A glance at everyday life of New Elder Group in China

A case study of Xiamen, China

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Abstract

This thesis targeted a new group in the transitioning Chinese society---the New Elder Group (NEG) --- at the private level, focusing on their everyday life. NEG refers to retired people who are relatively young (55-80), financially independent, and in good health. Their primary desires in everyday life is to "live a good every day". This thesis demonstrates the need to pay more attention to the diversity of older people and their diverse values and desires. Besides, the philosophy of "living a good every day" relates to the desires which vary from individual to individual. It requires a qualitative in-depth interview method to collect and critically analyze data. The data was collected from eight NEGs.

This study used a time-geographic approach to visualize the everyday life path and life course theory to analyze the results. This thesis finds that NEG feel satisfied and happy with their everyday life, sometimes bored but seldom lonely. Public facilities for older people's creation activities need to be expanded, only parks mentioned for all NEG. They engaged in their retired everyday life activities with different life goals driven by their self-identities of "being a free man" and "being a part of a family" at three time periods, which is influenced tightly by the specific sociocultural context of China. With the priority of family interest, NEG would choose to become LaoPiaoZu (LPZ) with the transition event of the new arrival of the grandchild in the family. LPZ refers to older people who relocate to new cities for taking care of their children's families. It alters self-identities and life's goal from "living a good every day" to "taking good care of grandchildren", leading to the limited activity spaces and lack of social connections. This thesis doubts the trend of making the same choice of becoming LPZ for generations of NEG in the future.

Keywords: everyday life, diversity of older people, New Elder Group, LaoPiaoZu, time-geographic approach, life course theory, Xiamen, China

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Abbreviation

ADB: Asian development bank

CASS: Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

CMRI：China Mobile Research Institute

CNR: China national radio

CPC: China Population Census

CRCA：China Research Center on Aging

FPPCSC：Fujian Provincial People's Congress Standing Committee

NBSC：National Bureau of Statistics of China

NPCSC: Office of the Leading Group of the Seventh National Population Census of the State Council

SFN：Sina Fashion News

SPCC: Supreme People's Court of China

UNDESA：United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division

WHO: World Health Organization

WNA: WiseNet Asia

WNAKC: WiseNetAsia Knowledge Center

1.Introduction & Background

Population aging is becoming an inevitable trend (WHO, 2015). According to the World Health Organization (2022), the global population of individuals over the age of 60 will increase to 2.1 billion and nearly 22% share of the total population by 2050 (WHO, 2022).

This large group of older people presents an opportunity to rethink what it means to be old and how our entire lives can unfold. This opportunity largely depends on healthy aging (WHO, 2020), which the World Health Organization defines as "the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age" in the United Nations Decade of Healthy Aging action (2021-2030) (WHO, 2020). The "Functional ability" refers to "having the capabilities that enable all people to be and do what they have reason to value" (WHO, 2020). The action focuses on older people themselves and calls for the creation of more suitable and sustainable health policies based on the values of older people, to help them gain the capabilities they need. It is important to understand the values and desires of older people before the governments create health policies for them to gain the necessary capabilities for well-being in older age.

As previously noted in the World Health Organization's (WHO, 2015) Global Report on Ageing and Health, "there is no typical older person". The process of aging is unique to each individual and is influenced by personal and sociocultural contexts (Westerhof et al., 2012). This means that the values and needs of older people are diverse and rooted in their experiences throughout their life course in different socio-cultural societies (WHO, 2015). According to the life course theory, older people may undergo various transition events that can alter the trajectories of their everyday lives, such as retirement, the loss of loved ones, or the arrival of new family members, leading to changes in their values (Bao, 2005). These values, which are shaped by the interaction between individuals and their environments (WHO, 2020), have a significant impact on the formation of self-identities, which are closely tied to an individual's perception of themselves (Bao, 2005; Ekerdt & Koss, 2015).

The perpetuation of negative stereotypes about older people remains a prevalent phenomenon in society (WHO, 2021). These biases, based on age (ageism), can significantly impact the self-identity and everyday life arrangements (Ekerdt & Koss, 2015; WHO, 2021). Such stereotypes, which often disregard the diversity and contributions of older people to society, may also influence policy decisions that affect the sustainable and better life for this demographic group (WHO, 2015). To address this issue, it is necessary to recognize the diversity of the older population and to conduct more case studies with in-depth qualitative methods to understand the unique values and desires of older people in diverse contexts (WHO, 2020).

China, which has one of the largest older populations in the world, currently has a significant proportion of individuals over the age of 60, at 18.7% (Table 1). According to United Nations, this population is defined as "Older Persons" using the biological age criterion of being over 60 years of age (UNHCR, n.d.). Projections estimate that this demographic will increase to 34.8% by 2053 (Table 2). The size of this older population in China highlights the urgent need to develop a sustainable elderly care system that can adapt to the country's rapid aging process and improve the quality of life for older people (ADB, 2021). This will pose a significant challenge, particularly as the needs and desires of this population shift from a survival level to a development level (ADB, 2021; SPCC, 2022).

Table 1: *Age Composition of the 2020 National Population in China. layout: Jianmei (2022)* Source: (NPCSC, 2022)

		Unit: person, percent
Age	**Population**	**Proportion**
Total	1411778724	100.00
0-14	253383938	17.95
15-59	894376020	63.35
60 and over	264018766	**18.70**

Table 2: *Prediction of Four periods of aging process in China.* Layout: Jianmei Zhou (2022). Source: (Yang, 2020)

Time period	Total Amount of Older People (billion)	Share of Older People (%) by Total Population
2000-2022	0.131-0.268	10.31-18.5
2022-2036	0.268-0.423	18.5-29.1
2036-2053	0.423-0.487	**29.1-34.8**
2053-2100	0.487-0.383	Relatively stable

Additionally, China has one of the youngest retirement ages in the world, with men retiring at 60, higher-position women at 55, and blue-collar women at 50. This is the same age of retirement age as 70 years ago, although life expectancy has increased to an average of 77 years, with women living an average of 79 years (Yang, 2020). Every year, more than 20 million people retire in China, and the largest "retirement wave" in history is anticipated to occur within the next 10 years due to the 1950s "birth boom" (Li et al., 2022). This significant and relatively young retired population presents an opportunity to reexamine attitudes towards aging (of oneself or others) and to consider the potential for new ways of everyday life for older people.

In terms of the diversity among older people, a new social group of retired people, referred to as the "New Elder Group" (NEG) by the media (Bai, 2019; Li et al., 2022; SFN, 2021), has emerged in contrast to traditional older people (Zhang & Zhou, 2019). Traditional older people in China refer to those born in or before the 1950s, who were shaped by the collectivist-oriented, family-centered culture of the time and often had multiple children and lower levels of self-awareness (Peng & Cheng, 2019; Zhang & Zhou, 2019). Their everyday lives were typically centered on serving their children and families (Zhang & Zhou, 2019). In contrast, people of NEG who were born around the 1960s (and are therefore under the age of 80) and grew up during China's reform and opening-up policy, tend to have higher levels of education, better incomes, and more open ideologies (Bai, 2019), leading to different values and desires for their everyday

lives (Li et al., 2022).

As shown in Chart 1 below, the NEG population in China (age 55-80) is expected to continue growing and become the largest demographic group by 2060 with the development of China (USCB, 2022). It is therefore important to examine their new everyday lives to understand and promote the well-being of older people. The philosophy of life among NEG is to live a good every day (Li et al., 2022). In this sense, the quality of life for NEG is closely tied to whether their planned everyday life activities fulfill their spiritual needs, rather than a desire for material possessions that may be more prevalent among other older people in China.
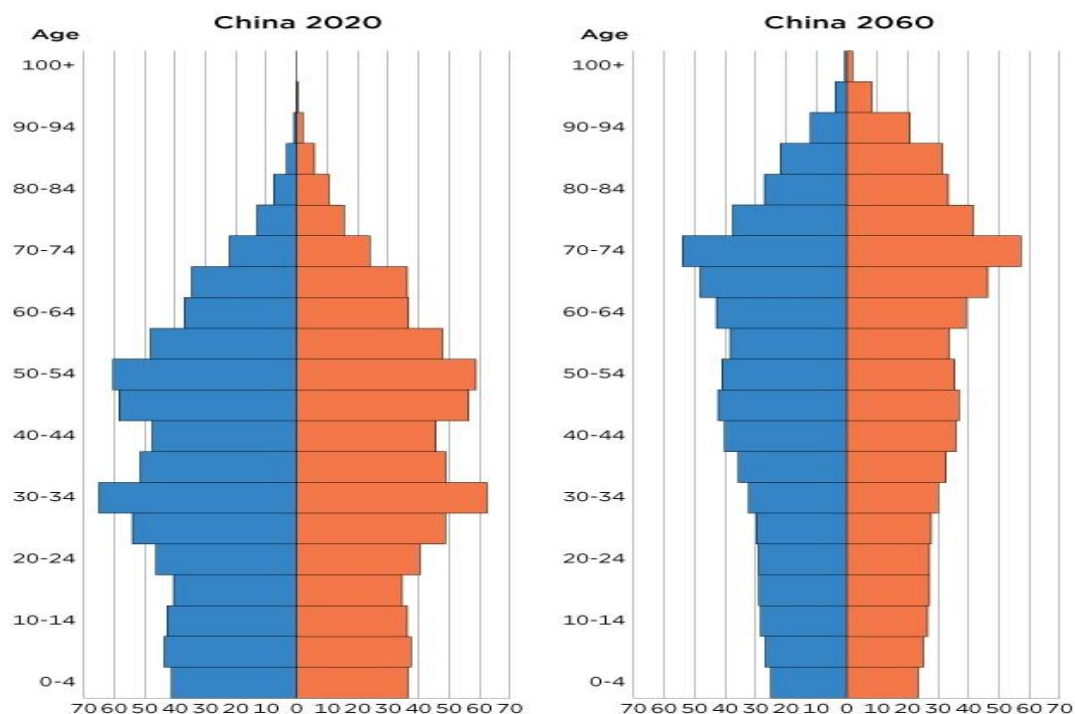
Chart 1 *Population by age and sex for China: 2020 and projected 2060.* Source: (USCB, 2022)

However, current policies and official documents in China tend to prioritize physical health for older people, such as long-term care needs, rather than addressing spiritual needs of well-being (Chen et al., 2022; Jiang, 2019; Luo & Zhang, 2019; Yang, 2020). The recent report "The Path to Healthy Aging in China: A Peking University-Lancet Commission" (Chen et al., 2022) emphasizes physical health but does not adequately consider the values and desires of older people. The 2018 report "The Quality of Life Index of 31 Provinces in China" developed a life quality evaluation

system based on data from 31 provinces that primarily focuses on material living conditions, social relationships, and social participation (Luo & Zhang, 2019). The contradiction between health policies and the diverse values and desire for well-being among NEG is exacerbated.

Furthermore, these policies and official documents often lack consideration for the diversity within the older population, let alone the unique characteristics of the NEG (Chen et al., 2022; Luo & Zhang, 2019; SPCC, 2022; Yang, 2020). Research on NEG is scarce within academia, with a greater presence in social media. These sources tend to focus on the consuming potential of this group in markets, such as travel set products, designed elder technical products, and fashion clothing, rather than their values and desires (Cheng, 2021; CNR, 2021; SFN, 2021; Teng & Shen, 2018).

1.1 Aim and questions

The UN decade of Healthy aging action (2020) emphasizes the importance of health policies that focus on older people themselves and consider the diverse values of older people. It calls for more case studies to gain a better understanding of the potential new lives that older people can be engaged in as they age (WHO, 2020). The case of NEG (age 50/55-80) in China offers a valuable opportunity to expand our knowledge of the potential for new and fulfilling lives for Chinese older people, as this group is expected to become one of the main demographic forces in China by 2060 (as shown in Chart 1).

1.1.1 Aim

This thesis aims to demonstrate the importance of considering the diversity within the older population in health policy decisions and to critically examine whether the public resources available to every older person align with their values for a "good" life. It also aims to explore the influence of sociocultural factors on the values related to aging of the NEG in China through the analysis of everyday life activities over the life courses, to see a potential new good lives for Chinese older people.

1.1.2 Research Questions

The research questions are designed to reach the aim by examining the everyday

lives and self-identities of NEG in the context of the socio-cultural context of China. They are divided into three research questions following:

---*What do people of NEG think of their everyday life?*

---*How do NEG engage in their everyday life activities?*

---*How is NEG's self-identity (their attitudes towards being retired and old) shaped by the sociocultural context of China?*

This thesis also hopes to respond to the call of UN Decade Healthy Aging action, to conduct an empirical case study on the time-geographic and life-course approach to analyze the aging population in such a specific socio-cultural and geographical location—-Xiamen, China.

1.2. Scope of this thesis

1.2.1 Scope of Research People

Everyday life is a reflection of society and is shaped by different activities at any time in any place (Lefebvre, 2014; Magnus, 2018). Activity-based everyday life of the aging population is more based on a private perspective (Lefebvre, 2002), which also varies from individual to individual, from space to space.

China has a huge population of older people, and it is difficult to analyze their life quality individually in such a big group since the values on life quality of everyday life refer more to an individual subjective way. Linked to the diversity and complexity of older people, this thesis will focus on activity-based everyday life for the new social group (NEG) which comes up with the process of social change in China, not all older people.

1.2.2 Scope of Research Place

Under the consideration of the diversity and big amount of aging population in China, it would be too broad, complicated, and ambitious to discuss the activity-based everyday life for retired people at the national level, especially in a such big country--- China. Therefore, it is required and necessary to choose a place (Xiamen) as a case study to do this research for this thesis. Xiamen is part of Fujian Province, which is located in the southeast of China and is known as a tourism island.

