifestyles. They knew where the environmental barriers were, and their familiarity with these barriers compensated for their declining functional capacity and the increasing challenges created by the environments. As shown in the findings, long-term residency and familiarity with the surrounding environment were strong driving factors that made the participants attached to their neighbourhoods, even when there were many issues and threats presented to their ageing process.

This outcome can be further explained from a constructionist perspective, which perceives that a good environment to one person may not be applicable to others. As Crotty asserts:

[...] each of us is introduced directly to a whole world of meaning. The melange of cultures and sub-cultures into which we are born provides us with meanings. These meanings we are taught and we learn in a complex and subtle process of enculturation. They establish a tight grip upon us and, by and large, shape our thinking and behaviour throughout our lives. (Crotty, 2012:79).

As outlined in the quote, the environment we live in provides cues and acts as a surrogate for inhabitants to interpret social situations from the environment and act upon them differently (Rapport, 1990; Blumer, 1969). In other words, our environments influence our actions and behaviours based on our interpretations of the situations and the symbolic meanings presented in the environments. In the Chinese context, the cultural understanding of a place as one's root place and attachment to it can be viewed as a great example of such enculturation. Furthermore, the home is a place to practise filial traditions, which is an element embedded in Chinese culture that continued to be followed by many of the participants in this research. This different interpretation of meaning may well be a possible explanation as to why Gilroy (2012) found that older people in Wuhan were willing to sacrifice a chance of new, better-quality housing in order to remain where they were. Not only their attachment to the neighbourhood social support and convenient access to neighbourhood amenities was high, what was perceived as a poor neighbourhood by the policy makers seemed to have a various different meaning to these elderly Chinese people. A similar pattern appeared in the present research: the older people from N1 with poor housing conditions seemed more attached and had more-positive perceptions of their neighbourhood environment than those from a newly

developed community like N3. However, the data reveal that a certain level of attachment to the home was also influenced by property ownership.

The participants' attachment to their neighbourhood locations and reluctance to relocate also reflect the current uneven urban development in Beijing (Zhao, 2013a). With many residential developments in recent decades in suburban Beijing constructed without adequate services, such as hospital and schools, relocation outside of the city centre also means reduced access to these services (Fang et al., 2015; Feng and Zhou, 2003; Feng et al., 2008). Thus, these findings may provide some insights for policy makers and the field of urban planning and housing design in China, in particular that older people's experiences and neighbourhood needs should be carefully evaluated and that they should be provided with agency during the decision-making process. This would not only make AIP possible but also provide a better quality of life. As Jacobs (1992) asserts:

[...] city development or renewal should not follow a generalised way; the uniqueness of a place should be put into consideration. Social experiences, personal perception and contextual meanings are all crucial elements for the understanding of urban life. Whatever the aims and objectives are, one can only learn from no one but the people of the place, because nobody else knows enough about it. (Jacobs, 1992:409)

Nevertheless, the participants' high attachment to their neighbourhoods and their insider knowledge cannot dismiss the negative outcomes created by the inadequate physical environments in their neighbourhoods. In fact, the findings demonstrate that, in many cases, planning and design decisions had not been sensitive to the needs of older people and on many levels had denied their right to use the outdoor spaces as they wished. The physical conditions of these neighbourhoods were far from adequate in terms of accessibility to amenities that are needed by the older people in their immediate neighbourhood areas. The findings echo those of previous

studies (Bigonnesse et al., 2014) that an adaptable home environment is important for older people to age in place. The home environment not only means one's apartment or house but also includes the neighbourhood social and physical environment.

As shown in the findings, participants from different neighbourhoods identified different problems that they felt needed urgent solutions. For example, stairs and access to elevators were an important driving force for participants in N3 seeking relocation to enhance their mobility and access to outdoor spaces. The lack of basic structures in N1, such as indoor toilets, showers and kitchens, was the main concern to most of the participants in this neighbourhood. All of the participants from all three neighbourhoods strongly believed that open spaces and supportive facilities were important to their outdoor activities, and none of these neighbourhoods provided a satisfactory outcome to the participants. A prior study conducted in the US (Dahmann et al., 2010) also suggested that research on physical activities and focused on park or trail access is not enough to capture the disparity of provision of recreational resources among socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods and groups. This is also important to older people in urban China. As the findings in this research show, most of the participants spent considerable time in their immediate neighbourhood areas; with many of them showing signs of functional decline, recreational programmes and places close to home have become more important for their physical and social activities, which may have a great impact on their health. A study from the UK also reported that older age groups and those in poorer health report greater difficulty in accessing local amenities (Janevic et al., 2004). The findings in this research corresponded with this claim. For example, traffic and road safety, pedestrian pathways and wheelchair access are all basic physical designs but seemed to ignore older people's needs in all three neighbourhoods. There was also a consensus among the participants that daily outdoor activities and social participation with others in their neighbourhoods benefited both their physical and psychological wellbeing and had a positive impact on their ageing process.

This finding is consistent with a study conducted by Gilroy (2012) in Wuhan, which found that rapid physical changes during city regeneration have put older people's wellbeing at threat. As she asserts,

One of the issues in urban China is the rapidity with which people need to keep making those maps. Older people, in particular, may find themselves less able to cope with the breath-taking pace of change because of their own physical and cognitive competence. For those who have to relocate to new places not only is there a new locality to understand, but also this may be done with few or no relational resources, with implications for isolation and social exclusion. (Gilroy, 2012:474)

As shown in the findings, the beautification of neighbourhoods or changes of physical structure are often related to the prioritisation of economic activities. These findings correspond with those of a study on the regeneration of neighbourhoods in Beijing (Acharya, 2005). As shown in the data, this had happened in all three neighbourhoods in various ways. Whether making space for tourist activities or commercial outlets or creating extra profits for property developers, the resources for the residents in the neighbourhoods have been taken away. This has resulted in many of the participants, particularly the participants with a degree of functional decline or wheelchair users, having their opportunities to participate in social and physical activities reduced. As Rapport (1990) argues, people react to their environments differently, as there are different interpretations of meaning towards it. When residents' and users' meanings are neglected, the environment often becomes inappropriate and unsuccessful, sometimes leading to opposition, resistance and conflict. As Rapport (1990) further emphasises, it is users' meanings and the meanings of everyday environments that are important, not architects or famous buildings. Mr Zun's recollection of improvement of the neighbourhood environment perfectly reflects such conflict and unsuccessful outcomes.

In addition to the parking problems, you know what, they have changed the fence over the canal bank so many times. I have lived here since the 1950s; I've seen it all. At the earliest, it was cement, which was used for more than 30 years, and then changed to stainless steel for around ten years – all still in perfect condition. But they demolished it all and changed it again. So much money has been spent on it, but no one came to us to discuss it at all. Such a waste of money [...] In the end, they built it too high without enough drainage during the rainy season. Many houses were flooded and we had to smash part of the fence to drain the water into the canal. (Mr Zun, 65y, N1)

Participants from N2 and N3 had experienced similar outcomes during the redevelopment processes in their neighbourhoods. Street widening in N2 may have eased the traffic congestion to a certain extent, as the planners and policy makers wished for, but many older people (such as participants from N2) who used the street on a daily basis found it too much of a burden to cross from one side of the street to the other. As shown in the data, the participants' social and physical activity areas were shrunk. In a similar vein, N3 may provide an easy entrance for automobiles, but its design has met with high objection from the participants. Mrs Mao's poem about this specific issue evidently reflects their frustration.

I even wrote a limerick because of it. "Who is the grandmaster this design belongs to? Tilted entrance and tilted door. Uphill for climb and downhill for dive. No road for the blind, no pavement for the elderly. The grandmaster will be reviled by several generations of residents". I saw with my own eyes that someone fell

down because the slope was too much for him to manage. I read this to the developer at one of the meetings too. (Mrs Mao, 64y, N3)

This outcome of the processes of urbanisation, modernisation and redevelopment of the city and neighbourhoods makes it seem that neither the government, professionals nor property developers have paid attention to the increasing demands on the built environment from older people's viewpoints, continuing to build without the ageing population in mind. In other words, the participants' negative perceptions of their neighbourhood environments and the provision of outdoor facilities and open spaces reflect different understandings of the neighbourhood environment between policy makers, architects, urban designers and people who use the spaces on a daily basis. These findings again echo Gilroy's finding in Wuhan that during rapid urban changes, "the poor and more vulnerable lose [the right to the city] in the face of ambitious city fathers or ruthless developers" (Gilroy, 2012:473).

Urban environments may provide many conveniences, such as easy access to medical resources, which was demonstrated in this research. It can also be oppressive towards certain groups (Laws, 1994). If one agrees with the claim that the urban system prevents women from walking city streets at night for fear of violent attacks and that better street lighting and chaperone services are necessary to achieve justice for women to have equal rights to enjoy the urban environment (Laws, 1994), one could argue that the same claim is applicable to older people in the city. Being able to participate in the neighbourhood and community is important to older people's social integration and makes them feel indispensable and an integral part of society (Vitman et al., 2014). Thus, a key weapon against ageism is "intergroup contact, ongoing interaction, familiarity, and personal knowledge, which allow individuals the opportunities to challenge prejudices and stereotypes" (Vitman et al., 2014:179). Being able to go outdoors and use

public places provides older people with such opportunities. In the Chinese context, this issue has started to draw the government's and scholars' (Du and Xie, 2015) attention. As Du and Xie (2015) point out, the Chinese government has made a specific effort to address the issue by amending the 'Old-Age Law' in 2012 by emphasising the importance of building an enabling living environment for ensuring safe, convenient and comfortable living and social participation in old age. However, Du and Xie (2015) suggest that the regulations have not been properly employed at the operational level. In this sense, the data in this research provide more-detailed evidence that there are still so many issues that need to be addressed in order to achieve barrier-free communities that are suitable for older people and that enable them to age in place.

7.2.2 Role of social engagement in ageing

As discussed above, good-quality housing and adequate and age-friendly neighbourhood environments are important assets in supporting older people's social engagements, helping them to age in place. As shown in the findings, a perceived good physical environment promotes social activities, and flourishing social engagements provide motivation for older people to go outdoors and engage in physical activities. Bowling and Stafford (2007) suggest that perceptions of poor neighbourhood environments are associated with a greater likelihood of low social activities. However, the findings in this research show a rather contrasting outcome. While some negative attitudes were shown by participants from all three neighbourhoods towards their outdoor neighbourhood environments, their willingness to participate in neighbourhood activities was evident.

The classic Western theory of ageing, the disengagement theory, suggests that older people tend to withdraw from society, as they have less desire for social participation and connection (Maddox, 1964). As demonstrated, the findings in this research show otherwise. Despite the limited spaces and sometimes poor physical conditions in the neighbourhoods, the social activities and interactions carried out by older people were somewhat

surprisingly apparent. The findings suggest that regular outdoor activities were part of a lifestyle and were common among all three neighbourhoods in urban Beijing in this research. The findings echo Powell's (2012) account of city life in China:

[...] in the cities of China today, it is heartening to see the colonisation of open space throughout the hours of daylight and even into the evening by the elderly who are engaged in a wide variety of activities, from the traditional (such as Taijiquan and Qigong), walking one's pet bird, traditional dance, or poetry writing using brushes dipped in water only, illustrating the ephemeral and passing nature of life itself. (Powell, 2012:19).

These findings also correspond with the study in Wuhan by Gilroy (2012), which found that older people used their outdoor places to carry out all kinds of activities, and taking part and being a bystander were equally enjoyable experiences. And

For those disinclined to take part in many activities themselves there was great pleasure expressed in watching swimmers, dancers, and especially mah-jongg players. To be there, even as an observer of activity, was to be in company and part of the community. (Gilroy, 2012:470)

As demonstrated in the findings, whether in a newly established community with housing ownership like N3, a socialist work unit compound such as N2 or a historical traditional courtyard neighbourhood later developed into a tourist attraction like N1, the Chinese elderly eagerly engaged with others at the neighbourhood level. Thus, the researcher argues, urbanisation and modernisation may bring great changes to the city and sometimes change the entire physical appearance of a living environment (Acharya, 2005), but the social understanding of the self among these groups of elderly is still maintained through collective relations with others. This may be due to the consciousness of individuality in China, and many older people still hold the

view that “conceptions of the good are not seen as subjective to individual choice” and that who they are is answered both for themselves and for others by the history they inherit and the social positions they occupy (Wedell-Wedellsborg, 2010:187). Thus, as a generation that has gone through so many political, social and economic changes through their lives, these elderly people’s experiences have contributed to their perceptions of themselves and society. As a generation, their group identity ranged from the ‘intellectual youth’, ‘sent-down youth’ to ‘rusticates’ or commonly known ‘Red Guards’, and now they are labelled the ‘lost generation’ (Lin, 2013). As Lin (2013) points out, political loyalty played an important part for this generation. The researcher’s conversation with Mr Dang on economic reform may provide a good demonstration of how these experiences can be internalised and applied to their day-to-day lives.

