

# Productive Engagement and Ageing in Productivist Welfare Regimes: Questing for an age-friendly city in Hong Kong

Dr. Vincent WEN

Asia Pacific Institute of Ageing Studies

Lingnan University

# Productive Ageing and Welfare

- The concept of productive ageing combats dependent conditions in later life and ensures better health outcomes through continuous participation of the older persons in societal affairs.
- Productive ageing has been one of the internationally prominent directions of social policy development, but few studies have placed the discourse within the context of welfare regimes.

# The Idea of Age-friendly City

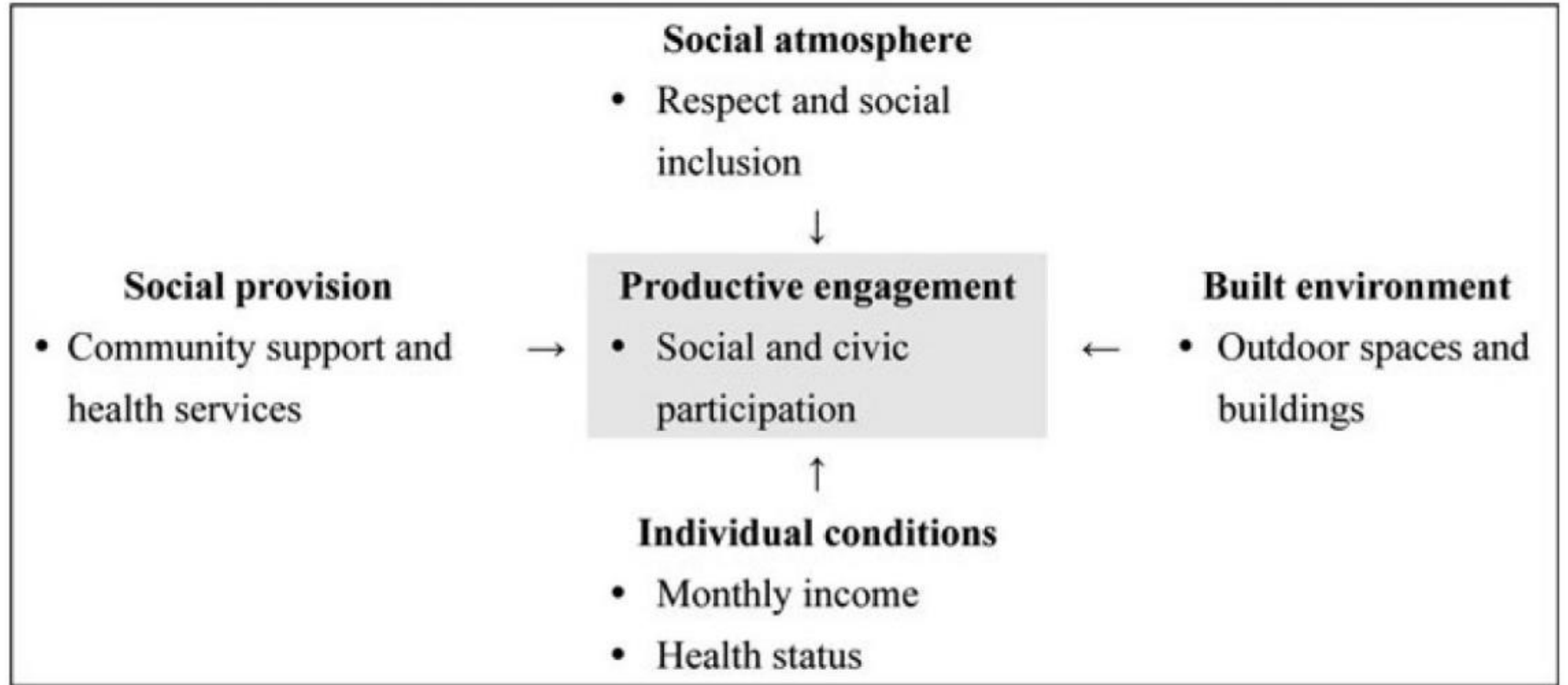
- The success of productive ageing efforts depends on the availability of barrier-free environments through robust public and private-sector collaborations to optimise mobility and foster independent living (WHO, 2007).
- The age-friendly city concept by the WHO (2007) provides a holistic framework for understanding productive ageing.

# Ageing Productively in Hong Kong

- **Hong Kong: welfare provision seeks to support productivity**
  - Substantial public-funded social services, including housing, health services, social care and education (Yang and Kühner, 2020)
  - In-kind transfers involve an investment in human capital formation for economic growth
  - The subordination of social policy to economic policy (Holliday, 2000; Wilding, 2008)

# Ageing Productively in Hong Kong

- Productive ageing is particularly important in Hong Kong and similar places to sustain older persons' productive engagement and promote their independence (Kim, 2015).
- This study sets out against the broader welfare regime debates to examine critically **how Hong Kong has attempted to promote an age-friendly city to support older persons for positive engagements in realising productive ageing.**



**Figure 1.** Framework on productive engagement in later life.

Source: Adapted from Morrow-Howell and Wang (2013).