Here are some reasons that I chose Xiamen as my study area. **Firstly,** Xiamen also faces a similar challenge in the contradiction of being active relatively young and aging at the same time, as China has. Compared to the other 35 main cities, Xiamen is the third youngest main city in China (Chart 2 below). It attracts plenty of young laborers due to its relatively best economic development, better social resources in Fujian Province, and the good natural environment in China (NBSC, 2021). Meanwhile, older people (above 60) in Xiamen account for more than 14% (Chart 3 below) and the average life expectancy of people in Xiamen is around 74 (Dong, 2020; Ren, 2021), which indicates the aging society. In this situation, it indicates a big challenge in balancing the access to limited social resources between young and older people. Moreover, there is also a challenge in the access to limited social resources between NEG and other older people who call for material needs. **Secondly,** I am from Xiamen. Practically, it may be relatively easier for me to find some interviewees over such a long distance during the pandemic period. Theoretically, it might be more possible for me to look into situated socio-geographical culture relations with self-identity behind the data.
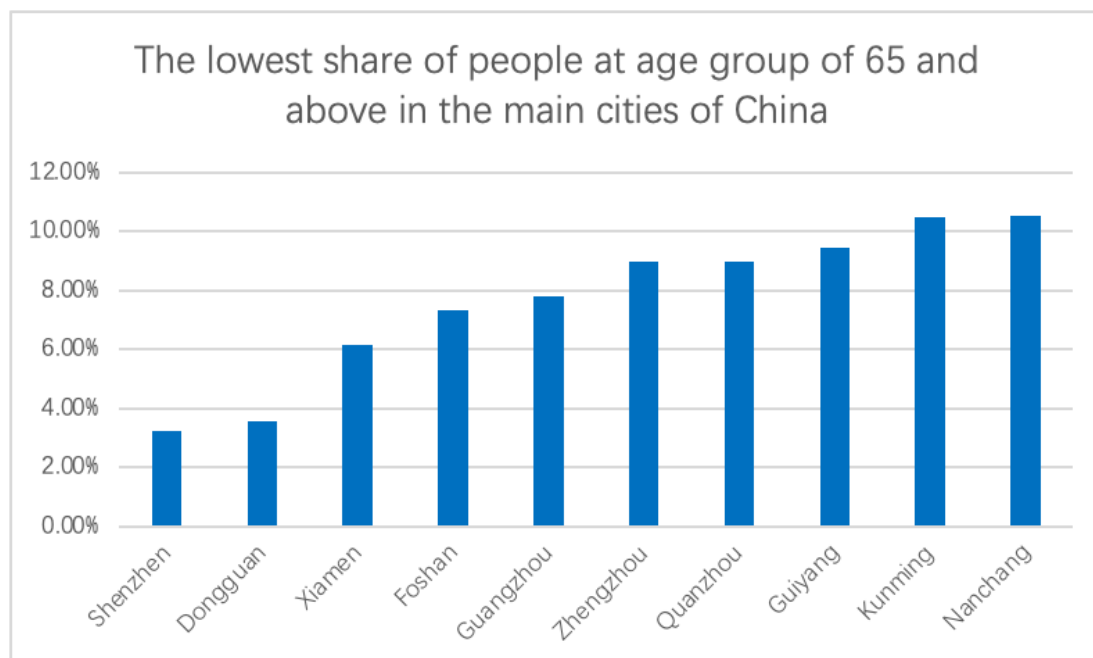
Chart 2 *The lowest share of people at age group of 65 and above in the main 35 cities of China.* Layout: Jianmei Zhou (2022). Data Source:(NPCSC, 2022)
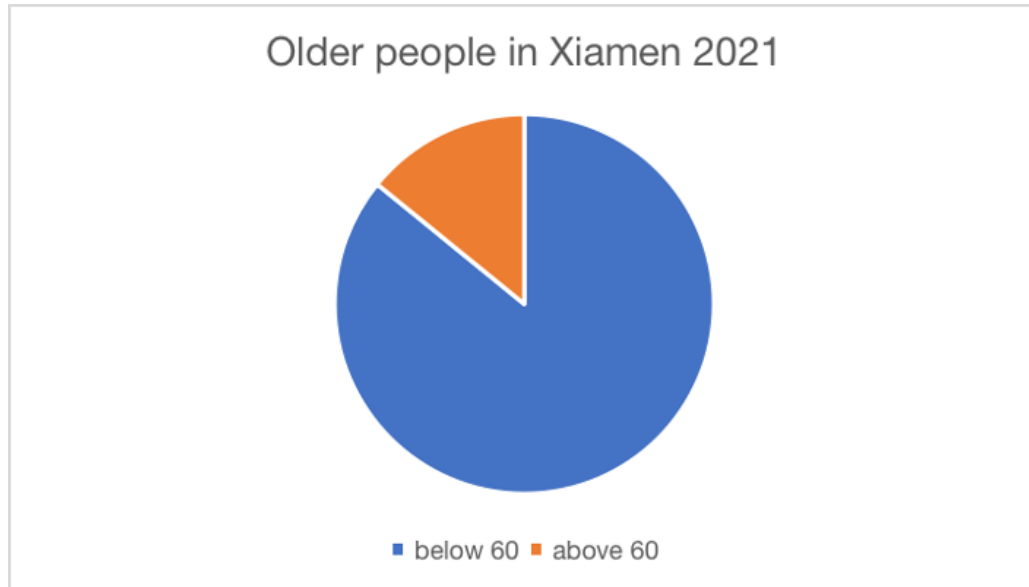
Chart 3 *Share of older people in Xiamen*. Layout: Jianmei Zhou (2022). Source (Zhao, 2022)

1.3 Organization of thesis

This first chapter describes the importance of the diverse values of older people, the basic situation background of the Chinese aging population, the early retirement age in China, and the problem that the research of NEG has. Then, it follows with the aim and research questions, ending with the scope of this thesis. Chapter two is the literature review on the existing research of everyday life and the geographies of old people (Geographical Gerontology), highlighting the research gaps linked to this thesis. Chapter Three presents the conceptual theoretical framework for this thesis anchoring the answers to those research questions, such as some concepts of New Elder Group (NEG) and the theories of time geography and life course theory. Chapter Four is followed by the methodology part with the operationalization and limitations during the process of this research. Chapter Five introduces the sociocultural background of China to give a better understanding of data analysis. Then, the results and analysis come out in Chapter Six, in the order of answering three research questions. Chapter Seven discusses some new findings. The thesis ends with the conclusion part in Chapter Eight, including the research findings and the possible further research topic.

2 Literature Review

As introduced in the first chapter, NEG is a new social elder group that is mentioned frequently by the media and it is classified by their relatively young age with good health and financial condition, and more open attitudes towards themselves as "Freedom" people and hope to live a good every day (Bai, 2019; Chen, 2018; CMRI, 2020; CNR, 2021; Emily, 2021; Li et al., 2022; SFN, 2021; Xu, 2022).

However, this new group is not investigated well yet within academia, especially in the research of their everyday life in a geographical way. Hence, before going to the theoretical part, this section will focus on the research on geographies of everyday life and aging, to give a better understanding of how to study everyday life activities of older people from a geographical perspective, linked to the research questions.

2.1 Overview of research on geographies of everyday life

Geographies of every day might "simply be defined as concerned with the places in which everyday activities occur", using human-centered methods, lacking an understanding of "the relations between people and their surroundings in a period of time-space compression" (Holloway & Hubbard, 2013, P36).

As mentioned in the literature, people engage in various activities at different times and in different spaces as part of their everyday life (Hägerstrand, 1970). This highlights the role that time, space, and companionship play in everyday life. Researchers have applied a geographical perspective to the study of everyday life by considering "space" and "time" as interconnected elements in the emergence of geographies of everyday life (Holloway & Hubbard, 2013).

Some research on geographies of everyday life has focused on different topics. Hägerstrand (1970) introduced the concept of "Time Geography," which combines time into the study of everyday life and provides a method for analyzing activities with constraints and visualizing the path of everyday life. Thrift & Pred (1981) argued that everyday life practices are based on past life experiences and serve as the foundation for future life experiences, and should therefore be analyzed in combination with an individual's everyday life and a social system. (Thrift, 1981). Mattson (2011) examined

spatial mobility in everyday life and found that geographical spaces are important in an individual's movement (Mattson, 2011). Mckercher (2012) delved into the details of an individual's travel activities in everyday life (McKercher & Ho, 2012). Ivory (2015) compared male and female activity spaces in everyday life and found some differences (Ivory et al., 2015). Sullivan (2017) provided a comprehensive view of "the geography of everyday" (Sullivan, 2017). Ellegård (2019) used a time diary method to trace the everyday life of individuals using time-space diagrams and developed digital software (2011) to assist respondents in recording their everyday life diary.

In Chinese Literature, research on geographies of everyday life can be divided into three main themes: (1) From the individual's perspective, analyzing the relations between the desire for good quality of life and the individual's everyday life, or the space-time characteristics of everyday practices in everyday life (Wei, 2020; Zhou & Chai, 2013). (2) Focusing on space, exploring how to develop public space to improve the quality of everyday life. There is a lot of research on urban green space, public urban space, and accessibility using GIS analysis of accessibility, quantity, etc (Chen et al., 2017; Gu et al., 2018; Zhang, 2020). (3) Focusing on relatively vulnerable social groups, such as women, and elderly people in rural areas, and looks at concepts related to everyday life such as mobility for the elderly (Chen et al., 2007), the temporal-spatial pattern of routine, urban design, and macro-level analysis (Chai et al., 2015; Zhang, 2019).

The analysis of everyday life often involves the use of geographic information systems (GIS) for visualization purposes.. Some researchers have utilized 3D-VQGIS to analyze the temporal-spatial character of daily activities for low-income workers in urban areas (Zhang, 2011). Others have employed qualitative GIS methods, such as geo-narrative, to examine temporal-spatial behaviors (KWAN et al., 2013). Additionally, some studies have utilized tools such as "Daily Life" and "VISUAL-TimePAcTS/energy use" to visualize different contexts in the analysis of everyday life (Ellegård et al., 2016). Chai (2017) developed a daily activity mode for residents in the DanWei community, based on the activity-based analysis method (Chai et al., 2017).

This model includes elements such as activity space, activity schedule, and means of movement, and is designed to help visualize and analyze daily activities.

2.2 Overview of research on Geographies of Aging in China

Elderly people have been the focus of numerous studies in various fields, including health geography, population geography, planning and design, and environment and aging, which have flourished since the 1970s (Lulle, 2019). Geographies of aging examine "where aging occurs, in what ways aging is transforming societies in a particular place, and how it is experienced by people" (Lulle, 2019, P2), and consider the "transactional, mutual relationship between people and the spaces where aging occurs" (Lulle, 2019, p. 2).

Chinese scholars have been studying the issues faced by the aging population in China's specific social and economic context since the 1980s, using interdisciplinary approaches from demography, economics, and gerontology. Demography of aging focuses on the statistical analysis of the dynamic development of the aging population at the national or regional level, while gerontology examines the regular characteristics of physical aging and strategies from a medical and biological perspective, the social and economic analysis of the aging population at the macro level, and the intergenerational relationships, elderly care, and living conditions of the elderly at the micro level (Gao et al., 2015).

Geographies of aging in China have primarily focused on the spatiotemporal distribution, urban-rural differences, and regional development of the aging population at the macro level. However, recent research has focused on five main areas: 1) the spatiotemporal characteristics and driving factors of population aging; 2) the spatial effects of an aging population in urbanization and the demand for elderly services; 3) the physical and mental health of the elderly with their social and living environment; 4) the spatial practices of the elderly; and 5) spatial planning for elderly services (Gao, et al, 2015).

Research on the spatial practices of the elderly has focused on everyday life routines and the spatiotemporal characteristics of mobility. Sun (2001) studied the

spatiotemporal characteristics of leisure activities among the elderly in Beijing (Sun et al., 2001). Chai (2010) used qualitative and empirical analysis methods to analyze the time-space relations of daily activities for old people in Beijing based on the theory of behavioral geography, to explore the relations between decision-making and space. Zhou (2013) summarized the development of spatial behaviors of elderly people in China, focusing on the influence factors on three main daily activities: "seeing a doctor," "shopping," and "leisure" (Zhou & Chai, 2013). Yang (2018) analyzed the multi-dimension characteristics of mobility among the elderly (Yang, 2018). Some researchers focus on the spatial characteristic of disabled elderly people who are above 60 ages with the GIS method (He & Yan, 2019).

Research on the characteristics of mobility has focused on mobility factors and the adaptation of the elderly to the urban environment (Miao, 2012). Sun(2003) used demand analysis on urban green space for leisure activities of the aged (Sun, 2003). Chai (2006) proposed a model of elderly mobility in China. GIS has been used to map the flows of the elderly in relation to their living environments (Chai, 2006). Research has emphasized the role of social actors in everyday life and the P-E Fit framework (Lawton, 1968) has been expanded to include the situated social actor (Gao et al., 2015).

2.3 Implications of the thesis

As mentioned above, the overview of geographic research on everyday life often employs a "human-centered" approach, considering the role of time and space in understanding the experiences of individuals. GIS can be used to map and analyze temporal-spatial behaviors, which may not be the best fit for the research questions of this thesis. Another approach that can be useful in studying the everyday lives of elderly individuals is the time-geographic approach, which allows for the visualization and critical analysis of everyday life routines. This approach may be particularly useful in the current research on older people and their everyday lives.

Additionally, the research on geographies of aging in China has largely focused on the spatiotemporal distribution, urban-rural differences, and regional development of the aging population at the macro level, with a lack of attention to the diversity among

older people and the specific needs of different age groups. The research also lacks a focus on the cultural and social factors that influence mobility among older people and has largely focused on leisure activities in urban planning rather than addressing the broader range of spiritual and intellectual needs of older people. There is a need for more research on the specific characteristics and needs of different age groups within the older population, and for a greater focus on the cultural and social factors that influence mobility and everyday life among older people in China, with a more critical analysis of the relationship between age, self-identity, and socially situated culture to deeply understand the complex roles of NEG in China.

3. Conceptualization and Theoretical Framework

"Everyday life is, therefore, a taken-for-granted reality which provides the unquestioned background of meaning for the individual. It is a social construction that becomes a "structure" itself. Thus through our actions in everyday life, we build, maintain and reconstruct the very definitions, roles, and motivations that shape our actions... Human actions are structured into and by the societies into which we are born".

- John Elyes (1989, P103)

This part will start with a conceptualization of the "New Elder Group" (NEG) and "LaoPiaoZu" (LPZ) which will be analyzed more in chapter 6, and introduce other items that will be discussed later with data, such as the difference between boredom and loneliness, self-identity, and the relations between retirement and self-identity. Then, it describes the time principle of life course theory to better analyzed data in the later part. Lastly, it demonstrates the analysis framework of the time-geographic approach on everyday life activities.

3.1 New Elder Group

Linked to the research purpose of this article, the New Elder Group (NEG) refers to older people who are born in the 60s and 70s, get retired in good health, and have independent financial conditions.

"New" refers to new lifestyles, life attitudes, and values of older people who were born in or after the 1960s, compared to the traditional older people in China who were born in the 1940s or 1950s (Xu. & Shen., 2022). Older people who were born in the 1940s or 1950s have been through the toughest, poorest period in China, with the typical age characteristics of hard work and thrifty in their own lives (SFN, 2021). The New Elder Group (NEG) that this thesis focuses on is a generation that grows up with the development of China together, implying that they have fewer constraints at a young age. The policy of reform and opening up, the college entrance examination system was restored, and the society gradually embarked on the road of rapid development with the process of individualization from western culture in Chinese society (Xu, 2022). The income of NEG is multiple and more stable, other than from children. They have

pensions and the portion relying on pensions is raising meanwhile the rate of depending on their children is decreasing according to the research (Xu. & Shen., 2022).

