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# **Neighbourhood Attachment and Participation in Chinese Cities: A Case Study of Chengdu**

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**June 2021**

## **Abstract**

The central aim of this research is to critically examine the experience and determinants of neighbourhood attachment and the extent of neighbourhood participation in different types of urban neighbourhoods in inland cities of China. The study is informed by an increasing amount of theoretical and empirical research regarding the neighbourhood, and also draws upon research that has made linkages between social interaction, physical environment and place. The study is motivated by the fact that there has been limited research on neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood participation in urban China, especially in inland cities. Existing Chinese case studies only explore a handful of types of urban neighbourhoods, such as work unit compounds and commercial-housing neighbourhoods, while inadequate attention has been paid to other types of urban neighbourhoods, such as the resettlement-housing neighbourhood. This study covers five major types of neighbourhoods which represent the majority of urban neighbourhoods in China. The study employs social capital theory and residential satisfaction theory and takes a constructionist stance and qualitative case study approach, involving 31 in-depth interviews and intensive non-participant observation to investigate neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood participation in five different types of urban neighbourhoods in urban Chengdu.

The main finding of this thesis is that there are varied experiences of neighbourhood attachment and different levels of neighbourhood participation in different types of Chinese urban neighbourhoods. Significantly, compared with current studies which find no evidence of emotional attachment in commercial-housing neighbourhoods, this research argues that residents of the new commercial-housing neighbourhood have emotional attachment which is based mainly on their intensive neighbourly interactions. This study also argues that a good neighbourhood environment, neighbourhood facilities and services not only generate functional attachment but also promote neighbourly interactions which contribute to the development of emotional attachment. Comparing formal participation with informal participation, results indicate that residents are more inclined to participate in informal participation. Findings also show that neighbourhood organisations played a crucial role in promoting high levels of informal participation. There was no conspicuous evidence suggesting that social capital exerted significant effects on informal participation.

Regarding neighbourhood attachment, this study found that the majority of residents living in the SOE neighbourhood, resettlement-housing neighbourhood, public institution

neighbourhood and new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have emotional attachment, while those in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood tended not to have emotional attachment. The majority of residents who live in the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, old commercial-housing neighbourhood and new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have functional attachment, while those in the SOE neighbourhood and public institution neighbourhood tended not to have functional attachment.

In relation to participation, this study reveals that the SOE neighbourhood residents tended to have a low level of formal participation while the resettlement-housing neighbourhood tended to have a medium to high level of formal participation. Residents from the public institution neighbourhood tended to have a medium level of formal participation while those from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have a medium to low level of formal participation. Residents in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have a low level of formal participation. The study shows that residents from the SOE, public institution and new commercial-housing neighbourhoods tended to have a medium to high level of informal participation while those in the resettlement-housing and new commercial-housing neighbourhoods tended to have a high level of informal participation.

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## Acknowledgements

My sincere and deep gratitude first goes to my supervisors, Dr Amin Kamete and Professor Ya Ping Wang. Your guidance, patience and professional standards have inspired and enriched my growth as a researcher. Dr Amin Kamete and Professor Ya Ping Wang are approachable, knowledgeable and responsible. They have safeguarded my own research interest, provided intellectual assistance for my study, supported me to attend international conferences and helped me solve life problems. I appreciate your delicate support and encouragement, which gave me so much strength to accomplish this work.

This has been a long journey and so many unexpected things have happened. In the process of my PhD study, my mum got cancer. I suspended my study and went back to China to look after her. It was the most difficult time in my life, with a lot of tears. I also lost my beloved grandma who raised me up. Her death was heart-breaking and gave me a heavy blow. These nightmares have impacted this project in various ways. Nevertheless, I would like to thank Professor Moira Munro and the College of Social and Political Science, who supported me to extend my study. I also want to thank those doctors who helped my mum and grandpa in the hospital. This research would not have been completed without your help.

I would like to particularly thank my friend Jinqiao Long. No one else could have provided such support over the past year. In the darkest time of my life, it was your support that kept my heart warm. I also would like to thank my friend Dr Sisi Zou, who looked after me in the last few years. I am glad you walked with me on this journey. I would like to thank my friend Susanna Oelschlagel, who helped me improve my English.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the participants of my research. I am grateful for your trust in sharing your stories with me. It is your voices, experiences and life stories that enrich my research with colour and depth.

Finally, I want to give my deepest gratitude to my parents, who gave me selfless love and support to pursue my studies in the UK. It would be impossible for me to study in a foreign country without your unconditional love. Additional special thanks to my fur babies, who provided me with emotional support.

## **Authors Declaration**

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed Name: Liyuan Zhuang

Signature: Liyuan Zhuang

## Abbreviations

HOA	Home-owners associations
NPC	National People's Congress
PMC	Property management company
PRC	People's Republic of China
RC	Residents' committees
SOE	State-owned enterprise

# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction and background

### 1.1.1 Global urbanisation

Over the past several decades, urbanisation has become a significant global phenomenon which can be considered one of the most powerful and observable anthropogenic forces on the planet (Dawson *et al.*, 2009, p.7). Urbanisation can be deemed as a process of the gradual transformation from the traditional rural society dominated by agriculture to the modern urban society that is based on manufacturing and services. In 1957, only one-third of the world's population lived in cities and towns, but in 2018, over half lived in urban areas (Cui and Shi, 2012, p.1; UN, 2019, p.55). The trend in urbanisation is not the same in the continents of the world. The most urbanised regions are Latin America and the Caribbean with 82% and 81% of its population living in urban areas in 2018, followed by Europe (74%) and Oceania (68%) (UN, 2019, p.28). Asia and Africa have relatively low levels of urbanisation, about 50% and 43% of their population living in urban areas (UN, 2019, p.23). The global process of rapid urbanisation is expected to continue in the foreseeable future, with the majority of the urban population increase occurring in developing countries.

Globally, more population is living in cities than rural (UN, 2019, p.57). City, as a centre of production and work, is still the economic engine for contemporary urban growth (Storper and Scott, 2009), which is closely related to the high wage premium, one of the most important reasons for people to migrate to cities. Recently, its role in favour of the process of consumption through providing good access to amenities significantly improves urban residents' quality of life, another attraction of cities. However, fast and unplanned urban growth would influence the whole country development, because of the inadequate infrastructures and myopic policies (Heilig, 2012). The evidence of some countries in South America and Asia strongly verifies the negative influence of this kind of urbanisation. The growing number of urban populations also cause rapid urban sprawl, pollution and environmental degradation (UN, 2019, p.1).

The rapid expansion of the boundaries of cities and towns was linked to the boom years of development in some land rich developed countries, such as America, Canada and Australia, but nowadays it is taking place in cities all over the developing countries. (Wang and Kintrea, 2021, p.13). In Africa and Asia, urban population growth has consumed large areas of land

around major cities. The rapid industrial development in these countries is accompanied by a variety of neighbourhoods being constructed in the peripheral area of large cities. These neighbourhoods include commercially constructed housing estates of different standards, gated or semi-gated neighbourhoods for the upper crust, tenement and high-rise apartments for the middle class and state-supported low-income housings (Wang and Keitrea, 2021, p.14). However, informal settlements such as urban villages and various slum resettlement are increasing at a large scale.

In Africa, the majority of the urban population still settles in impoverished slums and squatter settlements which have poor living conditions characterised by poor housing, restricted access to water supplies, little or no sanitation and inadequate health care facilities (Wang and Kintrea, 2019, p.148). China and India, the two largest developing countries of Asia not only have experienced fast economic growth and intensive industrialisation but also accommodate the world's largest population of slum dwellers. Although an increasing number of middle-class populations live in well-maintained neighbourhoods in these two countries, inequalities in terms of income, living standards, housing and access to infrastructures and public services between rural-to-urban migrants and established residents still exist in some areas (Wang and Kintrea, 2019, p.148).

### 1.1.2 Urbanisation in China

Since 1978, China has been experiencing an unprecedented pace of urbanisation and economic growth. The urbanisation rate increased from 19.39% in 1980 to over 64% in 2021 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021), which is recognised as the fastest urbanisation process in human history (Chai, 2014, p.183). With rapid urbanisation, Chinese cities have developed at an extraordinary rate in population, size and scale of land use over the last three decades. The proportion of the total urban population has increased from about 20% of the total population in 1980 to over 53% in 2013 and the number of cities grew from about 250 to over 650 during that same period (Wang and Wang, 2014, p.6).

The speed and scale of China's urban growth have been facilitated by some important factors, such as the economic reforms that began in 1978, intra-country migration policies, increasing urban-rural income disparities, surplus rural agricultural labourers and the conversion of farmland for urban use (Gong *et al.*, 2012, p.843). An increase in economic opportunities stimulated migration from rural to urban areas. Since 1978, hundreds of millions of Chinese migrant workers have moved from rural to urban areas in order to find

employment opportunities (Du and Li, 2010, p.93). According to Gong *et al.* (2012, p.844), internal migration in China contributes to the availability of many rural labourers for productive activities in urban areas. These migrants have been and remain a significant part of the urban labour force.

The sharp increase in urban populations and economic growth has given rise to a huge demand for urban land, resulting in the continuous expansion of urban areas (Bai *et al.*, 2012; Wang and Wang, 2014). Large amounts of agricultural land have been converted to urban and industrial purposes, such as the construction of urban settlements, roads and stand-alone industrial sites (Ho and Lin, 2004, p.758; Xiao *et al.*, 2006, p.70). During the period 1997 to 2006, a total of 12,869 km<sup>2</sup> was transformed into built-up areas in China (Bai *et al.*, 2012, p.135). In the same period, the average annual growth of the built-up area in 135 cities was 5.7 km<sup>2</sup> every year; and this figure is much higher still in larger cities (Bai *et al.*, 2012, p.135). For instance, since the 1990s, in Beijing, Shanghai and many provincial capital cities, residential land use has doubled or even tripled over a short period of 20 years (Wang and Wang, 2014, p.6). For example, in Beijing between 2001 and 2012, residential land use experienced the greatest expansion of all land use, followed by industrial and commercial land use (Wong *et al.*, 2019, p.2775). Thus, the development and transformation of urban neighbourhoods in China are connected with rapid urbanisation.

### 1.1.3 Neighbourhood creation and transformation

To appropriately refrain from the negative impacts of urbanisation, such as the infrastructural deficit, social segregation and environmental degradation which have occurred in those highly urbanised developing countries, it is important to pay attention to and take advantage of the roles of neighbourhoods. Governments have been conventionally inclined to solve social issues through neighbourhood policies (Van Kempen and Wissink, 2014, p. 95). In fact, in contemporary China, neighbourhoods are considered one of the platforms for policy implementation.

During the socialist period from 1949 to 1978, work compounds represented the dominant residential form in urban China (Xu and Yang, 2009 p.100). Apartments were seen as a form of social welfare to be developed and distributed directly by the work unit, and they were tied up to each occupant's work (Wang and Murie, 1999, p.1478). The characteristic of high consistency with the government's aims and regulations in work compounds leaves little space for neighbourhood governance. Alongside the reform of state-owned enterprises in the



post-socialist period, the paid transfer of land use rights and housing reform triggered market-driven housing provision (Wang and Murie, 1999, p.1480; Zhu *et al.*, 2012, p.2441), leading to tremendous spatial and social transformations of Chinese cities. Housing reforms have paved the way for people to choose their places of residence through the market. Consequently, urban residents have been able to choose between public and private housing and between homeownership and renting (Zhu *et al.*, 2012, p.2439). Commercial-housing neighbourhoods sharply increased in the suburbs and on redevelopment sites in inner cities (Zhu *et al.*, 2012, p.2441).

Urbanisation and institutional reforms led to tremendous changes not only in terms of neighbourhood forms and housing preferences but also urbanites' lifestyles and residential mobility (Zhu *et al.*, 2012). Chinese cities have changed from places of production to places of consumption. With the relaxation of social and spatial restrictions, urban citizens started to experience more personal autonomy in relation to the intensification of consumer culture and increasing opportunities for leisure activities (Chai, 2014, p.186). For residents of the work unit, the activity space expanded beyond the work unit compound, and at the same time, it became individualised and diversified. Unlike the previous work unit arrangement in cities, residents in the new neighbourhood come from different social and economic backgrounds. These challenges call for the transformation of governance at the neighbourhood level. The Chinese government aims to construct a 'harmonious society' by taking part in neighbourhood management, performing political and social functions (Zhu, 2014, p.44). Since the mid-1990s, an administrative strategy of community building (*shequ jianshe*) which was intended to turn the neighbourhood into a social institution instead of serving the welfare function of the work unit was initiated by the state. This has meant restructuring community governance and reinforcing the provision of social services (Yip, 2012, p.231; Zhu, 2015, p.44).

Gated communities, as the dominant form of contemporary urban neighbourhoods (Lu *et al.*, 2018, p.144), unsurprisingly become the objective of community building. China's gated or walled form of residence can be traced back to before the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) (Wu, 2005, p.235; Huang and Low, 2008, p.185). Although the degree of 'gatedness' is different from one neighbourhood to another, different types of enclosed neighbourhoods have been built in different historical periods and look similar across the nation (Huang and Low, 2008, p.183). Although Western scholars mainly focus on the negative effects of gated communities, Chinese gated neighbourhoods with their different

backgrounds embody the collectivism-oriented culture that is deeply embedded in Chinese society (Huang and Low, 2008, p.183). Some scholars argue that in China, gates and walls help define groups of people and cultivate social cohesion and solidarity (Wu, 2005, p.251; Breitung, 2012, p.284).

In 2016, the State Council of the PRC, combined with China's cabinet and the Community Party's Central Committee issued a directive that called for an end to gated communities (Wang and Pojani, 2020, p.505). The new government directive aims to stop the construction of new gated communities and gradually open existing neighbourhoods to the public. However, the new government directive sparked fierce debate and faced huge criticism from the public. One of the reported reasons is that this directive contradicts the Property Right Law of the PRC, which states 'roads and other public areas and facilities within a building zone are jointly owned by owners, with the exception of the public roads belonging to city ownerships' (Hamama and Liu, 2020, p.5).

This policy has not been implemented officially in China, albeit a pilot study in some newly built neighbourhoods in Beijing (Hamama and Liu, 2020, p.5; Wang and Pojani, 2020, p.518). How to open existing gated neighbourhoods is still being studied. Some scholars suggest that the key matters of concern are creating defensible spaces, applying traffic calming devices, devolving decision-making power to neighbourhood committees, balancing funding streams between the centre and the peripheries, and reviewing property laws (Wang and Pojani, 2020, p.518).

Indeed, to introduce a new mechanism for the creation of urban space as opposed to gated communities, it is crucial to increase the engagement of bottom-up forces with shared values (Hamama and Liu, 2020, p.5). Residents' needs, feelings and interests should be regarded as the most important elements in the outcome of neighbourhood-oriented policies (Zhu *et al.*, 2012, p.2440). As a consequence of failing to recognise residents' needs, feelings and interests, a large number of homeowners are in clear opposition to the new government directive (Hamama and Liu, 2020, p.5). Urbanites particularly mention that perceiving a sense of insecurity is at the top of the list of their concerns if they live in a neighbourhood without walls and gates (Wang and Pojani, 2020, p.512).

Given this situation, it is necessary to explore how residents feel living in their current neighbourhoods. It is vital to obtain a better understanding of neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood participation, especially among different types of urban neighbourhoods.

Hence, in addition to focusing on changes to the physical structure of the gated neighbourhood and neighbourhood governance, residents' feelings and attitudes regarding current neighbourhoods are deserving of academic attention.

#### 1.1.4 Neighbourhood attachment and participation

Neighbourhood attachment is a form of place attachment generated by neighbourly interactions in daily life, which fosters emotions and affection for the neighbourhood and cultivates group and individual identity (Zhu *et al.*, 2012, p.2442). It is considered a key determinant for explaining people's feelings of closeness to the place where they perceive a sense of safety and satisfaction (Lu *et al.*, 2018, p.145). Neighbourhood attachment represents a good relationship between residents and neighbourhoods (Lu *et al.*, 2018, p.145). Despite its potential disadvantages, the majority of researchers hold the view that neighbourhood attachment has positive impacts for residents and neighbourhoods because it provides a sense of security and identity to residents, as well as generating perceptions of cohesion, liveability, integration and stability in a place (Low and Altman, 1992; Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001; Giuliani, 2003; Beumer, 2010; Comstock *et al.*, 2010; Livingston *et al.*, 2010; Wu and Logan, 2016).

Neighbourhood participation is understood as residents' voluntary engagement in neighbourhood or community affairs and activities, which is crucial for sustainable community development (Zhu, 2015, p.44). Many scholars and policymakers emphasise the importance of neighbourhood participation. They state that neighbourhood participation carries not only beneficial effects for individuals' daily lives, but also the neighbourhood, community and social development (Claridge, 2004; Tumber, 2013). Neighbourhood participation also promotes residents' feelings of safety in the neighbourhood (Marschall, 2004, p.232).

In the West, there is extensive literature on neighbouring, neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood participation (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Low and Altman, 1992; Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001; Giuliani, 2003; Beumer, 2010; Comstock *et al.*, 2010; Livingston *et al.*, 2010; Tumber, 2013). In China, where the neighbourhood has recently become a hot topic (Wu, 2018; Zhu, 2020; Wong *et al.*, 2020), there has been relatively less material published on neighbourhood attachment and residents' participation. Due to the nation's rapid urbanisation and economic growth, different types of neighbourhoods have experienced a profound transition in urban China (Wang and Wang, 2014). This transition

has resulted in changes both inside and outside the neighbourhood in terms of the physical environment, resident composition, neighbourhood governance and neighbourly relations (Wu, 2012). However, there is inconclusive evidence about changing neighbourhoods in the post-reform period and the mechanisms of attachment in urban neighbourhoods, while the variations in neighbourhood interaction, attachment and participation across different urban neighbourhoods are even less explored.

Existing studies mainly focus on the work unit compound and commercial-housing neighbourhoods (Wu, 2005; Huang and Low, 2008; Breitung, 2012; Zhu *et al.*, 2012), while inadequate attention has been paid to other types of urban neighbourhoods. For instance, the resettlement-housing neighbourhood is barely discussed (see Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10 of this thesis). Some literature has investigated neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood participation in some megacities and coastal cities in China (Du and Li, 2010; Wu, 2012; Zhu, 2015; Lu *et al.*, 2018), but less work has been done on inland cities. As discussed above, neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood participation in urban China are very understudied topics and require urgent research. To contribute to filling this gap, this study investigates neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood participation in five different types of urban neighbourhoods in urban China.

## 1.2 Research aim and questions

The central aim of this research is to critically examine the experience and determinants of neighbourhood attachment and the extent of neighbourhood participation in different types of urban neighbourhoods in China. As most large urban neighbourhoods are new and indigenous existing research on neighbourhood issues are very limited, especially in inland regions. This study will borrow the urban neighbourhood concept and related theories developed in the west and apply and evaluate them in the Chinese context.

### Main Research question

The main research question of this research: To what extent do urban residents perceive and experience neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood participation in different types of urban neighbourhoods in Chengdu? To answer this main research question, four secondary questions are set as follow.

## Secondary research questions

1. How do residents experience emotional attachment in different types of urban neighbourhoods? How can we explain this?
2. How do residents experience functional attachment in different types of urban neighbourhoods? How can we explain this?
3. What is the level of formal participation in the different types of urban neighbourhoods? Why is this the case?
4. What is the level of informal participation in the different types of urban neighbourhoods? Why is this the case?

## 1.3 Chengdu as a case study

This study takes a constructionist stance and uses a qualitative approach, characterised by semi-structured interviews. In terms of design, the study uses the case study as the main approach. Chengdu and one example from each of the five main different types of urban neighbourhoods were selected as case studies.

The detailed research design and the background of the city of Chengdu are presented in the methodology chapter (see Chapter 6). There are two reasons for the choice of Chengdu as the site of the case study. The first is that the existing research pays disproportionate attention to China's megacities and coastal cities, with little attention given to land-locked urban centres in the west.

To the best of my knowledge, although Chengdu is one of the largest hubs in southwestern China, there is a dearth of research that investigates neighbourhood issues in Chengdu, and there is no published paper in relation to neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood participation in Chengdu. However, due to the 'Go West' policy, Chengdu, as the capital city of the western province of Sichuan, has experienced significant urban change since the 1990s (Zhang *et al.*, 2020, p.3). With strong economic growth and millions of new migrants, Chengdu can provide a particularly good reflection of Chinese cities regarding the issue of neighbourhood social interaction, attachment and participation and what it implies for social and neighbourhood stability (Schneider *et al.*, 2005).

Second, in terms of neighbourhood development, the Chengdu municipal government pays much attention to building sustainable communities. It launched the ‘Urban & Rural Community Development’ project in 2016 (Wu, 2018). This project aimed to promote neighbourhood development and governance, enhance a sense of well-being among residents and address local issues by using local resources. The RC and other social institutions jointly applied for project funding from the Municipal Civil Affairs Department. The joint project team obtained one year to improve the community, and especially to raise community awareness, to increase neighbourhood attachment, to foster social capital and to increase neighbourhood participation. The city of Chengdu was the only metropolis in China where this project was carried out (Zhang *et al.*, 2020, p.3). Therefore, as the only city which implemented the project, Chengdu is the best choice to illustrate neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood participation.

Taken together, the development of Chengdu in terms of neighbourhood forms, neighbourhoods organisations and neighbourhood governance presents a general trend in China. This is not to say that Chengdu can be seen as a representative of all cities in China, but the story in Chengdu may raise issues of interest for other large inland cities in the context of marketisation. For these reasons, Chengdu can be considered a starting point for understanding other large inland cities in China.

## 1.4 Thesis structure

This thesis consists of 11 chapters, including the present chapter- Introduction.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on neighbourhoods and neighbourhood attachment. It discusses the definition of neighbourhoods, outlines the importance of neighbourhood attachment, distinguishes between the concepts of ‘community’ and ‘neighbourhood’, examines different forms of neighbourhood attachment and discusses different determinants that drive neighbourhood attachment.

Chapter 3 continues the literature review, focusing on neighbourhood participation. It discusses the definition of neighbourhood participation, outlines the importance of neighbourhood attachment, examines different forms of neighbourhood participation and discusses determinants that influence neighbourhood participation.

Chapter 4 reviews the prior studies on neighbourhood development in China and serves to establish a background for this study. It describes neighbourhood transformation, looks at the concept of gated communities, examines neighbourhood governance in urban China and reviews the literature on neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood participation in different types of Chinese neighbourhoods.

Chapter 5 provides a review of relevant theories and outlines the analytical framework used in research. I will focus on social capital theory and residential stratification theory and explain the reasons for adopting Putnam's social capital theory and Galster's residential satisfaction theory. This chapter articulates the specific theoretical framework of this research to investigate neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood participation in Chinese cities.

Chapter 6 outlines the research methodology and discusses the selection of appropriate research philosophy, the research strategy, the research design, methods of data collection, interviewee recruitment process, and the data analysis method. This chapter also contains my reflections and a discussion of research ethics.

Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10 are the empirical analysis chapters, which include the research findings. Chapter 7 presents the findings regarding emotional attachment among the five urban neighbourhoods in urban Chengdu. This analysis helps to address the first research question. Chapter 8 provides the findings regarding functional attachment among the five urban neighbourhoods in the city. This analysis helps to answer the second research question. Chapter 9 presents the findings on formal participation among the five urban neighbourhoods. This analysis helps to answer the third research question. Chapter 10 presents the findings of informal participation among the five urban neighbourhoods, helping to answer the fourth question.

Chapter 11 is the overall conclusion chapter. It will first draw together the main findings to answer the research questions. Following that, this chapter highlights this study's contributions and policy implications. This chapter ends with a discussion of the study's limitations and recommendations for future research directions.

# Chapter 2 Research on Neighbourhoods and Neighbourhood Attachment

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on neighbourhoods and neighbourhood attachment. The overall aims of this chapter are to discuss the concept of neighbourhood, distinguish between 'community' and 'neighbourhood', examine neighbourhood attachment and discuss the different determinants that drive neighbourhood attachment. It begins by examining some broad concepts. First, the definition of the neighbourhood is described in Section 2.2, then Section 2.3 discusses the differences between the concepts of community and neighbourhood. Section 2.4 discusses the importance of the neighbourhood. Section 2.5 discusses the different forms of neighbourhood attachment. Section 2.6 presents an analysis of the drivers of neighbourhood attachment. Finally, Section 2.7 concludes the chapter.

## 2.2 Defining neighbourhood

A neighbourhood is a universally existing concept of human settlement which can be found in all periods, cultures, and both rural and urban areas (Talen, 2018, p.11). It is often considered a living area, a place of work or a family environment (Lebel *et al.*, 2007, p.2). Although the neighbourhood is often referred to and employed as a viable, relevant and important setting for empirical research, many researchers claim that 'neighbourhood' is still an ambiguous concept which is difficult to define precisely (Talen, 2018; Galster, 2019) and 'there is still no consensus on its definition' (Jenks and Dempsey, 2007, p.153). The definition of a neighbourhood can differ from person to person, even between individuals living relatively close to each other. The difficulty arises from the term 'neighbourhood' adequately encompassing a physical construct, functional construct and social construct (Jenks and Dempsey, 2007, p.155). When employed by academics, practitioners, policy makers and residents, this term can be used to point to different features, such as administrative boundaries, depending on which features are prioritised. Despite these difficulties, great efforts have been made by researchers from distinctive educational backgrounds to conceptualise and theorise neighbourhood.

In a broad sense, a neighbourhood can be seen as a local place where people live and to which people attach meaning (Lupton, 2003, p.4; Young Foundation, 2010, p.13; Ujang and



Zakariya, 2015, p.710). Yi-Fu Tuan (1975, p.152) describes a local place as ‘a centre of meaning constructed by experience’ that is considered important to the lives of people over time. Tuan (1975, p.152) acknowledges a local place as a physical space which is experienced by different people. John Agnew, a famous geographer, points out that a local place contains three elements: location, locale and a sense of place (Agnew, 1987, p.27). For Agnew, location refers to the objective position based on geographic features such as longitude and latitude, while the locale is the physical and social context within which social relations develop. A sense of place is the subjective side of a place, which encompasses the emotional attachment that people have to a place. Both Yi-Fu Tuan and Agnew claim that people connect with a place psychologically. They consider that a physical space becomes a place when people give meaning to it. They, therefore, suggest that a place or a neighbourhood is a product of human activity and a site of human experience.

Some scholars define a neighbourhood based on its physical and geographical boundaries (such as postal codes or census tracts). For instance, Keller shows that a neighbourhood is a ‘place with physical and symbolic boundaries’ (1968, p.89). Golab defines a neighbourhood as ‘a physical or geographical entity with specific boundaries’ (1982, p.72). Mavoa *et al.* (2019, p.2) identify three main types of neighbourhood definitions frequently used in research on the built environment and public health: administrative units, circular buffers and road network buffers. However, wholly physically or spatially based definitions of ‘neighbourhood’ are quite rare. Theorists such as Golab, who states that the ‘neighbourhood’ is spatially defined, invariably acknowledge its close relation with social phenomena.

The ‘neighbourhood’ could also be conceptualised as a functional entity: a provider of services and facilities within certain distances, a physical construct that supports the needs of the people living there (Hallman, 1984, p.14; Barton, 2000, p.5). Urban Task Force (2003) states that a neighbourhood should equip itself with at least a primary school, primary healthcare, local shops, some open space and a pub within 600 metres of sustainable residential housing. Others assume that the same services, as well as a café/restaurant, should be provided within 900 metres of residential areas (Aldous, 1992, p.72). Barton (2000, p.96; 2000, p.125) highlights that a primary school, a bus stop and local shops should be within ‘easy walking distance’, or 400 metres, of a neighbourhood. Despite the lack of consensus regarding what kinds of services and facilities should be present in the ‘neighbourhood’ and how far they should be located from residents, it is clear that some set of key services and facilities (identified slightly differently by different scholars) appear to be a definitive

condition for the formation of a neighbourhood. This kind of definition, which indicates a high level of applicability, is principally advocated in literature targeted at practitioners, policy makers and geographers. Nevertheless, a widely accepted view regarding this 'functional neighbourhood' is that such attributes cannot be isolated from the social aspects of a neighbourhood.

Many scholars recognise that a neighbourhood has social features (Schoenberg, 1979; Hallman, 1984; Holland *et al.*, 2011; Manley *et al.*, 2013). Based on this, they try to integrate the social aspects with the geographic characteristics and functional attributes in their definitions, aiming to account for interrelationships between people, to address people's lived experiences and to include the local residential environment. Schoenberg (1979, p.69) introduces social networks into the definition of a neighbourhood. He indicates that a neighbourhood has 'boundaries, more than one institution identified with the area, and more than one tie of shared public space or social network' (Schoenberg, 1979, p.69). Neighbourly interaction, another important social aspect of the neighbourhood, is addressed by Hallman (1984, p.13), who defines a neighbourhood as 'a limited territory within a larger urban area, where people inhabit dwellings and interact socially'. Kearns and Parkinson (2001, p.2103) consider the neighbourhood to be a 'home area', that is, the area within the range of a five-to ten-minute walk from one's home. The definition by Kearns and Parkinson highlights three scales of a neighbourhood: home area (identity and belonging), locality (residential activities and social status) and urban district (landscape of social and economic opportunities) (Kearns and Parkinson, 2001, p.2104).

Additionally, social relations are mentioned by Holland *et al.* (2011, p.690), who suggest that a neighbourhood is defined by physical boundaries (waterways or large highways), administrative boundaries (census areas) and social relations. Manley *et al.* (2013, p.3) highlight social engagement in their definition, arguing that a neighbourhood that contains a committed, engaged and satisfied population is more likely to show residential stability, provide a good social setting, deal with crime and disorder, and foster a collective voice that can influence relevant political outcomes. In view of the above, it can be concluded that these definitions emphasise both social and physical aspects.

There is no perfect answer to the question of how to define a neighbourhood because a neighbourhood may be different at different times depending on the situation, the people asked, and the policy or research rationale. However, an increasing number of scholars agree

that a neighbourhood is a dynamic entity which consists of physical, functional and psychological aspects (Freiler, 2004; Bernard *et al.*, 2007; Baffoe, 2019). These physical, functional and psychological attributes comprise environmental aspects, proximity, buildings, infrastructure, demography, local services, social networks, local associations, sentiment and political attributes (Galster, 2001, p.2122; Young Foundation, 2010, p.12). Thus, inspired by prior studies, this research considers a neighbourhood to be a local place which comprises personal characteristics, social characteristics, physical characteristics, political characteristics and sentimental characteristics, and enables people to develop social relations, facilitate social interactions, and build self-identities.

## 2.3 Community and neighbourhood

In any examination of the use of 'neighbourhood', the related concept of 'community' invariably arises. Davies and Hebert (1993, p.33) define a community 'as an area within a city, [which] is collective entity that [has] a physical plan, particular land uses and facilities, such as shops and churches, and contain[s] people with different characteristics such as gender, family, age, ethnicity, etc'. Chaskin (1997, p.522) argues that the community cannot simply be seen as a geographically bounded subdivision of land. According to Chaskin (1997, p.522), communities are units which contain a broad range of connections: social, functional, cultural and circumstantial connections. Here we have the same trinity (physical, functional and psychological) associated with 'neighbourhood', and this is where the confusion comes from.

This comparison between neighbourhood and community can be traced back to the early ideas of *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society), which were introduced by the famous German sociologist Ferdinand Tonnies in 1887 (Field, 2003, p.7). His study particularly focused on the decline of social bonds and solidarity (Beumer, 2010, p.2). Tonnies indicated that due to the declining bonds, the community had become an individualistic society and cities had become places full of strangers (Beumer, 2010, p.2). In 1938, Louis Wirth first proposed the idea of 'community lost' (Wirth, 1938). Wirth argued that population size, density and heterogeneity interacted to generate a new way of life named 'urbanism', which is detrimental to the kinds of personal, intimate bonds found in the community (Wirth, 1938, p.1). His study emphasised the negative effects of the fast growth of cities and intensifying social distribution in urban neighbourhoods.

Additionally, Wellman and Leighton (1979, p.363) point out that the neighbourhood could be seen as an important source of sociability, support and mediation with formal institutions. Their ideas became known as the 'community saved'. The idea of the community saved suggests that social solidarity, neighbourliness and political participation will flourish in the urban setting (Hampton, 2013, p.102). In 1979, Wellman and Leighton put forward the idea of the 'community liberated', indicating that people could generate all kinds of relationships beyond the boundaries of their neighbourhoods (Wellman and Leighton, 1979, p.381). Based on these theoretical perspectives, both a community and neighbourhood can be local places where human activities and relations occur.

It may not be surprising that some theorists use the terms 'community' and 'neighbourhood' interchangeably (Jencks and Mayer, 1990; Lock, 2003). Dear and Wolch (1989) use 'community' to describe a set of social relations within a particular spatial setting, applying it where Healey uses 'neighbourhood' (1998). Although the community is often seen as a synonym for the neighbourhood, the question is raised as to whether to consider community and neighbourhood the same thing.

The fuzzy boundaries between the concepts of 'community' and 'neighbourhood' have generated different analytical responses. Some scholars describe them as 'chaotic' concepts (Flanagan, 2010; Berk, 2010). For example, Flanagan (2010, p.109) indicates that since 1979, community studies have tended to see the community and neighbourhood as the same. Berk (2010, p.2) considers that community is a conjunction of the neighbourhood, which can be defined as 'the social group that resides in a specific locality and that shares some common resources and common values'. Baffoe (2019, p.396) reports that in urban and community studies, scholars are more likely to demarcate neighbourhoods as communities because a community is easily identified based on its recognised delineated borders. However, others argue forcefully for keeping these two terms distinct (Davies and Hebert, 1993; Chaskin, 1997). Davies and Hebert (1993, p.1) argue that a neighbourhood is much more restricted than a community in its spatial dimensions. Wellman and Leighton (1979, p.363) indicate that due to its small scale, a neighbourhood is more easily identifiable as a research site than a community.

In China, a community (*shequ*) is defined as 'a social collective formed by those residing within a defined geographic boundary', and the territory of community is 'the area under the jurisdiction of the enlarged residents 'committee'' (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2000, p.1). In

comparison to a neighbourhood, a Chinese community has more households, authority control over local community affairs, and political and social responsibility (Tang and Sun, 2017, p.10). Most notably, the Chinese neighbourhood can be identified based on its boundaries because they have predominately taken a gated form (Lu *et al.*, 2019, p.2). A neighbourhood is deemed the basic unit of urban communities in China (Liang *et al.*, 2009, p.1). In other words, several neighbourhoods make up a community, and they are considered to be affiliated. In view of this, Chinese neighbourhoods can probably be seen as an expression of the community. This is consistent with the statement of Manley *et al.* (2013, p.3) that ‘in many western countries there have been long traditions of constructing neighbourhoods as a means to developing better communities’. As discussed above, this thesis does not treat the neighbourhood the same as the community. Although a neighbourhood is not necessarily seen as being the same as a community in China, it can be considered as an expression of the community.

## 2.4 Neighbourhood matters

Neighbourhoods can be understood as microcosms of the city and what happens in neighbourhoods influence the public and societal disposition (Wellman and Leighton, 1979, p.364; Freiler, 2004, p.17). Based on this, the fortunes of cities and neighbourhoods are closely related to each other that influence people’s daily lives. The importance of the neighbourhood has been discussed by many scholars from different perspectives. First, much importance is attached to neighbourhoods is because neighbourhoods become an important arena for public intervention (Kearns and Parkinson, 2001, p.2109). It is where government services and provisions are delivered (Wan, 2016, p.2330). To address social, economic and cultural issues – namely ‘neighbourhood effects’ – the construction and reconstruction of neighbourhoods have been a crucial part of urban development, especially in disadvantaged areas (Manley *et al.*, 2013; p.3). Some urban regeneration policies which have been implemented in European countries aim not only to develop physical housing infrastructure but also focus on neighbourhood life (Cadell *et al.*, 2008, p.22).

In the UK, ‘neighbourhood renewal’ became one of the government’s favoured modes of governance at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It encourages people and communities to have more responsibilities in supporting themselves and to collaborate with local government (Lawson and Kearns, 2014, p.66). Western policymakers have also been affected by the ideas of Putnam with regard to social capital and the neighbourhood as a

foundation for wider societal cohesion (Forrest and Yip, 2007, p.47). To create a cohesive society, urban regeneration policies started to pay attention to the importance of the idea of social capital in urban neighbourhoods and communities (Forrest and Kearns, 2001, p.2128).

Second, considerable evidence shows that the neighbourhood is of importance for every resident in terms of their physical health and personal development. For instance, the neighbourhood is important for children's healthy development. Acevedo-Garcia *et al.* (2020, p.2) report that the neighbourhood influences children's lived experiences, health, education, norms, expectations for the future, and future outcomes. Another example by Lloyd and Hertzman (2010, p.293) shows that neighbourhood socioeconomic conditions are related to the language and cognitive outcomes of children in the United States. In particular, the neighbourhood is important for people who live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Freiler (2004, p.17) explains that residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods devote most of their time to their neighbourhoods and rely on neighbourhoods as resources of social networking and also use services close to where they live. Freiler also finds that neighbourhoods are very important to elderly residents and families with children (2014, p.17). Therefore, it is clear that neighbourhoods are essential for different groups of people, although the degrees of importance might vary.

Additionally, the neighbourhood is associated with mental health and wellbeing. A large body of literature examines the association between the neighbourhood environment and residents' health. For example, Chen *et al.* (2021, p.8) demonstrate that neighbourhoods with high-quality and aesthetically pleasing natural elements may potentially benefit residents' mental health. Visser *et al.* (2021, p.1) establish the relationship between a neighbourhood's social environment and mental health and wellbeing. Bissonnette *et al.* (2012, p.842) assume that a neighbourhood's characteristics potentially influence residents' health. In view of the above, it can be concluded that the physical factors of the neighbourhood have an influence on residents' health, both physiologically and physically.

In view of all, the neighbourhood is deemed an important concept. Neighbourhoods can be considered a ready-made place for policy intervention to tackle social problems. They also contribute to human health and wellbeing, children's development, educational attainment and employment. Therefore, the neighbourhood is important not only for individuals but also for the health and prosperity of society more broadly. This explains why so many researchers, policymakers and governments pay much attention to the neighbourhood.

## 2.5 Neighbourhood attachment

### 2.5.1 What is neighbourhood attachment?

Before discussing neighbourhood attachment, it is pivotal to mention place attachment, of which neighbourhood attachment is a form (Zhu and Fu, 2017, p.165). Place attachment is a multi-layered and multifaceted concept which can be defined as the affective bonds that people have with places (Low and Altman, 1992, p.143; Jean, 2016, p.2569). It is good not only for people but also for places because place attachment provides a sense of security and identity for people and cohesion and stability to a place (Bailey *et al.*, 2012, p.2). Over the past 30 years, a considerable amount of literature has investigated place attachment and related concepts, such as a 'sense of place', 'place belonging', 'place dependence', 'community attachment' and 'place identity' (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001; Lewicka, 2011). The diversity of these related terms is probably a result of the fact that place attachment has been investigated within the contexts of several disciplines, such as geography, sociology, demography, urban studies and psychology (Lewicka, 2011, p.207). Notwithstanding these various expressions, they all refer to bonds and feelings people have with and for a place, and all these terms have been used to represent the creation of positive experiences or memories associated with a particular place.

Place attachment can be related to different spatial ranges such as a room, the house, the neighbourhood, the community, the city or some larger space (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001, p.273, Giuliani, 2003, p.137). When the space is specifically restricted to a neighbourhood, place attachment is equivalent to neighbourhood attachment. Because the neighbourhood can provide a useful scale for investigating the social relations of everyday life in the world (Beumer, 2010, p.3), the scale of the neighbourhood in place attachment has drawn a good deal of attention from scholars, receiving more interest than other place scales (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001; Giuliani, 2003; Lewicka, 2010).

Some scholars have debated how narrow or broad the definition of neighbourhood attachment should be (Livingston *et al.*, 2010; Wu and Logan, 2016). They argue that neighbourhood attachment should be a multidimensional concept which is affected by the relationship between people and place, but also includes cognitive and behavioural components. Many studies adopt the definition of neighbourhood attachment proposed by Comstock *et al.* (2010, p.436), who state that it can be understood as a social-psychological

process which enables an emotional connection to residents' social and physical environment, which in turn is nourished by daily encounters with the physical environment and neighbours' activities. These daily encounters foster a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood, as well as group and individual identity (Zhu *et al.*, 2012, p.2442).

Neighbourhood attachment can generally be considered a good thing for both residents and neighbourhoods. It not only improves the vitality, stability and security of a neighbourhood, but also promotes solidarity, familiarity, local networks and social participation (Brown *et al.*, 2003; Dekker, 2007). Specifically, in relation to a neighbourhood, neighbourhood attachment could help tackle neighbourhood deprivation, physical decline, loss of social cohesion and the threat of crime (Brown *et al.*, 2003, p.270). With regard to residents, neighbourhood attachment can generate feelings of pride, a source of security, a general sense of wellbeing and higher levels of life satisfaction (Zhu *et al.*, 2012, p.2442; Jean, 2016, p.2569).

Strong neighbourhood attachment is associated with strong networks, which might help people gain more opportunities, such as employment opportunities and personal development (Livingston *et al.*, 2008; Bailey *et al.*, 2012). A strong attachment also contributes to local integration and the shared goal of keeping the neighbourhood safe (Dekker, 2007, p.356). More importantly, a number of studies have highlighted that strong neighbourhood attachment fosters social and political involvement, which further improves social stability (Mesch and Manor, 1998, p.505; Wu, 2012, p.547). Conversely, the absence of neighbourhood attachment is related to problems of crime and security, particularly in deprived neighbourhoods (Livingston *et al.*, 2008, p.3). As discussed above, neighbourhood attachment is an indispensable aspect of a good neighbourhood.

Although generally advantageous, high neighbourhood attachment can also lead to unfavourable consequences (Fried, 2000; Livingston *et al.*, 2008; Anton and Lawrence, 2014) by inhibiting mobility and constraining individual progress in places that offer little chance of economic growth (Fried, 2000, p.193). Similarly, a study by Anton and Lawrence (2014, p.451) further reveals that residents who felt attached to their neighbourhoods were less likely to leave, even when the place stopped being manageable. Additionally, neighbourhood attachment can cause internal contradictions when newcomers who have different backgrounds, languages and cultures from the majority move to a neighbourhood with a high percentage of attached residents (Fried, 2000, p.202). As discussed above, the shortcomings



of neighbourhood attachment must be weighed against the advantages of spatial mobility for residents.

To conclude, neighbourhood attachment has been a widely investigated topic over the past few decades. Despite these potential disadvantages, the majority of researchers hold the view that neighbourhood attachment has largely positive impacts for residents and neighbourhoods because it provides a sense of security and identity to residents, and it generates cohesion, liveability, integration and stability in a place (Low and Altman, 1992; Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001; Giuliani, 2003; Beumer, 2010; Comstock *et al.*, 2010; Livingston *et al.*, 2010; Zhang *et al.*, 2012; Wu and Logan, 2016).

### 2.5.2 Forms of neighbourhood attachment

In the literature, neighbourhood attachment is usually theorised around two-dimensional models comprising emotional attachment and functional attachment (Vaske and Kobrin, 2001; Livingston *et al.*, 2008; Anton and Lawrence, 2014; Jean, 2016). Additionally, two other dimensions of neighbourhood attachment – territoriality and symbolic attachment – have been explored in existing studies (Kintrea *et al.*, 2008; Livingston *et al.*, 2008). The following subsections review the literature concerning these four types of neighbourhood attachment: emotional attachment, functional attachment, territoriality and symbolic attachment.

#### Emotional attachment

Many researchers believe that emotional attachment is central to the formation of neighbourhood attachment (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001; Livingston *et al.*, 2008; Anton and Lawrence, 2014). Giuliani and Feldman (1993, p.268) assume emotional attachment is formed by residents who have a long-term psychological investment in a neighbourhood over time, partly through social relationships in a neighbourhood that help develop a sense of belonging (Gerson *et al.*, 1977). Simply put, emotional attachment can be understood as a feeling, mood and/or emotion people have towards a place (Livingston *et al.*, 2008, p.11). As Livingston *et al.* elaborate, residents become emotionally attached to places:

if these places support their self-identity: places do this if they offer distinctiveness from others; if they offer continuity of experience over time; and if they enable us to make a positive evaluation of ourselves, supporting our self-esteem. (2010, p.411)

A body of literature has addressed the importance of emotional attachment (Breakwell, 1986; Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001; Livingston *et al.*, 2008, 2010; Anton and Lawrence, 2014). Some researchers hold that emotional attachment can contribute to a sense of safety, develop self-esteem, maintain group identity and facilitate social participation (Williams and Vaske, 2003, p.831; Dekker 2007, p.362). Also, a high level of emotional attachment is positively associated with a weak moving intention, and thus promotes neighbourhood stability (Permentier *et al.*, 2009, p.2166).

In Western countries, some city and neighbourhood authorities try to foster a sense of emotional attachment to neighbourhoods. They believe that residents with strong emotional attachment follow closely what happens in their neighbourhoods, which promotes civic participation (Dekker, 2007, p.362). Motivated by this emphasis placed on neighbourhood attachment by the authorities, many scholars seek to examine the relationship between neighbourhood attachment, neighbourhood participation and social capital (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Dekker, 2007; Hays and Kogl, 2007; Wu, 2012; Lee and Park, 2019). They find that residents with strong emotional attachment are more likely to have participatory behaviours which contribute to neighbourhood development (Livingston *et al.*, 2010, p.411). These studies also confirm that emotional attachment plays a central role in neighbourhood development.

### Functional attachment

Functional attachment addresses the importance of place in offering features and conditions that enable people to achieve specific goals or desired activities (Williams and Vaske, 2003, p.831; Livingston *et al.*, 2008, p.10; Ujang and Zakariya, 2015, p.712). Functional attachment is an ongoing relationship (Williams and Vaske, 2003, p.831) which is embodied in a broad range of physical settings in the neighbourhood, such as physical environment, residential buildings, facilities, services and other non-residential indoor settings (Scannell and Gifford, 2010, p.290). Levels of functional attachment are also influenced by building appearance, greenery, playground, security and property management (Zhu *et al.*, 2012, p.2450).

In fact, residents cannot directly feel attached to their physical settings (Scannell and Gifford, 2010, p.290). Some studies indicate that functional attachment is generated from a positive evaluation of the use of physical settings (Zhu *et al.*, 2012, p.2442; Ujang and Zakariya, 2015, p.712). In this way, it can be argued that if residents are satisfied with their physical

settings and keep using them, they are more likely to cultivate functional attachment (Austin and Baba, 1990, p.60). In other words, subjective feelings about functional and utilitarian physical settings are important for forming functional attachment (Smaldone *et al.*, 2005, p.398).

In the literature on attachment, some studies emphasise the importance of emotional attachment but neglect the contribution of functional attachment (Livingston *et al.*, 2010). This is because functional attachment is usually generated in deprived neighbourhoods and its negative physical characteristics may negatively influence emotional attachment. For example, high-density and low-quality housing lead to weak neighbourhood attachment (Livingston *et al.*, 2010, p.412).

However, some studies have documented that functional attachment is important to residents (Stedman, 2003; Scannell and Gifford, 2010; Zhu *et al.*, 2012; Ujang and Zakariya, 2015). For example, a number of scholars indicate that functional attachment is a pragmatic form of attachment which is formed by residents' daily practices (Pinkster, 2014, p.816; Jean, 2016, p.2577). A Chinese study by Zhu *et al.* (2012, p.2443) finds that functional attachment is important in affluent areas because physical components entice residents to stay in their neighbourhoods and promote stability. More importantly, some researchers indicate that under some circumstances, functional attachment is not only related to place dependency but is also potentially associated with emotional attachment (Stedman, 2003; Scannell and Gifford, 2010; Ujang and Zakariya, 2015; Jean, 2016). This is because physical characteristics such as a well-maintained public realm, a good physical environment and neighbourhood facilities can attract residents to repeatedly use them and thus may potentially create neighbourly interactions (Moore and Graefe, 1994, p.28; Williams and Vaske, 2003, p.831). These interactions help establish social relations in the neighbourhood and cultivate emotional attachment. A study in Canada by Jean (2016, p.2577) reaches a similar conclusion, emphasising the social function of physical settings and agreeing that emotional attachment can be generated by consuming neighbourhood spaces and commodities. Jean (2016, p.2578) argues that although these interactions may be unable to foster strong 'social bonds', they are still part of meaningful neighbourly interactions. As discussed above, it is clear that functional attachment is also important for residents and should not be ignored.

## Territoriality

Few studies pay attention to territoriality. A sense of territoriality is an extreme form of neighbourhood attachment which is related to ownership, control of space and regulation of access to self (Livingston *et al.*, 2008, p.13; Scannell and Gifford, 2010, p.4). Brower (1980, p.180) defines territoriality as ‘the relationship between individual or group and a particular physical setting, that is characterised by a feeling of possessiveness and by attempts to control the appearance of the space’. In other words, if residents feel a sense of territoriality, they would like to protect their neighbourhood and prevent others from occupying it.

Although a sense of territoriality can strengthen affective bonds (Livingston *et al.*, 2008, p.13) and may be beneficial to mutual support (Kintrea *et al.*, 2008; p.4), some studies criticise territoriality because it may cause social exclusion (Kintrea *et al.*, 2008; p.4; Scannell and Gifford, 2010). For example, Kintrea *et al.*, (2008 p.4) find that a sense of territoriality is related to social problems such as isolation and violence. Scannell and Gifford (2010, p.4) indicate that territorially is associated with personalisation, aggression and territorial defence. In this case, some scholars consider that territorially may interfere with the formation of social relations and hinder local development (Kintrea *et al.*, 2008).

## Symbolic Attachment

Less attention has been paid in the literature to symbolic attachment. The definition of symbolic attachment is vague. Savage *et al.* (2005) develop the concept of symbolic attachment: ‘the way that middle-class people claimed moral rights over the place through their capacity to move to, and put down roots in, a specific place which was not just functionally important to them but which also mattered symbolically’ (Savage, 2010, p.116). In Jean’s (2016, p.2578) work, symbolic attachment is mainly generated from distinctive lifestyles and identities, which have symbolic meanings to people. People’s attachment to their place of residence is intertwined with their preferences for a certain type of life, and these preferences are largely dictated by the shared symbolic representations of familial life to meet certain family needs (such as child development) or social status (Jean, 2016). As mentioned above, symbolic attachment refers to a sense of attachment which is mainly generated from middle-class residents who detach from city life and move to suburban neighbourhoods to look for distinctive lifestyles and identities (Jean, 2016, p.2568).

These middle-class households believe that living in suburban neighbourhoods can mirror their identification with family values, help them obtain the best family life because of a good environment, and allow them to avoid urban problems (such as pollution, social disorder and crime) while distancing themselves from dangerous ‘others’ (Pinkster, 2014, p.813; Jean, 2016, p.2757). However, the literature also reports that these middle-class households disengage from local lives and avoid interactions with neighbours in the suburban neighbourhood (Watt, 2009, p.2874). Some scholars critically argue that symbolic attachment is a selective form of belonging which can be seen as a spatially uneven attachment resulting from residents’ schizophrenic relationship to the suburban area (Watt, 2009, p.2874).

## 2.6 Drivers of neighbourhood attachment

### 2.6.1 Personal characteristics

A large number of studies examine the relationship between personal characteristics and neighbourhood attachment. Personal characteristics consist of the length of residence, homeownership, gender, presence of children, age and socio-economic status (Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974; Brown *et al.*, 2003; Hernandez *et al.*, 2007; Livingston *et al.*, 2010; Vidal *et al.*, 2010; Anton and Lawrence., 2014; Li *et al.*, 2017). The following subsections review how these personal characteristics influence the level of neighbourhood attachment.

#### Length of residence

A considerable amount of literature has indicated that the length of residence is the most prominent factor that has a direct and significant effect on neighbourhood attachment (Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974; Brown *et al.*, 2003; Hernandez *et al.*, 2007; Livingston *et al.*, 2008, 2010; Vidal *et al.*, 2010; Wu and Logan, 2016). It is often seen that living in a neighbourhood for a number of years means investment and commitment to a local area and residents (Austin and Baba, 1990, p.61). Long-term residence enables residents to become very familiar with a place (Tuan, 1977, p.18), which helps generate strong sentiment (Wu and Logan, 2016, p.2985) and produce neighbourhood attachment (Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974, p.330). As discussed above, residents who reside longer in a neighbourhood develop a high level of familiarity and a stronger attachment (Riger and Lavrakas, 1981, p.56; Hernandez *et al.*, 2007, p.311).

As Vidal *et al.* (2010, p.356) state, the long-term residence helps residents collect good memories and significant experiences in a neighbourhood. The longer residence also plays an important role in the development of friendship, associations and stronger bonds and ties with family, all of which help cultivate neighbourhood attachment (Livingston *et al.*, 2010, p.411; Clark *et al.*, 2017, p.16). The long-term residence also promotes strong social capital, close relationships and familiarity, which can foster neighbourhood attachment (Li *et al.*, 2017, p.6). As a result, the long-term residence is a positive factor affecting neighbourhood attachment.

However, some scholars find that residents can also develop neighbourhood attachment after staying for only a short time (Brown *et al.*, 2003; Livingston *et al.*, 2010). For instance, a study in England shows that although some residents have very short-term residence, they still report positive feelings towards their neighbourhood (Livingston *et al.*, 2010, p.417). These British residents provide several reasons for their high level of attachment, with convenience and rapid accessibility of public services standing out (Livingston *et al.*, 2010, p.417). Another example from a study by Brown *et al.* (2003, p.269) indicates that short-term residents develop a high level of neighbourhood attachment if the neighbourhoods provide them with a satisfying amount of privacy and promote family togetherness. It turns out short-term residents can also perceive neighbourhood attachment if neighbourhoods satisfy their needs.

### Age

Scholars indicate that age is a factor in neighbourhood attachment (Low and Altman, 1992; Lewicka, 2010). Residents of different ages may develop different levels of neighbourhood attachment. For example, a large body of literature finds that elderly residents tend to have a high level of neighbourhood attachment (Low and Altman, 1992; Brown *et al.*, 2003; Livingston *et al.*, 2010; Clark *et al.*, 2017). Not surprisingly, this is because elderly residents generally have the long-term residence (Brown *et al.* 2003, p.230; Clark *et al.*, 2017, p.11). As discussed previously, the long-term residence is positively associated with strong neighbourhood attachment. However, there are some other reasons why elderly residents generally have strong neighbourhood attachment. As Bailey *et al.* (2012, p.211) report, elderly residents have a higher frequency of social contact than young people in the neighbourhood. They not only enjoy but also benefit from these neighbourly interactions, which foster neighbourhood attachment (Low and Altman, 1992, p.150).

Numerous studies reveal that younger people have a lower level of neighbourhood attachment than elderly residents (Hay, 1998; Livingston *et al.*, 2008; Clark *et al.*, 2017). This is because younger people generally have higher probability of moving than elderly people (Clark *et al.*, 2017, p.10). However, a study by Kamalipour *et al.* (2012, p.465) indicates that younger people also have strong neighbourhood attachment if the neighbourhoods offer good physical and psychological conditions. With respect to middle-aged residents, Livingston *et al.* (2008, p.14) find that they are more attached to their homes than neighbourhoods. On the other hand, Kamalipour *et al.* (2012, p.465) report that middle-aged residents feel more attached to the city than to neighbourhoods because the city can provide important opportunities for people in that age range, for instance, job opportunities. Although these two studies have different results, both of them stress that middle-aged residents are more likely to feel attached to other places than their neighbourhoods. In summary, elderly residents display strong neighbourhood attachment, younger people may perceive neighbourhood attachment if they are satisfied with physical conditions, and middle-aged groups seem to have low attachment to their neighbourhoods.

### Homeownership

Many studies show that homeownership is associated with neighbourhood attachment (Brown *et al.*, 2003; Oh, 2004; Livingston *et al.*, 2008; Wu and Logan, 2016; Weijs-Perree, 2017). Owning property is considered an economic investment in the neighbourhood, which enhances neighbourhood attachment (Lu *et al.*, 2018, p.145). Homeownership promotes greater residential stability, both for homeowners and neighbourhoods (Rohe and Stewart, 1996, p.45; Wu and Logan, 2016, p.2975). Compared with renters, homeowners display more attachment to their neighbourhood (Manturuk *et al.*, 2010, p.473; Weijs-Perree, 2017, p.135) because homeowners tend to stay longer in their neighbourhood, invest more money, know more neighbours, engage in more neighbourhood groups and are less likely to move (Brown *et al.*, 2003, p.260). A study by Mesch and Manor (1998, p.515) find that homeowners are more likely to have a locally based relationship, which enhances their sentiment to their neighbourhoods. Conversely, a study in Australia reported that renters have weak or no attachment to their neighbourhoods because they are associated with short-term residence and high moving intentions (Anton and Lawrence, 2014, p.458).

However, some studies have found that renters also display strong neighbourhood attachment (Brown *et al.*, 2003; Manturuk *et al.*, 2010; Livingston *et al.*, 2008). For example,

Manturuk *et al.* (2010, p.475) report that short-term renters display strong neighbourhood attachment. Livingston *et al.* (2018, p.4) find that these renters tend to have stronger attachment in more affluent areas. Harris *et al.* (1996) state that renters with short-term residences report a strong attachment because their rental properties allow them to have a great deal of privacy and family togetherness (Cited by Brown *et al.*, 2003, p.269). As shown above, homeowners are more likely to have neighbourhood attachment. With respect to renters, deriving the arbitrary conclusion that renters lack neighbourhood attachment would be dangerous because renters' attachment may vary based on each individual's lived experiences.

### Gender

Several studies have recognised that gender is related to neighbourhood attachment (Kamalipour *et al.*, 2012; Zhu *et al.*, 2012; Anton and Lawrence, 2014). Some researchers claim that women are more attached to a neighbourhood than men (Livingston *et al.*, 2008, p.14; Anton and Lawrence 2014. p.459) because women are more 'neighbourhood dependent' than men (Meegan and Mitchell, 2001, p.2174) and have more social interactions in their daily lives (Carli, 1989, p.566; Zhu *et al.*, 2012, p.2442). According to Anton and Lawrence (2014, p.454), because they spend more time in the neighbourhood, women develop more social networks than men, and these social networks promote a sense of attachment. Anton and Lawrence (2014, p.454) suggest that men also report low attachment due to societal pressure, which causes men to be less adept at openly expressing their emotions and feelings of attachment.

However, quantitative studies by Lewicka (2005, p.387) and Scannell and Gifford (2010, p.295) stress the insignificant effect of gender on neighbourhood attachment, proposing that men and women show the same levels of neighbourhood attachment. Similarly, Bonaiuto *et al.* (1999, p.345) argue that gender is not an important indicator of neighbourhood attachment. However, those quantitative studies fail to provide reasons why gender does not influence neighbourhood attachment. In view of all that has been mentioned in these studies so far, one may suppose that the different results may be due to different study areas. Therefore, the reasons behind this are not clear and demand further investigation.



### Presence of children

Evidence shows that the presence of children is positively associated with neighbourhood attachment (Henning and Lieberg, 1996; Anton and Lawrence, 2014; Livingston *et al.*, 2008, p.51). For example, according to Mesch and Manor (1998, p.507), families with young children exhibit a strong interest in the neighbourhood. A study by Anton and Lawrence (2014, p.459) finds that families with children are more likely to use neighbourhood facilities and interact with other residents. Concurrently, Zhu *et al.* (2012, p.171) also find that families with children of a similar age are more likely to interact with each other than those without children. In this regard, spending a long time in public spaces and using neighbourhood facilities improves opportunities for residents to interact with their neighbours.

Additionally, Henning and Lieberg (1996, p.6) indicate that residents with young children are closely connected with the neighbourhood because they have more neighbour contact than those without children. This neighbour contact is treated as the most important factor in the development of neighbour relations and sense of attachment (Henning and Lieberg, 1996, p.14). Taken together, having children is associated with a high level of neighbourhood attachment because families with children are likely to build neighbour relationships and have neighbourly interactions (Bond *et al.*, 2013, p.6). Residents may meet and get to know each other through their children, establishing relationships with neighbours and therefore generating neighbourhood attachment.

### Socio-economic status

In general, socio-economic status includes income, educational levels and employment status and is measured by a single or combination of factors (Austin and Baba, 1990, p.69; Dekker, 2007, p.356). Some studies measure the relationship between socio-economic characteristics and neighbourhood attachment (Bailey *et al.*, 2012; Schechter, 2013; Weijs-Perree *et al.*, 2017). For example, Bailey *et al.* (2012, p.4) find that higher socio-economic status is correlated with more extensive local networks and therefore generates higher neighbourhood attachment. In contrast, low socio-economic status results in difficulty accessing social networks of choice (Dekker, 2007, p.361) and thus may result in low attachment to the neighbourhood (Bailey *et al.*, 2012, p.4).

As one of the most common socio-economic characteristics, many studies have investigated the relationship between income and neighbourhood attachment. For example, a study by Brown *et al.* (2013, p.269) reports that higher-income residents feel more attached to their neighbourhood and that this is attributable to the better living environments. Conversely, low-income earners usually report low levels of neighbourhood attachment because they have fewer options of where to stay (Weijs-Perree *et al.*, 2017, p.144). However, some studies report that low-income earners can also be associated with strong neighbourhood attachment (Williams *et al.*, 1992; Livingston *et al.*, 2010; Anton and Lawrence, 2014). Livingston *et al.* (2012, p.5) explain that low-income residents have lower mobility and consequently this results in a higher reliance on the area as well as a higher attachment. Anton and Lawrence (2014, p.454) argue that limited choice may cause residents to persuade themselves that their neighbourhood is better than others.

Some studies have found that levels of education are correlated with neighbourhood attachment (Livingston *et al.*, 2008, Anton and Lawrence, 2014). The level of education can be viewed as a cultural resource, so residents with higher education attainment might participate more and therefore generate stronger neighbourhood attachment (Livingston *et al.*, 2008, p.15). Furthermore, Anton and Lawrence (2014, p.454) state that education levels are associated with income levels. Low-income residents are usually less educated and therefore have limited choices about where they live. As a result, higher education tends to be correlated with higher neighbourhood attachment.

However, Williams *et al.* (1992) find that less-educated residents also report strong neighbourhood attachment. Some scholars provide a possible explanation for this by suggesting that if residents have more interactions in the neighbourhood, they will feel more attached to their neighbourhoods. In other words, although educational levels are related to neighbourhood attachment, interactions seem to play a stronger role than educational levels. Residents with lower levels of education can also have a higher level of attachment because of frequent neighbourly interactions (Williams *et al.*, 1992). Instead, Rollero and De Piccoli (2010, p.199) report that well-educated residents may develop weak neighbourhood attachment because they are more geographically mobile and less dependent on a specific place.