Chairman Mao said the cadres are servants of the people. Our mental state has equipped us with such consciousness. Now, as long-term party members, we should not have any doubt about the government and economic reform. Economic reform makes our life better. We don’t worry about food, my children all have jobs – it’s all good. Communism is an ideology and is our faith. It is all outlined in the Communist Manifesto. When we reach the final stage of communism, everyone contributes what they can and takes what they need – there is no class division and no exploitation. (Mr Dang, 72y, N1)

The participants’ ageing experiences being shaped by their early life course experiences was reflected in their attitudes to life. These attitudes were also influenced by their own perceptions of group identity. Similar phrases were used by most of the participants, such as “people like us have been through a lot of hardship, and we are satisfied with what we’ve got” and “people like

us like to help others". This may explain why many of the participants continued to expect collective responsibility for their housing and age-care provision, as well as their own satisfaction with their contributions to their neighbourhoods. Participating in handyman groups and volunteering in the community watch team were reflections of their perceptions that one's value is determined collectively rather than individually. As a result, the neighbourhood is an important place where such value is expressed. Being able to help others and being respected in the community gave them a sense of pride and self-esteem.

Neighbourhood informal social networks and their benefit have been one of the major topics in community studies in the West. Unger and Wandersman (1985) point out that technology, better transportation and advanced lifestyles have created many opportunities for people to form friendships and social ties outside of their immediate neighbourhoods. There is also a strong argument put forward by scholars such as Putnam (2000) that neighbourhood and community social engagement in contemporary US society is declining. In the case of the Chinese elderly, the findings in this research show a rather contrary outcome. The increased opportunities that can be accrued in advanced industrialised societies may not be easily obtained by older people in urban China. As shown in the findings, the basic infrastructure in some neighbourhoods was still lacking, and none of the older participants could drive; their activities often took place within walking distance around their neighbourhoods. Education and income levels are also factors that may influence lifestyles. Based on the information provided by the participants, the majority of them were at the lower end of these scales, and free lessons in the neighbourhoods would be most welcome. However, this invokes the need for future research to provide a more in-depth understanding of the relationship between older people's lifestyles and their neighbourhood social engagements.

Neighbours played important roles in providing help when needed around the house due to their immediate physical proximity (Freeman and Ruan, 1997). Social engagement at the neighbourhood level provides opportunities for older people to build a social network of support when in need of help and assistance. In this sense, the absence of social engagement often results in social isolation and a lack of social support. As Yuan and Ngai (2012) suggest, social isolation creates threats to older people's identity, sense of belonging to society and participation in civic engagements; puts older people at a higher risk of psychological problems; and exacerbates physical diseases. Social isolation and loneliness are a major concern to older people in advanced industrial societies (Dahlberg et al., 2014; Dahlberg and McKee, 2013; Ellwardt et al., 2013; Hagan et al., 2014; Iparraguirre, 2015). The prevalence of loneliness does increase with age (Yang and Victor, 2011; Yang and Victor, 2008), and loneliness can be a major cause of unhappiness and can contribute to depression (Barg et al., 2006). Recent empirical findings have shown an alarming situation: depression has become a more common psychological problem among the elderly in urban China (Su et al., 2012; Zhang and Chen, 2013; Lei et al., 2014; Li et al., 2014). Prior research (Cao et al., 2015) has found that among urban older people in China, social capital and social networks are significantly associated with geriatric depression. However, a review of the literature on social support and loneliness indicates that older Chinese people receive relatively little support from their neighbourhoods, communities, government and other organisations (Chen et al., 2014c). The findings in this research suggest differently. As the data reveal, different types of social support (emotional, instrumental, informational and appraisal) (Heaney and Israel, 2008) were experienced by participants through their neighbourhood social engagements. The support that they gained through their networks in the neighbourhoods made them feel cared for and enhanced their self-esteem, value, sense of belonging and mutual obligations, which is identical to the meaning of social support defined by Cobb (1976). Thus, the social engagements in the neighbourhood were

perceived by the participants as necessary in their daily routines and crucial to their physical and mental wellbeing. Furthermore, according to Yang and Victor (2008) in a Chinese context, perceived non filial children is a statistically significant risk factor of loneliness. In the case of this research, none of the participants perceived their children as not filial. In fact, overwhelmingly, nearly all participants had high satisfaction and were proud to have very filial children. This highlights to the fact that neighbourhood level interactions may played an important role in such outcomes. As participants' daily needs were being met and supported through their interactions and engagements with their neighbours and friends in their neighbourhood and community, they were less dependent on their children's help and thus, more easy to satisfy.

The findings also show that older Chinese people actively adapt to the environment and at the same time construct it according to their needs, as many of the participants expressed the view that many of the activities carried out at the neighbourhood level were a kind of *huxiangbangzhu* (help to each other). From providing emotional support to fixing a shower head, the participants seemed to deliberately construct reciprocal relationships in their communities. In other words, by helping others, one would receive help in times of need. Although community care has been promoted by the Chinese government in recent years, there is no clear definition and many of the participants seemed confused with the concept. However, as discussed earlier, the majority of the participants continued to hold the view that the government or society has the responsibility to support their welfare. They laid their trust and expectations in the authority of their Danwei before; now they put that trust in their neighbourhoods and community committees.

If the shequ [community] manages well, it is crucial to our lives. For example, if something happened to your family, who would you ask for help? The shequ and juweihui [resident committee] will be the first in line. If

I asked my Danwei, it is not only too far away but also the new people often don't know who I am. The shequ has become the first line of contact for help. Even if you ask for government help, it still has to come through the shequ. "Shequ shiwojia, dajia dou ai ta" [the community is my home and everyone loves it]. Without the shequ, one would be in trouble. (Mr Gan 74y, N1)

As indicated in the findings, a great amount of social activities was organised for the residents by the neighbourhood committees or street committees, for example food delivery to the elderly who live alone. These programmes are part of *shequ jianshe* (community building): a strategy employed by the Chinese government to respond to the increasing risk of social instability (Tomba, 2014). As many scholars (Gilroy, 2013; Cheung and Kwan, 2009; Du and Qu, 2013; Yuan, 2001) suggest, patterns of change in old-age support are apparent in China. The findings in this research show that family members may not be in a position to provide care for their elderly parents. The changing perception of the ageing self has also contributed to the increasing number of urban elderly who choose to live independently. Therefore, alternative resources, in this case, the support that older people gain from their neighbourhoods, have even greater value to help older people to age in place. Furthermore, the Chinese government's ongoing promotion of the filial piety tradition and homecare model may well be interpreted as a lack of interest in injecting a great deal of economic resources into welfare provision in the age-care sector. The long waiting lists for government-owned nursing homes and the high prices of private retirement homes mean that many families and older people rely on their community and neighbourhood resources. As Tomba points out,

Communities of newly raised middle-class owners with access to resources are expected to practice self-government and achieve

autonomy, but the urban underclass is still very much dependent on the direct institutional discipline exercised by neighbourhood institutions through the social service network. (Tomba, 2014:149)

Based on the findings in this research, this argument is equally applicable to many of the participants in this study, and their dependency on community-based services was apparent. It is important to note that the lack of participation in formal programmes arranged by the neighbourhood and community committees by participants from N2 may also be interpreted as due to their higher freedom and autonomy as a result of their good socio-economic status.

7.3 Active ageing and resilience in later life

7.3.1 From Deficit model to active ageing in urban China

As outlined previously, “active ageing” has been internationally circulated as a prominent approach to meeting the challenges of an ageing population (Moulaert and Paris, 2013). This increasing attention to the concept of active ageing reflects a shift in how ageing and later life are viewed; from a negative, deficit-model towards a positive model sometimes conceptualised as happy gerontology (van Dyk, 2014). According to Boudiny (2013), the negative view of older age has generally shifted towards more positive models in recent decades in industrialised societies. By emphasising what older people can do, active ageing required a recognition of the importance of continued participation in social, economic, cultural, and other civic engagements in later life (WHO, 2002). Since there is no consensus on its actual meaning in existing gerontological debate in Western societies, the concept is also relatively new among Chinese scholars. Thus, research directly addressing active ageing is currently rare. In the Chinese context, the findings in this research reveal a more complex picture.

As Lou (2015) points out, the concept of active ageing may not explicitly exist in a Chinese cultural tradition, but is deeply embedded into cultural values and expectations. In other words, older people have enjoyed a high social status representing power and resources, and are expected to be treasured, respected, and taken care of in their old age (Yi et al., 2016; Lou, 2015). As in the participant's own words: "a person who does not perform filial duty properly cannot stand up tall in front of others" (Mrs Fu, N3). Furthermore, while active ageing may not have been adopted widely by the Chinese government, policy objectives set by the government starting to show its tendency towards the WHO's active ageing framework (WHO, 2002). Thus, relevant concepts such as productive ageing and healthy ageing, which also emphasised such positive attitudes, also started being discussed among scholars and appeared in the Government's welfare promotion programmes (Li et al., 2013; Liang, 2011; Peng and Fei, 2012; Smith et al., 2014). As discussed earlier, both physical and social environments at neighbourhood level play an important role in this research in determining participants' opportunity for social engagement in the local community as well as in wider society. The findings in this research have strongly demonstrated that this group of older people perceived themselves as competent and knowledgeable (Boudiny, 2013) that their willingness to continuing participation and desire to contribute to the wider society were strong. If active ageing means an individual is 'capable and duty-bound to live a self-reliant life and contribute to the public good' (van Dyk, 2014:93), this group of older people seem to fit this idea perfectly. The unique position of neighbourhood association in urban Beijing also showed its strong influence and played an important role in the encouragement and cultivation of the idea of 'active ageing' at neighbourhood level. This finding echoed several recent studies (Tomba, 2014; Tomba, 2005; Chen and Fong, 2014; Miao, 2008) on urban neighbourhood development during the rapid process of urbanisation in many Chinese cities since economic reform. The top-down orientation of neighbourhood committees reflected continuing heavy

state influence on neighbourhood participation (Miao, 2008; Chen and Fong, 2014).

The findings in this research revealed that these global trends were reflected in Chinese older people's perception on ageing in their everyday lives. The data showed that coupled with 'active ageing' (lao you suo shi), other conceptual equivalence phrases such as 'lao you suo wei' (productive ageing), 'lao you suo yang' (age care), and 'lao you suo bao' (healthy ageing) also started to appear in the daily conversation of older people. The China Elder Health Care Association was also established to promote nurturing health (yang sheng), wellness exercises (bao jian), good therapy (shi liao) and Chinese medicine (Lou, 2015). However, the researcher argues, under the Chinese context, such developments cannot simply be interpreted as mirroring the meaning of 'active ageing' that has been developed within industrialised societies and perceived as a positive turn away from the deficit model of ageing as it was happening in industrialised societies. In fact, echoing existing studies (Liang, 2014; Wei, 2014; Wong and Leung, 2012), the findings in this research showed otherwise. As Lou (2015) asserts, an alarming observation was that a great proportion of older people felt they were a burden on their family and society. As shown in the findings, despite the continuing strong influence of the filial piety tradition on the age care system, and the Chinese government's ongoing promotion of the concept of active ageing, older people have started to perceive themselves as a burden to society and to their family members. There were different factors expressed by the participants which contributed to their perceptions. Firstly, the Chinese government's continuing emphasis of population ageing as an economic and social crisis in the media clearly influenced older people's perception on ageing and self. The lack of welfare provision on pensions and healthcare insurance has put further pressure on many participants. The data in this research revealed a strong sense of fear, worry, and negative attitude towards ageing and later life care. Nearly every

participant has expressed at some point of the interview that they did not want to become 'a burden' to their family and community.