Based on the background mentioned above, the life attitudes and values of the new elder group change from "living for children" to "living for themselves" and their lifestyles are trying to be changed from "family-centered" to "self-centered", to fulfill their values of living a good everyday (Xu. & Shen., 2022), compared to traditional older people.

Additionally, there is no unified definition and explanation for the NEG (Chen, 2018). Xu Hongdao (2012) believes that "liberation of the mind, youthful attitude, fashionable life and enthusiasm for public welfare are the hot spots of the new elderly, and one of the four is the NEG"(Teng & Shen, 2018). Sun (2021) believes that NEG are a group of old people with the following characteristics, such as high-income, tasteful, and thoughtful fashion old people in first- and second-tier cities, who are healthy, open-minded, positive, and highly accepting of new things (Li et al., 2022).

Some research shows that the New elder group has the obvious characteristics of better health condition, better-educated, better financial condition, and better mental health (Bai, 2019; Emily, 2021; Li et al., 2022; SFN, 2021; Xu, 2022), which indicates more social resources and fewer constraints in their daily life compared to other older people due to the different social change and reforms in China.

3.2 LaoPiaoZu

Linked to the data that we got (Table 5 in chapter 6), LPZ in this thesis will use He (2014)'s definition, representing those retired people who leave their familiar hometown and move to the new cities that their children live in, for taking care of their children's family, especially when the life event of grandchildren baby coming (He, 2014).

LaoPiaoZu (LPZ), as a new social group of retired people, comes out with both rapid urbanization and the aging process in the specific context of China. The research on LPZ mainly occurs in 2011 (Zhang et al., 2021). "Lao", literally means age above 60 (men) or 55 (women), or 50 (blue-collar women) according to the Chinese

Retirement Policy (Qian, 2017), which is socially regarded being old (Liu, 2016). "Piao", translated into English means floating literally according to CiHai Online Dictionary (Dictionary.writtenChinese). It describes the status that moving without changing the household registration (HuKou system) address (Wang, 2017), and also indicates less belonging in the context of the Chinese language. "Zu", means it is not an individual but the amount of the group (Dictionary.writtenChinese). Linked to all mentioned above, LPZ has two significant factors of group characteristics: moving and old.

There is no standard definition of LPZ within academia but the definition is usually related to the reasons for moving (Chen, 2018). Liu (2012) thinks LPZ refers to people who have to leave their hometowns and move to new cities where their children live (Liu, 2012). He (2014) regards LPZ as a social group that leaves their home and moves to new big cities only to take care of grandchildren(He, 2014). Some research argues that there are three reasons for LPZ to move to new cities: taking care of children (43%), family elderly care (25%), and jobs (23%) (He, 2014; Pan, 2019; Ren, 2021; Xu, 2022).

This kind of group is also named the "nanny older group"(Zhou, 2022), which faces so many challenges and focuses on some concepts of community integration, urban adaptation, social communication, psychological distress, and so on (Liao, 2022; Mu, 2021; Wen, 2016; Xu & Hua, 2018; Xu, 2017; Zhou, 2022). Some researchers think that LPZ who left their hometown and moved to a new city without friends have a longer adaptation period compared to young people (Zhou 2022), which burdens their mental stress and stronger negative feelings, such as loneliness, upset, disappointment and so on (Liao, 2022; Xu, 2017). They have some problems with their native language (like Hokkien in Xiamen) which makes social communication even worse (Feng, 2021). Moreover, LPZ will have more stress in terms of the responsibility of taking care of the grandchild. Their spiritual needs are neglected, and they are not good at expressing their feelings due to the attitudes of being old in Chinese culture, which will be described in chapter 5 (Chen, 2019; Pan, 2019).

3.3 Loneliness Versus Boredom

Michaelis (2021) thinks that one of the simplest ways to distinguish them is that: loneliness is the lack of the person you care for to share with your life, thoughts, interests, passions, and so on, but boredom is you have the person you care for to share with, just lack of the sense of satisfaction, gratification and productivity by repetition, monotony, etc (Michaelis, 2021).

Boredom has different definitions varying from individual to individual, from context to context (Li et al., 2021). Michelle (2021) regards boredom as "a lack of purpose and can happen to anyone at any time. But the likelihood of boredom may escalate at an older age" (Michaelis, 2021). It could be a negative emotion whose stimulus factors include repetition, lack of novelty, and monotony. Exploration and withdrawal from the boring situation have been discussed as some strategies for boredom (Li et al., 2021).

Loneliness is more refers to "negative or unpleasant feelings, coming from deficiencies" (Jylhä & Saarenheimo, 2010). Loneliness entails a lack of involvement (Michaelis, 2021), including social and emotional loneliness (Jylhä & Saarenheimo, 2010). Social loneliness could cause emotional loneliness and emotional loneliness may have impacts on arising social loneliness. The main factors causing social loneliness include a lack of social networks (Jylhä & Saarenheimo, 2010). Emotional loneliness is related to the absence of reliable and intimate relations (Jylhä & Saarenheimo, 2010). It could arise from the absence of someone to care for, or the absence of someone whom to share the experience with (Jylhä & Saarenheimo, 2010).

Boredom and loneliness could both be regarded as negative emotions but to different extents. Boredom seems less severe than loneliness. Boredom could happen at any age, at any person due to repetition in everyday life (Michelle 2021; Jylhä & Saarenheimo, 2010).

3.4 Self-identity

Self-identity was defined by many psychologists in different versions. This thesis uses this definition of self-identity, which refers to an individual's sense of self and their

unique identity, which can be shaped by their lifestyle choices and be closely intertwined with their personal relationships (Glddens, 1991). "The self is a relation and an awareness of the world as a continuous, past and future experience, and it is often identified with soul, person, subject, individual and role" (Ferguson, 2009).

The self can be identified through the connections and similarities it has with others (categorization), and also places its development within a specific historical and cultural context (Ferguson, 2009). Role-based identities are related tightly to different roles performed by individuals within groups in their everyday life and interacted with group-based identities (Stets & Burke, 2000). It suggests that people in the same social categories may have a similar decision when the transitional event comes, to be "part of the group" (Harwood, 2020; Stets & Burke, 2000). Rather than only considering individuals' roles in different groups, it is important to value an individual as a unique unit. This is called person identity, which focuses on the individual and cares about their desires as an individual (Stets & Burke, 2000).

Those types of identities mutually influence each other and shape self-identities (Stets & Burke, 2000). Linked to this thesis, it is important to analyze different types of identities of being old, to better understand how NEG's self-identity of being retired and old is shaped by the situated social-historical culture in China.

3.5 Relations with retirement and self-identity

The term "retirement" generally refers to a complete and permanent withdrawal from paid labor officially, and entering retirement could be regarded as an inevitable and big transition event for older people when their biological age is vested to be retired (Wetzel et al., 2015). Those changeable trajectories of their everyday life may have good and bad effects on the everyday life for them (Ji, 2018).

The values of having a good life in older people vary greatly due to their diversity of themselves (Yang, 2020). Burgess (1960) argued that retirement reduced the status of older people in the economy, the family, and the community, and older people who get retired "are imprisoned in a roleless role" (Burgess, 1960). One of the biggest challenges of retirement is how to deal with their abundant leisure time in their

everyday retired life compared to the scheduled work life before retirement (Burgess, 1960). "Boredom and waste of time" seems to become the rule of retirement (Jahoda, 1982). However, time seems to be occupied in modern society for older people who are retired, by leisure, sports, chores, and sleeping (Ekerdt & Koss, 2016) and most retired people will feel satisfied with their "freedom to get rid of the need to work's demands; freedom to engage in new activities, thoughts, experiences" (Weiss, 2005).

However, "All identities are socially constructed" (Doty, 1998). It is still a challenge for being "freedom" after retirement in this real world since activities that they participate in their everyday life are often influenced by their self-identities as a retired person (Ekerdt & Koss, 2016, P4). In terms of retired people, different socially constructed views of age and attitudes toward being old could have varying impacts on their self-identity (Westerhof et al., 2012). In China, for example, being old is socially regarded as the point at which older people get retired (Ji, 2018). Consequently, their everyday life can be quite different before and after retirement (Bao, 2005; Ji, 2018). Therefore, it is important to use life course theory to analyze everyday life activities for NEG.

3.6 Life course theory on the three-dimensional view of age

Life course theory views that "the life course is made up of age-related patterns that are embedded in social institutions and historical contexts. This view is based on the idea that social pathways and their historical and cultural contexts play a significant role in shaping individual development and aging" (Elder et al., 2002).

Time plays a significant role in shaping the experiences and development of individuals over their lifetime at both a sociohistorical and personal level. Historical changes differentiate the lives of people with successive birth cohorts. Individuals of different ages have different experiences and resources that influence their ability to adapt to new situations in different socio-historical contexts. It helps to better understand how social, cultural, and historical contexts shape individual experiences over time (Elder et al., 2002).

There are three-dimensional perspectives of "age" based on the principle of time

in the life course theory. It regards "age" as a combination of the personal status of biological life, societal time of life, and historical time of life. The biological age of people is dynamic information and a factual foundation of signs for transition in the societal age. Besides, age at a historical time of life highlights the influence of historical events on the agency (decision-making) of people. It shows that historical events may have different impacts on people in (near) cohort group than people who are born in the (near) same period of historical time, which cause different decision-making with the transition. As a result, the trajectory of everyday life for the age group would be affected by time and space, as a combination of a biological lifetime, social culture, and historical context (Bao, 2005; Elder et al. 2002).

3.7 The time-geographic analysis framework for everyday life activities

Time-geographic approach that Hägerstrand (1970) comes up with could be a tool to help to analyze the process and change, by the following concepts: project, individual path, and constraints.

3.7.1Goal-Oriented Project in everyday life

For living individuals as human beings, activities that individuals engaged in everyday life are planned for "goal-oriented" projects (Ellegård, 2019). Different kinds of goals of the project either short-term or long-term are based on ideas or wishes that are immaterial. In this sense, the project could be regarded as a material or immaterial result which consists of different resources, knowledge, and skills varying from individual to individual. Goals could be set up both by individuals for themselves and organizations (individuals in organizations of various kinds). The goals of the organizational project vary from the different decision-making positions of individuals within organizations. For example, as a family unit (the smallest organization in society), the goal of the project for everyday life for different family members could be "to live a good life" or "to take care of children" for older people in asian culture (Ellegård, 2019).

"To live life" as an overall goal for all people, there are some activity categories at the highest level (Table 3) which are categorized by the time-geographic diary method

and developed by a bottom-up approach (Ellegård, 2019).

Table 3 Highes-level activity categories in the time-geographic activity categorization scheme. Layout: Jianmei (2022) Source (Ellegård, 2019)

Activity category	Relevant activities
Care for oneself	Eat, sleep, care
Care for others	Help others to eat, sleep and get care
Household care	Care for the home, belongings, administration
Transportation	Movements to and from locations
Refelction/recreation	Get inspiration, relaxation, socializing, playing
Procure and prepare food	Cultivate, shop for food, cook, bake, and so on
Work/education	Work and education

3.7.2 Visualization of everyday life by Individual paths

Path, as the basic concept of time geography, is a tool to visualize the movements of individuals in the process of time and space. For studying everyday life, different kinds of individual paths with different focuses can be produced, based on the time-geographic diaries methods (Ellegård, 2019). The Time-space individual path, activity-oriented individual path, and social context path at an individual level could help to analyze the topic of this thesis, especially research question 2.

The time-space individual path focuses on the relations between geographical location and time in the realm of everyday life, which could help to analyze and find out the most frequent space that individuals move to over time in the realm of everyday life and for how long they stay at these places (Figure 1 left part). The activity-oriented individual path emphasizes the highest level of everyday activity (Table 3 above) that individuals engaged in (Figure 1 middle part). It can be analyzed at both the micro (Individual) level and macro (aggregate) level in an analysis of a possible pattern of everyday life for an indivisible individual (Hägerstrand, 1970). The social context of everyday life (Figure 1 right part) shows us the social relations of individuals, which could have influences on well-being for older people to some extent (Hou et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2020).
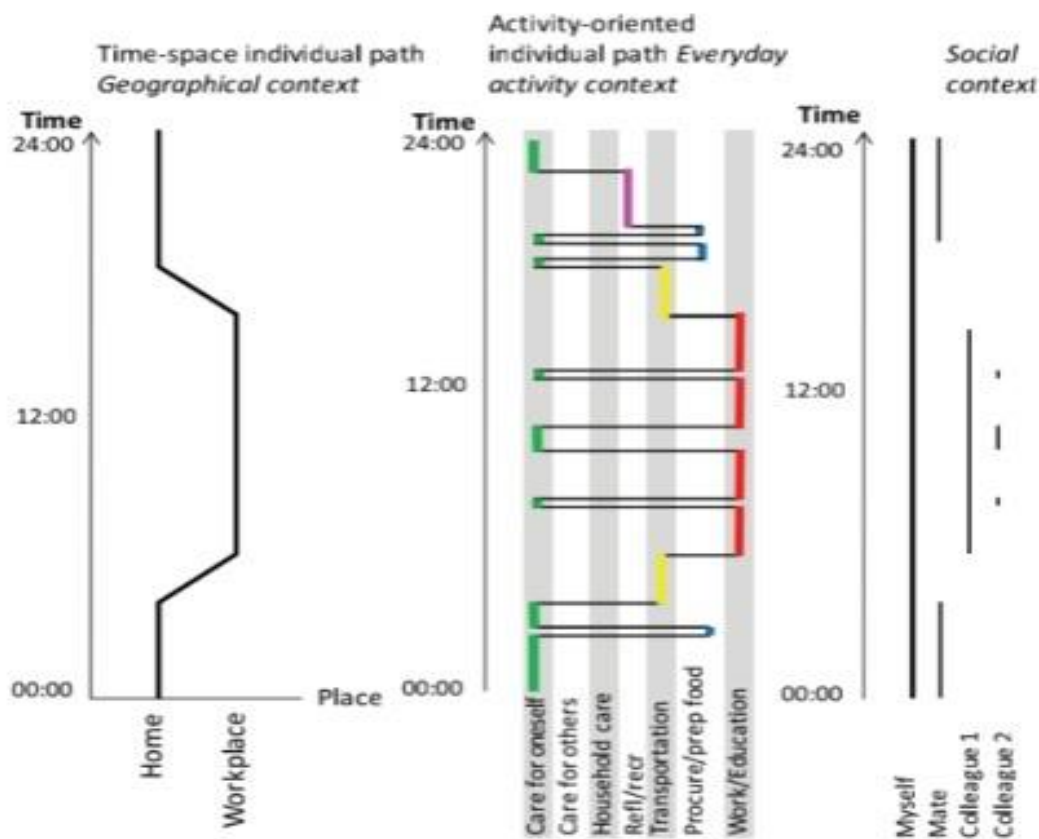
Figure 1 An example of visualization of individual path at three contexts. Source (Ellegård, 2019)

3.7.3 Three Constraints

"Constraints of everyday life based on the time-geographic approach are discussed by Hägerstrand (1970), Lenntorp (1976), Mårtensson (1979), and many other researchers in the later research" (Ellegård, 2019, P45). There are three main constraints in time geography, which are capability, authority, and coupling constraints. Those three constraints are mutually affected. Capability constraint refers to "individual's bodily, mental functions and to the resources (like transportation, economic, knowledge) that are available" (Hägerstrand, 1970; Ellegård, 2019, P43). Authority constraint concerns "power relations" which could be national laws or hierarchical organizations structured by social culture and norms. In this sense, the authority constraint is a "product of culture" (Ellegård, 2019, P44). It is important to discuss the social culture in which the individual is situated, giving a deeper understanding of the reason for decision-making on everyday activity for a good everyday life. Coupling constraint refers to "where, when, and for how long, the individual has to join individuals, tools,

and materials to produce, consume and transact" (Hägerstrand, 1970, P14; Ellegård, 2019).