A very small number of studies have examined the relationship between employment status and neighbourhood attachment (Bailey *et al.*, 2012; Wu, 2012; Weijs-Perree *et al.*, 2017).

They find that people with jobs feel more attached to neighbourhoods than unemployed people, who have fewer opportunities to choose a neighbourhood that they feel connected to (Weijts-Perree *et al.*, 2017, p.144). A Chinese study by Wu (2012, p.565) finds that employed people are more likely to be integrated into their neighbourhoods, which facilitates the formation of neighbourhood attachment. In contrast, owing to the stigma of unemployment, unemployed people have fewer interactions, which may reduce their sense of attachment (Manturuk *et al.*, 2010, p.483). Unlike unemployed people, retired residents display strong neighbourhood attachment because they spend a considerable amount of time in the neighbourhood and have frequent neighbourly interactions (Seifert and Konig, 2019, p.2). This finding is consistent with the previous empirical results that argue that elderly residents tend to have high levels of neighbourhood attachment (Brown *et al.* 2003, p.230). As discussed above, it seems that employed and retired people are more likely to have stronger neighbourhood attachment than unemployed people.

As shown above, existing studies show inconclusive findings regarding the relationship between socio-economic status and neighbourhood attachment. These inconsistencies may be ascribed to different study areas, sample sizes and statistical methods. Although quantitative methods indeed help to establish the relationship between personal characteristics and neighbourhood attachment, their explanations of causality need to be carefully considered due to endogeneity issues or selection bias. In this case, using quantitative methods cannot answer why higher-income residents feel more or less attached to their neighbourhoods than low-income residents. This problem also occurs with other personal characteristics. Studies investigating the correlation between personal characteristics and neighbourhood attachment are extensive, but they are beset with many contradictions and conflicting results. Such approaches, however, fail to consider the underlying causes of the phenomenon. As discussed above, there is no doubt that personal characteristics influence neighbourhood attachment. Therefore, it is necessary to employ qualitative methods to explain the phenomenon, to understand residents' feelings and to explore the reasons behind these.

### 2.6.2 Physical characteristics

Many studies reveal that physical characteristics have an independent effect on neighbourhood attachment (Fried, 1982; Mesch and Manor, 1998; Woolever, 1992; Bonaiuto *et al.*, 1999; Zhu and Fu, 2017). Williams and Vaske (2003, p.831) highlight that

functional attachment is heavily influenced by physical characteristics. Therefore, a positive perception of physical characteristics is an important part of the evaluation of functional attachment. According to existing studies, physical characteristics encompass the physical environment, neighbourhood facilities and neighbourhood services (Talen, 2000; Zhu *et al.*, 2012; Zhu and Fu, 2017). What follows are reviews of how physical characteristics impact neighbourhood attachment.

### Physical environment

A large body of literature recognises that the physical environment is one of the most important determinants of neighbourhood attachment (Fried, 1982; Hourihan, 1984; Mesch and Manor, 1998; Talen, 2000; Zhu *et al.*, 2012; Zhu and Fu, 2017). Scholars emphasise that neighbourhood attachment includes not only a sense of belonging but also attitudes to the overall quality of the physical environment (Hourihan, 1984; Mesch and Manor, 1998; Zhu *et al.*, 2012). According to Fried (1982, p.107), ‘the physical environment is a particularly important setting for human behaviour by virtue of its significance for roles, relationships and the sense of place in the world’. A study by Zhu and Fu (2017, p.166) find that the assessment of the residential environment is even more important than social relations in generating a sense of attachment. Many studies conclude that the physical environment can help residents generate neighbourhood attachment.

A range of factors describing the quality of the residential environment – for example, common open spaces, sidewalks, neighbourhood locations, green space, building appearance, cleanliness, air quality and quietness – have been explored in many studies (Hourihan, 1984; Hur and Morrow-Jones, 2008; Talen, 2000; Zhu *et al.*, 2012; Arnberger and Eder, 2012). Scholars have established connections between the physical factors of a neighbourhood and neighbourhood attachment. For example, Talen (2005, p.346) and Zhu and Fu (2017, p.162) report that neighbourhood attachment is positively associated with neighbourhood public space because it is an important place for social encounters, interpersonal interactions and political discourse. A study in Canada by Jean (2016, p.2577) finds that over half of urban households of the Montreal metropolitan region say that location is more important than housing itself in generating a sense of attachment.

Some studies indicate that residential satisfaction is strongly interrelated with the appearance and design of the neighbourhoods (Hourihan, 1984, p.430; Hur and Morrow-Jones, 2008, p.621). For example, Hourihan (1984, p.427) claims that high residential satisfaction

improves neighbourhood attachment and vice versa. Kamalipour *et al.* (2012) find that a lack of maintenance is negatively associated with neighbourhood attachment. Furthermore, a study by Mesch and Manor (1998, p.517) finds that satisfaction with the open areas and quietness of neighbourhoods is associated with the likelihood of having neighbourhood attachment and a desire to stay. Therefore, a well-maintained public space, location, quietness and good appearance of the neighbourhood are related to the quality of life, which improves neighbourhood attachment.

The availability of accessible and usable green space is also a vital factor in determining neighbourhood attachment (Kyle *et al.*, 2004; Arnberger and Eder, 2012; Zhang *et al.*, 2015). Green space allows residents to relax and have a rest from their daily routines (Kyle *et al.*, 2004, p.42), which promotes neighbourhood attachment (Arnberger and Eder, 2012, p.41). Zhang *et al.* (2015, p.14344) show that green space can promote mental health because it not only reduces mortality and levels of stress but also increases interactions and physical exercise. In this case, the availability of accessible green space is not only related to functional attachment but also emotional attachment. As shown above, the contribution of the physical environment to neighbourhood attachment has been highlighted in a number of existing studies. Many scholars indicate that the physical environment encourages residents to spend time in the neighbourhood, and thus improves neighbourly interaction and relationships, which potentially contribute to neighbourhood attachment.

### Neighbourhood facilities

Some studies investigate the links between the use of neighbourhood facilities and neighbourhood attachment (Moore and Graefe, 1994; Stedman, 2003; Dekker, 2007; Zhu *et al.*, 2012). In this context, neighbourhood facilities include fitness facilities, children's facilities, residential elevators and parking lots. For example, a study by Zhu *et al.* (2012, p.2446) reports that high-quality facilities contribute to feelings of self-pride and therefore develop neighbourhood attachment. Clark *et al.* (2006, p.323) and Weijs-Perree (2017, p.146) show that an attractive level of facilities encourages residents to walk in the neighbourhood, which can create a healthy social environment and relieve the pressure of urban living. Wen and Wang (2009, p.171) find that neighbourhood facilities such as sport and exercise facilities largely improve residential satisfaction and thus enhance neighbourhood attachment.

According to Moore and Graefe (1994, p.28), functional attachment can be quickly established if neighbourhood facilities are convenient and good for residents' chosen activities. These results show that there is a positive relationship between neighbourhood facilities and neighbourhood attachment. As shown above, neighbourhood attachment will potentially develop when neighbourhood facilities satisfy residents' particular needs (Stedman, 2003, p.673; Lu *et al.*, 2018, p.145) and support their activities (Moore and Graefe, 1994, p.27).

### Neighbourhood services

A few studies report that the use of neighbourhood services facilitates the development of neighbourhood attachment (Zhu *et al.*, 2012, Jean, 2016; Lu *et al.*, 2018). Neighbourhood services include cleaning services, security services and housing maintenance services, healthcare services, educational services and public transport. Some studies suggest that the experience of efficient services contributes to residential satisfaction and therefore enhances neighbourhood attachment (Lu *et al.*, 2018, p.148). Some scholars examine the relationship between neighbourhood attachment and a variety of neighbourhood services, including educational services, health services, commercial services (such as shopping malls and groceries), public transport services and private service (such as services of PMCs) (Bonaiuto *et al.*, 1999; Zhu *et al.*, 2012, Jean, 2016).

Specifically, a study by Wen and Wang (2009, p.171) states that public services in the neighbourhood – such as community schools, entertainment centres and libraries – not only improve satisfaction and residents' mental wellbeing but also generate a certain amount of neighbourhood attachment. A UK study by Hickman (2010, p.11) finds that public services not only have social functions but are also important places of social interaction. He finds that in Edinburgh the local library is a popular place for the community, as it is used for meetings and classes, which potentially contribute to a sense of attachment (Hickman, 2010, p.33). A case study by Jean (2016, p.2577) shows how middle-class families develop feelings of attachment to their neighbourhoods through extensive use of neighbourhood services. In view of the above, the provision of neighbourhood services enables the delivery of neighbourhood attachment.

Notably, some researchers indicate that privatised services enhance neighbourhood attachment, compared with services provided by state-led organisations or mixed organisations (Zhu *et al.*, 2012; Lu *et al.*, 2018). They explain that good-quality privatised

services promote residents' self-sufficiency (Zhu *et al.*, 2012, p.2453). However, residents may rely on the use of privatised services provided by the market instead of asking for help from their neighbours (Lu *et al.*, 2018, p.148). As discussed above, although privatised services contribute to functional attachment, they may hinder neighbourly interactions and thus have negative impacts on emotional attachment.

To conclude, based on the literature, physical characteristics contribute to neighbourhood attachment. This is especially the case with respect to functional attachment. As shown above, very few studies have focused on the important role of functional attachment. This research will contribute to filling the gap in the research on functional attachment.

### 2.6.3 Social determinants

Some studies employ social determinants to examine neighbourhood attachment, especially emotional attachment (Austin and Baba, 1990; Livingston *et al.*, 2008; Dallago *et al.*, 2009; Corrado *et al.*, 2011). This is because some scholars believe that emotional attachment can be seen as individuals' commitment to their neighbourhoods and neighbours. This commitment is a product of social ties, social activities, interactions and residential satisfaction (Giuliani, 2003, p.145; Livingston *et al.*, 2008, p.12). According to some studies, social determinants are constituted of social capital, perceptions of neighbourhood safety, sense of belonging and moving intention (Austin and Baba, 1990; Dallago *et al.*, 2009; Corrado *et al.*, 2011). What follows is a review of the interactions between neighbourhood attachment and social determinants.

#### Sense of belonging

Many studies conclude that a sense of belonging is intertwined with emotional attachment. According to Escalera-Reyes (2020, p.3), a sense of belonging can be considered 'the human emotional need to be an accepted member of a group to maintain close and safe ties that generate a sense of security, care and affection'. It is a feeling which is greater than a mere sense of familiarity (Escalera-Reyes, 2020, p.3). A study by Antonsich (2010, p.645) provides an analytical method to measure whether residents have a sense of belonging in their neighbourhood. Antonsich indicates that if residents perceive a feeling of being at home in a neighbourhood, they perceive a sense of belonging to that neighbourhood (Antonsich, 2010, p.646). Other scholars agree with this analytical method and confirm that a sense of

belonging can be considered a feeling of being at home in the neighbourhood (Cuba and Hummon, 1993; Wu *et al.*, 2011).

A sizable body of research investigates neighbourhood attachment and sense of belonging (Riger and Lavrakas, 1981; Proshansky *et al.*, 1983; Hernandez *et al.*, 2007; Wu *et al.*, 2011; Escalera-Reyes, 2020). For example, Escalera-Reyes (2020, p.3) states that neighbourhood attachment contributes to a sense of belonging which makes a particular place an anchor of their identity. Wu *et al.* (2011, p.374) suggest that a sense of belonging is a barometer of a sense of attachment, which shows whether residents feel accepted, safe and at home there. Hernandez *et al.* (2007, p.310) indicate that if residents have emotional attachment, they will believe that they have a sense of belonging to their neighbourhoods. The literature suggests that many scholars tend to equate a sense of belonging with emotional attachment (Proshansky *et al.*, 1983; McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Antonsich, 2010). From the above survey of the literature, it can be understood that if residents perceive feelings of belonging, they will have emotional attachment.

### Moving intentions

Another factor which influences neighbourhood attachment is moving intention. Gustafson (2009, p.490) claims that residents with a strong sense of belonging are less likely to move. Some studies examine the relationship between moving intention and neighbourhood attachment (Permentier *et al.*, 2009; Bond *et al.*, 2013). For example, Permentier *et al.* (2009, p.2166) write that neighbourhood attachment can be seen as a psychological investment which can reduce moving intentions. According to a UK study by Bond *et al.* (2013, p.20), some residents from Glasgow express that their moving intentions are related to experiences of racism, lack of safety and overcrowding, all of which negatively influence a sense of attachment. Based on this study, it seems that moving intention is related to low attachment.

However, some studies suggest that moving intention and neighbourhood attachment are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Van Ham *et al.*, 2016; Permentier *et al.*, 2009; Bond *et al.*, 2013). For instance, Van Ham *et al.* (2016, p.1151) report that some people with a strong attachment still move to another neighbourhood due to individual preference, resources and job opportunities and constraints. Bond *et al.* (2013, p.21) show although feeling attached to the neighbourhood could contribute to low moving intention, low moving intention may also be ascribed to the unaffordability of households. A similar claim is made by Permentier *et al.* (2009, p.2165), who suggest that residents are less likely to move when they have a



limited choice of residency. These studies show the weak connections between attachment and moving intention.

These inconsistent results have drawn attention from scholars. Kearns and Parkes (2003, p.842) and Fang (2006, p.684) find that residential dissatisfaction will cause high moving intention and thus negatively influence neighbourhood attachment. Unhappiness with the surrounding disorder (such as crime and anti-social behaviours), home dissatisfaction and a declining neighbourhood evoke actual mobility (Kearns and Parkes, 2003, p.843). As a result, if a resident has moving intention due to dissatisfaction, they may have a low level of attachment.

### Perceptions of neighbourhood safety

Some studies investigate neighbourhood attachment and perceptions of neighbourhood safety (Austin and Baba, 1990; Livingston *et al.*, 2008; Dallago *et al.*, 2009). Generally, perceptions of neighbourhood safety are related to neighbourhood attachment (Livingston *et al.*, 2008, p.2). Some studies classify neighbourhood safety into two groups: physical security (Austin *et al.*, 2002; Mahmoudi Farahani, 2016) and emotional safety (McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Scannell and Gifford, 2017). With respect to physical security, rates of victimisation and neighbourhood disorder influence residents' attitudes toward feelings of safety and therefore cause low neighbourhood attachment (Austin *et al.*, 2002, p.418; Mahmoudi Farahani, 2016, p.370). Additionally, feeling unsafe and fear of crime may keep people away from neighbourhood activities, and thus undermine their neighbourhood attachment (Brown *et al.*, 2003, p.261).

With respect to emotional safety, McMillan and Chavis (1986, p.9) assert that membership is an important factor of neighbourhood attachment which generates emotional safety for residents. Scannell and Gifford (2017, p.361) highlight that good interpersonal relationships in the neighbourhood contribute to emotional safety, which improves a sense of attachment to a place. Ross and Jang (2000, p.402) argue that intimate neighbourly ties buffer the effects of neighbourhood disorder and contribute to feelings of safety and a sense of attachment. Some researchers argue that the feeling of safety seems more important than actual safety in the development of neighbourhood attachment (Livingston *et al.*, 2008, p.48). In this case, it seems that physical security contributes to functional attachment, and emotional safety is related to emotional attachment. Nevertheless, whether residents perceive physical safety or emotional safety, feeling safe is closely associated with neighbourhood attachment.

## Social capital

Social capital is an important determinant of neighbourhood attachment (Kleinhans *et al.*, 2007). It is defined as resources which are obtainable through social networks, reciprocity, norms and trust (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). Social capital can be simply understood as information resources inherent to social networks and social interactions. Neighbourhood-based social capital addresses the benefits of neighbourly interactions, shared norms in relation to how to treat neighbours and behaviours, trust and collective actions for a common goal (Kleinhans *et al.*, 2007, p.1070). Many scholars affirm that social capital is beneficial to neighbourhood development. The famous political scientist Robert Putnam points out that:

neighbourhoods with high levels of social capital tend to be good places to raise children. In high-social-capital areas public spaces are cleaner, people are friendlier, and the streets are safer. (Putnam, 2000, p. 307)

In this case, social capital is an important resource which promotes social support, social leverage and informal social control (Chi and Carpiano, 2013, p.88). In relation to neighbourhood attachment, social capital promotes neighbourhood attachment and social stability due to the feelings of safety and support it offers to residents (Livingston *et al.*, 2010, p.412; Middleton *et al.*, 2005, p.1711). Conversely, lack of social capital in the neighbourhood leads to neighbourhood decline (Middleton *et al.*, 2005, p.1711). The results of a UK study support this view and points out that in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, residents have low levels of neighbourhood attachment because they lack access to wider social networks (Forrest and Kearns, 2001, p.2133).

Putnam (1995, 2000) identifies three dimensions of social capital: social networks, mutual trust and the norms of reciprocity. Following Putnam's research, some studies investigate the relationship between these three dimensions of social capital and neighbourhood attachment. First, social networks, as a critical element of social capital, refer to social ties that link people with others. According to Hu *et al.* (2018, p.246), strong ties are defined as bonding capital which exists between close-knit people with frequent interactions, such as family members and close friends. Weak ties describe bridge bonding, which is characterised by distant social relationships and infrequent interactions, such as acquaintances or strangers. Strong ties provide understanding and support, whereas weak ties may help people to be more successful through access to opportunities and resources in other social circles (Bridge, 2002, p.21). It should be noted that weak ties are not weaker than strong ties (Henning and

Lieberg, 1996, p.8). A classic example of weak ties is that it is related to information about job opportunities, which can be obtained from acquaintances (Kleinhans *et al.*, 2007, p.1073). As can be seen here, strong and weak ties have different functions and benefits.

Notably, some studies consider neighbours to have strong ties (Middleton *et al.*, 2005, p.1716; Hu *et al.*, 2018), and others consider them to have weak ties (Power and Willmot, 2007; Kleinhans *et al.*, 2007). The reasons for such inconsistent classification remain unclear. This thesis does not intend to explore which categories of social ties neighbourly relationships belong in. The reason for this is that there is an agreement that the positive aspects of both strong ties and weak ties are important to construct healthy social networks, which are beneficial to residents and neighbourhoods (Henning and Lieberg, 1996, p.8; Bridge, 2002, p.21). Additionally, relationships change over time; for example, neighbours can become good friends (Crisp and Robinson 2010, p.41). As discussed above, whether they are described as strong ties or weak ties, neighbourly ties can form robust social networks.

As a kind of social network, some researchers claim that neighbourhood-based social networks have the largest impact on neighbourhood attachment (Livingston *et al.*, 2008; Weijts-Perree *et al.*, 2017) because they can promote high levels of social interactions (Forrest and Kearns, 2001, p.2129). These interactions foster friendliness, neighbourhood participation and neighbourhood attachment (Farrell *et al.*, 2004, p.12; Livingston *et al.*, 2008, p.1).

Residents with frequent neighbourly interactions are more likely to reduce crime in terms of surveillance of neighbourhoods and looking out for strangers, which promotes feelings of safety and neighbourhood attachment (Mahmoudi Farahani, 2016, p.370). Neighbourly interactions contribute to residents' wellbeing because these contacts help residents feel relaxed, comfortable, at ease and satisfied (Buonfino and Hilder, 2006, p.24). As noted above, a large quantity of research claims that frequent social interactions contribute to strong local networks, which generate feelings of safety and promote neighbourhood attachment (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Farrell *et al.*, 2004; Livingston *et al.*, 2008; Oh; 2014).

Second, many scholars examine the relationship between mutual trust and neighbourhood attachment (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Livingston *et al.*, 2008; Zhu, 2020; Kao and Sapp, 2020). According to Cattell (2001, p.1509), trust is embodied in relationships and can foster mutual support. More importantly, strong mutual trust among residents is related to high

levels of sense of safety (Power and Willmot, 2007, p.2; Livingston *et al.*, 2008, p.23). Middleton *et al.* (2005, p.1714) state that feelings of trust mean that residents would feel comfortable socialising with others in the neighbourhood. In contrast, a UK study by Forrest and Kearns (2001, p.2139) finds that a lack of mutual trust and self-help in poor neighbourhoods result in neighbourhood decline. Collectively, these positive consequences of mutual trust foster strong neighbourhood attachment (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Livingston *et al.*, 2008; Kao and Sapp, 2020).

Third, the norm of reciprocity means a relationship in which people obtain and provide an almost equal amount of support from each other (Antonucci and Jackson, 1990, p.519). In the neighbourhood context, the norm of reciprocity can be simply understood as mutual support among residents (Seifert and Konig, 2019, p.47). It is a form of neighbourly interactions which is built on neighbourly relationships. Mutual support can be split into two forms: emotional support and practical support (Buonfino and Hilder, 2006, p.24; Seifert and Konig, 2019, p.47). Some studies indicate that family members and friends are more likely to provide emotional support, which can reduce feelings of isolation and contribute to mental health (Crisp and Robinson 2010, p.33; Mahmoudi Farahani, 2016, p.367). As Power and Willmot (2007, p.2) indicate, chatting with friends is considered emotional support.

Neighbours are likely to provide practical support, such as the routine exchange of advice or equipment (Buonfino and Hilder, 2006, p.24). Some researchers claim that emotional support is more intense than practical support (Crisp and Robinson 2010, p.33). In particular, some studies indicate that due to factors like proximity and continuity, neighbours provide emotional support to or receive it from neighbours during personal emergencies or crises (Greider and Krannich, 1985, p.60). A good example comes from a UK study which reported that a participant had received emotional support from neighbours which helped her cope with depression (Crisp and Robinson, 2010, p.33). The participant in the study revealed that because of this, she developed friendships with her neighbours. In view of the above, it can be concluded that neighbours are important resources who provide practical and emotional support (Seifert and Konig, 2019, p.3).

Turning to the role of mutual support in neighbourhood attachment, mutual support has been found to increase neighbourly interactions and reduce residents' perception of danger in their neighbourhoods, thereby enhancing neighbourhood attachment (Mahmoudi Farahani, 2016, p.367; Hoogerbrugge and Burger, 2018, p.1489). Writing about the relationship between

mutual support and neighbourhood attachment, Weijs-Perree *et al.* (2017, p.135) argue that a high level of mutual support in the neighbourhood is related to stronger neighbourhood attachment. According to Wu and Logan (2016, p.2973), support between residents could strengthen residents' sentiment towards their neighbourhood. Based on the literature, it can be concluded that a high level of mutual support increases neighbourhood attachment.

More details about social capital theories will be discussed in Chapter 5. To sum up, compared with studies devoted to personal and physical characteristics, fewer studies have assessed the role of social determinants in influencing neighbourhood attachment. Most of these studies agree on the significance of social determinants to neighbourhood attachment, particularly emotional attachment. For this reason, in the examination of emotional attachment, this thesis will take social determinants into account.

## 2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a comprehensive review of the conceptualisation and theorisation of neighbourhood and neighbourhood attachment, as well as a discussion of the determinants of neighbourhood attachment. The definition of the term 'neighbourhood' suffers from a lack of consensus. A well-defined neighbourhood should include physical, functional and psychological features. The relationship between neighbourhood and the closely related term 'community' has also been examined. With respect to China, the neighbourhood is a part of the community, and the neighbourhood can be an expression of the community. The neighbourhood is an indispensable part of society and is important for individuals' everyday lives as well as society's development. Emotional attachment, functional attachment, territoriality, and symbolic attachment are included within the structure of neighbourhood attachment. Of the four types of neighbourhood attachment, emotional attachment draws the most attention from scholars and has the most importance attached to it, followed by functional attachment. Due to the limited applicability of territoriality and symbolic attachment in China, this thesis will mainly deal with emotional attachment and functional attachment. Personal characteristics, physical characteristics and social determinants influence neighbourhood attachment, although the direction and degree of influence of these characteristics are still inconclusive. Owing to the limited focus on social determinants, this thesis will fill this gap.

## Chapter 3 Research on Neighbourhood Participation

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on neighbourhood participation. The overall aim of this chapter is to discuss what neighbourhood participation is, what different types of neighbourhood participation are and what determinants influence neighbourhood participation. The chapter is organised as follows. Section 3.2 conceptualise neighbourhood participation. Section 3.3 reviews the importance of neighbourhood participation. Section 3.4 examines different forms of neighbourhood participation. Section 3.5 explores different levels of participation. Section 3.6 discusses drivers of neighbourhood participation. Section 3.7 provides a conclusion.

### 3.2 Defining neighbourhood participation

Conceptually, participation is a broad concept (Claridge, 2004, p.18). Due to different ideological positions, different scholars provide different definitions of participation and apply it in different situations (Claridge, 2004, p.18). Paul (1987, p.2) provides a definition of participation which is denoted as ‘an active process by which beneficiary/client groups influence the direction and execution of a development project with a view to enhancing their well-being in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance or other values they cherish’.

Participation is usually tagged to words such as ‘political’, ‘citizen’, ‘public’ ‘community’ and ‘neighbourhood’ (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Dekker, 2007; Omar *et al.*, 2016). Specifically, political participation refers to ‘those activities participated by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed to influence the selection of government and/or the actions they take’ (Verba and Nie, 1972, p.2). Citizen participation takes place when citizens are provided with an opportunity to be involved in the democratic decision-making process and influences policies (Day, 1997, p.421). Public participation refers to the engagement in a decision through formal or informal channels that aim to allow participants to take action and to be heard in the decision-making processes and thus to influence the outcome (Lee and Sun, 2018, p. 5171). From the above, the terms ‘political’, ‘citizens’ and ‘public’ are often used interchangeably because all of them indicate people to have voices in public policy decisions and the intended outcomes are to enable their influence on government decisions.

These types of participation are all of importance for the legitimacy of political decision-making in democracies.

Community participation can be simply defined as the involvement of residents in community activities and projects to solve their common problems and achieve common goals (Harvey *et al.*, 2002, p.177). Zhu (2015, p.44) indicates that community participation is an important element in achieving sustainable community development. Additionally, community participation is a key method for promoting the quality of the physical environment and services, reducing anti-social behaviours, preventing crime and improving social conditions (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990, p.55).

More recently, much attention has been paid to participation at the neighbourhood level (Dekker, 2007, p.356; Hays and Kogl, 2007, p.181; Kearns and Parkinson, 2010, p.2109). It is partly because the neighbourhood can be considered a platform for experimentation with forms of local participatory democracy (Omar *et al.*, 2016, p.310). The neighbourhood is also a strong framework mechanism to show residents' preferences and satisfaction, to improve the quality of well-being and to continuously obtain better living conditions (Omar *et al.*, 2016, p.310). Some studies demonstrate that neighbourhood-based political mobilisation may create more effective policy outcomes than other less democratic processes (Hays and Kogl, 2007, p.186). For example, an American study by Portney and Berry (1997, p.630) found that by comparison with other social groups and organisations, neighbourhood associations are most effective at promoting grassroots political participation.

Neighbourhood participation refers to residents voluntarily taking part in local activities in aiming to positively influence the social, physical, and economic situations of the neighbourhood (Tumber, 2013, p.9). It is associated with neighbourhood collective efficacy, which aims to solve common problems and to achieve common goals (Zhu, 2020, p.1).

### 3.3 Neighbourhood participation matters

Many scholars and policymakers emphasise the importance of neighbourhood participation. They state that neighbourhood participation carries not only beneficial effects for individuals, but also for the neighbourhood, community and social development (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Harvey *et al.*, 2002; Claridge, 2004; Marschall, 2004; Tumber, 2013). Scholars emphasise that neighbourhood participation is a tool for residents to refrain from ongoing problems and to create an opportunity for pursuing a better living standard (Chavis

and Wandersman, 1990, p.55; Omar *et al.*, 2016, p.310). More specifically, neighbourhood participation promotes effective neighbourhood service delivery and improves the quality of the physical environment (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990, p.55). The more neighbourhood participation there is, can more services be cheaply provided (Claridge, 2004, p.27). As a result, residents can enjoy cultural, leisure and sporting activities by obtaining and using these cheap services.

Neighbourhood participation can increase property value (Marschall, 2004, p.232). Property value is significantly influenced by the neighbourhood environment and the accessibility of services and facilities. Residents voicing their preferences for neighbourhoods will influence the policymaking process in terms of the delivery of local services and facilities. Additionally, neighbourhood participation is good for the stability of the neighbourhood as well as the whole social development because participation enables the neighbourhood to achieve social inclusion and reduce the isolation of ethnic minority groups (Tumber, 2013, p.10). In this sense, the benefits of neighbourhood participation for neighbourhood development are tangible, as it greatly improves service delivery, the physical environment and the property value as well as achieves neighbourhood stability and social inclusion.

The importance of neighbourhood participation for residents is also well established in the literature (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Harvey *et al.*, 2002; Marschall, 2004; Tumber, 2013; Moore *et al.*, 2016). Some scholars indicate that neighbourhood participation can empower residents by allowing them to voice their preferences and demands for essential services and their interests to professionals, services providers and other residents (Tumber, 2013, p.3; Aitken, 2017, p.551). Neighbourhood participation also renders residents to work together to meet their shared needs (Harvey *et al.*, 2002, p.178). As noted by some studies, working together is particularly important for residents who live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods to improve their living conditions (Moore *et al.*, 2016, p.3).

Some studies show that participation is important for promoting health and disease prevention by influencing welfare reform and mental services delivery (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990, p.55). Neighbourhood participation also promotes residents' feeling of safety in the neighbourhood (Marschall, 2004, p.232). Accordingly, concerning the resident, neighbourhood participation not only helps individuals put forward their requests but also contributes to the residents' health and fosters a sense of safety. Residents are the ones who benefit most from neighbourhood participation because a better neighbourhood leads to a



better life for residents themselves. All in all, neighbourhood participation is beneficial for both the individual and neighbourhood's development.

### 3.4 Forms of neighbourhood participation

Participation in the neighbourhood can take different forms. Generally, participation can be divided into two main forms, namely, formal participation and informal participation (Dekker, 2007; Hays and Kogl, 2007; Tumber, 2013). Both forms are related to residents working together to co-create collective goods, building connections with other neighbourhood groups, engaging in grassroots movements, participating in neighbourhood meetings and voting in city council elections and others (Hays and Kogl, 2007, p.184). Some scholars indicate that whether formal or informal, the central aim of participation is to expand the citizen's power or 'civic capacity' (Hays and Kogl, 2007, p.184). The section below elaborates different types of neighbourhood participation.

#### 3.4.1 Formal participation

Formal participation refers to a 'top-down' form of participation, which is defined as people participating in the decision-making processes that would positively influence their neighbourhood (Tumber, 2013, p.9). Both resident associations and the local government are included in the process of formal participation (Tumber, 2013, p.10). In a nutshell, formal participation is a mutual exchange between authorities and citizens. Crucial here is the initiating role and dominance of governmental actors in involving citizens in policy making or service delivery.

Turning to the neighbourhood level, formal participation in the context of neighbourhood exhibits residents have civil rights, to achieve legitimacy for decisions and to advance residents' individual development and to contribute to wider neighbourhood development (Dekker, 2007, p.357; Aitken, 2017, p.549). Authorities will take residents' suggestions into account when making policy decisions. Many scholars elaborate examples of formal participation which consist of voting in local elections, attending City Council meetings, being a member of the District Council and making plans for the neighbourhood (Dekker, 2007, p.357; Hays and Kogl, 2007, p.199; Tumber, 2013, p.10; Gelder, 2013, p.13). As can be seen from the above analysis, formal participation in the neighbourhood denotes the exchange of ideas taking place between authorities (such as the local government) and residents.

### 3.4.2 Informal participation

Informal participation is regarded as a 'bottom-up' form of participation which is based on individuals' social networks (Dekker, 2007, p.357; Tumber, 2013, p.9). Informal participation can take the forms of participating in the residents' committee, engaging in a church, joining in neighbourhood organisations (such as football clubs), engaging in leisure activities, organising street parties or festivals, discussing neighbourhood affairs, taking part in consultations and others (Hays and Kogl, 2007, p.193; Dekker and Van Kempen, 2008, p.81; Blakeley and Evans, 2009, p.17; Tumber, 2013, p.10; Zhu, 2020, p.2). Bottom-up pathways are characterised by citizens taking the lead in formulating and/or generating community goods and services.

Additionally, reporting neighbourhood issues and problems is also seen as informal participation (Lelieveldt, 2004, p.542; Tumber, 2013, p.10; Hays and Kogl, 2016, p.190). These neighbourhood issues include litter in the streets, drug abuse, burglary in dwellings, graffiti/vandalism, maintenance of the buildings or facilities, upkeep of public spaces, conditions of housings, playgrounds for children, quality of neighbourhood services, racism, disruptive behaviours, demand for better street lighting and others (Dekker and Van Kempen, 2008, p.73; Blakeley and Evans, 2009, p.17). Although reporting neighbourhood issues is deemed as being temporarily engaged, it can generate neighbourly interactions, facilitate dialogue, prompt residents to solve common agendas that could cultivate participatory behaviour in civic and political realms (Blakeley and Evans, 2009, p.17; Hay and Kogl, 2016, p.190).

Several studies address the importance of informal participation at the neighbourhood level (Dekker, 2007; Zhu, 2020). For example, Zhu (2020, p.2) points out that informal participation is important for improving the neighbourhood environment, facilitating local service delivery, maintaining social order, and enhancing neighbourhood and community capacity. More importantly, many studies point out that informal participation as steppingstones may increase residents' opportunities of engaging in political affairs (Marschall, 2004, p.232; Dekker, 2007, p.357; Dekker and Van Kempen, 2008, p.64). It is because participation in different kinds of local events and activities helps residents to cultivate skills and attitudes as well as develop democratic competence (Dekker *et al.*, 2010, p.610). Although informal participation seems irrelevant to formal governance, as if it is merely a superficial process (Gelder, 2013, p.13), it is important in generating neighbourly

interactions, building neighbourly relationships, cultivating attitudes and skills, and creating the possibility for residents to participate formally (Dekker, 2007, p.347).

A Dutch study by Dekker *et al.* (2010, p.610) found that at the individual level, the majority of residents are more inclined to take part in informal participation such as being a member in residents' organisations rather than being involved in formal participation. A similar result is found by Xu and Chow (2006, p.202) who report that in urban China, residential interest in formal participation has greatly declined, while their interest in informal participation has risen. Evidence shows that residents seem to withdraw from the democratic process which has been perfectly exemplified by a declining participation rate in elections (Henn *et al.*, 2007, p.468). Therefore, some scholars suggest that the local government and policymakers should pay more attention to informal participation because it may increase the chances of residents taking part in formal governance processes (Dekker, 2007, p.357).

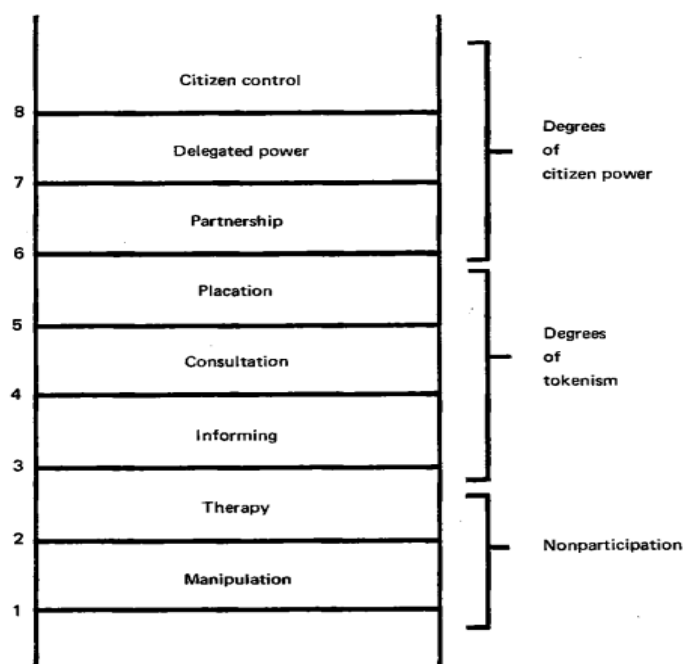
Some studies advocate that a combination of formal and informal participation can obtain the best outcomes (Tumber, 2013, p.10). In doing so, formal instruments are made available by the government and residents are active to make their voices heard. However, some residents do not want to take part in any form of participation because they might find other things in life more important, such as work. As Hays and Kogl (2007, p.198) express in their study, some residents do not report problems to the neighbourhood association because they do not find anything wrong. In this sense, there is no real problem.

Dekker argues that it would be problematic if residents are not allowed to engage in formal and informal activities in the neighbourhood when they would like to participate (Dekker, 2007, p.347). Indeed, residents cannot be forced to take part in neighbourhood projects and activities, however, the opportunity of participation should be available to all residents (Harvey *et al.*, 2002, p.177). This is seen as a basic human right and a fundamental principle of democracy (Moore *et al.*, 2016, p.9). As stated above, whether formal or informal participation, it is essential to promote and support residents' participation in the neighbourhood policymaking process and all other neighbourhood matters.

### 3.5 Sherry Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation

In 1969, Sherry Arnstein proposed one of the most famous and insightful models, namely, the Ladder of Citizen Participation which introduces different levels of participation from non-participation to citizen control, whereby power and responsibility are delegated to

citizens (Arnstein, 1969, p.217), as depicted in Figure 3.1. Although this model is made based on the planning perspective, it has been widely used in different fields, such as natural resource management, health care, public services and urban studies (Leach *et al.*, 1999; Carman *et al.*, 2013; Fainstein, 2014). Arnstein believes that citizen at the lowest point only has a small impact on the result of participation however participants at the upper end of the point have a high level of influence (Arnstein, 1969, p.217). Therefore, according to Arnstein's view, the influences of participation heavily rely on the different levels of power.



**Figure 3.1 Eight rungs on a ladder of citizen participation**

Source: Arnstein (1969, p. 217)

However, some scholars raise doubts about Arnstein's model (Wood, 2002). They argue that Arnstein's model is confusing because it seems to combine the power with the process (Cooper and Hawtin, 1998; Wood, 2002). For instance, Arnstein indicates that consultation belongs to the degree of tokenism which aims to let powerholders communicate to the public (Arnstein, 1969, p.217). Arnstein considers that in the degree of tokenism, participants' voices may not be accepted by policymakers and therefore cannot influence the policymaking processes (Tumber, 2013, p.11). However, Wood (2002, p.3) argues that consultation is the process of participation that may positively influence the final result if residents' opinions are received and noted by the government and acted upon. In this case, studies suggest that it is not necessary to classify neighbourhood participation into different levels and argue that is better to explore various external factors which would have an impact

on participation (Wood, 2002; Tumber, 2013). Based on these debates, while this study appreciates the contribution of Arnstein's 'ladder of participation', it assesses the impacts of neighbourhood participation through examining other factors.

### 3.6 Drivers of neighbourhood participation

Numerous conditions and determinants including personal characteristics, social characteristics and physical characteristics have been identified to explain participation (Verba and Nie, 1972; Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Kang and Kwak, 2003; Dekker, 2007; Hays and Kogl, 2007; Omer *et al.*, 2016). These determinants and conditions help us understand who wants to participate in neighbourhood activities and why residents decide to engage in neighbourhood participation. The section below reviews the different drivers of neighbourhood participation and explains how they influence participatory behaviours at the neighbourhood level.

#### 3.6.1 Personal characteristics

Considerable empirical studies have made it clear that neighbourhood participation is associated with personal characteristics such as age, gender, presence of children, socio-economic status and ethnicity (Dekker, 2007; Hays and Kogl, 2007; Tumber, 2013; Omer *et al.*, 2016). The section below reviews how these personal characteristics influence neighbourhood participation.

##### Socio-economic status

Socio-economic status is highly associated with neighbourhood participation (Marschall, 2004; Dekker, 2007; Hays and Kogl, 2007; Dekker and Van Kempen, 2008; Tumber, 2013). Some scholars consider residents with high socio-economic status as being more likely to engage in neighbourhood participation and local affairs because these people are characterised by abundant resources and strong interpersonal skills which all contribute to a high participation rate (Marschall, 2004, p.233; Tumber, 2013, p.14). As mentioned in Chapter 2, socio-economic status mainly consists of three elements, namely, educational level, employment status and income level. The relationship among the three elements is that people with good education attainment are more likely to have a good job, which is correlated with obtaining a high income (Tumber, 2013, p.15).

Following structure in Chapter 2, the effects of three indicators of socio-economic status, namely educational levels, employment status and income levels on neighbourhood participation will be examined, respectively. First, scholars highlight that education levels have the biggest impact on neighbourhood participation (Kang and Kwak, 2003; Lelieveldt, 2004; Persson, 2013). For example, Persson (2013, p.689) states that people with a high level of educational attainment are more likely to have participation behaviours because education not only improves knowledge and skills but also cultivates strong political interests and concerns. A study by Kang and Kwak (2003, p.91) explained that residents with high educational attainment are more knowledgeable on local affairs than others and hence tend to participate more. Furthermore, Dekker (2006, p.86) states that less-educated residents tend to withdraw from formal participation because of the less well-developed interpersonal skills, fewer social interactions, and less access to institutions and participation activities.

However, some studies find that less-educated residents also actively participate in neighbourhood activities (Lelieveldt, 2004, p.542; Dekker and Van Kempen, 2008, p.76). According to Dekker and Van Kempen (2008, p.66), these less-educated residents may consider themselves as vulnerable groups and therefore become more cohesive. Correspondingly, they tend to participate more to improve their current situation.

It is noteworthy that findings from studies of Dekker (2006) and Lelieveldt (2004) are not contradictory. In Dekker's study (2006), highly educated residents with a fund of knowledge and skills are inclined to take part in formal participation, whereas Lelieveldt (2004) reports that less-educated residents are interested in informal participation to improve their living environment. It seems that residents with different educational levels engage in different forms of participation. As discussed above, a higher level of education attainment is associated with a higher level of participation in formal activities because well-educated residents are better equipped with skills, social networks and resources, and thus are more likely to actively engage in local affairs. Less-educated residents are less likely to participate in formal participation, but they are inclined to engage in informal neighbourhood activities.

Second, turning to employment status, unemployed residents show a high participation rate because they have more time to spend in the neighbourhood than employed residents (Dekker and Van Kempen, 2008, p.81). Tumber (2013, p.31) explains that in addition to having more spare time, unemployed residents may choose to become volunteers to obtain work experiences, widen professional networks, and increase opportunities of getting a paid

job. In general, it turns out that unemployed residents are willing to work as volunteers in neighbourhood activities (neighbourhood participation), including improving their neighbourhood's safety and environment (Tumber, 2013, p.31).

Interestingly, Tumber (2013, p.31) finds that employed residents also like to be productive and contribute to their society. They choose to participate in neighbourhood organisations and societal groups. For instance, Dekker and Van Kempen (2008, p.77) assume that the concentration of unemployed residents may be considered as a big neighbourhood problem, which may be a motivator for employed residents to participate in neighbourhood activities. Therefore, it seems that whether unemployed or employed, both types of residents are likely to participate in neighbourhood activities.

Third, some studies examine the relationship between income levels and neighbourhood participation. Theoretically, having high incomes and therefore a high socio-economic status, should help residents participate more in the neighbourhood (Tumber, 2013, p.32). However, Tumber (2003, p.32) finds that in comparison with low-income residents, those with high incomes are less likely to be a volunteer in neighbourhood activities. Tumber fails to provide a reason for this phenomenon. Tumber (2013, p.13) further points out that low-income residents are against formal participation because of a lack of trust in authorities (Tumber, 2013, p.13). Dekker (2006, p.86) indicates that low-income residents tend to be inactive in formal political and electoral processes because they have limited access to institutions. Accordingly, the literature on the effects of income on neighbourhood participation exhibits inconclusive results.

In summary, socio-economic status is closely related to neighbourhood participation. These studies find that the higher socio-economic status correlates with a wider social network and more competence, resulting in a higher participation rate. Among three components of socio-economic status, the educational level has been frequently used to examine the relationship between socio-economic status and neighbourhood participation. Well-educated residents relate to a high level of participation. Although the employment status and income level display a correlation with neighbourhood participation, they seem to have no significant effects on neighbourhood participation.

## Ethnicity

Many studies indicate that ethnicity is associated with neighbourhood participation (Verba and Nie, 1972; Gerson *et al.*, 1977; Dekker, 2007; Dekker and Van Kempen, 2008; Tumber, 2013). Some scholars state that the participation rate is greater in a neighbourhood with a high proportion of people from the same ethnic background because residents may feel more confident and have easier communication with others (Gerson *et al.*, 1977).

By contrast, ethnic minorities seem more reserved and thus shy away from civic life because of various reasons (Tumber, 2013, p.16). A study conducted in the UK reported that members of ethnic minorities are largely absent from neighbourhood participation due to language barriers (Blakeley and Evans, 2009, p.19). A Dutch study reported that in addition to language deficiency, cultural differences are another reason that explains why ethnic minorities have a low participation rate in neighbourhood organisations (Tumber, 2013, p.16). Some scholars also argue that low participation of ethnic minorities results from the unfamiliarity of organisations, the fear of being rejected, discrimination and harassment due to racism (Van Kempen *et al.*, 2006). The concentration of ethnic minorities in disadvantaged neighbourhoods is characterised by low-income and short residence which leads residents to withdraw from civic activities (Dekker and Van Kempen, 2008, p.66; Tumber, 2013, p.4). As discussed above, ethnic minorities tend to have lower participation than the native population.

Nonetheless, some studies assert that ethnic minorities can also have a high participation rate. For example, a study by Dekker (2007, p.359) reported that, in the USA, ethnic minority groups show higher rates of neighbourhood participation than dominant ethnic groups because of the development of group consciousness. The group consciousness encourages people to become active in political participation (Sanchez, 2006, p.428). Furthermore, Dekker and Van Kempen (2008, p.65) explain that owing to a lack of personal resources among ethnic minorities, political participation seems to be a method of obtaining something which they cannot attain relying on their current social network. Taken together, it is clear that there is an association between ethnicity and participation, but there is disagreement over which direction this takes.



## Gender

Participation rates are also related to gender. Some scholars have found that women generally participate more than men in the neighbourhood (Kang and Kwak, 2003; Lelieveldt, 2004; Dekker, 2007). As a Dutch study by Dekker (2007, p.359) showed, women play an important role in neighbourhood participation because they pay much attention to what happens in the neighbourhood. Anton and Lawrence (2014, p.454) state that women are actively involved in neighbourhood organisations. In a similar vein, in China, elderly women are the dominant members of resident committees (Heberer, 2006, p.8). Heberer (2006, p.15) further reports that in Chongqing and Shenyang, the number of women made up 80% of the total membership in those committees.

By using regression analysis to examine the relationship between personal characteristics and participation, a study by Kang and Kwak (2003, p.91) discovered that women are more likely to participate in local affairs and neighbourhood organisations because they are more knowledgeable about local affairs than men. A UK study found that the high participation is due to a high level of social capital level and that women believe that they can influence decisions more than men (Grimsley *et al.*, 2005, p.12). A UK study by Blakeley and Evans (2009, p.19) reported that despite being surrounded by housework and child issues, women still have a high level of participation in neighbourhood affairs. However, these studies fail to provide a reason. From the above, it can be concluded that the literature shows a consistent result that women generally participate more than men in neighbourhood activities and neighbourhood organisations.

## Presence of children

Another associated factor is the presence of children in the neighbourhood. Generally, scholars demonstrate that residents having children are more inclined to have social contacts with other residents, which contributes to building social networks and promotes the possibility to participate in neighbourhood activities (Lelieveldt, 2004; Dekker and Van Kempen, 2008; Anton and Lawrence, 2014). An Australian study by Anton and Lawrence (2014, p.459) indicated that families with children are more likely to take children to neighbourhood playgroups and local sporting teams which increases the chance to communicate with other families and build social networks.

In their study in Northwest, Central and Southern Europe, Dekker and Van Kempen (2008, p.81) found that households with children are more active in improving their neighbourhood because they want to create a better living environment for their children. According to Gelder (2013, p.14), those households with children prefer to spend more time in the neighbourhood. Consequently, they tend to be more active in their neighbourhoods. A UK study indicated that families with children are more likely to believe that they know their neighbours well and feel their opinions enable them to influence policy decisions in their local areas (Grimsley *et al.*, 2005, p.26). This study further reported that by comparison with the presence of children, families with no children tend to participate less because they distrust local councils and local schools.

To sum up, according to the literature, families with children are associated with spending more time in the neighbourhood, having more social interactions with other families, are more actively engaging in neighbourhood organisations and knowing more neighbours which all contribute to a high level of participation.

### Age

Based on the literature, age correlates with neighbourhood participation. Some scholars find that elderly residents usually exhibit a high level of participation because they have more time to spend in the neighbourhood (Lelieveldt, 2004, p.542; Grimsley *et al.*, 2005; Dekker, 2007, p.370; Anton and Lawrence, 2014, p.454). For instance, Grimsley *et al.* (2005, p.15) illustrate that by comparison with other age groups in UK, residents from the 65 to 74 age group have the highest participation rate in neighbourhood programmes because they are more trustful of all local institutions. These elderly residents believe that these neighbourhood programmes could improve the local area.

In some countries, such as Malaysia, young people were targeted as the major group in shaping the community's well-being and continue to contribute to community culture and future (Omer *et al.*, 2016, p.316). However, some studies show that young people are generally associated with a low participation rate (Henn, 2007, p.467; Blakeley and Evans, 2009; Omar *et al.*, 2016). For instance, in the UK, only 37% of young people voted at the British General Election in 2005 (Henn, 2007, p.467). A UK survey by Blakeley and Evans (2009, p.19) found that in east Manchester, young people were largely absent from participation although the staff from the New Deal for Communities Programme made efforts to engage them. Malaysian youths showed a low level of participation in the

neighbourhood because they perceived the feeling of being marginalised from neighbourhoods (Omar *et al.*, 2016, p.315). Omar *et al.*'s study suggests that young people as the largest active group in the neighbourhood should be motivated more to participate in neighbourhood programs and activities.

In contrast, many studies find the contradictory result that some young people are also positively correlated with neighbourhood participation (Kang and Kwak, 2003). For instance, Kang and Kwak (2003, p.91) state that young people show a high level of participation because they are more knowledgeable on local affairs through following social media. Indeed, young people are increasingly taking advantage of different technologies to get more information about local affairs and activities (Kang and Kwak, 2003). In view of all that has been mentioned in these studies so far, one may suppose that these contradictory results of youth participants' attitudes towards participation may be due to different study areas. Therefore, the reasons behind this are not clear and require further investigation.

There is a dearth of studies investigating how middle-aged residents participate in neighbourhood activities. A small number of studies provide an inconsistent result. A study by Blakeley and Evans (2009, p.19) found that middle-aged residents are active in neighbourhood affairs. Similarly, a UK study by Grimsley *et al.* (2005, p.26) stated that residents from the 55 to 64 age group are most likely to engage in local voluntary organisations. However, Grimsley *et al.* (2005, p.26) also report that by comparison with elderly residents, the middle-aged group (between 35 and 44) are more likely to distrust local health services and therefore have a low participation rate.

In summary, in the literature, age is associated with participation rates. A consistent result is that elderly residents are more likely to participate in neighbourhood activities because they spend more time in the neighbourhood than other age groups which facilitate participation. However, with respect to young people and middle-aged residents, contradictory results are reported. The inconsistency may be due to the difference in the political environment in different countries, different analytic approaches and other factors.

### Homeownership

Many studies find that homeownership is associated with neighbourhood participation (Marschall, 2004; Grimsley *et al.*, 2005; Dekker, 2007; Dekker and Van Kempen, 2008; Tumber, 2013). Some studies acknowledge that homeowners generally have a higher

participation rate than renters because purchasing a property is seen as an investment in the locality which makes homeowners have a willingness to improve the liveability and safety in the neighbourhood (Dekker, 2007, p.359; Tumber, 2013, p.31). A similar view was found by Marschall (2004, p.234), who states that homeowners seem to have more interest in neighbourhood development than renters and therefore they are more likely to devote time to the neighbourhood.

Some studies show that homeowners are active in the neighbourhood associations and organisations because they would like to maintain the quality of the neighbourhood (Heberer, 2006, p.6; Dekker and Van Kempen, 2008, p.77). These organisations consist of sports clubs, cooking lessons and others which are considered a podium for more formal organisations (Dekker and Van Kempen, 2008, p.77). This shows that the aim of resident participation is not only for the improvement of their neighbourhoods but also for the on-going maintenance. It can be concluded that the ultimate goal of homeowners' participation in organisations and associations is to improve their neighbourhood.

In the literature, renters generally represent a low level of participation because they tend not to bother themselves with what happens in the neighbourhood as they may just live in a neighbourhood for a short time (Dekker and Van Kempen, 2008, p.76; Anton and Lawrence, 2014, p.458). In this case, renters are usually less attached to their neighbourhoods and consequently participate less in neighbourhood activities (Tumber, 2013, p.31). A UK study found that residents in private rented accommodation tend to have a low participation rate because they do not have a sense of belonging and feel that they cannot influence the results of decisions (Grimsley *et al.*, 2005, p.14). As discussed above, due to little interest and a low level of attachment, renters are more likely to withdraw from neighbourhood activities. Taken together, many studies display a consistent result that homeowners are more prone to participating in neighbourhood activities than renters.

### 3.6.2 Social characteristics

As mentioned before, personal characteristics influence residents' tendency to participate in local public affairs. However, the reasons for participation are less clear. When discussing reasons for neighbourhood participation, social capital, neighbourhood attachment and political interest are often mentioned by scholars (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Lelieveldt, 2004; Dekker, 2007; Zhu, 2020). Therefore, what follows is a review of social characteristics which can largely explain neighbourhood participation.

## Social capital

An in-depth analysis of social capital will be further examined in Chapter 5. A body of research outlines that social capital appears to significantly influence neighbourhood participation (Kang and Kwak; 2003; Lelieveldt, 2004; Dekker, 2006; Hays and Kogl, 2007; Zhu, 2020) because it generates neighbourly interactions which not only facilitate residents to share information and discuss issues happened around but also motivate residents to act for a common goal (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990, p.58; Marschall, 2004, p.242). Residents with dense social capital are more likely to solve community issues through collective actions (Collins, 2013). These collective actions can be seen as participation in the neighbourhood. Additionally, social capital also relates to different life experiences (McDonald and Mair, 2010, p.335). Although some residents live in the same neighbourhood, different residents with different social capital will have different living experiences that significantly influence the willingness to participate in local affairs. In general, a consistent result is that dense social capital is related to a high level of neighbourhood participation.

Social capital is generally seen to consist of social networks, trust and norms (Lelieveldt, 2004; Marschall, 2004; Dekker, 2006; Hays and Kogl, 2007). Although most empirical studies focus on the impact of the social network dimension of social capital, an increasing number of studies find that trust can also provide strong support for participation (see detailed analysis in Chapter 5). By comparison with the other two dimensions of social capital, only a small number of studies pay attention to the relationship between norms and participation. More details will be provided in Chapter 5.

Some scholars elaborate that social network influences both formal and informal participation at the neighbourhood level (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Kearns and Forrest, 2010; Kang and Kwak, 2003; Lelieveldt, 2004; Marschall, 2004). Residents who have frequent interactions with other residents are more integrated into the local area and have a more positive perception about it, and they may be more willing to take an active role in political activities and other neighbourhood matters (Dekker, 2006, p.88). Specifically, in respect of formal participation, a study by Kang and Kwak (2003, p.92) noted that residents who maintain dense social networks and frequent interactions with other neighbours report high levels of participation in local affairs. Marschall (2004, p.235) points out that robust

local ties increase mutual trust and residential stability which contribute to affective identification with their neighbourhoods and hence contribute to participation.

In a study in Madison, Wisconsin, and its adjacent cities, towns, and villages, Kang and Kwak (2003, p.91) illustrated that residents who get involved in a church network are inclined to participate in neighbourhood affairs. Kang and Kwak (2003, p.92) add that those who have a strong social network closely follow what happens in their local area by reading the newspaper and are more active and willing to work collectively for the local area. Similarly, Chavis and Wandersman. (1990, p.58) stress that social network contributes to the formation of neighbourhood organisations by sharing information about the association and developing the co-production of services through informal normative mechanisms. Some scholars further underline that residents with the strong social networks are more likely to be aware of the existence of local voluntary organisations and be a member of them (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990, p.58). A Chinese study found that residents with the weak local networks (such as being unfamiliar with neighbours) seem to have no interest in neighbourhood affairs and consequently display a low participation rate (Tang and Sun, 2016, p.15).

With respect to formal participation, by using multinomial logistic regression models, a Dutch study by Dekker *et al.* (2010, p.609) argued that the actual number of relations in the network and the density of the network are positively related to residents' participation in neighbourhood projects. A study conducted in Sweden concluded that residents with a robust social network are more likely to engage in voluntary associations which induces political activity (Teorell, 2003, p.49). The studies reviewed here show that residents with strong local ties are more apt to have a high participation rate in both formal and informal neighbourhood activities.

Trust is another important factor that greatly influences neighbourhood participation. Trust generates informal governance and a sense of responsibility which all promote participation rates in the neighbourhood (Dekker, 2007, p.356). Some scholars have examined the relationship between two types of trust (namely trust in authorities/organisations and trust in other neighbours) and neighbourhood participation (Lelieveldt, 2004; Dekker, 2007; Bentley, 2014; Grimsley *et al.*, 2015).

Some of the literature shows that trust in authorities, organisations and agencies is related to the propensity to participate. As Lelieveldt (2004, p.535) indicates, trust in authorities is

positively associated with formal participation. The more the residents feel trust in authorities, the more they participate in local elections and informal governance. A lack of trust in organisations or agencies such as the local council and the local school results in a low participation rate because residents believe their opinions cannot influence decisions (Grimsley *et al.*, 2015, p.28). Grimsley *et al.* (2015, p.28) also point out that low levels of trust in organisations is associated with a sense of personal insecurity in the living area which results in low participation rates.

Trust in neighbours also contributes to neighbourhood participation. For example, a study by Bentley (2014, p.56) found that having interpersonal trust among residents largely contributes to neighbourhood participation. In contrast, distrust in neighbours results in difficulties in generating communal action and eventually leads to a low participation rate (Dekker, 2006, p.89). The literature reviewed here seems to suggest that trust in neighbours and authorities is positively associated with neighbourhood participation. Distrust leads to low levels of efficacy and a sense of insecurity which lead residents to withdraw from neighbourhood participation.

Some sociologists and urban planners consider that shared norms are also an important asset that can promote neighbourhood participation (Zhu, 2020, p.1). It is because shared norms will lead residents to trust each other which can increase neighbourly interactions and facilitate collective actions, consequently contributing to participation (Dekker, 2007, p.356). Tumber (2013, p.13) claims that residents who have high levels of norms must take part in participation. Dekker (2006, p.89) points out that norms are the rules specifying appropriate and desirable behaviours and rejecting undesirable behaviours. Some scholars tend to suggest that the more the residents reject deviant behaviours the more inclined they are to generate higher participation (Dekker, 2007, p.361).

Taken together, among the three components of social capital, social networks and mutual trust play a vital role in helping to promote participation in the neighbourhood. As these studies indicate, strong social networks cultivate mutual trust (Dekker *et al.*, 2010, p.613). Mutual trust is generated by common norms and group identification (Dekker, 2006, p.89). Shared norms contribute to mutual trust and therefore in turn generate strong local networks (Dekker, 2007, p.356). In doing so, the three components interconnect with each other. Overall, the evidence presented in this section indicates that social capital is a very useful concept that affects residents' propensity to participate in the neighbourhood. It seems that

residents with dense social capital are more inclined to participate in neighbourhood activities.

### Neighbourhood attachment

A large body of research concludes that neighbourhood attachment has a significant impact on neighbourhood participation (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Kang and Kwak, 2003; Dekker, 2006; Anton and Lawrence, 2014; Buta *et al.*, 2014). The feeling of attachment to the neighbourhood leads residents to undertake communal action to protect their neighbourhoods and hence have a willingness to devote time to engage in neighbourhood activities and organisations (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Kang and Kwak, 2003; Lelieveldt, 2004). Specifically, neighbourhood attachment is related to a sense of safety, residential stability and trust which all give residents incentives to engage in neighbourhood affairs.

For example, as Kang and Kwak (2003, p.30) illustrate, a sense of attachment is a catalyst of participation that will promote residential stability in the wider neighbourhood development. A similar view was expressed by Chavis and Wandersman (1990, p.73), who argue that residents with a strong neighbourhood attachment generate a strong sense of safety and hence promote willingness to communicate with neighbours and to participate in neighbourhood activities. Stefaniak *et al.* (2017, p.217) point out that neighbourhood attachment generates greater interpersonal trust among residents and hence increases the motivation to participate in neighbourhood affairs.

Additionally, a sense of attachment can bring residents together to participate in relative formal activities to solve common problems (Perkins and Long, 2002; Walker and Ryan, 2008; Anton and Lawrence, 2014). Echoing this sentiment, Perkins and Long (2002, p.297) state that a strong sense of attachment might motivate residents to participate in community organisations to tackle common issues. Similarly, Anton and Lawrence (2014, p.454) claim that neighbourhood attachment leads residents to engage in town meetings, neighbourhood-related recreational activities and local association activities.

Some studies have also found that residents with high levels of attachment are more likely to have pro-environmental concerns and behaviours in their neighbourhoods (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Buta *et al.*, 2014). Pro-environmental behaviour relates to 'actions which deliberately aim to minimise one's negative impact on the natural and built



environment' (Buta *et al.*, 2014, p.3). A strong sense of attachment motivates residents to feel that they have the responsibility to protect their neighbourhoods (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990, p.56). From this point of view, attached residents have a willingness to protect the physical environment and social features of the neighbourhoods to achieve a high quality of life (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990, p.56; Anton and Lawrence, 2014, p.459). As discussed above, displaying pro-environmental behaviour can be understood as a form of neighbourhood participation.

Overall, neighbourhood attachment is positively correlated with neighbourhood participation. Strong neighbourhood attachment stimulates residents to take collective actions to improve their neighbourhoods and feel comfortable in participating in neighbourhood organisations. In this case, participation is higher if residents perceive a stronger sense of attachment.

### Political interest

A few scholars mention that residents who have a general interest in local and political affairs are more willing to engage in participation (Marschall, 2004; Sanchez, 2006; Heberer, 2006; Wu *et al.*, 2019). In this sense, political interest is an important factor to predict formal participation (Reichert, 2018). Although people who have a general interest in participation may not necessarily take practical actions, this interest can help residents not only form attitudes toward participation but also increase the possibility of engaging in the political process (Aitken, 2017, p.553).

Some studies explore how political interest can influence neighbourhood participation. For example, Marschall (2004, p.233) points out that having an interest in participation largely motivates residents to get involved in neighbourhood participation. A study conducted in the USA found that political interest greatly influences whether Latino residents become frequent voters in the election (Sanchez, 2006, p.435). Heberer (2006, p.6) additionally points out that an interest in voting will diminish if participants do not know the candidates and this results in a low level of the participation rate.

