5 The Impact of Impending Demolition on Ageing in Place in Declining Neighbourhoods in Shenyang, China

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Abstract

Facilitating ageing in place enables older people to remain in familiar places, namely their homes and neighbourhoods, as long as possible. However, urban redevelopment that includes the forced relocation of residents often makes ageing in place impossible. The present research examined how impending neighbourhood demolition affects the ageing in place of older people in Shenyang, China. Starting with the press-competence model and related academic work concerning the influences of person–environment interaction on the wellbeing of older people, this paper discusses the impact of forced relocation and demolition on the meaning of home, the living arrangement and the role of family, and strategies to maintain the independence of older people. Transcript analysis of 54 semi-structured interviews with older residents revealed their ambivalent feelings towards the impending demolition. Long-term residence in declining neighbourhoods makes them feel rooted and enables them to develop their living strategies and plan for ageing in place. However, neighbourhood decline challenges their daily activities and they increasingly struggle to maintain their independence, which leads them to consider impending neighbourhood redevelopment as an opportunity to improve their living conditions. The impending forced relocation interrupts their place-based identity and living strategies and causes significant stress due to their lack of autonomy in the decision making on the relocation process, the move itself and their uncertainty regarding their post-relocation life. Implications for further research and policy are provided.

Keywords: *Ageing in place; Urban redevelopment; Declining neighbourhoods; Caregiving; Forced relocation; China*

§ 5.1 Introduction

In many countries, the ageing of the population is a fundamentally important demographic development. The growing shares of older people create huge societal challenges with regard to the labour force and the funding of pensions, healthcare and other age-related services (for an overview, see Gavrilov and Heuveline, 2003). Ageing in place encompasses the interaction between older people and their living environment (Davey, 2006; Lawton, 1983). It implies that older people stay in their familiar environment (i.e. their home and neighbourhood) and that they maintain their sense of home, independence and autonomy. Apart from a theoretical construct, it is also a prevalent policy that is not only considered necessary to reduce the costs of institutionalized and special medical care, but also considered positively with regard to the physical, social and psychological wellbeing of older people (Davey, 2006; Gilroy, 2008; Sixsmith and Sixsmith, 2008; Wiles *et al*. 2012).

However, some scholars argue that ageing in place might not be a preferable choice for older people (Hillcoat-Nallétamby and Ogg, 2014; Löfqvist *et al*., 2013; Oswald and Rowles, 2006), because the wellbeing of older people while ageing in place is affected by their competence (i.e. socioeconomic status, physical abilities, personal characteristics, ability to cope with change) and the environments (i.e. the physical environment, the institutional context and the cultural values) (Lawton, 1983, 1985; Gilroy, 2008). For instance, Van Der Meer and colleagues (2008) reported that vulnerable older people who are living in declining neighbourhoods experience more dissatisfaction and sense of unsafety in their neighbourhoods than those who are less vulnerable, whereas in more prosperous neighbourhoods, there are no obvious differences between vulnerable and less vulnerable older people. This study shows the significance of the neighbourhood conditions and the socioeconomic status of older people for their wellbeing while ageing in place.

China faces increasing challenges resulting from its ageing population (Chou, 2010): it is estimated that by 2030 China will have 347.1 million people (23.8% of the total population) aged 60 years or older (Chou, 2010, p. 4). In addition to this demographic process, older people in China increasingly face multiple challenges, such as poverty, inadequate housing and a lack of medical care, due to the highly limited development of age-friendly physical environments and an inadequate social welfare and healthcare system (Jiang, 1995; Liu and Wu, 2006; Saunders and Sun, 2006). Meanwhile, under the influence of modernization, industrialization and urbanization, traditional practices of ageing in place in China, such as intergenerational co-residence and strong dependence of parents on children, are changing rapidly. The intergenerational co-residence of older people and their children has become less prevalent and children and even parents increasingly prefer to live separately (Forrest Zhang, 2004; Logan *et al*., 1998).

In the context of such structural and cultural changes in China, the pertinent question is how older people experience ageing in place. This is especially important for vulnerable older people who live in declining neighbourhoods. In China, older people residing in old neighbourhoods, such as some *danwei* (work unit) communities or urban villages, suffer from deterioration due to a lack of maintenance and investment. These neighbourhoods were built many years ago and are often unsuitable for ageing in place in terms of building design, infrastructure and facilities. In the context of a large-scale urban renewal programme, many of these old neighbourhoods will be redeveloped, which will involve the demolition of dwellings and the forced residential relocation of millions of people (Li *et al*., 2017; MOHURD, 2013). Impending relocation is a direct threat to the ageing in place of older residents or the opportunities for such. Although it is not unlikely that their housing conditions may be improved after forced relocation, the whole process of relocation can cause them major disruption and insecurity.

Driven by these concerns, the present research examined the lived experiences of older people in declining neighbourhoods, and in particular how the impending neighbourhood demolition and forced relocation affects their perception of ageing in place, taking *danwei* communities and urban villages in Shenyang, China, as a case study. In this paper, a transcript analysis of 54 semi-structured interviews with older residents in declining neighbourhoods is used to show how the impending neighbourhood demolition influences older residents' lived experiences with regard to (1) the meaning of home, (2) their living arrangement and the role of family, and (3) strategies to maintain their independence. We define 'older residents' as people living in the case study areas who are at least 50 years old,[1] which is based on the earlier retirement age of employees of state-owned enterprises and governmental departments and institutions (for an overview, see note 1 and West, 1999). The following section elaborates the concept of ageing in place, also in the context of forced residential relocation in later life. It also discusses ageing in place in the contemporary Chinese context. Section 5.3 introduces the research area, data and methods. Section 5.4 provides the results of the transcript analysis. The final section presents the discussion and conclusions, as well as some policy recommendations.

