

Urban Acupuncture and Co-Production: A Study on the Effective Provision of Community-Based Elderly Care Services—The Case of the “Senior Hair Salon” in District X of City C

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Abstract

Developing a community-based elderly care supply model characterized by multi-agent participation, multifunctional services, and comprehensive process management is a crucial strategy for enhancing the efficiency of elderly care service production, invigorating elderly care spaces, and guaranteeing the progress of elderly care service projects. This paper addresses issues such as the diminished role of the service population in community elderly care provision, the disorganized activation of unused spaces, and the challenges in maintaining operational continuity. Focusing on the “Senior Hair Salon” in Z community of X district, C city, the study synthesizes “co-production” and “urban acupuncture” theories to establish an analytical framework centered on space, characters, and connections. The paper conducts a thorough examination of the “Senior Hair Salon” service model, discussing the role of key individuals, the utilization of sensitive spaces, and the management of essential connections. The research identifies the pivotal role of the elderly in community-based elderly care provision—not merely as service recipients but also as leaders and coordinators in service activities. Based on these findings, the paper describes the site selection and adaptation of the service facility according to the elderly’s needs and outlines the formation of a collaborative operation model involving various stakeholders centered around the elderly community. This model prompts the district government, community neighborhood committees, volunteer service teams, and community residents to engage in a multi-agent co-production process. To maintain the uninterrupted functioning of the Z community’s “Senior Hair Salon” service, it is imperative to establish a dual incentive mechanism for the elderly and volunteer barbers, fostering

their sustained contribution of community-oriented behavior. Additionally, developing an interconnected network between the Z community service point and the other five points is crucial for facilitating resource sharing and coordination among these various service points.

Keywords

Co-Production, Community Pension Service, Senior Hair Salon, Urban Acupuncture

1. Introduction

According to the data from the Seventh National Census, the population aged 60 and above in China accounts for 18.7% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021) of the total population, an increase of 5.44% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010) compared to 2010, indicating a deepening aging trend in China. Coupled with the decline in family support functions and the limitations of institutional elderly care, traditional family and institutional elderly care are struggling to address the current aging issues. Unlike family and institutional elderly care, community elderly care involves more diverse entities, mainly characterized as “government-led, community-based, family-involved, and socially contributed.” This diversity determines its varied sources of funding and low-cost investment, highlighting its advantages in addressing China’s elderly care difficulties. Therefore, how to construct an effective and even efficient community elderly care model has attracted widespread attention.

Since 2000, the government has consistently implemented policies to enhance community-based elderly care services and optimize service delivery pathways. These policies emphasize the development of age-friendly community public service facilities, promote the construction of community elderly care service networks, and increasingly underscore the pivotal role of communities in elderly care service provision. This approach has encouraged various regions to actively seek effective strategies for elevating the level and quality of community-based elderly care services. Strategies include multi-faceted governance led by party-building (Deng, 2023), multifunctional service platforms, and comprehensive service processes. Nevertheless, research indicates that the complexity of operational realities presents significant challenges in the practical implementation of these services within communities.

Multi-element governance can capitalize on the benefits of collaboration across multiple entities (Liu, 2022). However, this approach may result in ambiguous roles and responsibilities, leading to independent action by each entity. This disjointed effort often culminates in resource wastage, imbalances in service provision, and a lack of maintenance protocols. Furthermore, while the multifunctionality of elderly care service platforms offers diverse services and revita-

lizes community spaces, it frequently neglects the actual needs of residents. This oversight hinders community engagement, resulting in superficial service projects and underutilized platforms. Additionally, comprehensive elderly care service processes, encompassing construction, operation, and maintenance, tend to overlook the ongoing upkeep of services. As a result, operations are confined to project-based activities, undermining the sustainability of the service provision. In summary, the provision of community elderly care services has not effectively utilized the strengths of various models, resulting in numerous issues. Fundamentally, this situation indicates an inability to harness the benefits of diverse service entities, a failure to align diverse service platforms with the needs of the elderly, and a deficiency in sustaining and operating long-term service processes.

Firstly, the efficient provision of elderly care services advocates for the inclusion of multiple stakeholders, such as government bodies, social organizations, businesses, community members, and other societal groups, with the aim of harnessing each entity's unique resources and capabilities. However, a common issue in many communities is the persistence of government-dominated systems, which hinders the potential advantages of diverse stakeholder involvement in different contexts. Conversely, while some communities have successfully engaged multiple entities, emphasizing their roles as per the situation, these systems often lack effective cooperative mechanisms. This deficiency impedes the realization of the full potential of collaborative multi-stakeholder support in elderly care.

Secondly, to facilitate activities, communities frequently repurpose underutilized spaces into facilities for elderly care services. However, the process often involves imprecise selection of these service facilities. Not only is there a misjudgment in identifying suitable underutilized spaces, but also a failure to realize their potential in fulfilling elderly needs. Additionally, some communities neglect the varied and layered requirements of service users, failing to consider the comprehensive nature of community service spaces. This leads to the creation of areas disconnected from residents' lifestyles and isolated from other community spaces, thereby diminishing community cohesion.

Lastly, within the multi-element governance model involving multiple entities, a "top-down" approach led by the government is commonly employed to enhance supply efficiency. This strategy, while focused on organizational and design aspects of activities, often neglects the central role of the elderly in service utilization. It also overlooks the flexible benefits and effectiveness of collaborative efforts between community, society, and market. This results in a lack of ongoing service maintenance and continuity, posing challenges in maintaining service quality, ensuring long-term operational viability, and achieving sustainability.

