



On Housing the Aging Population : A Case Study in Hokkaido, Japan (2)

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On Housing the Aging Population

— A Case Study in Hokkaido, Japan (2) —

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Abstract

In order to make a contribution to the planning of the Public Dwellings for the Aged, the magnitude and the nature of demand are analyzed through the questionnaires answered by the aged citizens. Analyses are made especially on the family relationship, present housing conditions, desired domiciles, contact with children, and the desired location and type of the Public Dwellings for the Aged. The analyses are concluded with the statement that the principle of supported independence shall be established in all housing projects for the aged.

1. Purpose of Case Study

1. It is in the best interests of the economy and social health of the country to provide old people with living arrangements especially suited to their needs.
2. Industrialized society, because of its influence on the break-up of the generations, must assume some of the responsibility for the shelter and care of the aged previously supplied by the family.
3. The old age group has the right to its proportionate share of the goods and services available to other age groups in the population.
4. Mental and physical health of older people are promoted when the aged are privileged to retain active membership in the life of the community.

— Wilma Donahue —¹⁾

Since around the beginning of this century, the population of the aged in advanced countries has shown a steady increase both in terms of the absolute number and of the percentage in national population structure. Beside this phenomenon, the general trend toward the nuclear family has caused a remarkable increase of the elderly living by themselves and deprived of the care by the kinsfolk. Since around 1950, similar trend has become obvious in Japan.

The housing for the aged has generally been categorized into two types; the communal, or institutional, type and the residential type. The latter type, however, was proved to be more appropriate for the elderly and this fact has more or less been reflected on the national policies for old age housing in Sweden, the Netherland, Switzerland, the U.S.A., and Norway.

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The Public Dwellings for the Aged (which shall hereafter be abbreviated as the P.D.A.) is the residential type housing for the elderly which is constructed and managed by the government or semigovernmental authorities. At the serious development of the aging problems, the construction of the P.D.A. was started in Japan in 1964. Ever since, the P.D.A. have been constructed in many parts of the country, but the total number of construction has been too small to meet the demand. Beside this, the quality of the P.D.A. has been poor and the design does not seem to have gone beyond the level of trial and error. As Dr. Wilma Donahue pointed out, in order to bring about the solution of the housing problems for the elderly, it is most important now that the circumstances of the elderly and the magnitude of their housing need shall be clarified.²⁾

The purpose of this case study is to achieve these objectives and to obtain some fundamental data for the planning of the P.D.A. in Japan.

2. Method of Case Study

In August 1969, with the cooperation of the related sections of the Municipality of Muroran, the whole families with the head of house of 55 years and over in Muropan City were located from the Domicile Registration Cards and the questionnaires were sent by mail to 2,450 families statistically selected out of them. 464 replies, which consisted 18.9% of the all questionnaires sent, were obtained and, after checking the filling up of necessary forms, 455 of them were selected as the effective replies. The ages of those who furnished us the effective replies are shown in Table 1.

The questionnaire included the principle question about the willingness to move in the P.D.A. with 14 other questions which were constructed to clarify the factors influencing on the reactions toward the P.D.A. Most of

Table 1. Ages of Respondents

Age	55~59	60~64	65~69	70~74	75~	Total Number
Male	14	201	127	49	24	415
Female	4	14	9	10	3	40
Total	18	215	136	59	27	455

the questions were set in a multiple-choice form in order to make effective statistical analyses.

3. Results and Analyses

All data in the effectively filled up questionnaires were transferred on punch cards for hand-sorting and the correlations of the principal question about the willingness to move in the P.D.A. with other factors included in 14 questions were analyzed.

As the result, no apparent correlations were found between the principal question and the following four factors :

1. Education

2. Occupation
3. Monthly Income
4. Health Conditions

On the other hand, obvious correlations were discovered between the willingness toward the P.D.A. and the following three points :

1. Ownership Status of the House
2. Complaints to Present Housing Conditions
3. Contact with Children

The questionnaires have also shown us some reactions of the aged people to the following three items :

1. Desired Conditions of the P.D.A.
2. Desired Location of the P.D.A.
3. Desired Type of the P.D.A.

Explanations of the results and the analyses of them are presented in five sub-sections hereafter.