§ 5.2 Ageing in place and urban redevelopment in China

§ 5.2.1 Ageing in place: home, independence and living arrangement

Facilitating ageing in place enables older people to remain in familiar places, namely their homes and neighbourhoods, as long as possible (Davey, 2006; Dobner *et al*., 2016; Gilroy, 2008; Oswald and Rowles, 2006; Sixsmith and Sixsmith, 2008, Wiles *et al*. 2012). It is believed that remaining in familiar places can be beneficial to older people, as it helps them to maintain their autonomy and independence (Borglin *et al*., 2005; Davey, 2006; Sixsmith and Sixsmith, 2008;). However, ageing in place does not mean that older people are satisfied with their lived experiences in their current neighbourhoods (Hillcoat-Nallétamby & Ogg, 2014; Peace et al., 2011). In fact, ageing in place might be a compromise for older people. They may have both positive and negative experiences in these places, which may drive them to move away or make them stay (Oakley *et al*., 2008; Tester and Wingfield, 2013). The press-competence model proposed by Lawton and Nahemow (1973) posits that the interaction between two factors, namely, the environmental features and personal competence, affects the wellbeing and behaviour of older people who are ageing in place (see also Lawton, 1985). Vulnerable older people are very likely to suffer from challenges resulting from neighbourhood decline, as both their deteriorated living conditions and constrained socioeconomic resources reduce their ability to overcome environmental pressures (Hillcoat-Nallétamby, 2014; Portacolone, 2011; Saunders and Sun, 2006; Van Der Meer et al., 2008). The press-competence model therefore provides a useful lens to explore the behaviour and living experiences of vulnerable older people living in depressed conditions (Hillcoat-Nallétamby and Ogg, 2014; Lager , 2014; Oswald and Rowles, 2006; Peace *et al*., 2011). Inspired by the model, we suggest decomposing the ageing in place experience of vulnerable older people from declining neighbourhoods into three key dimensions: (1) the construction of the meaning of home, (2) their strategies for remaining independent, and (3) their living arrangements and the interaction with family, which will be explained in the following sections.

Home has been the key notion surrounding what environmental features should be developed to facilitate ageing in place (Ekström, 1994; Wiles *et al*., 2009; Severinsen *et al*., 2016; Oswald *et al*., 2005; Sixsmith and Sixsmith, 2008; Sixsmith *et al*., 2014). After a long period of residence, older people become familiar with, attached to and dependent on the physical and social environments of their neighbourhoods and dwellings, and during this process they develop a sense of home (Borglin *et al*., 2005; Ekström, 1994; Gilroy, 2008; Lager , 2014; Wiles *et al*., 2009; Severinsen *et al*.,

2016). The development of a sense of home is not only a natural but also a necessary process for the wellbeing of older people (Borglin *et al*., 2005; Oswald and Rowles, 2006). First, home is mentally and psychologically significant to them, as it provides a sense of privacy, safety, autonomy, freedom and continuity – states that are essential to human beings (Borglin *et al*., 2005; Tester and Wingfield, 2013). Second, home is the shelter in which older people live and conduct their daily activities, which is closely related to the environmental attributes of their dwellings and neighbourhoods (Hillcoat-Nallétamby and Ogg, 2014; Oakley *et al*., 2008; Tester and Wingfield, 2013). For instance, the facilities and location of dwellings and neighbourhoods can affect the quality and scale of older people's activities (Hillcoat-Nallétamby and Ogg, 2014; Oakley *et al*., 2008; Van der Meer *et al*. 2008). The significance of a sense of home and its related environments is enhanced as older people become less mobile and stay at home more due to ageing related physical and cognitive decline (Oswald and Rowles, 2006; Severinsen *et al*., 2016).

In addition, personal competence, such as physical capacity, socioeconomic status and social relationships, can determine the degree to which older people are able to overcome or adapt to environmental challenges and achieve independent ageing (Lawton, 1983; Plath, 2008; Portacolone, 2011; Van der Meer *et al*. 2008). In the USA and some western European countries, older people find it difficult to rely on others as it indicates the loss of their autonomy and independence (Borglin *et al*., 2005; Plath, 2008; Smetcoren *et al*., 2017). Remaining independent is therefore highly appreciated by both older people themselves and society, and is one of the policy aims regarding ageing in place (Hillcoat-Nallétamby, 2014; Portacolone, 2011). Independent ageing can normally be manifested through the living arrangement and care receiving patterns of older people, which indicates the extent to which older people are dependent on others (Smetcoren *et al*., 2017). For instance, in order to maintain independence, many older people prefer to live alone or with their spouses (Portacolone, 2011). In particular, they avoid living together with their children when they feel that they may become a burden on them. The maintenance of independence is context-based. In addition to the environmental pressures, the macro-social, economic, cultural and institutional context can directly affect the socioeconomic resources that are available to older people (Allen and Wiles, 2014; Dobner *et al*., 2016; Lawton, 1983, 1985; Liu *et al*., 2014; Plath, 2008; Smetcoren *et al*., 2017). For instance, whereas the relatively mature social welfare and caregiving services (public or private) make independent ageing more achievable in some western countries (Sixsmith and Sixsmith, 2008; Plath, 2008; Portacolone, 2011; Allen and Wiles, 2014), in Asian countries such as China and Vietnam, dependence on children and intergenerational co-residence are both prevalent and necessary due to the relatively underdeveloped social welfare and medical care systems and the traditional norms such as Confucianism (e.g. filial piety) (Chan, 2005; Logan *et al*., 1998; Yamada and Teerawichitchainan, 2015;

Zavoretti, 2006). The following subsection discusses older people's ageing in place experience in the Chinese context with regard to how the transitions in China affect the traditional caregiving norms, living arrangement, and parental–children and family–institutional relationships.

