

Reproducing Community-based Eldercare Service Spaces Under Population Ageing: A Case Study of Ruijin Beicun Community in Nanjing, China

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Abstract

In urban China, older people's growing need to 'ageing in place' has revealed the limited capacity of many existing neighbourhoods to provide accessible and sustained eldercare support. While government-led age-friendly initiatives seek to strengthen community-based support, their implementation requires the coordination of spatial resources, institutional arrangements, and older residents' everyday care needs within existing neighbourhoods. This raises a critical question for urban planning: how are new eldercare services embedded into existing built environments, and how does this process reshape community space? Drawing on the theory of the production of space, this paper examines Ruijin Beicun Community in Nanjing as a qualitative case study. Through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and policy analysis, it analyses how community-based eldercare is embedded in existing neighbourhood spaces and how service provision, spatial resources, and governance arrangements are reorganised in this process. The findings show that introducing eldercare services into older neighbourhoods produces a composite service space that brings together physical facilities, institutional arrangements, and lived social relations. Through the reuse of vacant community spaces, the development of embedded service facilities, and service procurement arrangements, local community governance is gradually shifting from administrative management towards life-support-oriented coordination. This process also generates several tensions in practice, including those between public welfare goals and market-based operations, standardised care protocols and individualised everyday needs, as well as universal policy ambitions and selective resource allocation. This paper argues that age-friendly regeneration should be understood as an ongoing process of reorganising welfare responsibilities, spatial resources, and care relations within existing neighbourhoods, rather than as a static outcome of facility provision. It contributes to urban planning debates by showing how community-based eldercare can become a mechanism for spatial governance and age-friendly regeneration in densely populated and ageing urban environments.

Keywords

Community-based Eldercare, Production of Space, Age-friendly Regeneration, Spatial Governance, Ageing in Place, Nanjing