

# What Do We Have in Common?

*Thinking Together About Good Lives for Older  
Adults and Caregivers in Ageing Societies*

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THE HASTINGS CENTER

# Population ageing

- Result of two long-term demographic trends: longer lives plus lower birthrates.
- Increasingly a global trend: “[T]he most formidable demographic challenge facing the world is no longer rapid population growth, but population aging.” (IMF 2023)
- Ageing societies = those with more people over age 65 than under age 15, with rapid growth of populations 75+ and 85+.
- Characteristic of wealthy, technologically advanced societies in East Asia, Asia-Pacific, Western Europe, North America.

# Bioethics *for* Ageing Societies (2016 - )

- Research on ethical and social challenges arising from population ageing. Involves gerontologists, architects, community planners, community innovators.
- Expanding bioethics work on ageing beyond end-of-life decisions and care – important, yet not the whole story.
- Informed by project collaborations in Singapore (2011-18) with NUS and Oxford, including online casebook, *Caring for Older People in an Ageing Society* (2017)



<https://www.thehastingscenter.org/bioethics-for-aging-societies/>

<https://www.bioethicscasebook.sg/caring-for-older-people-in-an-ageing-society/>

# THINKING TOGETHER ABOUT AGEING, PLACE, SOCIAL CONNECTION



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Forum

**Bioethics and Gerontology: The Value of Thinking Together**

Nancy Berlinger, PhD,<sup>1,\*</sup> Kate de Medeiros, PhD,<sup>2,\*</sup> and Laura Girling, PhD<sup>3</sup>

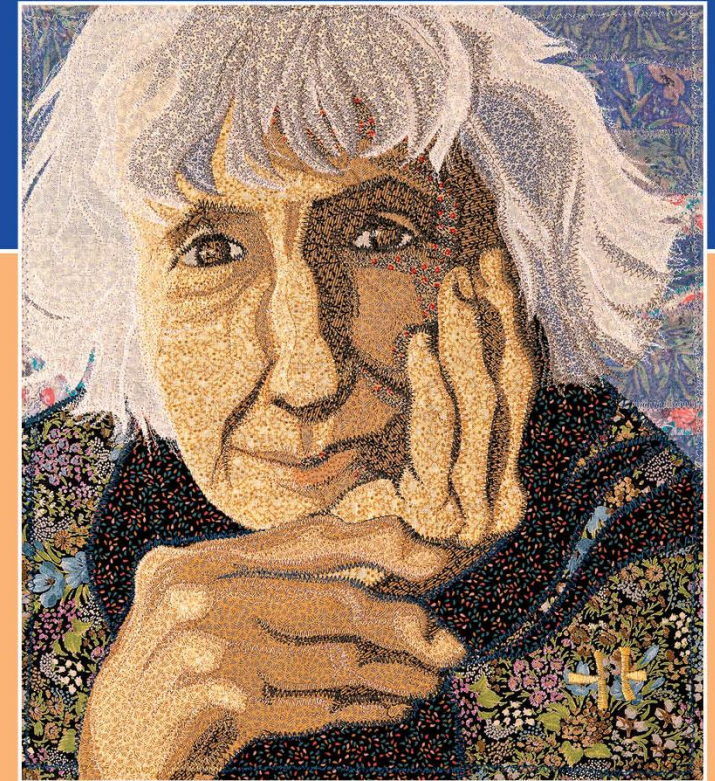
# Common questions across our societies

- What is a good life in late life? What is a good life for a caregiver?
  - Can research and its applications focus on improving the lives of older adults and caregivers, not limited to improvements in health-related targets?
- Who will care for us as we age? What are families expected to do for their elders?
  - Are these expectations realistic given lower birthrates/smaller families?
- How can investments in housing and neighbourhoods better accommodate the needs of older adults and their families?
  - How are these investments different from improvements to health systems?
- How can technology meet the needs of older adults and their families?
  - What's useful, what's not, and what don't we know yet?



# What Makes a Good Life in Late Life?

CITIZENSHIP AND JUSTICE IN AGING SOCIETIES



EDITED BY  
NANCY BERLINGER, KATE DE MEDEIROS, AND MILDRED Z. SOLOMON

# *What Makes a Good Life in Late Life? Citizenship and Justice in Aging Societies*

Nancy Berlinger, Kate de Medeiros & Mildred Z. Solomon, editors


*Hastings Center Report* Special Report  
September/October 2018

Full report: <https://tinyurl.com/b83hdj5a>



# Bioethics for Aging Societies collaborations with the Housing an Aging Society Program, Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University