§ 5.2.2 Ageing in place in current China

Ageing of the population in China has become increasingly challenging, not only due to the size and pace of the ageing process, but also because of the associated challenges related to housing, medical treatment and economic security (Bartlett and Phillips, 1997; Saunders and Sun, 2006; Zavoretti, 2006). In China, traditional ways of caregiving that are important for ageing in place have undergone many changes, such as the decrease in intergenerational co-residence and changing relationship within families (Forrest Zhang, 2004; Logan *et al*., 1998; Logan and Bian, 1999). Some scholars argue that these changes are the combined effect of traditional values and the modernization, marketization and urbanization process in China (Logan *et al*., 1998; Forrest Zhang, 2004; Zavoretti, 2006). Three overall developments are particularly relevant in the context of ageing in place in contemporary China.

First, in China filial piety has traditionally played a significant role in ageing in place, but the nature of this role is now changing. Filial piety is both a traditional norm and a common repertoire for caregiving practices, which highlights the mutual responsibility of children and family (Cheung and Kwan, 2009; Chou, 2010; Zhang *et al*., 2014; Yan, 2011). Filial piety, which is embedded in Confucianism, requires children to provide their parents with various types of support (e.g. material, economic and emotional support) and to show them respect and obedience (Cheung and Kwan, 2009; Li *et al*., 2012). Currently, however, the notion of filial piety has been reinterpreted, and its influences on the caregiving for older people have been altered and even decreased (Qi, 2016). Therefore, ageing in place for some older people means living alone in declining neighbourhoods, as intergenerational co-residence has become less common. Many adult children, especially those who are married, move into newly-built private housing in other neighbourhoods. Some older parents have to stay in their old and declining neighbourhoods because they cannot afford better dwellings or because they are attached to their neighbourhoods (Zhou *et al*., 2015). At the same time, traditional patterns of patrilocal residence, which stresses the co-residence of parents with sons rather than daughters, have changed due to the increase in gender equality as well as the one-child policy (Bartlett and Phillips, 1997).

Second, and related to the above, modernization in China has gradually altered traditional family interactions, exchanges and housing patterns (Qi, 2016; Forrest Zhang, 2004). For instance, individualization poses challenges to filial piety (Liu *et al*., 2014). Individualization stresses independence and autonomy, as opposed to the Chinese traditions, which stress dependence/interdependence and hierarchy within families. Under the influence of individualization, family interactions appear to shift from parental authority and the obedience of children, to financial and emotional exchange and children's respect for parents (Qi, 2016). In addition, the one-child policy has made the child the centre of the family, which promotes the individualization of children (Qi, 2016). Therefore, the co-residence of multiple generations has become less popular. Different generations increasingly live separately to preserve privacy and freedom and to avoid friction, especially between parents and daughters-in-law. However, the significance of family for ageing in place in China retains its vital function. Some studies have reported that due to the insecurity embedded in personal life and societal transitions, the intimacy between family members has been strengthened and is manifested via actions rather than verbal communication, such as mutual assistance in decision making, crisis management, etc. (Qi, 2016; Jiang, 1995). In addition, there is still intensive social exchange between parents and children, which on the one hand is due to traditions. On the other hand, parents and children turn this intensive social exchange into forms of financial and material support, as a preparation for the uncertainties in the future (Chou, 2010; Chen and Silverstein; Zhang *et al*., 2014). Therefore, living alone gradually becomes more accepted by the older people themselves. Although it can lead to loneliness (Saunders and Sun, 2006), some older people still prefer to live alone to maintain their independence and autonomy (Logan *et al*., 1998).

Third, market transition, which is characterized by reforms of state- or collective-owned enterprises, is intended to reduce the burden on the state and related enterprises by assigning social welfare provision responsibilities, such as healthcare and pensions, to individuals and the market (Forrest Zhang, 2004; Logan and Bian, 1999; Zavoretti, 2006). The dismantling of collective organizations, such as the danwei system and the collective companies established by urban villages, the emphasis on self-reliance and the limited development of elderly care systems mean that older people have to increasingly rely on themselves or their family for care, especially if they have limited access to pensions and related social welfare (Jiang, 1995; Forrest Zhang, 2004; Liu and Wu, 2006; Zavoretti, 2006). Even though older people who retire from state- or collective-owned enterprises can get healthcare and a pension, these resources can barely meet their basic food and health needs (Liu and Wu, 2006). This especially applies to danwei communities, because since the market reforms many danweis have stopped providing their employees with social welfare, such as housing or education. At the same time, interurban and interregional (within city and/or rural area) residential mobility has become more frequent due to hukou reform (for an overview, see Liu et al., 2014), rapid urbanization and the

establishment of a private housing market. Children move to other dwellings in other districts, other cities and even other provinces, which increases the distance between them and their parents, and in turn, reduces the caregiving for older people (Logan *et al.*, 1998).

In parallel with changes in living arrangements and increased residential mobility in today's China, the care for older people is under pressure (Gilroy, 2012; Bartlett & Phillips, 1997). Many older people who have no pension or who used to work for enterprises that went bankrupt are more likely to experience poverty. This is especially true for those who are not covered by the institutional care system (e.g. the 'Five Guarantees' or the 'Three No's Standard'[2]) and cannot get support from their children (Liu and Wu, 2006; Bartlett and Phillips, 1997). Whereas those older people whose families can afford to pay for newly-built private housing have moved out of older neighbourhoods, others have to stay in the old and declining danwei communities and old inner city neighbourhoods (Zhou *et al.*, 2015). These neighbourhoods are subject to physical deterioration, population turnover and economic decline, which makes staying in these areas (and hence, ageing in place) more difficult for older people than other age groups (Gilroy, 2012). Some of these areas will soon face demolition in the context of a national urban redevelopment programme, an issue to which we now turn.