This finding corresponds to an existing study that found more than 16% of older adults who chose institutional care did so to avoid burdening their family (Wong and Leung, 2012). There was a strong sense of insecurity among this group of elderly about the choice of their later life care and coverage of their health insurance and affordability of institutional care facilities. Whether it is a young-old only just starting their retirement or a 90-year-old who has family and higher status pension coverage, their primary life goal was to stay healthy in order to avoid becoming a burden to their children and family. As in Mrs Chang's words:

All I want is to not become a burden to my children. Everyone doing the same. Once I lose my independence, I will go to a care home. The quality of care, I hope it will be ok. I don't want to become a nuisance to others and to my children. (Mrs Chang, 72y, N2)

As shown above, despite the implementation of programmes associated with the concept of 'active ageing' by the Chinese government, other research has also shown similar trends of increasing negative attitudes rather than a positive turn or sometimes a rather mixed feeling. As Liang (2014) asserts, Chinese older people's perception of age identity was not strictly confined to chronological age categories but registered attitudes towards older people as starting to show their negativity (Liang, 2014). In other words, instead of enjoying high social status in old age, in recent decades society seems to value youth over old age, and older people have also developed increasingly negative views towards ageing and tend to dissociate themselves from being old (Liang, 2014). In this case, participants' conformity to an active lifestyle was due to a desire to retain a youthful identity or 'bu fu lao' (not accepting oneself as being old). However,

the phrase 'bu fu lao' also represents a spirit of not accepting old age as only meaning frail, weak and lessening value. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the fact that in a Chinese context, ageing and older people as a social group has not previously been perceived so negatively. To the contrary, it is portrayed with power, wisdom and enjoying high social status in society and family. As revealed in this research, such a shift in attitude has had its impact on older people's perception of themselves and the meaning of ageing. Further, the data in this research also showed that many participants' changing attitude towards the traditional understanding of what retirement life should look like and the quality of life not only includes better material consumption but also personal, social and psychological wellbeing. Thus, attitudes towards continuing being active in the labour market has become much more complex due to the existing cultural, social, and economic situation within the Chinese context.

The importance of older people's own perception on active ageing was also revealed when employment and productive ageing was considered. Many participants in this study were doing volunteering jobs in their own neighbourhood. Whether acting as a handyman in their own neighbourhood, or helping to organise or running community entertainments, this group of older people did not express a willingness to continue in the labour market. They are happy to contribute to society and be active in their later life but without the constraints of formal employment. Furthermore, as the findings showed in this research, many participants may become more dependent on their adult children's financial help, but they also look after their grandchildren in exchange. To complicate the matter further, the findings also revealed that for those participants whose adult children were in less fortunate situations (e.g. laid-off factory workers), they are still the sole provider to the family. For example, Mr Jing and his wife had to work extra years in order to support their disabled son and his family, and they continued providing childcare and co-residence with the young family. In

this sense, continuing to be active in the labour market was perceived by these older people as a negative outcome rather than being empowering.

I would love to do the same as those old foreigners who travelled different places. But we cannot. The reason we opened that small restaurant for the tourists after we retired was because we have to earn extra in order to support our children. Our country doesn't have good welfare coverage for the disabled, does it? Once we save some money we have to use it to support our children. For those foreigners, retirement means to go traveling and enjoy life. For us, many of us are still burdened by the family responsibilities and have too much pressure to cope with. (Mr Jing, 67y, N1)

In this sense, active ageing should not only be discussed within the bounds of extended employability or civic engagement but all meaningful activities that are perceived by older people as useful for the enhancement of their quality of life and elements of successful ageing (Boudiny, 2013). Thus, the researcher argues that the findings have shown the necessity of inclusiveness to the concept of active ageing and address the diverse needs of older people. As Boudiny (2013) argued, overemphasis on health and independence may lead to a new ageism and replace the fear of ageing with the fear of ageing with disability, in which dependent older adults suffer from discrimination. The findings in this research also provided evidence that active ageing can be equally applied to the oldest old, and older people who had declined functional capacity as to the 'healthy young-old' (Boudiny, 2013). Acknowledgment that the oldest old also needs active ageing but may not necessarily participate in the 'youthful activities' (Boudiny, 2013). As Mr Fan (N2) mentioned, he may not be able to walk longer distances as he had done before, but he was still physically capable of many activities close to home. Thus, it is necessary for the social researchers as well as

policy makers to pay attention to these groups of elderly. Not only their voices need to be heard but they should also be provided with equal opportunities to lead a meaningful and empowering active life. As Boudiny (2013) emphasised, a broad perspective needs to be considered and all groups of older people, including those already in the situation of frailty and dependency, should be included. As Boudiny (2013) argued, being dependent and being engaged in life are not mutually exclusive.

7.3.2 The relationship between active ageing and resilience in later life

Within the context of an ageing population and having a positive view of ageing, the concept of resilience has also gained considerable attention from gerontologists. In line with active ageing, researchers who are interested in resilience aim to explore the experiences of vulnerability and aim to acknowledge the positive aspects of the ageing process in later life (Wild et al., 2013). Such positive outcomes were not difficult to identify during the research process. As mentioned previously, these groups of older people had experienced many turbulent incidents including natural disasters, as well as social and political changes throughout their life courses. Before the Cultural Revolution, they experienced industrialisation and three years of famine during which period the mortality rate is still debated among scholars and continues to be a politically sensitive subject that is avoided in public discussion. The oldest old group also experienced war with Japan and civil war with Kuomintang before the Communist Party took power in 1949. The cultural revolution not only caused the country to economically drop from the world stage but also impacted on the people's everyday lives and their attitudes toward life. As shown in this research, these groups of older people who survived all these events seem equipped with high resilience. Despite their ages, social economic situations, and personal differences, the participants from all three neighbourhoods expressed genuine satisfaction with their lives. As Mrs Tiao expressed clearly:

I have never thought about later life care yet. Maybe just because we are not that old yet. Now, we just live a good life for ourselves. Don't get upset with things, eat good food also means healthy and well-balanced diet. Then, stay healthy and 'xiang de kai' (be willing to accept things as they are). Not like what we were before, try every possible way to save money, and for others. I don't think we become selfish. We just accept things more easily now, and more 'xiang de kai'. (Mrs Tiao, 62y, N3)

As shown above, together with Chinese cultural and philosophical interpretations of life and living, all participants demonstrated their strength and negotiated the adversities encountered in later life. The data showed that these older people actively adapted, rearranged, and even created resources to suit their own personal and group needs. As shown in this research, the limitation of their physical, social environment never stopped them from going out to meet their friends and participants. If we view resilience within the context of adversity, as Windle (2011) asserts, management of loss and adaptation to situations such as chronic illness should also be included. Despite all the constraints and limitations, the data revealed that these groups of older people have characterised by self-efficacy, are full of hope towards their later life and they have developed coping strategies to solve current environmental and personal crises. As shown in the data, many participants had demonstrated such resilience by using their existing knowledge of their neighbourhood to create new routes and timetables in order to cope with their chronic illness and declining functional capacity.

There is no open space for our leisure activities. Some of them play cards in front of the building. [...] We also gathered together and play ping-pong in the community centre before. Now they have turned it into a community library. That's why we moved to one of the corridors in the nearby hospital. In the winter, we tend to use the corridor to play cards in the shopping mall, it was warm there. (Mr Zhi, 60y, N3)

Further, 'resilience is increasingly framed as a resource available to all people at all stages of life' (Wiles et al., 2012). Since it is rooted in psychology, in the most recent decade, as Bennett and Windle (2015) argued, broader antecedents, processes, and outcomes of resilience need to be recognised. In other words, not only psychological factors such as personal control, competence, and self-esteem are important to resilience, but also community and socio-environmental factors. As Boudiny (2013) strongly argued, older adults' own perception of the meaning of active ageing is also important in the active ageing discourse. Boudiny (2013) further asserts that 'the meaning of an active life may change throughout the life course and that gains might also be seen in the context of loss, as older adults may unfold unexpected substitute skills, collaborative relationships or create strategies to overcome limitations' (Boudiny, 2013:1093). In this sense, one may argue that instead of viewing active ageing as a positive outcome of the discourse of the concept of ageing, the participants in this research have made active ageing a coping strategy in response to the deficit model of ageing. As Lou (2015) points out, the cultural norms on ageing can be characterised by "experiencing old age in peace and joy (An Xiang Wan Nian), which is manifested by taking care of health (Yi Yang Tian Nian), longevity (Chang Shou), and having children and grandchildren (Zi Sun Man Tang), with wealth (Fu Gui) and blessing

(Fu Qi)” (Lou, 2015:121). It seems that being physically, socially, and culturally active was to resist the ongoing ageing process, such as declining functional health, shrunken social networks, changing identity and loss of social roles, as well as the later life care crisis within the current complex social situation. As previously mentioned, to some participants this also extended to further economic activities in order to ease the financial burden.

I have so many things to be worried about and my brain doesn't work well these days. Since my eldest daughter has died, and my late husband has gone, I have no one I can rely on. But I thought, an orphan still survives and lives right, I am this much of age, of course I can live. I am already in this situation. Even though I don't accept it, what else can I do? Looks like I am not going to die soon, in this case, live is the only option. I am not like her, I tend to live simply, and don't cook many dishes as she does. I just cook some rice, pickle, salted egg to go will do. I am no comparison with her, she has two sons to hold up the sky for her. I have nothing and might end up in a care home. But as long as I can cook and move, I will not go. (Feng, 80y, N1)

The findings in this research provide empirical evidence that older people ‘develop new ways to remain engaged’ (Boudiny, 2013:1088) and these can help them to accept changes in their later life and cope with the transition. In particular, this research provided evidence on how important older people themselves view their non-work-related activities to their quality of life and adaptation of new lifestyle and experiences of ageing in later life. For example, the handyman team, entertainment team, as well as the Communist Party club members at the neighbourhood level that were formed by, and specifically designed for, the older people had been highly praised by all participants. Those participants who were part of the team

believe that their lives have been enriched and that these activities further enhance their sense of belonging, control, and self-worth. As in Mr Ow's words: "I became busier after my retirement. But I like it, otherwise the life would be too boring for me, just staying home and reading a little newspaper, or thinking what to eat for three meals.' Further, as Mr Zun emphasised: "We are all very happy to be part of the handyman team. It makes me happy if I can do something not only for myself but also to help others. It also means I am still capable and useful after retirement. If I can still contribute, I am still worthy and useful." It was clearly shown that these groups of older people actively seek and use their existing resources at both an individual level as well as neighbourhood level in order to overcome their declining health and reduced social network and social support.

Furthermore, as Lou (2015) points out, collective and social orientation has been the dominant social norm over individual rights, personality traits, and autonomy. Chinese culture emphasises collective wellbeing, situational behaviour, and interdependency (Lou, 2015). These traditions continue to impact on participants' behaviour, decision making, group dynamic, family rules, and self-construction (Lou, 2015). As shown in the findings, many older people considered that the responsibility for their grandchildren's upbringing and childcare was expected as part of the contribution for the harmony of the family, and in turn, the harmony of the society as a whole. As Mr Gan (N1) said: "Help with the childcare can ease the financial burden. But most importantly, it's your own family and one's responsibility to help". Further, as Mrs Xiu (N1) emphasised: "If the age care problem is being solved, those related issues also dissolve. For example, if your own parents are being taken care of properly, you will go to work without any worries. Good age care will benefit so many families." Therefore, as Mr Zun summarised perfectly: "good age care will impact on the employment, harmony of the family, and our country as a whole." Again, the researcher argues that these attitudes reflected older people's strong anxiety about their own social status and later life care. Whether it is an emphasis on

traditional values or support of childcare, the reciprocal relationship has become a useful resource that older people believe that they can bank on in the near future.

Therefore, during this process of creating and adapting their physical and social environment, the meaning of old age and active ageing is being renegotiated (van Dyk, 2014). The findings in this research demonstrated the complexity of active ageing and resilience in the Chinese context. As Ng et al. (2002) point out, in addition to family members, neighbours and friends are important parts of social support networks, providing various support functions to older people. In a time of changing family structures and destruction of traditional values, the existing family-orientated age care support system faces a greater challenge than ever before. For example, as shown previously, Mrs Yu (N1), who has high satisfaction with her overall circumstances, clearly faces some issues that cannot be overcome through her own resilience. In other words, her medical insurance and poor housing status have to be addressed at the policy level through state intervention despite her individual highly resilient character. Thus, the emphasis on positive views and promotion of active and productive old age may easily be used by the government to neglect frailty, dementia, and hardship and discrimination (van Dyk, 2014; Wang et al., 2014; Wang, 2012), and this is clearly reflected in this research. Furthermore, the diverse recruitment of the participants in this research also revealed that an active lifestyle was not only required by the able-bodied 'young-old' (van Dyk, 2014), such as Mr Zhi (N3) and Mrs Tiao (N3), but also equally desired by the oldest old participants such as Mr Fan (N2), the 90-year-old, and Mrs Cai who had terminal illness and whose functional health had declined dramatically in recent years. The findings in this research challenge the active ageing discourse on the emphasis of the 'sameness' (van Dyk, 2014), and 'continuities' are narrowly defined with functional health status and productive capacity of an individual. At the same time, the findings show older people's capacity and the positive outcome of resilience. As

demonstrated in this research, older people like Mr Chuan, who was a Communist Party member, continue to have the desire to participate at a neighbourhood level as a valuable member of the community and contribute to the wider society. In the participants' own words:

I am happy to join them. Do you know the value of the party union in the neighbourhood? It is a bridge connecting the party members and public. Communication and guiding. I have been part of the community handyman team and only stopped recently due to my illness. I love to participate in the social events and help others, it made me happy. It was all voluntary. (Mr Chuan, 80y, N1)

7.4 Ageing in a rapidly changing world

One of the key themes derived within this study related to how ageing and age care were understood by these older people from a traditional viewpoint within Chinese culture: in this case, the concept of filial piety and how these norms are being challenged in a rapidly changing urban environment.