The foregoing analysis clearly demonstrates that the development of community-based elderly care services necessitates a strategic integration of community

elders service needs with the revitalization potential of underutilized spaces. Moreover, it demands an examination of the sustainable operational aspects of such services. In this context, this study leverages the concepts of “Collective Production” and “Urban Acupuncture” to inform the framework for a multi-stakeholder collaborative approach in elderly care service development. This approach encompasses the identification and role definition of key actors, the selection and revitalization of underutilized spaces, and the establishment and maintenance of service networks, thereby providing a theoretical foundation for these critical aspects of community elder care services. Consequently, this paper synthesizes these two theoretical perspectives to formulate a comprehensive analytical model for the provision of community elderly care services. Utilizing this model, the paper presents an in-depth analysis of the “Senior Hair Salon” initiative in Z community, X district, C city, examining it across three dimensions: stakeholders, space, and service linkages. This analysis aims to address three core issues: Firstly, the identification and role shaping of pivotal figures to foster a mechanism driven by internal leaders for collective production; Secondly, the recognition and effective activation of sensitive spaces; and thirdly, the design and persistent cultivation of essential project linkages to ensure the continuity and comprehensive development of the initiative.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Exploratory Research on Effective Provision of Community Elderly Care Services

As the needs of the elderly become increasingly diversified and personalized, individual-centric approaches have emerged as pivotal in the realm of elderly care services (Sumini et al., 2020). This paradigm shift has given rise to a multi-tiered production mechanism encompassing government, society, market, and community levels, thereby augmenting the efficacy of service delivery in this sector. Particularly in China, community-based elderly care has evolved from being predominantly welfare-driven to embracing broader social objectives. This evolution includes a transition from government-led initiatives to a framework involving multiple stakeholders, as well as a diversification of service models. The current supply mechanism in elderly care places greater emphasis on the dynamic interplay among various providers. It capitalizes on the strengths of government, societal actors, and individuals, underscoring the role of social organizations, enterprises, charities, and service groups in mobilizing organizational resources. Deeper research into this field reveals that multi-entity involvement materializes through various forms, such as volunteerism, multi-faceted governance, collaborative efforts, and collective production. Each of these forms focuses on specific aspects and given the complex nature of elderly care, a singular approach cannot suffice. A composite strategy, integrating multiple forms of engagement, is essential to leverage the unique benefits offered by each participant and to bolster overall service effectiveness. However, certain studies and

practical applications tend to neglect regional variances and the need for adaptive strategies suited to local conditions. There is a pressing need to elucidate the interconnections and interactive pathways among the diverse stakeholders in elderly care service provision. Furthermore, it is imperative to stimulate and harness the motivational forces driving each participant, ensuring a more tailored and effective approach to elderly care.

As a foundational element of grassroots governance, the focus on elderly care services within community settings has progressively shifted towards aligning with the specific needs of seniors and developing service frameworks utilizing community platforms (Zhu et al., 2021). This transition is primarily evident in the extensive development of community spaces for elderly activities and the implementation of micro-modifications to increase the age-friendliness of communities. The former approach, while substantial, is often hampered by high costs, intensive construction requirements, and limited efficiency. In contrast, micro-renovation aims for optimal efficiency with minimal yet precise interventions. This approach is characterized by activating smaller spaces, precisely targeted service offerings, and subtle adjustments, leading to lower costs, less invasive construction, and enhanced efficiency. Micro-renovation, with its greater transformative value and potential for intervention, stands in stark contrast to more extensive renovations (Yu et al., 2021). By adopting this method for community elderly care services, it is possible to cater to the varied lifestyle requirements of the elderly more accurately, significantly reducing the care giving burdens on communities and families. Research indicates that while some scholars have investigated community space modifications through the lens of space classification, they often overlook how these spaces meet the diverse and layered needs of the elderly. Others have examined the planning and distribution of elderly facilities from a macro perspective, establishing age-friendly systems within communities and initiating renovations driven by the care needs of the elderly. Nevertheless, there is a pressing need for continued exploration and follow-up on micro-modifications for age-friendly community environments. This includes enhancing oversight, maintenance, and adjustments of age-friendly spaces to ensure their ongoing effectiveness in serving the elderly community.

Within the realm of community elderly care services, the interplay and coordination among various stakeholders have been systematized and proceduralized, culminating in a structured approach to service project delivery. Contemporary research delves into the development of a “one-core multi-element” co-governance model, incorporating the concerted efforts of party committee governments, community organizations, market enterprises, and community residents. This model has led to the establishment of a precision service model that operates on the principles of multi-entity involvement and a community elderly care system driven by demand. Furthermore, a “five-society linkage” multi-governance framework has been formulated, grounded in the community platform, utilizing

social organizations as facilitators, social workers for support, community volunteers as the backbone, and social charitable resources as accelerators (Li et al., 2024). Under the umbrella of diverse multi-element governance models, the process of multi-stakeholder participation in service provision is methodically structured. This results in a procedural operation that focuses on varying aspects of project linkages. The “one-core multi-element” model underscores the pivotal role of the party organization, emphasizing a “top-down” approach where the party organization leads other entities in delivering community elderly care services. In contrast, the “demand-driven supply” model is aligned with the actual requirements of the elderly community, accentuating a “bottom-up” feedback mechanism and service provision. The “five-society linkage” operates on the tenet of multi-party equilibrium, integrating resources and enhancing service quality across five key sectors: the community, social organizations, community volunteers, social public welfare charitable resources, and social workers. This highlights the significance of professional providers in the service delivery chain. These models have found broad applicability in the delivery of community public services, effectively addressing various aspects of elderly care. To devise a multi-element governance model that enhances elderly care service provision, a thorough examination of the community’s context and resource strengths is imperative. This entails an exploration of innovative, adaptable approaches and their localized implementation across various models. Such a process ensures systematic operation within project components, thereby augmenting the efficiency and efficacy of community-based elderly care services.