§ 5.2.3 Ageing in place, urban redevelopment and forced relocation

In general, people are reluctant to relocate to other places in later life. They often prefer to grow old in their homes and trusted neighbourhood environments, particularly if they are strongly attached to these places (Oswald and Rowles, 2006; Oakley *et al.*, 2008; Smetcoren *et al.*, 2017). Even if some of them intend to move, they may have to stay, due to various constraints such as limited resources, a lack of housing alternatives or a strong attachment to their environments (Löfqvist *et al.*, 2013; Hillcoat-Nallétamby and Ogg, 2014). However, in the context of urban redevelopment, ageing in place for older people might become unlikely, since these redevelopments often involve the forced relocation of residents and neighbourhood demolition. Forced relocation can be a very stressful process for older people (Ekström, 1994; Severinsen *et al.*, 2016), as it may deprive them of the sense of home they have developed over a long period (Fried, 1963) and because the move itself is often chaotic. Older people need to find alternative housing, to organize the move, and to pack and/or unpack their belongings, which can be very exhausting (Ekström, 1994; Severinsen *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, great uncertainty might be embedded in the forced relocation, as they may be unsure both during and after their relocation whether they will be able to adapt to their new living environments (Goetz, 2013; Oswald and Rowles, 2006).

Since the 1990s, many urban areas in China have undergone rapid redevelopment, characterized by large-scale neighbourhood demolition. Since 2008, the central government has carried out two rounds of shantytown redevelopment projects (SRPs) focused on improving the living conditions of low- and middle-income households living in declining neighbourhoods that lack basic facilities and infrastructure (Li *et al*., 2017). In total, between 2008 and 2012, about 12.6 million households were involved in SRPs (MOHURD, 2013). In 2013, the government triggered a second round of SRPs. Unlike the first round, the second one especially targets vulnerable residents in undesirable, small-scale urban areas that were left under-redeveloped by the government or developers. Residents who are involved in the projects are forced to relocate. They can get two types of compensation from the local government, namely in-kind and monetary compensation. The amount of compensation depends on the size of the dwelling that is going to be demolished. If they choose monetary compensation, they might use the money to purchase a dwelling on the private housing market. Otherwise, they need to wait until they are relocated to the relocation neighbourhoods provided by local governments.

The present research sought to uncover how this imminent threat affects older people's perception of 'ageing in place' from the three key themes stated in section 5.2.1, that is (1) the meaning of home, (2) their living arrangements and family interactions, and (3) their strategies to remain independent. Our research population consisted of older residents of declining Shenyang neighbourhoods that are slated for demolition and who will thus be relocated by SRPs. The following section describes the research area, data and methods.

§ 5.3 Research area, data and methods

Shenyang is a typical old industrial city in northeast China. It has a population of 5.25 million (SSB, 2014), making it the largest city in northeast China and the 11th largest in the country. Shenyang has been called the 'Ruhr of the East', and it has been deeply affected by the planned economy. The city has a large proportion of state-owned enterprises, industrial workers and danwei communities. However, since the 1980s, Shenyang has suffered from a major economic depression because of its maladjustment to the market economy. Many enterprises have gone bankrupt, leading to many lay-offs. Urban areas, especially traditional industrial areas occupied by state-owned enterprises and danwei communities, have fallen into decline. Currently, Shenyang still has a lot of danwei communities. In addition, there are

many urban villages in the suburban areas. The physical condition of both danwei communities and urban villages has severely deteriorated during this period. There are still thousands of households living in dwellings that lack basic facilities. For instance, about 11,400 households lack bathrooms (SSB, 2010). The city's 17,700 housholds are living in residential buildings that are under six storeys high (SSB, 2010) are very likely to become the targets for SRPs (see section 5.2.3). It is reported that during 2014–2016, about 81,500 households were involved in the current round of SRPs (Shenyang Daily, 2016).

The empirical basis for this paper consists of in-depth interviews conducted in March, April, September and October 2015. We interviewed residents of danwei communities and urban villages that were to be demolished in the near future. We recruited respondents through a combination of snowball sampling and door knocking. All of the respondents were homeowners and had been living and/or working in these neighbourhoods for at least twelve years, and in some cases all their lives (more than 60 years). Table 5.1 and Figure 5.1 show the details and locations of the case study areas. Neighbourhoods I–VI are danwei communities, which used to be affiliated with state-owned manufacturing enterprises, governmental institutions or departments, or state-owned farms. Neighbourhoods VII and VIII are urban villages, which are mainly concerned with farming activities and agricultural production.

TABLE 5.1 The research neighbourhoods

NEIGHBOURHOOD ID	HOUSEHOLD NUMBER	LOCATION	NEIGHBOURHOOD TYPE	RESPONDENTS NUMBER
I	Around 600	Urban area	Danwei	3
II	Around 70	Urban area	Danwei	2
III	Around 75	Urban area	Danwei	1
IV	Around 30	Urban area	Danwei	1
V	Around 150	Suburban area	Danwei	9
VI	Around 450	Suburban area	Danwei	12
VII	Estimated 30	Suburban area	Urban village	1
VIII	Around 1300	Suburban area	Urban village	25

During the interviews, we found that the older residents in both types of neighbourhood face similar challenges while ageing in place due to their similar environmental pressures and constrained socioeconomic situation. Therefore, this paper shows how impending demolition and forced relocation affects ageing in place in general, and does not compare the two types of neighbourhood.