Table 2. Family Type and the Willingness to Move in the Public Dwellings for the Aged

Family Type		Would like to move in a Public Dwelling for the Aged ?					Total
		Yes	Yes, with conditions	No	Cannot tell	No answer	
One generation	Single	9 (18.0)	11 (9.4)	20 (11.4)	10 (16.7)	7 (13.5)	57 (12.5)
	Couple	12 (24.0)	20 (17.1)	36 (20.5)	15 (25.0)	14 (26.9)	97 (21.3)
Two generations	Couple with unmarried children	14 (28.0)	47 (40.2)	48 (27.3)	13 (21.7)	16 (30.8)	138 (30.5)
	Single with unmarried children	4 (8.0)	12 (10.3)	9 (5.1)	5 (8.3)	2 (3.8)	32 (7.0)
	Couple with child's couple	0 (0)	2 (1.7)	4 (2.3)	1 (1.7)	1 (1.9)	8 (1.8)
	Couple, child's couple & unmarried children	0 (0)	3 (2.6)	5 (2.8)	0 (0)	1 (1.9)	9 (2.0)
	Couple with parent(s)	3 (6.0)	0 (0)	3 (1.7)	1 (1.7)	0 (0)	7 (1.5)
Three generations	Couple, child's couple & grandchildren	1 (2.0)	6 (5.1)	26 (14.8)	6 (10.0)	4 (7.7)	43 (9.5)
	Single, child's couple & grandchildren	0 (0)	1 (0.9)	6 (3.4)	2 (3.3)	2 (3.8)	11 (2.4)
	Couple, child's couple, unmarried children & grandchildren	0 (0)	2 (1.7)	5 (2.8)	4 (6.7)	2 (3.8)	13 (2.9)
	Single, child's couple, unmarried children & grandchildren	0 (0)	1 (0.9)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0.2)
Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous (with spouse)	3 (6.0)	7 (6.0)	9 (5.1)	2 (3.3)	1 (1.9)	22 (4.8)
	Miscellaneous (without spouse)	4 (8.0)	4 (3.4)	4 (2.3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	12 (2.6)
	Unknown	0 (0)	1 (0.9)	1 (0.6)	1 (1.7)	2 (3.8)	5 (1.1)
Grand Total		50 (100.0)	117 (100.0)	176 (100.0)	60 (100.0)	52 (100.0)	455 (100.0)
Percentage of Category		50 (11.0)	117 (25.7)	176 (38.7)	60 (13.2)	52 (11.4)	455 (100.0)

Table 3. Number of Family

Would like to move in a Public Dwelling for the Aged?	Number of				
	1	2	3	4	5
Yes	9 (18.0) [%]	15 (30.0) [%]	12 (24.0) [%]	10 (20.0) [%]	3 (6.0) [%]
Yes, with conditions	11 (9.6)	29 (25.4)	32 (28.1)	19 (16.7)	10 (8.8)
No	20 (11.4)	43 (24.6)	30 (17.1)	24 (13.7)	26 (14.9)
Not decided	9 (15.3)	19 (32.2)	6 (10.2)	7 (11.9)	5 (8.5)
No answer	7 (14.0)	15 (30.0)	8 (16.0)	6 (12.0)	9 (18.0)
Total*	56 (12.5)	121 (27.0)	88 (19.6)	66 (14.7)	53 (11.8)

* Number of family member is not known for 7 families out of 455 total.

3-1. Family Type and Housing for the Aged

One of the most fundamental factors which relate to the housing problems of the aged is the family type of their households. Several proposals have been made for the classification of the aged family and the one proposed by the Sociological Institute of Frankfurt-am-Mein and another one proposed by Professor Soichi Nasu of Chuo University seem to have been highly evaluated.³⁾ With reference to these proposals and after examining several alternatives, the author has obtained a classification of the aged family which seemed to be most effective for this case study. According to this family type classification, all respondents are classified and presented in Table 2. Table 2 also shows the correlation of the family type of the elderly with their reactions to the P.D.A., while Table 3 shows the distribution of the number of family members of the aged families and their spoused ratios according to their reactions toward the P.D.A.