In conclusion, in the research on the effective supply of community elderly care services, the exploration of diverse subject linkage, forms of human participation, and service supply models, as well as the excavation, transformation, and activation of service carriers based on the community platform have been discussed. Among them, the study and practice of human participation urgently need to further transform the service objects from passive to active, highlight the core driving role of the elderly, and clarify the linkage mechanism among multiple subjects. At the same time, it is necessary to sort out the community situation and resource advantages according to the actual situation, further explore and stimulate the behavioral motivation of different subjects and form a sustainable supply link. Moreover, the study of service facilitators necessitates ongoing attention to the nuanced evolution of community aging—enhancing oversight, upkeep, and timely modification of aging environments to guarantee the perpetual vitality of community elderly care spaces.

2.2. Construction of the “Human-Space-Link” Analysis Framework

In order to explore the co-creation of public value in the supply of community care services, different scholars have discussed the dual subject cooperation mechanism between the public and the regular supplier of public services based on

the co-production theory. In the academic discourse on co-production, there exists a diversity of interpretations among scholars. Central to these discussions is the dual-participant cooperation mechanism involving the public and conventional public service providers. This dialogue seeks to elucidate the collaborative generation of public value within the realm of public service delivery. Predominantly, co-production theory advocates for the engagement of multiple stakeholders, including professional public service providers and the citizenry. This theory accentuates the public as a coequal participant alongside professional service providers, fostering active involvement in co-production. It endeavors to delineate an efficient public service delivery model by underscoring the transformative impact of public participation and the interplay among varied stakeholders. Nevertheless, a profound question lingers unresolved: “How does public engagement in co-production specifically concentrate on distinct public groups?” Moreover, this theoretical framework alone does not suffice to elucidate the dynamic transformation and ongoing development of service linkages in the provision of elderly care services.

In response to the blind areas involved in the theory of co-production, urban acupuncture theory can make up for it. “Urban Acupuncture” was first proposed by architect and urban scholar Manuel de Sola Morales in the study of urban revival (Jia, 2011). Since then, “Urban Acupuncture” as a catalytic small-scale renovation and update mode has entered people’s vision. Later, as the concept was widely used in different practices, its practical connotation has been enriched and gradually used to improve the ecological environment system and urban environment system, connect urban community governance and citizen participation, and solve the problems of urban and community public service updates. “Urban Acupuncture” borrows the working principle of ancient Chinese “acupuncture”, focuses on the identification of key “acupoints”, and emphasizes the “progressive” adjustment of “symptoms” with precise intervention methods. It is a small-scale, low-cost, micro-intervention, progressive, catalytic update method, advocating maximizing efficiency through micro-updates and micro-interventions (Salman & Hussein, 2021). In this regard, in the supply of community elderly care services, by focusing on the identification of internal key figures and sensitive space site selection, introducing “progressive therapy”, the whole process construction of community elderly care service supply is explored.

In this regard, in order to answer three major questions: “How to identify key figures for role shaping and drive co-production”, “How to identify sensitive spaces and explore the utilization potential of space”, and “How to continuously activate and create projects, and achieve the construction of the entire process”, this paper integrates the two theories of “Co-production” and “Urban Acupuncture”, and builds an analytical framework around the three elements of space, human and link elements, as shown in **Figure 1**. First, by identifying and shaping the roles of elderly care service supply at various levels of government,

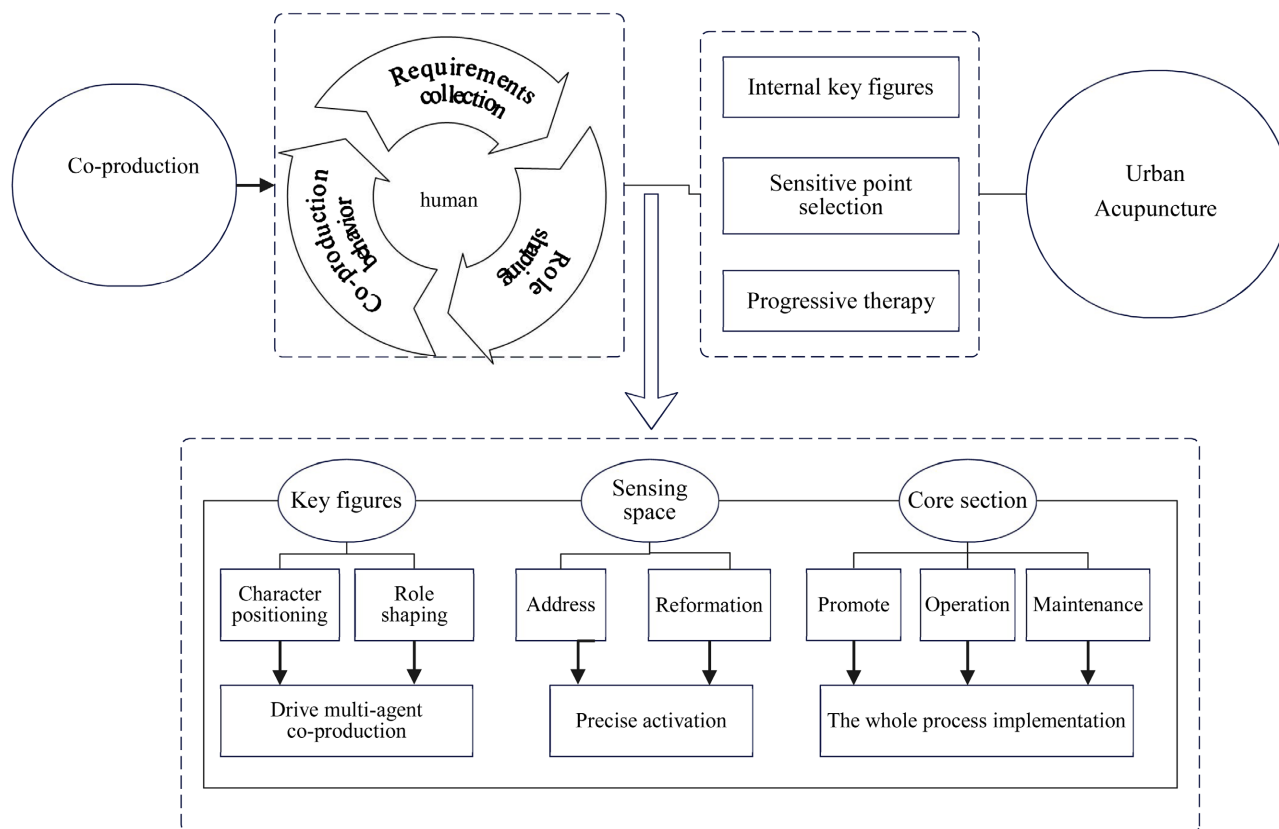


Figure 1. “Space-Person-Link” analysis framework.