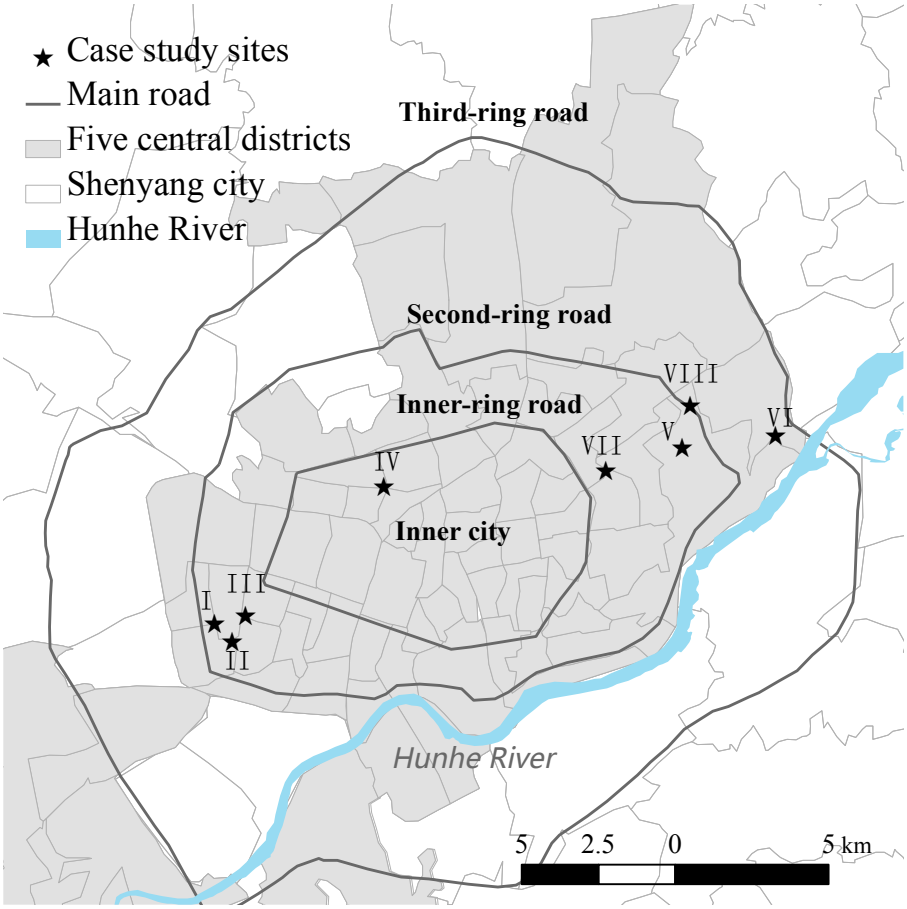

FIGURE 5.1 Location of the case study sites in Shenyang
Source: Authors

All of the interviews were conducted face to face using a semi-structured interview schedule. Table 5.2 shows the gender and age category of the respondents. A total of 54 interviews with residents who were aged at least 50[1] years (77.8 % of them were at least 60) were conducted. Of the interviews, 28 were conducted in danwei communities and 26 were conducted in urban villages. Some respondents were approached more than once to obtain supplementary information. During the interviews, questions were asked about their family and moving history, moving intentions, residential satisfaction, and perceptions of the impending demolition and neighbourhood changes. Fifty of the fifty-four interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim, enabling content analysis of the transcriptions. The remaining four interviews were not recorded either because permission to record

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was not given or because the recording device failed. During the interviews, we also kept a logbook in which we noted our observations regarding emotions and non-verbal cues of respondents. During the analysis of the transcriptions, these notes were used to add additional meaning to specific quotes, including some of those incorporated in section 4. The transcriptions and recordings were read and listened to several times to gain familiarity with the accounts. Atlas.ti was then used to code and categorize their lived experiences in these neighbourhoods, their meaning of home, dependence on their neighbourhoods in social, physical and economic terms, their opinions on intergenerational co-residence and the function of family members, moving intentions, their coping strategies regarding neighbourhood decline (e.g. lack of tap water and poor dwelling conditions) and their perceptions of the impending demolition. To guarantee the anonymity of respondents in the analysis, the quotations are accompanied by gender, age and fictitious name.

TABLE 5.2 Gender and age category of the respondents

	GENDER		AGE (YEARS)				
CATEGORY	Male	Female	50–60	60–70	70–80	≥80	Unknown
Absolute number	28	26	12	19	15	4	4
Proportion	52%	48%	22%	35%	28%	7%	7%

§ 5.4 Results

§ 5.4.1 The meaning of home

When asked about their lived experiences in their neighbourhoods, many respondents reported that neighbourhood deterioration, such as a lack of tap water or a problematic sewerage system, had undermined their quality of life. However, when asked if they wanted to leave, many answered 'no'. They explained that they were attached to their place, because it was their 'home'. 'Home' on the one hand refers to the tangible physical features of their dwelling, such as the form and condition of the facilities. Many respondents reported that they enjoy freedom at home as they can do whatever they want; for example, they can construct a hot-brick bed[3] to cope with the severe winters

in Northeast China, which is significant for older people. On the other hand, home is a possession and has an economic meaning in terms of ownership and investment, which indicates autonomy and freedom to decide on how to use it. Yan (67, female, lives alone) reported that she had bought her dwelling rather than rented one because 'If I move around [as tenants often do], how terrible it is! Isn't it like being homeless?!' For Yan, owning her home also provides her with stability and a sense of security, which were highlighted by most respondents as being significant for their wellbeing.