However, although political interest is an important factor for facilitating residents to involve in neighbourhood activities, it may be insufficient to lead to practical action from residents (Marschall, 2004, p.233). It was found that in addition to being interested in politics, whether practical action happens is dependent on participants' time, attention and energy (Blakeley

and Evans, 2008, p.21). As a UK study reports, in east Manchester, a low level of the participation rate is due to the insufficient time of residents (Aitken, 2017, p.553). In this sense, as there is no agreement on the best time, scholars suggest that to avoid this issue, the meeting can be held at different times to achieve wider participation (Wood, 2002, p.43).

A study in Germany found that policy efficacy, an associated factor of political interest is also important to neighbourhood participation (Reichert, 2018, p.459). The relationship is that policy efficacy can promote participatory behaviours when political interest is considered (Reichert, 2018, p.460). By contrast, high levels of cynicism and scepticism and low levels of self-opinions lead to a negative view about neighbourhood participation (Wood, 2002, p.36). An example cited from Wood (2002, p.36) shows that some residents think participation is a waste of time because they believe that their voice cannot have any impact on political affairs, resulting in low neighbourhood participation.

Some scholars advocate that political interest and policy efficacy should be promoted together because those who are interested in political affairs and who feel more able to affect political decisions are more willing to participate. Overall, these studies reviewed here show that having a political interest is related to neighbourhood participation. Specifically, political interest facilitates residents to engage in political affairs. Notably, although residents with political interests are more likely to pay attention to political affairs, practical action is influenced by some other factors such as time, location and political efficacy.

### 3.6.3 Physical characteristics

In comparison with the personal characteristics and social characteristics, a small number of studies point out that physical characteristics are also related to participatory attitudes and behaviours at the neighbourhood level (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Marschall, 2004; Dekker and Van Kemper, 2008). In the literature, the neighbourhood environment is positively associated with neighbourhood participation (Grimsley *et al.*, 2005, p.4). As Chavis and Wandersman (1990, p.57) state, a poor physical environment (such as litter, abandoned cars or gangs on the street) is related to feeling unsafe and therefore leads residents to withdraw from their neighbourhood affairs and activities.

Interestingly, scholars find that the perception of environmental problems can also act as a motivator to trigger collective actions (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Kang and Kwak, 2003). Chavis and Wandersman (1990, p.56) report that participation in voluntary

organisations has been seen as an effective method for improving the quality of the physical environment, improving services, preventing crime and promoting social conditions. The highest degree of participation is due to residents perceiving environmental problems. A similar view was expressed by Kang and Kwak (2003, p.91), who states that residents who live in an area with high levels of crime tend to have a high degree of civic participation. Indeed, due to a communal need to improve the situation, residents living in deprived neighbourhoods are more likely to take part in neighbourhood issues (Dekker and Van Kempen, 2008, p.77).

A number of studies point out that some other physical characteristics such as the quality of local services, density, housing conditions and geographical location are also correlated with neighbourhood participation. For example, Marschall (2004, p.233) points out that satisfaction with local services increases the level of neighbourhood participation whereas neighbourhood physical problems such as dilapidated properties result in residential dissatisfaction which has negative impacts on participation. Dekker and Van Kemper (2008, p.82) illustrate that in Northwest Europe, low-density neighbourhoods have higher participation rates and fewer neighbourhood problems.

Dekker and Van Kemper (2008, p.82) additionally indicate that older neighbourhoods show higher participation rates than new ones because social organisations of older neighbourhoods have had a long time to establish themselves in their local area. Tumber (2013, p.16) reports that neighbourhood participation is influenced by the neighbourhood's geographical location because life chances are different in different neighbourhoods. A similar finding was reported by Wood (2002, p.42), who claims that location influences residents' attendance at meetings, particularly those with a disability.

All in all, above studies provide an amount of supportive evidence for various factors that influence neighbourhood participation. However, it was found that some factors present contradictory results. These contradictory results may be due to different research areas, sample sizes and analytical approaches. It appears that due to adopting the quantitative method, many studies only find correlations between different factors and participation but fail to explore the reasons why residents are willing or unwilling to participate in public affairs. To address this, my research employs a qualitative method to find out the reason behind this.

### 3.7 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the literature on neighbourhood participation. First, various forms of 'participation' were reviewed. Second, this research considered that neighbourhood participation is important for individuals and neighbourhood' development. Third, this chapter found two types of participation at the neighbourhood level, namely, formal participation and informal participation. It is important to distinguish between the two forms of participation because they relate to different actions from the participants. Fourth, the evidence presented in this section tends to show that the research on neighbourhood participation does not necessarily need to refer to Arnstein's 'Ladder of Citizen Participation'. Instead, neighbourhood participation is majorly influenced by a lot of determinants, such as personal, social and physical characteristics. Following other research, this study looks for different factors which may motivate residents to get involved in neighbourhood participation. Fifth, this chapter reviewed various drivers of neighbourhood participation. It was found that many empirical studies provide supportive evidence for the relative importance of factors affecting participation. However, these studies only displayed correlations and failed to provide reasons behind these. Additionally, the evidence on the impact of some factors is inconsistent. Thus, this study tries to conduct more in-depth research to explore the willingness to participate in local and public affairs. The next chapter will review neighbourhoods' development in China.

# Chapter 4 Neighbourhood Development in China

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on neighbourhood development in China to establish the background for this study. The chapter starts by describing historical neighbourhood transformation in urban areas in Section 4.2, followed by an examination of the concept of gated communities in the Chinese context in Section 4.3, as gated communities is a main feature of the urban residential organisation in the country. Section 4.4 examines the current neighbourhood organisations and governance. Section 4.5 examines other research on neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood participation in different types of Chinese neighbourhoods through a brief literature review. Finally, Section 4.6 concludes this chapter.

## 4.2 From traditional settlements toward urban neighbourhoods

As discussed in Chapter 2, a neighbourhood is a dynamic entity which consists of both physical, functional, and psychological aspects. In this thesis, a neighbourhood is defined as a local place which comprises personal characteristics, social characteristics, physical characteristics, political characteristics and sentimental characteristics, and enables people to develop social relations, facilitate social interactions, and build self-identities. Over the past 40 years, a series of market-oriented transformations – including institution reform, land reform and housing reform – have brought about great changes in urban neighbourhood landscapes, community experience and grassroots governance (Wang and Murie, 1999, p.1477; He and Wu, p.194; Zhu, 2015, p.45). These transformations have led to the large growth of urban populations and the expansion of urban space. The total urban population increased from about 20% in 1980 to about 64% in 2021 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). The rate of urbanisation increased from less than 20% to over 50% from 1980 to 2012 (Chai, 2014, p.183). To accommodate these new urban population, a large number of houses and neighbourhoods with different features has been constructed in cities in China. Given these monumental changes, this section reviews how different types of urban neighbourhoods were developed historically and highlights the economic, physical and social features of these neighbourhoods.

In pre-communist China, one of the earliest residential developments based on the neighbourhood unit concept was developed in 1934 by the Japanese colonial planners in the

north-eastern city of Changchun and was created under the specific circumstances of colonisation (Lu, 2006, p.373). In the following years, other foreign-controlled neighbourhoods were built in China during the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), but these neighbourhoods were mainly for foreigners. During this period, Chinese urban residents resided in low-rise traditional Chinese houses such as tenements, lane houses (*li long*) and courtyard houses (*siheyuan*), which were privately owned by families and passed down through generations (Li *et al.*, 2012, p.238). They were mainly built in old districts which have now been largely demolished and replaced by commercial-housing neighbourhoods, although some traditional Chinese houses remain in contemporary China (Lei and Lin, 2021, p.5).

After the war, the top priority of Chinese planners was to rebuild the nation as well as to plan large-scale residential development. In 1946, the Chinese Ministry of the Interior invited American consultants to take part in planning and decision-making in China. Under their influence and following the Western trend, Chinese planners adopted the neighbourhood unit concept, which was originally designed in the USA, to organise Chinese cities and towns (Lu, 2006, p.374). Although a key purpose of the innovation of the neighbourhood unit in the American context was to increase community bonds and social democracy, this objective seemed lost in the Chinese planning process. Instead, Chinese planners considered the neighbourhood unit to be an effective approach to organise and plan cities and deliver public services to urban residents (Lu, 2006, p.375). Albeit this difference in objectives, the consciousness of the construction of the neighbourhood emerged in China.

After 1949, with the guidance of the Soviet Union, the work unit compound (*danwei dayuan*) – a distinctive Chinese concept – emerged in urban China and was seen as an important part of the socialist system of production (Xu and Yang, 2009, p.106; Zhu, 2015, p.45). These work unit compounds were mostly built in the central areas of cities during the first three decades of the PRC (Chai, 2014, p.185). In comparison with traditional house neighbourhoods, work unit compounds generally had a better physical environment (Lei and Lin, 2021, p.5). Following the ancient tradition of demarcating residential spaces, the work unit compound was designed as a walled and gated enclosure (Bjorklund, 1986, p.21). In addition to an enclosed place, the work unit compound was designed as a multifunctional and self-contained compound consisting of workplaces and a proportionate area of residence (Li *et al.*, 2012, p.238; Chai, 2014, p. 185; Zhu, 2015, p.45).

Apartments were seen as a form of social welfare to be developed and distributed directly by the work unit and tied up with the employee's work (Wang and Murie, 1999, p.1478). Residents only paid minimal rent to their work units. Additionally, work unit compounds contained various physical and social infrastructure and provided comprehensive social services to employees. Specifically, large work unit compounds were usually constituted of kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools, hospitals, activity centres, sports facilities, canteens, parks, libraries and other on-site amenities (Xu and Yang, 2009, p. 106; Lei and Lin, 2021, p.5). In this situation, it was not necessary for residents to leave their work unit compound since it functioned as a miniature city which contained rich institutional resources and formed the basic life circle of residents (Xu and Yang, 2009, p.108). Due to these advantages, highly educated and skilled residents, along with their offspring, were absorbed into the work unit system (Lei and Lin, 2021, p.5). According to Chai (2014, p.184), in 1978, about 95% of the urban residents were employees of work units and most of them lived in work units.

Presently, although work unit compounds vary in scale, location, housing conditions, facilities and services, they have a number of generic features, including socio-economic homogeneity, low homeownership rates and low residential mobility (Zhu, 2015, p.45). The integration of work, residence and social facilities significantly contribute to the dense network of human relationships, home-work balance, low traffic demand, easy access to basic facilities, and low social inequality (Xu and Yang, 2009, p.107; Zhu, 2015, p.45). The work unit compound cultivates a compound culture that is underpinned by frequent neighbourly interactions and extensive mutual help (Li *et al.*, 2012, p.238). The work unit compound also provides a strong sense of identity for residents and the enclosure of the place makes residents feel secure (Bjorklund, 1986, p.21; Li *et al.*, 2012, p.238). All these factors help foster a strong sense of belonging among the members of the work unit compound (Zhu, 2015, p.45).

However, the work units' style of the residential organisation also produced several shortcomings. Work unit compounds led to the spatial fragmentation of urban China, which negatively influenced the broader goals of urban planning and urban development (Chai, 2014, p.185). Residents had limited possibilities of building a wide social network with people in different work units due to the spatial and organisational segregation caused by walled barriers (Chai, 2014, p.185). Since 1978, the reform of state-owned enterprise, transfer of land use rights and housing reform triggered real estate development and led to

tremendous spatial and social transformations in cities (Wang and Murie, 1999, p.1477; Zhu, 2015, p.45). However, negative features of the work unit compounds also underpinned the transformation of the work unit during the reform period. During the transformation, the major changes to the work unit compounds were decreasing spatial integrity and shifts in land use. The brick walls of the former work unit compound were replaced by fences, green belts or commercial outlets (Chai, 2014, p.186). The boundaries of many work unit compounds were changed as workplace and residential areas were no longer bonded together. For example, some factories relocated to suburban areas for manufacturing activities (Chai, 2014, p.186).

During the 1980s and 1990s, commercial-housing development in China made notable progress as a large amount of commercial real estate was built in the inner suburbs of large cities (Wang and Murie, 1999, p.1491). Presently, commercial-housing neighbourhoods are designed as enclosed residential compounds and are constructed by private real estate developers. The majority of these neighbourhoods are gated (Li *et al.*, 2012, p.238). According to Zhu (2015, p.45), these neighbourhoods also adopt some design features from New Urbanist neighbourhoods in the USA in terms of having public spaces, a range of facilities and mixed land use. Some large commercial-housing estates even have facilities for education, healthcare and recreation. The development of commercial-housing neighbourhoods brought larger housing units, better living environments and facilities for urban families, and it also led to the loss of the links between housing and employment (Wang and Murie, 1999, p.1491).

As a part of housing reform since 1988, existing welfare housing was privatised and sold to current residents at a largely discounted price (Zhu, 2015, p.45). In 1998, marked by the official end of the welfare housing system, housing provision in China finally changed from a plan-oriented economy to a market-driven economic model. The work unit stopped providing public housing to urban employees. Instead of relying on work units for welfare housing, the commercialisation of urban housing formed a modern housing market (Wang and Murie, 1999, p.1486; Wu, 2005, p.240). Along with the deepening market-oriented reform after the early 2000s, urban regeneration projects were implemented, so dilapidated neighbourhoods in inner cities were turned into commercial-housing neighbourhoods, which have now become the dominant form of urban neighbourhoods in China (Zhu, 2015, p.45). Compared to traditional house neighbourhoods and work unit compounds, these



commercial-housing neighbourhoods are generally occupied by residents with a higher socioeconomic status (He and Wu, 2007, p.194).

According to the State Council and State Statistical Bureau (2007), over 50% of Chinese urban residents reside in commercial-housing estates, compared with less than 40% of people living in former employment unit housing. The termination of welfare housing provision and comprehensive commercial development led to increasing homeownership in urban areas (Wang and Murie, 1999; Zhu *et al.*, 2012, p.2439). Since then, urban residents have been able to choose between homeownership and rental (Zhu *et al.*, 2012, p.2439).

Nowadays, the newly built commercial-housing neighbourhoods consist of high-rise buildings, large green spaces, children's playgrounds, sport facilities and elderly residents' activities centres. Nevertheless, due to a lack of investment in old districts, the traditional house neighbourhoods are characterised by a deprived physical environment, narrow streets and decaying buildings inhabited by low-income families and low-skilled workers (Lei and Lin, 2021, p.5). Due to their good location (often in the city centre), residents of traditional house neighbourhoods have easy access to transportation. In comparison with those who lived in traditional housing neighbourhoods and work unit compounds, apart from having a relatively short duration of residence, residents of commercial-housing neighbourhoods have lower levels of social capital and neighbourly interactions (Lei and Lin, 2021, p.7). Conversely, residents of traditional house neighbourhoods are more likely to have frequent neighbourly interactions and good relationships, even though sometimes they have conflicts because of contention for limited resources.

Because of the increasing influx of rural labour and relaxed Hukou (population registration system) constraints, about 277 million rural workers have migrated from villages to urban areas to look for work (Lin and Lei, 2018, p.118). However, the existing urban structure was unable to accommodate the massive influx of migrant workers (Breitung, 2012, p.279). As a result, many migrant workers resided in low-cost rental housing, known as urban villages (*chengzhongcun*) which were located in urban expansion zones in the urban periphery (Lei and Lin, 2021, p.7). The residents of these urban villages often are composed of villagers and rural migrant workers with low socioeconomic status (Wang *et al.*, 2009, p.958).

In the literature, urban villages are often depicted as being characterised by poor quality housing, a deprived physical environment, low residential stability and a high rate of violent crime (Wang *et al.*, 2009, p.958). They cannot provide essential facilities and services for

residents. Some scholars indicate that residents are generally unfamiliar with their neighbours due to the high levels of mobility and social heterogeneity (Lei and Lin, 2021, p.7). Nevertheless, good relationships have been found among migrant workers who come from the same origin of places (Lei and Lin, 2021, p.7). Furthermore, since the end of the 1990s, affordable housing neighbourhoods were built to meet the demand of lower-income households (Wong *et al.*, 2020, p.2775).

To sum up, the role of the neighbourhood in urban China has experienced significant change under the market-oriented transformation from traditional Chinese houses and work unit compounds to commercial-housing neighbourhoods (see Table 4.1). These changes have led to increased mobility and the trend towards privatism in urban China. Commercial-housing neighbourhoods and dilapidated migrant enclaves emerged side by side in Chinese cities, in sharp contrast to work unit compounds and homogeneous neighbourhoods. Although urban neighbourhoods have different characteristics, they mostly take the form of walled and gated complexes. It has been found that the gated community has become the standard development pattern in urban areas in contemporary China (Yao and Wei, 2012, p.2890). It is, therefore, necessary to understand the development and meaning of the gated community in China. To this end, the following section will provide a review of the gated neighbourhood.

**Table 4.1 Neighbourhood development in urban China**

	Pre - 1949	1950s	1960s - 1980s	1990s - present
<b>Urban area</b>	1. Traditional Chinese houses 2. Some foreign-controlled neighbourhoods 3. Consciousness of the neighbourhood emerged	1. Work unit compounds emerging	1. Traditional house neighbourhood declined due to re-development of urban area 2. Work unit compounds became the dominant form in urban area 3. Two types of work unit compounds (Institution and State-owned enterprise) 4. Urban villages emerging	1. Disappearance of central traditional neighbourhoods 2. Changing work unit (reformed work unit compound) 3. Emergence of large-scale housing estate: commercial-housing and social housing 4. Urban villages provide low-cost rental housing for migrants

Source: Author's creation (2019)

### 4.3 The predominance of gated communities

The American sociologists Edward Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder were the first to propose the concept of the gated community in their book entitled 'Fortress America', in which they highlighted the restriction of public access to gated communities (Blakely and Snyder, 1997). A more comprehensive definition of the gated community was provided by Atkinson and Blandly who considered not only the physical but also social and legal aspects: 'walled or fenced housing developments, to which public access is restricted, characterized by legal agreements which tie the residents to a common code of conduct and usually collective responsibility for management' (2005, p.178). Some scholars claim that since the advent of the gated residence in the USA, this model has spread to almost every corner of the world, including the Arab world, South Africa, Latin America, North America and Western Europe (Webster *et al.*, 2002, p.315).

However, the gated and walled residence has existed in China for a long time (Wu, 2005, p.235; Huang and Low, 2008, p.185). Although the degree of 'gatedness' is different from one neighbourhood to another, different types of enclosed neighbourhoods have been built in the different historical periods and look similar across the nation (Huang and Low, 2008, p.183). Specifically, the traditional Chinese house mostly adopts the enclosed residential pattern that was widely built before establishing the PRC (Xu and Yang, 2009, p.100). For example, one of the traditional types of Chinese residence is a courtyard house which was built as a rectangular housing complex, consisting of multiple bungalows and open space (Wu, 2005, p.235; Huang and Low, 2008, p.190). The courtyard house is surrounded by walls, which are the essential elements separating the family space from the public areas (Xu and Yang, 2009, p.101).

Another type of traditional Chinese house is the lane house, which emerged in treaty port cities such as Shanghai. Most of them were built before 1949 (Wu, 2002, p.1604). Lane houses incorporated both Chinese and Western influences; they were built as small clusters of three-storey terrace houses and often had a stone-framed entrance to form an enclosed compound (Xu and Yang, 2009, p.101; Wu, 2002, p.1605). Although the construction of lane houses is different from that of courtyard houses, both traditional Chinese houses took the form of an enclosed compound (Huang and Low, 2008, p.191). The physical wall and gate helped to delineate private property, define collectives based on family and occupation and form extremely close ties among residents (Huang and Low, 2008, p.183).

In the period from 1949 to 1978, the work unit compound was the dominant housing form in urban areas; they were mostly enclosed areas with surrounding brick walls (Huang and Low, 2008, p.192). These walls set the compound physically apart from its surroundings (Xu and Yang, 2009, p.110). Work unit compounds were also guarded by uniformed security personnel (Huang and Low, 2008, p.192). With different degrees of access restriction, strangers could not freely access work unit compounds. In consideration of security issues, the gate of the work unit compound was often closed at midnight and opened in the morning (Wu, 2005, p.239). In addition to economic and political reasons, gating helped not only define socialist collectives based on common work unit affiliations but also provided a sense of safety to urban residents (Huang and Low, 2008, p.184).

Although commercial-housing neighbourhoods have become the dominant residential form in urban areas since 2003, work unit compounds still played an important role in the urban housing sector (Xu and Yang, 2009, p.115). Though the walls of the work unit compound have remained, as mentioned previously, some compounds have changed from brick walls to fences, green belts or commercial outlets which continue to isolate those insides from the outside world (Chai, 2014, p.186). To improve accessibility for residents, more gates have been set up in the walls around some work unit compounds (Xu and Yang, 2009, p.115). Despite this, access to work unit compounds is still forbidden to strangers.

Since the housing reform in 1988, there has been massive construction of commercial-housing neighbourhoods in urban China, with clusters of elegant high-rise apartment blocks (Huang and Low, 2008, p.182). Due to increasing social inequality, the influx of migrants, fear of crime during the market transition, and residents' increased concern about security, gating has been adopted (Wu, 2005, p.238). As a result, commercial-housing neighbourhoods mostly take the form of gated communities featuring communal spaces, facilities and mixed land use (Miao, 2003, p.47; Zhu, 2020, p.2).

Compared with other types of urban neighbourhoods, commercial-housing neighbourhoods usually have a better security system, such as having security guards, card-activated entrances, infrared alarmed systems, intercoms, surveillance cameras and security personal on patrol, all of which provide a sense of security and safety to residents (Huang and Low, 2008, p.183). Additionally, unlike traditional Chinese neighbourhoods and the work unit compound, the commercial-housing neighbourhood has a PMC – a professional provider of 'territorial collective goods' (Wang and Clarke, 2021, p.538). The PMC charges property

management fees and provides estate management and public services such as cleaning, refuse disposal, gardening, security and other services to residents (Huang and Low, 2008, p.195; Xu and Yang, 2009, p.111). The enclosed residential pattern is also beneficial to the PMC because the gates and walls delineate the area and make clear the responsibility of the management.

Nowadays, the majority of urban neighbourhoods are gated (Tomba, 2014, p.37). Although different types of gated neighbourhoods have their own social and historical backgrounds, three common features are the enclosed spatial form, closed-off management and property rights, and responsibility for the residential quarters (Yao and Wei, 2012, p.2890). Residents need to share an internal open space, an internal green space and the facilities. The road system of most Chinese urban neighbourhoods is not integrated into the whole road network of the urban area (Xu and Yang, 2009, p.115). Gating provides a better delineation of the space and makes the neighbourhood marketable (Li *et al.*, 2012, p.240). Gated neighbourhoods are also associated with security, privacy, traffic reduction, a sense of safety, and a sense of belonging due to their physical design and like-minded neighbours (Wu, 2005, p.251; Huang and Low, 2008, p.185; Breitung, 2012, p.284). In addition to these advantages, the prevalence of gating in China is also associated with the tradition and culture of collectivism, which is deeply embedded in Chinese society (Huang and Low, 2008, p.198).

Many Western scholars focus on the negative effects of gated communities, such as the disconnect with the local place, social polarisation and segregation, social exclusion and spatial fragmentation (Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Atkinson and Blandly, 2005, p.179; Low, 2001, p.45; 178; Hamama and Liu, 2020, p.2). Nevertheless, it seems unproblematic in China (Huang and Low, 2008, p.198; Breitung, 2012, p.283; Yip, 2012, p.224). For example, Breitung (2012, p.283) argues that while segregation is considered a social problem in the West, it is seen as a solution to the problem of social diversity in growing Chinese cities. Huang (2006, p.507) indicates that the gated community is associated with a new form of political control, contributing to increased social solidarity in the post-reform era, instead of increasing individualism. Additionally, as mentioned previously, the wall and gate both have material and psychological functions in the Chinese context (Breitung, 2012, p.291).

In summary, the gated and walled residence has a long history in China which can be traced back to before the founding of the PRC. Although Western scholars mainly focus on the negative effects of gated communities, due to the different cultural context and urban

development, the meanings and effects of the gated community in China are quite different from what they are in the West. Chinese gated neighbourhoods with their different backgrounds embody the collectivism-oriented culture which is deeply embedded in Chinese society (Huang and Low, 2008, p.183). Some scholars argue that the gates and walls help define groups of people and cultivate social cohesion and solidarity (Wu, 2005, p.251; Huang and Low, 2008, p.185; Breitung, 2012, p.284). The next section discusses neighbourhood governance in contemporary China.

#### 4.4 Neighbourhood governance in urban China

The social-spatial transformation was accompanied by changes in grassroots governance in contemporary urban neighbourhoods (Zhu, 2015, p.45; Wu, 2018, p.1178). In the past decade, Chinese neighbourhood governance has changed from state paternalism to neighbourhood-based self-governance (Heberer and Gobel, 2011, p.9). Complementing the crucial role governments play in managing social problems, residents have been invited to govern their neighbourhoods' issues by themselves (Heberer and Gobel, 2011, p.9). The following sections review existing studies of neighbourhood governance in China.

The work unit compounds were the traditional organisational basis for the Party to deliver social services to residents (Wu, 2018, p.1179). Because of the changes to the economic model from a centrally planned economy to a socialist market economy, the welfare provision of public housing came to an end and the government lost its control over citizens' personal lives and choices (Wu, 2018, p.1179). The privatisation of public housing since 1988 provided opportunities for urban residents to choose their places of residence freely (Zhu *et al.*, 2012, p.2439). Given the influx of rural migrants and the emergence of employees who work in private sectors, in order to address the changing socio-economic circumstances, maintain political stability and restore social control, a top-down approach of 'community building' with propaganda related to 'building a harmonious society' was implemented by the central government (Zhu *et al.*, 2015, p.45).

The top-down approach of 'community building' focuses on the actions of the state in filling the vacuum which was created by the retreat of the welfare state in the 1990s (Wang and Clarke, 2021, p.537) in terms of urban governance at the neighbourhood level (Wu, 2002). One main takeaway of the top-down approach is to integrate residents' committees (RC) into the governance networks of local authorities (Heberer, 2009). Local governments aim to

replace the work unit system with RCs and continue to manage urban spaces and residents (Heberer and Gobel, 2011, p.2; Wu, 2005, p.239).

The first RC was established in 1949 for the purpose of maintaining social stability and coping with the wartime chaos that was afflicting traditional and old housing areas. An RC was a unit that represented and served the community, and which was funded by the community itself. The RC was officially established on the last day of 1954 (Read, 2000, p.810). To solve the problems of corruption and having redundant staff in RCs, governments decided to increase the representation in RCs of workers who were employed in the work unit and their families. Another important reform to RCs was that their funding was changed to rely on local governments. This funding mode reflects the nature of the RC as an administrative agency. As Wu (2002) notes, there were now four layers of agents of local government: the municipality, the district government, the street office of government, and the RC.

Recently, some new reforms have been enforced for RCs. The budget of the RC is allocated by the street office of the government (Wu, 2018, p.1186). The RC is served by professional social workers and cadres recruited formally by the street office of the government, instead of housewives, retirees and the unemployed. The RC now has a proper office with desks and filing cabinets (Wu, 2018, p.1185). Therefore, it has become a *de facto* government agency performing administrative duties. However, Tomba (2014, p.46) highlights that despite receiving funding from the relevant municipal departments or being supported by the local police office for its salaries and activities, the RC is not a level of 'government' but one of 'administrations'.

An RC's primary responsibilities are to maintain the social control of the Communist Party at the grassroots level and oversee community activities (Zhu, 2015, p.45; Wang and Clarke, 2021, p.537). RCs also have some other responsibilities in terms of providing basic social service delivery and welfare to residents, managing aspects of urban healthcare and sanitation, organising state-led community building campaigns, establishing the HOA, protecting social stability, preventing possible social turmoil and enhancing state legitimacy (Heberer and Gobel, 2011, p.35; Wang and Clarke, 2021, p.537). The development of RCs represents the extension of state governance into the neighbourhood (Read, 2000). Although the RC is defined as a 'resident self-managed, self-educated, and self-served local mass self-organised organisation' (Blantly, 1991), in reality, the residents' committee is always guided

by the government and is thus quite different from ‘grassroots organisations’ in the West (Wu, 2018, p.1186).

To increase administrative capacities, the street office of the government has to merge smaller RCs into a large residential community organisation (*shequ*) and professionalise the operation of the *shequ* (Wu, 2018, p.1187). According to Wang and Clarke (2021, p.537), the new neighbourhood systems of *shequ*, especially in traditional and old housing areas consist of Party secretaries, outposts of government departments, professional community working stations and RC-led civic groups.

Thus, the Chinese term for the community (*shequ*) has a triple meaning, which is different from the Western context (Wang and Clarke, 2021, p.537). First, the *shequ* is an officially demarcated urban space with clear geographical boundaries that are made up of several neighbourhoods, in which a large group of residents reside (a population of between 3,000-16,000 people) (Heberer and Gobel, 2011, p.8; Wan, 2016, p. 2331). Second, the *shequ* is a unit of administration governing the neighbourhoods (Wan, 2016, p.2331). Third, it is a social entity where shared values and common goals are the basis for developing social ties and organising collective actions (Wang and Clarke, 2021, p.537). Therefore, the *shequ* is the basic unit of urban, social, political and administrative organisation and the social interaction occurring within.

In gated communities, particularly commercial-housing neighbourhoods, RCs have been relatively marginal actors (Min, 2009). This necessitates constructing neighbourhood governance from the bottom up. In this case, homeowners start to act as a social force and develop new institutions of neighbourhood governance (Wang and Clarke, 2021, p.537). The most important of these new institutions is the PMC and the HOA.

In commercial-housing neighbourhoods, neighbourhood issues are generally organised by professional PMCs and HOAs (Zhu, 2015, p.45). Instead, the RC usually maintains a distant relationship with the neighbourhood and plays a supervisory role (Zhu, 2015, p.45). Under a signed contract with homeowners, the PMC provides a variety of services to residents, including access control and patrolling, collecting parking fees, amenity maintenance, environment upkeep, and even sending parcels and maintaining contact with homeowners and other residents (Zhu, 2020, p.3). Some upscale commercial-housing neighbourhoods provide ‘24-hour professional management’ and ‘five-star hotel management’, emphasising prestige and luxury to attract residents (Wu, 2005, p.244).



However, these services are charged through management fees from all residents (Wu, 2005, p.241).

This brings us to the HOA – a civil territorial agency which is deemed an emerging form of private governance (He, 2015, p.264). The HOA mainly has two functions. The first one is to assert property rights on behalf of homeowners to influence the practices or decisions of PMC, developers, or administrative authorities (Zhu, 2015, p.45; He, 2015, p.271). In this case, the HOA offsets the power of PMC during the governance vacuum resulting from the retreat of the state (Wang and Clarke, 2021, p.538). The second function is that the HOA can be considered as a platform for collective decisions about collective consumption (Wang and Clarke, 2021, p.538). Some scholars claim that in urban China, the increasing number of HOAs and the empowered homeowners have become a growing social power at the neighbourhood level; they may help offset the power relation between the state and society, which provides a social space for neighbourhood participation (He, 2015, p.261; Zhu, 2015, p.45; Wang and Clarke, 2021, p.538).

To date, in urban China, the neighbourhood has been incorporated into the administrative territory of *shequ*. In other words, theoretically, all of the urban neighbourhoods are governed by the *shequ*. In some neighbourhoods, especially work unit compounds and commercial-housing neighbourhoods, the RC has limited functions (Wang and Clarke, 2021, p.357). According to Xu and Yang (2009, p.113), persistent work unit management still plays an important role in providing housing maintenance and improvement to homeowners. It seems that the welfare-style governance partly remains in work unit compounds (Breitung, 2012, p.280). In traditional and old housing areas, the RC exerts important influences on service provision, while in commercial housing estates, the provision of services relies on PMCs and HOAs. In urban villages, the RC which is transformed from Village Residents Committee (*cunweihui*) and community working stations start to play a role here.

To sum up, the Communist Party and the state in China penetrate widely and deeply to the grassroots level. There exist certain types of state-sponsored administrative bodies to manage ‘the grassroots’, such as RC. To date, three main actors act on neighbourhood governance in different types of urban neighbourhoods: the RC, PMC and HOA, which represent the state, market and social force respectively (He, 2015, p.26). These actors contest, disagree, collaborate and negotiate in neighbourhood governance in everyday life (Wang and Clarke, 2021, p.538). Additionally, these actors play different roles in the

different types of urban neighbourhoods, leading to differentiated governance, which influences residents' attitudes towards neighbourhoods, as shown in Table 4.2. The next section reviews existing studies of neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood participation in urban China.

**Table 4.2 Neighbourhood organisation and governance in China**

Neighbourhood organisations	Types of housing areas/neighbourhoods			
	New commercial-housing estate	Privatised work unit housing areas	Traditional and old housing areas	Urban villages
<b>RC</b> 居民委员会	Independent or shared	Some, not all	Yes, strong	Transition from Village Residents Committee (村民委员会) to Residents' Committee
<b>Work Unit management</b> 单位	Independent or shared	Yes, function gradually transferred to RC and <i>shequ</i>	No.	No
<b>Community working station</b> 社区工作站	Independent or shared	Some, not in all	Yes, established recently	Establishing
<b>Neighbourhood Chinese Communist Party Branch</b> 社区党委、党支部	Independent or shared	Some	Yes	Village Chinese Communist Party Branch
<b>PMC</b> 物业管理公司	Yes	No, or very limited	No, or shared with other neighbourhoods, supported by <i>shequ</i>	No
<b>HOA</b> 业主委员会	Yes	No, or very weak	No, or very weak	No

Source: Author's creation (2021)

## 4.5 Neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood participation in urban China

There is growing literature on neighbourhood studies in China, but as far as I am aware, there is limited research on the sense of attachment and participation at the neighbourhood level in urban areas. This thesis has provided some examples of neighbourhood attachment and participation in Chapters 2 and 3. However, those examples do not distinguish Chinese neighbourhoods based on their types. Therefore, the following sections will review existing studies of neighbourhood attachment and participation based on different types of urban neighbourhoods in China.

Residents from the traditional-house neighbourhoods have been found to have a strong sense of attachment, belonging and territorial control (Wu, 2005, p.241; Xu and Yang, 2009, p.100). Huang and Low (2008, p.192) explore the reasons for this, finding that due to intensive daily interactions, proximity and a high level of mutual help, residents of

traditional-house neighbourhoods have developed good relationships with each other. This neighbourly interaction and mutual help include looking after neighbours' children, borrowing money and sharing food (Huang and Low, 2008, p.192). Additionally, Huang and Low (2008, p.192) also find that in comparison with other urban neighbourhoods, the traditional-house neighbourhood in urban areas has the highest level of neighbourhood attachment. Existing literature clearly highlights that in the traditional Chinese neighbourhood, such as courtyard houses and lane houses, residents have a strong sense of neighbourhood attachment.

In the work unit compound, due to the collective life, residents know each other and have a strong sense of attachment (Huang and Low, 2008, p.193). Breitung (2012, p.285) reports that in Guangzhou, the strong sense of attachment is also attributable to the relatively homogenous and stable population of the work unit compound. An empirical study by Forrest and Yip (2007, p.56-58) shows that in comparison with the commercial-housing neighbourhood, the work unit compound has stronger neighbourhood attachment and closer neighbourly relationships. Residents have frequent interactions at the workplace as well as at home (Li *et al.*, 2012, p.252; Huang and Low, 2008, p.193). However, Wu (2005, p.241) points out that in the work unit compound, residents feel more attached to the workplace than the place of residence because of the fragmentation of service provision.

Some scholars report that in commercial-housing neighbourhoods, residents have weak neighbourly interactions but a strong sense of belonging and attachment (Breitung, 2012, p.285; Zhu *et al.*, 2012, p.2439). Breitung (2012, p.285) explains that this strong sense of attachment results from a high-quality physical environment and a sense of responsibility. This sense of responsibility results from reporting damage that residents find in the public areas in their neighbourhood. Zhu *et al.*, (2012, p.2446) indicates that strong neighbourhood attachment is fostered by the physical factors of the commercial-housing neighbourhood, such as location, facilities, quietness and services.

A study by Li *et al.* (2012, p.252) discovered that in Guangzhou, in comparison with the work unit compound, the commercial-housing neighbourhood has a higher level of neighbourhood attachment and satisfaction due to the good quality of the living environment and the pride of homeownership. The sense of attachment stems from physical factors such as location, facilities, quietness and services (Zhu *et al.*, 2012). In contrast, Wu (2005, p.241) indicates that due to their short durations of residence and their wider social networks,

residents of a commercial-housing neighbourhood consider their neighbourhood a living place rather than a place for social interactions. Social network has not been constructed in their new neighbourhood.

A few studies investigate the concept of neighbourhood attachment regarding urban villages. For example, Wu (2005, p.241) shows that residents of urban villages have low levels of neighbourhood attachment due to the poor-quality services. However, a study conducted in Guangzhou showed that although urban villages have inferior residential environments, migrants still report strong neighbourhood attachment because of strong local ties (Du and Li, 2010, p.105). Wang *et al.* (2016, p.651) find that in Nanjing, migrants are inclined to interact with neighbours, which may contribute to neighbourhood attachment. To the best of my knowledge, there is a paucity of studies examining the neighbourhood attachment in resettlement-housing neighbourhoods. A study by Lu *et al.* (2018, p.147) argues that residents had weak neighbourhood attachment because they are dissatisfied with the neighbourhood image in resettlement-housing neighbourhoods.

This brings us to neighbourhood participation, which is important for improving the neighbourhood environment, enhancing local services delivery, maintaining social order and increasing community capacity (Zhu, 2020, p.1). There are two types of neighbourhood participation in China. In terms of formal participation, residents could get involved in three election procedures: the election of People's Congress delegates for the city district, the election of the RC members, and the election of the HOA (if an HOA exists) (Heberer and Gobel, 2011, p.124). These basic-level elections are fundamental to autonomous self-governance (Heberer and Gobel, 2011, p.71).

Elections for the regional People's Congress belong to direct election and participation is compulsory for all residents aged 18 years and above. Elections for RCs take place every three years. The electoral candidates should all live in the neighbourhoods, and they must be elected by residents (Audin, 2015, p.8). Elections for RCs have two forms: direct election and indirect election. Some scholars reveal that direct elections at *shequ* level are the exception rather than rules, although the government allows for the holding of its (Heberer and Gobel, 2011, p.71). In most cases, indirect elections are much more common, and the electoral candidates not elected by residents are found to be a frequently used tactic of filling RC seats. Some RCs recruit their own candidates who have a certain level of popularity with the residents and political connections (Heberer and Gobel, 2011, p.72). In terms of the

elections of the HOA, they are generally direct and competitive elections. Scholars point out that elections of the HOA were considered much more meaningful than RCs elections because most of the candidates for the HOA elections were nominated by the homeowners themselves (Heberer and Gobel, 2011, p.144). These elections can take place in the *shequ* organisation as well as in the neighbourhoods.

Some scholars point out that informal participation comprises neighbourhood-organised activities and reporting neighbourhood problems (Zhu, 2015, p.48). Neighbourhood-organised activities are held by neighbourhood organisations including the *shequ*, work unit, PCM and HOA (Lu *et al.*, 2018, p.145). Neighbourhood activities include neighbourhood meetings, leisure interest groups, sporting events, public security activities and others (Zhu *et al.*, 2012, p.2447). Some studies point out that in the Chinese context, neighbourhood participation more often consists of informal participation (Zhu, 2020, p.4).

Increasing number of studies investigate neighbourhood participation in urban China. A study by Wu (2012, p.554) found that compared with other types of urban neighbourhoods, residents of work unit compounds have the highest level of participation in neighbourhood activities. Wu (2012, p.554) explains that the work unit, as a well-organised social entity, can effectively organise neighbourhood activities. Furthermore, the resident composition of the work unit compound is mostly constituted of the work unit employees and retired residents, who have a high degree of neighbourhood participation (Wu, 2012, p.555).

However, residents of urban village have low participation rates because urban villages consist of private rental housing with few organised social activities (Wu, 2012, p.555). Another reason for the low participation rate is that most migrants who reside in urban villages are excluded from the formal organisation of communities (Wu, 2012, p.555). Similarly, Du and Li (2010, p.101) find that in Guangzhou, although migrants have frequent interaction, they are less likely to participate in neighbourhood affairs. Du and Li (2010, p.105) explain that the low participation rate is due to the high level of neighbourhood satisfaction.

There is a dearth of literature that examines neighbourhood participation in resettlement-housing neighbourhoods. As far as I am aware, Lu *et al.* (2018, p.147) produced the only empirical work, which finds that the resettlement-housing neighbourhood has a low level of participation in neighbourhood events. They explain that the relocated residents of urban villages seem unfamiliar with organised associational activities (Lu *et al.*, 2018, p.147).

Regarding the commercial-housing neighbourhood, Zhu (2015, p.52) finds that residents have high levels of participation because their neighbourhoods have many homeowners who have a common stake and are aware of their rights. A study conducted in Wenzhou finds that due to paying more management fees, neighbourhood activities in the commercial-housing neighbourhoods are of good quality (such as inviting foreigners to teach English), which attracts many residents to take part (Lu *et al.*, 2018, p.147). It was found that 89.3% residents of this commercial-housing neighbourhood regularly participated in garden parties and festive activities (Lu *et al.*, 2018, p.147). A recent study by Zhu (2020.p.15) found that in Guangzhou, many residents in commercial-housing neighbourhoods have a lack of knowledge about their rights and economic interests in the neighbourhood, which may influence their willingness to participate in neighbourhood affairs.

Existing studies indicate that some personal characteristics and physical characteristics influence the likelihood of participation at the neighbourhood level (Wu, 2012; Zhu, 2015; Zhu, 2020). It was found that the long-term residence and high level of educational attainment help to develop neighbourhood participation (Wu, 2012, p.558). Zhu (2015, p.52) reports that homeowners are more likely to engage in neighbourhood affairs. Zhu (2015, p.45) states that neighbourhood participation depends on the physical environment of a neighbourhood. For example, residents in neighbourhoods with more public space have a higher participation rate than those in neighbourhoods with a small public space (Zhu, 2015, p.50).

Additionally, a study by Wu (2012, p.554) found that retired residents are more active than other residents in participating in neighbourhood social activities. For unemployed residents, they are still willing to participate in neighbourhood social activities due to the available time and the requirement for the allocation for social welfare (Wu, 2012, p.554). Compared with female residents, male residents are less interested in neighbourhood activities (Wu, 2012, p.558). As discussed in Chapter 3, personal characteristics such as the duration of residence, homeownership, educational level, employment status, gender and physical factors are associated with participation at the neighbourhood level.

As discussed above, different types of urban neighbourhoods show different levels of neighbourhood attachment and participation. Existing studies mainly focus on the work unit compound and commercial-housing neighbourhoods, while other types of urban neighbourhoods such as the resettlement-housing neighbourhood are barely discussed.

Furthermore, it has been found that there has been limited research on neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood participation based on different types of neighbourhoods in urban China. Apart from these, to the best of my knowledge, existing studies mainly focus on coastal cities, whereas Chengdu, as an inland city, has never been chosen as the study area.

## 4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed existing studies on neighbourhood development in China to provide a background for this study. Neighbourhoods in urban China experienced transformation from traditional houses to work unit compounds to commercial-housing neighbourhoods under the nation's market-oriented reforms. Whereas Western researchers focus on the negative effects of the gated community, the Chinese gated neighbourhood (as a dominant form of community) exemplifies the collectivism-oriented culture that is deeply rooted in Chinese society, and the walls and gates help to cultivate social cohesion and solidarity. Different actors play different roles in the different types of urban neighbourhoods, leading to differentiated governance, which influences residents' attitudes towards their neighbourhoods. Different types of urban neighbourhoods show different levels of neighbourhood attachment and participation. There has been limited research on neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood participation based on different types of neighbourhoods in urban China. Apart from this, as far as I am aware, the existing research mainly focuses on coastal cities in China, whereas Chengdu, as an inland city, has never been chosen as the study area. This thesis seeks to fill these gaps. The next chapter will present the theoretical framework of this research

# Chapter 5 Review of Relevant Theories and Analytical Framework

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the relevant theories and then outlines the theoretical framework of this research. It introduces and discusses the theories of neighbourhood attachment and participation that serve as the theoretical foundations for this research. It focuses on the different dimensions of social capital theory and residential satisfaction theories, explaining how these theories relate to neighbourhood attachment and participation. This chapter is structured as follows. Section 5.2 examines different authors' approaches to social capital theory and explains the reasons why Putnam's social capital theory has been adopted for this study. Section 5.3 discusses residential satisfaction theory and how it relates to a key theme of this thesis: functional attachment. Section 5.4 articulates the specific theoretical framework of this research, which combines social capital theory and residential satisfaction theory to investigate neighbourhood attachment and participation in Chinese cities. The final section is the conclusion.

## 5.2 Social capital theories

Social capital has long been recognised to play a particularly important role both in neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood participation (Kleinhans *et al.*, 2007; Kang and Kwak; 2003; Lelieveldt, 2004; Dekker, 2006; Hays and Kogl, 2007; Zhu, 2020). In the past six decades, an increasing number of studies have contributed to the establishment and enrichment of social capital theories (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 2000). Compared with other elements that influence attachment and/or participation, the well-documented social capital theories facilitate a comprehensive understanding of neighbourhood attachment and participation at the same time, particularly as community life in China is still in its initial stages and neighbourhood integration, attachment and residents' participation is a very understudied topic which requires urgent research and understanding. This section will first introduce the development of social capital theories based on the work of different authors. Second, it will explain how Putnam's social capital theory can be used to investigate neighbourhood attachment. The third part will explain the deployment of Putnam's social capital theory in the study of neighbourhood participation.



### 5.2.1 The development of social capital theories

Social capital first appeared in a paper, written by a practical reformer Lyda Judson Hanifan (Hanifan, 1916, p.130). This book argues that neighbours could work cooperatively to oversee rural schools in West Virginia (Hanifan, 1916). Hanifan describes social capital as ‘those tangible assets [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely goodwill, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individual and families who make up a social unit’ (Hanifan, 1916, p.130). Jane Jacobs (1961, p.138) defines social capital as a network of relationships between neighbours which is slowly built up through everyday activities and interaction in the neighbourhoods. Jacobs’ conceptualisation of social capital provides a foundation for mutual trust, shared efforts and resilience in times of trouble.

Contemporary theorists have enriched this term from various aspects. The best-known contributors to the identification and theorisation of social capital are Pierre Bourdieu (1986), James Coleman (1990) and Robert Putnam (2000). First, Bourdieu argues that social capital is rooted in economic capital (Field, 2004, p.15). He defines social capital as ‘the aggregate of the actual potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition’ (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). According to Bourdieu’s conceptualisation, social capital is a consequence of an individual’s position in diverse interconnecting networks (Hays and Kogl, 2007, p.183). In this way, social capital can be understood as an individual capacity that arises from occupying a particular position within existing power structures.

It is not consistently available to members of a group or collective, but available to someone who makes efforts to obtain it by achieving positions of power and status and by developing goodwill (Bourdieu, 1986, p.249). Bourdieu holds that social capital is correlated with social class and stratification, which in turn is related to different forms of benefits (Bourdieu, 1986, p.250). Simply put, Bourdieu’s social capital is embedded in the individual and is related to the social connections that a person can use to achieve benefits. As a result, his idea of social capital is that it is only possessed by the middle and upper classes, while it is out of reach of lower social classes (Asquith, 2019, p.28).

James Coleman’s conception of social capital has had a wider influence than Bourdieu’s. Bourdieu regards that social capital as a private good that reproduces social inequality (Häuberer, 2011, p.40). However, Coleman argues that social capital has the character of a public good that is almost productive (Coleman, 1988, p.111). Coleman (1990, p.302)

defines social capital by its function, which is 'a variety of entities with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspects of a social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of actors of individuals who are within the structure'. This means social capital can be considered as an element in a social structure which benefits the actions of actors. Similar to Bourdieu's, Coleman's understanding of social capital addresses the social structure of relationships among people. However, contrary to Bourdieu's idea, Coleman (1988, p.116) considers social capital a public good which is beneficial to everyone in the group. He argues that people who stay in disadvantaged communities or who belong to the working class could also profit by possessing social capital (Coleman, 1988, p.116).

The most prominent conceptualisation of social capital, one that has gained extensive publicity, is that of Robert Putnam, who developed his concept of social capital following Coleman's ideas. Putnam (1993, p.163) defines social capital as 'features of social organisation, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions.' He indicates that social capital is a quality that can improve interpersonal cooperation. He further explains social capital in another work (Putnam, 1996, p.56) as 'features of social life – networks, norms and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives.' It can be seen that the three elements – networks, norms and trust - are the same ones mentioned in his 1993 work cited above (Putnam, 1993). The difference is that he addresses 'participants' instead of 'society'. Based on his revised view, social capital can be seen as a collective capacity that results from the connections and relationships that form people's trust and participation.

Putnam (2000, p.19) later refines the earlier definition of social capital, saying it refers to 'connections among individuals-social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. This sense of social capital is closely related to what some have called 'civic virtue.' The difference is that social capital calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital'. In Putnam's revised view, he asserts that social capital is inherent in the relations among individuals. The relations between individuals generate social networks, norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness. He asserts that social capital resembles 'civic virtue' and has a close relationship to political participation. The difference between social capital and political participation is that the latter relies on relations with a political institution and social capital lies with a relationship between people (Putnam 1995, p.665).

Putnam has moved the study of social capital away from an analysis of the individual-level benefits to a consideration of the community-level benefits (Baum and Ziersch, 2003, p.320). Western policymakers have been influenced by Putnam's idea of social capital and have used the neighbourhood as a foundation for achieving social cohesion and neighbourhood participation (Forrest and Kearns, 2001, p.2125). In the neighbourhood context, social capital focuses on the positive side of social interactions, shared norms about how to treat neighbours, behaviours in space, trust and collective action for a common goal (Lochner *et al.*, 2003). In this case, its dimensions are closely connected not only to neighbourhood attachment but also participation. Therefore, this research chooses Putnam's social capital theory to investigate neighbourhood attachment and participation in the Chinese context. Social capital has been defined and conceptualised in different ways. Specifically, in this article, I define social capital as social networks and connections between people, and the resources derived from these networks and connections.

### 5.2.2 Social capital and neighbourhood attachment

Putnam's (1995, 2000) social capital theory consists of three elements: trust, social networks and norms of reciprocity, each of which will be introduced in this section. The relationship among the three elements is that trust is produced in social networks and through norms of reciprocity, forming social capital (Dekker, 2006, p.89; Dekker *et al.*, 2010, p.613). Many studies have shown the connections between neighbourhood attachment and social capital through its three dimensions (Kleinhans *et al.*, 2007; Dekker, 2007; Wu, 2012; Permentier, 2012). For example, residents with a strong social network are more likely to have a high level of emotional attachment (Livingston *et al.*, 2008, P.2). A high level of mutual trust and mutual help contribute to a high level of emotional attachment (Seifert and Konig, 2019, p.2).

Trust is the first element of social capital. A high level of mutual trust is important for the creation of a sense of attachment because it develops a positive consequence of interactions and mutual help (Chen *et al.*, 2009, p.147; Wang *et al.*, 2016, p.651;). By contrast, lacking interpersonal trust may weaken the local ties within the neighbourhood, preventing residents from sharing information, such as job and education offers (Permentier, 2012, p.179). Additionally, Putnam (2000, p.288) asserts that a high level of mutual trust between residents might improve informal social control mechanisms. In this case, mutual trust also contributes to a sense of safety in the neighbourhood. According to Livingston *et al.* (2010, p.412), the

trust element of social capital can generate a sense of safety which in turn may cultivate neighbourhood attachment. Trust in neighbours can increase social interactions among neighbours and strengthen the sense of safety, thereby facilitating neighbourhood attachment.

Norms constitute the second element of social capital. In the neighbourhood context, the norms element of social capital is not a straightforward equivalent to social rules. Norms in this context can be considered to be norms of behaviours (Forrest and Kearns, 2001, p.2129). In this sense, it is closely related to the residents' behaviours in public places (Dekker, 2007, p.361). However, Putnam (2000, p.19) redefined social capital theory, which changed norms to norms of reciprocity. Influenced by this conversion, some researchers came to regard norms of reciprocity as the mutual support that relies on social networks (Seifert and Konig, 2019, p.47). According to Seifert and Konig (2019, p.2), mutual support can generate collective consciousness and effects in the neighbourhood, which positively influence stability, attachment and security within the neighbourhood. In this case, mutual support also encourages residents to take an active role in their neighbourhood. As more and more residents start to help their neighbours, the neighbourhood will become more united, vibrant and stable (Seifert and Konig, 2019, p.2). Thus, norms of reciprocity are strongly connected with neighbourhood attachment. In this thesis, the norms element of social capital will be understood as mutual support to investigate neighbourhood attachment.

The third element of social capital, social networks, reflect the degree of social interaction in the neighbourhoods (Dekker, 2007, p.360). Specifically, social networks are an interconnected group of associations of people and organisations, which consist of many social ties. These ties, which include formal and informal aspects, are related to social capital and take place in a local social environment. Local friends, relatives and neighbours who compose individual social networks make up daily social interactions (Austin and Baba, 1990; Zhu *et al.*, 2012; Rademacher and Wang, 2014; Kohlbacher *et al.*, 2015). Based on existing studies, it has been found that social ties are good for both residents and the neighbourhood (Henning and Lieberg, 1996, p.8; Bridge, 2002, p.21). For individuals, social ties are able to give emotional and physiological support to individuals or families and provide social connections with wider society (Hu *et al.*, 2018, p.246). In terms of neighbourhoods, strong local ties can cultivate the identity of a place; consequently, neighbourhoods become more stable.

Many studies have shown that local networks with frequent interactions are positively correlated with neighbourhood attachment (Warner and Rountree, 1997; Livingston *et al.*, 2008; Mahmoudi Farahani, 2016). In other words, people are more likely to feel attached to a place where they have many acquaintances and a number of close friends and relatives. Residents might foster bonds and emotions with their neighbourhoods if they have friends, relatives and familiar neighbours living in the same area. In view of the above, it can be claimed that a strong social network could help to generate neighbourhood attachment.

### 5.2.3 Social capital and participation

Many studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between social capital and participation (Dekker, 2007; Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Putnam, 2000). They focus on the impact of the dimension of social networks on participation (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Dekker, 2007; Lelieveldt, 2004). One common argument being made is that a strong and dense social network can promote participation (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Dekker, 2007; Hays and Kogl, 2007). In other words, social networks allow participatory behaviours to occur (Forrest and Kearns, 2001, p.2129). The mechanism is that people who interact more with others and integrate more with other social networks feel more positive about participation. These interactions may encourage residents to participate more in social and civic activities (Lelieveldt, 2004, p.533). However, it is notable that a limitation of social networks is that some people cannot choose which group to belong to. For example, people with higher socio-economic status have more opportunities to enter a strong and dense social network than do people with lower socio-economic status (Dekker, 2007, p.371), while strong and dense social network is positively associated with high levels of participation in local affairs (Kang and Kwak, 2003, p.92)

The trust element of social capital may have important implications for people's behaviours (Lelieveldt, 2004, p.535). This element can be divided into two types: trust in neighbours and trust in authorities (Dekker, 2007, p.361). People only trust someone who shares common norms and group identification with them. This trust is based on personal experiences and impressions. In this case, a lack of trust between residents in communities can lead to difficulties in communal action (Dekker, 2006, p.89). In addition to trust in neighbours, participation is also strongly associated with trust in authorities. Some scholars have addressed the negative impact on participation of the lack of trust in authorities in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and among ethnic minorities (Dekker, 2007, p.361). A study

of North Belfast showed that residents refused to participate in voluntary associations because they distrusted their community authorities (Shirlow and Murtagh, 2004, p.63). This suggests the boosting trust element of social capital can promote a high degree of participation, particularly in disadvantaged areas.

The norms element of social capital can potentially influence people's behaviours, which also impacts neighbourhood participation (Lelieveldt, 2004, p.535). According to Dekker (2007, p.89), norms can be understood as the rules encouraging appropriate behaviours and prohibiting deviant ones. In other words, if residents are less likely to confront deviant behaviours, they will participate more in social and civic activities. In this case, in terms of participation, the norms element of social capital cannot be seen as mutual support, quick different from norms in neighbourhood attachment; rather, it can be understood as prohibiting deviant behaviours in the neighbourhood. Thus, if deviant behaviours occur less, residents will participate more (Dekker, 2007, p.361).

### 5.3 Residential satisfaction theories

The above analyses delineate that social capital theory with its three dimensions can be used to account for neighbourhood attachment and social participation (Dekker, 2007; Hays and Kogl, 2007; Wu, 2012). However, neighbourhood attachment can be divided into emotional attachment and functional attachment (Vaske and Kobrin, 2001; Anton and Lawrence, 2014; Jean, 2016). Social capital theory mainly accounts for civic activities and the emotional bonds of neighbourhood attachment, but it fails to provide the necessary evidence for functional attachment, namely satisfaction with physical attributes of housing and neighbourhoods.

Physical attributes can be categorised into the physical environment, neighbourhood facilities and neighbourhood services (Bonaiuto *et al.*, 1999; Zhang *et al.*, 2015; Liu *et al.*, 2017; Prootinga *et al.*, 2017). For example, according to Prootinga *et al.* (2017, p.274), neighbourhood attachment is positively correlated with the overall quality of the physical environment. Bonaiuto *et al.* (1999, p.345) address the links between green areas and buildings' aesthetic pleasantness and neighbourhood attachment. My research also aims to examine how residents perceive functional attachment in different types of urban neighbourhoods in Chengdu, and this is where residential satisfaction theories come in.

The mechanism of forming functional attachment through physical attributes is that neighbourhood image, good services and facilities facilitate the quick generation of the strong attachment by fulfilling residents' demands (Lu *et al.*, 2018, p.145). According to Livingston *et al.* (2008, p.19), functional attachment is generated when the neighbourhood provides features and conditions that can satisfy residents' needs and goals. Lu *et al.* (2018, p.145) also point out that satisfaction with a neighbourhood's physical attributes may result in the development of greater functional attachment. Subjective satisfaction with neighbourhood quality is most relevant for the development of functional attachment (Bonaiuto *et al.*, 1999, p.133). Therefore, residential satisfaction can help examine whether the physical attributes are suited to the achievement of residents' goals and activities in their neighbourhood (Mesch and Manor, 1998; Bonaiuto *et al.*, 1999; Poortinga *et al.*, 2017), in turn generating functional attachment (Stedam, 2003; Roazzi *et al.*, 2009).

Some researchers argue that neighbourhood satisfaction is distinct from neighbourhood attachment (Guest and Lee, 1983; Brown, 1993, Zhu *et al.*, 2012). They indicate that residents may be satisfied with a neighbourhood but not attached to it. Although true to some extent, this distinction found in these studies partly arises from a lack of distinguishing neighbourhood attachment into different forms. In terms of functional attachment, many researchers highlight that subjective satisfaction with physical factors is positively associated with the development of neighbourhood attachment (Mesch and Manor, 1998; Bonaiuto *et al.*, 1999; Stedman, 2003; Li *et al.*, 2012; Jean, 2016; Poortinga *et al.*, 2017). More importantly, residential satisfaction can help determine the way in which residents respond to and how they feel about their physical neighbourhood environment, neighbourhood services and neighbourhood facilities. High satisfaction encourages residents to stay in the neighbourhoods and vice versa (Hur and Morrow-Jones, 2008, p.620). In view of this, my research chooses residential satisfaction theory as a tool to evaluate functional attachment in urban neighbourhoods.

Satisfaction can be seen as a subjective response to an objective environment (Potter and Cantarero, 2006, p.608). The definition of residential satisfaction is the feeling of satisfaction experienced when a person achieves what they need or desire in their house or neighbourhood (Mohit and Raja, 2014, p.51). Residential satisfaction can be a yardstick to measure the impact of the perceived neighbourhood attributes (Parkes *et al.*, 2002, p.2415). According to Chen *et al.* (2020, p.565), these neighbourhood attributes include physical attributes such as location and access to amenities and services and social attributes such as

safety and social support. It is noteworthy here that this research only deals with how residents perceive physical attributes to investigate functional attachment; social attributes are beyond the scope of functional attachment.

Although a growing number of researchers have been concerned with functional attachment, there is a lack of research introducing theories that could be suited to exploring functional attachment. There are three main theories related to residential satisfaction: housing needs theory (Rossi, 1955), housing deficit theory (Morris and Winter, 1978) and psychological construct theory (Galster, 1985). Housing needs theory was introduced by Rossi (1955, p.178) to conceptualise residential satisfaction/dissatisfaction. He indicates that in different stages of the life cycle, residents have different desired housing needs. Of all the desired housing needs, space requirements are at the top of the list, which varies over the course of a person's life cycle. Households may be dissatisfied with their house when there is a discrepancy between people's current and desired housing needs. As a result, households show this dissatisfaction by 'voting with their feet'.

The housing deficit theory was proposed by Morris and Winter (1978), who introduced it to conceptualise residential satisfaction/dissatisfaction. According to Abidin *et al.* (2019, p.51), the notion of housing deficit can be understood as a lack of housing for family members. Nonetheless, in Morris and Winter's (1978) view, the housing deficit theory is that people focus on imperfect housing conditions; to put it another way, people are more likely to compare their housing conditions to those of others'. The differences with other households they observe cause them to become dissatisfied with their housing conditions, leading to housing deficit (Abidin *et al.*, 2019, p.51).

Galster (1985, p.417) introduced the notion of 'psychological construct' of residential satisfaction. Psychological construct theory focuses on the physical aspect of houses or neighbourhoods that are seen as affecting their overall satisfaction with their dwellings and neighbourhoods (Galster and Hesser, 1981, p.736). In Galster and Hesser's (1981, p.736) view, residents cognitively construct a 'reference' condition for each facet of their residential situation based on their individual self-assessed needs and aspirations. Residents would rank-order various facets of the residential environment, and the priority assigned to a given facet is determined by the marginal utility they could achieve through possible improvement (Galster, 1985, p.417). When current houses or neighbourhoods are consistent with their 'reference' condition, a psychological state of satisfaction is produced. Dissatisfaction will



correspondently result in either adaptation or modification (Galster, 1985, p.417), although these options may be restricted by a lack of purchasing power for lower-income households or housing policies, such as housing purchase restriction policies in China.

Of all these three theories, Galster's psychological construct theory, which focuses on how residents psychologically perceive the physical attributes of their neighbourhoods, is best suited to my research. The reason is that in relation to functional attachment, my research focuses on residents' perceptions of their feelings towards the neighbourhood environment rather than an objective measurement of the environmental quality. In this research, residents' satisfaction with their residential environment is based on their perceptions, needs and experiences and in turn, generate functional attachment. As a result, Galster's psychological construct theory is the appropriate one which can be used to analyse functional attachment. Taking this approach, this research will evaluate functional attachment by investigating the extent to which residents are satisfied with the physical attributes of their neighbourhoods.