society, market, or community, the positioning of key figures is clarified, and a mechanism for key figures to drive other diverse subjects for co-production is constructed. For example, by analyzing the current situation of the community to identify the advantages of different subjects, a party member volunteer backbone team is formed with party members as key figures, playing the role of party organization leadership and mobilization, driving community residents to participate in community autonomy and guiding professional social organizations to empower residents. Secondly, the address selection of elderly care service carriers is carried out with the identification of sensitive spaces. By linking the elderly care service needs of the community and the reconstruction potential of sensitive spaces, fully considering the potential of sensing spaces to meet the local elderly care needs, sensitive spaces such as community corners and idle spaces are transformed into multifunctional spaces. For example, for sensing spaces that present scattered stacking and chaotic overall spatial status, reconstruction is carried out through location identification, current situation analysis, and functional integration to maximize the satisfaction of residents’ diversified needs while beautifying and upgrading sensitive spaces, making them suitable for all ages. Finally, through the procedural operation of project links, the operation and maintenance procedures of elderly care service projects are constructed to achieve the whole process implementation.

3. Service Co-Governance in Practice: A Case Study of the “Senior Hair Salon” in Z Community, X District of City C

This study examines the “Senior Hair Salon” initiative, a key elderly care service project launched by the Civil Affairs Bureau of District X. The project repurposed the unused second floor of the former public elderly activity center in Community Z, establishing a permanent Senior Hair Salon. Inaugurated on September 1, 2020, the salon received an initial funding of 30,000 RMB from the Finance Bureau of District X. The local neighborhood committee of Community Z managed the site selection, space renovation, and volunteer coordination. Meanwhile, the community geriatric group took charge of the salon’s daily operations and maintenance. The city’s hairdressing volunteer service team catered to approximately 20 seniors on each designated service day (the 10th and 20th of each month). The service ambitiously extended to elderly residents within a 3-kilometer radius, aiming to enhance accessibility and community engagement in elderly care.

3.1. Identification and Construction of Key Figures in “Senior Hair Salon”

3.1.1. Identification and Creation of Internal Key Figures

In the realm of elderly care services, internal key figures are instrumental, exhibiting pivotal roles in driving and coordinating these services. Their identification and role development are crucial, achieved through precise positioning and strategic role definition. Specifically, in the context of the “Senior Hair Salon” in Z community, the primary beneficiaries are individuals aged 60 and above. These seniors are not merely recipients of haircutting services but also contribute to the supply side of elderly services by fulfilling their own needs. This positions them as integral internal figures in the service supply chain. Among this demographic, some retirees, not satisfied with prolonged idle time at home, exhibit substantial social and self-actualization desires. Conventional hair salons in the community fall short in meeting the frequent and specific hairdressing requirements of the local elderly populace, underscoring the necessity for tailored elderly care services.

Consequently, establishing a management role for the elderly within the service point significantly enhances their engagement in community development, social interaction, and self-worth realization. This role, particularly within the “Senior Hair Salon”, encompasses management and maintenance responsibilities. By endorsing the elderly as self-governors in the salon’s operations, they are encouraged to actively participate and even persuade their peers and relatives to contribute to the salon’s cleanliness, space upkeep, and resource provision. Such involvement directly aligns with the desires of the local elderly population to collaboratively construct, manage, and share in the benefits of the age-friendly “Senior Hair Salon.” This approach not only fosters a sense of ownership among the elderly but also addresses their social and communal needs effectively.

In addition, in the operation of the “Senior Hair Salon” in Community Z, active communication among the elderly fosters the sharing of service experiences and the continual refinement of service needs. These insights are either relayed to the neighborhood committee by the elderly group for feedback or internally utilized for service enhancement. Such processes are instrumental in tailoring and elevating the quality of services offered. Additionally, the elderly negotiate and organize regular tasks such as cleaning, space management, and managing hairdressing queues, ensuring their activities do not impede others’ experiences. This contributes to the orderly and consistent delivery of services. In scenarios where the service point faces challenges or emergencies, the elderly demonstrate remarkable ownership by offering financial aid, donating tea leaves, or making other contributions to ensure the smooth functioning of the “Senior Hair Salon”. This initiative in Community Z exemplifies role molding that addresses the diverse needs of the local elderly population. By continuously fostering their sense of belonging and identity, the initiative effectively motivates them to actively participate and contribute to the co-creation of their mobility within the elderly care services framework.

3.1.2. Elderly People Drive Co-Production of Multiple Subjects

The “Elderly Hair Salon” initiative involves a coalition of crucial stakeholders, including the senior citizens, X district government, Z community neighborhood committee, the volunteer hairdressing team, and the local residents. This collaboration results in a dual operational mechanism for the salon, integrating both top-down and bottom-up approaches. From the top-down perspective, the government of District X, in conjunction with the community neighborhood committee, volunteer hairdressing team, and elderly groups, established a foundational framework for the “Senior Hair Salon” program. The District Civil Affairs Bureau formed a pilot project leadership team to evaluate applications from communities for setting up “Haircuts for the Elderly” service points. This team also oversees the recruitment and allocation of haircutting volunteers within the district. Concurrently, the District Finance Bureau provides financial support to the established community service points, aiding the delivery of haircutting services. Conversely, from a bottom-up viewpoint, the elderly actively engage in co-managing, co-constructing, and sharing the “Senior Hair Salon.” Their involvement is based on the community’s assessment of their haircutting needs and the local infrastructure. This ensures the sustainable operation of the service point, as depicted in **Figure 2**. This bi-directional approach fosters a comprehensive and responsive service model, catering effectively to the specific needs and conditions of the elderly community.