In addition to the above statements about home and self, the meaning of home is also manifested by respondents' relationship with significant others, in particular their family, who have been co-residing with them for a long time. Their 'home' witnesses and is involved in their life histories. In their memories and imagination, 'home' denotes the similarity of lifecycle of different family generations. For instance, both themselves and their children were born in the same dwelling. Also, they intend to become old and die at home. Home entails their identity, and it shows where they come from and where their life ends. Consequently, the impending forced relocation, as part of the SRP in Shenyang, causes a severe disruption of many older people's plans to age (and die) in the same place. For instance, Meng (85, male, more than 30 years of residence) stated: 'I don't want to leave, to be honest. I am on the way to dying...'

Older people also extend the meaning of home to broader environments beyond their dwellings. They described their close relationship with their neighbourhoods through detailed narratives of how their neighbourhoods had provided them with familiarity and convenience during their long period of residence, and how their neighbourhoods are embedded in their routines and habits, such as cooking, exercising, working, communicating, relaxing, etc. They had developed their living strategies on the basis of the physical environments.

Compared with ageing and neighbourhood decline, which usually unfold slowly, to older people SRPs and the related forced relocation and neighbourhood demolition mean sudden and huge changes. Forced relocation therefore creates discontinuity in their people–place interactions developed over the long period of residence. Many respondents reported that they welcome neighbourhood redevelopment, because their declining neighbourhoods have negatively affected their living conditions and quality of life for a long time. However, they also reported a sense of being uprooted and discontinuity, creating a sense of affliction before their neighbourhoods are actually demolished. Li (58, male, more than 50 years of residence) reported that he felt 'bad' that his 'old house', which he grew up in, was going to be demolished. He used the term 'old house' to show his rootedness in his neighbourhood. 'Old house' is a Chinese term that represents a person's or family's origins.

Similar to Meng's statement, many older people also reported that they had planned to age and die in their current home. However, in the face of the SRP and forced relocation, such plans are no longer feasible. For many, the conflict between their decreasing competence and the neighbourhood decline has made their continued residence harmful to their wellbeing. Although they might have better living conditions after (and as a result of) the forced relocation, the fact that their homes would soon disappear made them feel the loss of their homeownership and a sense of homelessness:

Ah [sighs], I don't know where I will go. Where would I live? If I had another home, I won't bother to think about this. After the demolition, I could directly move into it... (Yan, 67, female, lives alone)

... People always say that 'Silver house, golden house, no better than one's own slum home'. I never want to move to a high-rise building. (Lian, 78, female, lives alone)

§ 5.4.2 Living arrangements and the role of family

Ageing in place in China has long been characterized by intergenerational co-residence and the intensive interaction between parents and children. Some of our respondents were living together with their children. They explained that although they would prefer to live separately, they co-resided with their children due to various life constraints, such as a lack of affordable dwellings or their need for care. Various forms of interaction and exchange were involved in their daily routines and family life, such as mutual emotional support, household chores, grocery shopping, caring for grandchildren and older people themselves, and living costs. Careful consideration was at the basis of the interactions between parents and children. For instance, Fang (85, female) has three children (one son and two daughters). She had been living together with her son and daughter-in-law for many years, because of her traditional thinking about patrilocal caring in China, that is, living with the son rather than the daughter when getting older. Hence, the gender of the children strongly affects the living arrangement of older people, as Fang explained:

... how can I live with them [daughters] and then mess up their home? I am an annoying person. I smoke ... So I will go nowhere. I will definitely live together with my son!

For Fang, living together with her son is righteous and based on the traditional norms, which makes her feel at home.

There were also those who lived alone in declining neighbourhoods. Some respondents said that they were living apart from their children due to generation gaps with regard to habits and norms. These gaps are evident in both parents' and children's daily routines and behaviour. For instance, Meng (85, male, lives with his wife) said that they preferred soup and soft foods, whereas their children did not. Wen (70s, female, lives alone) had tried to co-reside with her son's family after her husband passed away, but later she decided to move back to her own home to live alone, because:

I normally wake up in the morning at around four or five. They [the son's family] are still sleeping soundly then. So should I get up or not? If you move, you wake up others. If you don't, you cannot sleep...

Both Meng and Wen said that their decision to live apart was due to generational differences. Ageing in a co-residence setting would mean fewer choices or would require them to change their habits, sharpening the differences between older parents and children. Therefore, to avoid friction and conflicts caused by these differences, both Meng and Wen had chosen to live alone. Wen's narratives also show the loss of autonomy and freedom while co-residing with children, which caused her to voluntarily move out of her son's family home to live alone.

However, the impending forced relocation had led to both changes and challenges to the living arrangement of these older people. Some of those who were currently living alone said that they would prefer to continue living alone after relocation so as to maintain their freedom and autonomy regarding the use of their homes. Some of them also said that they would use the monetary relocation compensation to buy an apartment close to their children, so that it will be relatively easy for their children and other family members to visit and take care of them. Some of those who were living together with their children said that they would prefer to live separately from their children's family after relocation, whereas others said they would prefer to continue living together with their children. The difference in perception seems to be partly related to age, namely being younger or older than approximately 70. However, to older people, both the monetary and the in-kind compensation have potential uncertainties, which might lead them into homelessness. They might not be able to afford dwellings on the private housing market, even with the monetary compensation, due to increasing housing prices. Those who choose in-kind compensation might have to wait for a long time to be rehoused, which for older people is intolerable as they regard themselves as too old to wait. Some older people therefore become anxious and stressful. For instance, Hui (60s, female, retired) was living together with her husband and her daughter's family in the same courtyard. After finding out that all they could get from the local government was an apartment of around 70 m^2, which is much smaller than their current dwelling, Hui had become very anxious:

In the future, we will all live together in the one apartment of around 70 square metres! … It is shameful that three generations live in the same apartment! My grandson is 12 years old now!