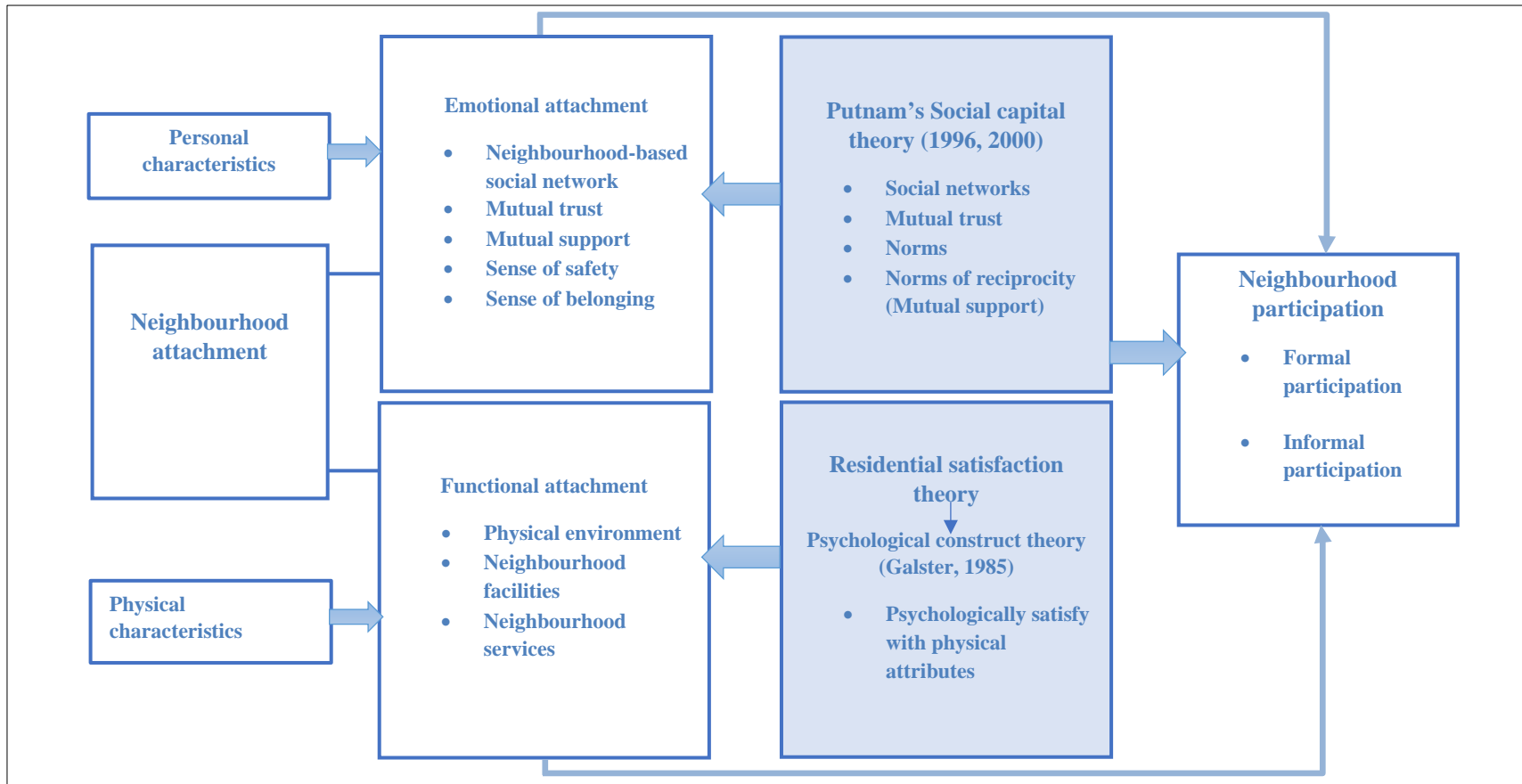
## 5.4 The construction of a theoretical and analytical framework

This research aims to examine neighbourhood attachment and participation in different types of neighbourhoods. Drawing on discussions in Chapters 2 and 3 and social capital theory and residential satisfaction theories above, a theoretical framework is developed (Figure 5.1). This framework summarises the theories of which components have effects on neighbourhood attachment and participation. It will help guide the methodology and the empirical part of this research by illustrating which components need to be considered for this investigation.

The key components in this framework are neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood participation. Neighbourhood attachment shows residents' emotions, feelings, moods and attitudes toward neighbourhoods. Two types of neighbourhood attachment, namely emotional attachment and functional attachment are included in this study. **(1) Emotional attachment** manifests residents' emotions, feelings, moods and attitudes toward their neighbourhoods' interpersonal relationships. Emotional attachment is embodied in neighbourhood-based social networks, mutual trust, mutual support, sense of safety and sense of belonging. **(2) Functional attachment** embodies residents' satisfaction regarding physical settings, which in this context includes the physical environment, neighbourhood facilities, neighbourhood services and residents' housing. **(3) Neighbourhood participation**

refers to residents voluntarily taking part in local activities which aims to solve common problems and achieve common goals. Both formal participation and informal participation are included. In the western context, formal participation consists of voting in local elections, attending City Council meetings, being a member of the District Council and making a plan for the neighbourhood (Dekker, 2007; Gelder, 2013). In China, however, formal participation in the neighbourhood level takes the form of participation in neighbourhood elections, including the election of People's Congress delegates for the city district, the election of the *shequ* representatives, and the election of the HOA (Heberer and Gobel, 2011). In line with Heberer and Gobel (2011), formal participation is defined as participation in neighbourhood elections. Existing studies indicate that informal participation mainly comprises neighbourhood-organised activities and reporting neighbourhood problems (Zhu, 2015; Lu *et al.*, 2018). Inspired by existing research, neighbourhood-organised activities and reporting neighbourhood problems are employed to examine informal participation in this study.

Two theories underpin the analyses of attachment and participation. (1) Putman's **Social capital theory** is of use to investigate emotional attachment and neighbourhood participation. The factors stemming from social capital theory and influencing emotional attachment and neighbourhood participation encompass social networks, mutual trust, and norms of reciprocity (namely mutual support). Residents with strong social networks are more likely to have a high level of emotional attachment and civic participation. Simultaneously, a high level of mutual trust and mutual support contribute to a high level of emotional attachment and neighbourhood participation. (2) **Residential satisfaction theory** has been adopted to evaluate functional attachment. More specifically, Galster's psychological construct theory is used to indicate the extent to which residents are psychologically satisfied with the physical attributes of their neighbourhoods. Apart from social capital theory and residential satisfaction theory, the framework in Figure 5.1 also highlights two other types of factors that exert influence on neighbourhood attachment and participation: **Personal characteristics** and **Physical characteristics**. They help to understand who feel attached to the neighbourhood and why residents feel attached to the neighbourhood. They also help to understand who wants to participate in the neighbourhood-organised activities and why residents decide to engage in neighbourhood participation.



**Figure 5.1** Neighbourhood attachment and participation in Chinese urban neighbourhoods

Source: Author's creation (2020)

## 5.5 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the theoretical framework of this research. It introduced and discussed the theories of neighbourhood attachment and participation that serve as the theoretical foundations for this research. It focused on the different dimensions of social capital theory and residential satisfaction theories, explaining how these theories relate to neighbourhood attachment and participation. Comparing these theories, this study chose Putnam's social capital (1996, 2000) and Galster (1985) psychological construct theory to investigate neighbourhood attachment and participation. Based on the literature, some other relevant components were identified and added in the theoretical framework. This theoretical framework provides guidance for both the methodology and data analysis which is applied to both the systematic analysis and detailed investigations of residents' feelings, emotions and attitudes, as well as residents' behaviours in case study neighbourhoods. The following chapter will present the methodology of this research.

# Chapter 6 Methodology

## 6.1 Introduction

This methodology chapter explains the philosophy, design, approach and methods that are applied in this study to address the research questions. First, Section 6.2 discusses the selection of appropriate research philosophy. In order to provide a philosophical foundation for this research, constructionism is chosen, and this section will explain and justify it as the most appropriate paradigm. Section 6.3 introduces the research design. This research adopts a qualitative approach. A case study is selected as the research strategy, which is introduced and explained in Section 6.3.2. Section 6.3.3 outlines the main features of the case study sites, explaining the reasons for their selection and introducing the basic information of the five neighbourhoods.

The data selection process is presented in Section 6.4, which provides specific details about how, when and where the research was undertaken, as well as the participants in this research. This section includes three parts to introduce the assessment, recruitment and core methods. Details on how I accessed the five neighbourhoods and recruited participants are in Section 6.4.1. The core methods used for data collection – semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation – are discussed in Sections 6.4.2 and 6.4.3. Section 6.5 discusses how the data were processed and analysed using thematic analysis. In Section 6.6, I reflect on the methodology. The final two sections discuss the ethical issues and present the conclusion to this chapter.

## 6.2 Research philosophy

In this study, research philosophy is generally divided into two categories: ontology and epistemology (Neuman, 2014, p.93; Bryman, 2004, p.19). Ontology is related to concepts such as existence, being, becoming and reality (Crotty, 1998, p.16; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.183). Scholars believe that ontology is applied neutrally to everything that is real (Floridi, 2003, p.159). As used in this study, epistemology can simply be understood as the study of knowledge (Crotty, 1998, p.15). In broad terms, epistemology is the study of how a particular discipline gain or justifies knowledge (Bryman, 2004, p.11). Defined narrowly, it refers to the study of the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowing a particular statement to be

true. In relation to my research, I chose epistemological philosophies because the design and conduct of this research are closely related to the epistemological stance.

There are a variety of epistemologies. According to Crotty (1998, p.15), epistemology has been generally divided into three epistemological positions: objectivism, subjectivism and constructionism. Objectivism is based on the positivist paradigm, which considers reality to be a single, fixed and measurable phenomenon. The objectivist believes that truth has objective meaning and exists outside of the human mind, waiting to be discovered (Tracy, 2013, p.40). Objectivism is well exemplified by Crotty (1998, p.15), who states that a 'tree in the forest is a tree, regardless of whether anyone is aware of its existence or not'. As a result, objectivism can help social researchers discover the objective truth by using quantified measurements, enabling them to standardise and generalise a social phenomenon. Conversely, another epistemology – subjectivism – is opposed to the idea that objective reality exists independently. Subjectivism believes that the meaning of reality is generated by the subject (Crotty, 1998, p.16).

The third alternative, which is used in this study, is constructionism, which goes against both objectivism and subjectivism. It argues that there is no objective truth waiting for people to discover, nor is it a purely subjective creation. Constructionism involves the construction of reality (the object) by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting (Crotty, 1998, p.50). As understood in this research, constructionists attempt to understand the intangible constructions or perspectives which the individual forms about specific places, events and issues. Thus, in the constructionist view, knowledge about the world relies on how people interact with it (Crotty, 1998, p.49). It is during one's continuous engagement with the world that meaning and knowledge are constructed and delivered (Crotty, 1998, p.49).

In the relationship between human beings and their social world, constructionists argue that 'because of the essential relationship that human experience bears to its objects, no objects can be adequately described in isolation from the conscious being experiencing it, nor can any experience be adequately described in isolation from its objects' (Crotty, 1998, p.52). Crotty (1998, p.54) further asserts that although different people may be observing or experiencing the same phenomenon, they may construct its meaning in different ways. This

is because the construction process can be affected by time, place and different structural and other factors.

By taking a constructionist viewpoint to explore neighbourhood attachment and participation in Chinese cities, I found that there is an interactive relationship between residents and neighbourhoods. For instance, neighbourhood attachment rests on the interactions between residents and their neighbourhoods. To this end, I needed to examine the ways in which residents' own experiences and attitudes are derived, and how in turn these impacts their perceptions about their neighbourhoods and lives. Thus, comparing the three epistemological positions, constructionism is most consistent with the theoretical framework of my research.

## 6.3 Research design

### 6.3.1 Qualitative approach

Generally, social science research can be divided into three types: quantitative research, qualitative research and mixed methods research (Creswell, 2009, p.4). Bryman (2004, p.62), describes quantitative research as 'entailing the collection data and as exhibiting a view of the relationship between theory and research as deductive, a predilection for a nature science approach'. Qualitative research seeks to explore and understand individuals or groups, with a focus on a social or human problem (Creswell, 2009, p.4). Unlike quantitative research, which aims to explore the particular as an instance of general, qualitative research aims to explain the experiences and actions of a specific individual faced with a specific situation (Ciesielska and Jemielniak, 2018, p. 138). Mixed methods research is an approach which mixes both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study (Creswell, 2009, p.4).

In line with the epistemological stance and the theoretical framework adopted for my research, the qualitative method is applied to examine neighbourhood attachment and participation in Chinese cities. The reason why I did not choose the quantitative method is that this method focuses on systemic factors rather than experiential influences. For example, using quantitative data for this study could make it difficult to answer why residents might have a sense of belonging in neighbourhoods. Additionally, numbers cannot explain why residents do not want to interact with neighbours. This is consistent with a point in Ciesielska

and Jemielniak's book, which states that quantitative research considers human actions as behaviours, whereas qualitative research considers human actions as purposive, meaningful and emotional (Ciesielska and Jemielniak, 2018, p.138). Therefore, the quantitative approach cannot be singly applied in my research, which aims to deeply understand residents' feelings, emotions and attitudes. There is no denying that mixed methods can be used in my research. However, in considering the limited time for data collection available to a PhD student, adopting only the qualitative method is the most appropriate approach to my study.

### 6.3.2 Case study

The research design chosen for the research is the case study. As used in this study, a case study is 'an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon (e.g., a 'case'), set within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (Yin, 2003. p.13). A case study is used in order to examine the phenomena in depth within its real-life context (Yin, 2015, p.48). This strategy allowed me to deeply observe the characteristics of an individual unit (case), such as a person, group, community, place, city or phenomenon in relation to these units of study.

As noted above, this research used the case study as its research strategy. Before explaining the reason why I chose this particular case study, it is helpful to reiterate the purpose of this research. This research aims to explore the experiences and attitudes of residents toward their neighbourhoods and how they participate in different types of neighbourhood activities in urban China. As can be seen from the purpose, this research investigates residents' feelings, experiences and attitudes in urban neighbourhoods in China. Because this study explains a real phenomenon in people's real lives, the case study was deemed an appropriate design. This is in line with Nock *et al.* (2007, p.338), who point out that a case study is most often used to observe an individual and report on interactions with variables of interest. This is consistent with my research; in order to explore residents' interactions, I need to observe how they interact with their neighbours and urban neighbourhoods. For these reasons, this research adopted a case study as the research strategy.

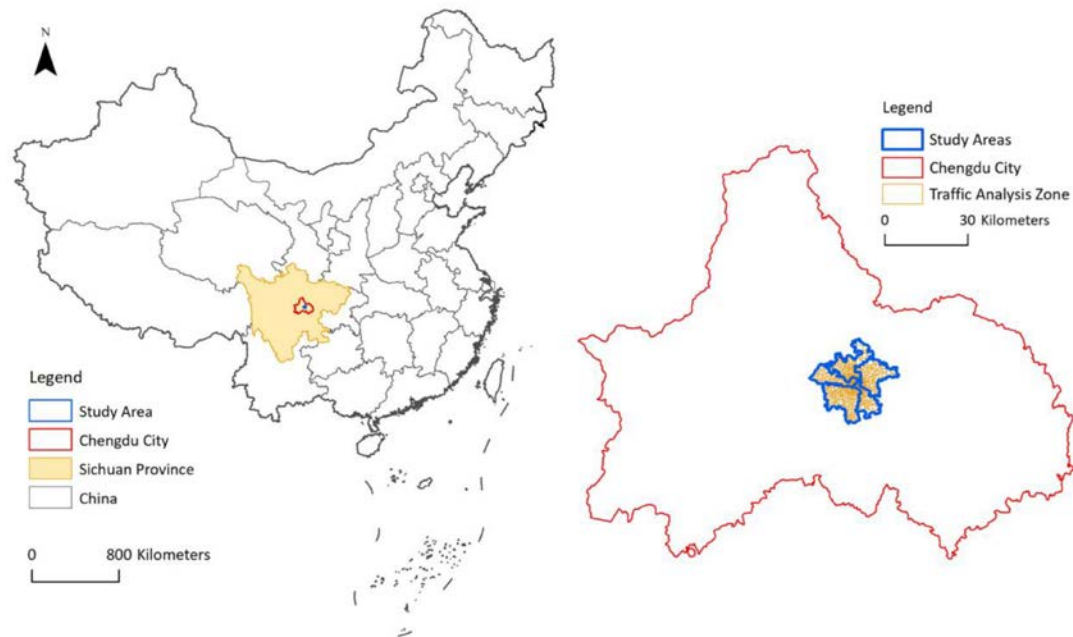
This research follows the four procedures for conducting case study research developed by Yin (2015, p.7). The first step is to identify a case (or cases) and establish the logic of the case study. At this stage, it is important to formulate the research questions and research



purpose before choosing a precise location. The second step is data collection, which means conducting the fieldwork in the case study location. The third step is to analyse the collected data and review the relevant theories. The final step is to draw conclusions on the basis of analytical results. In line with Yin's recommendations, five components of research design were considered when carrying out the case study (Yin, 2015, p.61-62). They are: a) research questions; b) study propositions; c) its unit(s) of analysis – 'case'; d) the logic linking the data to the propositions; and e) the criteria for interpreting a case study's findings.

### 6.3.3 Research settings and the city

The city of Chengdu was selected as the case study city. The city has experienced fast urbanisation and shows the characteristics of rapid urban sprawl, population growth and infrastructure construction. Specifically, the degree of urbanisation in Chengdu amounted to 74.41% in 2019 (Chengdu Bureau of Statistics, 2020, p.50). This city has a massive population, which exceeded 16.58 million in 2019 (Chengdu Bureau of Statistics, 2020, p.50). In 2017, Chengdu's gross domestic product (GDP) exceeded 1.3 trillion yuan (about 201.89 billion U.S. dollars), ranking eighth in China's urban GDP table (Lu *et al.*, 2019, p.5). Chengdu is one of the most famous historical cities in western China (the location of Chengdu is shown in Figure 6.1). According to a report from the Asian Development Bank, Chengdu was rated the most liveable city on the Chinese mainland in 2014 (Zhang *et al.*, 2020, p.3). Its prosperous socioeconomic status and prestigious image make Chengdu an excellent location to use as a case study in urban research. The existing research in urban studies in China has paid a disproportionate amount of attention to coastal areas, while little attention has been given to the land-locked urban centres of the west. Thus, as one of the largest hubs in southwestern China, it will be beneficial to study Chengdu as an example of inland cities.



**Figure 6.1 Location of Chengdu**

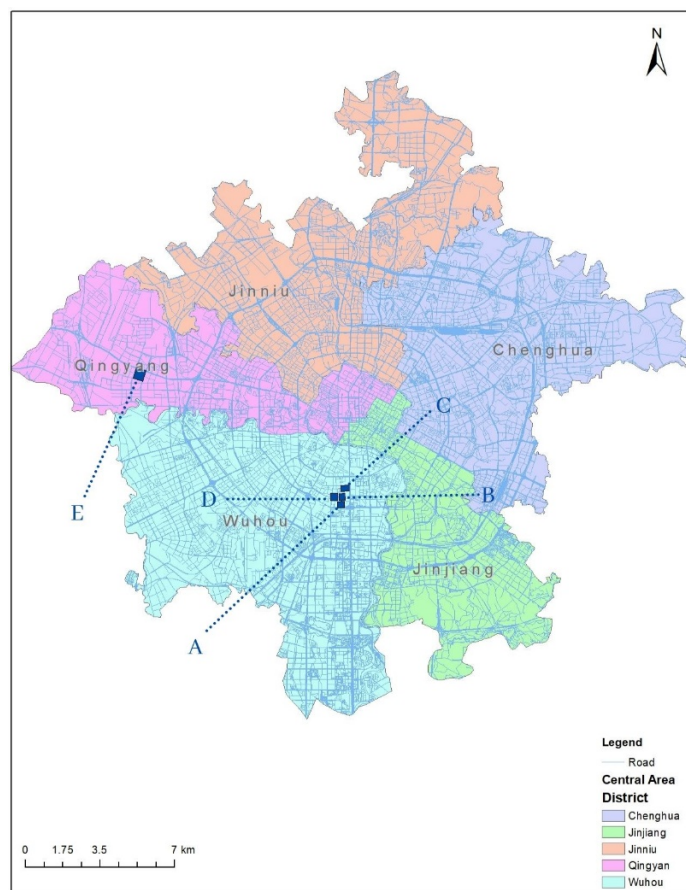
Source : Lu *et al.* (2019, p.6)

### 6.3.4 Case neighbourhoods

Five neighbourhoods were selected in the central urban area of Chengdu. They are located in the districts of Chenghua, Wuhou, Jinniu, Jinjian and Qingyang (see Figure 6.2). These five districts are the most prosperous and oldest districts in Chengdu, with a total population of 4.6 million, and a total area of approximately 420 square kilometres (Lu *et al.*, 2019, p.5). Each neighbourhood possesses different and long-standing socio-economic profiles as well as a variety of social identities. Of these, four neighbourhoods were chosen from Wuhou district, which is one of the most flourishing districts in the inner city of Chengdu. These four neighbourhoods include a state-owned enterprise neighbourhood (Qi Ye Dan Wei Xiao Qu), a resettlement-housing neighbourhood (Chai Qian An Zhi Fang Xiao Qu), a public institution neighbourhood (Shi Ye Dan Wei Xiao Qu) and an old commercial-housing neighbourhood (Jiu Shang Pin Fang Xiao Qu) (see Figure 6.2). The fifth neighbourhood is a new commercial-housing neighbourhood (Xin Shang Pin Fang Xiao Qu), which lies on the fringe of Qin Yang district (see Figure 6.2). The details of each neighbourhood are presented in the following sections.

Generally, all neighbourhoods are walkable and offer pedestrian access to public services such as shopping malls, hospitals, schools and restaurants. These neighbourhoods are

reachable by public transportation and have a good network of bus stops and subways. The study's choice of a SOE neighbourhood, a public institution neighbourhood and a resettlement-housing neighbourhood represent most types of inner-city neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods have incomplete facilities, relatively old residential buildings and high percentages of long-standing residents, especially elderly ones. However, some young adults and middle-aged city dwellers prefer to reside in old or new commercial-housing neighbourhoods, which have better housing conditions and good neighbourhood environments. The majority of the residents in the two work unit neighbourhoods and the resettlement-housing neighbourhood had a long-term residence, while the residents in the two commercial-housing neighbourhoods had a relatively short-term residence. To be clear, this study considered the long-term residence to be when a person has lived in a neighbourhood for an uninterrupted period of seven years or longer. Short-term residence refers to the length of residence shorter than seven years.



**Figure 6.2 Locations of the five neighbourhoods in Chengdu**

(A: SOE neighbourhood; B: Resettlement-housing neighbourhood; C: Public institution neighbourhood; D: Old commercial-housing neighbourhood; E: New commercial-housing neighbourhood)

Source: Author's creation (2020)

### Neighbourhood 1: SOE neighbourhood (Qi Ye Dan Wei Xiao Qu)

The SOE was constructed by a research institution in the 1980s (see Figure 6.3). It comprises eight blocks, each with seven floors. Since it is an old neighbourhood, these blocks do not have elevators and the floor area ratio is 2.1 (see Appendix 1). This neighbourhood has small green spaces and open areas. The area of green coverage is around 20%. This neighbourhood lacks facilities, such as a parking area and fitness equipment. Residents must park their cars on the street, which is not always legal. Demographically, the majority of residents are older people who have retired from the research institution. It has 300 households in total, and approximately a third of the households are occupied by renters. This neighbourhood does not have a PMC. It has a concierge whose responsibility is to prevent unauthorised access and to collect a cleaning fee of eight yuan (1.24 U.S. dollars) per month from each household. However, it was observed that strangers could get in and out of this neighbourhood freely.

The SOE neighbourhood is conveniently located in the Wuhou district, which provides easy access to the city centre and Shuang Liu International Airport. This area is considered to have the best public services for local residents. For instance, with regard to health care services, the area has a number of top-ranked hospitals (the Huaxi Hospital), the Affiliated Cancer Hospital, the Chengdu Integrated TCM & Western Medicine Hospital, the First Chengdu Hospital and others), three community hospitals, nine dentists and over nine pharmacies. Good hospital resources might be a reason for local residents, especially the elderly, not to move away.

As a school catchment area, it has plenty of educational resources. There are approximately ten private and public kindergartens, ten primary schools, eight secondary schools, six high schools and six universities surrounding the neighbourhood. The children of homeowners have access to these schools. Three public libraries can also be found in this area. Various forms of public transport cover the area, which is very convenient for the residents. For instance, people have easy access to a subway station (line 1), bus stops (number 16, 99, 27, 34, 77, 79, 114, 300, 12, 19, 904, 72 and 118) (see Appendix 2) and an airport shuttle bus within walking distance. There are also nine large shopping centres, four grocery stores, over 20 supermarkets, and many retail shops as well as banks. In terms of entertainment, there are five gyms, four cinemas, five parks and a large number of restaurants and bars.



**Figure 6.3 SOE neighbourhood**

Source: Photos from <https://m.lianjia.com/>

### Neighbourhood 2: Resettlement-housing neighbourhood (Chai Qian An Zhi Fang Xiao Qu)

A resettlement-housing neighbourhood is included in this research (see Figure 6.4). Most of its current residents had previously lived in a traditional Chinese neighbourhood, which was located in the old city centre (*Xin Nan Men*). In the 1990s, the original neighbourhood was demolished during an urban redevelopment process and replaced by the Chengdu Central Bus Station. Almost all the residents of the old neighbourhood accepted compensation and moved to the current resettlement-housing neighbourhood. The neighbourhood has 154 households in total. Most of the residents are relocatees with working-class backgrounds. This resettlement-housing neighbourhood is rather small; only three blocks were constructed in 1998, and they have six floors and no elevators. The floor area ratio is 1.9 (see Appendix 1). Additionally, because of the small floor space, residents do not have enough open areas for activities, and there is only a small green space (20%). There are no parking spaces or recreational facilities. In 2013, the open area of the resettlement-housing neighbourhood was rebuilt by the local government and the rather unsightly open area was replaced by some green spaces.

Although this neighbourhood does not have a PMC, a group of neighbourhood representatives exist in the neighbourhood. This group is made up of three block representatives and one neighbourhood representative. They are active members of the neighbourhood who are elected by all the residents. These representatives act as a bridge

between residents and the *shequ* organisation, and they contribute substantially to the neighbourhood. For instance, they help residents address problems, collect cleaning fees (eight yuan per month per household, which is equivalent to 1.24 U.S. dollars), organise events and activities, and manage the housing blocks in terms of solving conflicts. They also help the *shequ* organisation supervise residents in the neighbourhood in case of trouble or the occurrence of deviant behaviours. This neighbourhood has a concierge who is responsible for preventing unauthorised access.

Although the new commercial-housing neighbourhood in this study is located in Qingyang district, the other four neighbourhoods are located in the same area, Wuhou district. The two work unit neighbourhoods, the resettlement-housing neighbourhood and the old commercial-housing neighbourhood share the same public facilities. Likewise, the resettlement-housing neighbourhood is in a school catchment area with good amenities. The children of the residents are within walking distance of ten private and public kindergartens, ten primary schools, eight secondary schools, six high schools and six universities. There are three libraries in this area, all of which are accessible to the general public. Public transport is very convenient as residents can have quick access to a subway station (line 1), bus stops (number 16, 99, 27, 34, 77, 79, 114, 300, 12, 19, 904, 72 and 118) and an airport shuttle bus (number 1 to Chengdu Shuang Liu International Airport). Residents have access to excellent medical services in this area because of the presence of a number of top-ranked hospitals (the Huaxi hospital), the Affiliated Cancer Hospital, the Chengdu Integrated TCM & Western Medicine Hospital, the Chengdu First People' Hospital and others), community hospitals, and a variety of dentists and pharmacies within a short distance. With regard to entertainment services, there are a number of restaurants, bars, big shopping centres and parks.



**Figure 6.4 Resettlement-housing neighbourhood**

Source: Photo taken by author (2017)

### Neighbourhood 3: Public institution work unit (Shi Ye Danwei Xiao Qu)

The public institution work unit has seven blocks with six floors each (see Figure 6.5). Two residence blocks were constructed in 1979, then another was constructed in 1989. In 1995, to make room for more residence blocks for employees, two gardens and a staff dining room were demolished. In 1995, two more residential blocks were constructed. The last two residential buildings were completed in 2001. The property's floor area ratio is 2.45 (see Appendix 1).

At the time of this study, there were 219 households living in the neighbourhood and the majority of residents were middle-aged. This neighbourhood has some open areas and some green spaces (25%). It has no fitness facilities, and a small number of parking spaces (80); residents usually park their vehicles in the open area of the neighbourhood. This neighbourhood does not have a PMC and, therefore, residents have to manage any conflicts

or problems by themselves. There is a concierge living in the neighbourhood who is responsible for preventing unauthorised access. The cleaning fee is 10 yuan per month per household. For residents who are employees of the public institutions, the cleaning fee (10 yuan per month per household, which equals 1.55 U.S. dollars) is directly deducted from their salary, whereas renters need to pay this to the concierge.

Similar to other neighbourhoods which are also located in this area, good public services surround the public institution and thus provide convenience to residents. Specifically, as a school catchment area, the residents' children have a short walk to the nearby school. As mentioned before, this area has 10 private and public kindergartens, 10 primary schools, eight secondary schools, six high schools and six higher educational institutions. There are also three public libraries. The residents have easy access to public transport, such as the subway station (line 1), bus stops (numbers 16, 99, 27, 34, 77, 79, 114, 300, 12, 19, 904, 72 and 118) and an airport shuttle bus (number one to Chengdu Shuang Liu International Airport) (see Appendix 2). Healthcare services are available too; there are a number of top-ranked hospitals (the Huaxi Hospital), the Affiliated Cancer Hospital, the Chengdu Integrated TCM & Western Medicine Hospital, the First Chengdu Hospital and others), three community hospitals, nine dentists and over 10 pharmacies. Four grocery stores, over 20 supermarkets, more than 19 banks and many retail shops further improve the quality of the residents' lives and increase neighbourhood satisfaction. With regard to entertainment services, a host of famous restaurants, bars, gyms, cinemas, parks and large shopping centres can also be found.





**Figure 6.5 Public institution work unit**

Source: Photo taken by author (2017)

#### Neighbourhood 4: Old commercial-housing neighbourhood (Jiu Shang Pin Fang)

The fourth neighbourhood is an old commercial-housing neighbourhood, which was constructed in 1999 (see Figure 6.6). It has eight residential blocks with eight floors each. Only one block has an elevator. At the time of the study, there were 300 households living in the neighbourhood and there were some green spaces and an open area. The floor area ratio is 1.76 and the greening rate is 30% (see Appendix 1). This neighbourhood has 100 parking spaces, but residents usually park their vehicles in the open area because there are not enough parking spaces for them.

The study noted that the ages, occupations, educational background and other characteristics of the residents are rather mixed. A PMC provides services to the residents and is mainly in charge of collecting fees from them, including administrative fees and bills (electricity, water and gas). The monthly fee for each household is 0.6 yuan (0.093 U.S. dollars) per square meter. Neighbourhood security is very tight; for instance, residents need to use a special card to access the neighbourhood. There is a HOA but residents rely on the PMC to address any issues.

Like the other neighbourhoods located in this area, the old commercial-housing neighbourhood is in a school catchment area with numerous local services (schools, libraries, hospitals, dentists and pharmacies) and many community amenities (banks, restaurants, bars,

big shopping centres, grocery stores, banks and parks). Meanwhile, this area has good public transport facilities. Residents have easy access to a subway station (line 1), bus stops (number 16, 99, 27, 34, 77, 79, 114, 300, 12, 19, 904, 72 and 118) and an airport shuttle bus within a short walking distance (see Appendix 2).



**Figure 6.6 Old commercial-housing neighbourhood**

Source: Photos from <https://m.lianjia.com/>

#### Neighbourhood 5: New commercial-housing neighbourhood (Xin Shang Pin Fang)

The fifth neighbourhood is a new commercial-housing neighbourhood which was constructed in 2013 (see Figure 6.7). In Chengdu, the pattern of the urban spatial structure changed from a single centre structure to a concentric circles structure, and then to a multi-centre structure since 2016. Thus, even though this neighbourhood is located on the urban fringe of Chengdu, the Chengdu municipal government is constructing this area as a sub-centre in the city with a number of residential areas, big shopping malls, different levels of schools, restaurants and other amenities.

The new commercial-housing neighbourhood has six blocks with 20 floors each. All flats in the five blocks are partial flats, which means they have already been decorated by the property developer before being sold. Only one block comprises uncompleted flats. The housing price of a partial flat is higher than that of an uncompleted one. This new commercial-housing neighbourhood has a variety of amenities, including a swimming pool, a basketball court, a tennis court, a badminton court, a wide range of fitness equipment and

recreation facilities for children, etc. It has a two-story underground garage with 1,179 parking spots. The floor area ratio reaches 3.6 and green space makes up 35% of its total area (see Appendix 1). Neighbourhood security is very tight. Currently, this neighbourhood has 1,466 households. The majority of residents are young adults and middle-aged people who have relatively higher incomes and educational backgrounds (see Table 6.2). A PMC provides comprehensive services to residents. At 2.5 yuan (0.39 U. S dollars) per square meter per month, the administrative fee is four times higher than that in the old community housing.

This neighbourhood is located in Qingyang district, which is a developing area with an increasing number of public services and entertainment venues. Specifically, this research noted that there are three public and private kindergartens, five primary schools, two middle schools and three high schools in this area. Healthcare services are easily accessible in that there are three general hospitals, two community hospitals, six dentists and over 10 pharmacies in this area. The public transport is completed and convenient, so residents have easy access to a subway station (line 4) and bus stops (number 1056, 309A, 32, 78 and 905) within a short walking distance (see Appendix 2). Local life is very convenient; there are four large shopping centres, four grocery stores, over 20 supermarkets, and various restaurants, retail shops and banks. With regard to leisure activities, there are four parks, five gyms and three cinemas located in this area.



**Figure 6.7 New commercial-housing neighbourhood**

Source: Photos taken by author (2017)

## 6.4 Data collection methods and process

### 6.4.1 Access and recruitment of interviewees

In 2017, I conducted field work in China. I stayed in Chengdu for four months from June to September. Being able to enter the neighbourhoods and access groups of residents determined the success of the data collection for my research. I considered different methods of entering these neighbourhoods during the initial stage of the fieldwork. Simple methods such as through officially authorised channels or just entering a neighbourhood without any permission were all considered. However, according to the initial observation of the study area, I recognised how difficult it would be to gain access to the neighbourhoods.

First, it is challenging to get access to government officials in China. For me, the biggest problem was how I could represent myself and gain the officials' confidence, assuring them that no private or sensitive governmental information would be leaked during the research. Second, as gated neighbourhoods, each has one or more gatekeepers who have the administrative power to grant or deny access to the neighbourhoods. Some scholars have shown that gatekeepers play an important role in accessing the study area and recruiting participants (Wanat, 2008, p.191; Krausse, 2010, p.18), and they suggested that it is necessary to negotiate access through gatekeepers. However, the neighbourhood management security became tighter than usual because at that time of the study, Chengdu was undergoing an inspection on ecological and environmental protection from the central government. Therefore, it was impossible to enter a neighbourhood to carry out the interviews without permission from the *shequ* organisation.

Personal connections can be considered a kind of social capital which still plays a vital role in Chinese daily life. According to Krausse (2010, p.12), personal connections in terms of family ties, friends, old classmates and colleagues can provide resources to get things done. In this situation, I contacted the *shequ* organisations through my personal connections and explained my purposes. I then promised that all information collected would only be used for research purposes and would not be leaked to the public. Finally, the *shequ* organisations informed the Street Office and gave me permission to do the interviews in these five neighbourhoods.

The choice of participants in this study was guided by the understanding that the aim of sampling design in a qualitative study is to identify key informants who have knowledge of or experience with the phenomenon of interest (Creswell and Clarks, 2018, p.214). The goal of the sampling approach was to obtain a broad range of perspectives rather than representativeness (Bryman, 2004, p.333).

Generally, common qualitative sampling methods include purposive sampling, convenience sampling, snowball sampling and theoretical sampling (Bryman, 2004, p.333). Purposive sampling is one of the most common sampling strategies that researchers can intentionally choose participants who are knowledgeable about the phenomenon being studied (Gill, 2020, p.580). It can provide rich information to the study, but it is challenging to locate information-rich participants. Purposive sampling is suitable for finding a sample that has specific experiences and specialised knowledge. Theoretical sampling refers to research samples to generate theory. However, this research was neither investigating specific experiences of a particular subset of the population nor creating theory. Additionally, although the characteristics of convenience sampling are quick and easy, this type of sampling may not provide participants who can supply the best information (Gill, 2020, p.580). Convenience sampling is seen as the least scientific and lacks intellectual credibility. Accordingly, purposive sampling, theoretical sampling and convenient sampling are not suitable for this research.

Snowball sampling is also a commonly employed sampling method in qualitative research which works like chain referral (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015, p.98). It is a form of sequential and emergence-driven sampling typically used in fieldwork (Patton, 2015). Specifically, the researcher starts with a small population of know individuals and expands the sample by asking existing participants to recommend persons who could provide important data for the study (Gill, 2020, p.580). It is a practical and cost-efficient approach to reach appropriate targets in the research. It takes less time for researchers to obtain the trust from participants.

However, the quality of referrals may be problematic and limited. To improve the quality of snowball sampling, scholars suggest that researchers need to begin with a set of initial participants as diverse as possible, to have face-to-face interviews to build trust which can help to generate further referrals and to persist in securing interview that enhances the sample diversity (Kirchherr and Charles, 2018, p.17). These suggestions can lead to the reduction

of errors occurring in sampling and to enhance the sample diversity of the snowball samples. Comparing different sampling methods of qualitative research, snowball sampling was adopted in this research that was conducted in the five neighbourhoods.

At the beginning of the recruitment process in these neighbourhoods, although I had received permission from the *shequ* organisation to access these neighbourhoods, no one was willing to participate in my interviews. To get residents involved, I analysed the reasons for refusal, which might be related to people's busy schedules or the wariness of strangers. Ultimately, I decided to first chat with some residents who were sitting and relaxing in a cool place in the neighbourhood.

I introduced myself, handed them the participation information sheet (see Appendix 4) and explained the purpose of the interviews. Additionally, I promised to protect their privacy by explaining that the real name of the participants and the neighbourhood address would not be presented in my thesis. After a few minutes of conversation, I gained their trust. Those who participated in my interviews further introduced me to other residents. It is worth mentioning that being a student helped me create a good impression on the participants. As a result, they were willing to participate in the interviews. In order to enhance the diversity of samples, I walked around the neighbourhoods, aiming to spread the location in the neighbourhood and catch different residents who belonged to different social and economic groups.

This research aimed to recruit 30-40 participants. Ultimately, 31 participants engaged in the interviews; details can be found below (see Tables 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3). Apart from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood, I found my desired number of participants in the other four neighbourhoods. In the old commercial-housing neighbourhood, many residents refused to participate in interviews, stating that they had a busy schedule. Interestingly, this is consistent with one of my own findings, which is that residents from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood were not interested in participating in neighbourhood activities.

**Table 6.1 Number of participants who consented to interviews in each neighbourhood**

	SOE neighbourhood	Resettlement- housing neighbourhood	Public institution neighbourhood	Old commercial- neighbourhood	New commercial- neighbourhood
<b>Original requirement</b>	6-8	6-8	6-8	6-8	6-8
<b>Ultimately interviewed</b>	7	6	6	5	7

Source: Author's creation (2020)

**Table 6.2 Participants' information in the five neighbourhoods**

	State-owned enterprise neighbourhood N=7	Resettlement- housing neighbourhood N=6	Public institution neighbourhood N=6	Old commercial- housing neighbourhood N=5	New commercial- housing neighbourhood N=7
<b>Gender (of interviewees)</b>					
Couple	5	3	2	1	3
Couple with child	0	1	3	2	4
Single with child	0	0	1	0	0
Woman (single)	0	2	0	0	0
Man (single)	2	0	0	1	0
<b>Average Age</b>	76.2	65.8	43.8	48.4	43.5
<b>Range of ages</b>	72-82	54-73	18-56	28-75	29-58
<b>Education</b>					
Middle school	4	5	0	0	0
High school	1	1	0	1	0
College & university degree	2	0	6	4	7
<b>Annual household income (after tax)</b>					
≤¥50,000	0	2	0	0	0
¥60,000-¥14,000	7	4	0	3	0
¥15,000-¥24,000	0	0	3	1	1
¥25,000-¥34,000	0	0	3	0	2
≥¥35,000	0	0	0	0	4
<b>Housing tenure</b>					
Owner-occupied	7	5	5	4	7
Rental	0	1	1	1	0
<b>Length of residence range</b>	20-30 years	15-27 years	5-27years	0.5-16years	3-5years

Source: Author's creation (2020)

**Table 6.3 Participants' incomes in the five neighbourhoods**

	State-owned enterprise neighbourhood	Resettlement-housing neighbourhood	Public institution neighbourhood	Old commercial-housing neighbourhood	New commercial-housing neighbourhood
<b>Average annual household income in Yuan (¥)</b>	¥91,428.57	¥60,000	¥203,333.33	¥134,000	¥395,714.28
<b>Comparison with the average income of urban households in Chengdu over the year 2017</b>	Lower	Lower	Higher	Higher	Higher

Source: Author's creation (2020)

Note: Average income of urban households over the year in Chengdu (2017) ¥115,584.97 - the per capita cash income of urban households over the year 38917.5 yuan \* the person per household 2.97. (Data from Chengdu Statistical Yearbook 2019)

#### 6.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

Two core methods were selected in this research: semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation. Photography was employed as a supplementary method to non-participant observation.

The interview can be understood as one of the basic methods of data collection employed in qualitative research. According to Ciesielska and Jemielniak (2018, p.77), an interview can be defined as 'a specific form of conversation where knowledge is produced through the interaction between an interviewer and interviewee'. After the interviews, the researcher can understand experiences and reconstruct events in which they did not personally engage (Rubin and Rubin, 2012, p.3). For this study, the aim of the interviews was to explore individual experiences and perceptions in rich detail through a purposeful conversation with the participants. There are two major types of interviews: unstructured and semi-structured (Bryman, 2004, p.320). This research selected the semi-structured interview as one of its core methods.

The reason I chose this type of interview was flexibility, which is the key strength of semi-structured interviews (Bryman, 2004, p.321). To gain more insight from the participants, a semi-structured interview allows the researcher to slightly change the wording and the order of the questions in the interview guide. In this study, I could ask probing follow-up questions. According to Schultze and Avital (2011, p.2), a semi-structured interview is open to the



participants' decisions about what is important and relevant to talk about and how they want to express themselves. This characteristic allowed me to get the most detail and the most information from each participant.

In this research, the semi-structured interviews had a specific purpose: to understand themes of the world, to obtain descriptions of the world in which the participants live and to know its specific dimensions by focusing on the research questions and topic areas (Raworth *et al.*, 2012, p.1). The interview guide – a series of open-ended questions – was prepared ahead of time. These open-ended questions helped the researcher obtain free-form answers. The interviews took place face-to-face, enabling enables the researcher to communicate with participants directly with prepared questions. In this case, the researcher captured participants' emotions and attitudes directly during the interviews.

In total, 31 participants from five neighbourhoods were interviewed. The interview times ranged from 20 to 30 minutes. These interviews were conducted in the open areas of the five neighbourhoods. The reason for choosing open areas is that it is a safe place for both the interviewer and the participants. Prior to the interviews, the interviewee consent form (see Appendix 5) was shown to the participants. After obtaining permission, the interview would start. All of the participants signed the consent form for the interviews. After getting permission from the participants, all the interviews were recorded. These interviews were based on the participants' experiences and interpretations of their past behaviours, so the participants could easily follow all the questions and provide detailed answers. In line with the cultural expectations, small gifts were prepared at the researcher's own expense and given to the participants after the interviews. To avoid incentivising participation, the interviewer did not mention the gifts before the interviews.

#### 6.4.3 Non-participant observation

Observation is a data collection method where a researcher observes the behaviours of a group or individual to witness first-hand their social behaviours (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015, p.137). Apart from people, observation of physical or cultural artefacts, material resources and of people's surroundings may also help to develop insight into the processes at hand (Swanborn, 2010, p.2; Yin, 2015, p.144). There are participant observation and non-participant observation. Participant observation is where the researcher takes part in the

actions of the group being studied. Non-participant observation is used to obtain primary data about some aspect of the social world without interacting with its participants (William, 2008, p.561).

This research used non-participant observation. This was the ideal method to understand how the residents socialise with their neighbours, interact with other neighbours, use neighbourhood services and facilities and participate in neighbourhood activities. The non-participant observation was carried out during a field visit and during the research phase of interviewing in the selected neighbourhoods.

The non-participant observation process was conducted in three stages. First, this research carried out a broad scope observation in the five neighbourhoods to obtain an overview of the physical environment, construction and infrastructure. The second stage was to observe how residents interacted with neighbours and what they did in the public areas of their neighbourhoods. Based on the first stage, in the second stage, more attention could be focused on the narrower places where neighbourly interaction had been seen to take place, such as the open areas. Third, this research observed what happened in the department of the PMC and also how residents interacted with the members of the property management team. The observations ended when theoretical saturation was reached.

In this research, the observation data was considered supplementary information which took the forms of handwritten notes and photos. Based on the agreement with the *shequ* organisation, in the two work units, the resettlement-housing neighbourhood and the old commercial-housing neighbourhood, observation data could only be collected by writing field notes. As a result, some photos in relation to the physical environment and facilities were sourced online. However, in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood, both handwritten notes and photo recordings were used. The ethical issues of this will be discussed later.

In relation to photo-taking during observation, there were some good reasons for using photographs in the research. First, photographs can show special forms of data and have a unique capacity to communicate knowledge. According to Yin (2014, p.144), observations become valuable when researchers consider taking photographs at fieldwork sites because photos can help share important case characteristics with outside observers. Second,

photography is very useful for recording information not only about people and events but also about buildings, environment and facilities in the neighbourhoods (Basil, 2011, p.246). It helps present the data in a way that text-based descriptions alone cannot achieve.

In my research, I took a number of photographs in the selected neighbourhoods. All photos were taken using a mobile phone. These photos reinforced the credibility of any findings because they provided a visual depiction of the physical environments and facilities of each neighbourhood. For example, during the interviews, participants of the new commercial-housing neighbourhoods reported their satisfaction with a variety of neighbourhood facilities, which contributed to their sense of attachment. Several photos are presented as pieces of evidence in the relevant section of this thesis.

## 6.5 Data analysis

### 6.5.1 Transcription

All data collected from the semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation were transcribed after the fieldwork had ended. I was inspired by Longhurst's (2003, p.110) view on the advantages of transcribing interviews as soon as possible while the interviews are still fresh in interviewer's mind, which makes the translation much easier. In this research, the transcription work began as soon as the interviews were collected. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015, p.132), 'hiring a transcriber can be expensive...a transcriber is likely to be unfamiliar with terminology and not having conducted the interview, will not be able to fill in places where the recording is of poor quality'. Thus, I personally transcribed all the interviews to avoid errors that could have occurred had the work been outsourced.

There were two steps in the transcription process. First, the transcriptions were first made in Chinese to ensure that the original meanings would not be altered and to preserve the accuracy of the data. In this step, the Chinese transcriptions consisted of recordings and handwritten notes. The second step was to translate the Chinese data into English. This step was time-consuming because all the interviews were conducted in the Chengdu dialect. Therefore, I translated the scripts very carefully to avoid loss of original meaning and to retain the power of many concepts and vocabularies that were contained in the original language. For example, some participants used slang to express their feelings. In these cases,

I had repeated discussions with friends who are Chengdu locals to figure out how to precisely translate the slang into Mandarin and then into English. Although it was time-consuming, this process helped me become very familiar with my data, which was beneficial to the data analysis; this point is supported by Merriam and Tisdell (2015, p.132) and Tracy (2013, p.178). Additionally, the notes from the participant observation were also fleshed out with the relevant photos taken.

It is also important to mention that to ensure the participants' anonymity, they were given pseudonyms instead of using their real names. For example, the first participant of the SOE neighbourhood was given the pseudonym A1 and the second participant from this work unit became A2. However, the participants' genders, ages, jobs and some other socio-economic characteristics are retained to provide a clear understanding and explanation of the findings.

### 6.5.2 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis has been adopted in this research. This is one of the most common forms of analysis within qualitative research (Guest *et al.*, 2012, p.30). According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p.79), 'thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data'. One of the reasons I adopted thematic analysis is that a prominent feature of thematic analysis is flexibility in that it can be modified to the needs of the particular study, offering rich, detailed and complex accounts of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.5). There are various approaches to conducting the thematic analysis. Inspired by Braun and Clarke's (2006, p.87) thinking on how to use thematic analysis, the research followed a six-step process (see Table 6.4).

**Table 6.4 How to do thematic analysis**

<b>First step: Familiarising yourself with your data</b>
<b>Second step: Generating initial codes</b>
<b>Third step: Searching for themes</b>
<b>Fourth step: Reviewing themes</b>
<b>Fifth step: Defining and naming themes</b>
<b>Sixth step: Producing the report</b>

Source: Braun and Clarke (2006, p.87)

In this research, the first step was to get to know the data. Apart from the transcription process, I read through the transcriptions many times and took notes. The second step was to generate initial codes from the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p.88), codes identify a feature of the data that shows interest for the analyst. Boyatzis (1998, p.31) asserts that ‘a good thematic code is one that captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon. It is usable in the analysis, the interpretation, and the presentation of research’. Inspired by Braun and Clarke’s (2006, p.88) advice on how to generate initial codes, I first highlighted various phrases and sentences in each conversation in my transcriptions by using different coloured markers. Next, initial codes were developed to describe the highlighted content.

The third step was to search for themes. DeSantis and Ugarriza (2000, p.362) define ‘a theme’ as ‘an abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a recurrent experience and its variant manifestations. As such, a theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole’. At this stage, I checked the codes I had created and identified patterns among them. Next, I sorted and collated all the relevant codes into themes. Based on this principle, some initial codes were discarded because they did not appear often in the data. Additionally, some codes became themes in their own right.

The fourth step was to review the themes. At this stage, I returned to the data set and compared it with each theme to ensure that all the themes provided useful and accurate representations of the interviews. Defining and naming the themes took place during the fifth step. At this point, I followed Braun and Clarke’s guidance and defined and refined the ‘essence’ of each theme, determining which aspect of the data each of them captured, then I

finally named each theme (2006, p.96). The final step was to analyse the data on the basis of themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p.93), the aim of thematic analysis is to provide a concise, coherent, logical, nonrepetitive, interesting account of the story the data tell within and across themes. Direct quotes from participants' interviews were an important part of the data analysis chapters, which can not only help to understand specific points of interpretation, but also give readers a flavour of the original conversations (Nowell *et al.*, 2007, p.11). These quotes were embedded within the analytic narrative to convince the reader of this study's validity and to improve the merit of the analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.93).

This research is qualitative research which investigated residents' life experiences and perspectives in the five urban neighbourhoods in Chengdu. The qualitative research provides an opportunity to explore how participants talked about their experiences and attitudes toward neighbourhoods in more depth. Due to the overall design, this research did not make generalisations from the response provided by participants but focused on their varied life experiences and perspectives. In the representation of the participants' responses, this research was inspired by the extant literature (e.g., Power and Helen, 2007; Crisp and Robinson 2010; Heberer and Gobel, 2011; Bond *et al.*, 2013; Jean, 2016; Venter, 2016; Farahani, 2016; Li *et al.*, 2018) to describe participants' responses. For instance, these qualitative studies aim to investigate neighbourhood attachment and participation by using similar rhetoric such as 'high levels of', 'the vast majority of', 'the majority of', 'a low level of', 'most', 'more than the half of' and 'tend to have' to describe what they interviewed and observed (Power and Helen, 2007; Crisp and Robinson 2010; Bond *et al.*, 2013; Jean, 2016). Following extant literature, this research adopted existing literature' expression to describe the findings of this research.

As discussed in Chapter 5, this research divides neighbourhood attachment into two forms: emotional attachment and functional attachment. To measure emotional attachment, this research employs five themes: neighbourhood-based social networks, mutual trust, sense of safety, mutual support and sense of belonging. If over half of the participants of a given neighbourhood were shown to have mutual trust, a sense of safety, mutual support, a sense of belonging and strong neighbourhood-based social networks, this study considers the majority of participants to have emotional attachment. This research chooses three themes to analyse functional attachment: satisfaction with the physical environment, satisfaction

with the neighbourhood facilities, and satisfaction with the neighbourhood services. This research considers that if over half of participants displayed satisfaction with the physical environment, neighbourhood facilities and neighbourhood services, it can be said that the majority of participants have functional attachment.

This research classifies neighbourhood participation in two types: formal participation and informal participation (see Chapter 5). Regarding formal participation, this research defines that if all of the participants participated in neighbourhood elections, they had high levels of informal participation, whilst if none participated in neighbourhood elections, they had low levels of formal participation. If more than half (but fewer than all) of the participants participated in neighbourhood elections, participants had medium to high levels of formal participation, while if fewer than half (but more than none) participated in neighbourhood elections, participants had medium to low levels of formal participation.

With respect to informal participation, if all of the participants participated in neighbourhood-organised activities and the reporting of neighbourhood issues, participants had high levels of informal participation, whilst if none participated in neighbourhood-organised activities and the reporting of neighbourhood issues, participants had low levels of informal participation (see Chapter 5). If more than half (but fewer than all) of the participants participated in neighbourhood-organised activities and the reporting of neighbourhood issues, participants had medium to high levels of informal participation, while if fewer than half (but more than none) of the participants participated in neighbourhood-organised activities and the reporting of neighbourhood issues, participants had medium to low levels of informal participation. As some neighbourhoods did not have neighbourhood organisations that organised neighbourhood-organised activities for residents, the level of informal participation refers to the level of the reporting of neighbourhood issues in those cases.

## 6.6 Reflections

There are many guidelines and instructions written in English on how to do social research. In these guidelines and instructions, fieldwork is often discussed in the context of qualitative research, and it is defined as ‘that part of the qualitative research process where data are collected in a naturally occurring setting, i.e., what researchers actually do when they are ‘in

the field' – in, say, a village, school, bar, factory, club, hospital, church, care home or gang' (Payne and Payne, 2004, p.2). In the UK, fieldwork-based social research is common in daily life. However, the situation is different in China. For historical reasons, political control continues to have an influence on doing social research in Chinese society. This research does not intend to criticise political control on the government's part, however, here is a gentle suggestion that the government may need to reconsider how to balance economic growth and local residents' voices. However, because there is a limitation of books and papers discussing how to conduct fieldwork in China, this section will share some ideas based on the researcher's own experiences.

This study found that doing fieldwork in China was mainly constrained by two things. First, it was difficult to gain access to the neighbourhoods. Given the possibility of the leakage of private governmental matters, the relevant departments usually refuse to provide official permission. Nevertheless, it can be claimed that being refused by the government is not absolute; personal connections still play an important role in doing research in China. This finding is consistent with that of another researcher, Yawei Zhao, who conducted fieldwork in Dali (Zhao, 2017). By using friends' local connections, Zhao was able to complete all interviews in local villages. Additionally, some scholars suggest that researchers could negotiate access through gatekeepers (Wanat, 2008, p.192; Krausse, 2010, p.18). However, during the period of this research, political control and neighbourhood management became tighter than usual because Chengdu was undergoing an inspection of ecological and environmental protection ordered by the central government. As a result, negotiating with the gatekeepers of each neighbourhood was particularly difficult.

I used personal connections to contact the *shequ* organisations. After proposing to do interviews in neighbourhoods, I was required to have a meeting with the leaders of the *shequ* organisations in advance. The atmosphere was very tense during the meeting because initially, a director of the *shequ* organisation was unwilling to accept me doing interviews in his jurisdictional neighbourhoods. After I introduced the purpose of my research, the director of the *shequ* organisation impugned my motivation for doing this research. Honestly, I felt rather embarrassed because I had never imagined the occurrence of such a situation. Thanks to my sufficient preparation, I provided him with the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form and used simple words to explain the purpose of my research again. I guaranteed that pseudonyms would be used in my research and that the real name of the



*shequ* organisation, locations, neighbourhood addresses, and participants would not appear in my thesis. After a half-hour conversation, I finally gained his trust and obtained permission from the *shequ* organisation.

Second, it was a challenge to gain the trust of the participants. There is an old saying in China: ‘the first step is always difficult.’ In the beginning, no one was willing to participate in the interviews. The main reason was that it was difficult to establish trust with a stranger. To get residents involved in my interviews, I adopted the strategy of first chatting with some elderly residents who were sitting and relaxing in a cool place in the neighbourhood. Subsequently, I was able to gain trust from them after a few minutes’ conversations. Those who participated in my interviews further introduced me to other residents. In this way, I finally completed my study.

Apart from starting with elderly residents, there were three other points which increased the degree of involvement in my research. First, as a returning researcher, being able to speak the local dialect helped to increase the familiarity between me and the participants. Second, my identity as a student helped me create a good impression on the participants. After informing participants that the data collection was for my PhD thesis, which is non-profit, they were more willing to engage in the interviews. Third, building rapport between the researcher and participants can also increase the degree of participation. For example, one participant told me her daughter was also studying abroad. This commonality made her more willing to help me.

## 6.7 Research ethics

In this research, the main ethical concerns are informed consent, reciprocity, confidentiality and anonymity. Before the fieldwork took place, an ethics application form was approved by the Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow. All interviews and direct participation were conducted following the requirements of ethics approval. It is worth mentioning that the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form were provided at the start of each interview.

Specifically, in terms of informal consent, formal consent was obtained by giving prospective participants a written Informed Consent Form that was in English and in Chinese

to accommodate the language preference of the research participants. I also read the Plain Language Statement out loud in case research participants were illiterate. Participant Information Sheets were provided in the appropriate language and written format. I informed each participant of the purpose of the study, as well as the geographic and time scope. Additionally, I explicitly stated to the participants that their contribution was voluntary and could be stopped at any time without consequences and without giving a reason.

Regarding reciprocity, the benefits for the participants followed the guidelines of the University of Glasgow. Participants were not offered any payment for their time. However, to show appreciation for their willingness to participate, participants were informed that they could receive a copy of the thesis or a summary if they were interested.

Regarding confidentiality, the study of neighbourhoods can be a sensitive social, political and cultural topic, as well as a personally emotive subject. Therefore, research participants were treated with high levels of confidentiality. In this research, the participants were de-identified, and the results were synthesised and summarised, without pointing to any single individual. If an example or case was specifically mentioned in the data analysis, a pseudonym was used, and other identifiable components were removed. For example, the first participant of the SOE neighbourhood is referred to as Participant A1, the second participant of the resettlement-housing neighbourhood is Participant B2, etc. In the context of Chengdu, privacy and anonymity are important. In this research, locally and politically sensitive questions have been avoided. Neighbourhoods' names and addresses do not appear in the research.

The taped interviews, notes and photos will be destroyed once the research is complete by shredding the paper documents and completely deleting any electronic files. The collected data has not been and will not be shared with other researchers or research institutions. The data is stored in a secure IT environment, where it cannot be accessed by other individuals.

## 6.8 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the methodology of this research. Of the three dominant epistemological positions, constructionism was selected as it is consistent with the theoretical framework of this thesis. A qualitative case study was selected as the research

strategy to provide a deeper understanding of neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood participation in China. Complete examinations of the research design, recruitment process and methods of data collection have also been presented. Two research methods – semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation – have been discussed. This chapter outlined the data analysis method, thematic analysis, as well as my reflections and some information on the research ethics. The next chapter will present and discuss the findings of this research.

# Chapter 7 Emotional Attachment

## 7.1 Introduction

This is the first chapter of the data analysis. It addresses the first research question: ‘How do residents experience emotional attachment in different types of urban neighbourhoods? How can we explain this?’. To accomplish this, Chapter 7 draws on the residents’ perspectives and experiences to explore emotional attachment among the five urban neighbourhoods in Chengdu through analysing neighbourhood-based social networks, neighbourly interactions, mutual trust, sense of safety, sense of belonging and neighbourly mutual support. This chapter has been divided into two parts, including Section 7.2 Emotional attachment Part A and Section 7.3 Emotional attachment Part B. Neighbourhood-based social networks and neighbourly interactions will be examined in Section 7.2.1. Section 7.2.2 discusses mutual trust and a sense of safety. The sense of belonging will be examined in Section 7.3.1, followed by neighbourly mutual support in Section 7.3.2. Section 7.4 will present the findings of emotional attachment. Section 7.5 will conclude Chapter 7.

## 7.2 Emotional attachment Part A

### 7.2.1 Neighbourhood-based social networks and neighbourly interactions

Social networks, as a critical element of social capital, refer to social ties that link people together with others (Putnam, 1995, 2000). As discussed in Chapter 2, social networks in the neighbourhood refer to neighbourhood-based social networks, which have the largest impact on neighbourhood attachment (Livingston *et al.*, 2008; Weijs-Perree *et al.*, 2017) because they can promote high levels of social interactions (Forrest and Kearns, 2001). These interactions foster friendliness, neighbourhood participation and neighbourhood attachment (Farrell *et al.*, 2004). Therefore, to explore neighbourhood-based social networks and neighbourly interactions within the five urban neighbourhoods, the following questions were asked: ‘Do you know your neighbours?’, ‘How much do you know about them?’, ‘Do you interact with your neighbours?’, and ‘Think of the ways you have socialised with them. When? Where? How?’ (see Appendix 3). The purposes of these questions are to explore what types of urban neighbourhood-based social ties exist in the five neighbourhoods and to

explore how residents interact with their neighbours. The following subsections will present the participants' responses to these questions, followed by an analysis of the data.

### SOE neighbourhood

The SOE neighbourhood appeared to have strong neighbourly ties and neighbourly relationships, which contributed to intensive neighbourly interactions. The majority of the residents had been working and living in this work unit compound for over 30 years. Their dual roles (as colleagues and neighbours) and the long-term residence help them to build bonds in the neighbourhood. All the participants indicated that they were familiar with their neighbours, especially those who were also colleagues. The participants knew most of their neighbours' names, some personal information, their family backgrounds and even some private matters. The residents spent a good deal of their spare time together, greeting and chatting with each other and taking part in self-organised activities. According to the interviews, these activities included going shopping, going to the park, playing mah-jong (a game of Chinese origin, usually played by four people, in which tiles bearing various designs are drawn and discarded until one player has an entire hand of winning combinations) and playing croquet. These neighbourly interactions were reported to take place not only within the neighbourhood or participants' homes but also extended outside of the neighbourhood, such as to supermarkets and the park.