7.4.1 The continuing influence of filial piety on ageing and age care in China

One of the most important reasons employed by Western governments and researchers to promote AIP is that it is what most older people desire (Kwon et al., 2015; Róin, 2015). Thus, supporters of AIP initiatives tend to emphasise older people's attachment to their homes and neighbourhoods, as well as the positive outcomes of such attachment for older people's health both physically and psychologically (Gallagher, 2012; Buffel et al., 2011; Thomas et al., 2008).

The existing literature on older people's attachment found that privacy, autonomy and control are the key factors that influence older people's attachment to their home places (Elliott and Wadley, 2013). The findings in this research suggest a similar pattern in that the participants were attached to their long-lived homes and neighbourhoods and held some strong negative attitudes towards institutionalised care facilities and relocation. However, after examining the factors that influenced such desires and attitudes, some unique characteristics emerged and highlighted the significance of the Chinese social and cultural context. The data show multiple context-specific discourses that depart from the Western concept of place attachment and that defy simple application. Firstly, the Chinese culture of *antu zhongqian* influenced the older people's perceptions of successful ageing and a successful life, contributing to their attachment to their homes and long-lived neighbourhoods. This finding echoes that of a study conducted in Wuhan (Gilroy, 2012) that settling in one place is still preferred by Chinese people. Further, the participants' perceptions of themselves as long-term residents and *laobeijing* (indigenous Beijingers) and strong sentiment of *gutunanli* (difficult to leave one's roots) added to their attachment to the places. Thus, losing one's home in old age was perceived negatively and as emotionally damaging by most of the participants. Thus, the finding provided some insights into older Chinese people's attachment to their homes and how cultural influence plays an important role in understanding AIP. The prior research on AIP has shown that in well-urbanised societies, the reasons for older people not to move are often related to practical aspects of the environment and older people's own health status, as well as individual economic constraints for relocation (Lofqvist et al., 2013). In fact, the sharp rise in UK pensioners seeking retirement abroad (such as France and Australia) in 2005 and 2006 (Murray et al., 2012) shows a great contrast and how place can be perceived differently by older people in different societies with different political, social, economic and cultural backgrounds.

Secondly, the major difference between East and West is the deeply rooted culture of filial piety and its influence on ageing and age care in China throughout history. In contemporary China, as the data show, adult children have both moral and legal duties to look after their parents in old age (Chou, 2010a; Sung, 1998; Du and Xie, 2015), and such customs continue to be practised by nearly all of the participants and their children. These include both financial assistance and emotional support. With more than half of the participants co-residing with their adult children, the data in this research are consistent with previous studies' findings (Zhang et al., 2014; Cao et al., 2014) that this deeply embedded cultural institution continues to influence and shape perceptions of age and age care. Thus, family values still play a crucial role in the participants' everyday lives. To older Chinese people, home is where family and children are around and is the primary place where filial duty can be performed on a daily basis.

The data show that most of the older people in this study continued to expect care and support from their adult children. They had strong attachments to home and family because they felt that "family relations are important" (Mrs Guan, 69y, N2); they were "happy to live with children and have a big harmonious family" (Mrs Mao, 64y, N3), and tradition and old ideologies were still preferred. Most of the participants strongly believed that *yanger fanglao* (bringing up children for the purpose of being looked after in one's old age) was still the best solution. Children are one's old age "warrant" (Mr Ding, 68, N3): as long as one has children, one "won't end up bad in old age" (Mrs Dou, 78y, N3). To a certain extent and to some of the participants, the traditional value of sons (particularly the eldest son) bearing more responsibility over daughters is still a valid custom and is followed in their everyday lives. For example, Mrs Ye's reaction to the researcher's question about whether she had ever thought about living with her daughter showed that it seemed unthinkable and absurd to her. On the one hand, this attitude reflects Chinese society as "a relentless canonisation of tradition" (Zhang and Schwartz, 1997:191) and how these deeply rooted traditions are

sometimes followed without questioning their validity. On the other hand, it also brought further concerns over the participants' wellbeing when they have to face changes in their lives.

I have a son. Why would I go to my daughter? Just like in the old days, I'll stay with my son. (Mrs Ye, 78y, N1)

As shown in the data, the participants who co-resided with their children had high expectations of filial piety; for the participants who lived independently, being able to interact with their children and frequent if not daily visits were still necessary and desired. These factors were some of the main reasons why a great number of the participants held negative attitudes towards institutional facilities and a reluctance to relocate. To many of the participants, relocation to institutional care was still perceived as abandonment of one's family and a failure of life. Furthermore, the negative attitudes towards institutions were influenced by the participants' perceptions of the poor quality of service that these places provide. This may be the result of the expectation of filial duty and the assumption that one's family members and children can provide better personal care than staff in a care home can, as well as the trust that older people have in their children. As Yi et al. (2016:214) asserts that "most of the elder people do not accept the social elderly care agencies, and they do not believe that satisfied service can be provided by social agencies". It is not surprising that the findings in this research correspond with a prior study's finding (Qi, 2015) that the homecare model is still preferred over institutionalisation, and co-residence with family members still dominates the living arrangements in this study. These findings may be of particular importance to policy makers on the care arrangements for older people at home, as well as service providers in other societies where many Chinese people have emigrated and settled. In China, providing welfare provision and assistance to adult children who act as full-time caregivers to their parents not only helps to

fulfil older people's desire to stay with their families but also ensures their quality of care at home, in particular for families in low-income categories.

Thirdly, family values were also a fundamental principle for the older people in this study, who took on childcare duties for their grandchildren on behalf of their adult children. Having a harmonious family was not only about having one's own children around; the joy of grandchildren was also important. As filial piety defines intergenerational relationships (Ho et al., 2012), each person within the family has a role to fulfil and must behave accordingly. In consequence, many of the participants felt that such interdependent relationships within their families provided them with a sense of value and self-esteem. Having close relationships with one's grandchildren reflected harmonious family relationships and the fulfilment of one's own duties and contributions. Furthermore, childcare played a role of reciprocation between older people and their family members for their later age-care arrangements. Mrs Dou's words summarise this well:

Home is the best. Why do we have children? For our old-age care. Otherwise, no one would have children [...] This society, even in the future, still needs to go to work after they have their children. If they don't go to work, they will be left behind financially. If they go to work, they need their laojia [parents] to take on the childcare duty. Still, one needs one's parents' help, and without parents' help it would be difficult. That is why one must think about one's parents and not be selfish. They're not all bad – there are good children willing to looking after their parents [...] I think having a carer at home is better than moving to a nursing home. At least I can see my children every day. All my grandchildren

*are in their twenties now. I have helped all of them. (Mrs
Dou, 78y, N3)*

In the Western literature, successful ageing has often been defined as “living in the community, without restriction on activities of daily living, no serious difficulties on gross mobility and physical performance, a high score on a cognitive screening test, and excellent or good self-rated health” (Du, 2008:294). A study on older people’s perceptions of successful ageing from Taiwan suggests that living with one’s family and being supported by one’s children are two of the core elements of the concept of successful ageing (Hsu, 2007). However, these deeply ingrained family values and filial duties are not considered important factors to successful old age by older people in Western societies (Bowling and Dieppe, 2005). Some scholars have made further attempts to understand the differences in expectations for filial piety by comparing older Chinese people in Beijing and older people who live in the UK (Laidlaw et al., 2010). According to Laidlaw et al. (2010), there are statistically significant differences: Chinese-born older people have much higher expectations of filial piety practice in comparison to their UK-born counterparts, and the strength of the tradition remains high among older Chinese emigrants in the UK after many years of residence and acculturation outside of China. Being surrounded by one’s family members is a sign of prosperity, and such positive family relationships are considered by older Chinese and Hmong people in the US as a great contributor to successful ageing (Nguyen and Seal, 2014). According to (Nguyen and Seal, 2014), filial piety and frequent interaction with one’s children are perceived by the elderly as necessary and must-have elements in their everyday lives in order to achieve happy lives and successful ageing.

As mentioned in the literature review, the concept of AIP may be a new trend in the study of ageing and age care among Western scholars. Nevertheless, in the Chinese context, it has been practised throughout history as a result of the strong influence of the filial piety tradition. It is important to note that

Confucianism was heavily criticised and its doctrine was rejected during the Cultural Revolution (Shen, 2016; Zhang and Schwartz, 1997). However, as Zhang and Schwartz (1997) assert, although every aspect of Confucius's thinking was attacked and anti-Confucius sentiment was high during the Cultural Revolution period, nevertheless, the rigid cultural climate in China had helped to sustain Confucian values. Whether in the rejection of Confucianism by the new communist regime before the economic reform in the 1980s or in the restoration of Confucianism after the economic reform and recent heavy promotion of filial piety by the Chinese government, Confucian ideology has never stopped being used for political legitimisation (Zhang and Schwartz, 1997). In this sense, in the current political and social climate in China, I argue that the concept of 'shequ jujia yanglao' (AIP) based on the filial piety tradition fabricated by the current regime in China may be viewed as the by-product of political gain and authoritarian control in a rapidly changing society. If the family is the smallest unit of society, a harmonious family reflects a harmonious society. As many of the participants expressed, "age-care issues have a great impact on individuals, such as the younger generation's career development, family relationships and the harmony of the country" (Mr Zun, 65y, N1). Thus "once the age-care issue has been solved, many related social problems will be solved too" (Mrs Xiu, 75y, N1).

7.4.2 Urbanisation and changes in ageing and age care

As outlined previously, ageing has been constructed in Western societies through different historical periods, and older people have been viewed as a social category that is distinct from other age groups. Thus, older people in Western societies are often perceived "in a negative manner, viewed as ill, mentally slower, forgetful, bothersome, sexually inactive, unproductive, a burden to society, and so forth" (Bai et al., 2016:28). According to Phillipson (2013a), the establishment of a mandatory retirement age in the UK was crucial to the public understanding of age care as a collective responsibility through welfare provision during the post-war period. However, Phillipson

(2013) also asserts that society's high ethical ground of providing a good quality of life and security for older people began to be perceived as a welfare crisis when the demand for provision became a big burden during the economic recession. The realisation of the increasing ageing population and its possible strains on socio-economic resources has caused great concern. In consequence, the ideology on old-age care has started to shift from a collective responsibility towards an individual and family responsibility model in recent decades. The UK government abandoned the default retirement age of 65, and individuals can work as long as they wish and that some may wish to work at least to the age of 80 (Barrett and Sargeant, 2015). Only certain occupations, such as the fire service or jobs requiring certain physical abilities, still have the compulsory retirement age applied. As Barrett and Sargeant (2015) point out, the state pension age was also raised for both men and women. In this sense, AIP is one of the solutions and strategies employed by the government to ease the burden of population ageing on welfare resources. However, as addressed many times through this thesis, older Chinese people have never been viewed as a 'problem' in this way but have enjoyed a high social status in society throughout history. In particular, for the participants in this study, their life courses had involved experiencing socialist China, 'iron rice bowl' employment and welfare provision for housing and medical insurance, with the filial piety tradition as a moral principle, so for the majority of urban older people, age care has never been a worry. Nonetheless, the rapid urbanisation in recent decades has brought greater socio-economic changes, and the findings from this research reveal the effects of these changes on urban older people's lives.