During the decision-making process, some older people intend to give their children's interest priority over their own preference. By satisfying their children's needs, they try to avoid conflicts with their children. In addition, they are also expecting their children to take care of them as they become increasingly impaired. For instance, Fang (85, female) reported that she would continue living together with her son and daughter-in-law after her forced relocation. She had agreed that her son would become the homeowner of the dwelling that the local government will offer their family as compensation, because her son had promised to take good care of her. Therefore, when discussing what type of compensation to choose (e.g. in-kind or monetary compensation), they take their children's future needs and life chances into consideration. For instance, Hui said she felt depressed because they could not get one more dwelling as compensation for her daughter's family from the government, based on the size of their current dwelling:

There is only one chance in our life to undergo the demolition and relocation, isn't it?! If my daughter cannot get [her own] dwelling as compensation for the redevelopment, it will be a whole life regret! They will have no dwelling after the redevelopment. Nothing! … We have a pension, but our children don't! They [government staff] asked me to discuss the compensation with my children… I told them I can do nothing because my daughter's family won't agree [with the compensation]. They won't sign the contract!

§ 5.4.3 Strategies to maintain independence

The third and final factor in relation to ageing in place is the issue of maintaining independence. For our respondents, independence does not mean refusing help from children or other people. Some older people rely on assistance from and even co-reside with their children. However, they still perceive themselves as being independent, as they possess the key resources for their basic needs. For instance, their income or pension is a significant resource to maintain independence and autonomy. Fang (85, female) takes her co-residence with her son for granted and as fair, as her pension pays the whole family's daily living costs.

I have a pension, and I don't need my son to feed me…[we have been] living together for … 17 or 15 years. I have never asked my daughter-in-law for one cent… It is me that has been raising the whole family. I buy everything for her, even rice and food …

Fang's case shows that parents' support to their children leads not only to their autonomy and perceived equal position with regard to co-residence with children, but also to the dependence of children on them, because of their competence and social, physical and/or economic resources. The pattern of interdependence plays a significant role not only for older people: it also helps to protect parents and children from the insecurity and uncertainty embedded in an underdeveloped welfare system.

For those who live alone, their overall sense of independence is, paradoxically, based on their dependence on their children's assistance. For instance, Meng lived together with his wife, but his son visited them regularly and helped them to install a pump to get water on demand. Meng was therefore able to continue to live in his apartment rather than move in with his son's family. Some of our respondents who did not have a good relationship with their children struggled to maintain their independence while ageing. They sometimes turned to their neighbours for help, such as carrying heavy objects or groceries, in order to maintain their overall independence. For instance, Lian's children did not visit her often, although her only son lived in a nearby neighbourhood. Her nephew, who used to live next door, helped her a lot. Her neighbourhood often lacks tap water, and getting water had become a challenge in her daily life:

Lian: I can barely carry anything or walk. I am a person who only has the energy to talk now [shows an embarrassed smile].

Interviewer: Is there anybody helping you with the water?

Lian: Yes, this one, he [her nephew] helps. But recently he has moved into a high-rise building [of his son's, due to the impending demolition]. I have to use a small kettle like this to bring water. I cannot carry more.

Despite the environmental pressure brought about by the declining neighbourhood conditions, the physical, social and economic situation in their neighbourhoods to some extent also contributes to independent ageing processes. For instance, some respondents described how their low-rise dwellings enabled them to move about freely both inside and outside; for example, they could go for a walk, chat with neighbours or travel to other places – activities that are important to them because of their ageing-related physical decline. Also, since most respondents relied on their pensions to get by, living in their current neighbourhoods and dwellings also benefitted them in economic terms. They could mobilize local resources and did not have to pay utility and

service costs as they would in the neighbourhoods that are newly built for relocated residents from SRP target areas.

In fact, many respondents said that the state-led SRPs are basically coherent with their interest in improving their living conditions. Many developers are unwilling to invest in neighbourhood redevelopment and the respondents themselves could not afford voluntary relocation. Hence, they were grateful for the state-led redevelopment and welcomed it as a chance to improve their living conditions. However, when negotiating the type (monetary or in-kind) and amount of compensation they could get from their local government, older people said that they felt extremely stressful and worried about the forced relocation process. First, they considered the move itself a highly disruptive process, as they have less energy and resources than younger people to deal with challenges such as searching for temporary accommodation for the transitional period (after moving out of their current dwelling and before they are permanently rehoused) and organizing the move. This is especially challenging for those who cannot rely on their children or relatives. Second, many respondents said that they felt economically insecure in the face of increased living costs after relocation and the loss of incomes based on their small businesses in their current neighbourhoods.

... I am too old, not young any more. The younger people can experience this [forced relocation and movement] over and over again. I cannot! (Yan, 67, female, lives alone)

Ah! [sighs] I am worried [worried expression]. Even worse... I have to spend more money ... to decorate the apartment if I move to a high-rise building. (Lian, 78, female)

Many respondents felt they had no autonomy to change the compensation criteria and to narrow the mismatch between what the local government offered them and what they expect from the local government. In addition, some of them felt incapable of making decisions about the forced relocation. They had limited resources to gain information for making favourable compensation decisions. They regarded themselves as lacking the mental and physical energy to deal with the chaos and pressures involved in forced relocation. Therefore, some of them had transferred their autonomy in decision making to other people, such as their children or relatives, and others had decided to wait and see how the local government would rehouse them.