A good example comes from Participant A2, an 82-year-old retired male worker, who used the phrase 'like siblings' to describe his neighbourly relationships. This suggests that he had an intimate relationship with his neighbours, who were as close as his siblings. He said:

The majority of my neighbours were my colleagues and their family members. We got to know each other during work and daily life. So, we know each other very well, such as their family backgrounds, interests and even some private matters. We are old friends. There is a Chinese saying that close neighbours are better than distant relatives. Therefore, although we do not have blood relationships, we love and care about each other like siblings. I like talking to my neighbours. I chat and play croquet with some of my neighbours almost every day in our neighbourhood.

Another example comes from Participant A4, a retired worker from the SOE, who highlighted that she played her favourite game, mah-jong, with neighbours in her spare time. This may reflect the fact that the participants enjoyed spending time together and having interactions. She stated:

I almost know all my neighbours. I know their names, some personal information and family backgrounds. I chat with my neighbour almost every day. We like playing mah-jong in our spare time. As you know, mah-jong is a favourite competitive game in Chengdu; one can see it being played throughout the city at street corners, parks and open-air teahouses. We enjoy playing mah-jong together.

Participant A3 was a 72-year-old female who has never worked in the SOE, but who was also familiar with many neighbours since her husband was working in the enterprise. Another reason for her familiarity with her neighbours, which can be found in her quote below, is that she had lived in the neighbourhood for around 30 years. This suggests that a long-term residence improves the sense of familiarity among neighbours and contributes to intensive interactions. She said:

The majority of my neighbours were my husband's colleagues. I have been living in this neighbourhood for about 30 years, so I am familiar with my neighbours. I know their names, information about their families and other things. We have had a lot of interactions in our daily lives. I chat with my neighbours every day. We go grocery shopping together every day as well. Sometimes we have a walk in the park when the weather is good.

The above quotes show that close neighbourly ties, good neighbourly relationships and the long-term residence have promoted strong neighbourhood-based social networks in the SOE neighbourhood.

#### Resettlement-housing neighbourhood

The resettlement-housing neighbourhood appeared to have strong neighbourly ties and neighbourly relationships. All the participants expressed a sense of familiarity with their neighbours. They knew their neighbours' names, backgrounds, occupations and other personal details. Such familiarity was a result of the long-term residence in their neighbourhood, which ranged from 15 to 27 years among the six participants. To be sure, the long-term residence promoted a sense of familiarity and facilitated interaction among these participants, consequently forming strong neighbourly ties. Participants had intensive neighbourly interactions which were reflected by friendly greeting and chatting with neighbours almost every day, and participating in various neighbourhood activities including neighbourhood meetings, playing mah-jong and festival celebrations. Normally, Chinese people only celebrate the Chinese New Year with their family members. However, in this neighbourhood, residents celebrated the traditional festivals together, and this tradition was

highlighted by some participants. Furthermore, the participants enjoyed having conversations outdoors and felt happy spending time together.

A good example comes from Participant B1, a 73-year-old female participant who emphasised the high frequency with which she chatted with her neighbours. Notably, as is shown in the following quote, B1 had formed ‘a daily habit’ of chatting. This suggests she enjoyed spending time with her neighbours. She said:

The majority of the residents and I have been living in this neighbourhood for more than 20 years, so I know them well. I know their names and information about their families. I greet my neighbours when we encounter each other in the neighbourhoods. I like chatting with them every day in the open area in my neighbourhood. It seems that chatting with my neighbours has become a daily habit in my life.

Participant B2, a 54-year-old male participant, highlighted various neighbourly interactions. As presented in the quote below, he felt his neighbourhood was ‘a big family’. This suggested that he perceived a sense of belonging in the neighbourhoods. He reported:

We knew each other before we moved to this neighbourhood. We were neighbours for a long time. So, I know my neighbours’ names, some personal information and family backgrounds. Our neighbourhood is like a big family. We celebrate Chinese New Year together every year. All the dishes are prepared by us. We sit around tables and enjoy the food and time together. It is such a great time here! I feel very happy living in this neighbourhood. We play mah-jong every day, which is one of the most popular activities in my neighbourhood.

Participant B5, a 67-year-old female participant, talked about the long-term residence, highlighting that it helped contribute to close neighbourly relationships. Notably, as shown in the quote below, B5 used the phrase ‘love to talk’ to express how much she enjoyed chatting with her neighbours. She said:

We have been living together over the past few decades, so we are familiar with each other. I greet my neighbours when we encounter each other in the neighbourhood. I chat with them three or four times a week. We love to talk to each other about a wide range of topics.

Based on these, these meaningful repeated neighbourly interactions contributed to the high level of familiarity among the participants, formed bonds and built up strong neighbourly ties in the neighbourhood, all of which consequently established strong neighbourhood-based social networks in the resettlement-housing neighbourhood.

### Public institution neighbourhood

The public institution neighbourhood appeared to have strong neighbourly ties and good neighbourly relationships. These findings come as no surprise because the majority of the residents had been working and living in this neighbourhood for over 20 years. The work unit compound seemed like a small urban community where residents met and frequently interacted in the workplace as well as in their residences in their daily lives. Five of the six participants stated that they were quite familiar with their neighbours because they had work-unit-based social ties. As will be shown below, many participants said they greeted their neighbours and chatted with them frequently in the open area of the neighbourhood. Topics of conversation mainly revolved around what was happening in their daily lives, as well as work issues. Participants also frequently shared information and exchanged ideas in their daily lives. Among the common interactions mentioned by participants were neighbourly interactions such as hanging out, having dinner, exercising and travelling together.

A good example comes from Participant C1, a male participant with a 25-year residence who had intensive neighbourly interactions with his neighbours. This suggests that he had good neighbourly relationships and was willing to spend spare time with his neighbours. He said:

I know most neighbours because most of them are my colleagues, so I know their family backgrounds. Regarding interactions, I like playing mah-jong with close neighbours in my spare time. Also, I often invite them over to have dinner in my home or restaurants. One of my best friends is my colleague. We live in the same block and spend a lot of our spare time together.

Another example comes from Participant C4, a 53-year-old male participant who mentioned that his 15-year residence promoted a sense of familiarity with his neighbours. This suggests that the long-term residence helps neighbours get to know each other. He stated:

I know my neighbours quite well because they are also my colleagues. I have lived in this neighbourhood for over 15 years, so I am familiar with most of my neighbours and their family members. I also know their family backgrounds. We chat and greet each other when I see them in the neighbourhood. I always hang out with close neighbours, and we have dinner together.

A similar example was given by Participant C6, a 48-year-old female participant who highlighted having a variety of meaningful interactions with her neighbours. This suggests that she enjoyed spending time with neighbours. She said:



I know the majority of my neighbours. We are quite familiar with each other, so I know their family backgrounds and some personal information. I hang out with my neighbours and their family members, and we have dinner together. We've developed a friendship through our work. We spend time together doing things such as shopping, yoga or travelling. We've been to some small towns on vacation.

Conversely, this study found that renters had fewer interactions with neighbours due to a sense of unfamiliarity and consequently weak neighbourly ties. An example comes from Participant C3, a 47-year-old female participant who reported that although she could facially recognise some of her neighbours, she did not interact with them. This suggests that residents who are not employees are unfamiliar with other residents and inclined to have less intensive neighbourly interactions with them. She stated:

I temporarily live in this neighbourhood. I rent a flat here. I only can recognise some neighbours' faces, but I am not familiar with them. So I do not chat with them.

Combining all together, the long-term residence and various interactions reported in the neighbourhood enhanced opportunities to forge social contacts, which in turn increased familiarity among the majority of participants, building a strong neighbourhood-based social network in the public institution neighbourhood.

#### Old commercial-housing neighbourhood

The findings of the old commercial-housing neighbourhood are quite different from the two work unit neighbourhoods and the resettlement-housing neighbourhood. Most participants in this neighbourhood had relatively weak neighbourly ties and neighbourly relationships. Three of the five participants reported that they could recognise a small number of neighbours who lived next door or in the same block because of repeated routines in the neighbourhood. They often acknowledged each other by simply nodding their heads or giving simple greetings. As will be shown below, the participants explained that they were unfamiliar with each other and the act of nodding at somebody or giving a quick greeting was done out of politeness. They did not know their neighbours' names or backgrounds. Although some participants had a relatively long-term residence, they had not built intimate neighbourly relationships with their neighbours. A possible cause is that the PMC had never organised neighbourhood activities in this neighbourhood, so participants had not had opportunities to get to know their neighbours.

A good example is that even after living in her neighbourhood for seven years, Participant D1, a 52-year-old female participant, knew only a limited number of people in the neighbourhood and had superficial interactions with her neighbours. She said:

I don't know any of the neighbours. I can recognise a small number of neighbours who live in the same block or on same floor, but I do not know their names. I greet them sometimes.

Another interesting example is Participant D3, whom I met in the office of the PMC while he was chatting with a member of staff there. From his quote below, it appears that he had weak neighbourly ties even though he had lived there 16 years, the longest residence among all the participants in this neighbourhood. Notably, he had superficial interactions with some neighbours, but they did not have other meaningful interactions. This suggests that superficial interactions may not contribute to meaningful interactions sometimes. He commented:

I know some neighbours who live in the same block. I always greet them when we meet in the neighbourhood, but we do not have other interactions. We do not know each other well so we cannot find a topic to talk about.

However, this study found that some participants with children were more likely to have neighbourly interactions and build neighbourly ties in the neighbourhoods. An example comes from Participant D4, a 36-year-old female participant with two young children, who stated that she was familiar with some neighbours who also had children. She explained that she made friends with those neighbours because their children played together. This suggests that having children increases the chances of interacting with neighbours and consequently building neighbourly ties. She said:

I know some neighbours because my child always plays outside with the neighbours' children. So I do have opportunities to get to know and to talk to my neighbours. Our topic is always around the children. I hang out with my neighbours, whose children are my daughter's friends, to have dinner on the weekends.

As a result, although most participants could facially recognise some of their neighbours and had superficial interactions, they lacked more meaningful repeated interactions, and therefore developed weak neighbourhood-based social networks in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood.

### New commercial-housing neighbourhood

The participants in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood had intensive neighbourly interactions, which contributed to relatively strong neighbourly ties. All the participants reported that they knew some neighbours who lived on the same floor or in the same block. As will be shown below, some participants mentioned that although some neighbours had never spoken to them, they could recognise them by sight. All the participants indicated that they had neighbourly interactions in the neighbourhood. These interactions consisted of nodding to acquaintances, having dinner together, participating in neighbourhood activities, exercising (playing table tennis and jogging) and dining together. This study found that the presence of children increased neighbourly interactions and promoted familiarity with neighbours.

A good example comes from Participant E3, a 30-year-old male participant who had a young daughter, who mentioned that he made friends with his neighbours and was invited to his neighbours' homes to have dinner together. This suggests that having children promoted opportunities to have neighbourly interactions, which contributed to neighbourly ties. He stated:

I know my neighbours who live on the same floor as me. I know them by name and background. I sometimes get invited to my neighbours' homes. We have dinner together because our children are friends. Our children always play together, so we've become friends as well.

Another example comes from Participant E7, a 58-year-old female participant. In her quote below, she highlighted that she would 'practice dancing' with some neighbours 'every day'. This suggests that this participant had frequently neighbourly interactions. She said:

I know my neighbours who live on the same floor or in the same block as me. I greet them when we encounter each other in the neighbourhood. I love dancing so I participate in the square-dancing event every night after dinner. I am familiar with some neighbours who are also interested in dancing. We practice dancing together every day.

Participant E4, a 58-year-old male participant, described having neighbourly interactions. Notably, he showed in his quote below that he knew and made friends with some neighbours through participating in neighbourhood activities. He stated:

I am familiar with some neighbours who live on the same floor as me. I know their names and occupations. I greet them when I meet them in the block. When we'd just moved into this neighbourhood, I participated in a day tour, which was organised by the PMC. We went to a small town with lots of historical heritage. It was very interesting, and I had a relaxing day. I knew some neighbours and made friends through taking part in this day tour.

The responses of the participants suggest that a wide range of neighbourly interactions helped to establish neighbourly ties in this newly built neighbourhood and consequently built a relatively strong neighbourhood-based social network in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood.

### 7.2.1.1 Summary and discussion

This section summarises and discusses the findings from the five urban neighbourhoods in Chengdu. In general, this study has revealed that strong neighbourhood-based social networks and intensive interactions were found in the SOE neighbourhood, resettlement-housing neighbourhood and public institution neighbourhood. By contrast, it found that weak neighbourhood-based social networks and superficial interactions existed in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood. It was surprising to find that the new commercial-housing neighbourhood had relatively strong neighbourhood-based social networks owing to intensive neighbourly interactions. All of this is depicted below in Tables 7.1 and 7.2.

**Table 7.1 Neighbourhood-based social networks in the five neighbourhoods**

Neighbourhood-based social networks	SOE neighbourhood	Resettlement-housing neighbourhood	Public institution neighbourhood	Old commercial-housing neighbourhood	New commercial-housing neighbourhood
<b>Neighbourly ties</b>	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak	Relatively strong
	<b>Reasons</b> Intensive neighbourly interactions	<b>Reasons</b> Intensive neighbourly interactions	<b>Reasons</b> Intensive neighbourly interactions	<b>Reasons</b> Superficial neighbourly interactions	<b>Reasons</b> Intensive neighbourly interactions
	Work-unit-based social ties	Long-term residence	Work-unit-based social ties	The presence of children	The presence of children
	Long-term residence		Long-term residence		

Source: Author's creation (2021)

**Table 7.2 Neighbourly interactions in the five neighbourhoods**

Neighbourly interactions	SOE neighbourhood	Resettlement-housing neighbourhood	Public institution neighbourhood	Old commercial-housing neighbourhood	New commercial-housing neighbourhood
Head-nodding	•	•	•	•	•
Greeting and chatting	•	•	•	•	•
Leisure activities in the neighbourhood	•	•	•		•
Hanging out	•	•	•		•

Source: Author’s creation (2021)

Participants in the two work unit neighbourhoods had strong neighbourly ties; they were colleagues who had been working together and living in the same neighbourhood for a long time. According to participants, the majority of participants in the SOE neighbourhood had been living in the neighbourhood for over 30 years. Many participants had been living in the public institution neighbourhood for over 20 years. These dual identities as colleagues and neighbours, as well as long duration of residence, helped them develop a sense of familiarity with their neighbours and build strong neighbourly ties in the neighbourhood (see Participant A3). These findings are consistent with the literature, which suggests that the long-term residence enables residents to be very familiar with a place (Tuan, 1977), which in turn helps generate strong sentiment (Wu and Logan, 2016).

Participants of two work unit neighbourhoods had various intensive neighbourly interactions (Table 7.2). For example, in the SOE neighbourhood, the participants highlighted greeting and chatting with each other, as well as a variety of self-organised activities such as going shopping, going to the park, playing mah-jong and playing croquet (see Participant A4, for example). In the public institution neighbourhood, in addition to common interactions such as greeting neighbours, the participants described a lot of meaningful neighbourly interactions such as hanging out, having dinner, exercising and travelling together (see Participants C1, C4 and C6). These all suggest that participants enjoyed spending time together. These findings are consistent with the literature which states that neighbourly interactions help establish social relations in the neighbourhood and cultivate emotional attachment (Moore and Graefe, 1994; Williams and Vaske, 2002). Therefore, not only were neighbourly ties formed during working hours, but they were also rooted in the participants’ daily lives. Along with the long-term residence and intensive neighbourly interactions,

participants of two work unit neighbourhoods had strong neighbourly relationships and had consequently formed a strong neighbourhood-based social network.

The other neighbourhood with strong neighbourly ties was the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, where participants were familiar with their neighbours due to the long-term residence (see Participant B5). According to the participants, they had intensive neighbourly interactions. Chatting was the dominant form of neighbourly interaction (see Participants B1, B2 and B5). This finding resonates with Dekker's (2007) research, which argues that talking with neighbours is good neighbourly behaviour that can improve social ties in the neighbourhood. Additionally, Lawson and Kearns (2017) point out that conversations can break down barriers and build neighbourhood attachment. The variety of meaningful, repeated interactions highlighted by participants included engaging in neighbourhood meetings, playing mah-jong and festival celebrations (see Participant B2, for instance). The participants enjoyed having conversations outdoors and felt happy spending time together. Thus, the participants became familiar with other neighbours through chatting, attending meetings and greeting each other. These meaningful repeated neighbourly interactions facilitated high levels of familiarity, formed bonds and developed strong neighbourly ties. Therefore, the resettlement-housing neighbourhood had strong neighbourhood-based social networks.

Surprisingly, this study found that strong neighbourly ties existed in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood despite its participants having short periods of residence. In contrast to Zhu *et al.* (2012), who argue that neighbourly interactions are superficial in commercial neighbourhoods in Guangzhou, this study has found that residents had meaningful interactions in a new commercial-housing neighbourhood in Chengdu. According to the participants, neighbourly interactions consisted of greetings, chatting, having dinner together and participating in neighbourhood activities (see Participants E4 and E7). Through intensive neighbourly interactions, some participants gained opportunities to get to know their neighbours and became familiar with them, making friends in the neighbourhood (e.g., Participant E3). Therefore, intensive neighbourly interactions generated strong neighbourly ties in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood and contributed to strong neighbourhood-based social networks.

Conversely, participants in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood appeared to have weak neighbourly ties and neighbourly relationships because of the superficial neighbourly interactions and unfamiliarity among participants. Although the old commercial-housing neighbourhood had a PMC, it had never organised activities. The participants did not get chances to know and interact with their neighbours. The literature shows that participants in commercial-housing neighbourhoods prefer to avoid interactions with neighbours because of the pursuit of privacy (Zhu *et al.*, 2012). This study has found that the participants in this particular commercial-housing neighbourhood lacked opportunities to have neighbourly interactions. Therefore, weak neighbourly ties and superficial neighbourly interactions resulted in weak neighbourhood-based social networks in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood.

In Putnam's social capital theory (1995, 2000), social networks are interconnected groups of associations of people and organisations, which consist of many social ties. This subsection highlights the factors that influence the formation of social networks. The dual identities in the SOE neighbourhood contribute to generating the formal and informal aspects of social networks, which make up daily social interactions (Austin and Baba, 1990; Robertson *et al.*, 2008; Rademacher and Wang, 2014). This study has also found that participants in the SOE neighbourhood, the two work unit neighbourhoods and the resettlement-housing neighbourhood had a long-term residence, which contributed to familiarity with neighbours and strong neighbourly ties. This finding is supported by the literature, which notes that the long-term residence promotes strong social capital, close relationships and familiarity in the neighbourhood (Livingston *et al.*, 2010; Clark *et al.*, 2017; Li *et al.*, 2017).

In addition, children were seen as important for social interactions. In the two commercial-housing neighbourhoods, some participants mentioned that they met and got to know their neighbours through their children. In the same vein, the literature shows that families with children are more likely to take children out, use neighbourhood facilities and interact with other residents (Mesch and Manor, 1998; Henning and Lieberg, 1996; Dekker, 2007; Anton and Lawrence, 2014). It can be seen then that both the long-term residence and presence of children promote neighbourly ties and neighbourly interactions. In view of the above, it can be concluded that, among the five neighbourhoods in Chengdu, this thesis found that the interplay between neighbourly ties and neighbourly interactions contributed to strong neighbourhood-based social networks.

## 7.2.2 Mutual trust and sense of safety

Mutual trust and a sense of safety are interrelated. As is suggested in the literature, having mutual trust and a sense of safety are important for the creation of a sense of attachment. As Putnam (2000) states, a high level of mutual trust among residents might improve informal social control mechanisms. In contrast, a lack of sense of safety and mutual trust may weaken neighbourly ties, preventing residents from sharing information and therefore negatively influencing neighbourhood attachment (Forrest and Kearns, 2001). To explore mutual trust and the sense of safety, as well as factors affecting them in Chinese neighbourhoods, certain questions were asked in the interviews, such as: ‘Would you say that you trust most of the people in the neighbourhood? Why?’; ‘Can you give me some description of the feeling?’; ‘Do you feel safe living in your neighbourhood?’; ‘Can you give me some reasons that why you generate a sense of safety to your neighbourhood?’; and ‘Can you provide me some reasons why you do not have a sense of safety?’ (see Appendix 3). The following subsections will present the participants’ responses to these questions, followed by an analysis of the data.

### SOE neighbourhood

In the SOE neighbourhood, six of the seven participants commented that they trusted most of their neighbours. As will be shown in this section, the sense of trust was mainly generated from strong neighbourly ties and the long-term residence in the SOE neighbourhood. Answers such as ‘my neighbours are also my colleagues, so I trust my neighbours’ were given by almost all the participants. This suggests that the mutual trust generated from social ties during working hours extended to daily life in the neighbourhood. The long-term residence was another reason reported by participants. This study found that the range of the length of residence was from 20 to 30 years among seven participants. This suggests that having mutual trust among participants was associated with the long-term residence.

An example comes from Participant A2, an 82-year-old male participant who highlighted his ‘20-year residence’ in his quote below. This suggests that long term residence helped generate familiarity among residents and consequently contributed to the sense of mutual trust. He stated:



We have been living together for over 20 years, so we are familiar with each other. So I trust my neighbours.

Notably, one participant distrusted a small number of neighbours who were renters because she believed the renters behaved badly. An example from Participant A3 illustrated that renters were 'littering in the open area'. This suggests that environmental damage goes against public morality and can potentially destroy mutual trust between residents. She reported:

I trust most of my neighbours, but I do not trust some neighbours who are renters. I saw some of them engage in bad behaviour, such as littering in the open area.

Turning to the sense of safety, four of the seven participants stated that they believed they lived in a safe neighbourhood. They perceived a sense of safety owing to their sense of familiarity with their neighbours. However, three participants perceived feelings of unsafeness in the neighbourhood because of criminal behaviour and encounter with outside intruders. Strangers getting in and out freely made some participants feel unsafe in the neighbourhood. Furthermore, when starting my fieldwork, I was surprised that although this neighbourhood had a doorman sitting at the entrance, strangers were able to enter the neighbourhood without permission. Such interview moments may reflect a sense of safety as a situated practice that is relationally constituted. Because of this, some participants encountered strangers in their neighbourhoods. More seriously, a participant reported that salesmen even sold products door to door.

An example of feelings of unsafeness was presented by Participant A3, a retired doctor. She explained in the quote below that having an unprofessional concierge and criminal behaviour resulted in a lack of safety. She stated:

I think my neighbourhood is not safe because the concierge is not professional. He has not received any professional training. Strangers get in and out of our neighbourhood freely. I heard that my neighbours' flat was burgled while they were sleeping at night. So I feel unsafe in the neighbourhood.

Another example from Participant A6 shows that she perceived feelings of unsafety in the neighbourhood due to encountering outside intruders. She said:

I think my neighbourhood is not safe because people can get in and out of our neighbourhood freely. Salesmen sell their products door to door.

Conversely, the majority of participants demonstrated that they perceived a sense of safety. An example of feelings of safety was provided by Participant A1, who commented that familiarity with neighbours contributed to his sense of safety in this neighbourhood. He stated:

My neighbourhood is safe because I am familiar with my neighbours.

Taken together, it can be concluded that the majority of participants from the SOE neighbourhood had mutual trust and perceived a sense of safety. However, the lax security system and criminal behaviour undermined the feelings of safety for some participants.

### Resettlement-housing neighbourhood

In the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, all the participants trusted the majority of their fellow residents. As will be shown below, the long-term residence and high levels of familiarity were the dominant reasons for the participants' narratives. Two of the six participants reported that they did not trust a small number of neighbours who were renters. The reason was reported by participants as being that they had limited interactions with the renters, which led to unfamiliarity with them, consequently causing a sense of distrust. Interestingly, I noted that Participant B2 had obtained the trust of the other participants despite the fact that he was a renter. During the interview, this study observed that he was quite familiar with the other residents. These facts all suggest that a sense of mutual trust is positively associated with levels of familiarity in this neighbourhood.

A particularly good example of mutual trust is the case of Participant B2, who revealed that his spare keys were kept by one of his neighbours. This can be seen as evidence of how much he trusts his neighbours. As B2 insisted:

I trust my neighbours. I see them as my family members. I even left a spare key with my neighbour who is an elderly lady next door in case I lock myself out; that's how much I trust her.

This example from Participant B4 illustrates that the long-term residence contributed to mutual trust. Participant B4 further reported that he did not trust renters due to his having had fewer interactions with them, which has led to suspicion. He said:

I trust some neighbours who have been living in the neighbourhood for a long time. I do not trust the renters because I am not familiar with them.

With regard to a sense of safety, all the participants indicated that they perceived a sense of safety in the resettlement-housing neighbourhood. An answer of 'my neighbourhood is very safe' was given by many participants. The participants were familiar with their neighbours, which helped them easily identify strangers in the neighbourhood. As will be shown below, participants had a sense of ownership, which motivated them to protect their neighbourhood.

An example from Participant B2 illustrates that many residents were strongly motivated to protect their neighbourhood and kept an eye out, which contributed to neighbourhood security and consequently promoted a sense of safety. He stated:

My neighbourhood is safe. If a stranger comes to our neighbourhood, residents will ask strangers why there are here.

Another example comes from Participant B1, a 73-year-old female participant who considered herself to perceive a sense of safety because criminal activities had never taken place in this neighbourhood. She reported:

I feel my neighbourhood is a safe place. As far as I aware, burglary never occurs in my neighbourhood.

As a result, all the participants in the resettlement-housing neighbourhood had a sense of mutual trust owing to the long-term residence and high levels of familiarity. Participants also perceived a sense of safety.

#### Public institution neighbourhood

In the public institution neighbourhood, four of the five participants expressed that they trusted their neighbours, especially those neighbours who were their colleagues. As will be shown below, the key contributor to the sense of mutual trust was strong social ties in the public institution, which extended into this neighbourhood and transferred to strong neighbourly ties. Additionally, the long-term residence and neighbourly interactions were also mentioned in the participants' narratives.

A particularly good example of mutual trust is the case of Participant C6, who revealed that she had asked for help from neighbours to pick her daughter up from school. This action can be seen as evidence of how much she trusts her neighbours. As C6 insisted:

I trust my neighbours. The majority of residents are my colleagues, so we are quite familiar with each other. The high level of familiarity fosters a high level of mutual trust in the neighbourhood. My neighbours helped me pick up my daughter from school when I was busy. If I did not trust my neighbour, I would not do this.

Conversely, one participant expressed a sense of distrust towards some renters due to a lack of familiarity. An example from Participant C5 illustrates a sense of distrust towards renters. He explained that he lacked a sense of trust toward renters due to the fact that he 'do[es] not know them'. This suggests that a lack of familiarity led to a sense of distrust. He said:

I trust my neighbours who are my colleagues, but I do not trust renters. I do not know them.

With regard to the sense of safety, four of the six participants in the public institution neighbourhood perceived it as a safe neighbourhood. During my conversations with the participants, I found that the sense of safety was linked to high levels of familiarity with neighbours and strong neighbourly ties. According to participants, they believed that owing to strong neighbourly ties and neighbourly relationships, they could call for help when they had trouble, which provided them with a sense of safety. In addition, due to the high level of familiarity, participants could identify strangers in the neighbourhood and pay attention to their behaviours, consequently promoting residents' sense of safety.

An example of feelings of safety was provided by Participant C6, who considered her neighbourhood to have a high level of familiarity among neighbours, which helped residents easily identify strangers and consequently promoted a sense of safety. She stated:

I think my neighbourhood is safe. The majority of my neighbours are my colleagues, so I am quite familiar with them. In this situation, if a stranger comes into my neighbourhood, we can recognise them instantly and pay attention to the stranger's behaviour.

However, two participants perceived a sense of unsafeness because criminal behaviour had occurred in the public institution neighbourhood. For example, a quote from Participant C2

illustrates that burglaries had happened in the neighbourhood, which resulted in a feeling of unsafeness in the neighbourhood. She said:

My neighbourhood is not safe. Burglaries have occurred many times in our neighbourhood. We do not have anti-theft windows, so I need to check whether the door and windows are closed before I go to sleep. A few years ago, I heard someone yelling 'Catch the thief! Catch the thief!' around midnight. I was quite scared. So I feel my neighbourhood is not safe.

Another example was provided by Participant C4, a 53-year-old male participant. He felt unsafe because his electric scooter had been stolen. This suggests that criminal behaviour directly undermined the sense of safety. He said:

I think my neighbourhood is not safe. My electric scooter was stolen in the neighbourhood. At that time, I called the police, but the thief has not been found and caught.

Taken together, the majority of participants in the public institution neighbourhood had a sense of mutual trust and a sense of safety, but some participants perceived unsafe feelings because of criminal behaviour.

#### Old commercial-housing neighbourhood

In the old commercial-housing neighbourhood, three of the five participants reported a sense of distrust towards their neighbours. During the interviews, it was found that the major reason for this sense of distrust was a lack of familiarity with their neighbours. According to the participants, given their different social backgrounds, limited interactions and unfamiliarity, participants tended to withdraw from collective life and become distrustful of their neighbours. However, two participants reported that they trusted some neighbours.

An example from Participant D4 shows that she considered herself to trust some neighbours due to having had interactions with them. This suggests that neighbourly interactions play an important role in fostering a sense of familiarity that consequently results in a sense of mutual trust. She said:

I trust my neighbours. I bring my children out and have fun in the open area of the neighbourhood every day. I always chat with my neighbours while the kids play together. We become familiar through this chatting. This familiarity improves my sense of mutual trust for my neighbours.

However, another example of a sense of distrust was provided by Participant D5, a 51-year-old male resident, who stated:

I do not trust my neighbours because I am not familiar with them.

With regard to a sense of safety, four of the five participants perceived a sense of safety in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood. According to the participants, good neighbourhood security promoted feelings of safety in the neighbourhood. Strangers were not able to enter without permission, which reduced the fear of crime. I observed that a CCTV system had been installed in the open area of the neighbourhood and was in operation 24 hours to prevent criminal behaviour.

An example of feelings of safety was provided by Participant D2, a 28-year-old female participant who used the words 'very safe' to describe her feelings about the neighbourhood. This suggests that strong security contributes to feeling very safe in the neighbourhood. She stated:

My neighbourhood is very safe because we have strong security. If people want to access the neighbourhood, they need to use a door card to open it.

Another similar piece of evidence was provided by Participant D3, a female participant with two children. She said:

I think the neighbourhood security is good. The PMC has installed a 24-hour monitored CCTV system, which aims to deter criminal behaviours and protect personal and property safety. Furthermore, we have some security guards who patrol and inspect the property against fire, theft and anti-social behaviour.

Therefore, in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood, although the majority of participants had a sense of distrust towards their fellow residents because of limited neighbourly interaction and a sense of unfamiliarity, they perceived a sense of safety due to good security.

#### New commercial-housing neighbourhood

In the new commercial-housing neighbourhood, four of the seven participants reported that they perceived a sense of mutual trust. According to participants, the sense of mutual trust

was associated with neighbourly interactions and the belief in a shared identity. Based on the participants' narratives, they trusted their neighbours because they believed that as an upscale residential district, the residents were middle-class with good economic standing and shared values, meaning they would have high moral standards. Neighbourly interactions were another factor which contributed to the sense of mutual trust. Three of the seven participants stated that they could not answer this question.

A good example comes from Participant E2, who stated that neighbourly interactions contributed to her sense of mutual trust. She said:

I trust my neighbours. I talk to some neighbours when I meet them in the block and in the neighbourhood. I can get some basic information about my neighbours through this small talk. I also observe my neighbours' behaviour in the public area of the neighbourhood. For instance, I have observed that some neighbours always help others in terms of holding the door or lifting heavy parcels. These behaviours give me good impressions of my neighbours. That is why I have a sense of trust.

Another example of feelings of safety comes from Participant E3, a 30-year-old male homeowner who had also lived in the neighbourhood for five years. He said:

I think my neighbours have high moral standards just like myself, so I trust them. I am a good guy, so I trust they are also good people.

Turning to a sense of safety, all the participants of the new commercial-housing neighbourhood reported that they perceived a sense of safety. According to the participants, a strong security system was the key contributor to their sense of safety. As in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood, a CCTV system was installed in the public area of the neighbourhood to prevent criminal behaviour. Residents needed to use security cards at the main door to gain access to the neighbourhood as well as to access doors to individual blocks. Based on my observations, it was observed that the staff and managers of the PMC patrol the open area many times a day. Although there were approximately 300 households in this neighbourhood, the security officers knew almost all the residents. Strangers were prohibited from accessing the neighbourhood without permission. This strong security system was positively related to the sense of safety.

An example comes from Participant E1, a 29-year-old female designer who used 'very safe' and 'good security' to describe her neighbourhood. She said:

I feel very safe in my neighbourhood. My neighbourhood has good security. This neighbourhood has three gates. Each gate has a security guard. Strangers cannot access my neighbourhood.

Another example comes from Participant E7, a 58-year-old female who stated that criminal activities had never taken place in this neighbourhood, which illustrated she lived in a safe neighbourhood. She stated:

My neighbourhood is very safe because burglary and other criminal behaviour never occur in my neighbourhood.

Taken together, the majority of participants of the new commercial-housing neighbourhood had a sense of trust due to their belief in a shared identity and neighbourly interactions. They also perceived a sense of safety due to a strong security system.

#### 7.2.2.1 Summary and discussion

This section has discussed the extent to which residents have mutual trust and a sense of safety in five urban neighbourhoods and has offered possible explanations for these perceptions. Regarding mutual trust, this study has revealed that the majority of participants in the two work unit neighbourhoods, the resettlement-housing neighbourhood and the new commercial-housing neighbourhood had a sense of mutual trust, whilst the majority of participants in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood had a sense of distrust. With regard to a sense of safety, the findings revealed that the majority of participants from the five neighbourhoods perceived a sense of safety. However, the majority of participants in the two work unit neighbourhoods and resettlement-housing perceived emotional safety, whilst the majority of participants in two commercial-housing neighbourhoods perceived physical security. All of this is depicted below in Table 7.3.



**Table 7.3 Mutual trust and sense of safety in the five neighbourhoods**

	<b>SOE neighbourhood</b>	<b>Resettlement-housing neighbourhood</b>	<b>Public institution neighbourhood</b>	<b>Old commercial-neighbourhood</b>	<b>New commercial-neighbourhood</b>
<b>Mutual trust</b>	The majority of participants had a sense of mutual trust  <b>Reasons</b> Long-term residence  Strong neighbourly ties	The majority of participants had a sense of mutual trust  <b>Reasons</b> Long-term residence  Familiarity	The majority of participants had a sense of mutual trust  <b>Reasons</b> Strong neighbourly ties  Frequent interactions	The majority of participants had a sense of distrust  <b>Reasons</b> Unfamiliarity  Limited interactions	The majority of participants had a sense of mutual trust  <b>Reasons</b> Belief in a shared identity  Neighbourly interactions
<b>Sense of safety</b>	The majority of participants had emotional safety  <b>Reasons</b> Neighbourly ties  Familiarity	The majority of participants had emotional safety  <b>Reasons</b> Neighbourly ties	The majority of participants had emotional safety  <b>Reasons</b> A sense of ownership  Familiarity	The majority of participants had physical security  <b>Reasons</b> Good security	The majority of participants had physical security  <b>Reasons</b> Good security  Neighbourly interactions

Source: Author's creation (2019)

In the two work unit neighbourhoods and the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, the reasons given for the sense of mutual trust included the long-term residence, strong neighbourly ties, familiarity and frequent interactions (see Table 7.3). In the two work unit neighbourhoods, strong neighbourly ties resulted from the dual identities of colleagues and neighbours, which helped promote a sense of familiarity and neighbourly interactions among neighbours and consequently facilitated a sense of mutual trust (see Participant C6, for instance). Similarly, in the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, the long-term residence facilitated a sense of familiarity which played an important role in developing a sense of mutual trust (see Participants A2 and C6). By contrast, in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood, a sense of unfamiliarity resulted in a lack of mutual trust (see Participant D5, for instance). These findings are supported by Marschall (2004), who argues that robust local ties increase mutual trust, and Livingston *et al.* (2008), who emphasise that familiarity is an important component to build up a sense of trust between people and thereby contribute to emotional attachment.

This study found that four participants from the two work unit neighbourhoods and a resettlement-housing neighbourhood reported a lack of trust toward renters (see Participant A3). They reported that they did not trust renters because they behaved badly, such as by littering in the open spaces. This suggests that bad behaviours go against public morality and

can potentially hinder mutual trust between residents. In addition, a sense of unfamiliarity with renters was cited (see Participant C5). However, an example from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood (see Participant B2) showed that a long-staying renter was trusted by neighbours due to familiarity. This suggests that familiarity generated by the long-term residence of renters may offset the negative effects of bad behaviours on the sense of mutual trust.

Surprisingly, the majority of participants in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood trusted their neighbours. Unlike in the other types of neighbourhoods, the reasons consisted of a belief in a shared identity and neighbourly interactions. Participants explained that they trusted their neighbours because they believed that their neighbours with a similar socio-economic status would have shared values and lifestyles (see Participant E3). The finding of 'a shared identity' suggests a new understanding of the sense of mutual trust, which has rarely been mentioned in the existing literature. This stress the importance of shared identity to mutual trust. By contrast, in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood, the majority of participants distrusted neighbours owing to a sense of unfamiliarity and limited interactions.

Undoubtedly, good security can improve the sense of safety by preventing the occurrence of crime and antisocial behaviour. Take the two commercial-housing neighbourhoods as an example; the participants highlighted that good security in their neighbourhoods was the key contributor to their sense of safety (see Participants D2, D3, E1 and E7). However, based on the literature, there are two types of senses of safety: physical security and emotional safety. Good security is associated with physical security, which promotes functional attachment rather than emotional attachment (Austin *et al.*, 2002; Mahmoudi Farahani, 2016).

Notably, the majority of participants in the two work unit neighbourhoods and the resettlement-housing neighbourhood perceived emotional safety, despite the absence of a strong security system. Instead, strong neighbourly ties and familiarity among neighbours promoted emotional safety in these neighbourhoods (see Participant A1 for instance). This finding is supported by existing research which highlights that good interpersonal relationship in the neighbourhood contribute to emotional safety, which improves emotional attachment to the neighbourhood (Ross and Jang, 2000; Livingston *et al.*, 2008; Scannell and Gifford, 2017). Additionally, because of the familiarity among participants and a sense of ownership, participants can easily identify strangers and pay attention to their behaviours,

which consequently promotes a sense of safety (see Participants B2 and C6). This finding has resonance with Mahmoudi Farahani (2016), who argues that residents with frequent neighbourly interactions are more likely to reduce crime through surveillance of neighbourhoods and looking out for strangers, which promotes emotional safety and neighbourhood attachment.

In Putnam's social capital theory, trust is produced in social networks and through norms of reciprocity, forming social capital (Dekker, 2006; Dekker *et al.*, 2010). The findings from the five neighbourhoods in Chengdu prove the importance of several factors to the formation of trust: the long-term residence, neighbourly ties, familiarity, interactions and belief in a shared identity. Concurrently, neighbourly ties, familiarity, a sense of ownership, good security and interactions promote a sense of safety. These results show that some common factors – namely neighbourly ties, familiarity and interactions – contribute to the formation of trust and a sense of safety.

## 7.3 Emotional attachment Part B

### 7.3.1 Sense of belonging

The sense of belonging is recognised as an important determinant which is directly associated with emotional attachment. According to Escalera-Reyes (2020, p.3), a sense of belonging can be considered 'the human emotional need to be an accepted member of a group to maintain close and safe ties that generate a sense of security, care and affection'. The literature highlights that if residents have a sense of belonging, it is more likely that they will have emotional attachment towards their neighbourhoods (Hernandez *et al.*, 2007; Antonsich, 2010). A study by Antonsich (2010) provides an analytical method to measure whether residents have a sense of belonging in their neighbourhood. Antonsich indicates that if residents perceive a feeling of being at home in their neighbourhood, they perceive a sense of belonging to it (Antonsich, 2010). Other scholars agree with this analytical method and confirm that a sense of belonging can be understood as a feeling of being at home in the neighbourhood (Cuba and Hummon, 1993; Wu *et al.*, 2011). Inspired by the existing research, to explore the sense of belonging in these five Chinese neighbourhoods, several questions were asked in the interviews, such as 'Do you perceive a sense of belonging?'; 'Do you think of this neighbourhood as home?'; and 'Can you give me some description for

about the feeling?’ (see Appendix 3). The following subsections will present the participants’ responses to these questions, followed by an analysis of the data.

### SOE neighbourhood

Four of the seven participants from the SOE neighbourhood indicated that they perceived a sense of belonging in the neighbourhood. Feelings of ‘being home’ were described by these participants. Some participants further described that they feel integrated into their neighbourhood. When they were asked to explain why they thought they had these feelings of being at home, the participants provided several reasons. This study found that the most common reason was the long-term residence, which helped cultivate affection and a sense of familiarity with the neighbourhood, which consequently generated a sense of belonging.

An example comes from Participant A2, who acknowledged that his feelings of belonging were associated with his long-term residence. He illustrated that the long-term residence helped generate a sense of familiarity towards the neighbourhood environment as well as neighbours, thereby fostering a feeling of ‘being home’. He said:

I think I feel a sense of belonging to my neighbourhood. I have been living in my neighbourhood about 30 years, so I am familiar with everything in my neighbourhood, including my neighbours and the environment. Each time when I walk into my neighbourhood, I feel I am arriving home.

Another good example was provided by Participant A5, a 75-year-old female participant who acknowledged that her long-term residence helped her generate warm sentiments for the neighbours and neighbourhood, thereby fostering a sense of belonging. She expressed feelings of happiness and comfort:

Definitely, I have a sense of belonging. I belong to my neighbourhood. My 30-year or so residence has helped me cultivate great affection for my neighbours as well as my neighbourhood. I feel happy and comfortable living in this neighbourhood.

Notably, three participants who were long-staying residents reported a weak sense of belonging. The reasons for this were associated with dissatisfaction with the poor physical environment, insufficient facilities and housing conditions in the SOE neighbourhood.

An example comes from Participant A3, who had lived in the neighbourhood for 30 years, but complained:

I do not like my neighbourhood. I do not have a sense of belonging because the neighbourhood environment and public facilities are not good. The housing condition is not good either. So I do not foster a sense of belonging to this neighbourhood. I have bought a flat in a commercial-housing neighbourhood. My family is going to move away.

Another participant reported dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood facilities. Participant A4, a 75-year-old female who had living in the neighbourhood for over 20 years, reflected:

To be honest, I do not have much feeling of belonging in my neighbourhood. The major reason is that I am not satisfied with the neighbourhood facilities. An imperfect neighbourhood does not feel like a home.

Combining these responses, the majority of participants in the SOE neighbourhood tended to have a sense of belonging due to the long-term residence. However, dissatisfaction with neighbourhood facilities certainly affects the sense of belonging.

#### Resettlement-housing neighbourhood

Five of the six participants from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood pointed out that they had a sense of belonging to this neighbourhood. Four participants used ‘a very strong sense of belonging’ to describe their feelings. They identified their neighbourhood as their home for several reasons. The leading reason was the long-term residence, which helped residents adapt and integrate to living in the neighbourhood. Additionally, the majority of participants reported that they had friendly neighbours and a harmonious neighbourhood, which made them feel safe and happy living in the neighbourhood, and consequently increased neighbourly integration and a sense of belonging. Participants described feeling accepted, secure and at home in this neighbourhood.

A good example comes from Participant B4, who acknowledged that a sense of belonging was associated with good neighbourly relationships, neighbourhood activities and neighbourly mutual help. In addition to expressing feelings of belonging to her neighbourhood, participant B4 highlighted that she felt ‘happy living in this neighbourhood’ due to the good neighbourly relationships and a sense of belonging. She said:

I think I feel a strong sense of belonging. I belong to this neighbourhood because I have a good neighbourly relationship with my neighbours. So I feel quite happy living in this neighbourhood. There are many neighbourhood activities that I can join, and the neighbours take care of each other. For these reasons, I feel at home in the neighbourhood.

Similarly, Participant B1 used 'very strong' to describe her feeling of belonging. She emphasised that her sense of belonging was attributable to a harmonious neighbourhood, good neighbourly relationships and the long-term residence. She stated:

I feel at home in my neighbourhood. I have been living in this neighbourhood for a long time. I have built good relationships with my neighbours. I also feel my neighbourhood is a harmonious one. Due to all these reasons, I feel a very strong sense of belonging.

Participant B7 acknowledged a strong sense of belonging with a harmonious atmosphere in the neighbourhood. She highlighted the importance of neighbourly mutual support and relationship, stating:

I would like to say I belong to my neighbourhood. I get on really well with my neighbours. My neighbours not only mutually help each other but also have good neighbourly relationships. We have created a harmonious atmosphere in the neighbourhood, which has helped me develop feelings of being at home in the neighbourhood.

Notably, one participant who had lived in the neighbourhood for a long time reported an ambivalent answer. Participant B3 said:

I think this neighbourhood is my home, but I do not have a sense of belonging. The 27-year residence makes me think: this neighbourhood is my home. However, my weak sense of belonging is due to dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood facilities.

Participant B3's view suggests that dissatisfaction with neighbourhood conditions may offset the positive effect of the length of residence on a resident's sense of belonging. Taken together, the majority of participants in the resettlement-housing neighbourhood had a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood.

#### Public institution neighbourhood

Five of the six participants from the public institution neighbourhood reported that they felt they belonged to the neighbourhood. As will be shown below, this study found that

participants who had grown up or lived in the neighbourhood for a long time tended to feel they belonged to their neighbourhood due to the fact that they were from the area and had social and personal links to it. Additionally, according to the participants' narratives, the convenience associated with the high accessibility of public services contributed to their sense of belonging.

A good example came from Participant C1, a 56-year-old participant who reported a strong sense of belonging due to his 25-year residence. He used the phrase 'inextricable part of my life' to describe how he felt about the neighbourhood. This suggests that the long-term residence plays an important role in developing a sense of belonging to a neighbourhood. He said:

I have a strong sense of belonging to my neighbourhood. I have been working and living in this neighbourhood for over 25 years. A great deal of good memories has taken place in the neighbourhood in the past 25 years. These good memories have helped me develop a sense of attachment to my neighbourhood. I think my neighbourhood has become an inextricable part of my life.

Participant C2, an 18-year-old participant who had grown up in this neighbourhood, reported feelings of belonging to her neighbourhood. She underscored her familiarity with the neighbourhood and the convenience provided by nearby facilities. She said:

I have a sense of belonging to my neighbourhood. I feel I belong to not only my neighbourhood but also the community. I am quite familiar with this area as well as my neighbourhood. I grew up in this neighbourhood, so I know where the good restaurants, teahouses and parks are. I enjoy living here. Every time I approach my neighbourhood, I have a feeling of coming home.

Another example comes from Participant C5, who acknowledged that his strong sense of belonging was attributed to the high accessibility of public services, which made life convenient. He said:

I think I have a sense of belonging. I consider my neighbourhood to be my home. The high accessibility of public service brings convenience.

On the other hand, an example of a weak sense of belonging was provided by Participant C3, a 47-year-old female renter who had been living in this neighbourhood for five years. She expressed that her weak sense of belonging was associated with the poor physical environment. She said:

I have a sense of belonging to my home. But I do not have it in the neighbourhood. I do not like this neighbourhood because the physical environment is not good. I live here temporarily because this neighbourhood is near my company so I can have a short commute from home to work. I plan to move to a fancier commercial-housing neighbourhood.

The above quotes show that the majority of participants from the public institution neighbourhood felt a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, ascribed to familiarity and the high accessibility of public services.

#### Old commercial-housing neighbourhood

Two of the five participants from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood expressed that they had a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood. As will be shown below, the reasons given to explain this sense of belonging were related to the long-term residence and convenience of public services in the local area. An example was provided by Participant C1, a 52-year-old female participant who acknowledged that her sense of belonging was related to her long-term residence and the high accessibility of public services. She stated:

I think I feel at home in the neighbourhood. This sense of belonging developed through my long-term residence. In addition to my long-term residence, my neighbourhood has a good location with quick access to public services. I feel a sense of convenience living in this neighbourhood. These reasons all increase my sense of belonging.

Another example comes from Participant C3, a 75-year-old male participant who had been living in the neighbourhood for 16 years. He expressed:

I have a feeling of being at home in the neighbourhood. I have been living in this neighbourhood for a long time, which helps me generate affection for my neighbourhood.

However, three participants indicated that while they regarded this neighbourhood as their home, they did not have a sense of belonging. In their cases, this weak sense of belonging was related to short-term residence and loneliness. An example of the absence of a sense of belonging comes from Participant D4, a 36-year-old female who had a half-year residence. She stated:

I regard this neighbourhood as my home because I bought a property here. Honestly, I do not have a sense of belonging so far because I have been living in this neighbourhood for a short time. I need time to get used to this neighbourhood.



Similarly, Participant D5, a 51-year-old participant with a seven-year residence, reported his weak sense of belonging was associated with a sense of isolation and loneliness. This suggests that weak neighbourhood-based social networks undermined his sense of belonging. He said:

I consider my flat my home, but not the neighbourhood. I do not have a sense of belonging because I live alone. I do not have any relatives or friends living in the same neighbourhood. I feel lonely sometimes. My home is just a place for sleeping.

The above quotes show that the majority of participants in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood had a weak sense of belonging. The reasons given to explain this weak sense of belonging was a short-term residence and weak neighbourhood-based social networks.

#### New commercial-housing neighbourhood

All the participants from the new commercial-housing neighbourhood expressed that they had a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood. Although all seven participants had relatively short residences, ranging from three to five years, a good physical environment and sufficient neighbourhood facilities and amenities contributed to their sense of belonging to the neighbourhood. This study found that the PMC provided comprehensive housekeeping services to residents, which helped to resolve problems, and consequently contributed to an easier and more comfortable life for residents. Given these reasons, the participants highlighted that their sense of belonging was associated with being with family members, neighbourhood-based social networks and a sense of familiarity.

An example comes from Participant E1, a 29-year-old designer who had a three-year residence. She acknowledged that her sense of belonging was associated with the good neighbourhood environment, good neighbourhood services and friendly neighbours. She had this to say:

I see my neighbourhood as my home. I have a sense of belonging because of the good environment of my neighbourhood and the good services from the PMC. The security guards are very friendly. They always say hello to me every day. My neighbours are friendly as well.

Participant E3, a male participant who had a five-year residence, expressed that being with family members and good neighbourhood services helped cultivate his sense of belonging. He stated:

I think I have a sense of belonging to my neighbourhood. This is my first flat since I and my wife got married, so it has special meaning to me. My wife and I have a lot of memories and happiness in this small flat, and consequently we have a strong sense of belonging to this small flat as well as this neighbourhood. Additionally, the PMC provides good services to us, which makes our life easier. These all promote my sense of belonging.

Similarly, Participant E2, a 55-year-old female with a five-year residence, indicated an increase in feelings of belonging over time. She acknowledged that familiarity and neighbourhood-based social networks contributed to her sense of belonging. She stated:

When I had just moved to this neighbourhood, I did not feel a sense of belonging. The absence of a feeling of belonging was due to my unfamiliarity with this neighbourhood and this area. But after a short time, I became familiar with this area and adapted to life in this neighbourhood, and then a sense of belonging was gradually formed. After I moved to this neighbourhood, I found that acquaintances who also lived in this neighbourhood, two colleagues and one old classmate. If you asked me now, I would like to say that I feel I belong to my neighbourhood.

The above quotes show that the majority of participants in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood had developed a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood. A good physical environment and sufficient neighbourhood facilities and amenities all benefit the formation of a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood.

#### 7.3.1.1 Summary and discussion

This section will analyse the sense of belonging across the five urban neighbourhoods. Many scholars tend to equate a sense of belonging with emotional attachment; in other words, if residents perceive a feeling of belonging, they will have emotional attachment (McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Antonsich, 2010). In this study, the empirical evidence shows that the majority of participants from the two work unit neighbourhoods, the resettlement-housing neighbourhood and the new commercial-housing neighbourhood had a sense of belonging. Participants identified their neighbourhood as a place where they felt comfortable and at home, which is strong evidence that participants felt they belonged to their neighbourhoods. This finding is consistent with the findings of Wu and Logan (2016), who indicate that

residents from a work unit neighbourhood have a strong sense of belonging. However, this study found that the majority of participants from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood had a weak sense of belonging. All of this is depicted below in Table 7.4.

**Table 7.4 Sense of belonging of the five neighbourhoods**

	<b>SOE neighbourhood</b>	<b>Resettlement-housing neighbourhood</b>	<b>Public institution neighbourhood</b>	<b>Old commercial-neighbourhood</b>	<b>New commercial-neighbourhood</b>
<b>Sense of Belonging</b>	The majority of participants had a sense of belonging	The majority of participants had a sense of belonging	The majority of participants had a sense of belonging	The majority of participants lacked a sense of belonging	The majority of participants had a sense of belonging
	<b>Reasons</b> Long-term residence	<b>Reasons</b> Long-term residence  Good neighbourly relationships  Harmonious atmosphere in the neighbourhood	<b>Reasons</b> Long-term residence  Grew up in the neighbourhood  High accessibility of public services	<b>Reasons</b> Short-term residence  Sense of isolation and loneliness	<b>Reasons</b> Good physical environment, sufficient facilities and services  Neighbourhood-based social networks

Source: Author's creation (2019)

In the two work unit neighbourhoods and the resettlement housing neighbourhood, the long-term residence was highlighted by the participants, which generated familiarity with neighbours as well as with neighbourhoods, consequently contributing to a sense of belonging (see Participants A2, A5, B1 and C1). This finding is consistent with the findings of existing studies that conclude that the sense of belonging is related to how long participants have lived in a neighbourhood (Bond *et al.*, 2013; Kitchen *et al.*, 2015). In addition to the long-term residence, participants from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood indicated that a sense of belonging was attributable to good neighbourly relationships and a harmonious atmosphere in the neighbourhood (see Participants B4 and B7). In the public institution neighbourhood, this research also found that participants who had grown up in the neighbourhood tended to have a sense of belonging (see Participant C2). This finding resonates with existing studies which indicate the same (Livingston *et al.*, 2010; Bond *et al.*, 2013).

Surprisingly, in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood, although the participants had a relatively short residence, they felt a sense of belonging. The findings show that a good physical environment, facilities and services contributed to developing a sense of belonging

(see Participants E1 and E3). This finding is supported by existing studies showing that a good living environment brings positive psychological effects to residents, making people feel satisfied and generating a sense of belonging (Kitchen *et al.*, 2015). Additionally, the finding is also consistent with the findings of Kitchen *et al.* (2015), who report that residents who are provided with quality services are more likely to experience a sense of belonging. It is worth mentioning that participants staying for a short time can also develop a sense of belonging. This finding is in line with those of Livingston (*et al.*, 2010), who finds that short-term residents can have a strong sense of belonging and attachment due to convenience and the rapid accessibility of public services. Similarly, the present study finds that good neighbourhood amenities can offset the negative effects of short-term residence on people's sense of belonging.

The majority of the participants in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood had a weak sense of belonging. This study found that short-term residence and a sense of loneliness and isolation led to a weak sense of belonging (see Participant D5). The previous chapter mentioned that many participants of the old commercial-housing neighbourhood were generally unfamiliar with each other, and participants were less likely to interact with their neighbours. In this situation, many participants did not bond with their neighbours and also did not build connections with the neighbourhood. Although a few participants identified their neighbourhood as their home, they did not feel they belonged to the neighbourhood (see Participant D4).

Notably, it emerged that the long-term residence may not necessarily generate a sense of belonging. Taking an example from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood, a long-term residence may only foster feelings of belonging to a specific flat rather than the neighbourhood. However, this study found that the combination of the length of residence and neighbourly ties can generate neighbourly interactions and create a sense of belonging. This resonates with Zhu *et al.* (2012), who indicate that neighbourly interactions foster a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood. Additionally, taking the example of the SOE neighbourhood, although some participants had a long-term residence, dissatisfaction with the residential environment, facilities and services greatly diminished their feelings of belonging. This suggests that the physical condition of the neighbourhood is associated with feelings of belonging. In view of the above, it can be concluded that the long-term residence, good neighbourly relationships and a good neighbourhood environment contribute to the

enhancement of a sense of belonging in neighbourhoods. Poor neighbourhood environment, facilities and services, and a lack of neighbourly ties undermine a sense of belonging.

### 7.3.2 Neighbourly mutual support

At the neighbourhood level, mutual support can be considered the exchange of social support between neighbours. As discussed in Chapter 2, it can be generally divided into two types: emotional support and practical support (Power and Willmot, 2007; Mahmoudi Farahani, 2016). Mutual support can increase neighbourly interactions and reduce residents' perception of danger in the neighbourhood, thereby enhancing neighbourhood attachment (Seifert and Konig, 2019). To examine the extent of mutual support within the five neighbourhoods, the participants were questions such as 'Do you receive help from your neighbours?'; 'Do you provide support to your neighbours?'; 'What types of support do you provide or receive from your neighbours? Please provide details'; and 'Can you give me some description of the feeling' (see Appendix 3). The following subsections will present the participants' responses to these questions, followed by an analysis of the data.

#### SOE neighbourhood

All the participants of the SOE neighbourhood indicated that they not only helped their neighbours in practical ways but also supported each other emotionally. The statement 'we have mutually supportive relationships' was said by five participants. The participants seemed to rely on neighbourly help because many of them were elderly residents who did not have any relatives living nearby. Regarding practical support, four participants mentioned that they helped neighbours by doing small things such as helping with household tasks, doing housing maintenance tasks, fetching neighbours' packages from the main gate of the neighbourhood and collecting pensions from their work units. With regards to emotional support, visiting sick neighbours and looking after sick or old neighbours was mentioned by three participants. This emotional support helped neighbours overcome the difficulties created by illness. The participants expressed that they felt happy helping each other.

Participant A1, an 80-year-old male participant who lived alone, gave an example of receiving help from his neighbours, especially when he was ill. He said:

I got assistance from my neighbours. As you can see, I am an old man and I do not have any close relatives who live in my neighbourhood or nearby. So my neighbours helped me to clean my flat and tidy my room when I was ill. Even now, they often help me deal with small tasks because they know I live alone.

Similarly, Participant A2, a male participant, pointed out that he received practical support from his neighbours. His remarks also showed that he trusted his neighbours. He stated:

In this neighbourhood, we take care of each other. When I was busy, my neighbours helped me collect my pension and welfare payments from our work unit on my behalf. I do not have any relatives who live in my neighbourhood. They are like my family members, always providing support.

Apart from receiving help from neighbours, some participants indicated that they provided support to neighbours when they needed it. Participant A3, a retired medical doctor, said:

Yes, I always help my neighbours. Because I am a retired doctor, my neighbours always consult me about their health problems. On one occasion, one of my neighbours was so sick and could barely walk. So I helped the neighbour buy some medicine.

A good example of emotional support was provided by Participant A4, a woman aged 75 years. She stressed that mutual support made them become intimate and interdependent friends. She said:

We are friends. We like helping each other. I visit familiar neighbours when they get sick. Many of us do not have any relatives living nearby. So I think we rely on each other to a certain degree. I also help some neighbours to buy some food when they are busy. I do not have any relatives who live in my neighbourhood.

The above quotes show that all the participants from the SOE neighbourhood mutually supported each other, and that they enjoyed providing support for each other.

#### Resettlement-housing neighbourhood

All the participants stated that they had experienced mutual support in their neighbourhood. They expressed that they were happy to help their neighbours because the majority of participants did not have relatives nearby to offer help and support. From this, it can be seen that neighbours had become an important source of help and support for one another. According to the participants' narratives, practical support was ubiquitous in the

neighbourhood, including keeping spare keys for each other, lending tools and looking after neighbours' children. This study also found emotional support in this neighbourhood.

An example comes from Participant B1, a 73-year-old lady who expressed her experiences providing help to her neighbours. She reflected that she felt happy helping neighbours. She said:

We enjoy helping each other out. I help one of my neighbours by keeping his spare door key. I also help my neighbours in other ways. I mean, it has always happened. I cannot remember everything. But I can tell you, we help each other a lot.

In a similar vein, Participant B5, a female participant, shared an experience of helping with childcare. She said:

I always help look after my neighbours' kids when they are away. I like children, so I offer this help. I do not receive any money. It is for free.

An example of receiving emotional support was given by Participant B2. He appreciated the emotional support in the forms of encouragement and comforting words he got from his neighbours, which helped him overcome an illness. He said:

I got sick leave when I was 40 years old. My neighbours did not judge me when they knew I was unemployed. They understood my hardships. When I was in the hospital, my neighbours visited me there. They bought me flowers and fruits, and encouraged me by using some comforting words, which gave me great hope and helped me overcome the illness.

The above quotes show that all the participants experienced mutual support in the resettlement-housing neighbourhood. The types of mutual support comprised both practical and emotional support.

#### Public institution neighbourhood

Five of the six participants in the public institution neighbourhood got and provided support. As mentioned previously, this neighbourhood is like a small community in that residents work at the same place and live in the same neighbourhood. Friendships and family-like relationships were formed in everyday life and due to the long-term residence, individual relationships became stronger with time. Not surprisingly, there was a great deal of mutual

support reported between participants. Both practical and emotional support were mentioned by participants during the interviews. With regard to giving practical support, lending tools, sharing rides, fixing computers and looking after neighbours' children were highlighted by five participants. Participants expressed that mutual support had become 'a habit' in their neighbourhood. Emotional support also existed in the neighbourhood. Visiting or looking after sick neighbours and comforting frustrated neighbours were frequently mentioned during interviews. Notably, another type of mutual support was mentioned by participants: providing leverage. This type of neighbourly support entails using personal social networks to help others. In this way, participants who have a wide social network and/or have a high socioeconomic status are more likely to provide social leverage to their neighbours.

A particularly good example comes from Participant C5, a 41-year-old man who described his experiences in providing practical support to his neighbours. Keeping keys was one of the practical forms of support. He said:

Most of my neighbours are my colleagues. We are quite familiar with each other, so we always help each other within our ability. I cannot remember everything, but we definitely help each other a lot. Sometimes it is just a small task, such as lending tools and sharing rides. I also help keep my neighbour's spare door keys. She does not stay in this neighbourhood often, so I help to keep her key in case I need to run over and check her property when she asks.

Participant C2, a woman aged 18 years, shared her experience of receiving help from neighbours. Expressing her appreciation for receiving support from neighbours, she said:

My neighbour took me to the hospital when I was ill and my mum was not at home. I remember she spent a half day with me in the hospital. She accompanied me to visit the doctor, get a B-ultrasound examination and take medicine, and she took me home. Another neighbour helped fix my laptop. It was an emergency, so my neighbour helped fix the laptop until midnight. I really appreciate their help.