The service point for the elderly is spearheaded by a retired senior cadre, supported by four dedicated elderly individuals possessing substantial knowledge and cultural understanding. They play an instrumental role in motivating, supporting, and assisting other participants, as illustrated in **Figure 3**. On one

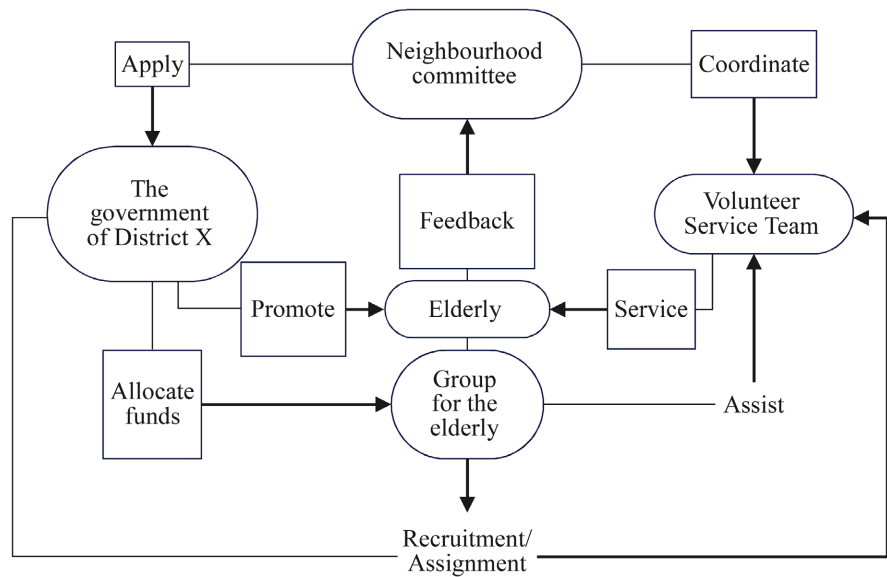


Figure 2. The operation mechanisms of “elderly hair salon”.

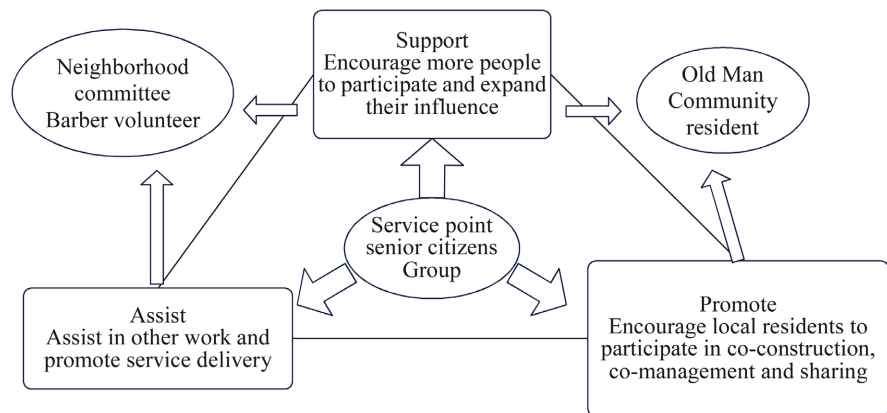


Figure 3. Diagram of multi-agent interaction.

hand, this group aids the Z Community Council in coordinating with professional hairdressing volunteers to provide services at the point, while also gathering and relaying feedback on the hairdressing needs and opinions of the elderly to enhance service implementation. Moreover, the Service Point Elderly Group actively engages with various groups. They not only encourage broader elderly participation in managing the space, maintaining order, and partaking in service activities but also coordinate the schedules of barber volunteers and assist in the provision of hairdressing services. Additionally, they promote the involvement of barber volunteers, fellow seniors, and community residents in developing the service point, aiming to augment manpower and material support for its sustained operation. This multifaceted involvement underscores their commitment to creating an efficient, responsive, and inclusive service environment for the elderly.

3.1.3 Mechanisms for Co-Production Driven by Internal Key Players

In summary, the “Elderly Hair Salon” at Community Z exemplifies a co-production

model with the elderly at its core, particularly in the context of providing elderly haircutting services. This model fosters a dynamic interaction and mutual influence among internal key figures, facilitating a multi-agent collaborative production approach. Central to this mechanism is the recognition of the diverse, multi-level needs of these key individuals. It starts by collating these needs through an assessment of service effectiveness, then progresses to creating roles for key individuals in the community elderly care service. This process establishes a multi-level, autonomous role structure aimed at fulfilling the needs of these key figures. Such a structure enhances the sense of ownership and responsibility among the key individuals within the service supply chain, subsequently motivating them to drive other diverse agents towards collaborative production. Emerging challenges and demands within this action-driven context perpetuate the cyclical operation of the internal person-led co-production mechanism, as depicted in **Figure 4**. This iterative process underscores the evolving nature of elderly care services, emphasizing continual adaptation and improvement.