§ 5.5 Discussion and Conclusions

This paper described the influence of impending neighbourhood demolition and forced relocation on the ageing in place of older people living in declining neighbourhoods in Shenyang, China. We used the press-competence model to analyse their ageing in place experiences through the lens of three key themes, namely the meaning of home, the living arrangements (in particular the role of family therein) and strategies to maintain independence. We found that in order to facilitate ageing in place in declining neighbourhoods, these older people have to mobilize their limited resources to overcome the challenges brought about by environmental pressures and their ageing-related decline in competence. As part of this process, they develop ambivalent feelings towards their homes and paradoxical practices for remaining independent. One the one hand, the emergence of forced relocation and neighbourhood demolition thwarts older people's plans to age in place, and the involuntary movement destroys their sense of home. On the other hand, it uncovers and in some cases even triggers the accumulated contradictions and conflicts embedded in their ageing in place experiences in various ways.

First, the term 'slum home' mentioned by our respondents precisely indicates the paradox in their sense of home while ageing in a declining neighbourhood. Physically, neighbourhood decline has made their continued living in these neighbourhoods harmful to them, which undermines their sense of home. Given this situation, forced relocation and urban redevelopment may indeed lead to the improved physical living conditions that older people anticipate which to some extent explains why they welcome shantytown redevelopment projects (SRPs). However, spiritually and psychologically, their severely deteriorated 'slum home' provides them with a sense of security, autonomy and stability, which is going to disappear due to the ongoing neighbourhood demolition and forced relocation. Therefore, the affliction (i.e. a sense of loss and grief) that is known to appear during relocation or in the post-relocation stage of urban renewal (see also Fried, 1963), already emerges, and strongly, at the pre-relocation stage. Their sense of affliction is further heightened by the large uncertainties embedded in the implementation and practice of urban redevelopment and forced relocation (in terms of the move, the compensation negotiations with the local government and the post-relocation environment conditions).

Second, urban redevelopment and forced relocation unfolds a paradox in older people's perceptions and practices related to the complexity of family interactions. Due to the dismantling of the socialist welfare system and the reinterpretation of filial piety, older people are increasingly becoming aware of the significance and necessity of (economic) independence, which is important for their basic living regardless of whether or not their

children take care of them. In the practice and experience of independence, these older people are dependent on their children in various ways, but these particular ways do not negatively affect the parents' sense of autonomy. In fact, older people perceive the intensive dependence on and interdependence with their children as both righteous and necessary for the maintenance of their overall independence. For these older people, the boundary between dependence and independence is not demarcated by the form of living arrangement or their dependence on their children. As our research shows, to older people co-residence can mean independence and strong autonomy, whereas the absence of co-residence might include strong parent–child interactions. The different combinations of co-residence/living alone and dependence on/independence of children/older parents can be regarded as a coping strategy of parents to maintain their overall independence and a coping strategy of their children to deal with their life constraints in the context of a transitional society and many uncertainties.

Third, and related to the above, strategies for maintaining independence can only be understood in light of the influence of forced relocation on older people in the Chinese context. The affected families need to relocate to alternative housing. For the older people, this means that they need to discuss with their family the living arrangement and caregiving during and after the forced relocation, which is closely related to the decision making on the compensation. This is in line with the research by Zhang (2017a, 2017b), who shows that the pressure caused by the state-led forced relocation and the current housing market situation has resulted in intra- and intergenerational conflicts in affected families, which to some extent originates from the multifaceted attributes of housing in current China. One the one hand, housing for older people and their family members forms a shelter, which is closely related to the living arrangement between family members and is important for the desired size and form of the relocation dwelling. On the other hand, housing is an asset that entails financial significance, which means that the ownership and distribution of this financial benefit among family members matters for the interaction with the family. Therefore, the key message here is that considering the appropriate type and amount of compensation goes hand in hand with intensive interactions between the older people and their children concerning whose demand and preference regarding housing should be given priority.

However, older people's expectations of and decision making on the compensation are largely constrained by the policy implementation by the central government and local governments. Urban redevelopment projects in China, such as SRPs, focus mainly on physical demolition and the spatial relocation of the residents. In this process, the complex and subtle differences between the needs of different social groups (in terms of differences in age and socioeconomic status) have been largely ignored. In particular, the 'one size fits all' nature of SRPs often cannot meet the complex needs of the older people involved and their desire to age in place. Hence, these older people are

becoming a hard-to-house group due to the disparity between their complex situations and what the current redevelopment projects can provide (Okelay *et al.*, 2008; Popkin *et al.*, 2005). We therefore recommend that local governments pay special attention to these older people during the forced relocation process with regard to their actual move, and – more importantly – to assist them with their decision-making process by providing more information about their compensation choices and by taking their life chances (social contacts, living costs, need for facilities and living arrangement) and family interaction more into consideration.

Notes

1 The retirement age for state employees is '60 for men and 55 for women in salaried cadre positions and age 50 for women in blue-collar jobs' (West, 1999, p. 162). People who have been working in harsh and dangerous conditions can retire five or even ten years earlier than the normal age. Since the reforms of state-owned enterprises around the early 2000s, 'it has become common practice for workers within five years of retirement in bankrupt enterprises to be required to take early retirement' (West, 1999, p. 164).

2 They refer to the social welfare programmes in China provided to individuals who have the 'Three No's' (i.e. no children or other dependable legal guardians, no work ability and no means of livelihood) and 'Five Guarantees' (i.e., food, shelter, clothing, healthcare and burial expenses) (Chou, 2011).

3 The hot-brick bed is a traditional type of bed found in northern China that is designed to provide a warm bed when it is cold. They are made from bricks or clay and can be connected to either the stove or the central heating system, or to both.

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