Discussing emotional support, Participant C6, a 48-year-old female, expressed that she comforted frustrated neighbours. Since many of the neighbours were colleagues, a certain empathy helped her to provide appropriate emotional support. She said:

Many neighbours are my colleagues. As a research department, we are working under a lot of pressure. I always comfort some neighbours when they feel worried. If someone tells me that they feel stressed or have problems, I will invite them to have dinner. In addition to the comforting words, I also help analyse the situation and provide a couple of possible solutions.



Notably, an example of providing leverage comes from Participant C1, a 56-year-old male who stated that he used his personal network to help residents solve problems. He said:

We are colleagues. I like to try my best to help my neighbours when they get in trouble. I helped a neighbour's son enter a good primary school by using my personal social network. They have also helped me with things in this way.

Another example of leverage was highlighted by Participant C2, who said:

My neighbour's husband is a dentist. They are my neighbours as well as my mum's friends. He always helps to check my teeth without booking an appointment at the hospital. I even got orthodontic treatment for free.

Conversely, only one participant of the public institution neighbourhood reported that she had never received help or provided it to her neighbours. Further questioning found that she was willing to help neighbours, but she had not obtained opportunities to do so. Participant C3, a female participant who had rented a flat in this neighbourhood for five years, said:

At present, I am not experiencing any issues, but I might need help from my neighbours in the future. Who knows? I think everyone would like to have supportive neighbours. If my neighbours have a problem, I would like to help them.

The above quotes show that the majority of participants had mutual support within the neighbourhood. This neighbourly help consisted of emotional support, practical support and providing leverage.

#### Old commercial-housing neighbourhood

Three of the five participants reported that they had never received assistance from their neighbours or provided assistance to them. One participant mentioned that they had received practical support from neighbours, and others had provided help to his neighbour. This study found that emotional support did not exist in this neighbourhood. I continually asked these participants why they did not have mutual assistance in the neighbourhood. The participants revealed that asking for help from the PMC was the most preferable method in general.

An example comes from Participant D3, a 75-year-old man who described his experiences providing practical support to his neighbours. He said:

I lent tools to my neighbour, who lives next door.

Another example comes from Participant D4, a 36-year-old female participant who talked about her experiences receiving help from neighbours. One main form of support she received from her neighbours was picking up parcels for her. She stated:

My neighbours help me pick up parcels from the parcel locker when I am busy or away. This is because parcels can only be left in the locker for 24 hours. Overtime fees will be charged if it exceeds 24 hours. She usually helps me by taking the parcel out and leaving it in front of my door.

During the interviews, I observed that a steady stream of residents came to the office of the PMC. For instance, Participant D3 was looking for a dentist in the local area. The staff of the PMC provided him with a card with the relevant information for the dental clinic. Another example comes from Participant D2, a 28-year-old female participant who expressed that she had a willingness to support her neighbours. She said:

I do not receive and get help from my neighbours. I usually ask for help from the PMC when I need it. For example, on one occasion, I bought a decorative painting, and the PMC helped me drill a hole in the wall. Although so far, it has not happened, I think my neighbours are available to help me with small tasks, such as lending scissors or a battery. Furthermore, although I have not had any experience in providing help for my neighbours, I would like to help them within my ability if they ask me.

The above quotes show that the majority of participants did not have mutual support in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood. Practical support was mentioned by a handful of participants. This study observed that the majority of participants were more accustomed to asking for support from the PMC. Nevertheless, participants showed the willingness to help neighbours.

#### New commercial-housing neighbourhood

Five of the seven participants stated that they had received assistance from and/or provided support to neighbours. Although this neighbourhood has a list of full services provided by the PMC, participants were still helping each other in practical ways. This practical support consisted of lending chairs, carrying heavy parcels and providing advice. There was no evidence of emotional support. Participants said that they were not only willing to support their neighbours, but also felt happy doing it.

A good example comes from Participant E5, a 45-year-old woman who described her experience of receiving help from neighbours:

I get help from my neighbours. One day, I left my resident's card and door keys at home. My neighbour let me into the building and gave me a chair to sit in. She also gave me a bottle of water. I appreciated her help because I could sit in the corridor to wait for my husband rather than standing in the wind. I also have experience of helping my neighbours. I was glad to help them.

Similarly, another good example of practical support was given by Participant E7, a 58-year-old woman who stated that she had the experience of receiving help from her neighbours. She said:

We have mutual support in the neighbourhood. On one occasion, I bought two boxes of fruit. They were too heavy. My neighbour noticed I was barely able to carry them and asked if I needed assistance. After I said yes, he helped to carry these heavy parcels to my home. I was surprised to get this help and appreciated his help.

In addition to receiving help from neighbours, Participant E4 described his experience of providing useful information to his neighbours. He said:

I gave advice to a young couple who are my next-door neighbours. They wanted to buy a new vehicle and asked my opinion. I found that they bought Volkswagen, the one I recommended. I feel quite happy about this.

Two participants maintained that they had never given or received support in the neighbourhood. They explained that they have a good PMC, which provides comprehensive services. An example comes from Participant E1, a 29-year-old woman who said:

I do not receive help from my neighbours. I usually ask for help from the PMC when I need it. But I would like to help my neighbours if they ask for help.

The above quotes show that the majority of participants provided practical support to their neighbours. Although this neighbourhood had a PMC that provided full support, participants were supportive of one another. In addition to these quotes, I observed that many residents were friendly and easily helped neighbours. For example, I saw that many residents helped neighbours by holding the main door of the residential block to let their neighbours through first. This behaviour supports the idea that the majority of participants in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood helped one another in practical ways.

### 7.3.2.1 Summary and discussion

This section has analysed mutual support across the five urban neighbourhoods. Notably, in the two work unit neighbourhoods, the resettlement housing neighbourhood and the new commercial-housing neighbourhood, the majority of participants mutually supported each other while less than half of the participants experienced mutual support in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood. Notably, practical support was the most common form of mutual support across the five neighbourhoods. In particular, in the two work unit neighbourhoods, the resettlement-housing neighbourhood and the new commercial-housing neighbourhood, various forms of practical support occurred which facilitated neighbourly interactions. This practical support ranged from simple things such as lending tools and carrying parcels, to complex aspects that some involved intense trust, such as keeping neighbours' spare door keys. Others were indicative of strong neighbourly relationships, such as looking after neighbours' children and looking after sick neighbours (see Participants A1, B5, C5). All of this is depicted below in Table 7.5.

**Table 7.5 Mutual support in the five neighbourhoods**

	<b>SOE neighbourhood</b>	<b>Resettlement-housing neighbourhood</b>	<b>Public institution neighbourhood</b>	<b>Old commercial-housing neighbourhood</b>	<b>New commercial-housing neighbourhood</b>
<b>Mutual support</b>	The majority of participants mutually supported each other	The majority of participants mutually supported each other	The majority of participants mutually supported each other	Less than half of participants mutually supported each other	The majority of participants mutually supported each other
<b>Practical support</b>	<b>Aspects</b> Helping with household tasks  Helping with housing maintenance tasks  Fetching neighbours' packages  Collecting pensions  Looking after sick neighbours  Lending medicines	<b>Aspects</b> Keeping the spare door key  Looking after neighbours' children	<b>Aspects</b> Sharing rides  Keeping the spare door key  Lending tools  Fixing laptop  Looking after sick neighbours	<b>Aspects</b> Lending tools	<b>Aspects</b> Lifting heavy parcels  Giving advice  Lending tools
<b>Emotional support</b>	<b>Aspects</b> Visiting and comforting sick neighbours	<b>Aspects</b> Visiting and comforting sick neighbours	<b>Aspects</b> Comforting sick neighbours  Comforting frustrated neighbours		
<b>Other types</b>			Providing leverage  <b>Affairs</b> Helping neighbours by sharing personal social networks		

Source: Author's creation (2019)

With regard to emotional support, it existed in the two work unit neighbourhoods and the resettlement-housing neighbourhood. According to the participant narratives, many participants from these neighbourhoods visited and comforted sick neighbours, and also comforted frustrated neighbours (see Participants A3, A4, C6). This emotional support was more intense than the previously mentioned forms of practical support (Buonfino and Hilder, 2006), and it helped neighbours overcome the difficulties created by illness and other significant issues (see Participants B2 and C6). These findings are consistent with findings from existing research that claims that mutual support is established in neighbourly relationships (Seifert and Konig, 2019) and residents with strong local ties are more likely

to provide support to neighbours and generate emotional attachment (Zhu *et al.*, 2012). These findings suggest the idea that strong neighbourly ties contribute to mutual support in neighbourhoods.

Providing leverage was a unique form of neighbourly support that was only found in the public institution neighbourhood, where some participants helped their neighbours by sharing their personal social networks (see Participants C1 and C2). This finding implies that the majority of participants in the public institution neighbourhood tended to have wide-ranging individual social networks and high socioeconomic status, which could be used to help neighbours deal with difficult challenges. According to the quote given by Participant C1, he himself benefited by providing leverage to neighbours. It seems that providing leverage is like an investment for interpersonal relationships, with the idea that investors will receive help in return in the future. This was therefore a type of benefit exchange. This is consistent with the finding of Forrest and Kearns (2001), who claim that mutual support is important because it is not only an important source for general wellbeing but may build important bridges between social networks.

Although some participants from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood did not have experience of providing and/or receiving neighbourly support, they expressed that they were willing to give a hand when their neighbours needed it (see Participant D2). This study found that participants of the old commercial-housing neighbourhood were likely to use services provided by the PMC instead of seeking assistance from neighbours (see Participant D2). In this context, the PMC became an important organisation for residents who required help with solving problems and getting advice. This finding is consistent with the finding of Zhu *et al.* (2012), who state that the neighbourhood services provided by the PMC mitigate residents' dependence on local networks in China. However, this study found that although the new commercial-housing neighbourhood had a PMC which provided full services, most participants mutually supported each other. Combined with the findings in the preceding sections, it can be seen that the majority of participants in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood had strong neighbourhood-based social networks and mutual trust, which may facilitate mutual support among the residents.

Some studies indicate that mutual help is no longer needed in urban China because residents can solve most housing-related problems with money or with help from the PMC (Zhu *et al.*,

2012; Li *et al.*, 2018). Significantly, none of the participants from the five neighbourhoods claimed that in their dealings with their neighbours they had refused to receive or provide support. Instead, many participants indicated that they had experienced a sense of pride and a sense of satisfaction after helping others, while other participants showed a willingness to help neighbours even if they had not had an opportunity to do so yet. In view of the above, it can be concluded that mutual support existed in the five neighbourhoods, albeit in differing forms and degrees. Strong neighbourly ties and mutual trust promote mutual support and help develop emotional attachment.

## 7.4 Bringing it all together: emotional attachment in the five neighbourhoods

Based on the discussions above, there were various determinants of emotional attachment identified in the different neighbourhoods. Table 7.6 shows the final assessment.

As is shown in Table 7.6, in the SOE neighbourhood, the majority of participants had strong neighbourhood-based social networks, mutual trust, mutual support, emotional safety and a sense of belonging. This study found that the majority of participants had dual roles (as colleagues and neighbours) and the long-term residence, which significantly helped them build strong neighbourly ties and good neighbourly relationships, thereby generating intensive interactions. On this basis, the majority of participants generated mutual trust, mutual support and emotional safety, which fostered strong affection for the neighbourhood and gave participants a sense of belonging, consequently contributing to their emotional attachment. In view of this, it can be concluded that participants of the SOE neighbourhood tended to have emotional attachment.

With regard to the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, the majority of participants had strong neighbourhood-based social networks, mutual trust, mutual support, emotional safety and sense of belonging (see Table 7.6). Strong neighbourly relationships were developed through a long residence and consequently generated strong neighbourhood-based social networks and intensive neighbourly interactions. On this basis, the participants had mutual trust and mutual support and generated emotional safety, which all finally translated into a sense of belonging. As a result, it can be concluded that participants of the resettlement-housing neighbourhood tended to feel emotionally attached to their neighbourhood.

In the public institution neighbourhood, the majority of the participants displayed strong neighbourhood-based social networks, mutual support, mutual trust, emotional safety and a sense of belonging (see Table 7.6). Most of the participants had strong neighbourly ties, which were generated by shared social and work experiences, as well as the long-term residence. These dual identities as colleagues and neighbours, as well as long duration of residence, helped them develop a sense of familiarity with their neighbours and build strong neighbourhood-based social networks. Combined with the engagement of various intensive neighbourly interactions, the participants mutually trusted and supported each other and formed emotional safety and a sense of belonging. In view of this, it can be concluded that participants of the public institution neighbourhood tended to have emotional attachment.

The majority of participants from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood had a weak neighbourhood-based social network and lacked mutual trust, a sense of belonging and mutual support, which resulted from weak neighbourly ties and neighbourly relationships. Although most of the participants perceived physical security, this type of sense of safety contributed to functional attachment rather than emotional attachment. Additionally, this study found that the leading reason for weak neighbourly ties in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood was that most of the participants did not get opportunities to interact with neighbours. In this case, less than half of the participants had a sense of mutual trust and mutual support. Combining all these factors, neighbourly relationships in this neighbourhood were found to be cold and detached, and consequently participants tended not to have emotional attachment.

Notably, the findings from the new commercial-housing neighbourhood diverge from existing studies, which consider that emotional attachment is absent in commercial-housing neighbourhoods in China (Wu, 2005; Breitung; 2012; Zhu *et al.*, 2012). Surprisingly, this research revealed that participants tended to have strong emotional attachment in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood. According to the participants, a good physical environment and facilities in the neighbourhood promoted neighbourly interactions, which helped to develop a relatively strong neighbourhood-based social network. The majority of the participants had mutual support and mutual trust (see Table 7.6). Although a strong security system contributed to strong physical security, it contributed to functional attachment rather than emotional attachment. Despite this, however, the new commercial-housing neighbourhood was characterised by strong neighbourly relationships, everyday



interactions, mutual trust and mutual support, which were enough to provide a powerful sense of emotional attachment. In view of this, participants of the new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have emotional attachment.

This study found that two personal determinants, the long-term residence and the presence of children contributed to emotional attachment. The long-term residence promoted familiarity with neighbours and strong neighbourly ties, consequently developing intensive neighbourly interactions. Having children were seen as important for social interactions. It can be seen then that both the long-term residence and presence of children facilitated neighbourly interactions, thus fostering emotional attachment.

Taken together, participants of the two work unit neighbourhoods, the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, and the new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have emotional attachment. However, participants of the old commercial-housing neighbourhood tended not to have emotional attachment. Existing studies suggest that a sense of belonging is equivalent to emotional attachment (Proshansky *et al.*, 1983; McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Antonsich, 2010). The findings regarding the sense of belonging in the five neighbourhoods were consistent with the findings on emotional attachment (see Table 7.6). For example, participants from the SOE neighbourhood had a sense of belonging as well as perceiving emotional attachment. Thus, this study supports the idea of Wu *et al.* (2011), who suggest that a sense of belonging is a barometer of emotional attachment.

The findings of this study are consistent with existing studies showing that work unit neighbourhoods have emotional attachment due to the close neighbourly relation and frequent interactions (Wu, 2005; Huang and Low, 2008; Li *et al.*, 2012; Breitung, 2012). In contrast with existing studies, this study found that the new commercial-housing neighbourhood had emotional attachment. This study has revealed that neighbourly interaction is crucial to developing emotional attachment in Chinese neighbourhoods. It appears the main way to promote emotional attachment is to promote neighbourly interactions among participants. Based on this conclusion and connecting to Putnam's social capital theory, the relationship between neighbourhood-based social networks, mutual trust, mutual support, sense of safety, sense of belonging and emotional attachment seems to lie in neighbourly interactions.

**Table 7.6 Emotional attachment of the five neighbourhoods**

	<b>SOE neighbourhood</b>	<b>Resettlement-housing neighbourhood</b>	<b>Public institution neighbourhood</b>	<b>Old commercial-housing neighbourhood</b>	<b>New commercial-housing neighbourhood</b>
<b>Neighbourhood-based social networks</b>	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak	Relatively strong
<b>Mutual trust</b>	The majority of participants had a sense of mutual trust	The majority of participants had a sense of mutual trust	The majority of participants had a sense of mutual trust	Less than half of participants had a sense of mutual trust	The majority of participants had a sense of mutual trust
<b>Sense of safety</b>	The majority of participants had emotional safety	The majority of participants had emotional safety	The majority of participants had emotional safety	The majority of participants had physical security	The majority of participants had physical security
<b>Sense of belonging</b>	The majority of participants had a sense of belonging	The majority of participants had a sense of belonging	The majority of participants had a sense of belonging	Less than half of participants had a sense of belonging	The majority of participants had a sense of belonging
<b>Mutual support</b>	The majority of participants mutually supported each other	The majority of participants mutually supported each other	The majority of participants mutually supported each other	Less than half of participants mutually supported each other	The majority of participants mutually supported each other
<b>Emotional attachment</b>	The majority of participants tended to have emotional attachment	The majority of participants tended to have emotional attachment	The majority of participants tended to have emotional attachment	The majority of participants tended not to have emotional attachment	The majority of participants tended to have emotional attachment

Source: Author's creation (2019)

## 7.5 Conclusion

Chapter 7 examined emotional attachment in the five different types of neighbourhoods through analysing five themes including neighbourhood-based social networks, mutual trust, sense of safety, sense of belonging and mutual support. This study found that the participants of the SOE neighbourhood, resettlement-housing neighbourhoods, public institution neighbourhood and new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have emotional attachment, while those in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood tended not to have emotional attachment. This study also found that neighbourly interaction played an important role in facilitating emotional attachment in Chinese neighbourhoods. The next chapter presents the data analysis in relation to functional attachment.

# Chapter 8 Functional Attachment

## 8.1 Introduction

This is the third chapter of the data analysis. It addresses the second research question: ‘How do residents experience functional attachment in different types of urban neighbourhoods? How can we explain this?’. To accomplish this, Chapter 8 draws on the residents’ perspectives and experiences to explore functional attachment among the five urban neighbourhoods in Chengdu through analysing residential satisfaction with the physical environment, neighbourhood facilities and neighbourhood services. This chapter is organised as follows. Satisfaction with the physical environment is examined in Section 8.2. Next, Section 8.3 discusses satisfaction with the neighbourhood facilities. Satisfaction with the neighbourhood services is examined in Section 8.4, and Section 8.5 presents the findings on functional attachment. Finally, Section 8.6 concludes this chapter.

## 8.2 Satisfaction with the physical environment

The physical environment is one of the most important determinants underlying functional attachment (Fried, 1982; Hourihan, 1984; Mesch and Manor, 1998; Talen, 2005). A good physical environment, which may include elements such as a quiet area, tidy green spaces, large open areas, the absence of incivilities and a good neighbourhood location, is seen as an added value, which provides opportunities for mental restoration and recreation and helps residents develop positive bonds with their neighbourhoods (Hur and Morrow-Jones, 2008). In contrast, physical disorder may deter or destroy functional attachment (Permentier *et al.*, 2011). To explore residents’ views of the physical environment in different types of neighbourhoods, the following questions were asked: ‘Can you please describe the physical environment in your neighbourhood?’; ‘Do you feel satisfied with the physical environment in your neighbourhood?’; and ‘Can you provide the reasons?’ (see Appendix 3). The following subsections will present excerpts from the participants’ responses to these questions in order to analyse satisfaction with the physical environment in each neighbourhood.

## SOE neighbourhood

Four participants from the SOE neighbourhood expressed their dissatisfaction with the physical environment. According to these participants, their dissatisfaction mainly derived from the small size of the open areas and unkempt green spaces in their neighbourhood. Three participants complained that the small open areas were unable to meet their demands, such as doing exercise. Two participants pointed out that the unkempt green spaces and litter in the neighbourhood resulted in residential dissatisfaction.

An example was provided by Participant A1, who felt discontented with the physical environment in his neighbourhood. He explained that organising activities was restrained by the small size of the open areas and the fact that the stairs and corridors were too narrow. He said:

The physical environment in our neighbourhood is not good. I am not satisfied with the open areas. They are too small to organise activities and do exercise. The walking paths in the neighbourhood are narrow. The housing conditions are also not good because the stairs and corridors are very narrow.

Another example comes from Participant A4, who complained about the small size of the open areas, unkempt green spaces and litter in the open spaces (see Figure 8.1). This indicates that the physical environment in the neighbourhood directly affects the extent to which residents are contented with the neighbourhood. She stated:

I do not like the residential environment of my neighbourhood. The green space is too small and disordered. Those plants are dirty. The grass and weeds are overgrown. No one is responsible for trimming lawns and managing the green spaces. Some neighbours even grow vegetables there. Furthermore, because of the small open areas, we do not have enough space for outdoor activities. I have also seen my neighbours drop litter in the open area, which makes the environment worse.

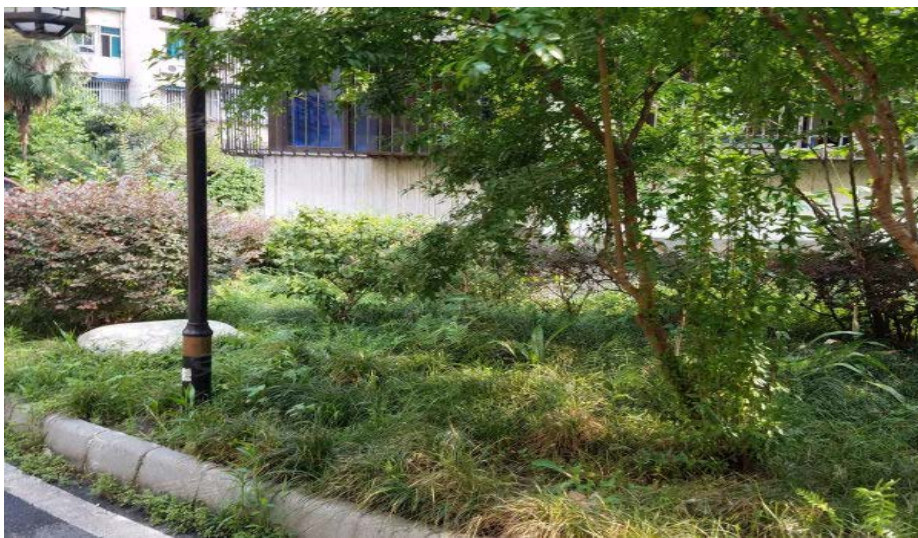
However, three participants felt satisfied with the physical environment in the neighbourhood. An example comes from Participant A2, an 82-year-old man who underlined that the open areas were particularly suitable for the daily activities of the elderly, said:

I am satisfied with the physical environment in our neighbourhood. Although we do not have enough open areas, it is enough for the daily activities of the elderly residents. We usually play croquet in the open area, which used to have a bicycle shed.

A similar example comes from Participant A5, a male resident who used the phrase ‘very satisfied’ to describe his view of the physical environment. He considered that residents need to accept the limitations of the old neighbourhood. He said:

I am very satisfied with the physical environment. My neighbours always complain about the open area. But in my opinion, we have to accept the limitations of the physical environment and adapt to them, considering it is an old neighbourhood.

Taken together, it can be seen that the majority of participants in the SOE neighbourhood were dissatisfied with the poor physical environment because of the small size of the open areas, unkempt green spaces and poor housing conditions in their neighbourhood.



**Figure 8.1 Unkempt green space in the SOE neighbourhood**

Source: Photo from <https://chengdu.anjike.com/>

### Resettlement-housing neighbourhood

Five of the six participants from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood expressed satisfaction with the physical environment. According to these participants, although the neighbourhood had limited open areas, the well-maintained green spaces and reconstructed open areas significantly contributed to residential satisfaction. During the interviews, it was observed that the open areas of this neighbourhood were clean. The participants stated that this neighbourhood did not have cleaners. Doormen were responsible for cleaning the open areas while residents took charge of the corridors of their blocks. The participants explained

that the communal space of the neighbourhood was a part of their home, so they needed to keep them clean and tidy.

An example comes from Participant B3, a 65-year-old female resident who described how the pleasant greenery made her feel contented. Her answer suggested that a good physical environment can promote the usage of communal space and thereby contribute to neighbourly interaction. She said:

I am satisfied with the physical environment in our neighbourhood, especially the green spaces. We have a lot of plants in the neighbourhood. As you can see, our open area is small, but it is acceptable because it is a small neighbourhood. So I like chatting or playing mah-jong with my neighbours in the open area.

Another example was given by Participant B4, a 68-year-old woman who expressed that ‘the reconstruction of the open area’ and ‘well-maintained green spaces’ improved her living conditions and contributed to her satisfaction (see Figure 8.2). She said:

I am satisfied with the physical environment, particularly with the reconstruction of the open areas and green spaces in 2013. The current residential environment and living conditions have been improved a lot. As you can see, we have some green spaces and small flower beds in the central area of the neighbourhood. Some neighbours voluntarily take charge of the maintenance of plants.



**Figure 8.2 The re-construction of the open areas in the resettlement-housing neighbourhood**

Source: Photo from <https://m.lianjia.com/>

Conversely, Participant B5 expressed dissatisfaction with the scale of the open areas, which were unsuitable for organised activities in the neighbourhood. This restriction affected her interactions with neighbours. She said:

Well, I am not satisfied with the physical environment because the residential buildings are old, and the neighbourhood garden is small. My hobby is going square dancing with other residents after dinner. We cannot dance in our neighbourhood because we do not have enough space in the open area. I want to live in a commercial-housing neighbourhood with a good living environment and housing conditions. But at this time, I do not have the ability to achieve this wish. So I have to accept the status quo.

The above quotes show that the majority of participants in the resettlement-housing neighbourhood expressed satisfaction with the aesthetics of the physical environment.

#### Public institution neighbourhood

Four of the six participants from the public institution neighbourhood expressed dissatisfaction with the physical environment. Three participants expressed dissatisfaction with the poor cleanliness. Apart from this, dissatisfaction with the open areas was reported by three participants. The participants explained that the areas were not only small but also taken up by private cars; residents parking their vehicles in open areas and green spaces made the limited open areas even more crowded (see Figure 8.3).

An example comes from Participant C2, a female participant who reported issues related to rubbish and small open areas. This suggests that tangible aspects of the neighbourhood environment such as cleanliness have a high impact on residential satisfaction. She said:

I am not satisfied with the physical environment in my neighbourhood. The public bins are too small. People usually leave rubbish next to the bins when they are full. Smelly bins with food remain, attracting rats and flies. Furthermore, this neighbourhood had two gardens, which have been replaced by residential buildings. So open areas and green spaces have become smaller.

Another example comes from Participant C6, a 48-year-old female resident who referred to the management of the neighbourhood. She particularly mentioned the problems of dog fouling and parking (see Figure 8.3). She stated:

I am definitely dissatisfied with the cleanliness of the neighbourhood. The open area is not clean. Rubbish can be seen everywhere. The cleaner is not doing a good job. The reason might be due to low pay. You can see dog mess everywhere, even in the corridors, and this makes the neighbourhood smelly and dirty. Honestly, I would be happy to pay more if that would improve the level of cleanliness. We do not have enough parking spaces, so a lot of people park their vehicles in the open area, which makes it more crowded.



**Figure 8.3 The open area of the public institution neighbourhood**

Source: Photo from <https://chengdu.anjuke.com/>

Two participants expressed positive feelings about the physical environment. An example comes from Participant C5, a 41-year-old male resident who stated that the quiet living environment and visible green spaces contributed to his residential satisfaction. He stated:

I am basically satisfied with our physical environment. My neighbourhood is very quiet, and the availability of green space is good. I can see greenery when I walk out of my building.

The above quotes show that the majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the poor physical environment in the public institution neighbourhood.

### Old commercial-housing neighbourhood

Three of the five participants from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood felt satisfied with the physical environment. According to these participants, the good cleanliness, upkeep of the green spaces and good housing conditions had positive effects on residential satisfaction. This neighbourhood was clean and tidy, and litter was not found in the open



area during the interviews. An enclosed garden was located in the central part of the neighbourhood, where it was visible to residents (see Figure 8.4).

An example was given by Participant D1, a 52-year-old female participant who described that the well-maintained garden contributed to her satisfaction (see Figure 8.4). She mentioned that this feature induced her to increase the frequency with which she utilised this neighbourhood. She said:

I am satisfied with the physical environment. We have a well-maintained garden in the centre of the neighbourhood. This garden has colourful plants, which look very pretty. My husband and I always take a walk around the garden after dinner. The cleanliness is fine because the cleaners keep the open area neat and clean.



**Figure 8.4 The neighbourhood garden in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood**

Source: Photo from <https://bj.ke.com/>

Similarly, another example comes from Participant D2, a 28-year-old housewife who acknowledged her residential satisfaction, citing the ‘nice’ and ‘quiet’ physical environment. She said:

My neighbourhood is nice and quiet. I have a young daughter. I always take her to walk around the green spaces. The neighbourhood cleanliness is good because we have cleaners to keep our neighbourhood clean. Our housing condition is fine.

Participant D4, a 36-year-old mother of two children, was dissatisfied with the open areas, which were occupied by private vehicles (see Figure 8.5). She reported:

I am not satisfied with the physical environment in the neighbourhood. The open area is filled with private cars, which means there isn't enough space for children to play in the neighbourhood. But my neighbourhood has good cleanliness, upkeep green spaces and good housing conditions.



**Figure 8.5 The open areas of the old commercial-housing neighbourhood**

Source: Photo from <https://m.lianjia.com/>

The above quotes show that the majority of participants felt satisfied with the good physical environment of the old commercial-housing neighbourhood.

### New commercial-housing neighbourhood

All the participants in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood expressed satisfaction with the physical environment. The responses demonstrated that their neighbourhood was an attractive place with high-quality green spaces, well-kept open areas, a high standard of cleanliness and high-quality housing conditions, all of which have strong positive effects on neighbourhood satisfaction. The participants stated that they enjoyed walking in the neighbourhood.

A good example comes from Participant E1, a 29-year-old female designer who expressed satisfaction with the physical environment and used the phrase 'like a tropical forest' to describe her neighbourhood. She said:

I think it is a nice neighbourhood to live in. We have a large area of green space, which contains different kinds of trees and flowers, and a large number of lawns. Our

neighbourhood green spaces look like a tropical forest. When I walk in the neighbourhood and see these green plants, I feel quite relaxed and peaceful. The gardens are maintained regularly by the gardeners, and we have many cleaners to keep the blocks and open area clean. They usually work from 6am to 6pm every day and no litter can be found in the open area.

Another example comes from Participant E2, who expressed satisfaction with the green spaces. She stressed that the green spaces were filled with a variety of plants and flowers (see Figure 8.6). She said:

I am satisfied with the physical environment in our neighbourhood. Our neighbourhood has been designed well by the landscape architect. These buildings and green space have been designed in a well-proportioned way. Flowers blossom during all four seasons of the year. Green spaces, plants and flowers are regularly maintained by the gardeners. In my neighbourhood, I feel as if it is spring all year round. I usually take a walk in the neighbourhood after dinner. I feel quite relaxed when I walk in the neighbourhood.



**Figure 8.6 Green spaces in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood**

Source: Photo from <https://chengdu.anjuke.com/>

Participant E3, a 30-year-old male resident, reported satisfaction with the general appearance of the neighbourhood. He said:

I am basically contented with the physical environment in my neighbourhood. The architecture and colour palettes are very modern. My neighbourhood looks like a small park. We have enough green spaces in the neighbourhood. My neighbourhood also has enough open space. My young daughter always plays with my neighbours' children in the open area (see Figure 8.7).



**Figure 8.7 The open areas of the new commercial-housing neighbourhood**

Source: Photo from <https://chengdu.anjike.com/>

The above quotes show that the majority of participants from the new commercial-housing neighbourhood felt satisfied with the good physical environment.

### 8.2.1 Summary and discussion

This section summarises and discusses the findings regarding the five urban neighbourhoods in Chengdu. In general, this study has revealed that the majority of participants from the SOE neighbourhood and public institution neighbourhood felt dissatisfied with their physical environments, while the majority of participants from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, old commercial-housing neighbourhood and new commercial-housing neighbourhood felt satisfied with theirs. All of this is depicted below in Table 8.1.

**Table 8.1 Satisfaction with the physical environment in the five satisfaction**

Physical environment	SOE neighbourhood	Resettlement-housing neighbourhood	Public institution neighbourhood	Old commercial-housing neighbourhood	New commercial-housing neighbourhood
<b>Satisfaction</b>	The majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the physical environment	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the physical environment	The majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the physical environment	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the physical environment	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the physical environment
<b>Aspects</b>	Poor housing conditions Small open areas Unkempt green spaces	Well-maintained green space Reconstructed open areas	Poor cleanliness Crowded open areas	Good cleanliness Upkeep green spaces Good housing conditions	High quality of green spaces Well-kept open areas High standard of cleanliness Good quality of housing conditions

Source: Author's creation (2019)

This study found that the majority of participants from the two work unit neighbourhoods reported dissatisfaction with their physical environment due to the relatively poor housing conditions, small open areas and unkempt green spaces (see Participants A1, A4 and C2). They also commented that there were not enough parking spaces for residents (see Participant C6). These limitations were caused by the early design philosophy of work unit neighbourhoods in which the function of the neighbourhood was just as a place to stay after work. However, with living standards rising and disposable income growing, an increasing number of residents bought private cars and consequently came to need more parking spaces. Because of the inadequate availability of parking spaces, residents had to park their cars in open areas of the neighbourhood, which made the narrow paths become more crowded (see Participant C6). A good deal of importance was attached to the quality of life (Zhu, 2012). Of all the indicators of quality of life, green spaces and neighbourhood aesthetics, which can make residents feel relaxed, received particular attention from these residents (Zhang *et al.*, 2015). However, this study found that these two work unit neighbourhoods were characterised by the deterioration of the sanitary conditions, the small open area and the unkempt green spaces, all of which led to dissatisfaction with the physical environment.

In the two commercial-housing neighbourhoods, the majority of participants felt satisfied with the physical environment. According to the participants, the two commercial-housing neighbourhoods had good housing conditions, upkeep green spaces, good cleanliness and

enough open areas, which allowed residents to participate in activities in the open areas (See Participants D2, E2 and E3). This finding resonates with Zhang *et al.* (2015), who state that a good physical environment can increase interactions and physical exercises. Well-maintained green space was considered an added value and was mentioned by many participants (See Participants D1 and E1). They expressed that they enjoy walking in the green environment, which not only promoted their mental health but also relieved any stress they might experience. This finding is consistent with the findings of Kyle *et al.* (2004) and Zhang *et al.* (2015), who state that green spaces allow residents to relax and to have a rest from their daily routine, thereby promoting the health and wellbeing of the residents, as well as neighbourhood attachment.

Although the resettlement-housing neighbourhood was an old neighbourhood with old residential blocks and a small open area, most participants indicated that they were satisfied with the physical environment. This study found that the open areas in the neighbourhood were reconstructed by the local government in 2013. The newly built open areas were small but nice, which significantly improved neighbourhood conditions (See Participant B4). To improve the green spaces, residents spontaneously grew plants in the garden and maintained them very well (see Participant B4). Thus, the function of a green space contributes to a better environment and improves the spiritual wellbeing of the residents. As a result, these newly built open areas and lively green spaces had positive impacts on the residents' satisfaction.

### 8.3 Satisfaction with neighbourhood facilities

Satisfaction with neighbourhood facilities can be considered a significant determinant of functional attachment. Functional attachment will potentially be generated when neighbourhood facilities satisfy residents' certain needs (Stedman, 2003; Lu *et al.*, 2018) and support their activities (Moore and Graefe, 1994). To explore residents' views of the neighbourhood facilities in the different types of neighbourhoods, the following questions were asked: 'Can you describe what types of neighbourhood facilities you have in the neighbourhood?', 'Do you or your family members use the neighbourhood facilities? What? When?', 'Do you feel satisfied with the neighbourhood facilities in your neighbourhood?', and 'Can you provide the reasons?' (see Appendix 3). The following subsections will present

excerpts from the participants' responses to these questions in order to analyse satisfaction with the neighbourhood facilities in each neighbourhood.

### SOE neighbourhood

Five of the seven participants from the SOE neighbourhood were dissatisfied with the absence of neighbourhood facilities, which they showed a strong desire to obtain and use. Five participants reported that they were dissatisfied with the lack of sport and leisure facilities. Lacking elevators in residential buildings was another leading issue resulting in dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood facilities. They explained that the residential buildings did not have elevators installed despite having eight floors. The majority of participants were elderly (between 70 and 85 years) and found it exhausting to climb up and down the stairs.

An example comes from Participant A2, an 82-year-old male resident who expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of sport and leisure facilities. He indicated that he had to use sport and leisure facilities in a community garden due to the lack of them in the neighbourhood. He said:

I am dissatisfied with the neighbourhood facilities. My neighbourhood does not have fitness facilities. I like doing exercise because it keeps me healthy, gets me active and makes me feel well. So I have to use the fitness facilities in a community garden.

Participant A6, a 72-year-old female resident, expressed her dissatisfaction with the lack of elevators in the residential buildings. She used the phrase 'like climbing a small mountain' to describe climbing the stairs. She said:

The major issue is that we do not have an elevator in the residential buildings. As we are getting old, it is harder to walk up and down the stairs, especially when I'm carrying heavy bags. Climbing the stairs is like climbing a small mountain.

In contrast, two participants expressed satisfaction with the neighbourhood facilities. However, the answers are not in keeping with the reality as no sport and leisure facilities were set up in the SOE neighbourhood. An example comes from Participant A5, a male participant who was the director of the SOE. He insisted:

I am satisfied with the neighbourhood facilities. I understand our neighbourhood is an old neighbourhood which provides quite limited facilities because it was constructed in the 1980s. At that time, people did not have demands for using recreational and fitness facilities in the neighbourhood. It is the reason why we do not have any facilities. Currently, it is difficult to install these facilities because the open area does not have enough space, so we need to accept the current situation. I think highly of my neighbourhood.

Participant A1 expressed that he accepted the current situation, considering his needs for sports facilities. He reported:

Well, I felt satisfied. I am okay with my neighbourhood not having any sports facilities. I am very old. At my age, I do not need to use any sports or recreational facilities.

The above quotes show that the majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the lack of facilities in the SOE neighbourhood.

#### Resettlement-housing neighbourhood

Four of the six participants from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood expressed dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood facilities. The lack of sport and leisure facilities and elevators were mentioned by these participants. Other participants expressed that they accepted the shortcomings because they understood that the small size of the open areas in this neighbourhood did not allow for extra facilities. The participants explained that the new facilities would take up space, which would have an influence on residential activities. It was observed that the benches in the open areas were frequently used. The participants stated that benches had been installed during the reconstruction of the open areas in 2013. Residents enjoyed sitting on the benches while chatting and interacting with neighbours. This suggests that neighbourhood facilities can increase neighbourly interactions.

An example comes from Participant B1, a 73-year-old female resident who expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of sport and leisure facilities and the absence of elevators. Participant B1 indicated that residents frequently used the benches in the neighbourhood, which promoted neighbourly interactions. She said:

I am not satisfied with the lack of sport and leisure facilities. The residential buildings do not have elevators, which is inconvenient for the residents. A number of benches were installed in the open areas. We almost use them every day because we like chatting in the neighbourhood.



Another example comes from Participant B6, a 68-year-old retired worker who expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of neighbourhood facilities but accepted the current situation, stating:

Well, it is a pity that we do not have any of them in our neighbourhood. But I think it is understandable because my neighbourhood has a small open area; we do not have any space to set up new facilities. The new facilities would take up our limited open area and may cause inconvenience to the daily lives of the residents, so we need to accept the limitations.

The above quotes show that the majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the lack of neighbourhood facilities in the resettlement-housing neighbourhood.

#### Public institution neighbourhood

All the participants from the public institution neighbourhood exhibited dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood facilities. Four participants complained that this neighbourhood did not have any sport and leisure facilities. Difficulties with parking were reported by two participants. This neighbourhood had had a small garden. Due to the increasing number of private cars, the garden was replaced by a small parking lot in the neighbourhood (see Figure 8.8). However, it only had 80 parking spaces and around 219 households, leaving a large demand unmet.

An example comes from Participant C6, a 48-year-old female participant who indicated that the lack of elevators brought physical restrictions to those residents who lived on the upper floors. She stated:

I am disappointed with the neighbourhood facilities. I understand that we live in an old neighbourhood, but they need to improve residents' quality of life by setting up new facilities. We do not have sport and leisure facilities in the neighbourhood. I have to bring my ten-year-old daughter to exercise in the sports centre, which is a 15-minute walk. Furthermore, our residential buildings do not have elevators. My flat is on the top floor; I feel really tired climbing the stairs.

Participant C4, a 53-year-old male, described his difficulty in finding a parking space in his neighbourhood. He indicated that although the neighbourhood had a small parking lot, it did not provide enough parking spaces for the residents (see Figure 8.8). Due to this, he usually chose to pay parking fees in another neighbourhood, which increased his living costs and consequently led to dissatisfaction. He said:

I am not satisfied with the neighbourhood facilities, particularly the small parking lot. I find parking very difficult in my neighbourhood. I have to park my car in another neighbourhood. The parking fee is a bit expensive, but I have no choice.



**Figure 8.8 A small parking lot in the public institution neighbourhood**

Source: Photo from <https://chengdu.anjuke.com/>

The above quotes show that the majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the lack of neighbourhood facilities in the public institution neighbourhood.

### Old commercial-housing neighbourhood

All the participants stated that they were dissatisfied with the neighbourhood facilities in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood. The complaints largely centred on the lack of sport and leisure facilities and the small parking lot. According to the participants, families with young children had a high demand for sport and leisure facilities, the limited availability of which could not satisfy the participants. Some participants indicated that the small parking lot did not meet the parking demands and resulted in conflicts among residents. These all led to residential dissatisfaction. This study found this neighbourhood had 100 parking spaces for around 300 households.

An example was given by Participant D4, a 36-year-old female resident with two young children. She expressed dissatisfaction with the shortage of sport and leisure facilities, which she considered to be of great importance for the personal development of children. She indicated:

I am dissatisfied with the neighbourhood facilities. I have two kids. My daughter is seven years old, and my son is nearly two. They like taking part in outdoor activities, but my neighbourhood does not have a play area, or any leisure facilities installed for children. I think I would like my neighbourhood more if it had good facilities. Furthermore, we do not have enough parking spaces. I have to park my car on the street sometimes and have to pay expensive parking fees.

Participant D5, a 51-year-old male resident, addressed the parking issue in the neighbourhood. He stated that the lack of parking spaces caused conflicts among residents. He said:

Well, my neighbourhood does not have enough neighbourhood facilities. We only have some garden benches to sit on. It also does not have allocated car parking spaces. It is difficult to find a parking space after 6pm. Sometimes, residents fight over parking spaces. Additionally, the residential buildings do not have elevators, which brings physical limitations to the residents.

The above quotes show that the majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the lack of neighbourhood facilities in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood.

#### New commercial-housing neighbourhood

All the participants from the new commercial-housing neighbourhood were satisfied with the neighbourhood facilities. According to the participants, the diverse neighbourhood facilities and activity spaces could be used by different age groups, contributing to residential satisfaction. It was observed that families with children preferred to use children's playgrounds and entertainment facilities. These facilities not only helped children keep active, but also facilitated the expansion of social networks by promoting interactions among children. An underground parking lot with 1,179 parking spaces not only satisfied the demands for parking, but also left more space available in the open areas.

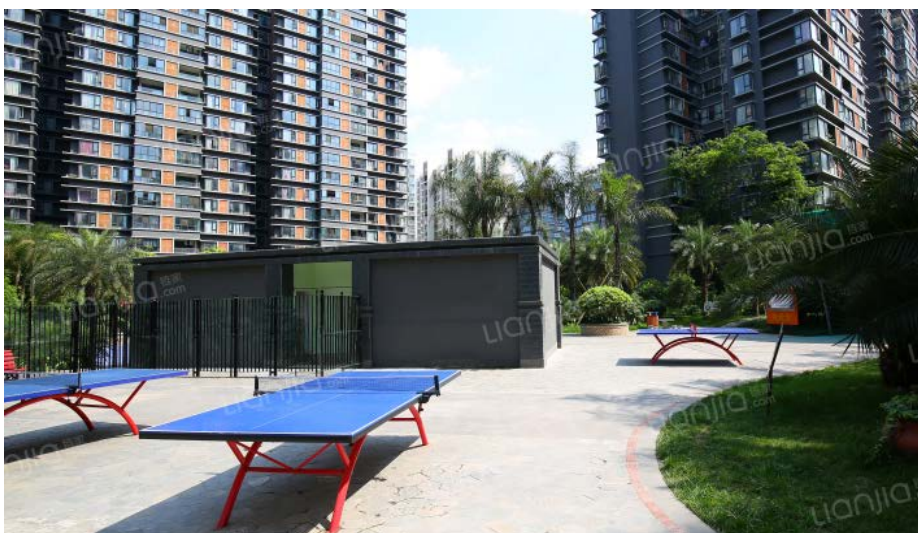
A good example comes from Participant E1, a 29-year-old female designer who highlighted the diversity of recreational facilities in her neighbourhood (see Figures 8.9 and 8.10). She reported:

Our neighbourhood provides multiple sets of fitness and leisure facilities and activity spaces for the residents. For example, we have fitness facilities, children's facilities, a swimming pool, a basketball court, a badminton court and so forth. I have never used them because my work is busy, but my mum likes playing table tennis in the neighbourhood.



**Figure 8.9** A swimming pool in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood

Source: Photo taken by author (2017)



**Figure 8.10** Sport facilities in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood

Source: Photo from <https://chengdu.anjike.com/>

Participant E3, a 30-year-old hotel manager with a young child, expressed satisfaction with the recreational facilities for children (see Figure 8.11). He highlighted that they used these facilities ‘every day’. He insisted:

Our neighbourhood has a lot of facilities. I often go to the children’s playground because I have a young daughter. My wife and I take her to the children’s playground every day. She likes playing on the swing and slide. Furthermore, she plays with my neighbours’ kids and has made a lot of friends. My neighbourhood has a swimming pool. My daughter loves to go swimming during the summer.



**Figure 8.11 A children's playground in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood**

Source: Photo from <https://chengdu.anjuke.com/>

Another example comes from Participant E4, a 58-year-old male resident who indicated his satisfaction with the sport and leisure facilities. He expressed that using sports facilities (see Figure 8.12) helped him with his health issues. He said:

There are many entertainment facilities and fitness facilities in my neighbourhood. Although my work is very busy, I use the facilities often, especially the fitness facilities. I find that using some of them can help me recover from back pain, strengthen weak muscles and increase flexibility. I also want to mention that the footpaths within the neighbourhood were built very well, and I always take a walk in my neighbourhood after dinner.



**Figure 8.12 Sport and leisure facilities in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood**

Source: Photo taken by author (2017)

This study found that the mere presence of neighbourhood facilities increases residential satisfaction. For example, Participant E5, a 45-year-old female resident, reported:

My work is very busy, so I did not use them, but I am satisfied with the various equipment and activity space in the neighbourhood. This is one of the reasons for me purchasing this flat. I like to play badminton when I have time.

The above quotes show that the participants felt satisfied with the neighbourhood facilities in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood.

### 8.3.1 Summary and discussion

This section summarises and discusses the findings from the five urban neighbourhoods in Chengdu. In general, this study has revealed that the majority of participants from the SOE neighbourhood and resettlement-housing neighbourhood, public institution neighbourhood and old commercial-housing neighbourhood felt dissatisfied with their neighbourhood facilities, while the majority of participants from the new commercial-housing neighbourhood felt satisfied. All of this is depicted below in Table 8.2.

**Table 8.2 Satisfaction with the neighbourhood facilities**

Neighbourhood facilities	SOE neighbourhood	Resettlement-housing neighbourhood	Public institution neighbourhood	Old commercial-housing neighbourhood	New commercial-housing neighbourhood
<b>Satisfaction</b>	The majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the neighbourhood facilities	The majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the neighbourhood facilities	The majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the neighbourhood facilities	The majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the neighbourhood facilities	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the neighbourhood facilities
<b>Aspects</b>	A lack of sport and leisure facilities  A lack of elevators in residential buildings	A lack of sport and leisure facilities  A lack of elevators in residential buildings	A lack of sport and leisure facilities  Parking problems  A lack of elevators in residential buildings	A lack of sport and leisure facilities  Parking problems	The presence of sport and leisure facilities  The presence of recreational facilities for children  The presence of an underground parking lot

Source: Author's creation (2019)

In the two work unit neighbourhoods and the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, participants increasingly focused on their health issues and complained about a lack of sport and leisure fitness equipment in their neighbourhoods (see Participants A2 and B1). The

absence of elevators in residential buildings was underlined by many participants (see Participants A6 and C6). This concern was mainly raised by elderly residents, who claimed that it brought physical limitations and caused great inconvenience to them. A lack of parking spaces was also highlighted by many participants (see Participant C4). Participants stated that they had to pay parking fees in other neighbourhoods, increasing their living costs. Based on the design philosophies of the neighbourhood in the early years, these old Chinese neighbourhoods did not install such neighbourhood facilities. However, with the increase of income, urbanites have started to strive for a higher quality of life. Neighbourhoods without good facilities cannot fulfil residents' demands, consequently causing dissatisfaction.

Because the old commercial-housing neighbourhood was constructed in 1999, it was affected by design principles which did not include installing sport and leisure facilities. This concern was particularly raised by families with children (see Participant D4). According to participants, a lack of parking spaces caused conflicts among residents, which potentially made weak neighbourly relationships even worse (see Participants D4 and D5).

As a market-oriented neighbourhood, public goods and services in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood were tailored to the individual demands of the households. Participants from the new commercial-housing neighbourhood felt satisfied with their neighbourhood facilities. This newly built neighbourhood had various sport and fitness facilities and activity spaces which attracted different age groups and contributed to residential satisfaction (see Participants E1, E3 and E4). This study found that the large underground parking lot fully met residents' parking demands. This is in line with the findings of Moore and Graefe (2004), who indicate that functional attachment can be quickly established if neighbourhood facilities are convenient and make it possible for residents to choose activities. Compared with the other four neighbourhoods, the new commercial-housing neighbourhood with its good neighbourhood facilities obtained the highest levels of satisfaction, and this consequently contributed to functional attachment.

This study found that the use of neighbourhood facilities plays an important role in promoting residents' health and making their lives easier. In contrast, a lack of neighbourhood facilities causes inconvenience to residents and diminishes the likelihood of practical connections being formed between residents and neighbourhoods. This study found that the use of neighbourhood facilities can promote neighbourly interactions (see

Participants B1 and E3). This finding is in line with existing studies that indicate that good neighbourhood facilities can attract residents to repeatedly use them and thus may potentially create neighbourly interactions (Moore and Graefe, 1994; Williams and Vaske, 2002; Zhu *et al.*, 2012), which in turn help establish social relations in the neighbourhood and cultivate emotional attachment. As discussed above, it is clear that functional attachment is important for residents and should not be ignored. Taken together, the presence of various neighbourhood facilities contributes to residential satisfaction and consequently fosters functional attachment.

## 8.4 Satisfaction with neighbourhood services

Satisfaction with neighbourhood services can be seen as an important determinant of functional attachment. Existing studies suggest that the experience of efficient services can quickly establish functional attachment by fulfilling residents' demands (Lu *et al.*, 2018). To explore residents' views of the neighbourhood services in the five different types of neighbourhoods, the following questions were asked: 'Can you describe what type of neighbourhood services you have in the neighbourhood?'; 'Do you or your family member use neighbourhood services? What? When?'; 'Do you feel satisfied with the neighbourhood services in your neighbourhood?', and 'Can you provide the reasons?' (see Appendix 3). The following subsections will present excerpts from the participants' responses to these questions in order to analyse satisfaction with neighbourhood services in each of the five neighbourhoods.

### SOE neighbourhood

The participants were dissatisfied with the limited private services while feeling satisfied with the public services in the local area which were provided by the local government. According to the participants, the SOE offered private services, including cleaning services and security services. However, the participants complained about the private services because the neighbourhood had poor cleanliness and loose security. This neighbourhood did not employ a PMC or HOA, so the participants indicated that they had to solve problems by themselves. The insufficient and poor quality of the private services generated residential dissatisfaction. However, the participants were generally satisfied with the public services



in the local area. The convenience of the educational and healthcare services in the local area was highlighted by some participants as contributing to residential satisfaction.

An example comes from Participant A2, an 82-year-old male who expressed dissatisfaction with the shortage of private services. He indicated that in this situation, he had to solve problems by himself. He stated:

We do not have a PMC who provides private services to us. I usually try to solve life problems by myself. If I cannot deal with it, I will report my issues to my work unit and the *shequ*. If I want to consult policy documents, I will ask a member of staff of the *shequ* for information. My work unit has helped to resolve issues before, such as the indoor maintenance service. But now the work unit cannot solve all issues of the neighbourhood.

Participant A3, a 72-year-old retired doctor, complained about poor cleaning services and security services. This suggests that poor private services resulted in dissatisfaction. She said:

I am not satisfied with the private services in the neighbourhood. We only have cleaning and security services, and the neighbourhood cleanliness and neighbourhood security cannot be considered to be of a professional standard. As we do not have a PMC, I've got used to solving problems by myself.

Participant A7, a 77-year-old male resident, indicated regretfully:

I feel dissatisfied with the neighbourhood services. We do not have a neighbourhood organisation that offers a series of private services. Furthermore, I am already retired, so I almost always solve issues by myself.

Another example comes from Participant A7, who expressed satisfaction with the public services in the local area. He highlighted that 'a diversity of public services' brought convenience to his life. This suggests that public services in the local area contributed to residential satisfaction. He reported:

I am satisfied with the public services. I mean we are close to everything. Because of the good neighbourhood location, our neighbourhood is surrounded by a diversity of public services, such as a well-designed public transport system, grocery stores and hospitals, which brings great convenience to residents.

The above quotes show that the participants felt dissatisfied with the limited and poor private services provided by the SOE, while feeling satisfied with the diversity of public services in the local area provided by the local government.

## Resettlement-housing neighbourhood

Five of the six participants expressed satisfaction with the private services. All the participants were satisfied with the public services in the local area. This study found this neighbourhood had limited private services, such as a doorman who was responsible for opening the door, screening visitors and cleaning the open area. Nevertheless, the majority of participants reported satisfaction with the private services. According to the participants' narratives, there was a neighbourhood representative group that helped manage neighbourhood issues and supported residents in solving problems.

An example comes from Participant B1, a woman aged 73 years who expressed satisfaction with the private and public services. She said:

I am satisfied with the neighbourhood services. We can almost solve issues by ourselves. Blocks' representatives have also helped us solve personal and neighbourhood issues. If it is a big task, they will report it to the *shequ*. I am satisfied with the private services. I am also satisfied with the external neighbourhood services. Because of a good neighbourhood location and local service distribution, a variety of external neighbourhood services are easily accessible within walking distance.

Participant B2, a 54-year-old worker, expressed satisfaction with the security services. He indicated that the doorman was responsible. Access to public services was also mentioned by this participant. He reported:

I am satisfied with the private services. We have a doorman who is responsible. I think we do not need a PMC because we have a high degree of autonomy. Residents help each other to solve problems. Our neighbourhood has a good location, and we have quick access to public services, such as hospitals and schools. My daughter is in a key high school, which is just near my flat.

Conversely, Participant B5, a 68-year-old female resident who lived alone, expressed dissatisfaction with the shortage of private services. She gave an example and explained that it took her a long time to find a housing maintenance service. She reported:

Well, I am not satisfied with neighbourhood services. I think we do not have enough private services. I usually solve issues by myself. This month, I spent a lot of time finding a plumber to get a replacement for the water pipe. Compared to the commercial-housing neighbourhood, we do not have enough private services. To be honest, I do not want to report issues to the *shequ*, because I do not want to be negative about my neighbourhood. It might create an unfavourable impression of my neighbourhood. So I have to solve problems by myself.

The above quotes show that the majority of participants from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood felt satisfied with the private services and the public services in the local area.

#### Public institution neighbourhood

All the participants were dissatisfied with the private services but satisfied with the public services in the local area. According to the participants, the public institution currently provided cleaning and security services to the neighbourhood. Participants complained about the unprofessional security and cleaning services. Conversely, the participants were highly satisfied with the diversity of public services in the local area, such as healthcare, entertainment and educational services. They indicated that the high accessibility of the public services brought convenience to their lives, consequently promoting residential satisfaction.

Participant C6, a 48-year-old woman, expressed dissatisfaction with the cleaning services. She insisted that the service was not worth the price paid by her work unit. She said:

I am not satisfied with the private services. Although my work unit has cleaners who are responsible for cleaning the open area of the neighbourhood and the corridors of the residential blocks, the neighbourhood environment is still not good.

Participant C5, a man aged 41, indicated his dissatisfaction with the private services, but he was contented with the facilities and services around this neighbourhood. He said:

My neighbourhood does not have enough private services. But I am satisfied with the public services, which surround my neighbourhood. It is very convenient for me to live in this area. For example, my daughter walks to school, which is a short distance away. There are a lot of restaurants near my neighbourhood, and we can eat there if we do not have time to cook.

Another example comes from participant C1, who described his satisfaction with various public services in the local area. He said:

I've got used to living in this neighbourhood. I cannot comment on the private services, but I am highly satisfied with the public services in this area. I like hanging out with my friends in the restaurants, which are near my neighbourhood. I have quick access to the banks and grocery shops. The subway stations and buses can take me anywhere I want to go. I like my neighbourhood because these public services bring convenience to my life.

Participant C6 expressed satisfaction with the healthcare services and public transport. She stated:

I am satisfied with the public services. It is a very convenient neighbourhood to stay in, with such convenient public transport (subway and bus), great shopping, modern supermarkets, and lots of different and excellent dining options. I have quick access to healthcare services.

The above quotes show that all the participants felt dissatisfied with the poor private services provided by the public institution while feeling satisfied with the diversity of public services in the local area, which was provided by the local government.

#### Old commercial-housing neighbourhood

Three of the five participants expressed satisfaction with the private services provided by their professional PMC. According to the participants, the main private services included cleaning, security and information consulting. All the participants were satisfied with the public services in the local area. Because of the good neighbourhood location and the distribution of local services, the old commercial-housing neighbourhood had a diversity of public services nearby which made residents' everyday lives more convenient.

Participant D3, a 75-year-old male who was familiar with the staff of the PMC, showed high levels of satisfaction with the private services. He stated:

I am very satisfied with the private services, which are provided by the PMC. My neighbourhood is very safe because neighbourhood security is very tight. Additionally, I am an old man who does not know how to get information from the internet or by telephone. I always consult the staff of the PMC to get information. I think they are quite helpful because they usually provide useful information to me. I also like to chat with them in my spare time. They are very friendly.

Similarly, Participant D1, a 52-year-old female resident, was satisfied with the basic neighbourhood services. She said:

In general, I am satisfied with the private services. The PMC are doing a good job. My neighbourhood is clean and tidy, and our neighbourhood is safe because staff from the PMC patrol the neighbourhood every day. I hope the PMC can pay close attention to details. For example, we had a parking issue in the neighbourhood for a long time. I hope they will pay more attention to the parking management.

However, two participants were dissatisfied with the private services provided by the PMC. For instance, participant D4, a 36-year-old female resident, complained about the inefficient neighbourhood maintenance services. She said:

I am not satisfied with the private services, which are provided by the PMC. I think their work is very ineffective. I reported a broken lightbulb in my building's corridor which needed replacing the PMC. There were a lot of delays before it eventually got replaced. The corridor was dark, which was very inconvenient, especially at night. But I am satisfied with the public services. I bought this flat because this area has good educational resources. My children will have access to a good primary school when they reach school age. I have quick access to grocery stores, restaurants and public transport, which makes my life easier. At the weekend, I usually take my child to the nearby shopping mall because they have a children's playground. I enjoy the convenience of living near a diversity of services.

Participant D2, a 28-year-old housewife, was also dissatisfied with the neighbourhood management. She thought the PMC did not provide services that matched the prices the residents paid. She stated:

We pay property administrative fees, but do not get good services from the PMC. Inadequate parking spaces and a lack of management lead to conflicts among residents.

Participant D3, a 75-year-old resident, expressed satisfaction with the accessibility of healthcare services and public transport in this area. She attributed her weak moving intention to the good healthcare services surrounding her neighbourhood. This suggests that the accessibility of public services contributes to residential satisfaction. He said:

I am satisfied with the public services. A lot of hospitals are located in this area, which is one of the most important reasons to live in this neighbourhood. Public transport is very convenient in this area. If I manage to go somewhere, I usually take a bus or the subway. Furthermore, many grocery stores are near my neighbourhood. I go to the grocery stores almost every day because I like eating fresh food.

The above quotes show that the majority of participants of the old commercial-housing neighbourhood felt satisfied with the private and public services.

#### New commercial-housing neighbourhood

All the participants from the new commercial-housing neighbourhood felt satisfied with both the private and public services. The private services were provided by the PMC, which belonged to the private real estate developer of this new commercial-housing neighbourhood.

The company provided fully covered services to residents. During the interviews, satisfaction with the indoor and outdoor maintenance, cleaning and security services were positively highlighted by many participants. They considered their PMC helpful and friendly. The participants expressed satisfaction with the public services. This study found that over the last five years, a large number of external services, including public services, had been established in this district due to large-scale real estate development. At the same time, the construction of a new subway station and a bus rapid transit (BRT) provided convenient transportation links for local residents. These all contributed to resident satisfaction.

An example comes from Participant E2, who expressed satisfaction with the efficient and high-quality maintenance services provided by the PMC. She said:

I am satisfied with the private neighbourhood services, which are provided by the PMC. Because of their good management, our neighbourhood is clean and tidy, and I often use maintenance services. The PMC has a professional maintenance team that is responsible for indoor and outdoor repair services. Because the PMC belongs to the real estate developer, they found the same materials with the same colour to repair my wall. The indoor maintenance service and materials are free. Meanwhile, they handle residents' complaints and suggestions in a timely and effective manner. So I think they are doing a great job.

Participant E4, a 58-year-old male participant, highlighted the good cleaning and security services. He also indicated that the PMC helped solve problems efficiently. He indicated:

I am satisfied with the private services. This neighbourhood has a very tight security service because the PMC provides a 24-hour manned guard service. The security department works 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Furthermore, the cleanliness in the neighbourhood is very good. Each block has an exclusive cleaner who cleans the corridors and elevators three times a day. At the same time, a number of cleaners are responsible for the open areas. I once sought help from the PMC when I'd locked myself out of my flat, and they helped me find a locksmith quickly.

Participant E7 expressed satisfaction with the way in which the PMC handled complaints and helped resolve disputes between owners. She said:

I am satisfied with the services, which are provided by our PMC. They are very responsible and helpful. I made a complaint about my neighbour, who used to throw rubbish on the corridor floor. The PMC quickly arranged for a cleaner to clean the corridor, and gently reminded my neighbour that they should dispose of their rubbish responsibly.