Many of the participants were aware that population ageing is a socio-economic problem in China and that, as a social group, older people have become perceived as a *fudan* (burden) to society. This understanding reflects the Chinese government's attitude towards the issue of population ageing and seems to follow the global trend that treats an ageing population

as an economic burden. At the individual level, many of the participants used 'fudan' frequently when talking about their future care arrangements to avoid any possible burden to their children. They viewed that they might become a *jingshenfudan* (psychological burden), as well as a *jingji fudan* (financial burden), to their family members. For the participants who only had one child, their perceptions of themselves becoming a burden to their children seemed higher. A recent study on the influence of ageing stereotypes on older Chinese people's depressive symptoms found that only 17% of the older people studied thought that they were not a burden to their families, and 19.5% disagreed with the statement that older people were a burden to society (Bai et al., 2016). According to Bai et al. (2016), such internalised stereotypes of ageing and older people also affect older people's mental health, and those with a stronger burden view are at a higher risk of mental health challenges, notably depression.

Bai et al. (2016) assert that older people's overwhelmingly negative view of themselves as a burden to family and society reflects the changing attitudes towards and images of age and older people in contemporary China. In other words, ageism in China may not be openly addressed by the government or thoroughly studied by social scientists, but many related problems are apparent. Bai et al. (2016) argue that modernisation can impact on older people's status and esteem, and the process of modernisation serves to disadvantage older people. In China's case, the change in family structure as a result of urbanisation and the one-child policy has inevitably created pressures and challenges for individuals and their families in the care of their elderly parents. Coupled with the state's emphasis on the burden of older people on socio-economic resources, this has created negative images of ageing and older people. As Bai et al. (2016:30) assert:

[...] the views of older people in general are influenced by age-related stereotypic information with which they are confronted and old adult's self-conceptions are also contaminated by certain types of age-

stereotypic information [...] Older adults in China may internalise broader attitudes toward the role and value of older people in the family and wider society.

However, the participants' perceptions of ageing and age care revealed a rather conflicting and confusing state in the discourse on ageing and age care in China. One participant's own words may help to explain the current social climate and its impact on older people's understanding of themselves individually and as a group in China:

Yes, there is a problem of population ageing, and it is starting to draw the government's attention. It is a burden to society. Of course, when people get old and become burdensome, they cannot contribute to society anymore. But from another point, when we were young, we contributed, and society should take care of us and provide us a good life in our old age. This is normal and should not be viewed as a burden. Just like when you raise children, they look after you when you are old. Whether we are a burden or not depends on which way one looks at it. (Mrs Jiao, 71y, N1)

The above quote demonstrates that, on one hand, the government's recent portrayal of older people through state media as a burden to economic resources seems to have been accepted by many of the participants. On the other hand, these participants continued to view their care as a collective responsibility and that these problems could only be addressed collectively. In fact, the findings in this research suggest an increasing demand and greater need for public care provision, such as care home and community-based services. Nevertheless, the recent trend of the Chinese government on the promotion of the filial piety tradition in response to an ageing

population appears to have taken the opposite stance. By placing emphasis on cultural tradition, reinforced through law and regulations, the implementation of the 9064 age-care strategy (ChaoYangNews, 2010; Yi et al., 2016) in urban areas and the family support agreement in rural China (Chou, 2010c) clearly demonstrate the Chinese government's intentions, and it is most likely that individuals and family members will continue to act as primary age-care resources. Together with the changing family structure, the end of welfare housing provision, the continuing increase in housing prices and the lack of public care facilities, this has created a situation where there is a huge gap between older people's needs and the available resources, in particular for low-income families. Thus, it is no surprise that anxiety concerning their later-life care was highly apparent among the participants.

Institutional changes toward older people have also resulted in changes to older people's perceptions of the self and their value in their families, leading to changes in their family relationships. The findings in this research suggest that many older people have reconstructed their relationships with their children from purely filial-piety-driven care to a reciprocated form. This finding corresponds with a study on co-residence that also found a reciprocal tendency when adult children's economic and housing statuses are lacking (Zhang et al., 2014). As shown in this research, the exchange can take many forms, such as cooking, childcare, sharing accommodation or financial assistance. Many of the participants in this research held the perception that being more productive and useful is a warrant of their care. Prior research (Chou, 2010b) has indicated that children are perceived by a great number of older people as unreliable sources of long-term care; unlike their rural counterparts, urban older people have fewer expectations of their adult children for their care. Some scholars view this as a weakening of the filial piety tradition as a result of family structure changes, labour movements and modernisation (Zhan et al., 2008b; Cheung and Kwan, 2009).

The findings in this research suggest a change in that many of the participants considered long-term care from their children, especially one-child households and low-income families, as impossible to achieve. However, the researcher argues that such changes in perception were not due to the declining filial piety ideology but related more to a consideration of the practicality of care at home once their functional capacity has declined. Many of the participants appeared to accept institutionalisation but only on the grounds that their adult children could not or were incapable of looking after them at home. That was also the main purpose and motivation of their physical activities.

It is worth noting that the participants who were in a better economic position perceived fewer constraints through the filial piety tradition and fewer expectations on their children for their long-term care. This contrast might suggest that the ageing population in China is characterised by increasing diversity in respect of incomes and lifestyles, reflecting contrasting experiences both between and within birth cohorts (Phillipson 2013). Perceptions of filial piety may still influence the actions of participants in their everyday lives but its practice is also determined by the socio-economic statuses of individual families. Participants who had better financial freedom, such as Mrs Chang from N2, perceived fewer constraints from the filial piety norms and had a more positive attitude towards institutional care facilities over home-based care. Furthermore, the practice of home-based care was perceived by participants who were one-child families as non-practical, and institutions were a much more attractive choice to this group of elderly people in urban Beijing. For participants in low-income families, their choice of care seemed further limited with increased vulnerability. Not only may their adult children be incapable of providing long-term care at home but they also lack the economic capacity to support the participants in relocating to institutions. In this sense, the government's promotion of filial piety and emphasis on the homecare model without adequate public and social

services (Wang, 2015) to support the homecare needs has clearly created an uncertain situation, which arguably contributes to older people's anxiety and sense of insecurity. Further, the quality of homecare and older people's quality of life in their later lives may be jeopardised.

7.4.3 Spatial stratification, urban poverty and AIP

Another key theme explored in this study related to how these older people's ageing experiences and later-life care are being challenged by the ongoing changes presented in the above discussions. It is important to note that the findings in this research have also brought attention to residential mobility in the context of AIP. The majority of the older people in this research were long-term residents in their neighbourhoods and expressed their desires to continue to stay in the same places. However, the issue of residential mobility has played a major part in this outcome. As shown in the findings, firstly, all of the participants had relied on welfare provision for their housing before the system ended in 1999. As a result, their place of ageing was controlled and determined by and through institutions, rather than their own choice. Secondly, the social spatial stratification created through the hierarchical order between SOEs and other sectors was further reinforced through the period of economic reform. As shown in the findings, groups like the participants in N2 continued to benefit, but participants from N1 were filtered out through different stages of housing policy development. Couples with low socio-economic status in both N1 and N3 were constrained by their purchasing ability. As a consequence, their choice of place to reside and age continues to be determined by structural factors. With the continuing decentralisation of the city, for older people in N1 who want to upgrade their living standards, they have no choice but to relocate to suburban areas of the city, as the housing prices in the city core areas are too expensive and unaffordable for them. At the same time, property developers will sell these places to the wealthy and powerful for profit. Thirdly, the findings in this research show that spatial stratification at the neighbourhood level in city centre areas was also apparent due to economic housing development

during the policy shift from welfare provision to commodification. A prior study on urban sprawl showed a similar segregation pattern in suburban areas of Beijing (Zhao, 2013a).

Spatial segregation clearly reflects a pattern of housing inequality (Huang and Jiang, 2009). As outlined earlier, the majority of the participants in N1 still resided in public rental accommodation with very low rent. Although it was reported in the fourth quarter of 2010 that 72.4% of the urban households in Beijing owned their houses (Operation Office, People's Bank of China 2010, cited by Yao 2011), the majority of the participants and their adult children from N1 were outside of this category. According to Yao (2011a), an individual household's residential location reflects the household's wealth and purchasing ability. In addition to rural migrants, workers laid off from SOEs are a disadvantaged group distributed across the city, including in dilapidated inner-city neighbourhoods such as N1. In fact, many of the participants and their adult children from N1 and N3 were workers who had been laid off from SOEs. Yao (2011a) also points out that the wave of public housing transfer during the abolition of housing allocation by work units in 1998 enabled most urban households to get a home of their own at very low or heavily discounted prices. This is also shown in the data; for example, all of the participants from N2 had benefited from this programme, which had contributed to their higher housing status. Yao (2011a) and many other Chinese scholars (Lin et al., 2014; Tao, 2015a) have argued that the most vulnerable population in Beijing's housing market is not the low-income local residents, as the majority of them already own homes, but rural-to-urban migrants. However, the data from this research reveal that many older people who are not living in their own homes and need to find housing solutions from the market are also in a very vulnerable position. In the case of this study, the majority of the participants from N1 and their laid-off adult children were all in a disadvantage position. They had not benefited from the previous housing welfare provision, nor were their

pensions and their adult children's family incomes sufficient for them to purchase housing from the market.

Before the economic reform and during the planned economy, urban residents enjoyed many privileges over the rural population in relation to housing, education and employment. The findings reveal that to the urban elderly, medical and pension provision provided them with a great sense of security. However, the living standards were less comparable to those of advanced industrialised societies during the socialist period, and urban poverty was not considered a social and political problem (Gustafsson and Deng, 2011) and attention often paid to rural areas (Li and Sicular, 2014). However, the data in this research clearly show that older people may face becoming the new urban underclass as a result of deprived housing provision, increasing living standards, and a lack of welfare provision and assistance. As Xie and Jin (2015) asserts that housing assets accounted as the main household wealth and housing inequality was the main contributing factor to wealth inequality. In fact, the participants' increasing fear of too many strange migrants in their neighbourhoods may be interpreted as individual prejudice, but it also "reflects an oppressive social structure to which people respond in a variety of ways" (Laws 1994:7). As shown in the findings, what underlined the participants' anxiety and objections was resource sharing. Furthermore, such anxiety may also interpreted as the raising awareness of loss of privileged position as the result of collapsed of the old institutional based of classification to increasing stratified society based on economic wealth (Liu-Farrer, 2016). As participants said:

As I said earlier, the fundamental principle for constructing these neighbourhoods is different. The majority of the residents in our neighbourhood are the long-term residents from previous courtyard houses who did not get welfare provision and cannot afford to buy from the market. (N3 was constructed under the

affordable houses program) But the people in those neighbourhoods (the neighbourhoods in the same street) are different. The quality of their houses meaning those houses are more expensive. The people who can afford those houses either the big bosses from financial groups, or owners of the coal mines or have certain highly privileged backgrounds. For them, so easy just to say, I take the whole floor. It is always the rich that become richer. But people like us, already in difficulty and in order to buy the house we have to borrow money. Burden on top of burden. That is why we live in a slum and they have a lucky star shining over them. (Mr Zhi, 60y, N3)

Poverty research in China has concluded that absolute poverty has declined and has been broadly stable since the early to mid-1990s (Krause and Hayward, 2013). Nevertheless, widening inequality has also been identified (Ren, 2013), and the findings in this research reflect this phenomenon. In the early 2000s, around 20 to 30 million registered urban residents had fallen into poverty (Solinger, 2012), and this is an important issue for urban older people. In their study of poverty and hardship among aged people in urban China, Saunders and Sun (2006) found that many urban older people had experienced at least two key forms of deprivation or exclusion through economic insecurity, housing, health and social isolation. Together with the unemployed, the laid-off and low-paid workers, elderly groups face the greatest risk of poverty (He et al., 2010; Gustafsson and Deng, 2011) in urban China and are likely to become the new urban underclass or new urban poor (Ren, 2013; Yang, 2014).

Saunders and Sun (2006) also suggest that in China, poverty is closely linked with access to pensions, and many older people are currently missing out on the benefits of the economic reform. In particular, women experience

much higher hardship than men, doing worse on almost all measures, and pensions are just one major dimension that tends to preserve existing gender inequalities (Saunders, 2006). The findings in this research support this view. Not only does urban–rural division create pension unfairness but also the co-existence of various pension schemes is the cause of much deeper unfairness among the different primary distribution groups and people who have equal basic needs (Wang et al., 2014). The data in this research extends previous findings and demonstrates how this pension system lack in conceptual design (Wang et al., 2014) has impacted upon many of the participants' quality of day-to-day life and how rural-to-urban migrant women have been filtered out by the loopholes in the system. For those older women who are only entitled to a small amount of state support, if their adult children's economic situations are also lacking, based on their current situation and the social climate, their future care arrangements may face a bleak situation and become the main cause of their worries and anxiety. Thus, the Chinese government needs to urgently address the issues that these older women are facing and develop appropriate measures to ensure their quality of life and later-life care.