3.2. Sensitive Spatial Selection and Activation of “Senior Hair Salon”

3.2.1. Space Selection: Identification of Sensitive Areas

In the context of spatial selection, the focus is on identifying areas within the community ripe for transformation and intervention, guided by an analysis of underlying contradictions and potentials. Key factors in this regard include geographic location and spatial property rights. The elderly activity center in Community Z, a two-story, medium-sized building, is strategically located at a community node. It is not only adjacent to the community committee but also situated in the heart of the residential area, frequented by local residents. The center’s first floor is actively used by the elderly for daily activities, serving as a communal hub, while its second floor is underutilized, primarily serving as storage space, with its potential for elderly-focused activities remaining untapped. The primary users of this facility are elderly individuals, indicating

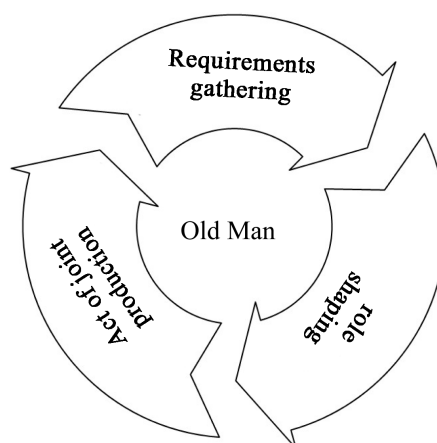


Figure 4. Mechanisms for co-production driven by internal key players.

extensive service coverage.

Regarding spatial property rights, the center is publicly owned, thereby eliminating the complexities of property disputes. This factor reduces the cost and difficulty associated with minor modifications and interventions. Consequently, there is considerable potential for transforming and utilizing the second floor for elderly care services in Community Z. Such changes promise multiple benefits, including the activation of underutilized space, better meeting the needs of elderly care, and enhancing overall service efficiency. This approach aligns with optimizing resource use while addressing the specific requirements of the elderly population in the community.

3.2.2. Space Reconstruction: Multifunctional Composite Elderly Space

Spatial transformation involves the functional reorientation of sensitive areas, emphasizing precise interventions in underutilized spaces to meet the multifaceted and diverse needs of the elderly. Prior to its transformation, the first floor of the elderly activity center in Community Z was equipped with numerous public amenities and resources, such as televisions, mahjong tables, desks and chairs, newspapers, chessboards, and tea facilities, facilitating leisure activities like reading, watching TV, playing chess, tea brewing, and socializing for the elderly. Given the scarcity of local commercial hair salons, which predominantly cater to a younger demographic with their pricing and design, many elderly individuals found it inconvenient and were less inclined to use these services, leading to a heightened demand for hairdressing within the community.

In this context, the introduction of the “Senior Hair Salon” on the second floor of the elderly activity center not only provided hairdressing services but also allowed the elderly to engage in leisure activities such as playing chess, reading, tea drinking, and chatting simultaneously. This enriched the elderly care experience and improved the quality of community-based elderly services. Moreover, the free, high-quality hairdressing services offered by the “Senior Hair Salon” attracted elderly individuals from the community and surrounding areas to participate in activities at the center, thereby expanding the range of the elderly population served by community care. Furthermore, the congregation of the elderly facilitated the community committee’s efforts to conduct educational activities on fraud prevention, vaccination, and health checks, satisfying the health and social interaction needs of the elderly. Therefore, the establishment of an age-friendly hairdressing space on the second floor of the Z community’s elderly activity center not only meets the diverse and layered elderly care needs of the community in real-time but also contributes to the renewal and enhancement of the multifunctional composite elderly care space within the center.

3.2.3. Space Activation: Links between Service Needs and Spatial Potential

The essence of activating underutilized spaces lies in “precise intervention”, which focuses on effectively linking service demands with the potential of the space, namely, its capacity to be transformed to meet elderly service needs. In-

vestigations revealed that the second floor of the elderly activity center is of a moderate size, and its location on the upper level poses potential safety risks due to crowding, particularly for the less mobile elderly demographic. This suggests the feasibility of conducting periodic small-scale service activities in this space is high. In response, Community Z, guided by the comprehensive evaluation of community construction needs by residents in District X and the financial budget considerations of District X's government, initiated the "Senior Hair Salon" hairdressing project, addressing a significant yet manageable need for elderly hairdressing services.

The "Senior Hair Salon" in Community Z carefully aligns the adaptation of the space with the service content, considering the mobility limitations of the elderly demographic it serves. By transforming the space into a hairdressing facility for the elderly, it achieves a precise connection between service needs and the potential of the space. On one hand, the "Senior Hair Salon" provides hairdressing services to the local elderly, effectively alleviating the imbalance between supply and demand for elderly hairdressing services. On the other hand, as a periodic, low-frequency activity, the hairdressing infrastructure required is relatively simple, easily movable and adjustable, offering high flexibility without necessitating frequent ascents to the second floor by the elderly. In summary, the transformation of the second floor of the elderly activity center into the "Senior Hair Salon" does not significantly alter the original material aspects of the space nor disrupt the existing spatial order of the community. It not only capitalizes on the value of existing elements for functional adaptation to service needs but also aligns with the community's age-friendly modifications and precise targeting of elderly service needs, exemplifying the precise intervention in activating underutilized spaces.

3.3. The Core Processes and Maintenance of the "Elderly Hair Salon" Project

3.3.1. Project Initiation: Coordinated and Facilitated by the Government of District X

In initiating the "Elderly Hair Salon" project, the District X government, as the project's proponent, orchestrated its implementation across various levels. The initial phase involved establishing the project's service scope. This determination was grounded in a comprehensive assessment of Chinese residents' community building needs, District X's financial budget for elderly care services, and the specific requirements of the district's elderly population. The project was conceived to provide basic, cost-effective haircutting services. Subsequently, the operational framework of the project was developed. Aligning with the defined service scope, the District X government pinpointed multiple stakeholders essential for the project's execution. This step entailed the formulation of policy planning and action directives, encompassing the designation of a central coordinating body, a volunteer hairdressing team, and entities accountable for service point

management and operations. This framework established a bilateral operational mechanism, directing the collaborative involvement of diverse entities in the realization of the “Elderly Hair Salon” project. The final stage entailed crafting the project’s financial strategy, ensuring a structured approach to funding allocation and management. This comprehensive methodology underscored the government’s commitment to addressing elderly care needs effectively and systematically.