These two tables give us fundamental data concerning the family structure of the elderly in terms of the demand for the P.D.A. The first thing which draws our attention is that there are a great number of the elderly who desire to move in the P.D.A. The percentage of these elder people is 36.7 (11.0 + 25.7)% among the whole respondents. The tables also show us the strong demand for the P.D.A. among the one-generation families and relatively strong repulsion among the three-generation families, especially among the families with the couple, the child's couple and the grandchildren. As widely pointed out, the extended family is now in the gradual collapse toward the nuclear family. The demand for the P.D.A. may, therefore, be forecast to increase in the course of time.

3-2. Present Housing Conditions and Willingness to Move in the P.D.A.

Since the housing problem for the aged consists a part of general housing problems of the nation, it is presumed that the present housing conditions of the aged have strong influence upon their reactions toward the P.D.A. The presumption will easily be proved by Table 4, which shows the relationship of the ownership status of their present houses and their reactions toward the P.D.A.

Among the elderly who own their houses, those who would like to move in

Member and Spoused Ratio

family member							Spoused ratio (%)
6	7	8	9	10	Total	Average	
1 (2.0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	50 (100.0)	2.7	64.0
9 (7.9)	2 (1.8)	2 (1.8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	114 (100.0)	3.3	75.2
21 (12.0)	6 (3.4)	3 (1.7)	2 (1.1)	0 (0)	175 (100.0)	3.6	76.1
6 (10.2)	4 (6.8)	3 (5.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	59 (100.0)	3.5	65.0
3 (6.0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (2.0)	1 (2.0)	50 (100.0)	3.3	73.1
40 (8.9)	12 (2.7)	8 (1.8)	3 (0.7)	1 (0.2)	448 (100.0)	3.4	72.7

Table 4. Ownership of House and the Willingness to Move in the P.D.A.

Would like to move in a Public Dwelling for the Aged ?	Ownership of House					
	Own house	Renting	Employer's house	Public housing	Unknown	Total
Yes	11 (3.6)	24 (38.1)	9 (19.1)	4 (21.1)	2 (11.8)	50 (11.0)
Yes, with conditions	62 (20.1)	23 (36.5)	19 (40.4)	7 (36.8)	6 (35.3)	117 (25.7)
No	147 (47.6)	9 (14.3)	11 (23.4)	6 (31.6)	3 (17.6)	176 (38.7)
Not decided	45 (14.6)	3 (4.8)	7 (14.9)	2 (10.5)	3 (17.6)	60 (13.2)
No answer	44 (14.2)	4 (6.3)	1 (2.1)	0 (0)	3 (17.6)	52 (11.4)
Total	309 (100.0)	63 (100.0)	47 (100.0)	19 (100.0)	17 (100.0)	455 (100.0)

the P.D.A. without conditions are merely 3.6% and those who would like to move with some conditions are 20.1%. Among the elderly who now rent their houses, however, these percentages go as high as 38.1% and 36.5%, respectively. Likewise, among those who own their houses, the percentage of the elderly who repulse to move in the P.D.A. is 47.6%, while, among those who rent their houses, the percentage is merely 14.3%. Table 5 is

Table 5. Main Reason to Refuse to Move in the P.D.A.

Main reason	Number	%
Possessing own house	103	58.5
Prefer to live with children	46	26.1
Do not like to live in a closed community of the aged	3	1.7
Miscellaneous reasons	8	4.5
No answer	16	9.1
Total	176	100.0

the result of the question to see the main reasons why a part of the elderly repulse to move in the P.D.A. The first reason here is also that they possess their own houses. From this table, it may be deduced that the economic factors surpass the psychological factors.

Incidentally, it is also noteworthy that those who repulse the P.D.A. by the reason that they do not like to live in a closed community of the aged is merely 1.7%. This frequently declared opposing reason against the collective housing

for the aged does not seem to be so prevailing as generally presumed. At any rate, further studies shall be made on this point in order to make contributions to the housing projects for the aged.