In short, constraints may affect the decision-making of everyday activities for everyday life for individuals, which could help to answer research question 2, especially the authority constraint in terms of "power relations" from a cultural perspective.

3.7.4 Critical thinking of the time-geographic approach

The individual-level method is useful to analyze everyday life activities. However, the aggregate level method, which is commonly used to analyze everyday life activities at the macro level and compare one category of activities within different groups of individuals based on factors such as age and gender (Ellegård, 2019), is not able to fully describe the activity patterns observed in the data collected from interviews. This is because the aggregate level method does not adequately capture the dynamic relationships between individuals (especially within a single group), places, and activities over the constant flow of time.

The combination of life course theory and the time-geographic approach offers a new way of dividing "time" and enables a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the activity patterns of this individual group over time. Life course theory illustrates the influence of transition events on the alteration of everyday life activities (Bao, 2005). Time can be divided by significant transition events in this case. As the biological age of an individual grows, NEG will experience the transition event of their grandchildren going to primary school, which decreases the coupling constraint and plays a crucial role in this decision-making process.

In this sense, the concept of "time" is not divided into typical units such as days, weeks, months, or years. Instead, it is divided into "before," "during," and "after" grandchildren going to primary school, based on the reason for NEG's move to Xiamen (Table 5 in chapter 6). "Activities" are classified into three main categories "self-centered," "other-centered," and "unknown goal" activities for each period, based on their relation to the NEG's self-identities and the research questions. *self-centered activity* refers to activities that they do for satisfying themselves. *Other-centered*

activities refer to what people do for others' sake, compared to self-centered activities (Boggatz, 2020). For the data from interviews, "emotional context" is added at the aggregate level (Figure 3) in addition to the three contexts at the individual level (Figure 4 & Figure 5 & Figure 6).

The visualization of this new application of the time-geographic approach is easier to read than it was previously and can depict the long-term pattern of the flow of time for one group. However, it does not display all the details and instead represents the main activities that people engage in during their main periods of time spent in main places, resulting in a general depiction. The concept of "self-centered," "other-centered," and "unknown goal" mainly come from Boggatz's idea (Boggatz, 2020) and the data from interviews, which warrants further investigation.

4. Methodology

The Chapter three gives an understanding of everyday life for NEG in this thesis. The following part starts with the operationalization of the theory to give a basic understanding of the way of conducting this research, mainly based on the time-geographic approach (Hägerstrand, 1970; Ellegård, 2019) and life course theory (Bao, 2005; Elder et al., 2002). Then, I will describe the process of data collection and the process of coding data. The third part is the description of my process of analysis; a qualitative content analysis aiming to find deeper information behind narrative materials from the interviews. The final part is with the limitations of the process.

4.1 Operationalization of theory

As Ellegård asserted everyday life is shaped by "different activities in different places, at any time and with any accompany" (Ellegård, 2001; Magnus, 2018). The way people deal with time after retirement relates to their self-identity and self-expression (Ekerdt & Koss, 2015). In this sense, it is important to analyze the sequence of activity of everyday life in both time and space perspective way, to give a better understanding of their self-identity in the context of China. Therefore, this thesis will both use the time-geographic approach (described in 3.7) with the highest-level activity (Table 3) and the time principle of life course theory to analyze and visualize activities of everyday life for NEG in China.

"The life course is viewed as an age-graded sequence of socially defined roles and events enacted over historical time and place" (Elder et al., 2002). Aging is a dynamic process and being a retired person could be a transition event that changes their trajectory of everyday life, driven by self-identity of being a retired person. It requires the qualitative in-depth interview to look into their opinion about being socially "old" and the changing social role behind those activities (Ekerdt & Koss, 2015; Liu, 2016). Those two theoretical approaches help to conduct the main concepts for interview guidance and questions. Besides, this thesis will use qualitative content analysis (QCA) to critically analyze data.

4.2 Research design

4.2.1 Philosophical Science

Situated Knowledge

"The object of knowledge as an active, meaning-generating part of the apparatus of bodily production" (Haraway, 2020, p. 595). This statement argues that no knowledge is purely objective. It relates to our personal living experience. Knowledge varies from individual to individual due to different living experiences. In this sense, my living experience would have a positive and negative impact on the way that I analyze this research.

As a Chinese person, it is easy for me to pay more attention to the topic of older people. Due to the rapid aging process in China, older people are put more emphasis than before. The way that I understand the phenomenon of the emergence of NEG is situated more from my living experience within the local culture. It helps me to better understand the role of "time" on self-identity for being a retired person. It also gives me the chance to notice the contradiction between "being a free man" and "being a part of a family" among NEG.

On the other side, as a young woman who is influenced both by individualism and collectivism with the transition of China, I have different views from older people. That may affect the objective response during the interview and critical analysis of data. My knowledge of older people is shaped by social media and the people around me. Most image of older people in Chinese society is represented negatively, regarding them as vulnerable, sensitive, and stubborn people (Sun, 2017). This age expectation would also have some negative impact on conducting interview guidance and questions, even during the interview. For example, Xiamen is my hometown and I have some stereotypes and my personal living experience in the process of interviewing. When I listen to the record and transcript them, I found sometimes I cannot be objective enough to follow their life stories and ask consequence questions. For example, when respondent B told me that he would take the 40-minute bus to the park and enjoy himself there before the pandemic. The first reaction in the deep of my heart is I think taking

40 minutes is so inconvenient and it may make people tired without asking. Ironically, I don't want to show my feelings too obviously, so I ask them other questions that I think it is "objective" "Do we have seats in the bus during the 40 minutes?" instead of "what do you think of the 40 minutes bus? Does it bother you?" to get answers from their perspective. Luckily, I found my problems during the interview and try to keep "situated knowledge" in mind, reminding myself that I should be out of the situation and be more objective.

4.2.2 Sampling

The targeted group of this thesis is NEG, which refers to retired people who are around 55-80, with good health and financial condition. Due to the character of NEG, one of the greatest challenges in the sampling step is to figure out how to find NEG to interview online in this pandemic situation. Since the targeted respondents may affect the answers we got from those qualitative questions in the interviews (Bryman, 2016, p. 416), it is vital to find the targeted group for interviewing. With the help of the internet and my friends in Xiamen, I finally have twelve respondents and eight of them are NEG.

During the process of looking for the NEG in Xiamen, *firstly*, I post related information about NEG with the payment as awards on all social media that people used in China, like Weichat. *Secondly,* I ask my friends and family for help to look for NEG around them. Due to the different understanding of NEG by those mediators, I finally got twelve respondents who could help to be interviewed but eight respondents of NEG in the end (Table 4). For the sake of convenience, it uses numbers to classify different respondents. In the Later chapter of this thesis, that qualified NEG will be classified as A-H to distinguish from here (Table 5). The measurement of being in a good health is valued by good mobility linked to the topic of everyday life activity, and financial condition is valued by their subjective feelings since different people have different attitudes towards "independent financial condition". Those interviews are constructed from March to April.

Table 4 *Basic information of respondents.* Layout: Jianmei Zhou (2022) √ refers to "yes" or "good"

Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Retired	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Healthy	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√		√	√
Financial	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	
Age <80	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

4.2.3 Conducting qualitative interviews and preparing questions

Interview guidance and questions

Interviewing is probably the most widely used method in qualitative research (Bryman, 2016). To know about the experiences, attitudes, and characteristics of individuals, households, or groups (Gregory et al., 2009), this thesis used the semi-structured qualitative interview to analyze everyday life for NEG at an individual level. The interviews span from March 8th to April 2nd, and the redo in-depth interview was conducted from April 6th (2 respondents), 12th (2 respondents), and 25th to 28th (2 respondents). These interviews are all constructed online. The interview guide was prepared beforehand (see Appendix 10.1) and modified with the process of interviews (see Appendix 10.2).

For preparing the interview questions, the first interview guidance is framed by the main first two research questions (in chapter 1), mainly focusing on "activities of everyday life" and "constraints of everyday life". The "activities of everyday life" part,

focuses on "what activities", "where" and "with whom" of everyday life, and highlights the significance of time and place during everyday life. Some questions will focus on "How often", "What do you think of." and "Why" to analyze it from their perspective. The "constraints of everyday life", aim to find the reasons for the way they engaged in their everyday life from different concepts of capability, authority, and coupling constraints (Ellegård, 2019, p. 44).

During this first time of interview, I categorize eight NEG out of twelve respondents (Table 4), based on the common characteristics and basic information. Then, following the guidance (mentioned above) to do the in-depth interview with the eight NEG. However, On the analysis of transcripts after the first period of the interview, it is interesting to find six of eight respondents whom all moved to Xiamen and became "LaoPiaoZu" (described in 3.2). Hence, I revised the interview guidance and add some interview questions to redo the in-depth interviews, to give a better understanding of the reasons for this choice (becoming LPZ).

"Self-identity", as a new theme, is added in the new research guidance. For this part, the interview questions are framed by a three-dimensional view of age, focusing on biological age, societal expectations of age, and the historical time of age respectively (Bao, 2005). This part of the interview is more flexible and less structured. The detailed interview questions are changed and modified continuously during the interview, depending on the adapted response from their narrative storytelling about their views of identity.

Digital preparations

To get good quality results from the mediated interview, I have to prepare and take some strategies when I conduct the interviews due to the shortcomings of mediated interview. The mediated interviews require the respondent to have technological expertise and access. Before we start the interview, I will recommend they find a quiet place with a better internet connection.

4.2.4 Data processing and analysis

Firstly, all interviews were transcribed. But it may limit the analysis results of

this research due to depending on too many written words that are transcribed (Loubere, 2017). In this sense, notes were taken during the online interview and were used in the initial analysis (Crang & Ian, 2007).

Then, there are two ways of data processing in this interview for this research. On one hand, for the concepts of "activity of everyday life", this thesis recorded their everyday life on one typical day that chose, critically analyzing and visualizing their individual life path in geographical, everyday activity and social contexts (at an individual level) and adding one more emotional context (at an aggregate level) by the time-geographic approach (described in 3.7). On the other hand, it uses qualitative content analysis (QCA) with coding by Nvivo, to critically analyze the data that get from interviews. QCA is a method for analyzing qualitative data and could reduce data by focusing on the core of research questions, not taking into account the qualitative materials (Schreier, 2012). It is helpful to find the activity pattern of respondents at an aggregate level (described in 3.7.4).

For the coding part, I coded those interview transcripts by the three main topics of this thesis: "*Activity-related*" "*constraints*" and "*self-identity related to age*". In more detailed coding names respectively, there are "*geographical context*", "*everyday activity context*" and "*social context*" in the first topic; "*capability constraints*", "*authority constraints*" and "*coupling constraints*" in the second topic; "*biological age-related*", "*societal age-related*", and "*historical time of age*" to the third topic. During the coding process, I used QCA and evaluated the information that is related to topics that respondents mentioned in the interview.

4.2.5 Limitations and Ethical considerations

One of the main limitations of this methodology was the sampling method, which was conducted with the help of family and friends in my hometown. Most of the respondents knew each other and live in close proximity, leading to potential bias due to shared social connections. Additionally, the study was geographically delimited to the inner island of Xiamen, a more developed area, and therefore does not represent the experiences of NEG in other districts of Xiamen. To mitigate this limitation, the study

also included a few interviewees through convenience sampling (posting in Weichat), though it may not fully compensate for this limitation.

In-depth interviews were conducted but the quality varied due to the challenges of remote online interviews. Firstly, a good internet connection, suitable device, and quiet location were necessary, not always easy to obtain. Secondly, two of the respondents were strangers found on the street by my sister and were unwilling to do a video interview, leading to lower quality interviews conducted by a voice call with the lack of emotional support by video interviews. To address this limitation, the study conducted supplementary second interviews with those respondents that my friends knew, but this was not possible with the two strangers mentioned above. This is a limitation that the study has to accept.

To ensure safety and confidentiality, all respondents in this research were recorded with their permission and are referred to anonymously.

5. Geographical Socio-Culture Context

5.1 Chinese Work Overtime Culture: "996" working hour system

Work culture in China prioritizes hard work and values collectivism (Schwartz, 2021), which highlights the priority of the business over the individual's personal life. The philosophy of "focused, hard-working, sacrifice for the common good" plays an important role in developing China's economy into the second largest in the world in only a few decades according to the international monetary fund (IMF) (Schwartz, 2021; WNA, 2021).

There are other working hour systems which are intended to keep up the pace with the worldwide economy, which is demanding working overtime, especially in some IT companies, such as "996" (9 am-9 pm, 6 days per week), "8106" (8 am-10 pm, 6days per week), "997" (9 am-9 pm, 7 days per week), and "007" (online 24hours a day, 7 days per week) (Schwartz, 2021). Those overtime working hour systems were encouraged by leading entrepreneurs but were opposed by many controversial social media, like "996. icu" or the anti-996 website. On these social media, topics about how those overtime working systems affect one's health (both in physical and mental ways) and against Chinese Labor Laws (WNA, 2021).

However, working overtime became such a "normal" working environment in many industries in China that employees are accustomed to, not only in those IT companies, and tech start-ups. Due to the huge population in China, it is difficult to find a job in a competitive job market and it is important to get a promotion to get a higher salary to support their family. To get a promotion, they would choose to work extra hours to obtain their boss's respect and other colleagues have to follow this behavior due to peer pressure. Gradually, working overtime becomes an unspoken rule in corporate culture (Schwartz, 2021).

5.2 "ZuoYueZi" culture in China

"ZuoYueZi" culture refers to confinement for women who just gave birth in China. It is more way of a common social norm than scientific knowledge that women have to stay in the bed for 28-40 days after they gave birth to a new baby (Zhang, 2018).