Furthermore, the findings show that social divisions in urban China are apparent and reflected through the emerging spatial stratification. As shown in the findings, the majority of the participants in this study were at the lower end of the spectrum (Chen and Hamori, 2013; Feng et al., 2012), and their choice of place to age was very limited. As Tomba suggests, such stratification has only played the role of strengthening the stratification that had already been created during the socialist period. Moreover,

[...] the increasing segregation of urban spaces over the last two decades concretises the government's need to classify spaces and places [...] no longer through the cellular structure of the work units but through a hierarchy of private spaces. (Tomba, 2014:4)

The existing research in Western societies has started to address similar issues and is beginning to pay attention to those older people who live in deprived urban neighbourhoods (Scharf et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2004; Van der Meer, 2008). According to Laws (1994), the built environment can act as both a container and a shaper of social processes and spatial structures and undoubtedly contributes to the oppression of many groups and individuals through state legislation. The occurrence of spatial stratification revealed in the findings asks for urgent attention to be paid not only to currently deprived neighbourhoods but also to those neighbourhoods most likely to see physical and social decline in the future.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This thesis has presented the views and perspectives of 34 Chinese older people ageing in three neighbourhoods of Beijing in a period of rapid urbanisation. Undertaken as an ethnographic study, the analysis drew on data from qualitative interviews, observations and photographic records. Theoretically and conceptually, the research was shaped by the social construction of ageing (Phillipson 2013a), and older people were approached as active agents with particular life histories and living in specific social, political and environmental contexts. The findings from this study demonstrate that the Western understanding of AIP is not sufficient to apply to the current social, economic and cultural context in urban Beijing. As the nascent concept of AIP has been embedded within broad socio-cultural institutions, numerous institutional legacies and socio-cultural factors directly and indirectly related to AIP serve as the discursive resources that shape and inform individuals' disputant discourses. These factors not only frame their basic logics, vocabularies and moral reasoning but also shape their structural positions on housing access, pension rights and later-life care. Participants in these three neighbourhoods have been constantly constructing and reconstructing their understanding of ageing and AIP with the wider economic, political, social and cultural influences. These interesting perceptions of and attachment to neighbourhood engagement invite further theoretical reflections, as ageing and age care for older people in China have been greatly influenced by existing cultural norms, as well as new social trends, in a far more complicated and ambivalent fashion than commonly assumed and observers have envisioned. Thus, to use a participant's own words,

We just cannot copy the Western way only. Age care in China still needs to consider the Chinese situation.
(Mrs Mao, 64y, N3)

This chapter critically reviews the extent to which the ethnographic research design and methodology allowed an exploration of the research questions, profiling the key findings and contributions made by the study to the field of AIP. The limitations of the research are identified, and some recommendations for future research are also presented.

8.2 Key findings and contributions

The aim of this research was to investigate older people's ageing experiences in urban Beijing in China. Several key findings were derived from this study. Firstly, as outlined through this thesis, the documentation of urban environmental changes, of older Chinese people's lives and of the relationship between the two are scarce due to the political constraints on social science and the late development of gerontology in China. The lack of attention paid to the concept of AIP and related issues in the Chinese context is also apparent. This research has gone to significant lengths to demonstrate the importance of the relationship between the neighbourhood environment and older people's lives in urban China, in connection with the rapid urbanisation that has happened in recent decades and its effects on perceptions of ageing and age-care practices. At its most qualitative level, it makes an empirical contribution to the understanding of urban ageing experiences in China, specifically the concept of AIP and its implications in a Chinese context.

Secondly, the traditional value of filial piety still holds its place and determines older people's positions within their families and their pattern of age care. AIP may be presented as a new concept to Western scholars and governments in response to the issues of population ageing, but it has been

a major part of social norms as a result of the domination of Confucian ideology through Chinese history. However, the promotion of the homecare model by the Chinese government in recent decades has shown a tendency towards following the trend of a Western understanding of population ageing as an economic burden. As a social group, older people are starting to be perceived by society as a 'problem', and this attitude has started to have effects on older people's ageing experiences and self-perceptions. These findings challenge the common assumption that older people hold a privileged position in China, contributing to the theoretical development of the ageing concept. As emphasised by social constructionism, our understandings of old age and ageing can be influenced by different social norms and cultures, in turn shaping individuals' ageing experiences and the outcomes of treatment towards older people. These findings provide some rich empirical understanding and analysis for the further formulation and development of theories of age and ageing in the Chinese context. Furthermore, these findings provide policy makers and service providers with some insights to design and deliver appropriate measures to ensure older people's good quality of life and to avoid any type of discrimination and societal suppression based on the negative stereotype of this group.

Thirdly, as identified within the findings, the neighbourhood environment both socially and physically plays a crucial role in older people's ageing and age-care experiences. They show that place matters in the ageing process and that ageing experiences can be influenced by different dimensions of the place where the older person lives. Not only do older people benefit from physical familiarity with their environments but also the social networks that older people gain through their long-term residency provide them with resources that other social relationships may not necessarily provide. As noted above, better social support in urban areas and cultural changes create situations where older people prefer to continue living in the community in their later life in order to continue enjoy their autonomy and independency. Retirement communities also seem a good solution to cope

with the declining family care system. As many older people are no longer able to rely on their adult children, and a larger number of dependent older people will no longer be cared for by family members (Yi et al., 2016). The increasing numbers of older people living alone (Wu et al., 2010b; Tian et al., 2010a) also bring many challenges to the family care system. These findings are particularly important within the Chinese context, as older Chinese people are facing rapid social and cultural changes in all sectors of their lives as a result of urbanisation, modernisation and globalisation. Thus, their long-lived neighbourhoods provide them not only with material resources but also a sense of safety and a sense of self, which are very important to their mental health and social integration. These findings also question existing theories of active ageing, ageing in place which have been developed and most debated and empirically tested in Western societies. By doing so, this research has strengthened the existing knowledge pool within the field of gerontology and has provided new empirical results for theory development. Based on the findings in this research, it is argued that the development of gerontology as a discipline urgently needs to widen its vision to the global level. It needs to move theories of ageing beyond Western-entrenched traditions and domination; it cannot be only located and examined against urbanisation in Western societies. Together with India, most urbanisation and population ageing will take place in developing countries, and both conceptual and empirical approaches to ageing must avoid the risk of consigning the research from developing countries to the realm of case study only (Ren, 2015), allocated within Western mainstream conceptions of old age and ageing. The findings from this research may well contribute one piece of the jigsaw to challenge the dominant canon of thought within the field of ageing studies.

Fourthly, the findings address the emerging issue of social segregation in relation to city redevelopment during urbanisation processes. By analysing spatial stratification in these neighbourhoods, the findings show that many older people are in danger of becoming the new urban poor, and spatial

stratification further reinforces this trend through housing consumption and inner-city neighbourhood redevelopment. Urbanisation is not new to China, and the study of the urbanisation process and its social consequences is dominated by research in Western societies. A lack of documentation on the complexity of urban development in China is apparent. The inequality caused by housing reform, pension reform and medical reform also means that there are a great number of older people facing poverty in urban China. The filial piety tradition's influence on older people's care arrangements has been shown to be reducing in the most recent decade due to changes in family structures, economic structures and people's perceptions of ageing. These changes have brought to light the ongoing social division in China, particularly the rise of the urban poor and the specific link to housing inequality.

8.3 Evaluation of the methodology

Although this research has made contributions to the knowledge in various ways, there are still limits and space for improvement. Firstly, only urban older people who had lived in a neighbourhood for a considerable period of time were included in this research. Older people who had migrated to the city or had followed their migrated children to the city were excluded due to the scale of this research. Secondly, there was a limitation related to the sampling process, as the recruitment was achieved through the researcher's personal connections and the gatekeepers' personal networks. Thus, the sample very much relied upon the individual gatekeepers' abilities to vertically network. In this case, the sample includes people who were likely to have closer relationships with the gatekeepers. For example, those older people who are less sociable or have limited involvement with the community may have been left out. Indeed, personal preference and bias should not be ignored. However, in order to gain more control of the recruitment process and to reduce possible bias, guidelines were given and repeatedly negotiated with the gatekeepers throughout the fieldwork. The

recruitment results show wide variations in the participants' demographic backgrounds, including age ranges, genders, marital statuses and economic backgrounds. Thirdly, as stated previously, the participant recruitment and site choices were closely linked together. Thus, the neighbourhoods selected for this research are located in the city core of Beijing. However, in the context of AIP, the researcher was aware that this was not the only choice. With the scale and speed of urban sprawl in Beijing, older people who are ageing in suburban neighbourhoods and rural neighbourhoods are also part of the community, and these neighbourhoods are similarly facing great changes in the process of urbanisation. There is an urgent need to document the changes and experiences of the older people who live in these neighbourhoods. Future research may adopt a different recruitment strategy and have a wider geographical selection. Last but not least, due to the limited resources and intentional small scale of this study, the conclusions drawn from this project are challenged by their capacity to be generalised. The extent to which the conclusions about the experiences of older people in a rapidly changing urban environment can be generalised to other neighbourhoods and cities in China deserves further testing. Thus, future research in the same vein may be necessary to attempt a larger-scale study whose design would draw on the experiences and insights gained in this study and which might support the findings generated by this study.

8.4 Recommendations for future research

This research has provided a greater understanding of older people's ageing experiences and perceptions in urban neighbourhoods in Beijing, China. The study explored how physical and social environmental changes and individual circumstances all interact to impact on the ways in which older people make sense of their ageing experiences, age care and sense of self. However, a single study cannot hope to fully cover the topic; during the research process, many additional questions were raised. Thus, the

following recommendations are made regarding possible areas of further investigation.

Firstly, the research aim for this study was to understand older Chinese people's experience of AIP within the context of urbanisation. Thus, the participants were limited to older people who lived in urban areas, without consideration of the complexity of urban and rural division on many levels, such as housing registration, welfare provision, welfare housing, and the differences in physical and social environments between regions in China. In this instance, inclusion of both rural and urban groups was beyond the capacity of this research. This does not mean that older Chinese people who live in rural areas are not important; indeed they are. Where rural older people have experienced urbanisation, a comparison between the two groups could be of interest. As outdoor neighbourhood environments were the focus of this research, physically impaired older people were also excluded in the recruitment process due to the time and small scale of the research. However, in considering the rights of the disabled population in general, these groups of elderly urgently need attention. Their ageing experiences and concerns also need a voice to be heard for the development of appropriate measures and policy to ensure their social participation and quality of life.

Secondly, further research should focus on issues related to the different physical, social, cultural and personal dimensions of the environment in which the ageing experience takes place. Within this, there is also a need to investigate the extent to which aspects of the Western conceptualisation of ageing are being introduced into China as a result of "a global neoliberal system of urban development" (Ren, 2015:330) and the impact of these changes on traditional views of ageing and age care in China. Thus, more work is required to explore the potential discrepancies between the traditional conceptualisation and contemporary aspects of ageing and age

care, between rural and urban settings, and between Western and Chinese contexts, as well as how these may differ.

Thirdly, considering the scale of the physical changes in many urban areas in China, older people who have recently moved into institutions or have relocated to different residential neighbourhoods and their experiences could also be examined under the concept of AIP. As shown in the findings, the ageing experience can be influenced by personal circumstances, such as education, socio-economic background, number of children and gender. Thus, wider recruitment in future research would help to provide a fuller picture of the issue of AIP.

Fourthly, as outlined previously, the lack of research on both active ageing and resilience provide little information on the subject matter in Chinese context. This research revealed the complexity of ageing and age care experience in the Chinese context. For example, urban and rural differences on economic productive activity, how these two groups of older people understand the concept of active ageing indeed needs further investigation. Researchers who are interested in resilience may also need to look further into what are the actual social and environmental factors which may determine Chinese older people's resilience at both an individual as well as community level. Furthermore, how these factors interrelated and effect older people's perception of ageing, their experiences of ageing and their quality of life. In-depth and comprehensive understanding on the diversity of older people's ageing experiences will provide valuable information for policy makers to establish appropriate system of age care and equal access for all older people in China.