# Framework

- The factors in the framework are deduced from five of the eight age-friendly city domains as follows:
  - 1) **Productive engagement**: the domains of civic participation and employment, and social participation indicate productive engagement in this study.
  - 2) **Respect and social inclusion**: refers to the positive image of older persons in society and recognition and appreciation of older persons.
  - 3) **Outdoor spaces and buildings**: reflects the age-friendliness of the physical environment of the communities and neighbourhoods.
  - 4) **Community support and health services**: suggests in-kind social provision to reduce family dependency and promote engagement in productive activities.

# Study Design and Settings

- Data gathered through a repeated cross-sectional design applied in two districts in Hong Kong:

1) Tsuen Wan

2) Islands





# Study Design and Settings

- **Islands District**
- The **least** populated in Hong Kong
- Consists of approximately 20 islands and occupies the **largest** geographical area
- Fast developing and serves as the major transportation hub for overseas destinations
- **Tsuen Wan**
- First phase of the New Town development since 1973
- A **densely populated** town in Hong Kong
- **Doubling-ageing**: ageing population and aging building stock

# Study Design and Settings

- Similarities: Tsuen Wan (an established new town) and the Islands (a developing new town) share the socio-cultural and productivist characteristics of Hong Kong society.
- Differences: Two districts' geographical, environmental and economic profiles offer dynamic opportunities for analysing the multi-faceted issues of the productive engagement of older persons.

# Study Design and Settings

- Two waves of district surveys were conducted in 2016 and 2018 as part of a larger project
- We analyse data for persons aged 60 and older to understand the factors associated with the productive engagement of seniors:
  - Islands District: 832 (2016 wave = 386; 2018 wave = 446)
  - Tsuen Wan District: 806 (2016 wave = 392; 2018 wave = 414)

Table 2 Comparison of perception of voluntary engagements, age-friendly city domains and economic status between Islands and Tsuen Wan Districts (2016 and 2018) by independent sample t-test

Characteristic	Differences by data collection years					
	Islands District			Tsuen Wan District		
	2016	2018	<i>t</i>	2016	2018	<i>t</i>
	<i>Mean values (SD) or percentages</i>					
Perception of productive engagement	4.195 (0.826)	4.433 (0.808)	−4.191***	4.358 (0.769)	4.393 (0.828)	−0.613
Respect and social inclusion	4.099 (0.862)	4.329 (0.817)	−3.933***	4.159 (0.807)	4.296 (0.866)	−2.310*
Outdoor spaces and buildings	3.868 (0.885)	3.952 (0.854)	−1.385	4.160 (0.803)	4.155 (0.897)	0.089
Community support and health services	3.805 (0.908)	3.937 (0.869)	−2.126*	3.626 (0.933)	3.648 (1.019)	−0.321
Health status	2.540 (0.914)	2.302 (0.749)	4.247***	2.54 (0.910)	2.26 (0.770)	4.782***

# Results

- **Islands**
- Perception of productive engagement, respect and social inclusion, and community support and health services **improved significantly** in 2018 from 2016
- **Tsuen Wan**
- Perceived productive engagement improved (although the change is not statistically significant)
- The respect and social inclusion domain saw an improvement after the implementation of district based programmes

# Results

**Table 3.** Age-friendly city domains and productive engagements in Islands and Tsuen Wan Districts by ordinal logistic regression

	Islands District				Tsuen Wan District			
	95% CI				95% CI			
	Estimate	SE	Lower bound	Upper bound	Estimate	SE	Lower bound	Upper bound
Respect and social inclusion	2.120***	0.120	1.885	2.354	2.379***	0.125	2.133	2.625
Outdoor spaces and buildings	0.596***	0.094	0.412	0.781	0.511***	0.104	0.307	0.716
Community support and health services	0.608***	0.094	0.423	0.794	0.452***	0.095	0.265	0.639

# Results

- Despite some differences in the perception of various age-friendly city domains, perceived respect and social inclusion, outdoor spaces and buildings, and community support and health services were all associated with productive engagement in both districts
- Surprisingly, the economic and health factors were not associated with productive engagement in both districts despite the significant differences between the two districts

# Conclusion

- Results give credence to the tenets of the age-friendly city framework
- The promotion of the age-friendly city can play an important role in promoting positive engagement leading to healthy and productive ageing in place



# Implications

- **District-based and bottom-up approach**
  - Intergenerational communication, and promote inclusivity to address the dreadful elements of ageism
  - Group work and capacity building: digital literacy of the elderly
  - Home safety and modification

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