There are so many restrictions that women cannot do in their everyday life (Zhang, 2022; Zhang. & Liu.;, 2018)

When respondents were asked "when did they move to Xiamen", their most common keywords are during the "ZuoYueZi" period, and taking care of the infants. In China, we have different traditional customs in details of everyday life in different regions in the "ZuoYueZi" period, such as eating. But they all have the common customs that women have to stay in the bed for 28-40 days (Zhang, 2009). Other details vary differently from city to city. For example, you cannot take shower, tear, or go outside in Xiamen. In this "ZuoYueZi" period, women and infants are both required to be taken care of. However, confinement centers are too expensive, and hard to tell the service quality (Pan, 2019). Men, in the family, as "new" fathers, husbands, also workers, who have no ability and time to take care of their wives and little infants. In such cases, senior people, especially women, who are experienced with having babies and are still in good health could be very compatible candidates to solve this problem.

5.3 Family Ethic Culture in China

The characteristics of the traditional Chinese family are "The superior and inferior, the elder and the younger in an orderly manner, division of labor and cooperation", which is known as the cooperated model of family union and has the potential uneven power structure behind in gender and generations (Greenhalgh, 1994). This kind of cooperative model prioritizes the interest of family union over individuals (Yan, 2006). Hence, the choices that they made are for the sake of the whole family. The older adult has also represented the "Senior" group in the Chinese family, which has a powerful role and takes the main responsibility of taking good care of the whole family (Fei, 2012). It comes up with the Chinese social norm of "Family Responsibility Ethics" based on the idea of cooperation and distribution of labor in the cooperate model of the Chinese Family (Fei, 2012). This kind of traditional Culture of family responsibility is rooted and shows that raising children and taking care of children is not only a temporary responsibility before they get 18 but also an "unlimited whole life responsibility" in Chinese Culture (Yang, 2015).

Moreover, due to the emergence of the importance of individuals' everyday life, more and more people recognize the importance of an individual's desire and happiness (Yan, 2006). The family has become a haven for people from outside troubles, sustenance for emotional support, and a place that prioritizes children in any situation (Yan, 2006). With the life event of having a new baby in a young couple's family, old people who are retired with a good health condition are taken for granted to take the responsibility to take care of children and grandchildren without paying back in order to reduce children's burden and help them to have a better life (Yang, 2015). It explained why the social group of LPZ is bigger and bigger even with so many challenges in their individual's real life to some extent. They prioritize the desire of their children over theirs. LPZ believes that it is their responsibility to move to new cities for taking care of their children's family (usually for baby-sistering grandchildren), even if they have to move to a new city and tolerate inconvenient environment, no social life, exhausting physical problems by baby-sistering and other challenges in their everyday life (as described in 3.2).

5.4 Attitudes towards being old in China

China has a long historical and dynamic-changing age status for older people. Those age expectations for older people have an impact on the social attitudes towards them in their daily life, resulting in the idea of "filial piety". The attitude towards older people changes to a large extent in the development of human society in China, going through from abandoning---respecting---disrespecting (Shang & Sun, 2015; Sun, 2017).

In the Traditional hunting and gathering period society, the social ideologies towards old people come with "valuing strong and young people and ignoring weak and old people", to survive and develop in the cruel nature environment. Due to migration period, old people are regarded as being a "weak" image and come up with the custom of "abandoning old people" (Shang & Sun, 2015). Until the agricultural civilization society, people could settle down and improve their life skills. Older people are regarded as wiser people with more living experiences in a family unit, due to the bad transportation, relatively stable social structure, and single similar life events in

their everyday life (Sun, 2017). From then on, the social attitudes toward older people change from "abandoning" to "respecting" them (Shang & Sun, 2015).

In the current modern society of China, society changes so fast and young people have more skills needed in society than older people. Hence, old people are socially regarded as a "weak" and "vulnerable" group to some extent, especially those older people who do not have a chance to be educated (Sun, 2017). Worsely, some old people will be socially regarded as a "useless" group in the rural area of China, and they are afraid of being a burden in a family (Shang & Sun, 2015).

5.5 Policies in China

5.5.1 Family planning policies in China: From one to three

The Chinese Government approves the One-child policy as a new constitution that birth control for every Chinese citizen's duty in 1982. The one-child policy was regarded as the harshest and most controversial family planning policy and has a profound impact on people's everyday life (Chubb, 1998). Due to bias against boys' culture and the One-child policy in China, parents tried to sell baby girls in the black markets. 80% of trafficked babies were girls in Guangxi Province (Rosenthal, 2003). It was the call for easing the limits of the One-Child policy. In 2014, the Chinese Government ease the limits of the One-Child policy and allowed married couples to have two children if one of the spouses is the only child in families (Goldman, 2021). In 2015, The Chinese Government finally ends the One-Child policy and introduce the two-child policy for every married couple for the rapid aging process in China (Buckley, 2015). In 2021, the three-child policy is introduced by the Chinese Government for the rapid aging process and scarce workforce (Wee, 2021).

5.5.2 Maternity Leave Policy in China

The parental leave policy in China is adopted in 1951 and expanded in 2001. more generous than before (7-30 days paid time off work) (Gabel, 2019), but varies across the whole country from different local governments (34 different administrative regions). The practices of policies varies, which are limited to residents who hold urban household registration status in reality (Gabel, 2019).

According to the newest revised regulations of Fujian Province Population and Family Planning in March 2022 (PCSC, 2022), the woman of a married couple who gives birth extends her maternity leave to 158-180 days; the man of a married couple would have 15 days for care leave. Both of them will have 10 days of childcare each year before the child grows to three years old. During these leave policies, they keep their same wages and benefits without any side effect on promotion (PCSC, 2022).

6. Results and Analysis

In this chapter, I will describe and analyze the data theoretically as introduced in chapter 3. To answer research questions, the following of this chapter will focus on these related to concepts of time geography: living individuals (as human beings), a goal-oriented project with individual paths and constraints of everyday life. Then, it ends up with a summary of these findings. For the living individual part, I find another different group within NEG based on their social background, summing up as a population group as "LaoPiaoZu" (LPZ) and how members of this group think of their everyday life (RQ 1). For the second theme, I will focus on the results and analysis of activities of everyday life (RQ 2), compared among different social groups that I found in the first theme, visualized in geographical, activity, and social context at an individual level (Figure 4 &Figure 5 &Figure 6) and four contexts (emotional context added) at an aggregate level (Figure 3). For the third theme, I will analyze three constraints of capability, authority, and coupling mutually to give a better understanding of the role of self-identity in the way they engage in their everyday life activities (RQ 2 &3).

6.1 Similar choice to become a part of "LaoPiaoZu" (LPZ) after retiring in their lifetime

As mentioned in the methodology part (chapter 4), we have 12 respondents but of these only 8 respondents (Table 5) are 55-80 age and with good health and relatively good financial condition chosen by the information part of the interview, which is called NEG by social media in China and matched with our topic. From the interview, it is interesting to find that those respondents are not native local citizens of Xiamen and six of them have similar reasons for moving to Xiamen (Table 5).

The reasons for six respondents moving to Xiamen are similar which is to take care of their children's family (Table 5). Looking into more details during the in-depth interview, the time that they move to Xiamen is similar. In the interview, they move to Xiamen when they have a new grandchild, and they are asked by their children to help to babysit the new baby. It seems that they made the same choice to move to Xiamen

when they face this same transition event of having a new baby in the family in their lifetime, although taking the risk of living in a new environment and changing trajectories of everyday life. It is interesting to find that the length for two of them who moved and stayed in Xiamen is less than 5 years, and others are more than 10 years. Those retired people who left their familiar hometowns and move to the new cities that their children live in, to take care of their children's families, are academically called "LaoPiaoZu" (He, 2014). It is a product of societal change with the transition of Chinese society (Liao, 2022; Wen, 2016; Xu & Hua, 2018). For the sake of clearance, this thesis following will use LPZ to represent "LaoPiaoZu".

Table 5 Basic information for New Elder Group (respondents). Layout: Jianmei Zhou (2022)

	Age	Native	Retired	"How long have you been in Xiamen?"	Main Reasons for them moving to Xiamen
A	57	no	Yes	19years	Moving with husband's job
B	60	no	Yes	19years	Job, the good living environment of Xiamen
C	68	no	Yes	16years	Taking care of children's family
D	62	no	Yes	4 years	Taking care of children's family
E	67	no	Yes	13years	Taking care of children's family
F	75	no	Yes	15years	Taking care of children's family
G	62	no	Yes	10years	Taking care of children's family
H	60	no	Yes	2 years	Taking care of children's family

Compared to other respondents (Table 5), respondents of A and B are the only couple in those samples and moved to Xiamen for other reasons. Respondent A moves to Xiamen with B because of B's changing job. B told me his story in the interview that he had other choices for jobs in Shanghai, and Hangzhou at that time, not only Xiamen.

Respondent B said that they visited those cities and decided to move to Xiamen in the end because of the good living environment (both social and natural) and active economic environment of Xiamen. For many years, Xiamen is also regarded as one of the most living-friendly cities in China (CASS et al., 2022). As introduced in chapter 1, Xiamen is a both relatively "young" and "old" city. As a special economic zone, it has more job opportunities and still attracts many young people working there (CASS et al., 2022). As a chain reaction, it makes sense that Xiamen gathered so many LPZ for those young couples.

To figure out the attitude of becoming LPZ for respondents A and B, they were asked "What do you do when you have a new grandchild and your children ask you for help to take care of the new baby, even to move to their cities that are new to you?", I know that their daughter is in Shanghai and Shanghai is a new city to them. and they answered, "Of course, I will help them if they need. I have to, it is my responsibility". The answers of respondents A and B, and the reasons for six respondents seem to show the tendency that retired people will make a similar choice (becoming LPZ) when they go through the same transition event of having a new baby in the family in their life course if they are needed. It is interesting to find that the length for LPZ moving to Xiamen is different from analyzing why they would sacrifice their comfortable late life to become the vulnerable LPZ group at their ages, which will be discussed in the later part.

6.1.1 Loneliness vs boredom in everyday life

Results from the interview show the different socially constructed opinions towards LPZ. Much research asserts that there are many challenges in LPZ's everyday life (Bai, 2020; Liu, 2012; Mu, 2021; Ren, 2021; Wen, 2016; Xu & Hua, 2018; Zhou, 2022). "Being lonely" seems a stereotypical imaged description of LPZ. Researchers would link LPZ to some keywords of "social adjustment", and "social separation" in academia (Ji, 2018; Liu, 2012; Mu, 2021; Xu & Hua, 2018). Some research emphasizes the problems that LPZ have, such as socially inclusive, social adjustment and distance elderly care, and so on (Liu, 2012; Mu, 2021); some researchers point out that the

anxiety and loneliness of LPZ are more serious than local people, not all dimensions of mental health (Xu & Hua, 2018).

However, the answers from those respondents in the interview reveal different opinions. They were asked, "what do they think of their everyday life?" "How do they scale the satisfaction of life from 1 to 10?" "Do they feel lonely after retirement?" during the interview. As a result, they all feel satisfied with their life. Most of them would rather use the item of "boredom" more often than the item of "loneliness". Seven of them admitted that they feel bored sometimes but not lonely. Only one respondent thinks she might feel a little lonely sometimes, especially when her family fell asleep, and she was still awake at late night. "It seems that I am all alone in the silent darkness and have no one to talk with at that moment."

The key to loneliness distinguished from boredom is if people have the person that they care for to share with (Conroy et al., 2010). Those LPZ, spend all their time with grandchildren that they need to take care of, and they will communicate with their children about chores with grandchildren. In this case, they have people they love in the family such as the grandchild, or their children to share with. Respondents A and B live together and are in good connection. Respondent A described her husband B as a "big tree that could always support her and she feels so peaceful and secure when she is with her husband.". The reason that those respondents feel bored sometimes but not lonely may be due to repetition in their everyday life (Jylhä & Saarenheimo, 2010; Michaelis, 2021).

6.1.2 LPZ of NEG (LPZN)

The narrower population makes sense if we want to get some depth findings of our research goals (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). This could help to analyze data more critically and deeply. Moreover, the LPZ found from the data has some common and differences from the LPZ as introduced in chapter 3. It has both characters of NEG and LPZ, which could be called LPZ of NEG. This might be one of the reason they do not feel lonely. LPZ of NEG focuses on the smaller and more specific group than LPZ used within academia. For the sake of clearance and convenience, this thesis will use LPZN

to represent those six respondents of NEG. The relations among them are shown below (Figure 2):
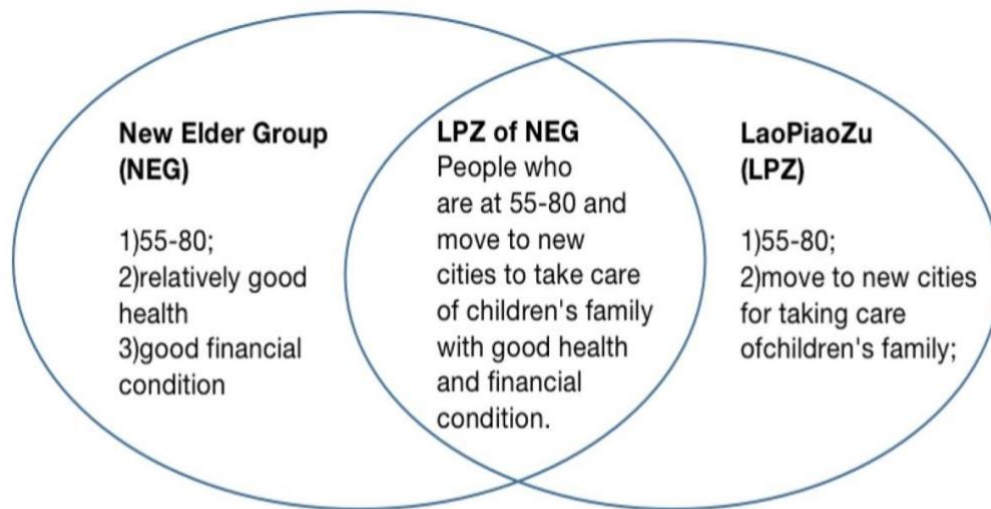
Figure 2 Differences and commons between NEG and LPZ. Layout: Jianmei Zhou (2022)

In short, Respondents of LPZN have mixed characteristics of NEG and LPZ. They all feel satisfied with their everyday life. Most of them don't feel lonely but bored sometimes. NEG seem to tend to become LPZ when they are needed for helping to take care of the new grandchild in their family, even though it means they have to give up their comfortable and free retired life, to take the responsibility for a newly born grandchild for the sake of family interest.

6.2 The way they engage in their everyday life activities

In the framework of time geography, living individuals will use their social resources to engage in different daily activities, for satisfying their desires (Ellegård, 2019). The activities they engage in everyday life for specific goals are called projects, as we introduced in chapter 3. All people share the same overall "to live life" goal. They have different resources and opportunities to realize their different desires due to their social status. In this sense, to answer the question of "How do they engage their everyday life?" (RQ 2), it is necessary to focus on the item of "them" which could be LPZN and NEG (mentioned in 6.1) and their different goal projects.