Participant E1, a 29-year-old designer, highlighted the increasing number of entertainment and community services in local area. She stated:

I am satisfied with the public services. There have been many changes over the last five years. This area was a sparsely populated place when I'd just moved in. There were just a small number of restaurants in this area. Life was inconvenient. Due to the development of the real estate and the construction of the subway, a lot of people have moved into this area. A large number of residences attracted investment in public and private services by the government and entrepreneurs. Countless restaurants, shopping malls, banks, drugs stores and other things are near my neighbourhood, which makes my life a lot easier.

Participant E3 reported being satisfied with the public transport and healthcare resources near the neighbourhood. He indicated:

I am satisfied with the services, especially the public services. The best children's hospital is right next to the door of my neighbourhood. I had quick access to the hospital when my young daughter was ill. Furthermore, my neighbourhood is within walking distance of my daughter's nursery, which makes it easy to pick her up and drop her off. In the last few years, using public transport has become a lot easier than before. Once the subway construction had been completed, I could take the subway to go to work every day.

The above quotes show that all the participants were satisfied with the private and public services.

#### 8.4.1 Summary and discussion

This section summarises and discusses the findings on the five urban neighbourhoods in Chengdu. In general, this study has revealed that the majority of participants from the two work unit neighbourhoods expressed dissatisfaction with the private services while the majority of participants from the two commercial-housing neighbourhoods and the resettlement-housing neighbourhood felt satisfied with them. In addition, all the participants were satisfied with the public services in the local area provided by the local government. All of this is depicted below in Tables 8.3 and 8.4.

**Table 8.3 Satisfaction with the private services**

Neighbourhood services	SOE neighbourhood	Resettlement-housing neighbourhood	Public institution neighbourhood	Old commercial-housing neighbourhood	New commercial-housing neighbourhood
<b>Satisfaction with private services</b>	The majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the private services	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the private services	The majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the private services	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the private services	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the private services
<b>Aspects</b>	Poor cleaning and security services	Good cleaning and security services	Poor cleaning and security services	Professional services from the PCM	Professional services from the PCM

Source: Author's creation (2021)

**Table 8.4 Satisfaction with the public services in local area**

Public services in the local area	SOE neighbourhood	Resettlement-housing neighbourhood	Public institution neighbourhood	Old commercial-housing neighbourhood	New commercial-housing neighbourhood
<b>Satisfaction</b>	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the public services in the local area	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the private services in the local area	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the private services in the local area	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the private services in the local area	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the private services in the local area
<b>Aspects</b>	A diversity of public services in the local area provided by the local government	A diversity of public services in the local area provided by the local government	A diversity of public services in the local area provided by the local government	A diversity of public services in the local area provided by the local government	A diversity of public services in the local area provided by the local government

Source: Author's creation (2021)

Regarding the private services, in the two work unit neighbourhoods, cleaning and security services were provided by the work units. The majority of participants expressed dissatisfaction with these private services, commenting on 'the poor cleanliness' and 'the loose security' (see Participants A7 and C6). These findings are in line with previous findings showing that the majority of participants from the two work unit neighbourhoods felt physical unsafe and dissatisfied with the physical environment, especially regarding the cleanliness. Many participants showed a strong desire to have a PMC that could provide good private services to residents (see Participant A3). Conversely, this study found that the participants from the two commercial-housing neighbourhoods were satisfied with the professional private services, which were attributed to the PMCs (see Participants E1, E3, E7). This suggests that private services from the PMC contribute to residential satisfaction. This finding also is consistent with Lu *et al.* (2018), who state that private services contribute to satisfying neighbourhood functions for residents.



It is noteworthy that although the resettlement-housing neighbourhood only had cleaning (for open areas) and security services, the participants reported positive feedback about the private services. This neighbourhood had a neighbourhood representative group that helped manage neighbourhood issues and solve residents' problems (see Participant B1). These volunteers also helped connect the neighbourhood with the *shequ* by asking for help and participating in activities. Due to the high degree of autonomy and mutual help, the participants from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood showed high levels of satisfaction with the private services.

Public services influence the quality of the residents' lives by providing additional resources and social benefits. This study found that all the participants from all five neighbourhoods expressed satisfaction with the public services in the local area. With the rapid development of the city and its infrastructure, a diversity of community-based services had been set up around the five neighbourhoods. These community-based services made up for the lack of private services in the older neighbourhoods to a certain degree, especially for the old neighbourhoods. This study found that participants of the five neighbourhoods had good access to educational, entertainment and healthcare services within walking distance (see Participants A7 and C1). A large number of banks, restaurants, retail shops, grocery stores, shopping malls and other leisure services were very convenient for these participants (see Appendix 3). Crucially, a well-developed public transport system in the local areas met the mobility needs of the participants, particularly those who did not have their vehicles and relied on public transport. Under these circumstances, the convenience of public services largely improved residential satisfaction and conductively cultivated functional attachment. This suggests that the rapid development of public services can reduce the negative effects of inadequate private services.

## 8.5 Bringing it all together: functional attachment in the five neighbourhoods

Based on the discussions above, Table 8.5 shows the final assessment.

In the SOE neighbourhood, the majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the physical environment, neighbourhood facilities and private services (see Table 8.5). As an old neighbourhood, the SOE neighbourhood had old residential buildings, small and crowded

open areas, unkempt green spaces and poor cleanliness. The inadequate private services did not meet the needs of the participants, who were left to solve issues by themselves. Even though the public services brought convenience to them, participants of the SOE neighbourhood tended not to have functional attachment.

As is shown in Table 8.5, in the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, the participants were satisfied with the physical environment and neighbourhood services. This study found that the reconstruction of open areas and well-maintained green spaces improved the neighbourhood environment. Simultaneously, participants had a strong awareness of residential environment protection which contributed to the good physical environment. With regard to the neighbourhood services, it is noteworthy that this neighbourhood had a representative group that helped manage the neighbourhood and solve residents' problems. A diversity of public services also made residents' lives easier. However, the participants were dissatisfied with the inadequate neighbourhood facilities. It is worth mentioning that although the participants expressed dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood facilities, most of them accepted the limitations. The participants stated that their neighbourhood had small open areas, and thus setting up new facilities was unpracticable. In view of this, the participants of the resettlement-housing neighbourhood tended to have functional attachment.

With regard to the public institution neighbourhood, the participants felt dissatisfied with the physical environment, neighbourhood facilities and private services (see Table 8.5). Small and crowded open areas, unpleasant green spaces and poor cleanliness had negative effects on neighbourhood satisfaction. The inadequate facilities and private services did not meet the needs of the participants. Conversely, the participants reported satisfaction with the public services because they brought convenience to the participants and slightly contributed to residential satisfaction. Combining these factors together, participants of the public institution neighbourhood tended not to have functional attachment.

As is shown in Table 8.5, the majority of participants in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood were satisfied with their physical environment and neighbourhood services. This study found that this neighbourhood had pleasant green spaces and a clean environment, which contributed to neighbourhood satisfaction. In addition, the good location of the neighbourhood provided convenient access to public services. However, the inadequate

neighbourhood facilities caused residential dissatisfaction. Yet despite this, the old commercial-housing neighbourhood was featured by good neighbourhood environment and neighbourhood services which were enough to give participants functional attachment.

In the new commercial-housing neighbourhood, the participants reported high levels of satisfaction with the physical environment, neighbourhood facilities and services (see Table 8.5). With the rapid development of the Chinese economy, commodity housing estates have entered a high-speed period of development, particularly after the process of urban gentrification. Urban residents as well as property developers have paid more attention to the development of the neighbourhood environment, the construction of facilities and the public services. As a newly built neighbourhood, the new commercial-housing neighbourhood has a high-quality physical environment and facilities. Additionally, the PMC provided professional private services to participants. A variety of public services were close by, which brought convenience to the participants. Combining these factors together, participants of the new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have functional attachment.

Taken together, the participants of two commercial-housing neighbourhoods and the resettlement-housing neighbourhood tended to have functional attachment while those in the two work unit neighbourhoods tended not to have functional attachment. These findings are in line with existing studies that state that functional attachment exists in commercial-housing neighbourhoods because it is fostered by the high-quality physical environment, facilities, quietness and services (Breitung, 2012; Zhu *et al.*, 2012; Li *et al.*, 2012). In addition, this study found that a well-maintained public realm, a good physical environment and neighbourhood facilities are frequently used by participants, thus promoting neighbourly interactions which help establish neighbourly relationships and cultivate neighbourhood attachment.

The fundamental factor which led to the negligible functional attachment in the two work unit neighbourhoods was the incapability of the government-led neighbourhood environment, services and facilities to meet the changing needs of participants. As Galster (1985) highlights in his 'psychological construct' of residential satisfaction theory, residents cognitively construct a 'reference' condition for each facet of their residential situation based on their individual self-assessed needs and aspirations. Residents' rank-order various facets

of the residential environment, and the priority assigned to a given facet is determined by the marginal utility they could achieve through possible improvement. When current houses or neighbourhoods are consistent with their 'reference' conditions, a psychological state of satisfaction is produced.

The point here is that the 'reference' conditions constructed in residents' minds have been changing, depending on the social environment and residents' economic situation. Before 1978, when China was marked by poor economic performance and private wealth was relatively small (Piketty *et al.*, 2019), the priority of work unit compounds was to provide a living place for the workers. For residents, the 'reference' for their neighbourhood and housing was simple: a place to accommodate the whole family. Living in a house almost freely was consistent with their 'reference', so satisfied with the neighbourhood and functional attachment were easily generated. With rapid economic growth and increasing private wealth (Piketty *et al.*, 2019), residents in urban areas have more needs. The 'reference' conditions for a neighbourhood environment includes high-quality green spaces, well-kept open areas, a high standard of cleanliness, and good quality housing conditions. The 'reference' conditions for neighbourhood facilities include the presence of sport and leisure facilities, recreational facilities for children, and an underground parking lot. The 'reference' conditions for local services include professional private services such as indoor and outdoor maintenance, cleaning and security services, as well as efficient responses from service providers, and a diversity of public services in the local area provided by the local government.

In privately governed residential spaces (in this context, the new commercial-housing neighbourhood), these 'reference' conditions can be easily fulfilled due to the market-oriented private provisions which are characterised by profit maximisation. Therefore, satisfaction with the neighbourhood and thereby functional attachment tend to be higher in these newly built commercial-housing estates and tend to be relatively high in old commercial-housing neighbourhoods. However, in other neighbourhoods that still feature governmental influences (in this context, the SOE neighbourhood, public institution neighbourhood and sometimes the resettlement-housing neighbourhood), the service provisions are more likely to be rigid, which is also one of the characteristics of public governance. As a result, in these neighbourhoods, residents' 'reference' conditions tend to

be unfulfilled, which leads to dissatisfaction and a low level of functional attachment to the neighbourhood.

As mentioned by Zhu *et al.* (2012) and Lu *et al.* (2018), privatised services enhance neighbourhood attachment, compared with services provided by state-led or mixed organisations. The findings in this section have revealed that the extent to which residents’ ‘reference’ conditions are being met determines functional attachment towards their neighbourhood. No matter whether it is a privately or publicly governed residential space, the key is to flexibly adjust to meet residents’ needs, enabling residents to maximise utility.

**Table 8.5 Functional attachment of the five neighbourhoods**

	<b>SOE neighbourhood</b>	<b>Resettlement-housing neighbourhood</b>	<b>Public institution neighbourhood</b>	<b>Old commercial-housing neighbourhood</b>	<b>New commercial-housing neighbourhood</b>
<b>Physical environment</b>	The majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the physical environment	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the physical environment	The majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the physical environment	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the physical environment	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the physical environment
<b>Neighbourhood facilities</b>	The majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the neighbourhood facilities	The majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the neighbourhood facilities	The majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the neighbourhood facilities	The majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the neighbourhood facilities	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the neighbourhood facilities
<b>Private services</b>	The majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the private services	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the private services	The majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the private services	The majority of participants felt dissatisfied with the private services	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the private services
<b>Public services</b>	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the public services in local area	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the public services in local area	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the public services in local area	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the public services in local area	The majority of participants felt satisfied with the public services in local area
<b>Functional Attachment</b>	The majority of participants tended not to have functional attachment	The majority of participants tended to have functional attachment	The majority of participants tended not to have functional attachment	The majority of participants tended to have functional attachment	The majority of participants tended to have functional attachment

Source: Author’s creation (2021)

## 8.6 Conclusion

This chapter examined functional attachment in the five different types of neighbourhoods through analysing three themes: satisfaction with the physical environment, neighbourhood

facilities and neighbourhood services. This study revealed that the participants of the SOE neighbourhood and public institution neighbourhood tended not to have functional attachment, while those in the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, old commercial-housing neighbourhood and new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have functional attachment. These findings highlight that a good neighbourhood environment, neighbourhood facilities and services not only generate functional attachment but also promote neighbourly interactions which can develop emotional attachment. The following chapter presents the data analysis in relation to neighbourhood participation.

## Chapter 9 Formal Participation

### 9.1 Introduction

This is the fourth chapter of the data analysis. It addresses the third research question: ‘What are the levels of formal participation in the different types of urban neighbourhoods? Why is this the case?’ To accomplish this, Chapter 9 draws on the residents’ experiences to explore formal participation among the five urban neighbourhoods in Chengdu through analysing residents’ participation in neighbourhood elections. This chapter is organised as follows. Section 9.2 examines the participation in neighbourhood elections and provides findings and discussions. Section 9.3 concludes Chapter 9.

### 9.2 Participation in neighbourhood elections

Formal participation in the context of the neighbourhood shows that residents have civil rights; it achieves legitimacy for decisions, and it advances residents’ individual development, as well as contributes to wider neighbourhood development (Dekker, 2007; Aitken, 2017). To explore the residents’ perspectives and experiences within the five urban neighbourhoods, the following questions were asked: ‘Have you ever participated in neighbourhood elections?’; ‘Which types of neighbourhood elections have you participated in and how do you feel?’; and ‘Why do you not want to participate in the elections?’ (see Appendix 3). The purposes of these questions were to explore what types of neighbourhood elections are participated in by residents and how residents felt about participating in them. The following subsections will present the participants’ responses to these questions, followed by the analysis of the data.

#### SOE neighbourhood

Six of the seven participants from the SOE neighbourhood stated that they had never voted in neighbourhood elections. Only one participant had voted in the election for the *shequ* representatives. As will be shown below, the participants indicated that they generally had negative attitudes towards participating in neighbourhood elections. They stated that they were a lack of interest in neighbourhood elections because they were considered useless activities which could not actually improve their lives. Although two participants showed

the intention to vote in elections, due to a lack of information and unfamiliarity with the candidates, their intentions had not been translated into real action.

An example comes from Participant A4, a 75-year-old woman who did not participate in the neighbourhood election. She held negative attitudes towards the neighbourhood elections and explained that she had ‘a lack of interest’, stating that the election could not ‘help with anything’. She stated:

I have neither voted in neighbourhood elections nor heard about these types of activities in my neighbourhood. I am not interested in participating in neighbourhood elections because it does not mean much to me. It cannot help with anything.

Another example was given by Participant A7, who indicated that he did not vote in the neighbourhood elections because he ‘did not know the candidates’. He stated:

I have never participated in these kinds of activities in my neighbourhood. Also, I do not care about it. Another reason is that I did not know the candidates and the election results may not be to my liking. So I did not want to participate in the election.

However, some participants showed ‘a strong intention’ to vote in neighbourhood elections but did not take real action. Participant A5 explained that he had not found the ‘time’ or ‘location’ of the elections on the announcement. He said:

I have never voted in the neighbourhood elections. I once found an announcement which invited locals to participate in an election. I wanted to take part, but I could not find the time or location of the election. Ultimately, I did not bother to participate in the election.

By contrast, one participant had voted in a neighbourhood election. Participant A3 shared her experience of voting in the *shequ* representative election. She had a strong political interest in participating because of her familiarity with the candidates. She expressed satisfaction with the election results. This suggests that social networks may promote participants to participate in neighbourhood elections. She stated:

I voted in an election, which was electing the *shequ* representatives. The *shequ* organised the election. All the candidates were staff of the *shequ*. I knew them well. They canvassed in the neighbourhoods before the election. I was delighted to participate in this activity. I think these representatives could do better in assisting residents, promoting community culture and mediating in civil litigation.



The above quotes show that the participants from the SOE neighbourhood tended to have low levels of participation in neighbourhood elections. This was attributed to a lack of interest, unfamiliarity with the candidates and a lack of practical information about when and where to vote.

#### Resettlement-housing neighbourhood

Four of the six participants from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood had voted in neighbourhood elections. According to the participants, the neighbourhood elections included the elections of neighbourhood representatives and *shequ* representatives. The participants stated that voting in neighbourhood elections provided an opportunity to choose their preferred representatives. As a result, they voted for the neighbourhood representatives who they thought would best provide support for their lives. As will be shown below, the participants highlighted that they were satisfied with the neighbourhood representatives' work. This study found that the participants were familiar with the candidates and understood the purpose of the elections. These factors contributed to the high level of participation in this neighbourhood. Additionally, the participants highlighted that the high level of participation was also attributable to mobilisation by neighbourhood representatives, who provided the information about the elections to residents, as well as timely reminders.

A good example comes from Participant B1, a 73-year-old retired worker who had participated in the election of a neighbourhood representative. She stated:

I have had the experience of taking part in neighbourhood elections. I participated in electing a neighbourhood representative. I also voted for the *shequ* representatives. I hope I voted for a candidate who can help residents solve problems and are willing to spend more time on practical matters.

Another good example was provided by Participant B2, a 54-year-old renter who had retired early. Although Participant B2 was a renter, he was allowed to vote in the election of the neighbourhood representatives. This study found that due to his long-term residence, his neighbours saw him as a member of the neighbourhood and allowed him to vote. He said:

I voted for the neighbourhood representative in my neighbourhood. I am satisfied with the result. Our neighbourhood representatives are nice people who always help us solve problems. They also give us reminders about the *shequ* elections and activities, in which we participate a lot.

Participant B3 had also voted in the neighbourhood election. She voted for a person who always helped other neighbours. She said:

I voted in an election for the neighbourhood representatives in my neighbourhood. I voted for a candidate whom I know well. She is a good person who is willing to help neighbours solve problems.

By contrast, two participants had not voted in the neighbourhood elections. Based on their comments, this study found that they were busy with their lives. An example comes from Participant B4, a 68-year-old female participant who lived with a family of four. She said:

I did not vote in neighbourhood elections because of personal matters. There were a lot of family issues to deal with. I know my neighbourhood elected three blocks' representatives and a neighbourhood's representative. I am satisfied with the results. I have asked for help from these representatives. They are quite helpful.

The above quotes show that the participants from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood tended to have a high level of formal participation.

#### Public institution neighbourhood

Half of the participants from the public institution neighbourhood stated that they had never voted in the neighbourhood elections. As will be shown below, the participants lacked interest in these activities because they thought the elections were 'not meaningful', 'a formality', 'useless' and 'a waste of time'. This study found that another three participants had voted in the election of the National People's Congress (NPC) for the city district. According to their comments, *shequ* had sent the work unit a notice requesting that a certain number of voters from the work unit needed to participate in this election. Then, the work unit appointed a corresponding quantity of employees to vote in the election. In this case, this participation seemed compulsory. All three participants expressed negative attitudes towards participating in elections and indicated that voting in the elections was meaningless to their lives.

An example comes from Participant C3, who had never participated in neighbourhood elections. She expressed that she focused on her work and did not know whether the neighbourhood had elections or not. She claimed:

I have never participated in neighbourhood elections. My work is very busy. I always work overtime. So I have never paid attention to neighbourhood elections. I do not know whether my neighbourhood organises elections or not.

Another comes example from Participant C2, who reported that she was disinterested in neighbourhood elections. She used the words ‘formality’, ‘useless’ and ‘a waste of time’ to describe her feelings about the election. She stated:

I have never voted in neighbourhood elections. I am not interested in this type of activity because the result has nothing to do with me. Honestly, I think the election results are preselected and unfair. All neighbourhood elections are formalities, which are useless and a waste of time.

Participant C1, a 56-year-old who had a 25-year residence, stated that he had voted in the election of the NPC for the city district. He indicated that his participation was required by his work unit. He used the word ‘formality’ to describe the election. He said:

I voted in an election, which was organised by the *shequ*. I participated in the election of the NPC for the city district because the *shequ* had sent my work unit a notice requesting that a certain number of voters from my work unit needed to vote in this election. I did not know the candidates. I voted randomly. I do not like taking part in these types of activities because I think it is a formality.

Similarly, Participant C4, a 53-year-old male participant who was employed in the public institution, also reported that he had voted in the election of the NPC for the city district. He indicated:

My neighbourhood is a work unit compound, which is managed by the work unit. The election is always held by the work unit. I have had experience participating in the work unit elections in our workplace. However, the content of the work unit elections was not related to neighbourhood issues. Once, the work unit organised for us to participate in the NPC deputy election at the district level at the office of the *shequ*. The staff of the *shequ* gave every voter a brochure, which included the information of the candidates. I did not know any of the candidates, so I read through the brochure and elected the candidate who had the best resumé. I do not like participating in the neighbourhood elections, but I had to complete the task required by the work unit.

The above quotes show that the participants from the public institution neighbourhood tended to have a medium level of formal participation.

### Old commercial-housing neighbourhood

Two of the five participants from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood had voted for members of the HOA in the neighbourhood. This study found that the majority of participants reported a negative attitude towards participating in neighbourhood elections because of a lack of time, negative participation experiences and knowing nothing about the candidates. As will be shown below, only one participant showed a strong intention to participate in the neighbourhood election. Due to her short residence, she had not had the experience of participating in an election.

Participant D1, a 52-year-old lady who worked in the street office, considered participating in the neighbourhood election to be meaningful. She described the function of the HOA. This suggests that her working experience made her understand the meaning of engagement in neighbourhood elections, which motivated her to participate in this election. She said:

I voted for the members of the HOA in my neighbourhood. I also have experience voting in the *shequ*. I think the election of the HOA is a meaningful activity. Members of the HOA cannot only express the residents' needs for the PMC, but also supervise the work of the PMC.

Another example was given by Participant D3, who had voted in the election of the HOA. He indicated that he had been a bad experience that undermined his interests in future participation. He said:

I voted in an election for the HOA in my neighbourhood. The PMC organised this activity. I participated in this election because I was looking forward to the HOA making a difference in the neighbourhood. However, I am disappointed because our HOA is barely functional. Because of this experience, I am not interested in these types of activities. I always contact the PMC when I have problems.

However, Participant D4, a 36-year-old female participant who had a short-term residence (less than a year), showed interest in participating in the neighbourhood elections. Asked to explain why she wanted to participate in the neighbourhood election, D4 indicated that she had heard about a good experience in her friend's neighbourhood, which motivated her to do it. She explained:

I do not have experience of voting in neighbourhood elections in this neighbourhood. I have been living in this neighbourhood for only half a year. If my neighbourhood organises a neighbourhood election in the future, I will definitely take part in it. It's

because my friend told me her neighbourhood has a good HOA which not only helps manage neighbourhood issues but also offers after-school care for children. After-school care assists busy and working parents with childcare needs. I hope my neighbourhood can have one.

Participant D5 did not participate in neighbourhood elections due to a lack of time and interest. He said:

My work is busy. I do not have time to participate in the neighbourhood election. I am not interested in it either.

The above quotes show that participants from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood had a medium to low level of formal participation.

#### New commercial-housing neighbourhood

None of the participants of the new commercial-housing neighbourhood had participated in neighbourhood elections. This study found that this neighbourhood had never organised neighbourhood elections because it was a newly built neighbourhood. At the time of the interviews, this neighbourhood was going to elect a HOA shortly. The PMC had placed a giant poster near the main door and was issuing reminders in the neighbourhood group chat on social media. Notwithstanding all this, six of the seven participants reported a low intention to participate in the election of the HOA. The reasons were concentrated on 'a lack of time' and 'unknown candidates'. Unlike previous neighbourhoods, the participants from the new commercial-housing neighbourhood knew an election was going to take place, but they did not want to be involved.

An example comes from Participant E1, who expressed a low intention to participate in the election due to a lack of time. She stated:

I do not have experience of participating in neighbourhood elections. I noticed recently that my neighbourhood is going to elect a HOA. All the candidates and their relative information have been posted in the public area. I did not know the candidates on the poster. But I think they are nice neighbours who want to do something for our neighbourhood. I am not going to vote in the election of the HOA because I do not have time. I have a wait-and-see attitude towards the neighbourhood election because it is our first one.

Similarly, Participant E3, a 30-year-old male employed in a hotel, reported that he was not going to get involved in the HOA elections. He explained that he was too busy looking after his young daughter in his spare time. He said:

I never participate in this type of activity because of my busy work. I have a night shift sometimes. I need to use my spare time to look after my daughter. I have not paid attention to neighbourhood elections.

An example comes from Participant E2, a 55-year-old female who expressed that she had not participated in neighbourhood elections because she considered the election a meaningless activity. She said:

I have never voted in neighbourhood elections. I saw the announcement about the election for the homeowners' association. I found the information about the candidates on the big poster. I can recognise some candidates' faces who live in my block. But I have never talked to them. I am not going to vote in the HOA election because I do not have time. Honestly, even if I had time, I would not want to vote in this type of activity because the HOA will just be a kind of decoration.

Some participants did not want to participate in neighbourhood elections because they did not see any reason for turning to the HOA when they needed help. For example, Participant E5 reported that they would be more likely to turn to the PMC than the HOA if she needed help. She said:

I have never participated in the neighbourhood election due to my busy work. I know my neighbourhood is going to elect a HOA, but I am not going to vote in the election because I am suspicious of the function of a homeowners' association. My neighbourhood has a good PMC. I always ask for help from them.

In contrast, Participant E7 felt passionate about participating in the election of the HOA. She claimed that the neighbourhood elections were good for 'neighbourhood management'. She stated that she was familiar with the candidates in the election. This suggests that the high intention to participate is attributable to strong neighbourhood-based social networks.

I am very interested in these types of activities because I believe it is good for neighbourhood management. I am going to vote in the election of the HOA in my neighbourhood. I am familiar with the candidates. They are conscientious people with warm hearts. I know whom I would like to vote for in the election.

The above quotes show that participants from the new commercial-housing neighbourhood had a low level of formal participation.

### 9.2.1 Summary and discussion

This section summarises and discusses the findings of participation in neighbourhood elections in the five urban neighbourhoods in Chengdu. Ten of the 31 participants from the five neighbourhoods had experience participating in different types of neighbourhood elections. Four types of neighbourhood elections were reported by the participants: the election of *shequ* representatives, the election of neighbourhood and block representatives, the election of the HOA and the election of People's Congress delegates for the city district. As can be seen in Table 9.2, these neighbourhood elections were organised by the *shequ*, PMCs and residents themselves. This study revealed that the participants from the SOE neighbourhood tended to have a low level of formal participation while the resettlement-housing neighbourhood tended to have a medium to high level of formal participation. The participants from the public institution neighbourhood tended to have a medium level of formal participation while those from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have a medium to low level of formal participation. The participants from the new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have a low level of formal participation. Apart from those from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, the participants from the other four neighbourhoods expressed negative feelings towards participating in neighbourhood elections. All of this is depicted below in Tables 9.1 and 9.2.

**Table 9.1 Participation in the neighbourhood elections in the five neighbourhoods**

	<b>Participating in neighbourhood elections</b>	<b>Reasons for willingness to participate in neighbourhood elections</b>	<b>Reasons for unwillingness to participate in neighbourhood elections</b>	<b>Attitudes towards participating in neighbourhood elections</b>
<b>SOE neighbourhood</b>	The participants had a low level of participation in neighbourhood elections	Political interests	Lack of interest  Lack of electoral information  Unknown candidates	Negative
<b>Resettlement-housing neighbourhood</b>	The participants had a medium to high level of participation in neighbourhood elections	Understanding the purpose of elections  Benefits from previous participation  Mobilisation by neighbourhood representatives	Lack of time	Positive
<b>Public institution neighbourhood</b>	The participants had a medium level of participation in neighbourhood elections	Requirements of the public institution	Busy with work  Lack of interest  Unknown candidates	Negative
<b>Old commercial-housing neighbourhood</b>	The participants had a medium to low level of participation in neighbourhood elections	Understanding the purpose of elections	Negative experience of participation  Busy for work  Lack of time  Unknown candidates	Negative
<b>New commercial-housing neighbourhood</b>	The participants had a low level of participation in neighbourhood elections	Having interest  Knowing the candidates	Lack of time  Busy with work  Unknown candidates	Negative

Source: Author's creation (2020)

**Table 9.2 Forms of participation in neighbourhood elections in the five neighbourhoods**

	<b>Forms of neighbourhood elections</b>	<b>Organisers</b>
<b>SOE neighbourhood</b>	The election of <i>shequ</i> representatives	The <i>shequ</i>
<b>Resettlement-housing neighbourhood</b>	The election of <i>shequ</i> representatives  The election of neighbourhood representatives	Residents  The <i>shequ</i>
<b>Public institution neighbourhood</b>	The election of People's Congress delegates for city district	The <i>shequ</i>
<b>Old commercial-housing neighbourhood</b>	The election of the HOA	The PMC
<b>New commercial-housing neighbourhood</b>	None	None

Source: Author's creation (2020)



As can be seen in Table 9.1, in the SOE neighbourhood, most participants had never participated in neighbourhood elections. The participants expressed that they were generally disinterested in participating in elections because they considered these activities to be meaningless. Many participants were suspicious of the importance of the neighbourhood elections because they indicated that the election results could not bring benefits to their lives (see Participants A4 and A7). These attitudes reflect that the participants considered their interests and benefits were not tied to the elections' results. As mentioned by Heberer and Gobel (2011, p.126), residents will be in favour of neighbourhood elections as long as the results bring them benefits. Although two participants reported intentions to participate in the neighbourhood elections, due to a lack of information about the election, they did not take real action (see Participant A5). Not knowing the candidates was another reason that was frequently mentioned by the participants. This finding is in line with those of Heberer and Gobel (2011, p.126), which shows a universal existence of information deficit in relation to the nature of elections in China. The findings suggest that having necessary information about candidates can prompt participants' willingness to participate in the election. In contrast, a lack of electoral information will decrease the intention to take part.

The findings regarding the SOE neighbourhood in Chengdu are inconsistent with the findings of Heberer and Gobel (2011), who report that residents from large SOE neighbourhoods in Shenyang had high levels of participation in neighbourhood elections. Heberer and Gobel (2011) explain that these residents usually knew each other, and they were used to forming collective thought patterns. However, based on the findings from Chapter 7 that the SOE neighbourhood had strong neighbourly ties, it is necessary to find another explanation for these participants' lack of participation. It may be that regional differences can cause different findings. In addition, this study found that most residents of the SOE neighbourhood in this study were elderly residents who had already retired. According to the participants, the work unit no longer invited retired employees to engage in the *shequ* elections. These may be the reasons for the low level of formal participation. In view of this, although the SOE neighbourhood had strong neighbourly ties, the participants did not display an interest in politics and therefore they were less involved in the neighbourhood election.

In the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, most of the participants voted in the neighbourhood elections (see Table 9.1). Two types of elections were mentioned by the

participants: the election of *shequ* representatives and the election of neighbourhood representatives. The participants expressed positive attitudes towards the neighbourhood elections. This study found that participants from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood were familiar with the candidates and understood the purpose of the elections (see Participants B1 and B3). Neighbourhood representatives significantly promoted the participants to have more participation by giving time reminder (see Participants B2). This finding contradicts the results of some existing studies that assert that resettlement-housing neighbourhoods have low levels of participation in neighbourhood events due to unfamiliarity with organised neighbourhood events (Lu *et al.*, 2018).

Although two participants did not attend the neighbourhood election, their non-participation was attributed to their busy lives (see Participant B4). This study found that these two participants both had large families, with four or five family members each, and they explained that they needed to look after young family members. According to Dekker (2007), some residents are unwilling to engage in elections because they spend their time doing other things. However, the problem is that residents have a strong aspiration to participate in elections but are not able to do so. In view of this, it is not surprising that they did not have time to attend some collective activities in the neighbourhood. Nonetheless, these two participants confirmed that they were satisfied with the election results.

This study found that neighbourhood representatives played an important role in facilitating formal participation. According to the participants, neighbourhood representatives passed the election information on to them and helped organise residents to participate in these elections (see Participant B2). The neighbourhood representative acted like glue in the way that it pulled residents together and mobilised them to participate in the neighbourhood elections. This finding resonates with existing studies that report that participants who have frequent interactions with other residents are more integrated into the local area and may be more willing to play an active role in political activities and other neighbourhood matters (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Dekker, 2006; Zhu, 2020). Combining all of this together, the participants from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood tended to have a medium to high level of formal participation and held positive attitudes towards neighbourhood participation.

In the public institution neighbourhood, half of the participants voted in the election of People's Congress delegates for the city district (see Table 9.1). Although three participants attended the election, they were not aware of the importance of the neighbourhood elections. According to the participants, their participation was compulsory rather than voluntary. The *shequ* sent a notice to the work unit asking for a certain number of voters to be appointed. This study found that the neighbourhood elections were generally evaluated very negatively by participants because they did not know the candidates (see Participants C1 and C4). Since these candidates were not elected by residents but appointed by means of a 'soft' consultation. Unknown electoral candidates cannot truly represent the opinions of all residents. In addition, participants suspected that the election results are preselected and unfair (see Participant C2). This could be the reason that some other residents refused to take part in 'manipulated' elections. Accordingly, the participants made negative comments about participating in these activities, calling them a 'waste of time' and a 'formality'. This finding resonates with a Chinese study by Heberer and Gobel (2011), who claim that neighbourhood participation cannot be taken seriously and joining in them is, thus, senseless.

The rest of the participants did not have experience of participating neighbourhood elections because they were busy and disinterested in such activities. They seemed unaware of these elections and even questioned that such elections existed (see Participant C3). This finding contradicts the results of some existing studies that assert that work unit neighbourhoods have the highest levels of participation because a well-organised social entity can effectively organise neighbourhood affairs (Wu, 2012).

This study found that unlike the participants from the SOE neighbourhood, most participants of the public institution neighbourhood had not retired. Most of them were employees of the research institute who reported that they did not have time to attend the elections due to their busy work schedules. These participants only voted in the election when the work unit required it and organised its employees to take part in the election (see Participants C1 and C4). In view of this, the participants from the public institution neighbourhood tended to have a medium level of formal participation and held negative attitudes towards neighbourhood participation.

In the old commercial-housing neighbourhood, fewer than half of the participants had taken part in the neighbourhood elections (see Table 9.1). According to the participants, the major

reasons for their low level of participation were a lack of time, the bad experience of participation and a lack of interest in the elections (see Participant D5). The finding is consistent with those of a quantitative study that indicates that residents living in commercial-housing neighbourhoods have a lower likelihood of voting in neighbourhood elections (Wu and Wang, 2016). This finding also resonates with a study by Heberer and Gobel (2011), who state that residents' participation experience is important, which could influence their aspiration to participate in civic engagement in the future. Based on this, the majority of participants from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have a medium to low level of formal participation.

The new commercial-housing neighbourhood, as a newly built neighbourhood, had never organised neighbourhood elections by the time of the interviews, and therefore none of the participants had voted. When I asked whether they had intentions to take part in future neighbourhood elections, one of the seven participants reported an intention to vote in the upcoming election (see Participants E7). This study found that this retired participant had a wide social network in the neighbourhood, which promoted her intention to participate. This finding is consistent with existing research that indicates that residents who maintain dense social networks and have frequent interactions with other neighbours report high levels of formal participation (Kang and Kwak, 2003; Marschall, 2004; Dekker, 2006; Zhu, 2020).

However, some studies indicate that residents from commercial-housing neighbourhoods pay more attention to political issues and activities because these neighbourhoods have many homeowners who have a common stake and are aware of their rights (Zhu, 2015; Lu *et al.*, 2018). However, this study found that participants in the new commercial-housing neighbourhoods reported a low likelihood to vote in local political elections. As was mentioned in Chapter 8, the PMC provided good neighbourhood management to residents, which contributed to a high level of resident satisfaction. Although this kind of satisfaction strengthened neighbourhood attachment, it meant some participants showed a lack of interest in voting for the HOA due to their satisfaction with the services provided by the PMC (see Participant E5). Combining these findings together, the majority of participants of the new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have a low level of formal participation.

This study found that strong neighbourhood-based networks can improve formal participation. Strong social networks indicated knowing more people in the neighbourhood

(Bridge, 2002; Hu *et al.*, 2018). Knowing residents and candidates contributed to high levels of participation in neighbourhood elections in the resettlement-housing neighbourhood whilst unknown candidates was a significant reason for the reluctance of participation in the other four neighbourhoods. Taking an example from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, high levels of participation in the elections of the neighbourhood representatives were largely due to the familiarity with candidates. Participants understood their election results would be meaningful as the person they elected would be the most appropriate one who knew their neighbourhood, excelled at addressing neighbourhood issues and was passionate and nice. Although the likelihood of participation was dependent on strong social networks, the participation levels were affected by the types of elections. Participants of the public institution neighbourhood had strong neighbourhood-based social networks, but they showed less interest in the election of the NPC for the city district due to unknown candidates. In view of this, although both neighbourhoods had strong neighbourhood-based networks, unknown candidates reduced the motivation for participation. Combining all these, strong neighbourhood-based social networks can contribute to the high level of informal participation.

### 9.3 Conclusion

This chapter has examined formal participation in the five different types of neighbourhoods through analysing participation in neighbourhood elections. This study revealed that the participants from the SOE neighbourhood tended to have a low level of formal participation. The participants from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood tended to have a medium to high level of formal participation. The participants from the public institution neighbourhood tended to have a medium level of formal participation while those from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have a medium to low level of formal participation. The participants from the new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have a low level of formal participation. Apart from the participants from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, the participants of the other four neighbourhoods expressed negative feelings towards participating in neighbourhood elections. This study found that strong neighbourhood-based networks can improve formal participation. The following chapter presents the data analysis in relation to informal participation.

## Chapter 10 Informal Participation

### 10.1 Introduction

This is the fourth data analysis chapter. It addresses the fourth research question: ‘What is the level of informal participation in the different types of urban neighbourhoods? Why is this the case?’ To accomplish this, Chapter 10 draws on the residents’ perspectives and experiences to explore informal participation in the five urban neighbourhoods in Chengdu through analysing participation in neighbourhood-organised activities and reporting neighbourhood problems. This chapter is organised as follows. Participation in neighbourhood-organised activities is examined in Section 10.2, then Section 10.3 examines reporting neighbourhood problems. Section 10.4 presents the findings on informal participation in the five neighbourhoods. Finally, Section 10.5 concludes this chapter

### 10.2 Participation in neighbourhood-organised activities

Participation in neighbourhood-organised activities is important for improving the neighbourhood environment, facilitating local service delivery, maintaining social order, and enhancing community capacity (Zhu, 2020). To explore the residents’ experiences of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities within the five urban neighbourhoods in Chengdu, the following questions were asked: ‘Have you ever participated in neighbourhood-organised activities in the neighbourhood?’, ‘Which types of neighbourhood-organised activities have you participated in?’, and either ‘How did you get involved in these activities?’; or ‘Why have not you participated in these activities?’ (see Appendix 3). The purposes of these questions are to explore what types of neighbourhood-organised activities are participated in by residents and to examine how residents feel about participating in these activities. The following subsections will present the participants’ responses to these questions, followed by an analysis of the data.

#### SOE neighbourhood

Three of the seven participants from the SOE neighbourhood had participated in neighbourhood-organised activities. These participants indicated that they had joined a croquet team and played croquet with neighbours almost every day. Another four

participants said that they did not participate in neighbourhood-organised activities. They explained that due to the absence of a PMC, many participants had not obtained opportunities to take part in various neighbourhood-organised activities. These participants used to attend activities organised by the work unit. As mentioned previously, most residents were elderly people who had retired. Many participants indicated that they felt that the work unit was no longer responsible for them since they had retired.

A good example comes from Participant A1, an 80-year-old man who indicated that this neighbourhood had a croquet team. He participated in this team and interacted with his neighbours almost every day. He said:

We used to participate in activities organised by the work unit. Nowadays, they do not organise any activities for us. At present, we attend a regular health assessment every year, which is organised by the work unit. In my neighbourhood, we do not have a PMC that can organise activities for residents. But we have a croquet team. I joined this team and play croquet with my neighbours almost every day.

Similarly, Participant A7, a 77-year-old man who had resided in the neighbourhood for 30 years, indicated that he had joined the croquet team in the neighbourhood and described himself as enjoying this activity. He stated:

A long time ago, my work unit organised for employees and their family members to have a trip, and we had a fun journey. At present, the work unit no longer organises activities for us because we have retired. I joined a croquet team and enjoyed playing croquet with my neighbours.

Another example comes from Participant A2, an 82-year-old male participant who stated that he took part in the neighbourhood's croquet team. He used the phrase 'a lot of fun' to describe his feelings about this activity. He said:

Neither my neighbourhood nor the work unit organises events, but we have set up a neighbourhood croquet team. I am a member of the croquet team. We play croquet almost every day. Exercise keeps our bodies strong and healthy. It is a lot of fun to play croquet with my neighbours.

Participant A3, a 72-year-old woman, attributed the low participation in neighbourhood-organised activities to a lack of neighbourhood organisations that could organise events for residents. She said:

The neighbourhood lacks a PMC to organise activities for residents.

Combining these responses, it can be seen that fewer than half of the participants engaged in neighbourhood-organised activities. The work unit no longer organised activities for them since they had retired. Based on this, the SOE neighbourhood had a medium to low level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities.

#### Resettlement-housing neighbourhood

All the participants from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood indicated that they had a great deal of experience participating in a variety of neighbourhood-organised activities. They regularly took part in these activities. These activities were organised by the *shequ* and neighbourhood representatives. According to the participants' narratives, *shequ* activities included dancing competitions, free movies, workshops, festival celebrations and sports events. It appeared that the participants not only enjoyed these many kinds of activities, but also benefited from their participation. As Participant B1 said, these activities helped residents expand their social networks. Neighbourhood meetings were also mentioned by some participants. These meetings were held with the aim of discussing neighbourhood problems. The participants expressed that they liked engaging in neighbourhood meetings because it was the best way to solve such problems.

A good example comes from Participant B1, a woman aged 73 years who described how she enjoyed participating in *shequ* activities because she made new friends that way. She emphasised that these activities promoted relationships among local residents. She said:

I love to participate in neighbourhood-organised activities, especially those activities organised by the *shequ*. Our *shequ* regularly organises activities, such as dancing competitions, workshops, festival celebrations and sports events. Residents from those neighbourhoods under the *shequ*'s control can participate in these activities. My favourite activity is the festival celebrations because a lot of residents from different neighbourhoods gather together. Through participation in these activities, I have made new friends who live in other neighbourhoods. I think these activities strengthen relationships between local people.

Another example was given by Participant B2, a 54-year-old male participant who stated that for him, the 'most impressive neighbourhood activity was free movies'. He said the *shequ* activities had enriched his life. He said:



I like attending *shequ* activities. The most impressive activity has been watching a movie with my neighbours. On one occasion, the *shequ* set up an inflatable movie screen and sound system in the open area. Residents needed to bring a chair and got together to watch the movie. I cannot remember what the movie was, but I really enjoyed it. I will continue to take part in *shequ* activities because these activities make my life more vibrant. I also had fun by taking part in them.

Participation in neighbourhood meetings was mentioned by Participant B3, a 65-year-old female who stated that reporting problems in neighbourhood meetings were the quickest way to solve them. She stated:

I regularly join in neighbourhood meetings, which are organised by neighbourhood representatives. When we have a neighbourhood meeting, residents will gather in the open area of the neighbourhood. It is the best way to get information. I have also found that reporting neighbourhood issues in the meeting is the quickest way to solve them.

Some leisure activities such as garden parties were highlighted by Participant B4, a 68-year-old female participant who had a residence of over 20 years. She said:

I participate in neighbourhood activities very often. I really like taking part in neighbourhood activities and enjoy the process of participation. My favourite one to participate in is garden parties. I participate in these activities three or four times a week. It usually takes place in the open areas of my neighbourhood. I like sitting on benches, chatting, drinking tea and eating fruit with my neighbours.

Combining these responses, it can be seen that all the participants from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood had rich experiences of participating in different types of neighbourhood-organised activities. These activities included *shequ* activities and neighbourhood meetings. Through their participation, these participants expanded their social networks by making new friends. They also indicated that participation in neighbourhood meetings was the best way to solve problems. Therefore, the participants from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood had a high level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities.

#### Public institution neighbourhood

None of the participants from the public institution neighbourhood had participated in neighbourhood-organised activities. As is shown in the quotes below, the participants expressed that this neighbourhood lacked neighbourhood organisations to organise activities for residents, which naturally led to a low level of participation. Some participants expressed

that even if this neighbourhood had neighbourhood-organised activities, they would not participate because they were busy or lacked interest.

An example comes from Participant C6, who indicated that this neighbourhood did not have neighbourhood organisations to organise events. She stated:

I have never participated in neighbourhood-organised activities. My neighbourhood does not have a PMC to organise such events. But my work is also too busy, so I would not have time to take part in these activities.

Participant C2, an 18-year-old female, did not know of the existence of any neighbourhood organisations, not to mention any activities they might have organised. She said:

I have never attended any neighbourhood-organised activities. I do not know whether we even have a neighbourhood organisation. Even if my neighbourhood organisation were to organise these, I may not participate in them. I am not interested in such activities.

Combining these responses, it can be seen that none of the participants had ever participated in neighbourhood-organised activities due to the absence of neighbourhood organisations. Thus, the public institution neighbourhood had a low level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities.

#### Old commercial-housing neighbourhood

All of the participants of the old commercial-housing neighbourhood reported that they had never participated in neighbourhood-organised activities. This study found that although this neighbourhood had a PMC and a HOA, they had never organised other activities for residents. A member of staff for the PMC explained that they did not have funds to organise neighbourhood activities. During the interview, the PMC confirmed that they would organise a one-day tour for residents next year. The PMC mentioned that the *shequ* organised a variety of activities for local residents, which they notified residents of by pegging a notice on the notice board and sending a notification in a WeChat group chat of the WeChat (WeChat is China's most popular messaging app). As is shown in the quote below, the participants indicated that they rarely participated in *shequ* activities.

An example comes from Participant D4, a 36-year-old female who stated that she had two young children had never participated in neighbourhood-organised activities. She acknowledged that she had seen the notifications for the *shequ* activities but had not participated due to a lack of interest. She said:

I do not have experience participating in neighbourhood-organised activities. I just moved into my flat six months ago. During that time, my neighbourhood has never organised activities for residents. I have seen the announcements for *shequ* activities in the WeChat group, but I have not taken part in the activities because I have not had time. I have a full-time job and need to look after two young kids after work. Also, I am not interested in *shequ* activities. I suppose that elderly residents may be willing to participate in these activities.

Participant D5, a 51-year-old male, had never participated in neighbourhood-organised activities. He indicated that even though this neighbourhood had these activities, he would not engage in them. He would feel embarrassed interacting with unfamiliar neighbours. He stated:

I have never participated in neighbourhood activities. Our PMC has never organised events. Even if we had activities, I would not participate because I am not familiar with my neighbours. I would feel embarrassed participating in neighbourhood activities with unfamiliar neighbours.

Combining these responses, it can be seen that all the participants from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood had never engaged in neighbourhood-organised activities. The PMC had never organised neighbourhood activities due to a lack of funding. Although the *shequ* provided activities for local residents, the participants from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood lacked interest. As a result, the participants from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have a low level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities.

#### New commercial-housing neighbourhood

Five of the seven participants from the new commercial-housing neighbourhood had experience participating in neighbourhood-organised activities. As is shown in the quotes below, recreational activities organised by the PMC, such as dancing competitions, table tennis matches, children's colouring contests and free movies, were the most popular activities in the neighbourhood. Apart from these, other activities, such as health

consultations and neighbourhood meetings, also attracted the attention of participants. All the participants expressed positive attitudes toward these activities. Notably, although some participants had never participated in these activities, they knew that their neighbourhood organised a lot of activities for residents and evaluated these highly. They explained that they could not attend these activities because of their busy life schedules. During the interviews, this study observed that there was a big noticeboard placed in the public area of the neighbourhood which showed an annual activity plan. It displayed information about 21 different types of activities with themes and dates.

A good example comes from Participant E6, a 58-year-old female participant who described her experience of participating in neighbourhood activities and highlighted many advantages of participating in activities, such as enriching residents' lives and increasing interactions among residents. She said:

I have engaged in lots of neighbourhood activities, which are organised by the PMC, such as dancing competitions, sporting events and free movies. These activities have not only increased contact among residents but also enriched residents' life in some way. It can help residents get along quite well.

Notably, the children's activities attracted a good deal of attention from the participants who had children. For example, Participant E3, a 30-year-old male participant, indicated that his wife often brought their daughter to engage in activities. He pointed out that they benefitted from these activities and enjoyed them. He stated:

My wife often takes my daughter to participate in neighbourhood activities, which are organised by our PMC. The most interesting activities are recreational activities for children and the photo contest. We really enjoy attending these activities. My child has made new friends by attending children's activities. Recently, our PMC organised an activity called 'Getting to Know Yourself'. A foreign teacher taught the kids the names of the different body parts in English. This activity not only provided the kids with useful information on biology, but also fostered the children's sense of self-protection. They also learnt English by participating in this activity. I like these neighbourhood activities.

Participant E4, a 58-year-old male, mentioned that the PMC had organised a free day tour for homeowners who just moved into their new homes. He stated that he had gotten to know his neighbours by participating in this tour. This suggests that neighbourhood-organised activities can improve neighbourly interactions, therefore contributing to neighbourly relationships. He said:

When we had just moved into this neighbourhood, I participated in a day tour which was organised by the PMC. We went to a small town with lots of historical heritage. It was very interesting, and I had a relaxing day. I got to know some neighbours and even made friends by taking part in this day tour. The residents became familiar with the staff of PMC thanks to this day tour.

Participant E2, a 55-year-old female, had participated in the health consultations organised by the PMC. She used the word ‘interesting’ to describe neighbourhood-organised activities. She stated:

I do not participate in neighbourhood activities often because I have a busy job. But I know the PMC organises a lot of interesting activities. Once, the PMC invited doctors to provide free tests and health consultations in the neighbourhood. I was just passing by the garden and saw this activity, so I had my blood pressure checked, and it was a bit higher than usual. In the end, a doctor gave me a piece of useful advice.

Apart from the PMC’s activities, the *shequ* organised neighbourhood meetings in the neighbourhood. Participant E1, a 29-year-old designer, described her experience of getting a voice in neighbourhood meetings. She said:

The PMC has organised a lot of neighbourhood activities. They usually send a notification in WeChat the group to notify residents about the time and place of these activities. The PMC also posts announcements in the public area to remind residents about these activities. Although I have rarely engaged in these activities, I think these activities are perfect because they made the residents’ lives more interesting. Once, I attended a neighbourhood meeting, which was organised by the *shequ*. The purpose of the meeting was to make comments about our PMC. I provided positive comments about our PMC because they managed our neighbourhood very well and all the staff of the PMC were conscientious. The staff of the *shequ* told me that they would organise a neighbourhood meeting once a month.

Notably, although two participants had never participated in these activities, they positively evaluated neighbourhood activities. Participant E4 stated:

I do not have time to take part in neighbourhood activities because my work is very busy. After working hours, I need to look after my son, who is going to take the college entrance examination in the middle of this year. But I know our PMC organises a series of neighbourhood activities. My neighbours have a high degree of participation in these activities. I think these are good for the neighbourhood.

Combining these responses, it can be seen that it turned out that the participants from the new commercial-housing neighbourhood frequently engaged in neighbourhood activities. Interestingly, although some participants claimed earlier that they were busy with their lives,

they still made time to participate in neighbourhood-organised activities. This suggests that good neighbourhood-organised activities may increase participation among residents. Based on this, it can be concluded that the participants from the new commercial-housing neighbourhood had a medium to high level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities.

### 10.2.1 Summary and discussion

This section summarises and discusses the findings regarding participation in neighbourhood-organised activities in the five urban neighbourhoods in Chengdu. Altogether, 14 of the 31 participants from the five neighbourhoods had the experience of different types of neighbourhood-organised activities. These 14 participants came from the SOE neighbourhood, the resettlement-housing neighbourhood and the new commercial-housing neighbourhood. As can be seen in Table 10.2, the various activities mentioned by these participants were organised by the neighbourhood representatives, residents themselves, the PMC and the *shequ*. This study revealed that the participants from the SOE neighbourhood tended to have a medium to low level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities while those from the new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have a medium to low level. The participants from the public institution neighbourhood and the old commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have a low level of participation while those from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood tended to have a high level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities. All of this is depicted below in Tables 10.1 and 10.2.

**Table 10.1 Attitudes towards neighbourhood-organised activities in the five neighbourhoods**

	<b>Level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities</b>	<b>Reasons for willingness to participate in neighbourhood-organised activities</b>	<b>Reasons for unwillingness to participate in neighbourhood-organised activities</b>	<b>Attitudes</b>
<b>SOE neighbourhood</b>	The participants had a medium to low level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities	Recreation	Lack of neighbourhood-organised activities	Negative
<b>Resettlement-housing neighbourhood</b>	The participants had a high level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities	Making new friends Recreation Reporting neighbourhood problems		Positive
<b>Public institution neighbourhood</b>	The participants had a low level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities		Lack of neighbourhood-organised activities	Negative
<b>Old commercial-housing neighbourhood</b>	The participants had a low level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities		Lack of neighbourhood-organised activities.	Negative
<b>New commercial-housing neighbourhood</b>	The participants had a medium to high level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities	Recreation Knowing neighbours and making friends Having a voice	A lack of time	Positive

Source: Author's creation (2020)

**Table 10.2 Participation in neighbourhood-organised activities in the five neighbourhoods**

	<b>Forms of neighbourhood-organised activities that residents have participated in</b>	<b>Organisers</b>
<b>SOE neighbourhood</b>	Croquet team	Residents
<b>Resettlement-housing neighbourhood</b>	Dancing competition Workshops Festival celebration Sports events Free movie Neighbourhood meeting Garden party	Neighbourhood representatives <i>Shequ</i>
<b>Public institution neighbourhood</b>	None	None
<b>Old commercial-housing neighbourhood</b>	None	None
<b>New commercial-housing neighbourhood</b>	Dancing competition Sports events Free movie Children's activities Day trip Health consultations Neighbourhood meetings	PMC <i>Shequ</i>

Source: Author's creation. (2020)

As can be seen in Table 10.1, in the SOE neighbourhood, the participants expressed that they used to get involved in activities organised by their work unit (see Participant A1, for instance), but since their retirement, they had distanced themselves from the work unit, no longer feeling that those activities were for them. Hence, the participants who were used to the collective life of the work unit felt the lack of neighbourhood-organised activities. By contrast, three participants expressed that they played croquet every day and felt happy joining the neighbourhood croquet team (see Participants A2 and A7). This finding resonates with existing studies which show that joining in neighbourhood organisations such as football clubs can be considered a type of informal participation which generates neighbourly interactions and builds neighbourly relationships (Hays and Kogl, 2007; Dekker, 2007). Nevertheless, the majority of participants had never participated in neighbourhood-organised activities. Consequently, the participants of the SOE neighbourhood had a medium to low level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities.

In the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, all the participants participated in different types of neighbourhood-organised activities (see Table 10.1). The diverse range of activities included recreational activities and neighbourhood meetings, all of which helped participants expand their social networks by making new friends and efficiently solving neighbourhood problems through reporting them during neighbourhood meetings. The participants expressed their beliefs that neighbourhood-organised activities not only enriched their lives but were also the quickest way to solve issues (see Participants B1, B2, B3). This finding is consistent with findings of Chavis and Wandersman (1990) and Dekker (2006) who state that residents who have frequent interactions with other residents are more integrated into the local area and have a more positive perception about it, and they may be more willing to take an active role in neighbourhood activities. Based on this, the participants from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood had a high level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities.

In the public institution neighbourhood and the old commercial-housing neighbourhood, none of the participants had the experience of taking part in neighbourhood-organised activities (see Table 10.1). According to the participants from the public institution neighbourhood, although the majority of participants were current employees, the public institution had never organised neighbourhood activities for them. With regards to the old commercial-housing neighbourhood, the PMC had a shortage of funding for organising



neighbourhood activities. Although the *shequ* had a variety of activities, the participants were uninterested in them (see Participant D4, for instance). As a result, the participants of the old commercial-housing neighbourhood and the public institution neighbourhood tended to have low levels of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities.

In the old commercial-housing neighbourhood, none of the participants had the experience of being involved in the neighbourhood-organised activities (see Table 10.1). According to the participants, owing to the PMC's scarcity of funding, none of the participants had participated in neighbourhood-organised activities. Some participants indicated that even if this neighbourhood had these activities, he would not engage in them. He expressed that he would feel embarrassed interacting with unfamiliar neighbours (see Participant D5). His expression is in line with the finding of Tang and Sun (2016) who indicate that weak neighbourly ties (such as being unfamiliar with neighbours) seem to have no interest in neighbourhood activities and consequently display a low participation rate. In the view of this, a lack of neighbourhood activities and weak neighbourly ties led to the low level of neighbourhood-organised activities in the old commercial housing neighbourhoods.

In the new commercial-housing neighbourhood, the majority of participants had experiences of participating in neighbourhood-organised activities (see Table 10.1). As the interviews revealed, a diversity of neighbourhood activities was held by the PMC, which attracted a high level of participation (see Participants E3, E4 and E6). All the participants showed positive attitudes towards these activities. Notably, some participants reported they had no time to participate in the neighbourhood elections, but they made time for neighbourhood-organised activities. This finding is consistent with the findings of Lu *et al.* (2018), who indicated that neighbourhood activities in the commercial-housing neighbourhoods were of good quality (such as inviting foreigners to teach English), which attracted many participants to take part. Therefore, participants of the new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have a medium to high level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities.

Given the above findings, although existing studies addressed the importance of social networks in promoting informal participation (Kang and Kwak, 2003; Dekker *et al.*, 2010; Tang and Sun, 2016), this study found that having various neighbourhood activities served as one of the prerequisites for informal participation. The relatively low level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities in the two work unit neighbourhoods can perfectly

exemplify this. As discussed in Chapter 7, two work unit neighbourhoods had strong neighbourhood-based social networks, however, due to a lack of neighbourhood organisations, they had low levels of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities. Similarly, participants from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have a low level of participation because of the PMC's scarcity of funding to organise events. By contrast, the diverse neighbourhood activities contributed to high level of participation in the resettlement-housing neighbourhood and new commercial-housing neighbourhood. Based on all these, without denying the function of strong social networks on promoting informal participation, neighbourhood organisations played a crucial role in mobilising informal participation in the Chinese context.

### 10.3 Reporting neighbourhood problems

Reporting neighbourhood problems is seen as a form of informal participation (Lelieveldt, 2004; Tumber, 2013; Hays and Kogl, 2016). Although reporting neighbourhood problems seems like a way of being only temporarily engaged, it can generate dialogue and prompt residents to solve common issues that could cultivate participatory behaviour in the civic and political realms (Blakeley and Evans, 2009). Therefore, to explore the residents' experiences of reporting neighbourhood problems within the five urban neighbourhoods in Chengdu, the following questions were asked: 'Have you ever reported neighbourhood problems to neighbourhood organisations?'; 'Can you describe what you reported?'; and 'Were you satisfied with the solutions? Why or why not?' (see Appendix 3). The purposes of these questions were to explore what types of neighbourhood issues residents were concerned about and to examine how they felt about reporting neighbourhood problems to the neighbourhood organisations. The following subsections will present the participants' responses to these questions, followed by an analysis of the data.

#### SOE neighbourhood

Five of the seven participants from the SOE neighbourhood had experiences of reporting neighbourhood problems to the work unit. According to the participants, the work unit set up a logistics department (*houqing bumen*) that was responsible for providing support to employees and helping with neighbourhood problems. The neighbourhood problems were related to issues such as the quality of housing and community environment problems such

as dog fouling. Most participants made efforts to report neighbourhood problems to the work unit and the *shequ*. In the quotes below, the participants indicated that the work unit and the *shequ* gave prompt responses and provided solutions for neighbourhood problems. The participants were generally satisfied with the results.

A good example comes from Participant A4, who reported her neighbours' antisocial behaviours to the work unit. She stated:

I reported a neighbourhood issue to the work unit. I found that some renters were growing vegetables in the green space of the neighbourhood. I disagreed with the renters' behaviour because it harmed the public area. In the end, my work unit contacted the homeowners requesting they return the green space to the public.

Participant A2 had experiences of reporting community environmental problems to the *shequ*. He described that the problem of dog fouling destroyed the local environment. He said:

I had an experience of reporting neighbourhood issues to the *shequ*. I found there was a lot of dog waste on the street outside my neighbourhood. I observed that a lot of people were continually failing to clean up after their dogs. It ruined the community environment. A member of staff from the *shequ* gave me feedback that they would enhance pet management in the community. Afterwards, the situation improved somewhat.

The problem in relation to the quality of housing had been reported by some participants. An example comes from Participant A1, an 80-year-old male participant who had experience of reporting the problems regarding a leaking roof to the work unit. He said that the work unit had helped repair the leaking roof at no charge. He said:

I reported to my work unit that I had a leaking roof. The staff of the logistics department quickly found a repairman. The work unit covered the maintenance cost. I was satisfied with the solution.

By contrast, Participant A6 showed reluctance to report neighbourhood problems to the work unit or the *shequ*. She thought neighbourhood problems should be reported to the PMC, which was absent in this neighbourhood. She insisted:

I saw some residents throwing rubbish out of their windows. It harms the environment and the public interest. Although I was not happy with this behaviour, I did not report

it because I thought this case was outside the scope of the work unit or *shequ*. This issue should be reported to a management company, which we do not have.

Combining these responses, it can be seen that most participants from the SOE neighbourhood had experiences of reporting neighbourhood problems to the work unit or the *shequ*. They were generally satisfied with the solutions because the situations had been improved and solved. This study found that a few participants were reluctant to report neighbourhood problems even though they had noticed them. The participants explained that they would prefer to report neighbourhood issues to the PMC, which was absent in this neighbourhood. As a result, the participants of the SOE neighbourhood had a medium to high level of participation in reporting neighbourhood problems. Problems regarding the quality of housing and the neighbourhood environment were of particular concern.