The financial support for the “Elderly Hair Salon” project in X District was two-fold. Firstly, the X District Finance Bureau granted 30,000 RMB to the service points that were selected for the pilot project. This funding originated from two sources: the “Centralized Lottery Public Welfare Funds to Support Social Welfare Special Funds” and the “Provincial Financial Funds for Pension Service System Construction Project.” Of this allocation, 20,000 RMB was earmarked for procuring barbering equipment and essential materials for the service points. Additionally, an annual sum of 500,000 RMB was designated for the replenishment of elderly service materials and the maintenance of the basic equipment. Secondly, the government actively promoted the involvement of third-party social entities in supporting the sustained operation of the service points, encouraging them to contribute either financially or through material donations. This dual approach of securing government funding and encouraging third-party support was instrumental in ensuring the robust functioning and longevity of the “Elderly Hair Salon” project, reflecting a comprehensive and sustainable financial strategy.

3.3.2. Project Operation and Maintenance: Multiple Regulatory Adjustments

In the execution of the “Elderly Hair Salon” service point activities, incremental adjustments are essential to ensure its consistent operation. This approach underscores the importance of operation and maintenance, which are supervised by various stakeholders. Specifically, in the Z community’s “Elderly Hair Salon”, the regulation and optimization of services and space are achieved through the daily management of the space by pertinent groups and an evaluation system organically developed by the participants. These groups comprise the community neighborhood committee, the elderly group at the service point, local elderly residents, and volunteer hairdressers. Their collective involvement plays a critical role in maintaining service quality and adapting to evolving needs, thereby contributing to the sustainability and effectiveness of the “Elderly Hair Salon” initiative.

In the operation of the “Elderly Hair Salon” within the community, a structured approach is key to ensuring the success and sustainability of the service. Primarily, the community neighborhood committee and the elderly group at the service point hold significant responsibilities. The neighborhood committee oversees the service quality and effectiveness, as well as the operational and

maintenance aspects of the space. They make necessary adjustments and optimizations based on the evolving needs of the elderly population, thereby ensuring the services remain relevant and beneficial. Meanwhile, the elderly group at the service point manages the day-to-day operations of the space. They embody a sense of ownership, adapting the services of the “Senior Hair Salon” to align with the actual hours and activities of the elderly, enriching their range of activities and ensuring that the service offerings are compatible with their needs. Local elderly residents, as the primary beneficiaries of the “Senior Hair Salon”, play a pivotal role in communicating the effectiveness and experience of the services to others in the community through firsthand usage and word-of-mouth. This engagement not only encourages more elderly participation but also garners additional support from various entities. Additionally, volunteer hairdressers contribute their professional expertise in space design and equipment arrangement, thereby continuously enhancing the space’s functionality and the overall professionalism and satisfaction of the service. This collaborative, multi-faceted approach is crucial in maintaining the quality and relevance of the “Elderly Hair Salon,” ensuring it effectively serves the community’s elderly population.

3.3.3. Full Process Realization of Project Initiation, Operation and Maintenance

The implementation of the “Senior Hair Salon” project in District X, particularly within Community Z, is a prime example of community vitality stimulation and empowerment through the provision of effective elderly haircutting services. The key to the sustainable activation and creation of this project lies in the comprehensive realization of its construction, operation, and maintenance phases. Under the guidance and coordination of the district government, the success of the project hinges on professionalizing, optimizing, and scientifically managing three critical processes: service activities, the operational framework, and the funding plan. To this end, a systematic implementation strategy for the “Senior Hair Salon” project has been meticulously formulated and executed. This strategy encompasses a series of interconnected stages: firstly, determining the service content, organizing activities, encouraging participation, and gathering feedback on the effectiveness of these activities; secondly, constructing the operational framework, which includes project design and management, along with ongoing supervision of the projects implementation; and finally, formulating the funding plan, which involves procurement and replenishment of materials, and the supervision of surplus assets. This structured approach ensures the project’s viability and relevance in addressing the hairstyling needs of the elderly in Community Z, marking it as a model for similar initiatives.

The successful execution of the “Senior Hair Salon” project is a collaborative endeavor, involving the community neighborhood committee, elderly groups at the service points, hairdressing volunteers, and the local elderly residents. These stakeholders play a pivotal role in advancing the operation and maintenance of

the project, as depicted in **Figure 5**. Moreover, the project's maintenance phase effectively informs and enhances the initiation phase. This cyclical process includes refining the service content based on evaluations of service effectiveness and feedback from activity experiences. Additionally, it involves the ongoing updating and coordination of the operational framework through vigilant project implementation supervision, coupled with the real-time monitoring of fund utilization and surplus asset management. Such a feedback mechanism enables the X district government to receive timely updates and insights, which are crucial for providing informed guidance on the establishment, operation, and maintenance of the project. This dynamic and responsive approach ensures that the project remains aligned with the evolving needs of the elderly community, thereby enhancing its efficacy and sustainability.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

4.1. Research Conclusion

In the field of elderly care service provision research, addressing three critical questions is essential for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. These include: "How to identify key individuals for role shaping and driving co-production," "How to identify sensitive spaces and unlock their utilization potential," and "How to sustainably activate and develop projects, ensuring a complete process realization." This paper integrates the theories of