In terms of policy and practice issues, given that many of the older people in this study identified a need for more interaction and participation at the neighbourhood level but found a lack of places to use, studies could also investigate which types of activities are preferred by older people and in

what way community provision could be made more effective and inclusive to all older people. The evaluation of community-based programmes that focus on age-friendly initiatives would also lead to a further improvement of the infrastructural aspects that enhance both physical and social environments to meet the needs of older people. As many of the participants identified that existing community-based services were lacking, studies could investigate which types of services are preferred by older people and their families. The evaluation of the existing provision of community-based care service programmes and their effectiveness for older people's AIP is also needed. Finally, the recent reform of the one-child policy by the Chinese government (Feng et al., 2016) has opened opportunities for studies concerning the impact of this shift on family structures, care arrangements and the conceptualisation of ageing. In addition to older people's views, younger generations' perceptions of this policy shift could be part of an investigation into the traditional views on ageing and age care.

8.5 Concluding remarks

As outlined previously, this research was initially triggered by my own personal experience of the changes in Beijing and the changes that had happened in my parents' neighbourhood. I was not entirely sure how the subject areas could be investigated at an early stage of this research. The initial reading of the literature around the subject areas widened my view, making me realise that I wanted not only to capture older people's experiences and views on their neighbourhood changes but also to place this in the wider socio-cultural context that shapes their ageing process and experiences. Regarding these complex and interrelated changes, I located these in relation to the concept of AIP, with a specific focus on the neighbourhood environment.

At this point, a reflection on the whole research process seems appropriate. In the process of this project, I lost my beloved mum and the supervisor who

recruited me for this project. Their deaths were sudden and I believe impacted on this project in various ways. Personally, I have had to face the fear of death that is deeply hidden in our daily dialogue and the emotional consequences that come with it. What happened in my personal life was closely linked with the process of this research, in particular during the fieldwork period. By looking back on my own journey through this project, the concept of 'reflexive ethnography' helped me greatly in understanding that, as a researcher, my position and power can be shifted and shaped by the different factors encountered through the whole research process. My parents were the initial motivation for my choice of topic, my first supervisor had triggered my curiosity on the link between ageing and place, and it was my own personal experiences and great interests on social construction theory that led me to the final project. The death of my mother on the one hand denied me the opportunity to recruit more participants in N2, as she had acted as the gatekeeper for my recruitment; on the other hand, it provided me with an insight into bereavement and a deeper understanding of some of the participants' experiences of the same issue, which would have been difficult or impossible for me to comprehend without my own personal experiences. I came to understand more in depth that my personal biography, such as gender, education and age, shaped the way I interacted with others in the field, the data I collected, my interpretations of the situations and my choice of presentation. What I experienced was not only part of this project but also part of my own ageing process, which one day will reveal its effect on me, just as what the participants had experienced in their early adulthoods had shaped and continues to shape their perceptions and interpretations of the world and life. Most importantly, I was more aware of these issues and their influence during my research and chose to face them rather than claim a full objective account. By facing the aspects that had influenced me during the construction process of this research and presenting them in different parts of this report, I have demonstrated that knowledge is a social construct, and this was a fundamental guiding principle of this research.

Throughout the time of writing this thesis, I also witnessed a historical change in the UK: a referendum in which the majority voted to withdraw from the European Union. I witnessed how politicians spoke out on their stances on the immigration issue, as well as the public responses to them. Two words that stood out to me during the debate were 'control' and 'contribution', as well as how these concepts are directly related to immigration issues and labour movement. Somewhat surprisingly, these concepts were also encountered during my research through my conversations with many of the participants on migrant issues in Beijing, which are presented in the findings. Concerns over the decline of their neighbourhoods; the rise of crime; and the intrusion of outsiders on their local culture, identity and, most importantly, existing resources. The attitude of rejection towards migrant workers in Beijing was clearly reflected in their insecurity over the existing resources in housing, education and welfare. Participants from both N1 and N3 expressed much stronger rejection towards migrants in their neighbourhoods. Similar to the 'white working class' identified in the media after the EU exit referendum, the older people in my research seemed to share the same sentiments that divide people and identify them as 'us and them'. Such similarity of feelings reminded me of what Booth Tarkington (1915) wrote, later quoted by Putnam (2000), in his analysis of the disintegration of US communities, which I believe reflects the feelings of people from the UK and many of the participants in this research.

Not quite so long ago as a generation, there was no panting giant here, no heaving, grimy city; there was but a pleasant big town of neighbourly people who had understanding of one another, being, on the whole, much of the same type. It was a leisurely and kindly place – "homelike," it was called [...] The good burghers were given to jogging comfortably about in phaetons or in surreys for a family drive on Sunday. No one was very rich; few were very poor; the air was clean, and there was time to live. (Booth 1915, cited in Putnam 2000:379).

Around the world, neighbourhoods and the connections and bonds that people have developed within these places have the same importance. Despite the geographical, political and socio-cultural differences, people struggle to comprehend great social changes, and their experiences are so diverse yet often similar. Older people in China, who have been respected as having greater knowledge and wisdom and who have enjoyed a privileged social status in society, seem to be facing their own dilemmas in a rapidly changing world. This thesis is just one piece of a jigsaw and a snapshot of older people's experiences in their ageing process. In considering the late development of gerontology and the lack of studies on ageing and AIP, I hope my contributions will continue in the future.

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Appendix 1: Interview schedule

Interview schedule – with local residents

Interview No:

Date & time of interview:

Length of interview:

Introduction:

Hello, my name is Marian Orton from the University of Warwick. You agreed that we have this interview, is this still good time to talk to you?

If now, proceed and note time interview started:

If postponed, note date and time of appointment:

This interview follows up the issues mentioned in the information sheet; about your experience of using your neighbourhood outdoor places and your perception about these places.

Before we start I'd like to stress that the information that you provide will be treated in confidence. Nothing you say will be passed on to any third party or cited in a way that enables you to be identified.

Is it OK if I record the interview? This is to enable me to be concentrate on our conversation and make notes later.

Section A: General information about interviewee

This section sought to gain some information on the intervening variables that might affect a participant's ability to use the outdoor environment, such as length of residency, physical capability.

A1. I would like to start by asking a few questions about some information about you.

Name	
Age	
Sex	
Marital status	
Education	
Income	
Ethnicity	
Employment	

A2. Please describe type of your work.

Employee of a for-profit company or business or of an individual, for wages, salary, or commissions

Employee of a not-for-profit, tax-exempt, or charitable organization

Local government employee

State government employee

Self-employed in own not-incorporated business, professional practice, or farm

Self-employed in own incorporated business, professional practice, or farm

Working without pay in family business or farm

Others

A3. Is this house, apartment -

Owned by you or someone in this household with a mortgage or loan?

Owned by you or someone in this household free and clear (without a mortgage or loan)?

Rented for cash rent?

Occupied without payment of cash rent?

Others

A4. How long have you been living there?

A5. Do you have children living with you?

A6. How do you describe your health status?

Section B: on the use of the outdoor/neighbourhood places

B1: How often do you go out and spend time in your neighbourhood outdoor area, in average?

B2: How long do you normally spend when you go out and spend time in your neighbourhood outdoor area, in average?

B3. What do you normally do in your neighbourhood outdoor area?

Organised activities- what, who ?

Non-organised activities – what?

B4. Who you normally spend time with in your neighbourhood outdoor area?

B5. What are the features you dislike most in your neighbourhood outdoor area? Why?

B6. What are the features you like most in your neighbourhood outdoor area? Why?

B7. Do you think there is enough outdoor space in your neighbourhood?

B8. What kind of facilities is there available in your neighbourhood outdoor places? Can you describe them to me?

B9: Which kind of facilities do you use most, and why?

B10. Do you need to take anything to facilitating your time in those spaces? What are they?

B11. Do you think there are enough outdoor facilities in your neighbourhood?

B12. If there is an opportunity, what are the features would you like to choose for your neighbourhood? Why?

Section C: on the perception of the outdoor environments

C1. What do you think about your neighbourhood outdoor environment?

C2. How much do you enjoyed being outdoors?

C3. How safe do you felt when you were out?

C4. How important it was to participants to be able to get outdoors?

C5. How easily do you found your way around? (what features? What areas?)

C6. What do you think about your neighbours? How important are they for you to going outdoors?

C7. In what way do you think the outdoor environment need to have to help older people to go out easier?

C9. Do you know the idea of age friendly community which promoted by WHO?

C10: Do you feel safe and secure when you go out / living in this neighbourhood?

Section D: On ageing in place

D1. Do you like the idea that age in place? Or would you prefer care institutions?

D2. What is your understanding about ageing in place? (jijia yanglao, shequ yanglao)

D3. Do you prefer ageing in place/in this neighbourhood? (are there other choice you can choose?)

D4. Do you think the neighbourhood environment (physical/social) are good enough for older people ageing in place?

D5. How important you think outdoor places are for people to age in place?

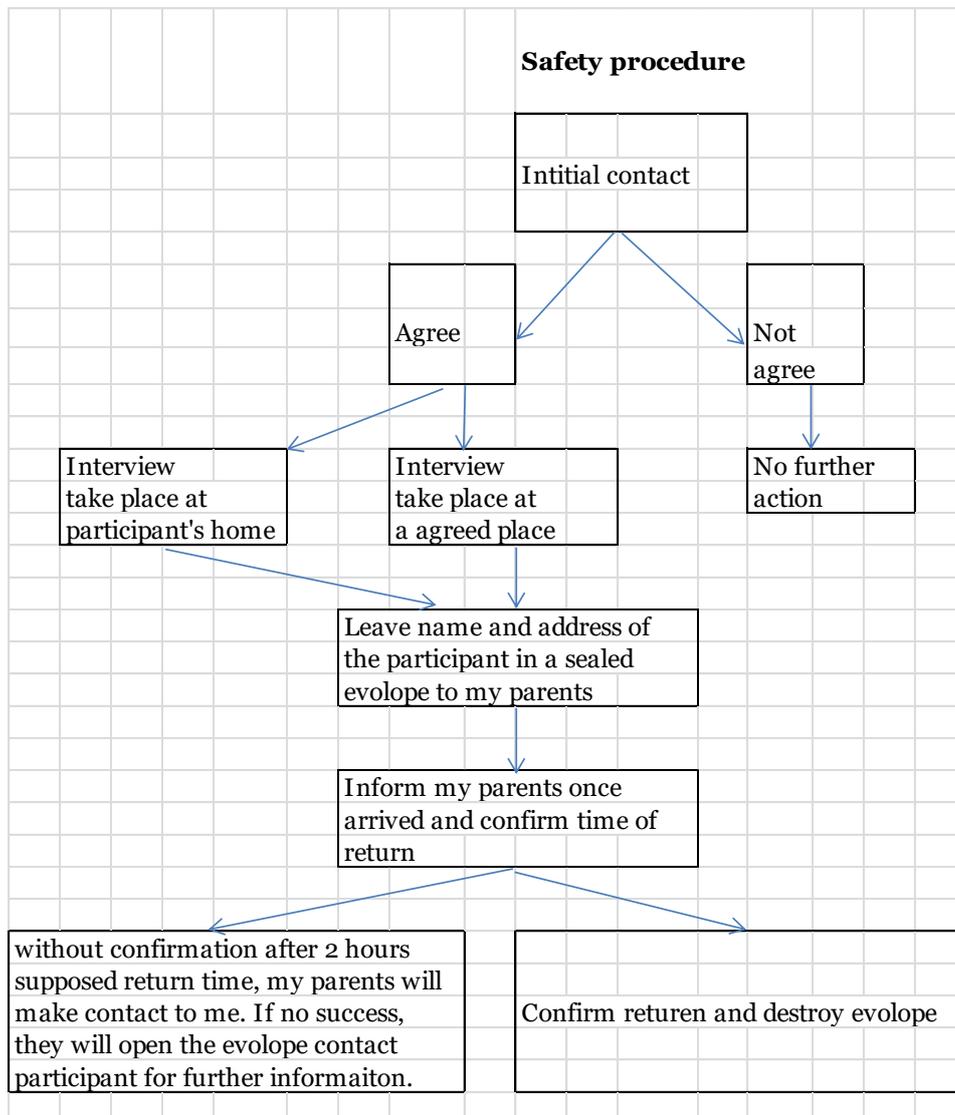
D6. Are there any changes would you like to have for this neighbourhood?

Prompts can be used during the interview process:

Could you describe further? Tell me about? How does that differ from? Can you give me an example of?

Ending question: Is there anything else you would like to add? Thank participant for their time and information.