#### Resettlement-housing neighbourhood

In the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, four of the six participants had experience of reporting neighbourhood problems to the neighbourhood representatives and the *shequ*. The quotes below show that many participants were concerned with problems related to the neighbourhood environment and safety. The participants stated that all the neighbourhood issues had been improved after they had reported them. Notably, the neighbourhood representatives played a significant role in helping with neighbourhood issues. These representatives not only resolved conflicts among residents but also presented pervasive neighbourhood problems to the *shequ* on behalf of all the residents. It can be seen in the quote below that through their efforts, the open area of the neighbourhood was reconstructed in 2013, which significantly improved participants' quality of life.

A particularly good example comes from Participant B1, who had reported neighbourhood issues on behalf of all residents to the *shequ*. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the reconstructed open areas not only improved residents' quality of life but also potentially facilitated their interactions, thereby contributing to neighbourhood attachment. She said:

I represented residents to report a neighbourhood issue to the *shequ*, which was requested to improve the living environment of the open areas. The open area of my neighbourhood was unkempt and lacked green space. In 2013, the *shequ* assisted with the reconstruction of the open area. My neighbours and I are very pleased with the results of the reconstruction. At present, one of my neighbours has become a volunteer to maintain the plants in the green space.

Another example comes from Participant B3, a 65-year-old female who reported a neighbourhood problem in relation to the absence of fire extinguishers in residential blocks to the *shequ*. She stated:

My neighbourhood is an old neighbourhood. There appeared to be a hidden danger with regards to fire safety in the neighbourhood as there were no fire extinguishers. I reported my concern to the *shequ*. Shortly afterwards, the *shequ* installed fire extinguishers in each block. I am satisfied with the result and as a result feel safer in the neighbourhood.

Some participants said they were more inclined to report neighbourhood issues to neighbourhood representatives. An example was given by Participant B2, a 54-year-old male resident who reported potential security issues to the neighbourhood representatives. He said:

I reported neighbourhood issues to our neighbourhood representatives. The block exit was covered by the arbitrary parking of bicycles. Not only was it a potential security issue, but it also influenced the neighbourhood aesthetics. The representatives talked to the bicycle owners and helped move the bicycles to the designated area. They also reminded other neighbours that block exits must be kept clear. I think my neighbourhood has neighbourhood self-governance. I like my neighbourhood being managed in this way. I do not want to have a PMC because I am satisfied with my current lifestyle and do not want to change it.

Notably, Participant B5, a 67-year-old female, expressed that she was reluctant to report neighbourhood problems to the *shequ* because of concern for the reputation of her neighbourhood. She said:

I do not like reporting neighbourhood issues to the *shequ* because it will influence our neighbourhood's reputation.

Combining these responses, it can be seen that most participants had experiences of reporting neighbourhood problems to neighbourhood representatives and the *shequ*. The participants had positive attitudes towards reporting neighbourhood issues because they were satisfied with the solutions. This study found that participants were seriously concerned about the neighbourhood environment, safety and security and showed a medium to high level of participation in reporting neighbourhood issues.

### Public institution neighbourhood

Four of the six participants from the public institution neighbourhood had experiences of reporting neighbourhood problems to the work unit. The public institution had a logistical department, which offered support to residents and helped solve neighbourhood issues. These issues were mostly associated with the quality of housing as well as neighbourhood environmental problems. The participants stated that they were accustomed to reporting problems to the work unit in relation to the quality of housing. With respect to these issues, the work unit replied promptly and provided effective solutions. According to the participants' narratives, the maintenance cost was fully covered by the work unit. Notably, other problems such as issues of cleanliness and noise disturbances only had slight improvements. The participants indicated that they tended not to report unsolved problems repeatedly because it could potentially influence relationships with colleagues. Some participants stated that they wished to have a PMC that could provide professional services.

An example comes from Participant C1, a male participant who reported fire safety problems regarding the blocked drain and the deteriorative circuit to the work unit. He stated:

I had an experience of telling the work unit about two neighbourhood issues. It was a matter of communicating problems rather than complaining about the neighbourhood. The first issue was a blocked drain in my flat. The work unit quickly found a plumber to dredge the pipe. The second one was old circuits in the residential blocks, which may cause safety issues. As I know, it was not only me but also other neighbours who had reported circuit deterioration to the work unit. My work unit ultimately provided a solution in that all the old wiring in the neighbourhood was changed. I am satisfied with all the solutions to these issues. I would like to mention that these issues did not mean that my neighbourhood was not good, as poor-quality housing usually goes with an older neighbourhood.

A problem regarding housing quality was reported by Participant C6, a 48-year-old female. Although she was satisfied with the solution provided by the work unit, she insisted that she would like to have a PMC to manage her neighbourhood. She said:

My flat is on the top floor. I reported that my roof was leaking. My work unit quickly responded and helped to find a handyman to repair my roof for free. I was satisfied with the solution. I also found a cleanliness issue in the neighbourhood, but I did not report it to the work unit because I thought this issue was not suitable to be reported to the work unit. I would prefer to have a PMC even though we would need to pay a high administrative fee. I think PMCs are in a good position to resolve neighbourhood issues.

Notably, not everyone was satisfied with the solutions to the neighbourhood problems. An example comes from Participant C4, who reported poor cleanliness to the work unit but was unsatisfied with the outcome. He said:

My neighbourhood does not have a PMC to report neighbourhood issues to. My neighbours and I usually report neighbourhood issues to the work unit. I reported a cleanliness issue in the open area and some noise disturbance from neighbours. After reporting it, there was a slight improvement, but they have not been completely resolved. I did not report it again because we are colleagues. I had to consider that the repeated reporting of neighbourhood issues may affect the relationship between us.

Another example comes from Participant C3, who was not an employee of the public institution. She had to report problems related to housing quality to the homeowner. She stated:

I have never reported neighbourhood problems to the neighbourhood association. As far as I know, this neighbourhood does not have a PMC. I have to report problems to the homeowners.

Combining these responses, it can be seen that most participants of the public institution neighbourhood had experiences of reporting neighbourhood problems to the work unit. Some participants were satisfied with the solutions, but others were not. With regards to the issues of housing maintenance, the participants were pleased with the different solutions provided. However, the neighbourhood cleanliness issue and noise problems were only met with slight improvement. Thus, the participants of the public institution neighbourhood had medium to high levels of participation.

#### Old commercial-housing neighbourhood

All the participants from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood had experiences of reporting neighbourhood issues to the PMC. According to the participants' narratives, the PMC helped to mediate conflicts between residents. Different solutions provided to the various neighbourhood issues were reported with positive and negative attitudes.

Some participants from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood were pleased with the solutions to the neighbourhood issues. The problem of noise disturbance was reported by Participant D2, a housewife who had a young child. She said that through the mediation of

the PMC, the problem had been solved, and she expressed her appreciation and gratitude to the PMC. She stated:

I reported neighbourhood issues to the PMC. There was a time when my child just needed to go to bed and sleep. I could hear the incessant noise of someone practising their piano. The sound of the piano affected my child's sleep. After reporting it, a staff member of my PMC accompanied me to find out who was playing the piano at night. It was not easy to find this neighbour. It took us a couple of days and we finally found this neighbour, whose son is a primary school student. This boy goes to school in the daytime so he must practice the piano after school. My neighbour apologised about the noise. After a negotiation, we agreed that my neighbour's son could play the piano before 9pm. I was pleased with the solution and grateful to the staff of the PMC.

Another example comes from Participant D1, a female who reported problems in relation to water leakage. The PMC offered co-operative repairmen. She said:

I reported to the PMC that I had water leakage in the wall. The staff of the PMC quickly found a handyman to repair the wall. This handyman was reliable and did a good job. The toilet looks great now that it has been done up. I paid for the repair. I cannot remember the exact price, but it was not expensive.

Participant D4, a 36-year-old female, reported a broken lightbulb in the public area. She said:

I had an experience of reporting neighbourhood issues to the PMC. Once, I reported that the light in the building's corridor did not work. The PMC took a very long time before repairing it. The corridor was dark, which caused me a great deal of inconvenience, especially at night.

Combining these responses, it can be seen that all the participants from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood had experiences of reporting neighbourhood issues to the PMC. Although these participants tended not to participate in the neighbourhood elections due to a lack of time, they had a high level of participation in reporting neighbourhood issues. This suggests that the participants from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood were more likely to participate informally than formally.

#### New commercial-housing neighbourhood

Six of the seven participants from the new commercial-housing neighbourhood had experiences of reporting neighbourhood issues to the PMC. According to the participants' narratives, all the neighbourhood issues received quick responses as well as satisfactory solutions. The PMC had an office in the neighbourhood, which meant residents could contact



the PMC not only by phone, but also by reaching the office within a few minutes. This study observed that the staff of the PMC had enough patience to listen to the issues being reported and found positive ways to solve neighbourhood issues. This encouraged participants to pay attention to their living areas and, in turn, contribute to creating a better neighbourhood together. Although two participants had never reported neighbourhood issues to the PMC, they explained that they were currently satisfied with their lives and had not encountered any neighbourhood issues. They further stated that they would report neighbourhood problems to the PMC if they came across any.

A good example comes from Participant E2, a 55-year-old female who reported problems of housing quality to the PMC. She indicated that she received a quick response from the PMC. She said:

This neighbourhood has a property maintenance team. This brings a great deal of convenience to the residents and improves our standard of living. I reported that water was leaking from a wall in the bathroom. The staff of the PMC quickly came to my flat and had a look at the metope. They found that there was a problem in the water-resisting layer. It took them half a day to repair the wall, but they didn't charge me. I was very satisfied with the solution.

A similar example comes from Participant E3, a 30-year-old male who had reported problems of peeling paint to the PMC. He said:

I reported that the paint on my balcony was peeling off the wall. Because my flat is a partial flat, it was decorated before its sale. So the PMC still had the original paint in their warehouse. A staff member from the PMC promptly responded to my report and repaired the wall within the same day. Because he used the original paint, I couldn't find any colour differences on my wall.

Participant E1, a 29-year-old, reported a parking problem to the PMC. She said:

I bought a private parking place in the underground car park. There was a time when a sports utility vehicle would always park in the fire engine access area, which was directly in front of my private parking space. For this reason, I couldn't move my car out of the parking space. I was furious. I called the PMC and complained about this issue. The staff of the PMC immediately contacted the car owner and required him to move his car to a temporary parking space.

Two participants reported problems of neighbourhood cleanliness to the PMC. An example comes from Participant E6, who reported that she had had 'bin wars' with her neighbours over rubbish. She said:

My neighbour used to leave a bag of rubbish in the corridor for a long time. I was unhappy with this because this behaviour influenced our living environment. It made me unhappy because the corridor is a public space. I reported it to the PMC. A member of staff quickly visited my neighbours' flat and advised them nicely to put the rubbish in the right place. I saw this member of staff pick up the rubbish bag when he left. Afterwards, the situation improved, but not that much. My PMC made an effort to solve it, instructing the cleaners to pick up bags of rubbish in the corridors of the building.

Participant E2 reported environmental nuisances to the PMC. She said:

There was a dog mess in the elevator, which made the elevator smelly. I reported it to the PMC. The staff immediately arranged a cleaner to clean the elevator. Recently, I found a notice posted near the elevator, which reminded dog owners to clear up after their dogs and to keep their dogs on a leash at all times.

Combining these responses, it can be seen that the majority of the participants had reported neighbourhood issues to the PMC and received satisfactory solutions. This study found that participants were greatly concerned about the neighbourhood environment and showed a medium to high level of participation in reporting neighbourhood issues.

### 10.3.1 Summary and discussion

This section summarises and discusses the findings regarding reporting neighbourhood problems in the five urban neighbourhoods in Chengdu. The empirical data revealed that 24 of the 31 participants from the five neighbourhoods had experiences of reporting neighbourhood problems to various neighbourhood organisations: the *shequ*, the neighbourhood representatives, the work unit and the PMC. The neighbourhood problems ranged from personal issues such as housing repairs and noise disturbances to public issues such as community and neighbourhood environmental problems and fire safety. The majority of participants were satisfied with the solutions. This study revealed that the participants from the two work unit neighbourhoods, the resettlement-housing neighbourhood and the new commercial-housing neighbourhood had medium to high levels of participation in reporting neighbourhood problems, while participants in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have a high level of participation. All of this is depicted below in Tables 10.3 and 10.4.

**Table 10.3 Reporting neighbourhood issues in five neighbourhoods**

	Level of participation in reporting neighbourhood issues	Neighbourhood issues	Where did participants report the issues?
<b>SOE neighbourhood</b>	The participants had a medium to high level of participation in reporting neighbourhood problems	Housing quality Neighbourhood and community environment Antisocial behaviour	Work unit <i>Shequ</i>
<b>Resettlement-housing neighbourhood</b>	The participants had a medium to high level of participation in reporting neighbourhood problems	Neighbourhood environment Fire safety Security	Neighbourhood representative <i>Shequ</i>
<b>Public institution neighbourhood</b>	The participants had a medium to high level of participation in reporting neighbourhood problems	Housing maintenance Fire safety Neighbourhood cleanliness	Work unit
<b>Old commercial-housing neighbourhood</b>	The participants had a high level of participation in reporting neighbourhood problems	Housing quality Noise disturbances	PMC
<b>New commercial-housing neighbourhood</b>	The participants had a medium to high level of participation in reporting neighbourhood problems	Housing quality Neighbourhood cleanliness Parking problems	PMC

Source: Author's creation (2020)

**Table 10.4 Participants' satisfaction with the solutions**

	Were they satisfied with the solution?	Why not?
<b>SOE neighbourhood</b>	Participants felt satisfied with the solutions provided by the <i>shequ</i> and work unit	
<b>Resettlement-housing neighbourhood</b>	Participants felt satisfied with the solutions provided by the <i>shequ</i> and neighbourhood representatives	
<b>Public institution neighbourhood</b>	Some participants were satisfied with the solutions, but some were not	Some neighbourhood issues such as cleanliness issues and noise disturbances only had slight improvements
<b>Old commercial-housing neighbourhood</b>	Some participants were satisfied with the solutions, but some were not	Delayed services caused an unsatisfactory experience
<b>New commercial-housing neighbourhood</b>	Participants felt satisfied with the solutions provided by the PMC.	

Source: Author's creation (2020)

The majority of the participants from the two work unit neighbourhoods had experiences of reporting neighbourhood problems to the work unit and the *shequ*. Both work units had logistical departments which were responsible for dealing with neighbourhood issues (see

Participants A1, C1, C6). The participants indicated that due to the collective life in work units, they were accustomed to reporting problems to the work unit. With regard to housing repairs, the work unit provided prompt responses and satisfactory solutions, which motivated participants to engage in further participation in reporting the neighbourhood issues. Apart from some personal issues, this study found that participants had great concerns about public issues such as environmental problems. Notably, some participants mentioned that they wished to have the PMCs partly because they can provide professional management and services for neighbourhoods. Another reason was that reporting issues to the logistical department came with the risks of exposing information about the complainants because most of the neighbours were colleagues, while the PMC could maintain the anonymity of complainants, helping reduce conflicts and maintain good relationships among colleagues (see Participant C4, for instance). Additionally, some participants who were renters seemed excluded from reporting neighbourhood problems, as they were not employees of the work unit (see Participant C3, for instance). These issues all suggest the necessity of having professional neighbourhood organisations in the work unit neighbourhoods.

The majority of participants from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood had experiences of reporting neighbourhood issues to neighbourhood representatives and the *shequ*. The existence of the neighbourhood representatives was a contributor to high levels of participation as they actively put forward residents' common needs to the *shequ* (see Participant B1, for instance). Thanks to residents repeatedly reporting neighbourhood problems to the *shequ*, the small open area was reconstructed by the local government in 2013, which significantly improved residents' lives. This study found that the participants benefited from the outcomes of their participation, which promoted them to pay more attention to the neighbourhood and facilitated them to engage in further participation. Compared with the participants from other neighbourhoods, those from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood paid more attention to public issues rather than personal ones (see Participants B2 and B3). In view of this, the resettlement-housing neighbourhood had a medium to high level of participation in reporting neighbourhood problems.

In the old commercial-housing neighbourhood, all the participants had experiences of reporting neighbourhood issues to the PMC. Notably, unlike the participants of the two work unit neighbourhoods, those from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood reported disputes with neighbours directly and did not have to worry about their neighbourly

relationships (see Participant D2, for instance). This suggests that weak neighbourly relationships may improve participation in reporting issues to the neighbourhood organisations. Interestingly, this study found that although these participants tended not to participate in the neighbourhood elections due to a lack of time, they showed a high level of participation in reporting neighbourhood issues. This indicates that the participants were more concerned about things they thought directly affected their lives.

In the new commercial-housing neighbourhood, most of the participants had experiences of reporting neighbourhood issues to the PMC. All the participants were satisfied with the solutions due to quick responses and free services provided by the PMC. Such satisfactory outcomes motivated participants to have further contact with the PMC. This finding resonates with the findings of Marschall (2004) who reports that satisfaction with local services increases the level of neighbourhood participation. Notably, compared with the other four neighbourhoods, the new commercial-housing neighbourhood had the highest property management fees (see Appendix 3). Participants reporting neighbourhood issues may consider this as the use of paid services rather than having neighbourhood participation. However, based on the participation narratives, those issues reported by them were not only related to personal issues, but also involved public issues such as the neighbourhood environmental problem (see Participants E2 and E6). According to existing studies, the perception of environmental problems can act as a motivator to trigger neighbourhood participation (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990, Kang and Kwak, 2003). Thus, there is no denial in saying that participants of the new commercial-housing neighbourhood had neighbourhood participation.

Given the above findings, most participants from the five neighbourhoods had experience of reporting neighbourhood issues. In particular, many participants were watchful of the neighbourhood environment and served as informants for the neighbourhood organisations about the neighbourhood issues. It displayed that the participants were concerned about what happened in their neighbourhoods and had a sense of responsibility to protect their neighbourhoods. Quick responses and efficient solutions of neighbourhood organisations significantly increased informal participation.

## 10.4 Bringing it all together: informal participation in the five neighbourhoods

Based on the discussions above, there were different levels of informal participation found in the different neighbourhoods. Table 10.5 shows the final assessment.

In the SOE neighbourhood, the majority of participants had engaged in informal participation (see Table 10.5). This work unit had a logistical department which was responsible for solving neighbourhood issues. This department provided prompt responses and satisfactory solutions which motivated participants to actively report issues. However, the work unit had not organised neighbourhood-organised activities for residents. Considering this work unit compound lacked a neighbourhood organisation that could organise events for residents, the level of informal participation in this research was equivalent to the level of reporting neighbourhood issues. Therefore, the participants of the SOE neighbourhood had a medium to high level of informal participation.

As is shown in Table 10.5, in the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, most of the participants had engaged in informal participation. Due to the variety of activities organised by the neighbourhood representatives and the *shequ*, participants had a high level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities. This study found that participants' social networks were expanded through this participation. The high level of participation in reporting neighbourhood problems was ascribed to the efforts made by the neighbourhood representatives. Combining all these findings, it can be seen that participants of the resettlement-housing neighbourhood had a high level of informal participation.

In the public institution neighbourhood, the majority of participants had engaged in informal participation (see Table 10.5). Like the SOE neighbourhood, this work unit had a logistical department in charge of solving neighbourhood problems. Participants were accustomed to reporting problems to the work unit due to the prompt responses and satisfactory solutions they received. However, the work unit had never organised other activities for the residents, and none of the residents had engaged in neighbourhood-organised activities. Considering this situation, the level of informal participation was equivalent to the level of reporting neighbourhood issues. Based on this, participants of the public institution neighbourhood had a medium to high level of informal participation.

In the old commercial-housing neighbourhood, most participants had engaged in informal participation (see Table 10.5). Due to the existence of the PMC, participants were willing to report neighbourhood problems. However, owing to the PMC's scarcity of funding, none of the participants had participated in neighbourhood-organised activities. Considering this situation, the level of informal participation was equivalent to the level of reporting neighbourhood issues. Based on this, the participants of the old commercial-housing neighbourhood had a high level of informal participation.

In the new commercial-housing neighbourhood, the majority of participants had engaged in informal participation (see Table 10.5). The PMC and the *shequ* organised diverse activities which attracted a large number of residents. The high level of participation in reporting neighbourhood problems was attributable to the quick, satisfactory responses provided by the PMC at no charge. Therefore, it can be seen that participants of the new commercial-housing neighbourhood had a medium to high level of informal participation.

Given the above findings, this study found that the participants from the SOE neighbourhood, public institution neighbourhood and new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have medium to high levels of informal participation, while those from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood and new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have high levels. Comparing formal participation with informal participation, this study found that participants were more inclined to participate informally. This research found that neighbourhood organisations played a crucial role in promoting high levels of informal participation in the five urban neighbourhoods in Chengdu. There was no conspicuous evidence showing the significant effects that social capital exerted on informal participation. The finding of this study contradicts the finding of Lu *et al.* (2018), who assert that the resettlement-housing neighbourhood has a low level of informal participation. However, the finding of this study is in line with existing studies which find that commercial-housing neighbourhoods have high levels of informal participation (Zhu, 2015; Lu *et al.*, 2018).

**Table 10.5 Informal participation in the five neighbourhoods**

	<b>SOE neighbourhood</b>	<b>Resettlement-housing neighbourhood</b>	<b>Public institution neighbourhood</b>	<b>Old commercial-housing neighbourhood</b>	<b>New commercial-housing neighbourhood</b>
<b>Participation in neighbourhood-organised activities</b>	The participants had a medium to low level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities	The participants had a high level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities	The participants had a low level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities	The participants had a low level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities	The participants had a medium to high level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities
<b>Reporting neighbourhood problems</b>	The participants had a medium to high level of participation in reporting neighbourhood problems	The participants had a medium to high level of participation in reporting neighbourhood problems	The participants had a medium to high level of participation in reporting neighbourhood problems	The participants had a high level of participation in reporting neighbourhood problems	The participants had a medium to high level of participation in reporting neighbourhood problems
<b>Informal participation</b>	The participants had a medium to high level of participation in informal participation	The participants had a high level of participation in informal participation	The participants had a medium to high level of participation in informal participation	The participants had a high level of participation in informal participation	The participants had a medium to high level of participation in informal participation

Source: Author’s creation (2021)

## 10.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined informal participation in the five different types of neighbourhoods through analysing participation in neighbourhood-organised activities and reporting neighbourhood issues. This study has revealed that the participants from the SOE neighbourhood, public institution neighbourhood and new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have medium to high levels of informal participation, while those from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood and new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have high levels. Comparing formal participation with informal participation, this study found that participants were more likely to engage informally. The following chapter will provide the conclusion to this research.



# Chapter 11 Conclusion

## 11.1 Introduction

The central aim of this research was to critically examine the experience and determinants of neighbourhood attachment and the extent of neighbourhood participation in different types of urban neighbourhoods in China. As most large urban neighbourhoods were new and indigenous existing research on neighbourhood issues were very limited, especially in inland regions. This study borrowed the urban neighbourhood concept and related theories developed in the west and applied and evaluated them in the Chinese context. Undertaken as a case study of Chengdu, the analysis drew on data from qualitative interviews and non-participant observation to address the main research question: ‘To what extent do urban residents perceive and experience neighbourhood attachment and neighbourhood participation in different types of urban neighbourhoods in Chengdu?’. The study captured the views and perspectives of 31 urban residents living in five major different types of neighbourhoods in Chengdu during a period of rapid urbanisation. In this final chapter I will firstly draw the main findings from previous analytical chapters together as answers to the research question and then highlight the main contributions of my study. I will also discuss the study’s limitations and propose ideas for future research.

## 11.2 Key findings

In the introduction I divided the main research question into 4 sub-questions. This section provides answers to them one by one.

### **1. How do residents experience emotional attachment in different types of urban neighbourhoods? How can we explain this?**

Analysis in Chapter 7, this study found that the majority of participants of the SOE neighbourhood, resettlement-housing neighbourhood, public institution neighbourhood and new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have emotional attachment, while those in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood tended not to have emotional attachment. This study revealed that neighbourly interactions played an important role in facilitating emotional attachment in Chinese neighbourhoods.

The majority of participants in the SOE neighbourhood had emotional attachment. They had dual roles (as colleagues and neighbours) and relatively longer-term of residence, which significantly helped them build strong neighbourly ties and good neighbourly relationships, thereby generating intensive interactions. On this basis, the majority of participants in this neighbourhood generated mutual trust, mutual support and emotional safety, which cultivated strong affections for the neighbourhood and gave participants a sense of belonging, consequently contributing to their emotional attachment. In view of this, it can be concluded that participants of the SOE neighbourhood tended to have emotional attachment.

Most participants interviewed in the resettlement-housing neighbourhood also had emotional attachment. Strong neighbourly relationships were developed through the long-term residence and consequently generated strong neighbourhood-based social networks and intensive neighbourly interactions. As a result, the participants developed mutual trust and mutual support and generated emotional safety, which all finally transformed into a sense of belonging. In view of this, it can be concluded that participants of the resettlement-housing neighbourhood tended to feel emotionally attached to their neighbourhood.

Similarly, residents interviewed in the public institution neighbourhood had emotional attachment. The participants had strong neighbourly ties, which were generated by shared social and work experiences, and by the long-term residence. Having the dual identities as colleagues and neighbours, as well as long duration of residence, helped them develop a sense of familiarity with their neighbours and build strong neighbourhood-based social networks. With the involvement of various intensive neighbourly interactions, the participants came to mutual trust and support each other, forming emotional safety and a sense of belonging. In view of this, it can be concluded that participants of the public institution neighbourhood tended to have emotional attachment.

The majority of participants in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood however did not have much emotional attachment. They had weak neighbourly ties and neighbourly relationships. Although most of the participants enjoyed some physical security, this type of sense of safety contributed to functional attachment rather than emotional attachment. The leading reason for the weak neighbourly ties in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood stemmed from a dearth of opportunities for participants to interact with their neighbours. Less than half of the participants interviewed had strong neighbourhood-based social

networks, mutual trust mutual support and a sense of belonging. Combining all these factors, participants tended not to have emotional attachment.

Diverging from existing studies which consider that emotional attachment is absent in commercial-housing neighbourhoods in China (Zhu *et al.*, 2012), this research found that the majority of participants in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood did have emotional attachment. A good physical environment and diverse facilities in this neighbourhood promoted neighbourly interactions, benefiting the development of a relatively strong neighbourhood-based social network. The majority of the participants reported mutual support and mutual trust. Although a strong sense of safety was formed via a strong security system, it contributed to functional attachment rather than emotional attachment. Despite this, the new commercial-housing neighbourhood was characterised by strong neighbourly relationships, everyday interactions, mutual trust and mutual support, which were enough to provide a powerful sense of emotional attachment. Consequently, participants of the new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have emotional attachment.

Given the above findings, it can be concluded that strong neighbourhood-based social networks and neighbourly interactions played pivotal roles in facilitating emotional attachment in urban neighbourhoods in Chengdu. Participants became familiar with neighbours through strong neighbourhood-based social networks and neighbourly interactions, thereby promoting mutual trust and mutual support, which in turn generated emotional attachment. The findings showed that in the SOE neighbourhood, the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, the public institution neighbourhood and the new commercial-housing neighbourhood, neighbourly interactions contributed to emotional attachment. This study, however, did not find evidence of the existence of emotional attachment in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood. The findings of this study are consistent with existing studies showing that work unit neighbourhoods have strong emotional attachment due to the close neighbourly relation and frequent interactions (Wu, 2005; Huang and Low, 2008; Li *et al.*, 2012; Breitung, 2012). In contrast with Zhu *et al.* (2012) who claims that due to superficial neighbourly interactions, commercial housing neighbourhoods have a weak emotional attachment, this study found this is only true in order commercial estates; the new commercial-housing neighbourhood actually had intensive neighbourly interaction, which contributed to emotional attachment.

Besides these social structural determinants, some personal determinants were highlighted by many participants. This study identified two main personal determinants, namely, long-term residence and the presence of children, which also contributed to emotional attachment. The long-term residence promoted familiarity with neighbours and strong neighbourly ties, consequently fostering intensive neighbourly interactions. Having children was seen as important for promoting social interactions. We confidently conclude concluded then that both the long-term residence and presence of children facilitated neighbourly interactions, thus fostering emotional attachment.

## **2. How do residents experience functional attachment in different types of urban neighbourhoods? How can we explain this?**

This study found that the majority of participants of the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, the old commercial-housing neighbourhood and the new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have functional attachment, while those in the SOE neighbourhood and public institution neighbourhood tended not to. This study revealed that a good neighbourhood environment, neighbourhood facilities and services not only generated functional attachment but also promoted neighbourly interactions, which contributed to the development of emotional attachment.

The majority of participants interviewed in the SOE neighbourhood did not have functional attachment. The participants felt dissatisfied with the physical environment, neighbourhood facilities and private services. As a work unit compound, the SOE neighbourhood had old residential buildings, small and crowded open areas, unkempt green spaces and poor cleanliness. The inadequate private services did not meet the needs of the participants, who were left to solve issues by themselves. Despite the convenience offered by the public services, participants of the SOE neighbourhood tended not to have functional attachment.

Similarly, the majority of residents interviewed in the public institution neighbourhood did not show much functional attachment. The participants felt dissatisfied with the physical environment, neighbourhood facilities and private services. Similar to the SOE neighbourhood, small and crowded open areas, unpleasant green spaces and poor cleanliness had negative effects on neighbourhood satisfaction. The inadequate facilities and private services did not fulfil the demands of the participants. However, participants reported

satisfaction with the public services because they brought convenience to the participants and slightly contributed to residential satisfaction. Based on these, participants of the public institution neighbourhood tended not to have strong functional attachment.

The majority of participants in the resettlement-housing neighbourhood had functional attachment. The participants were satisfied with the physical environment and neighbourhood services. The reconstruction of open areas and well-maintained green spaces improved the neighbourhood environment. Participants in this neighbourhood had a strong awareness of residential environment protection which contributed to the good physical environment. With regard to the neighbourhood services, this neighbourhood had a group of representatives that helped manage the neighbourhood and address issues. A diversity of public services also made residents' lives easier. Nonetheless, the participants were dissatisfied with the inadequate neighbourhood facilities. Notably, although the participants expressed dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood facilities, most of them accepted the limitations as their neighbourhood had small open areas and setting up new facilities was impracticable. In view of this, the participants of the resettlement-housing neighbourhood tended to have functional attachment.

The majority of participants in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood also had functional attachment. The participants were generally satisfied with their physical environment and neighbourhood services. Additionally, the good location of the neighbourhood provided convenient access to public services. However, the inadequate neighbourhood facilities caused residential dissatisfaction. Despite this, however, the old commercial-housing neighbourhood had a good neighbourhood environment and neighbourhood services which were sufficient to generate functional attachment among the participants.

The majority of participants in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood had functional attachment. As a newly built neighbourhood, the new commercial-housing neighbourhood had a high-quality physical environment and diverse facilities. A professional PMC provided professional private services for residents. Various public services were close by, which offered convenience to the residents. Combining these factors, participants of the new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have functional attachment.

Given the above findings, this study found that a good neighbourhood environment, neighbourhood facilities and services not only generated functional attachment but also promote neighbourly interactions which can develop emotional attachment. The participants of the two commercial-housing neighbourhoods and the resettlement-housing neighbourhood tended to have strong functional attachment while those in the two work unit neighbourhoods tended not to. These findings are in line with existing studies that state that functional attachment exists in commercial-housing neighbourhoods because it is fostered by the high-quality physical environment, facilities, quietness and estate management services (Breitung, 2012; Zhu *et al.*, 2012; Li *et al.*, 2012). Additionally, this study found that a well-maintained public realm, a good physical environment and neighbourhood facilities were frequently used by participants, thus promoting neighbourly interactions which helped establish neighbourly relationships and cultivate neighbourhood attachment.

### **3. What is the level of formal participation in the different types of urban neighbourhoods? Why is this the case?**

Overall, using the participation in neighbourhood elections as an indicator, the study found that participants from the SOE neighbourhood tended to have a low level of formal participation while those from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood tended to have a medium to high level of formal participation. The participants from the public institution neighbourhood tended to have a medium level of formal participation while those from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have a medium to low level of formal participation. The participants from the new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have a low level of formal participation. This study found that strong neighbourhood-based networks can improve formal participation.

Most residents interviewed in the SOE neighbourhood had never participated in neighbourhood elections. The participants were generally uninterested in participating because they considered these elections to be meaningless or did not know the candidates. The work unit no longer invited retired employees to engage in the *shequ* elections. These reasons explain why many participants were not involved in the neighbourhood elections. In view of this, participants in this neighbourhood did not display an interest in politics and therefore had a low level of formal participation.

Most of the participants of the resettlement-housing neighbourhood had participated in neighbourhood elections. Participants from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood were familiar with the candidates and understood the purpose of the elections. Neighbourhood representatives mobilised the residents to participate in the elections. Based on this, the participants had a medium to high level of formal participation.

Half of the participants interviewed in the public institution neighbourhood participated in neighbourhood elections. However, participation was compulsory. Neighbourhood elections were generally evaluated very negatively by participants because of their lack of interest, or because participants were busy with work and the candidates were unknown. Consequently, the participants from this neighbourhood had a medium level of formal participation but held negative attitudes towards neighbourhood participation.

Fewer than half of the participants of the old commercial-housing neighbourhood participated in neighbourhood elections. The main reasons for their low level of participation included a lack of time, the bad experience of participation and a lack of interest in the elections. Based on this, the participants from the old commercial-housing neighbourhood had a medium to low level of formal participation.

None of the participants interviewed in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood participated in neighbourhood elections. However, it should be noted that as a newly built neighbourhood, it had never organised neighbourhood elections by the time of the interviews. Nonetheless, participants reported a low level of intention to vote in the upcoming election. The major reasons for their low level of intention to participate were a lack of time, a bad experience of participation and a lack of interest in the elections. Based on this, the majority of participants of the new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have a low level of formal participation.

This research revealed that strong neighbourhood-based networks can improve formal participation. Strong social networks mean knowing more residents or candidates in the neighbourhood (Bridge, 2002; Hu *et al.*, 2018). Knowing candidates contributed to high levels of participation in neighbourhood elections in the resettlement-housing neighbourhood whilst not knowing the candidates was a significant reason for participants' reluctance to participate in the other four neighbourhoods. Taking an example from the

resettlement-housing neighbourhood, high levels of participation in the elections of the neighbourhood representatives were largely due to the familiarity with candidates. Participants understood their election results would be meaningful as the person they elected would be the most appropriate one who knew their neighbourhood, excelled at addressing neighbourhood issues and was passionate and nice.

The finding in the resettlement housing neighbourhood contradicts the results of some established studies that assert that resettlement-housing neighbourhoods have low levels of participation in neighbourhood events due to unfamiliarity with organised neighbourhood events (Lu *et al.*, 2018). This inconsistent finding may result from having good neighbourhood representatives in the resettlement-housing neighbourhood in this study. As mentioned previously, these neighbourhood representatives acted like glue in the way that they pulled residents together and mobilised them to participate in the neighbourhood elections. Additionally, this study found that although participants of the public institution neighbourhood had strong neighbourhood-based social networks, participants showed less interest in the election of the NPC for the city district. These electoral candidates were not the residents of the public institution neighbourhood. Participants of the public institution neighbourhood considered elections a meaningless activity due to unknown electoral candidates. Unknown electoral candidates cannot truly represent the opinions of all residents. In view of this, although the likelihood of participation was largely dependent on strong social networks, the participation rate was also affected by the types and procedures of the neighbourhood elections.

#### **4. What is the level of informal participation in the different types of urban neighbourhoods? Why is this the case?**

In terms of informal participation, the study found that participants of the SOE neighbourhood, public institution neighbourhood and new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have medium to high levels of participation while those from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood and new commercial-housing neighbourhood tended to have high levels. Comparing formal participation with informal participation, this study found that participants were more inclined to participate informally.



Most participants interviewed in SOE neighbourhood had experienced informal participation. The work unit had a logistical department which was responsible for dealing with neighbourhood issues. This department provided prompt responses and satisfying solutions which motivated participants to actively report issues. However, the work unit had no neighbourhood-organised activities for residents. Due to this, the level of informal participation in this research mainly referred to the level of reporting neighbourhood issues. Consequently, participants of the SOE neighbourhood had a medium to high level of informal participation.

Most participants of the resettlement-housing neighbourhood had participated informally. Attracted by various activities organised by the neighbourhood representatives and the *shequ*, participants had a high level of participation in neighbourhood-organised activities. Their high level of informal participation in reporting neighbourhood problems was also ascribed to the efforts made by the neighbourhood representatives. Combining all these findings, participants of the resettlement-housing neighbourhood had a high level of informal participation.

The majority of participants interviewed in the public institution neighbourhood were involved in informal participation. Similar to the SOE neighbourhood, this work unit also had a logistical department in charge of solving neighbourhood problems. Participants were accustomed to reporting issues to the work unit since prompt responses and satisfying solutions could be expected. However, the work unit had never organised other activities for residents, so none of the participants had had the opportunity to be involved in neighbourhood-organised activities, which made it hard to judge the level of participation in such activities. Considering this situation, the level of informal participation was based on the participants' reporting of neighbourhood issues. Consequently, participants of the public institution neighbourhood had a medium to high level of informal participation.

All participants interviewed in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood participated informally. Due to the existence of the PMC, participants were willing to report neighbourhood problems. However, owing to the PMC's scarcity of funding, none of the participants had participated in neighbourhood-organised activities. Considering this situation, the level of informal participation was equivalent to the level of reporting

neighbourhood issues. In the view of this, participants of the old commercial-housing neighbourhood had a high level of informal participation.

The majority of participants interviewed in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood engaged in informal participation. The PMC and the *shequ* organised diverse activities which attracted a large number of residents. The high level of participation in reporting neighbourhood problems was attributable to the quick responses and free services provided by the PMC. Therefore, participants of the new commercial-housing neighbourhood had a medium to high level of informal participation.

This research revealed that neighbourhood organisations played a crucial role in promoting high levels of informal participation in the five urban neighbourhoods. Contrary to the findings of existing studies, there was no conspicuous evidence showing that social capital exerted significant effects on informal participation. The findings of Lu *et al.* (2018) who assert that resettlement-housing neighbourhoods have a low level of informal participation. However, the findings of this study are in line with existing studies which find that the commercial-housing neighbourhood have high levels of informal participation (Zhu, 2015; Lu *et al.*, 2018).

### 11.3 Contributions of the study

This research provided an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of neighbourhood attachment and participation in different types of urban neighbourhoods in China. Using Chengdu as a case study, this study explored urban residents' attitudes and behaviours in urban neighbourhoods through thematic analysis. Although this qualitative research did not cover all types of urban neighbourhoods that currently exist in the city, the five different types studied represent the majority of urban neighbourhoods in China. The findings offer wider insights into how people perceive their neighbourhoods, as well as their neighbourhoods' formal and informal activities, and what determinants influence their attitudes. There are five major contributions that this study makes.

First, there is a paucity of research investigating neighbourhood attachment and participation in China, particularly when it comes to the implementation of the neighbourhood-oriented policy or community building which necessitates the understanding of residents' feelings

and attitudes towards their 'home ground'. The existing literature mainly focuses on the megacities and coastal cities of China (e.g., Zhu *et al.*, 2012; Wu, 2012; Lu *et al.*, 2018), while less work has been done on inland cities. This research helps to fill this void as Chengdu is an inland city. It also makes an empirical contribution to the understanding of neighbourhood attachment and participation in the inland cities of China. This is not to say that Chengdu can be seen as representative of all inland cities in China (China has vast regional disparities in terms of economic, social and political contexts), but this in-depth examination of the situation in Chengdu may raise issues of interest for those cities that have similar backgrounds or face similar opportunities and challenges. The findings of this study can be extended to cities and regions in China and other countries and may facilitate international comparative studies.

Second, existing research focuses on one or only a handful of types of urban neighbourhoods. For instance, a study by Zhu *et al.* (2012) investigates neighbourhood attachment in the commercial-housing neighbourhood in Guangzhou. Another example by Huang and Low (2008) examines neighbourhood attachment by comparing the traditional-house neighbourhood and work unit neighbourhood. Another study by Wu (2015) investigates neighbourhood participation in work unit neighbourhoods and urban villages in Guangzhou. These studies mainly focus on work unit neighbourhoods, urban villages and commercial-housing neighbourhoods. However, some other types of urban neighbourhoods, such as the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, are barely discussed.

Outcomes may vary in different forms of urban neighbourhoods with different neighbourhood governance structures and demographics. Based on the existing studies, there is a dearth of literature that examines neighbourhood attachment and participation in resettlement-housing neighbourhoods. To fill this gap, the resettlement-housing neighbourhood was included in this study. To obtain more accurate findings, the study further classified the work unit neighbourhood and commercial-housing neighbourhood into two types. Hence, the findings of this study provided a comprehensive understanding of neighbourhood attachment and participation in different types of neighbourhoods in China with reasonable confidence.

Third, the literature on the Chinese context tends to treat neighbourhood attachment as an integrated concept which does not differentiate between emotional attachment and

functional attachment (Wu, 2005; Xu and Yang, 2009; Breitung, 2012; Wang *et al.*, 2016; Lu *et al.*, 2018). The same loophole also exists in the literature on neighbourhood participation which is not classified into formal and informal participation (Du and Li, 2010; Heberer and Gobel, 2011; Wu, 2012). This has resulted in contradictory findings among existing studies (Wang *et al.*, 2016; Lu *et al.*, 2018). This research contributes to scholarship by breaking down the two types of neighbourhood attachment and two forms of neighbourhood participation and examining their determinants in different forms of urban neighbourhoods.

Fourth, functional attachment has been underexplored in international literature. The western scholarship emphasises the importance of emotional attachment but neglects the contributions of functional attachment (Dekker, 2007; Livingston *et al.*, 2010; Wu, 2012; Anton and Lawrence, 2014; Lee and Park, 2019). Existing studies indicate that functional attachment is usually generated in deprived neighbourhoods, which may have a negative impact on local residents (Livingston *et al.*, 2010). The findings of my study showed, on the contrary, that functional attachment exists in the resettlement-housing neighbourhood, old commercial-housing neighbourhood and new commercial-housing neighbourhood, none of which was deprived neighbourhoods. My research found that functional attachment in China was mainly based on residents' subjective satisfaction with the physical environment, services and facilities. In other words, a higher level of functional attachment was attributable to a better neighbourhood environment, services and facilities. The findings on functional attachment provided a new perspective and valuable information for policymakers to enhance neighbourhood attachment through the improvement of the residential environment, housing conditions and neighbourhood amenities.

Finally, as discussed above, the literature on functional attachment remains scarce. As a result, there is a lack of research introducing theories to explore functional attachment. Some scholars suggest that subjective residential satisfaction with neighbourhoods' physical characteristics is the most relevant factor in the development of functional attachment (Bonaiuto *et al.*, 1999). Residential satisfaction can be used to help examine whether the physical attributes are suited to the achievement of residents' goals and activities in their neighbourhood, in turn generating functional attachment (Bonaiuto, 1999; Stedam, 2003; Roazzi *et al.*, 2009; Poortinga *et al.*, 2017). Drawing inspiration from these works, this research developed an analytical framework that employed residential satisfaction theory to

examine functional attachment. This analytical framework provided a new approach for researchers who are interested in analysing functional attachment in urban studies or other disciplines.

## 11.4 Research implications

The findings of this research provided a deep understanding of neighbourhood attachment and participation in urban China. These findings can be employed to inform recommendations for policy making and planning in several ways.

First, neighbourhood attachment plays an important role in planning consideration and policy orientation in China. Since 2013, the central government has emphasised the strengthening of neighbourhood attachment in new urban developments (Lu *et al.*, 2018). Previous studies indicate that the mechanism of neighbourhood attachment is not entirely understood (Wu, 2012; Zhu *et al.*, 2012; Lu *et al.*, 2018). This research found that different types of neighbourhood attachment have different mechanisms. For instance, neighbourly interaction plays an important role in fostering emotional attachment; it contributes to strong based social networks and neighbourly ties among neighbours, and generates mutual trust and mutual support, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and emotional attachment. This finding is consistent with existing studies (Williams and Vaske, 2002; Middleton *et al.*, 2005; Dekker 2007; Mahmoudi Farahani, 2016; Hu *et al.*, 2018; Escalera-Reyes, 2020). In the old commercial-housing neighbourhood, however, residents did not know their neighbours and had very few neighbourly interactions, which led to unfamiliarity among neighbours, and therefore low levels of mutual trust and sense of belonging. These factors all led to the low level of emotional attachment in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood in Chengdu. This research suggests that neighbourhood organisations should organise more neighbourhood activities and aim to increase neighbourly interactions, fostering familiarity among residents and thereby improving emotional attachment in urban neighbourhoods.

This research found that satisfaction with the neighbourhood's physical environment, facilities and services contribute to functional attachment. Additionally, the physical environment and neighbourhood amenities have positive and significant effects on neighbourly interactions. For example, residents from the resettlement-housing neighbourhood highlighted that their reconstructed open areas within the neighbourhood

promoted neighbourly interactions by providing a place for chatting and interacting. Similarly, in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood, residents indicated that neighbourhood facilities, such as children's facilities, provided important opportunities for interacting with neighbours. Such interactions help to build neighbourly relations and consequently improve both forms of neighbourhood attachment. Regarding neighbourhood services, this research found that in the new commercial-housing neighbourhood, efficient services have successfully met residents' demands, becoming a core function of the neighbourhoods and consolidating functional attachment. These findings provide support for policy practices that focus on the enhancement of neighbourhood attachment by raising living standards, improving physical conditions and providing public services in urban neighbourhoods. This research suggests that local governments should begin from working on repairing dangerous residential blocks, expanding public spaces, increasing green areas and upgrading facilities in old neighbourhoods.

Second, although the Chinese government has stressed the importance of developing democracy, grassroots participation has grown slowly and cautiously (Zhu, 2020). This research found that urban residents were actively involved in informal neighbourhood activities, but less active when it came to formal participation. The low level of formal participation is attributable to a lack of political interest, unknown candidates and other personal reasons. This research found that strong neighbourhood-based networks contributed to formal participation. These findings provide support for policy practices that focus on the enhancement of neighbourhood participation by strengthening neighbourhood-based social networks and increasing neighbourly interactions.

This research found that the neighbourhood organisation plays an important role in promoting informal participation through organising various neighbourhood activities and having effective problem-solving skills. For example, a high participation rate in neighbourhood activities was found in the resettlement-housing neighbourhood and new commercial-housing neighbourhood in Chengdu, owing to broader neighbourhood activities organised by the neighbourhood organisations. Informal participation promotes neighbourly interactions in the neighbourhood. However, the findings show that in the old commercial-housing neighbourhood, due to a lack of funding (see Chapter 10), the PMC has never organised events for residents. Based on the findings, with respect to the improvement of informal participation, this research suggests that a special fund be set up by the local

government. The neighbourhood organisations could apply for this funding to organise neighbourhood activities in order to increase neighbourly interactions and informal participation. This study suggests that neighbourhood organisations should organise more neighbourhood activities and aim to raise participation levels so as to increase neighbourly interaction and thereby improve social integration.

Third, in order to make cities better places to live, the State Council of the PRC, China's cabinet and the Communist Party's Central Committee issued a new directive that called for an end to gated communities in 2016 (Wang and Pojani, 2020). The aim of the new government directive is to stop the construction of new gated communities and gradually open existing neighbourhoods to the public (Wang and Pojani, 2020). However, the new government directive sparked fierce debate and faced huge criticism from the public (Hamama and Liu, 2020). It was found that urbanites particularly mention that they do not perceive a sense of safety if they live in a neighbourhood without walls and gates (Wang and Pojani, 2020). As far as I am aware, this policy has not been implemented officially in China. Some scholars indicate that there is still a long way to go (Hamama and Liu, 2020; Wang and Pojani, 2020). Two recently released papers (Hamama and Liu, 2020; Wang and Pojani, 2020) indicate that in Beijing, although some newly built neighbourhoods have been created as experiments to test the implementation of the new government directive, the question of how to open existing gated neighbourhoods is still being studied. The findings of this study gave insight into the residents' feelings and attitudes regarding current neighbourhoods. As can be seen in Chapter 7, residents from different types of urban neighbourhoods appeared to have different types of sense of safety, depending on distinctive determinants. Regarding the enhancement of the sense of safety, policy makers can take different approaches based on different types of sense of safety in different types of neighbourhoods.

Finally, comparing the five neighbourhoods, this research found that the resettlement housing neighbourhood and new commercial housing neighbourhood tended to have a strong neighbourhood attachment and a high participation rate. Nevertheless, this study would not jump to a hasty conclusion that the resettlement housing neighbourhood and new commercial housing neighbourhoods are the ideal types of neighbourhoods which facilitate neighbourhood attachment and participation in China. It is because these two neighbourhoods cannot be the representatives of all the same types of neighbourhoods in China. More importantly, as shown in Chapter 6, these two neighbourhoods had different

characteristics in socio-demographic composition, physical environment and neighbourhood management modes. Since there is no unified standard, this research suggests that an ideal neighbourhood type should combine advantages of the resettlement housing neighbourhood and the new commercial housing neighbourhood, thereby contributing to a strong neighbourhood attachment and high participation rate. These advantages include a better residential environment, neighbourhood facilities and local services, more neighbourly interactions and resident self-governance, and greater neighbourhood management.

## 11.5 Limitations and future research directions

Although this research has made contributions to the understanding of neighbourhood attachment and participation in the Chinese context, there are still limitations and room for improvement. The first limitation is related to the sampling process. The neighbourhoods studied here were mainly assigned by the *shequ*. As mentioned previously, this study was conducted at a time when Chengdu was under inspection from the central government for ecological and environmental protection. Given these special circumstances, the *shequ* did not allow me to choose the neighbourhoods myself. In order to take greater control of the recruitment process and to reduce possible bias, guidelines were given and repeatedly discussed with the director of the *shequ*. As a result, the interviews were carried out in neighbourhoods without the interference of the officials and the *shequ* staff and participants expressed their views freely.

The second limitation is that I did not take weather conditions into account. I have been living in Scotland for many years and considered summer to be the best season of the entire year. However, Chengdu recorded its hottest summer ever in 2017, with temperatures reaching 39°C, and all respondents participated in interviews whilst being in the open areas of their neighbourhoods. With the weather being so hot, participants were more likely to answer with shorter sentences and often tried to minimise the interview time. This was particularly the case with elderly participants. In such cases, I suggested we find a space in the shade. In order to ensure the quality of the responses, I asked a couple of follow-up questions to obtain more detailed answers. Ultimately, the respondents expanded their answers and provided more details. Based on my experience, external conditions such as weather may negatively influence interviews. It is best to consider different situations in advance and take corresponding measures to solve them.



The third limitation is that due to time constraints, somewhat limited resources and the intentionally small scale of this research, the conclusions drawn from this thesis are challenged by their capacity to be generalised. The findings in the five neighbourhoods of Chengdu cannot simply be generalised to the situation in every urban neighbourhood in China. Nevertheless, the conclusions based on the experiences of urban Chengdu residents can be used for future research by including a wider range of Chinese cities. Thus, future research on the same topic might include a much larger-scale study whose design would draw on the experiences and insights gained in this research, and which might support the findings generated.

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## Appendix 1 Neighbourhoods Characteristics

	State-owned enterprise neighbourhood	Resettlement-housing neighbourhood	Public institution neighbourhood	Old commercial-housing neighbourhood	New commercial-housing neighbourhood
<b>Households</b>	300	154	219	300	1466
<b>Floors</b>	8 floors	6 floors	6 floors	8 floors	20 floors
<b>Residential building types</b>	Small high-rise residential building	Multi-storey residential building	Multi-storey residential building	Small high-rise residential building	High-rise residential building
<b>Floor area ratio</b>	2.1	1.9	2.45	1.76	3.6
<b>Green coverage ratio</b>	20%	20%	25%	30%	35%
<b>Year of construction</b>	1988	1998	Two residence blocks 1979 Four blocks 1985 Last two blocks 2001	1999	2013
<b>Parking spots</b>	0	0	80	100	1179
<b>Property management company</b>	None Self-governing	None Self-governing	None Self-governing	Yes (A grade-one property management company)	Yes (A grade-five property management company)
<b>Property administrative fee</b>	None (Cleaning fee: eight yuan (RMB) per month per household)	None (Cleaning fee: eight yuan (RMB) per month per household)	None (Cleaning fee: ten yuan (RMB) per month per household)	Yes 0.6 yuan (RMB) per square meter per month (including cleaning fee)	Yes 2.5 yuan (RMB) per square meter per month (including cleaning fee)

Note: Property management companies have been divided into five grades based on their services. Grade one is the lowest level and grade five is the highest.

## Appendix 2 Local Services of the Five Neighbourhoods

	SOE work unit	Resettlement-housing neighbourhood	Public institution work unit	Old commercial-housing neighbourhood	New commercial-housing neighbourhood
<b>Districts (Locations)</b>	Wuhou (Southwest of Chengdu)	Wuhou (Southwest of Chengdu)	Wuhou (Southwest of Chengdu)	Wuhou (Southwest of Chengdu)	Qingyang (West of Chengdu)
<b>Healthcare Services</b>	9 General hospitals	9 General hospitals	9 General hospitals	9 General hospitals	3 General hospitals
	3 Community hospitals	3 Community hospitals	3 Community hospitals	3 Community hospitals	2 Community hospitals
	9 Dental clinics	9 Dental clinics	9 Dental clinics	9 Dental clinics	6 Dental clinics
	over 9 Pharmacies	over 9 Pharmacies	over 9 Pharmacies	over 9 Pharmacies	over 10 Pharmacies
<b>Educational Resources</b>	10 Private & public kindergartens	10 Private & public kindergartens	10 Private & public kindergartens	10 Private & public kindergartens	3 Private & public kindergartens
	10 Primary schools	10 Primary schools	10 Primary schools;	10 Primary schools	5 Primary schools
	8 Secondary schools	8 Secondary schools	8 Secondary schools	8 Secondary schools	2 Secondary schools
	6 High schools	6 High schools	6 High schools	6 High schools	3 High schools
	6 Universities	6 Universities	6 Universities	6 Universities	0 Universities
	3 Public libraries	3 Public libraries	3 Public libraries	3 Public libraries	0 Public libraries
<b>Public Transport</b>	Subway (line 1)	Subway (line 1)	Subway (line 1)	Subway (line 1)	Subway (line 4)
	<b>Bus stops:</b> (number 16, 99, 27, 34, 77, 79, 114, 300, 12, 19, 904, 72 and 118)	<b>Bus stops:</b> (number 16, 99, 27, 34, 77, 79, 114, 300, 12, 19, 904, 72 and 118)	<b>Bus stops:</b> (number 16, 99, 27, 34, 77, 79, 114, 300, 12, 19, 904, 72 and 118)	<b>Bus stops:</b> (number 16, 99, 27, 34, 77, 79, 114, 300, 12, 19, 904, 72 and 118)	<b>Bus stops:</b> (number 1056, 309A, 32, 78 and 905)
<b>Entertainment Resources</b>	5 Gyms	5 Gyms	5 Gyms	5 Gyms	5 Gyms
	4 Cinemas	4 Cinemas	4 Cinemas	4 Cinemas	3 Cinemas
	5 Parks	5 Parks	5 Parks	5 Parks	4 Parks
	9 Big shopping centres	9 Big shopping centres	9 Big shopping centres	9 Big shopping centres	4 Big shopping centres
	a large number of restaurants, cafe and bars	a large number of restaurants, cafe and bars	a large number of restaurants, cafe and bars	a large number of restaurants, cafe and bars	a large number of restaurants, cafe and bars
<b>Others</b>	4 Grocery stores	4 Grocery stores	4 Grocery stores	4 Grocery stores	4 Grocery stores
	over 20 Supermarkets; banks	over 20 Supermarkets; banks	over 20 Supermarkets; banks	over 20 Supermarkets; banks	over 20 Supermarkets; banks
	over 19 a lot of retail shops	over 19 a lot of retail shops;	over 19 a lot of retail shops	over 19 a lot of retail shops	over 19 a lot of retail shops



## Appendix 3 Questions of the Semi-structured Interview

1. First, I would like to collect some personal information. Could you please tell me your gender, age, occupation, employment status (employed or unemployed), family type (with or without children), education background, tenure (homeowner or tenant), length of residence, and family income? 首先想收集一下您的个人信息。请问你的性别，年龄，职业，就业状态，家庭类型（是否有小孩），住房所有情况，教育背景，在小区里的居住时间，家庭收入？
2. Do you know your neighbours? How much do you know about them? Do you interact with your neighbours? and Think of the ways you have socialised with them. When? Where? How? 请问您认识您的邻居吗？你们是怎么认识的？请问你跟邻居有互动吗？如果是有，请问是什么样的互动？时间？地点？互动的细节？
3. Would you say that you trust most of the people in the neighbourhood? Why? And Can you give me some description of the feeling? 请问你信任你的邻居吗？为什么感觉到信任呢？为什么感到不信任？请你描述一下原因？
4. Do you feel safe living in your neighbourhood? Can you give me some reasons that why you generate a sense of safety to your neighbourhood? Can you provide me some reasons why you do not have a sense of safety? 请问你觉得住在小区里安全吗？请你描述一下为什们会感到很安全？如果感到不安全，请问为什么呢？
5. Do you perceive a sense of belonging? Do you think of this neighbourhood as home? Why? and can you give me some description of the feeling? 请问你对小区感到有归属感吗？你把小区当作家的一部分吗？为什么？能不能请你描述一下你的归属感？
6. Do you receive help from your neighbours? Do you provide support to your neighbours? What types of support do you provide or receive from your neighbours? Please provide details. and Can you give me some description of the feeling? 请问你得到过邻居的帮助吗？请问你帮助过邻居吗？你得到或提供过什么类型的帮助呢？请你提供一些细节？请你描述一下你的感受？
7. Can you please describe the physical environment in your neighbourhood? Do you feel satisfied with the physical environment in your neighbourhood? and Can you provide the reasons? 请你对小区环境进行一下描述？你对小区目前环境状况感到满意吗？能不能请你解释一下满意或者不满意的理由呢？
8. Can you describe what types of neighbourhood facilities you have in the neighbourhood? Do you or your family members use the neighbourhood facilities? What? When? Do you feel satisfied with the neighbourhood facilities in your neighbourhood? and Can you provide the reasons? 请你对小区的设施进行一下描述？你对小区目前的设施状况感到满意吗？能不能请你解释一下满意或者不满意的理由呢？

9. Can you describe what type of neighbourhood services you have in the neighbourhood? Do you or your family member use neighbourhood services? What? When? Do you feel satisfied with the neighbourhood services in your neighbourhood? and Can you provide the reasons? 请问你的小区目前有哪一些服务? 你对小区目前小区可提供的服务感到满意吗? 能不能请你解释一下满意或者不满意的理由呢?
10. Have you ever participated in neighbourhood elections? Which types of neighbourhood elections have you participated in and how do you feel? and Why do you not want to participate in the elections? 请问你参加过小区相关的选举吗? 如果参加过, 是什么样的类型的选举? 你对参加选举是什么感受? 请你解释一下为什么你愿意/不愿意参加选举?
11. Have you ever participated in neighbourhood-organised activities in the neighbourhood? Which types of neighbourhood-organised activities have you participated in? and either How did you get involved in these activities? or Why have not you participated in these activities? 请问你参加过小区相关组织举办的活动吗? 如果参加过, 请你描述一下你参加过什么样的活动? 你对参加小区组织的活动是什么感受? 请你解释一下为什么愿意/不愿意参加活动?
12. Have you ever reported neighbourhood problems to neighbourhood organisations? Can you describe what you reported? and Were you satisfied with the solutions? Why or why not? 请问你报告过任何与小区相关的问题? 如果有, 请你描述一下是什么样的问题? 请问你是跟哪个小区组织报告的? 你对处理结果满意吗? 为什么呢?

# Appendix 4 Participant Information Sheet

College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee



University  
of Glasgow

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College of Social  
Sciences

## Participant Information Sheet

**Research title: Neighbourhood attachment and participation in Chinese cities, a case study of Chengdu**

**Researcher: Liyuan Zhuang**

**Contact details: [l.zhuang.1@research.gla.ac.uk](mailto:l.zhuang.1@research.gla.ac.uk)**

**Urban studies**

**School of social and political sciences**

**University of Glasgow**

You are being invited to take part in my research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

The central aim of this research is to critically examine the experience and determinants of neighbourhood attachment and the extent of neighbourhood participation in different types of urban neighbourhoods in China. As most large urban neighbourhoods are new and indigenous existing research on neighbourhood issues are very limited, especially in inland regions. This study will borrow the urban neighbourhood concept and related theories developed in the west and apply and evaluate them in the Chinese context.

This research is on voluntary basis, so you have rights to skip any question in the interview and withdraw from the interview as you wish. Please be aware that interview will be recorded. Please also be aware that some of your activities in public areas of neighbourhood will be observed. However, as previously mentioned, you can stop the interview and observation at any time without giving any reason. This study aims to achieve total 31 interviews within 5 neighbourhoods by using semi-structured questions. Each interview will last approximately 30 minutes.

Participants' identification will be kept confidential to the maximum extent. All the paper documents and identifiers will be stored in a secured locker in my office at the university of Glasgow and all the digital files will be preserved in my laptop with passwords. All the data from participants will be only used for future publication purposes including PhD thesis, journal papers, conference presentation, and book chapter. Datasets is only available from the researchers by personal request. Non-identifiable data will be kept for 10 years from the date when the project is finished. Identifiable data will be destroyed once the project is finished.

Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

**Thank you for reading this**

This project has been considered and approved by the College Research Ethics Committee from the University of Glasgow. The College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer could be contacted for concerns/complaints.

Ethics Officer name and email contact are: Muir Houston ([Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk))

The researchers name and email contact are: Liyuan Zhuang, ([l.zhuang.1@research.gla.ac.uk](mailto:l.zhuang.1@research.gla.ac.uk))

The supervisors name and email contacts are: Amini Kamete ([amini.kamete@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:amini.kamete@glasgow.ac.uk)) and Ya Ping Wang, ([Yaping.Wang@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Yaping.Wang@glasgow.ac.uk))

# Appendix 5 Consent Form

College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee



University  
of Glasgow

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College of Social  
Sciences

## Consent Form

**Title of Project:** Neighbourhood attachment and participation in Chinese cities- a case study of Chengdu

**Name of Researcher:** Liyuan Zhuang

I confirm that I have read and understood the Plain Language Statement/Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I consent to interviews being audio-recorded.

(I acknowledge that copies of transcripts will be returned to participants for verification.)

I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.

I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym in any publications arising from the research.

- All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.
- The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
- Non-identifiable data will be preserved for 10 years once the project is complete.
- The material will be retained in secure storage for use in future own academic research
- The material may be used in future publications, both print and online.
- I agree to waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.

I agree to take part in this research study

I do not agree to take part in this research study

Name of Participant ..... Signature .....

Date .....

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date