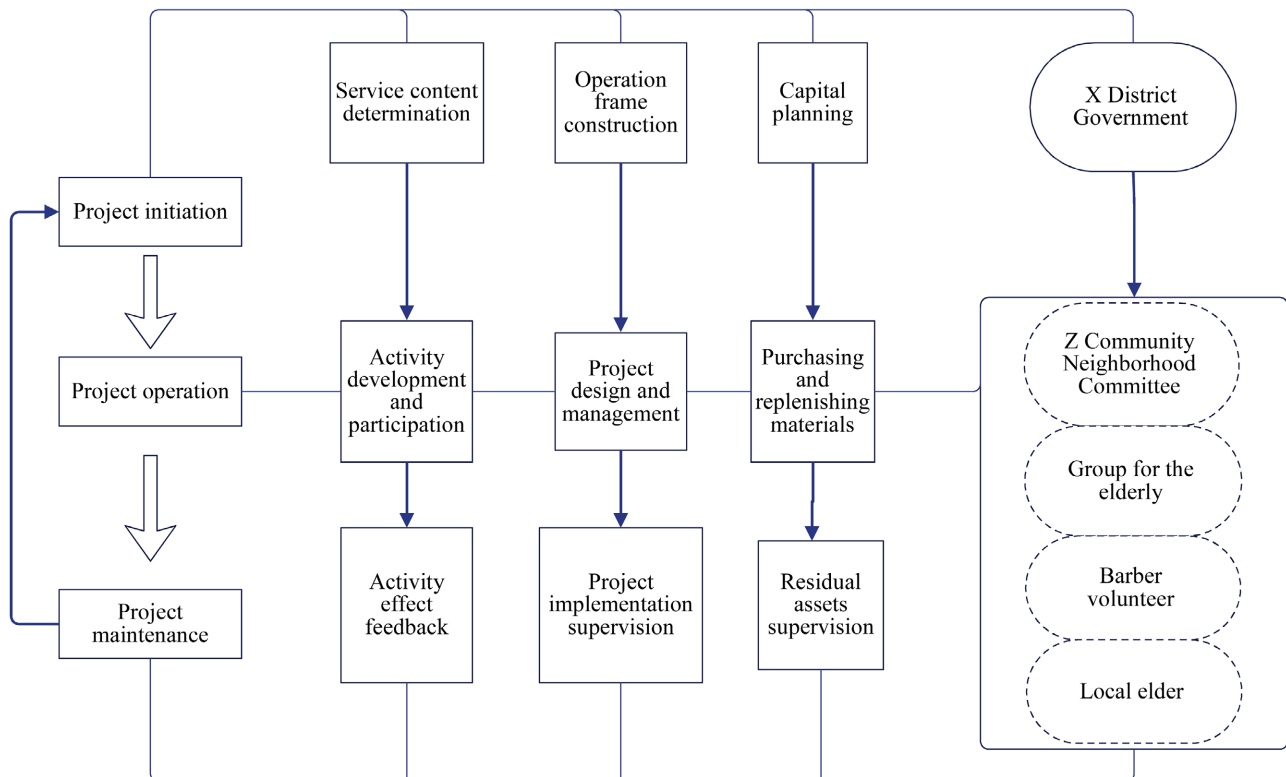


Figure 5. Realization of the whole process of project initiation, operation and maintenance.

“co-production” and “urban acupuncture” to construct a systematic “space-character-link” analytical framework. It thoroughly analyzes the elderly care service provision model in the “Senior Hair Salon” of Community Z in District X, City C. The study reveals that through precise targeting of the elderly service population and role shaping of key figures, the central role of community seniors in elderly care service provision is established. They are not merely recipients of services but also play vital roles in driving and coordinating activities. Building upon this, the selection and transformation of service venues based on the elderly’s service needs, and the involvement of a diverse range of stakeholders centered around community seniors in project operations and maintenance, have culminated in a pattern of co-production. This pattern involves multiple stakeholders, including community seniors, district government, community neighborhood committees, volunteer service teams, and community residents, collectively contributing to the service provision.

4.2. Theoretical Dialogue and Discussion

This paper engages with existing theories on three levels. Firstly, the theory of “co-production” underscores the construction of efficient public service provision models through the role shaping of public participation and multi-stakeholder interaction. From this perspective, the paper highlights the equal importance of elderly individuals and professional producers in service co-production, focuses on designing and planning service spaces for activities, and emphasizes the realization of the entire process of service operation and maintenance. The study finds that the production of elderly care services increasingly highlights the key role of elderly participation and the design and planning of service activities by multiple stakeholders within elderly care spaces.

Secondly, the sole perspective of co-production theory does not address the issues of key figure identification, elderly care space determination, space transformation, or the full process construction of phases. Here, the “urban acupuncture” theory emphasizes the crucial elements of “sensitive point acupuncture” and “gradual treatment.” Based on this perspective, the paper focuses on the “acupuncture governance” and “sustainable provision” of elderly care services, discovering that the effective co-production of “Senior Hair Salon” services relies on the shaping of internal key figure identification, sensitive space selection, and the realization of the entire process, including initiation, operation, and maintenance.

Finally, combining the case study presented earlier, the “character-space-link” model of elderly care service provision constructed in this research accommodates the co-production status of service recipients in multi-stakeholder participation and the “acupuncture” effect in the design of elderly care service provision models. It further breaks from the limitation of co-production perspective, which solely focuses on public role shaping and diverse interactions, by integrating “sensitive point acupuncture” and “gradual treatment” from the urban

acupuncture perspective in the construction of elderly care service co-production. Therefore, the “character-space-link” model of elderly care service provision effectively merges the theories of co-production and urban acupuncture, representing a further expansion and innovation of both theories.

Furthermore, the analysis presented in this paper reveals limitations and potential areas for further expansion. The study identifies a lack of sufficient motivation for the elderly and volunteer hairdressers in the “Senior Hair Salon” project in Community Z of District X, City C. To maintain the ongoing participation and momentum of the elderly and volunteers in co-production activities, it is imperative to develop a well-established, standardized, and scientific external incentive mechanism, grounded in their actual needs. Simultaneously, it is essential to activate internal motivators for both the elderly and volunteers by reinforcing their sense of service belonging, satisfaction, and accomplishment, thereby encouraging sustained behavioral output and ensuring the stability of the project’s operation. Moreover, with six “Senior Hair Salon” community service points currently established in District X, there is a need to amplify the catalytic effect of community hairdressing services to benefit a broader elderly population. To achieve this, the service point in Community Z should strengthen its connections and interactions with other service points, forming an organic network of elderly care service provision in District X. This network would facilitate resource sharing and coordination across different service points, thus enhancing the overall efficacy and reach of the service.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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