Those NEG people were asked to describe how often and what activities were

undertaken daily, or weekly, and were also asked to describe a typical day by their choices. This thesis uses a time-geographic approach to visualize "their" different daily life paths (Figures 4 &5 &6), focusing on time, location, activity, and the mode of travel (Hanson & Hanson, 1993) in three different contexts: the common geographical location in the realm of everyday life (in the geographical context), differences of highest-level of everyday activity among them (in the everyday activity context), and different social relations for NEG (in a social context) (Ellegård, 2019, P43).

6.2.1 Short-distance lifestyle and Limited spaces for recreation activities

The daily path (Figure 4 &Figure 5 &Figure 6) shows that NEG lived a short-distance lifestyle and they have simple activities and limited spaces for recreation activities in their everyday life.

Short distance lifestyle

Some main means of moving from one place to another place for NEG are walking, bus, and taxi, according to the interview. A person can only be in one place at a certain time (Hägerstrand, 1970). Movement is a normal activity in daily life. As those daily paths show, the spaces they move around in daily life include homes, parks, supermarkets, aged universities, and living communities. Figures (4 &5 & 6) show of the common activities and places are "transportation" and "parks" respectively. Based on the interview, most of the respondents choose "walking" as the main way to move from place to place.

One of the reasons why NEG prefer walking is they do not know how to drive a car and the public transport is too hard to catch at peak hours. The people of NEG were born from 1942 to 1967. It is rare for people at their age to have the opportunity to learn how to drive in the past historical time of China (Yang, 2019). Due to the intense demand for young people for public transportation (Hou, 2022), public transportation for NEG is relatively inconvenient in the consideration of relatively weak body conditions in the biological lifetime. As the following said:

> "My son will drive us to farther places to enjoy our weekends. But on the weekdays, he is too busy and I don't know how to drive. I cannot afford to learn to drive when I was young. Now I am old and lazy to learn to drive. I will take the bus if the weather

is not good. But I still prefer walking to the place most of the time."

<div align="right">(translated from respondents)</div>

Another reason is, for LPZN, this situation is even harder due to the new streets, new people, new lifestyles in the new city (Xu & Hua, 2018), and the relatively vulnerable grandchildren that they have to take care of (coupling constraint). Compared to adults and elders, kids are socially vulnerable and need to be helped in eating, sleeping, and accompanying for safety (Ellegård, 2019, p. 44). They have to stay together for most of the time in the realm of everyday life. LPZN has already taken many efforts on taking care of their young grandchildren, which makes their bodies easily more tired in the relatively weak body condition of their age. Those constraints have impacts on their decision-making. In that case, they would try to make their lives as convenient as they could. As the following said:

> "I am not familiar here and I don't know how to get to the place that is far away from my home and I have to take a bus or a taxi. The taxi fee is expensive and I am afraid I will be cheated by the driver of the taxi. Hence, I would rather walk or take a bus".

> "I was afraid of taking the wrong bus or getting off the wrong bus station. Someday I was at the bus station and the bus was coming. There were so many people waiting and they all ran and rushed in front of the bus door of a sudden. I was afraid to be left so I also started to run so fast to catch and squeeze into the bus. My heart was beating so fast when I finally got on the bus. Let alone, I have to carry my grandchildren in my arm, which is a tough exercise for me if I take the bus in such a way more often haha. I would rather walk now."

<div align="right">(translated from respondents)</div>

Hence, the best choice for them to move from place to place is walking. As a result, NEG engaged in activities in their everyday life, resulting in meeting with limited people and encountering the closer place with walk accessibility. The living environment for NEG is vital to their everyday life.

Limited public spaces for recreation activities for NEG

Within walk accessibility, all respondents would mention parks as the common space that they enjoy themselves no matter before or during the pandemic from the interview. Parks here refer to a wide variety of spaces "city parks, squares, linear parks, green link parks, community greens, community forests, country parks, national parks, playground, and even air rights parks"(Conway, 2000).

Xiamen, as a "Garden City", is known for its beautiful green environment in China (Li, 2019). Two districts of the inner island area (all respondents live in) have the biggest square of parks per person within 15 minutes of walking accessibility, and the biggest average total squares of public urban greenspace within 30 minutes of walking distance as well (Li, 2019). It provides NEG with a good living environment with good walk accessibility to parks. Parks that they went to most frequently are those close to their living communities varying from 5 minutes to 20 minutes' walk, as studies have examined the proximity to residential neighborhoods encourages people to be more physically active (Corkery, 2015).

Although the time they spend, activities they do, and frequency of going to parks vary from individual to individual (from the interview), especially NEG to LPZN, one of the common characteristics of parks that they mentioned is: closeness. Some previous studies have found that living in proximity to urban greenspace promotes a healthier lifestyle (Sugiyama et al. 2010; Giles-Corti & Donovan 2003; Corkery, 2015).

> "The parks that I usually go to are just next to my living community, which takes 5 or 10 minutes to walk there from home. I will stay there for a while to relax every time on the way back home."

> "Parks are so important for people at my age. I will go to parks when I don't know where to go and what to do. It is a good place to spend time you know. And it is so close to the place where I live. It only takes less than 10 minutes. I go there many times, you know, on the way doing some groceries after breakfast, going for a walk after dinner."

> (translated from respondents)

The other reason for parks becoming the most common space that they go to in their everyday life is that NEG gets different benefits from different experiences in parks. Parks could be a space for dancing before covid (Wang, 2022) and they could spend time with their grandchildren, enjoying their family time; they could also go to the parks taking part in different leisure activities that are held in parks, such as square dancing, singing chore, or just sitting there, watching, and enjoying the moment (Wang, 2022). As the following said:

> "I feel happier when I am back from the parks. There are so many different activities held in parks. Even though I didn't take part in activities, I would be

audience and still feel good after enjoying the moment there."

"I usually went to parks with grandchildren. It is a good place with good facilities for grandchildren playing, also a relaxed space for me to just sit down and watch grandchildren when they play; a place that I would chat with people who also bring their grandchildren and sit around to me."

"Of course, my mood is different, and become more relaxed. Otherwise, why I will go to parks?"

<div align="right">(translated from respondents)</div>

Hence, with the good accessibility and many benefits, parks play a necessary role as a space in everyday life for NEG, not only for the beautiful green environment but also for the different good spatial impacts on social connections and mental health. It results in improving the quality of their everyday life (Conway, 2000). However, there are no other public spaces shown in the common from the interview where they could hang out with their friends or enjoy their free time, except for Parks.

6.2.2 The possible activity pattern of Everyday life for LPZN

According to the interview data shown in Table 5, the length of time that NEG individuals spend in becoming LPZ varies. The longest is 16 years and the shortest is 2 years. Currently, these individuals are at different points in their life paths (as discussed in 6.2.3). However, when NEG who have been in the LPZ for a longer time look back on their past experiences, they tend to have similar daily activities to those who have spent a shorter time in the LPZ. For example, LPZN who have lived in Xiamen for 16 or 10 years have experienced the similar activity arrangement as those who have lived there for 2 or 4 years. This suggests that there may be common daily life patterns and activity arrangements among LPZN over time, as depicted in the long river of time and shown in Figure 3.

Additionally, as mentioned in 3.7.4, the passage of time can be divided into "before," "during," and "after" the grandchildren's primary school attendance, and activities can be classified into three main categories: "self-centered," "other-centered," and "unknown goal" activities for each period. The data seems to indicate a similar activity pattern among LPZN at these three different periods.

The first period, before the grandchild attends primary school, is characterized by the goal of "taking care of the newly born grandchild" as the main purpose of the

LPZN's daily life (transcript below). Most of their time is spent with their grandchildren (social context) at home, in supermarkets, and in parks (geographical context), and their activities are largely "other-centered" (everyday activity context). This main life project often leaves them feeling happy but also tired due to the lack of flexibility in their daily routine (emotional context). As respondent H said in the interview

> "I have tasks to be here so I am not flexible. I have to get up early to wake the older grandchild up and prepare breakfast for the whole family, walking the older grandchild to her school. Then came back to take care of this little newly born grandson. The day just starts."   (respondent H)

During the second period, while the grandchild is in primary school, the LPZN have more flexible and free time in their daily lives due to reduced responsibilities for child care (authority constraints) (Ellegård, 2019). However, they struggle with how to fill this sudden free time in a city that is unfamiliar to them, which refers to "unknow goal" status in the everyday activity context. They also feel lonely due to a lack of social connections and activities in the city (social and emotional context) (Mu, 2021; Wen, 2016; Xu & Hua, 2018). Some LPZN choose to leave Xiamen and return to their hometowns, while others choose to stay. Those who stay in Xiamen tend to spend their time at home, walking in supermarkets, parks, and living communities (geographical context).

In the third period, after the grandchild finishes primary school, the LPZN are familiar with the city and largely free from the responsibilities of child care (coupling constraints), and have more time to pursue their own interests and values with social resources (Ekerdt & Koss, 2015; Ellegård, 2019). They engage in "self-centered" activities such as volunteering and learning new things at aged universities (everyday activity and geographical context). They also spend time with friends they have made through these activities and at aged communities (social and geographical context). They often feel meaningful and happy in their daily lives (emotional context).
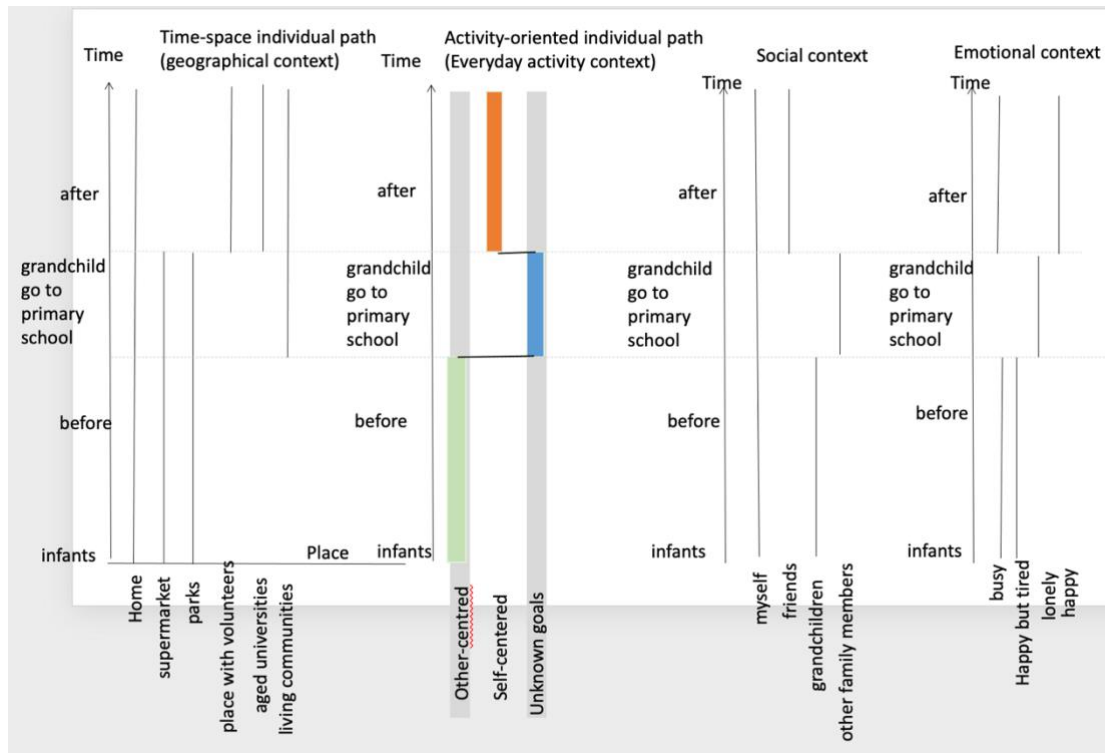
Figure 3 Activities pattern of LPZN at an aggregate level: places they mainly visit (time-space individual path) activities they mainly engaged in (activity oriented individual path), the social context they mainly experience on the period, and the emotional context they mainly feel. Layout: Jianmei Zhou (2022) inspired from (Ellegård, 2019)

6.2.3 Everyday life projects are driven by different self-identities

The way in which NEG use their time and engage in their everyday life is driven by their self-identities as old and retired people (Ekerdt & Koss, 2015). To understand the potential of new life experiences for older people in China, it is important to examine their values and attitudes toward aging and retirement at an individual level. People of NEG identify themselves both as "a part of the family" and "a free man" with different priorities at different periods from interviews.

Being "a part of the family"

For respondent H, an individual sample of LPZN, she she describes her situation as "tasks" and identifies herself as "a part of the family," with the goal of "taking good care of her grandchildren".

The first two highest-level everyday activity categories for LPZN (as exemplified by respondent H) are: "care for others" and "procure and prepare food" (Figure 4 below).

These activities are mainly engaged for the benefit of others, and can be described as "other-centered" activities compared to "self-centered" activities (Boggatz, 2020). Respondent H has the task of cooking for the whole family, and sometimes feels rushed due to the limited daily time and numerous tasks (everyday activity context). She spends most of her time at home (geographical context), primarily with her two-year-old grandchildren (social context).

Figure 4 Daily life path of respondent H at an individual level: places they visit (time-space individual path) activities they engaged in (activity oriented individual path) and the social context they experience on the day that I interview. Layout: Jianmei Zhou (2022) inspired from (Ellegård, 2019)

Being "a free man"

The self-identities of being "a free man" refers to the status of "doing things that they want" (respondents A & C). They have similar life projects of "living a good everyday life", but with different daily life paths due to different values of "good life" for themselves.

