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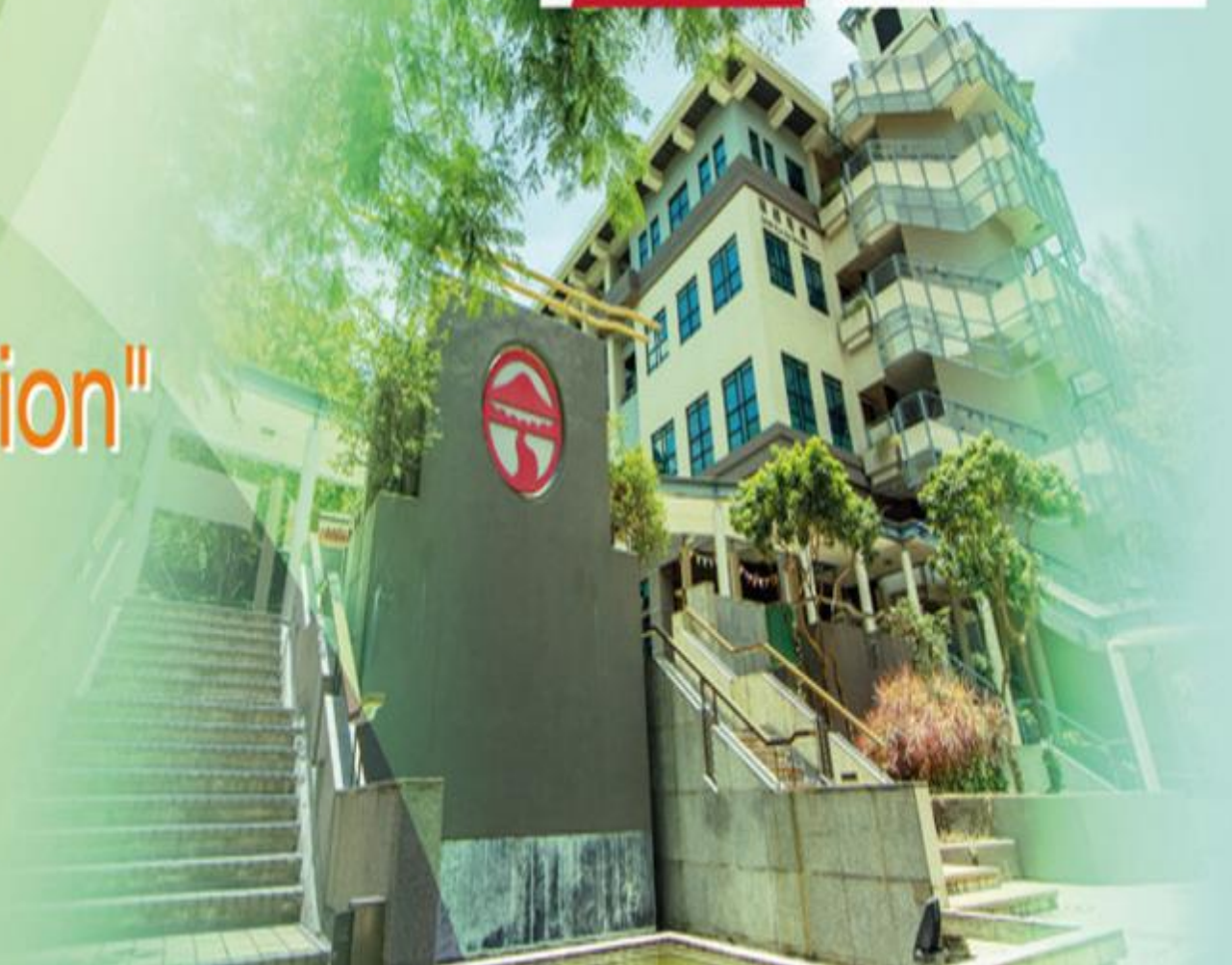## *Questing for an age-friendly city in Hong Kong*