Table 6 shows the complaints of the elderly about the present housing conditions and environment. As presumed from the first, it is observed that the greater the complaints, the stronger the demand for the P.D.A. This fact suggests us that, in order to achieve the welfare of the aged in terms of housing, the construction of new housing for the aged shall be accompanied by the betterment of their present housing conditions and environment.

Table 6. Complaints to the Present Housing Conditions (multiple answers)

Complaints	Would like to move in a P.D.A.?					Total
	Yes	Yes, with conditions	No	Cannot tell	No answer	
House is worn out	14 (28.0) [%]	35 (29.9) [%]	20 (11.4) [%]	11 (18.3) [%]	5 (9.6) [%]	85 (18.7) [%]
House is too small	13 (26.0)	21 (17.9)	12 (6.8)	9 (15.0)	5 (9.6)	60 (13.2)
Far from children's houses	4 (8.0)	5 (4.3)	10 (5.7)	4 (6.7)	3 (5.8)	26 (5.7)
Poor environment	8 (16.0)	8 (6.8)	6 (3.4)	1 (1.7)	1 (1.9)	24 (5.3)
High rent	7 (14.0)	1 (0.9)	1 (0.6)	1 (1.7)	0 (0)	10 (2.2)
Being asked to vacate the house	5 (10.0)	3 (2.6)	1 (0.6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	9 (2.0)
Miscellaneous	6 (12.0)	9 (7.7)	8 (4.5)	4 (6.7)	3 (5.8)	30 (6.6)
No complaints	9 (18.0)	34 (29.1)	112 (63.6)	29 (48.3)	19 (36.5)	203 (44.6)
Number of Respondents	50	117	176	60	52	455

3-3. Desired Domiciles of the Aged.

Many researches and case studies conducted so far in western countries have proved that the dwellings for the aged should, irrespective of the type and the kind, be constructed in the area where the aged people have spent their years up to the present time.⁴⁾ Table 7 shows the prospect domiciles of the elderly asked in this case study and also those of the people of all age groups asked in the former case study conducted in the same city.⁵⁾ Though 48.6% of the people in general (all age groups) replied that they did not decide their future domiciles yet, the majority of the elderly, 82.9%, replied that they would like to live in the same city. In many fields of old age welfare, it is insisted that the services for the aged shall be provided not on national or regional levels but

Table 7. Prospect Domiciles in Future

Q. Where do you want to live in future?		
Location	Age group 55 & over (%)	All ages (%)
Muroran	82.9	30.6
Sapporo	1.3	4.8
Tokyo	0.2	0.0
Other cities	1.5	2.0
Other villages	2.0	6.2
Not decided	7.0	48.6
No answer	5.1	7.8
Total	100.0	100.0

on community basis.⁴⁾ It is safely deduced from Table 7 that the community orientated approach is appropriate for the housing problems of the aged as in other welfare services for the aged. The most important reason to support the community orientated approach is explained that the personal contact of the elderly with their old friends and society is the most vital moment for them to lead a contented life. Careful attention, therefore, shall be paid to this fact in case of selecting the locations of the P.D.A.

3-4. Contact with Children

According to a case study conducted in Vienna, the main reason given by inhabitants for discontent with the old age apartments was reportedly that the distance from their families was too great.⁶⁾ It is obviously true throughout the world that the most important concern of the elderly is the contact with their children. Many data are reported to support this fact by western sociologists. Table 8 shows the correlations between the contacts with children and the reactions to the P.D.A. among single old persons and elderly couples (one-generation families) in this case study. The existence of the correlations between the two is quite obvious. About half of those who would like to move in the P.D.A. are completely deprived of the contact with their children and, on the contrary, the majority of those who show repulsion to the P.D.A. are given the opportunity of frequent contacts with children. It can be conjectured that the repulsion to the P.D.A. is fortified by the fear that the change of domicile required at moving in the P.D.A. would disturb the contacts with children which the elderly are presently cherishing. This fact is also one of the important points, to which most careful attentions shall be paid at deciding the locations of the P.D.A.