Respondent A sees her retirement as a relief from hard, menial, and low-paid work

as a substitute teacher (authority constraint). Her value of life project after retired is to "be free" from authority constraints (working demand) to "live a good every day". She says:

> "Being retired means being free to me. I can do whatever I want and not do whatever I do not want. Life before retirement is all for others, now it is time to just focus on me. I deserve it!"
>
> (translated from respondent A)

For respondent A as a sample of NEG, the main highest-level activity are "care for oneself", "transportation", "reflection/recreation", and "procure and prepare food" (Figure 5 below). The categories of "transportation" and "Procure and prepare food" could be categorized into "Reflection/recreation" activities according to her description. She sees walking as a way to relax and exercise, and regards cooking and doing some groceries as relaxation activities that they do for themselves. Therefore, the two highest-level everyday activity categories for NEG (not yet becoming LPZ) are "Reflection/recreation" and "care for oneself" (everyday activity context), which can be classified as *self-centered activity*, referring to activities that they do to satisfy themselves (Boggatz, 2020). She spends most of her time at home, supermarkets, and parks (geographical context), mainly with her husband (social context). The restrictions of the pandemic in China also make it more difficult for her to hang out with her friends. Otherwise, she would spend some time with her friends in everyday life (social context).
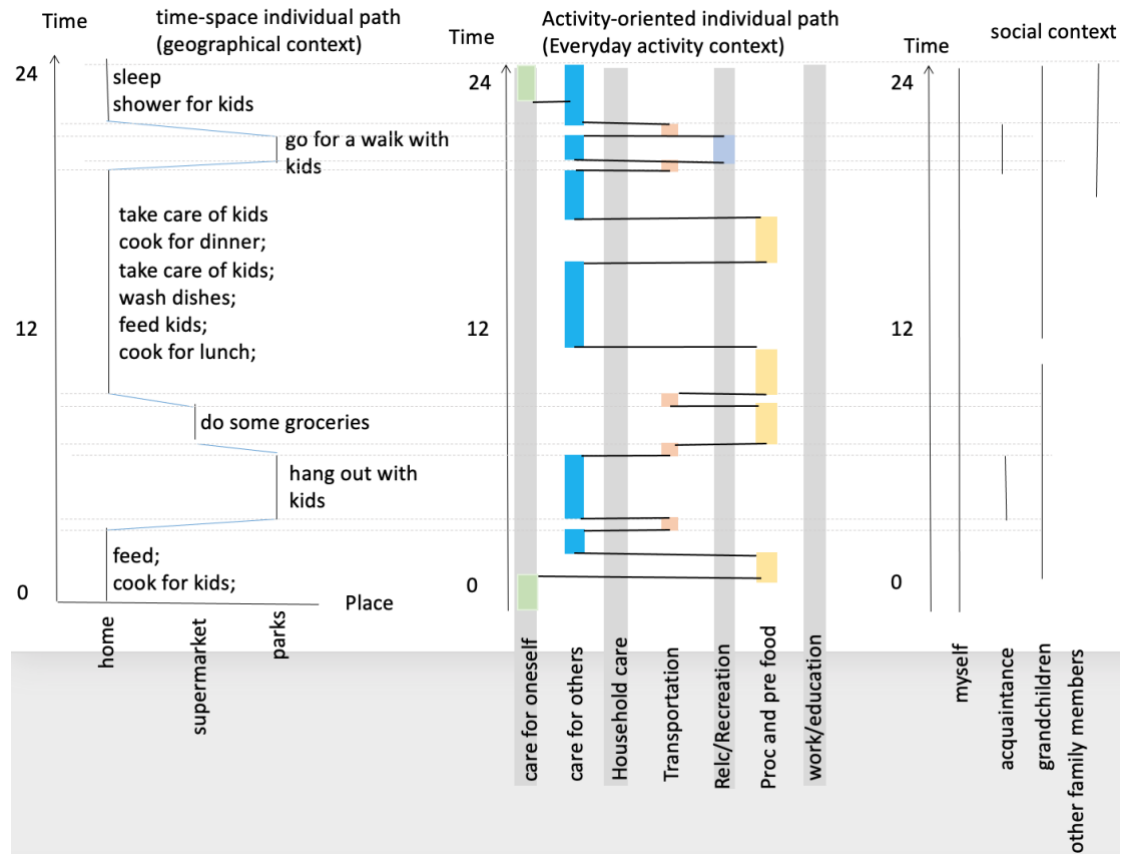
Figure 5 Daily life path of respondent A at an individual level: places they visit (time-space individual path) activities they engaged in (activity oriented individual path) and the social context they experience on the day that I interview. Layout: Jianmei Zhou (2022) inspired from (Ellegård, 2019)

For respondent C, a sample of LPZN who has lived in Xiamen for more than 10 years, her value of life is to "be meaningful" and "live a good every day." She says:

> "The length of life is limited, but the width is unlimited. If we could do many things every day to help people, our width of life is larger. Does this mean that our lives have extended? That is a meaningful life. That's what I want."
>
> (translated from respondents C)

The geographical context is more diverse (Figure 6 below). The highest-level activity of everyday life is the most multiple, diverse, encompassing all activity categories except for "care for others" (Figure 6). However, according to her description, she also cooks for the whole family, not just for herself. In this sense, "procure and prepare food" may relate to the activity of "care for others". Additionally, she worked as a volunteer in the living community once a week before the pandemic, and almost every day during the pandemic. The people she encountered were mostly family members, colleagues who worked together at volunteer groups in the living community, and friends of the same age whom she met through aged university studies (social
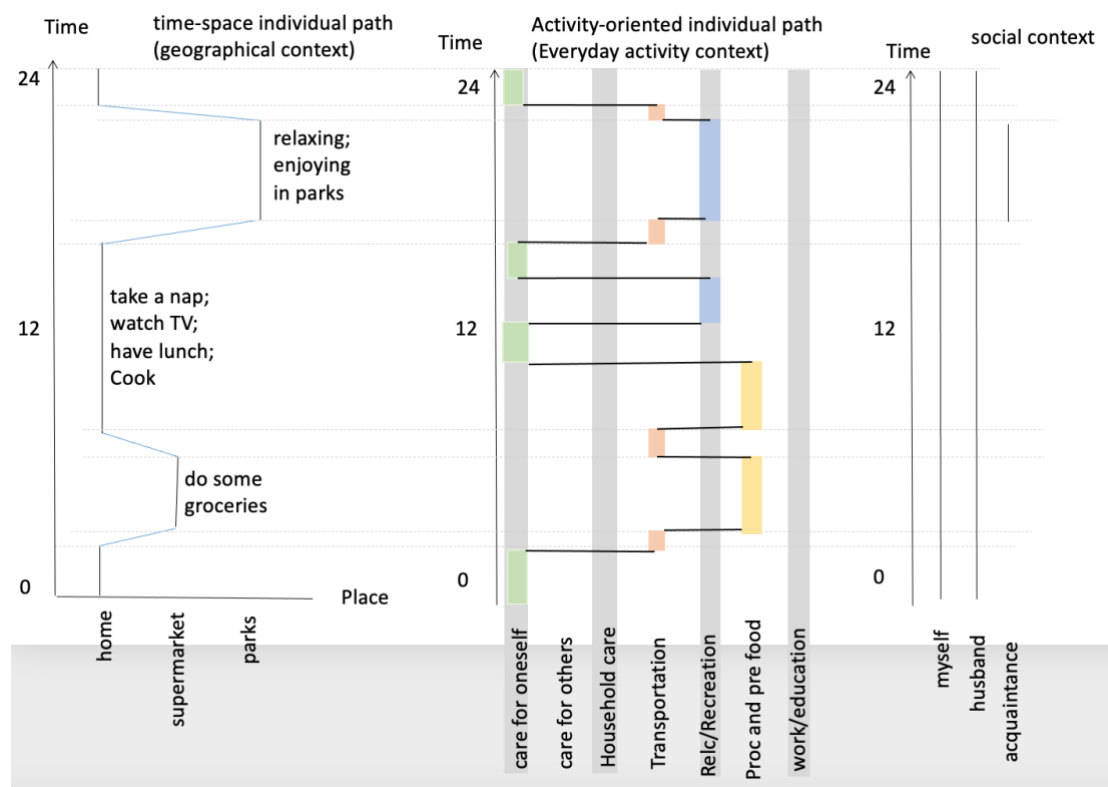
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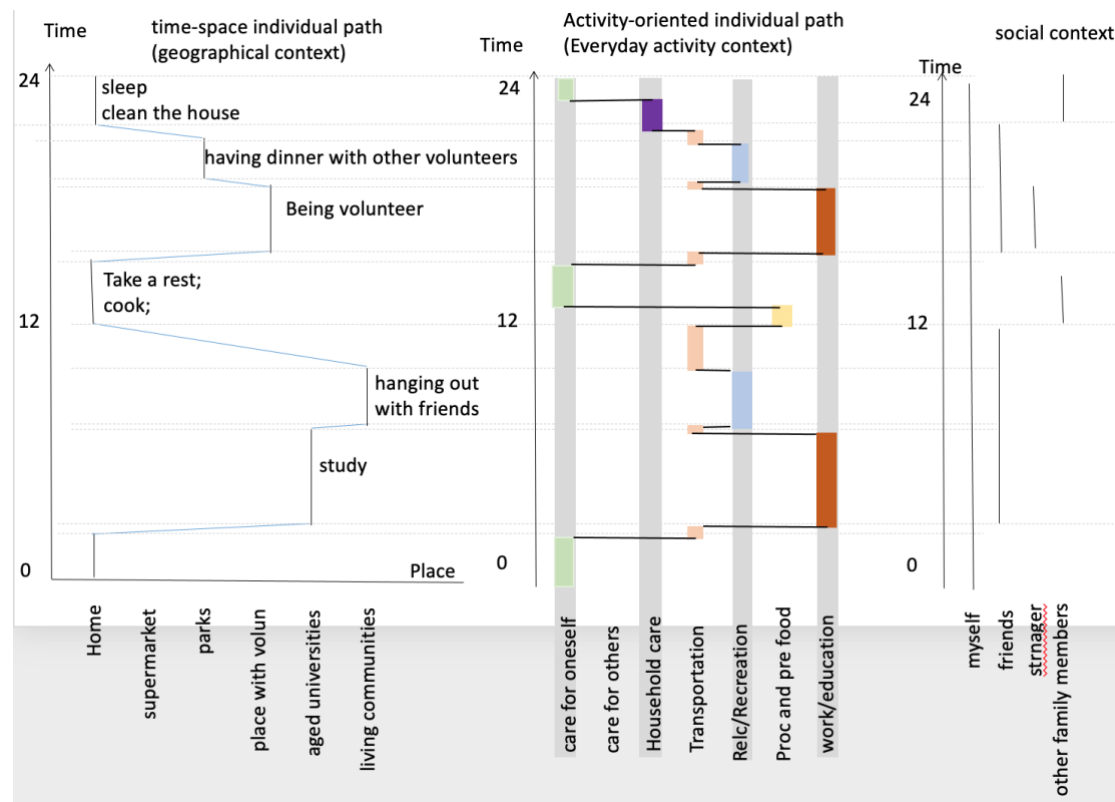
Figure 6 Daily life path of respondent C at an individual level: places they visit (time-space individual path) activities they engaged in (activity oriented individual path) and the social context they experience on the day that I interview. Layout: Jianmei Zhou (2022) inspired from (Ellegård, 2019)

6.3 The role of socio-culture on self-identities

As mentioned in chapter 3, society plays a significant role in shaping self-identities (Ferguson, 2009; Harwood, 2020). The part following is discussing how this self-identity for NEG is influenced by society and guides their everyday life in the context of China from the perspective of the time principle of life course theory and the concepts of constraints in time geography.

6.3.1 For "being a free man"

One aspect of this self-identity (person identity) is "being a free man," which is influenced by the social role of retirement and categorized by age. According to life course theory, age has a social meaning that is constructed by specific socio-historical and geographical factors, which could refer to biological age, societal age, and historical time of age (Bao, 2005; Elder et al., 2002). These different perspectives on

age help to shape the identity of a retired person in the context of China.

Biological age refers to the objective fact of a person's age over their lifetime (Bao, 2005). Different identities come up with different social categorizations, and (biological) age is one of the most popular ways to categorize people in society (Chen, 2013; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). People of NEG are all retired (Table 5). Retirement signifies a person whose age is old enough to be "free" from work's demand (Ekerdt & Koss, 2015; Qian, 2017; Weiss, 2005; Wetzel et al., 2015). NEG does not have much free time in their everyday life before they get retired, and they are free from this authority constraint (working demand) and coupling constraint (other persons depending on their presence) after retired. Linked to the young retirement age in China and current life expectancy (introduced in chapter 1), NEG (55-80) with a good health condition could have the mobility to engage in everyday life activities. Therefore, NEG also feel from the capability constraint (health condition).

In terms of societal age, retirement is an important life event that can be used as a social standard to judge people as "being old" (Liu, 2016). There is a stereotype of ageism in Chinese society that links "being old" with "being useless". Age status refers to a person's social position at different ages and can affect the social attitudes towards older people (Chen, 2013; Shang. & Sun., 2015). In China, social attitudes towards older people have fluctuated, and they are often seen as "useless" by both society and themselves (Shang. & Sun., 2015). Those expectations for older people are deeply rooted in traditional Chinese society (described in 5.5) and have impacts on human behaviors. Young people in China often has the responsibility of supporting and contributing to their families through work, whether they want to or not, as long as they are considered "useful" to families and society (Peng & Cheng, 2019; Yang, 2015). This can be a very tiring experience due to the demands of the working culture in China (as described in 5.1). In this sense, retired people may feel free from the responsibility of supporting their families and free to engage in new activities, thoughts, and experiences without the burden of fulfilling the expectations placed on young people (Weiss, 2005).

Historical time of age highlights the role of the social environment in history based

on the life course theory (Bao, 2005). Chinese society values individualism as NEG grows up (Sun, 2016). As mentioned in 3.1, NEG, who have undergone through the process of China's economic development possesses better social resources. Compared to traditional older people, they are able to use these resources to satisfy their individual goals and desires at a development level after retirement, as introduced in chapter 1. This freedom from past financial insecurity allows NEG to pursue their personal objectives to a greater extent.

6.3.2 For "being a part of the family"

The self-identity (group-based identity) of "being a part of the family" is closely tied to the family ethic-responsible culture in China (described in 5.3). NEG will prioritize this self-identity when faced with a conflict between "being a free man" and "being a part of a family". As discussed in section 6.2, the family plays a significant role in shaping the everyday activities and goals of life. The following analysis will examine how socio-cultural factors influence NEG's self-identity as 'being a part of the family' and choose to become LPZ, based on an analysis of the constraints of everyday life within the socio-cultural context of China.

The arrival of a new family member implies new and very demanding coupling constraints. Children must never be left alone and, if the parent is unable to be present, someone else (typically an older, more mature individual) must be there to supervise (Ellegård, 2019). The specific "ZuoYueZi" culture (described in 5.2) dictates that women who have just given birth and newborns must be taken care of. Elderly family members, who often have plenty of free time due to retirement and are experienced in caring for women and newborns during the 'ZuoYueZi' period, are often called upon to provide help in a short period (28-40 days). This may lead retired people to temporarily return to their caregiving roles in a family group and potentially become LPZ if needed in the future.

NEG is influenced by individualism gradually with the economic development of China. However, NEG's formative years were shaped by the traditional Chinese family ethic culture (described in 5.3), which is heavily influenced by collectivist values (Yan,

2006; Yang, 2015). In this culture, the family is viewed as a cooperative group and all members are considered as 'a part of the family'. Social norms (authority constraints) dictate that the collective interests of the family should take precedence over individual interests (Yan, 2006). Therefore, it is understandable that NEG would choose to become LPZ if their assistance is needed with the arrival of a new grandchild.