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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.
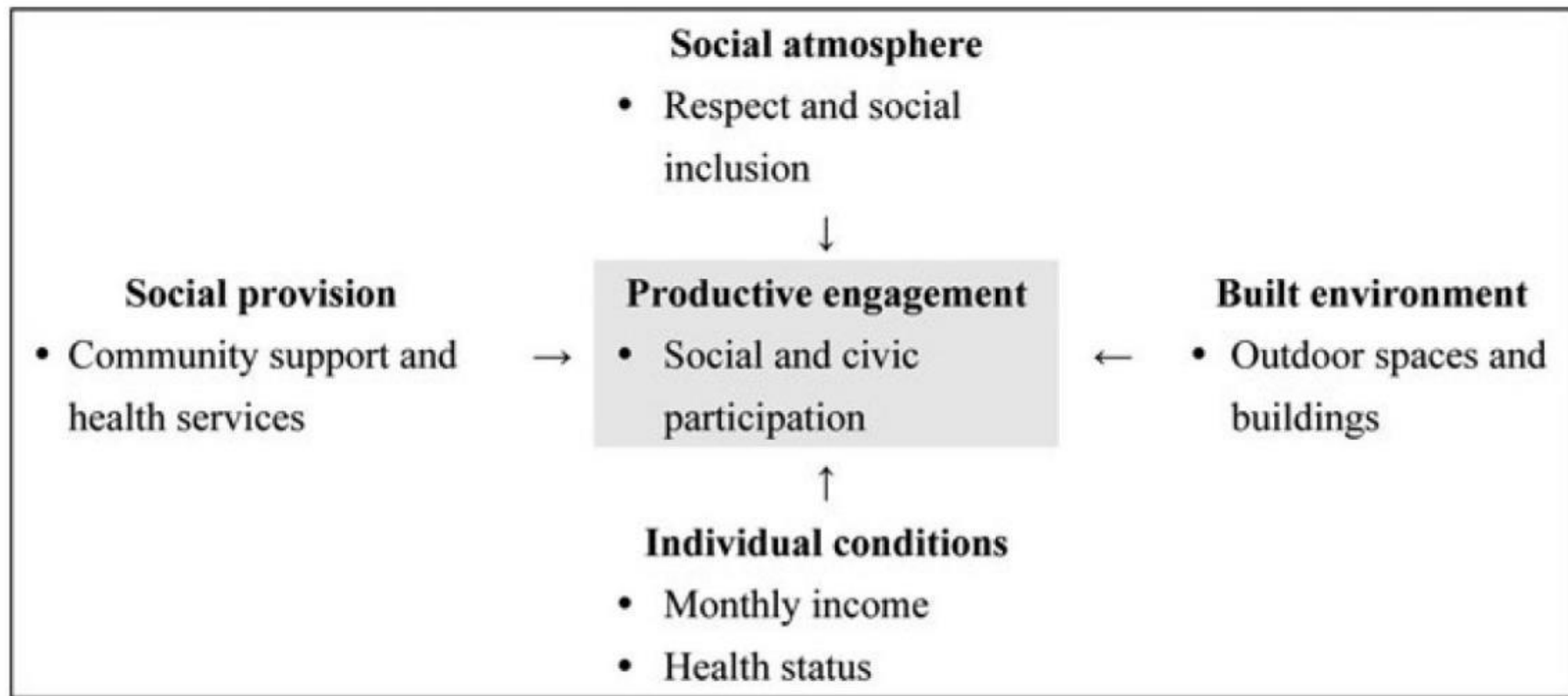
Social atmosphere

- Respect and social inclusion

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Social provision

- Community support and health services

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Productive engagement

- Social and civic participation

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Built environment

- Outdoor spaces and buildings

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Individual conditions

- Monthly income
- Health status

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

	Differences by data collection years					
	Islands District			Tsuen Wan District		
Characteristic	2016	2018	t	2016	2018	t
					Mean values (SD) or percentages	
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

Discussion and Conclusion

- Results give credence to the tenets of the age-friendly city framework

- Social atmosphere (the perception of respect and social inclusion) improved in both districts, and this outcome resulted in positive relations with perceived productive engagement
  - Implication: cities must be prepared to enact policies and programmes that elevate fluid intergenerational communication and interactions, and promote inclusivity to address the dreadful elements of ageism

Discussion and Conclusion

- The built environment (perception of outdoor spaces and buildings) had a positive association with productive engagement

  - Implication: as Hong Kong communities tend to have limited open spaces, attempts to improve conditions are likely to receive a positive response

Discussion and Conclusion

- A positive relationship was observed between social provision (community support and health services) and productive ageing

- This result is consistent with the assumption that social services enhance human capital and boost economic growth, especially in the productivist welfare regime

  – Implication: community services to engage and train older persons in new skills can boost their willingness about productive activities

Discussion and Conclusion

- This study highlights the importance of the place-based approach and structural factors (i.e. age-friendly environments) in productive engagement

  – productive engagement is commonly associated with elements of the social atmosphere, the built environment and social provision, but not with individual conditions (e.g. income and health).

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

Acknowledgement