Table 8. Contact with Children and the Willingness to Move in the P.D.A.

Children's visits per year	Would like to move in a P.D.A. ?					Total
	Yes	Yes, with conditions	No	Cannot tell	No answer	
None	10 (47.6)	11 (35.5)	11 (19.6)	12 (48.0)	9 (42.9)	53 (34.4)
1 to 5	4 (19.0)	3 (9.7)	12 (21.4)	4 (16.0)	2 (9.5)	25 (16.2)
6 to 30	2 (9.5)	8 (25.8)	7 (12.5)	4 (16.0)	3 (14.3)	24 (15.6)
31 to 100	2 (9.5)	3 (9.7)	9 (16.1)	2 (8.0)	3 (14.3)	19 (12.3)
100 & over	3 (14.3)	3 (9.7)	12 (21.4)	2 (8.0)	4 (19.0)	24 (15.6)
Very rare	0 (0)	3 (9.7)	5 (8.9)	1 (4.0)	0 (0)	9 (5.8)
Total	21 (100.0)	31 (100.0)	56 (100.0)	25 (100.0)	21 (100.0)	154 (100.0)

3-5. Desired Conditions for Location of the P.D.A.

Needless to say, good quality, or comfortableness, of the P.D.A. is important for the welfare of inhabitants. Appropriate location of the P.D.A., however, is as important, or often, more important than the good quality. Table 9 is the

Table 9. Desired Location of the P.D.A.

Location	Would like to move in a P.D.A. ?					Total
	Yes	Yes, with conditions	No	Connot tell	No answer	
The heart of the city	2 (4.0%)	4 (3.4%)	2 (1.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (1.8%)
Residential quarters in the city	25 (50.0)	55 (47.0)	27 (15.3)	16 (26.7)	6 (11.5)	129 (29.0)
Residential area in the suburbs	13 (26.0)	28 (23.9)	31 (17.6)	10 (16.7)	4 (7.7)	86 (19.3)
Peaceful countryside with good views	3 (6.0)	20 (17.1)	48 (27.3)	13 (21.7)	9 (17.3)	93 (20.9)
Miscellaneous	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (1.1)	1 (1.7)	1 (1.9)	4 (0.9)
No answer	7 (14.0)	10 (8.5)	66 (37.5)	20 (33.3)	32 (61.5)	135 (30.3)
Total	50 (100.0)	117 (100.0)	176 (100.0)	60 (100.0)	52 (100.0)	455 (100.0)

desired location of the P.D.A. as classified according to the magnitude of the willingness to move in. It is most noteworthy that half of the categories "yes" and "yes, with conditions" appointed residential quarters in the city as the desired location of the P.D.A., while many of the category "no" appointed peaceful countryside with good views. Although the idea that the housing for the aged shall be located in peaceful and quiet pastoral environment seems to be prevailing among the general public, the same idea

has been proved not to be practical for the true welfare of the elderly by western researchers.⁴⁾ This fact is not actually proved in Japan where the number of the constructed dwellings for the aged is very small up to the present. Table 9, however, shows us that the elderly citizens who actually think the possibility of moving into the P.D.A. are already aware of this fact. As Dr. G. H. Beyer pointed out, the true satisfaction of the elderly lies in their own consciousness that they are still important members of the society.⁴⁾ Therefore, when the location of the P.D.A. is to be decided, utmost care shall be paid not to disturb but to encourage the elderly to preserve their social solidarity.

Table 10 is the desired conditions of the P.D.A. as presented by the categories "yes" and "yes, with conditions". It is noteworthy that the main conditions requested by the elderly are of economic and financial nature. Compared to European experiences, psychological aspects seem to be subdued. It is also

Table 10. Desired Conditions of the P.D.A. (multiple answers)