Appendix 2: Safety procedure



Appendix 3: Consent form (Chinese)



授权同意书

(英国华威大学医院院下属科学和生物医学研究伦理委员会)
2013-329

研究项目编号: REGO-

项目名称:关于北京市老年人对居住区户外公共场所日常使用状况的田野调查

研究员: Marian Orton

指导教师: **Professor** Elizabeth Burton

受访人员在此项目中的编码:

请在同意的项目前打勾，不同意的打叉

	我已经阅读了关于标题中所提到的研究的具体信息，有机会考虑和进行提问，并得到了满意的答复。
	我明确的了解我对此项目的参与纯属自愿行为。我可以在任何时候中途退出，并不需要提供任何理由。我的任何法律权利都不会被影响。
	我同意参与以上标题中所述研究中的访谈环节
	我同意参与以上所述研究中的访谈环节及访谈后的与研究员（ Marian Orton ）的陪同散步过程。
	我同意参与以上所述研究中的访谈环节，并在访谈前自己照一些我所居住区的户外照片。并在访谈过程中和研究员（ Marian Orton ）针对这些照片进行讨论。
	我同意针对我的访谈过程进行录音。
	我完全允许研究员（ Marian Orton ）以匿名的形式使用我提供的，或者关于我的，包括图片，及访谈录音等任何与此项研究有关的信息。
	我明确的了解此项研究搜集的相关匿名信息，即我参与的部分将被英国华威大学及其他相关行政管理人员阅读。我给予以上相关人员许可进接关于我的记录。
	我明确的了解关于我的所有信息将以纸质和电子形式被保存 10 年，并会用于一篇博士论文，学术文献文章，研讨会报告等学术用途。任何引用将以匿名形式出现。

受访人姓名

日期

签名

Marian Orton

研究员

日期

签名

Appendix 4: Consent form (English)



CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Older People and Neighbourhood Outdoor Space in Beijing

Name of Researcher: Marian Orton

Please tick the boxes on the left if you agree:

	I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above project which I may keep for my records and have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have
	I understand that my information will be held and processed for the following purposes: a PhD thesis, journal articles, and conference and website papers, and reports. Any quotations used will be anonymous.
	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.
	I understand that when completed, this document will have one copy for me; one copy for researcher file.
	I agree to take part in the above study.
	I agree to take interview.
	I agree to take interview and accompanied walk with researcher.
	I agree to take photography and discuss it in the interview with researcher.
	I agree to have my interview audio-taped.
	I want to take part in the study, but do not want my interview to be audio-taped.
	I give full permission to the researcher to use anonymised materials including the interview audio recording and photographs taken by me or about me related to above study.

Name of Participant _____ Date _____ Signature _____

Researcher _____ Date _____ Signature _____

Appendix 5: Participant information sheet (Chinese)



给调研参与者的信息

项目名称：关于北京市老年人对居住区户外公共场所日常使用状况的田野调查

调查人：Marian Orton（中文名：孙英哲）

前言

现邀请您参与的是一个调查研究项目。在您决定是否参与的决定之前，请您仔细阅读以下信息，以便了解此项研究的目的和您可以参与的相关内容。如果愿意，您也可以和其他人讲述此研究项目。

第一部分讲述的是本项目的研究目的及如果您决定参与此项研究需要做的事情。第二部分将提供给您关于此项研究更具体的信息。

如果您认为信息不够明确的地方，您可向我提问。请仔细阅读及思考是否需要参与此项目。

第一部分

本项目是关于什么的？

本人（Marian Orton）现就读于英国华威大学医学院，此项调研是我博士论文的一部分，开始于 2010 年，预计将在 2015 年上季度结束。

此项调研的具体内容是想了解在北京居住的老年人在住家附近的户外活动场所的每日使用状况，经验及可能对老年人日常生活所造成的影响。这些场所包括人行道，公共空间，体育设施等老年人经常聚集或适用的地方。我希望能招募现年 60 岁及以上，定期及不定期使用户外场所的老年朋友参与此项目的受访及陪同散步环节。

是否需要参与此项目？

是否需要参与此项调研完全取决于您自己的决定。我可以帮助您一起阅读此信息并回答您提出的问题。此信息您可保存。如果您决定参与，我将需要您签署一份同意书。您可以随时退出，并不需要给出任何理由，您的退出对您的任何权益都没有任何影响。

如果我想参与，该如何做？

如果您愿意参与此项调研并愿意接受访谈。我希望在您的家里进行访谈。在家进行访谈可以方便我了解您住家的具体户外环境，并能在受访过程中更具体的了解您所谈论的关于户外设施及相关地点。如果您愿意受访，但是希望不再自己住家进行，我们可以选择一个您认为方便的场所进行访谈。访谈时间大约会持续一到一个半小时。如果您允许，我将做笔记及全程录音。参访将用普通话进行。

另外，您在接受访谈之前您还可以有以下两种选择，当然，这也完全取决于您个人意愿。

第一项，在您接受访谈之后，还可以选择和我一起在您所居住的小区走一走，具体看一看讲解一下小区的户外环境。如果您允许，我希望能做一些记录并拍照。这个过程大约需要 30 分钟。

第二项，在接受访谈之前，您可以自己拍一些您住家附近的户外活动场所的照片，并在访谈的时候和我谈论您所拍的这些照片。我可以提供给您一此性的相机使用。如果您希望使用自己的相机也可以。具体细节将在您选择此项内容之后提供。

是否有参与此项研究的风险？

针对参与此项研究的预估风险是：无。在这同时，我将努力让访谈及陪同散步的过程更轻松愉快。如果在参与过程中，您出现身体或心理的不适，我将立即停止访谈及陪伴散步。另外，您可随时向我提出需要休息的请求。

是否有参与此研究的直接利益？

没有

是否有费用及补助？

我很遗憾，此项研究因属我个人项目，我无法提供给您任何费用及补助

研究结束后会如何？

当访谈及陪同散步全部结束后，您将不需要再做其他任何事情。您为我提供的信息在被整理后用做我的博士论文和相关学术报告中。

我的参与是否保密？

是的。我们将严格按照相关法律及叙述研究伦理的规定，所有与您相关的信息将进行严格的保密。具体细节将在第二部分提供。

如果出现问题怎么办？

在此项研究期间的任何投诉及可能的伤害将会被严肃对待。具体的信息将在第二部分提供。

第一部分到此结束了。如果在阅读了第一部分之后，您对此项研究感兴趣并考虑参与，请在作出任何决定前，继续阅读第二部分更具体的信息。

第二部分

此项研究是由谁组织并提供资金支持的？

此项研究是我（Marian Orton）的个人项目，是为了完成我的博士论文。一切费用都由我个人承担。

如果我中途不想再继续参与此研究会如何？

此项研究的参与完全是自愿形式。拒绝参与将对您的任何权益没有任何影响。如果您决定参与此研究，您将需要签署一份证明您同意参与此研究的同意书。

如果您同意参与，中途退出对您的任何利益也不有任何影响。

您有权利完全退出此项研究，并在退出后，拒绝任何后续接触。

如果出现问题怎么办？

此项研究是包括在英国华威大学研究保险之下的。如果您有任何问题，可以联系 Jo Horsburgh (具体联系方式见下题)

如果我想投诉，应该联系谁？

在此项研究期间的任何投诉及可能的伤害将会被严肃对待。投诉请联系与此项研究无任何关联的，英国华威大学主管人员，Jo Horsburgh，联系方式如下：

Jo Horsburgh

Deputy Registrar

Deputy Registrar's Office

University of Warwick

Coventry, UK, CV4 8UW.

T: +00 44 (0) 2476 522 713 E: J.Horsburgh@warwick.ac.uk

我的参与是否保密？

我将以最大的努力在整个研究过程中对所有从访谈室中搜集的信息保密，确保您个人信息的私密性。我将隐藏或者删改您的个人信息（姓名，住宅地址等可预见性信息）以确保匿名性。您不希望使用的任何您提供的，或者关于您的信息，我都将不再使用。如果您是通过其他人得到此信息的，我将不会和其谈论您，也不会告知您是否参与此项目。

阅读此研究成果的人或许会因为图片识别出您所居住地的户外环境及区域，但是我将不会使用任何可以识别您个人信息的图片。在最后的博士论文及未来的各种与此项研究相关的报告中，同样的保密措施将继续被使用。

所有的信息及文件将会被妥善保管在上锁的文件柜中。所有的电子版本文件将保管在我的私人有密码的电脑中。只有我一人可以获取。关于您和您提供的所有信息将在此项目完全结束后以纸质及电子版本形式保留十年。然后将会被销毁。

研究结果将如何处理？

此项调研将除去用于我的博士论文之外，也会寻求各种国际学术期刊，会议，报告，相关网页等的发表。如果您希望，我也可以提供给您本调研成果的总结报告。

谁审核了此项研究？

此项研究是被英国华威大学生物及科学研究伦理协会，简称（BSREC）审核并通过。

审核号码：REGO-2013-329 日期： 15th Aug. 2013

如果我想参与，但是却不想录音，怎么办？

您仍旧可以在拒绝录音的情况下参与本研究。

如果我需要更多的关于此项研究的信息，怎么办？

任何关于此项研究的问题，或者任何关于您如何参与的问题，如果在阅读此信息后仍旧没有得到满意的答复，您可以联系：

研究员： Marian Orton,
手机号： 13521224416
邮件： marian.orton@warwick.ac.uk

指导教授： Associate Professor, Christine Harrison
邮件： C.Harrison@warwick.ac.uk

在详细阅读以上信息后，如果您决定参与此项研究，您可以通过以下联系方式，告知我。我的名字是：Marian Orton，我的中文名是：孙英哲，我的手机号13521224416

感谢您的阅读

Appendix 6: Participant information sheet (English)



Older People and Neighbourhood Outdoor Space in Beijing

Participant Information Sheet: Interview

I would like to invite you to take part in an interview but before you decide whether or not to do so, please take time to read the following information carefully as it explains why the research is being done and what it will involve.

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of this research project is to find out how outdoor space (e.g. courtyards, parks, parking spaces, exercise areas, streets and footpaths) with your neighbourhood is used by older people and the impact they may have on older people's wellbeing. I would like to recruit people aged 60 or over who walk in and use their local outdoor spaces.

This research is part of the requirement for me to gain a PhD degree at the University of Warwick, UK. The project started in 2010 and will end in 2014.

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. Even if you do decide to take part, you are free to stop at any time without giving a reason and to withdraw any unprocessed data you have given to me. There are no foreseeable risks or direct benefits to you in participating in this research apart from generously giving up some of your time. However, your participation would be very valuable in helping me to understand the role local outdoor spaces play in older people's lives in Beijing.

What will I do if I take part?

If you do choose to participate I would like you to take part in an interview, which ideally would take place in your home. This is to enable me to talk to you about the place where you live and to see your neighbourhood outdoor space/s and ask you specific questions about their different feature (e.g. what they are used for). However, the interview can be held at another place of your choosing if you prefer. The interview would take about one to one and half hours. With your permission I would like to take notes and to audio-record the interview.

In addition to the interview, there are two other ways you can choose to take part in my project but again this is entirely up to you:

Firstly, it would be very useful if you could take a walk with me around your local outdoor spaces during which we would talk about the spaces and, again with your permission, take photographs and sketch maps or places of the spaces. The walk would take about 30 minutes.

Secondly, it would be also very useful if you would take some pictures of your local outdoor spaces before the interview. We would then discuss the photographs during the interview. You could either use a disposable camera provided by me or, if you prefer, you can use your own digital camera. More detailed information will be given if you choose to do this.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

All the information collected will be kept strictly confidential and I will ensure your privacy and anonymity throughout the collection, storage and publication of the research material.

Any information you give me will be kept securely in paper and electronic form for a period of five years after the completion of the research project after which time it will be shredded and securely disposed of.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

In addition to my PhD theses, the research findings will be published in international journal articles, conference papers, and reports and on the relevant websites. Any quotations used will be anonymous. I shall send you a summary of my research findings and a summary report if you would like.

Who is the researcher?

This research is being carried out by Marian Orton, and supervised by Professor Elizabeth Burton and Dr Lynne Mitchell, Medical school, University of Warwick.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you would like to take part, you can contact me:

My mobile phone: +86 13521224416 My email: marian.orton@warwick.ac.uk

I will telephone / talk you to organise a convenient date and time for the interview. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign two copies of consent form to show that you are happy to take part, one is for your own records and the other is for me. If you are unable to sign the consent forms I will ask your permission to audio-record your consent to take part.

What if I want to take part but do not want to be audio-record?

You can still participate in the study but I will not audio-type the interview. The decision is entirely up to you.

If there are any further questions, you can contact me through following ways:

My mobile phone: +86 13521224416 My email: marian.orton@warwick.ac.uk

If you would like to discuss this with one of my supervisors please contact Dr Lynne Mitchell, Warwick School, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL. Email: Lynne.Mitchell@warwick.ac.uk