Policies, particularly family planning policies (authority constraints), can have a significant and long-lasting impact on the transition and trajectory of everyday life (Chubb, 1998). As previously mentioned in section 5.5, China's family planning policy has evolved from a one-child (1982) to a two-child (2016) to a three-child (2021) now, due to the country's rapidly aging population, unstable secure systems and declining workforce (Goldman, 2021). These policies have a significant influence on young couples' decision to have children (Goldman, 2021), and also on NEG both directly and indirectly (Chubb, 1998).

The One-Child policy makes NEG could have only one child, leading to a strong sense of attachment to this child. The one-child policy was implemented in China in 1982 and ended in 2016 (Goldman, 2021) It was considered the most harsh and controversial family planning policy (Chubb, 1998). NEG at that historical period, were only allowed to have one child and therefore devoted a great deal of time and energy to this child. This is reflected in the following statements by respondents:

> "I only have that one child and we definitely want to help her as much as we can to make her a happy life".
> "I have this only one child, the only wish that I have for now is to hope for him to have a bright future and happy life. To achieve this goal, I will offer my everything if he needs".

<div align="right">(translated from respondents)</div>

The two-child and three-child policies have a direct impact on the children of NEG, which in turn affects NEG indirectly. As described in chapter 5, young couples are often too busy to care for a newborn due to the demanding work environment in China and the lack of adequate maternity leave and the high cost of childcare (capability constraint). While 15 days of leave for fathers and 10 days of leave for couples to care for children under the age of three are helpful, they are not sufficient to meet the

coupling constraint for young children. This authority constraint caused the coupling constraints for kids as well as for adults (Ellegård, 2019).

Welfare policies for kids in China mainly focus on children who are homeless or disabled and lack inclusive welfare kids for families, like daily care (Qiao et al., 2019). The lack of suitable welfare policies for childcare and the high cost of raising a child (which is 6.9 times the GDP per capita in China, including the cost of hiring nannies) make it difficult for young couples to afford childcare (capability constraint) (Liang et al., 2022). In such situations, NEG with free time are often the first choice for young couples to care for their children (Xu & Hua, 2018). As one respondent stated:

> "My daughter is having a second baby. They are a young couple with much stress on making a living life in the urban city. Her mother-in-law is helping to take care of the new infant and she needs me to take care of the older kid. You know, it takes too much effort to educate a kid now. She needs someone to pick the older kid up to schools and interest classes. I am not rich and cannot financially help them, at least I could come and share some stress to reduce their burden."

> "I came to Xiamen since my daughter-in-law was pregnant. Work occupied most of the energy and time of young people. They need someone to help. I was just retired at that time. So I moved to Xiamen to take care of the baby until he went to primary school."

(translated from respondents)

7. Discussion

"An individual plays several roles at the same moment. But more often the roles exclude each other. They have to be carried out within a given duration, at given times and places, and in conjunction with given groups of other individuals and pieces of equipment".

Hägerstrand, 1970, P10

The everyday life of a new and bigger social group-- NEG-- is analyzed in this thesis, which highlights the importance of diversity among older people. The results suggest that the everyday lives of NEG appear to not feel lonely, but happy, and sometimes bored. This finding contrasts with data from a national report on the quality of life for older people in China (Luo & Zhang, 2019), which indicates that feelings of loneliness are prevalent among older people in 31 provinces of China (Luo & Zhang, 2019). Previous research on LPZ has generally viewed this group as vulnerable and has focused on issues such as social adaptation, mental health, and public service policies (described in 3.2). However, compared to LPZ in general, LPZ of NEG (LPZN) in this thesis appear to be less vulnerable although they are facing similar challenges related to adapting to a new living environment and experiencing fatigue due to demanding task-related schedules in their everyday lives.

One of the reasons could relate to their typical age characteristics of "being healthier, better educated, better financial condition and more active mental status" (describe in 3.1). These characteristics, particularly their material and physical features, suggest that their basic needs are met, and they are able to prioritize their higher desires. This may lead them to use their relatively greater resources and fewer constraints and engage in activities that satisfy their spiritual desires, such as volunteering or attending aged universities (as shown in chapter 6). As a result, NEG may feel less lonely and more satisfied with their everyday life, including LPZ of NEG.

The way in which NEG engaged their everyday life is still influenced by certain constraints that could impact the quality of life, as Hägerstrand.(1970) argued that the individuals' life paths are "captured within a net of constraints" and "an individual can never free himself from such constraints" (Hägerstrand, 1970, p. 11).

While NEG may have fewer capability constraints in terms of their material characteristics compared to traditional older people in China. As Hägerstrand (1970) stated that " those who have access to power in domains use much of their energy within their area of competence to remove constraints on activities in lower level domains (Hägerstrand, 1970, p. 19). However, the resources (public facilities for the elderly) that NEG have access to are still not enough. Some NEG attend aged universities or/and volunteer in living communities to have a "meaningful day" (Xu & Shen, 2022). However, the number of universities for the older people in China (76,296) and the number of students enrolled (10. 882 million) at the end of 2019 far exceeded the demand, leading to fierce competition for enrollment in college courses for older people (Li, 2022).

One of the findings from this thesis (discussed in section 6.2.1.1) is that NEG's daily activity spaces are typically within walking distance (within 20 minutes), and *parks near their homes* are a common leisure place. This is not consistent with the research (Gu & Chai, 2015), which found that older people's activity spaces would expand beyond their living communities. It is worth noting that this finding may have been influenced by the pandemic and individual agency to some extent. It is difficult to accurately assess the impact of the pandemic on NEG's everyday life due to the various temporary pandemic policies in China. It is unfortunate that this thesis does not compare NEG's everyday life before and during the pandemic in more detail. Additionally, the findings suggest that there are not enough public facilities or institutions suitable for entertainment and leisure for the elderly in their everyday life and that they have a demand for such resources (as discussed in section 6.2). However, current literature on NEG tends to focus on technological products and travel packages that may satisfy their consumption desires (Emily, 2021; SFN, 2021), rather than addressing the lack of public facilities (such as aged universities) for their mental desires. Urban planners could design more public facilities for older people's recreation, which could be a topic for further research on NEG.

One of the findings of this thesis is that NEG tend to make the same choice to

become LPZ for both objective and subjective reasons when there is a transition event of the arrival of a newborn grandchild in the family. This choice is mutually influenced by three constraints: coupling, authority, and capability.

Objectively, the newly born grandchild requires constant adult supervision to help, guide, and take care of them (*coupling constraint)* (Ellegård, 2019, p. 45). The 996 working culture (described in section 5.1) places a heavy burden on the young generation (*authority constraint*), leaving them little time for their own lives, let alone taking care of children. As previously mentioned, NEG's everyday life activities are also limited by recreation spaces (*capability constraints)*, many NEG have a lot of free time but lack ideas for how to spend their retired time, partly due to the lack of public facilities for older people's recreation (described in 6.2.2). Additionally, there are insufficient children's care institutions and children's welfare policies in Chinese society (described in 6.3.2). These objective conditions make NEG the main force in childcare.

Subjectively, Subjectively, this research has found that NEG choose to give up their familiar and comfortable lives and move to a new city to take on the challenges of becoming LPZ mainly due to their values and self-identities (discussed in section 6.3). Hägerstrand (1970) argued that "people retain identity over time" (Hägerstrand, 1970, p. 9) and that "time", in the context of time geography, is " a continuous dimension with its main constituents: past, now and future" that shapes the "population that consists of individuals of the same kind with the historical period when they are born" (Ellegård, 2019, p. 27). As mentioned in Chapter 3, NEG was born in a collectivist society, where the family is the most important and basic collective unit (Fei, 2012). They were raised with traditional family values (a family-centered culture) in China and value family continuity (Yang, 2015). Based on this core value, older people have a "responsibility ethic" that sees their children and grandchildren as their indispensable responsibility (Yang, 2015), as demonstrated by NEG in the interviews. In their values, "self" does not only represent the individual but also includes the family. Therefore, when there is a conflict between individual interests and family interests, they usually prioritize family interests. As Cheng (2008) stated that individual interests

are *sacrificed* in exchange for overall interests (family interest) (Cheng, 2008). In this sense, their self-identities are both "being a part of a family" and "being themselves". When faced with the transition event of a new grandchild, they prioritize "being part of a family" over "being themselves" which could refer to "being a free man" since NEG are retired. Their trajectory of life is changed by the newly born grandchildren from "self-centered" to "others (grandchildren)-centered" activities, and then back to "self-centered" again when the coupling constraint is reducing (the grandchildren are old enough to enter primary school) (described in 6.2). The family plays a crucial role in arranging NEG's everyday life activities, and this is deeply influenced by their self-identities, which are shaped by social culture and historical background, as Elder et al. (2002) argued in the life course theory (Elder et al., 2002).

However, linked to the diversity of older people, I doubt if all NEG will always prioritize their family interest over themselves subjectively and choose to become LPZ in the future for taking care of grandchildren. ***Firstly***, as the life course theory (Elder et al., 2002) suggests, an individual's development is not only passively restricted by the social-economic system but also influenced by the interplay of "society, history, and the individual." This highlights the importance of individual agency in the social changes of their own development. The fact that the three-child policy did not significantly increase the birth rate demonstrates the importance of individual agency. Xu & Shen (2022) found that some NEG, especially those from wealthy families who can afford it, choose to pay for a nanny to take care of the newborn grandchild and visit them from time to time while maintaining their own lives. ***Secondly***, as discussed in this thesis, this generation of NEG are mainly born in the 60s and 70s and experienced the enormous social changes brought about by China's reform and opening up, the family planning policy, the resumption of college entrance examinations, and the shift from a society that criticized individualism (before the reform and opening up) to one that respects it (after the reform and opening up) (Sun, 2016).

The long river of life is endless. As the younger generation born in the 80s, 90s, and 00s grows older and becomes the main force of NEG in the future, it is uncertain if

they would choose to become LPZ since their lives will be increasingly influenced by free markets and individualism. Their self-identities as NEG may be more centered on "being themselves," rather than "being part of a family." This raises the question of whether this younger generation of NEG in the future will be willing to sacrifice their individual interests for the sake of their family and become LPZ. This is an area that warrants further study. Additionally, how to navigate the tension between individual interests and collective interests in the context of Chinese society is an interesting topic for further research on older people in China, given the unique Chinese family culture.

8. Conclusion

With a qualitative in-depth interview and time-geographic approach, this thesis set out to critically analyze the everyday life of a new and bigger social group---NEG. This thesis aims to highlight that diversity of older people should be addressed regarding their values of "good everyday life". The research questions focused on what NEG's everyday life looks like, how they arrange their everyday life within constraints, and the relations of the way they engage in everyday life with self-identities that are embedded by historic and social times. Eight NEG were interviewed online and categorized into three elderly groups by different life periods of transition event with having a newborn grandchild. The study approached everyday life activities following the time-geographic approach and life course theory, which provided a method for visualizing the everyday life path in different contexts while analyzing the constraints and addressing the relations of their self-identities influenced by the socio-culture of China.

NEG would make the same choice to become LPZ with the newly born grandchild in their family if they are needed. Without taking family interest as a priority, NEG would plan more self-centered activities to "live a good every day", depending on what "good "means to them by their self-identities. To live a good everyday life, some of NEG enjoy being "free" from authority constraints (working demand), capacity constraints (health condition) and coupling constraints (other persons depending on their presence) and having choices to do whatever they want to do and not do whatever they do not want to do. Some of NEG enjoy being volunteers or learning at aged universities. Meaningful means good life to them. As LPZ of NEG, their goal is to "take care of grandchildren" instead of "living a good everyday life" when their grandchildren are too young, resulting in more others-centered activities, less social relations, and limited activity spaces. The activity spaces for elderly people seem barren. Building all age-friendly public facilities are necessary.

I trace the self-identities of NEG that were shaped by historic times and doubt the tendency of becoming LPZ for the future generation of NEG. In this rapid social change,

people who are born in the 80s, 90s, or in later years may choose differently for being through different social change that shapes different self-identities, as some researchers asserted that the process of aging itself links tightly to society and retired people arrange their everyday life diversely by different values, with daily constraints (Ellegård, 2019; Hägerstrand, 1970; Westerhof et al., 2012).

The answers to the research questions that this thesis found indicate that it would be necessary to address the diversity of older people in such a big aging population in China and family could be a vital role in their everyday life arrangements. It has a great demand for public facilities (parks, aged universities, etc.) for each older people, to satisfy the different values of older people and gain the capacities that they need. Moreover, it is imperative to make some welfare policies for fostering kids, such as childcare institutions to reduce coupling constraints in the long term.

The main contribution of this thesis is as follows. **Firstly,** this thesis enhances the case study on the diversity of older people in response to the call of the Decade of Healthy Aging Action (WHO, 2020). **Secondly,** this thesis focuses on the NEG which is a new social group and has not been studied well within Chinese academia. **Thirdly,** this thesis demonstrates the contradiction between the self-identities of "being a free man" and "being a part of a family" within Chinese society, which may be investigated more in the future.

Meanwhile, it is essential to highlight the following limitations of this study. **Firstly,** the data was collected through online, which is susceptible to response bias, as NEG with poor digital skills may have been accidentally omitted. **Secondly,** this thesis does not consider the impact of Covid-19 on their everyday life activities. The different individual life paths of NEG in the time period before, during, and after Covid-19 could be further studied. **Thirdly,** the way to visualize everyday activity at the aggregate level is learned from but a new application of the time-geographic approach, which needs to be explored more scientifically.

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10. Appendix

Semi-constructed interview:

Most specific questions are asked and followed by the answers from respondents. It is flexible but my interview guide and topic direction is trying to answer the research questions and focus on the key words of "activities of everyday life", "constraints of everyday life", "self-identities of being old/retired person", and the "socio-culture impact on their identities".

10.1 Interview guides 1st edition

1.Basic information:
   -Age, gender, address,
   -How long have you been in Xiamen?
   -Why do you move to Xiamen? (if not native)
   -Who do you live with?
   -What are you doing now? (retired or not, financial independent or not)

2.Feelings of everyday life
   - What do you think of your retired everyday life?
   - How do they scale the satisfaction of life from 1 to 10?
   - Do they feel lonely after retirement?
   -Why?

3.Arrangement of everyday life
   -What activities you engage in your everyday life?
   -How often do you do those activities?
   -Where and who accompany you with everyday activities?
   -Why do you arrange your everyday life in this way? (constraints)

10.2 Interview guides ²ⁿᵈ edition (self-identities added)

1.Feelings of everyday life

-What do you think of everyday life after moving to Xiamen and becoming LPZ?

-Is there differences between the life before and after becoming LPZ? If yes, what are they?

-Which everyday life you prefer?

2.Culture-socio role

-Why do you choose to move to Xiamen for taking care of your grandchild?

- Do you move to Xiamen spontaneously or were asked to?

3.Identities of themselves

-What do you think of being retired person or being old?

- What would you describe yourself with three words?

- Do you identify yourself as a "old" person?

- What do you think of being old means to you?

- Why do you think in that way?