Conditions	Would like to move in a P.D.A. ?	
	Yes (%)	Yes, with conditions (%)
Convenient for living	62.0	59.0
Low rent	66.0	39.3
Convenient for visiting	30.0	29.1
Close to children & friends	12.0	15.4
Convenient for work	36.0	35.9
Miscellaneous	10.0	2.6
No answer	4.0	7.7
Number of respondents	50	117

noteworthy that the condition to be "convenient for work" is highly requested, though most of the respondents are supposed to be of retired age. This fact does not necessarily mean that the elderly are indigent. As Dr. G. H. Beyer pointed out, to work active in the society is quite necessary for the aged to maintain their self-confidence and social solidarity, which are believed to be the most vital factors for the welfare of the aged.⁴⁾ This concept will be supported by observing Table 11 and Table 12. The former table shows that the great majority of the aged, 83.5%, want to work as long as possible and the latter table shows that the retiring age requested by the aged themselves (the average is 69.0 years) is much older than the generally established retiring age of this country (55 to 58 years).

It is deduced from all these analyses that the location of the P.D.A. shall be decided with very careful considerations that the inhabitants shall never be inconvenienced to work by moving in the P.D.A.

3-6. Desired Type of the P.D.A.

Table 13 shows the desired type of the P.D.A. as classified according to the magnitude of the demand. It is characteristic that the stronger the demand, the more definite the desired type of house. It is also characteristic that the detached house is more strongly desired than other types of house and that this trend is more obvious among the categories "yes"

Table 11. Old Age and Work

Q. Do you want to work in your old age?	
Would like to work as long as possible	380 (83.5%)
Would like to retire and live in peace	44 (9.7)
Miscellaneous	13 (2.9)
No answer	18 (4.0)
Total	455 (100.0)

Table 12. Desired Age of Retirement

Q. when do you want to retire?	
55 years	4 (0.9%)
60 years	33 (7.3)
65 years	116 (25.5)
70 years	153 (33.6)
75 years	54 (11.9)
80 years	25 (5.5)
Beyond 80 years	5 (1.1)
(Average)	(69.0 years)
Cannot tell	24 (5.3)
No answer	41 (9.0)
Total	455 (100.0)

Table 13. Desired Type of the P.D.A.

Desired type	Would like to move in a P.D.A.?					Total
	Yes	Yes, with conditions	No	Cannot tell	No answer	
Detached house	39 (78.0%)	71 (60.7%)	86 (48.9%)	33 (55.0%)	19 (36.5%)	248 (54.5%)
Terrace house	4 (8.0)	28 (23.9)	19 (10.8)	7 (11.7)	4 (7.7)	62 (13.6)
Apartment house with elevators	1 (2.0)	2 (1.7)	4 (2.3)	1 (1.7)	0 (0)	8 (1.8)
Miscellaneous	1 (2.0)	2 (1.7)	0 (0)	1 (0)	0 (0)	3 (0.7)
No answer	5 (10.0)	14 (12.0)	67 (38.1)	19 (31.7)	29 (55.8)	134 (29.5)
Total	50 (100.0)	117 (100.0)	176 (100.0)	60 (100.0)	52 (100.0)	455 (100.0)

and "yes, with conditions". In western countries, especially in North European countries, many dwellings for the aged were constructed and various types were developed after the World War II. No significant development, however, has been made in this country in this field of housing and this fact has naturally given a strong limitation to the idea of the elderly on their future dwellings. However, since many elderly citizens request the P.D.A. in residential areas in the city, the solution by means of the detached house shall naturally be limited. Therefore, it would be one of the urgent missions of Japanese architectural world to make researches and to develop unique solutions of the housing of the aged conforming to the true demand and appropriate to the situations of the society.

4. Conclusion—the Principle of Supported Independence

The general trend toward the nuclear family in advanced industrial societies can never be changed. Older people now tend to form their own households apart from those of their adult children. Ethel Shanas explains that this development is the result of three main factors, namely, 1) increased urbanization, 2) increased national mobility, and 3) the change of cultural values.⁷⁾ This general tendency is in principle to adversely affect the welfare of the elderly. From the all analyses of the case study, it can be deduced that the best architectural solution for the housing problems of the aged under the general tendency is to establish the principle of supported independence as named by Peter Townsend.⁸⁾ It shall always be remembered that, without the principle of supported independence, no project of the housing for the aged shall be successful for the true benefit of the elderly citizens.

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