## Aging in [a] Place



PLANNING, DESIGN & SPATIAL JUSTICE  
IN AGING SOCIETIES

Friday, October 18, 2019

Harvard Graduate School of Design, 48 Quincy Street, Cambridge



## COVID-19 RECAP

REVIEW OF EQUITABLE  
COMMUNITY-BASED AGING  
POLICIES AND PRACTICES



## ADVANCING HOUSING AND HEALTH EQUITY FOR OLDER ADULTS:

### PANDEMIC INNOVATIONS AND POLICY IDEAS

A REPORT FROM THE HARVARD JOINT CENTER FOR HOUSING STUDIES & THE HASTINGS CENTER

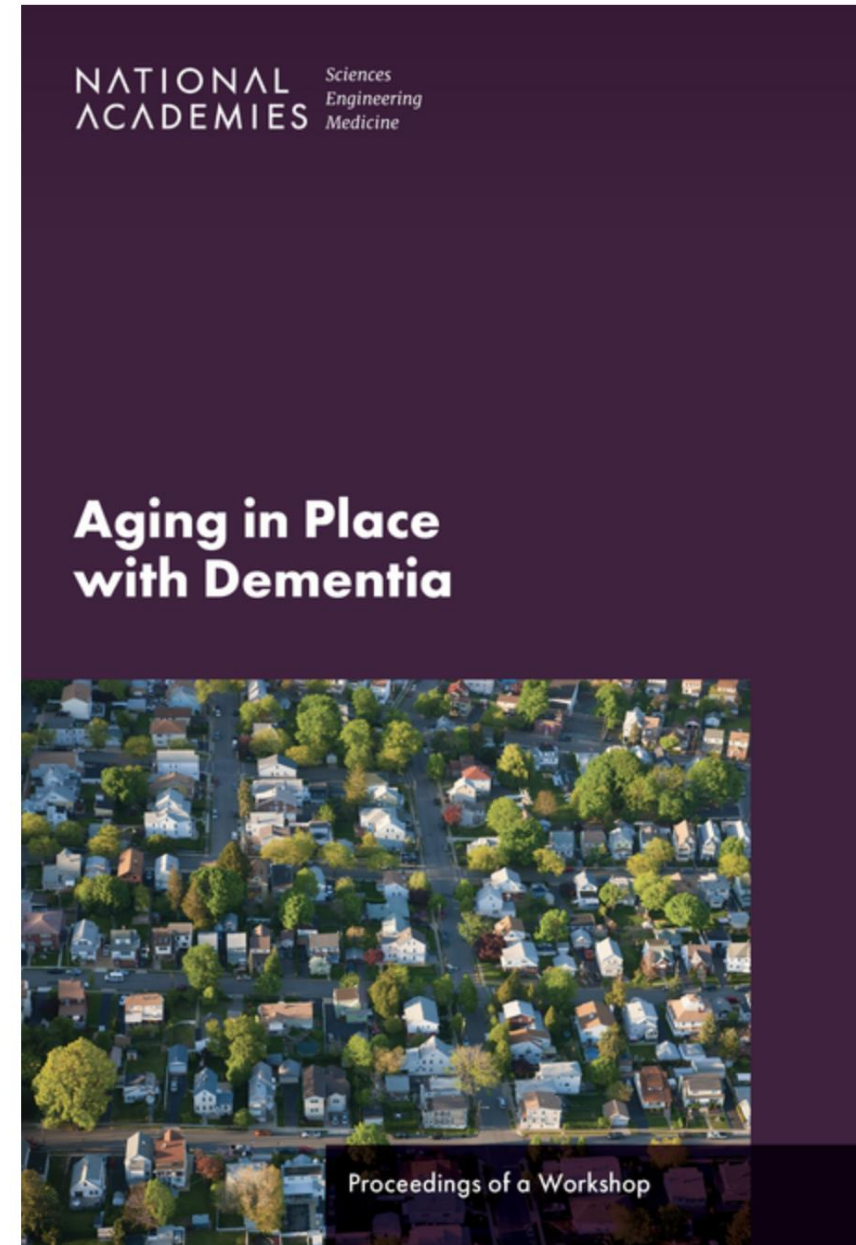


# Using a “housing lens” in research with older adults

**“ . . . a housing lens provides insight because it centers on the complexities of where people live.** Home is perceived as a platform for well-being based on its affordability, its physical suitability, its connections to supports and services, and its potential to contain memories and bolster one’s sense of self. A housing lens also reveals housing disparities among older adults, such as unstable, inadequate, unaffordable, or inaccessible housing, as well as a lack of nearby caregivers or community supports. . . .

**using a housing lens to focus on older adults’ homes in relation to their health and well-being . . . serves as a reminder that older adults are more than their illnesses or clinical experiences . . . .”**

NASEM 2024, drawing on Molinsky, Berlinger, and Wu 2022





# ***Facing Dementia: Clarifying End-of-Life Choices, Supporting Better Lives***

Nancy Berlinger, Emily A. Largent, Mara Buchbinder & Mildred Z. Solomon, editors

*Hastings Center Report* Special  
Supplement

February 2024

Full report: <https://shorturl.at/ivFR5>

Scan to access the report

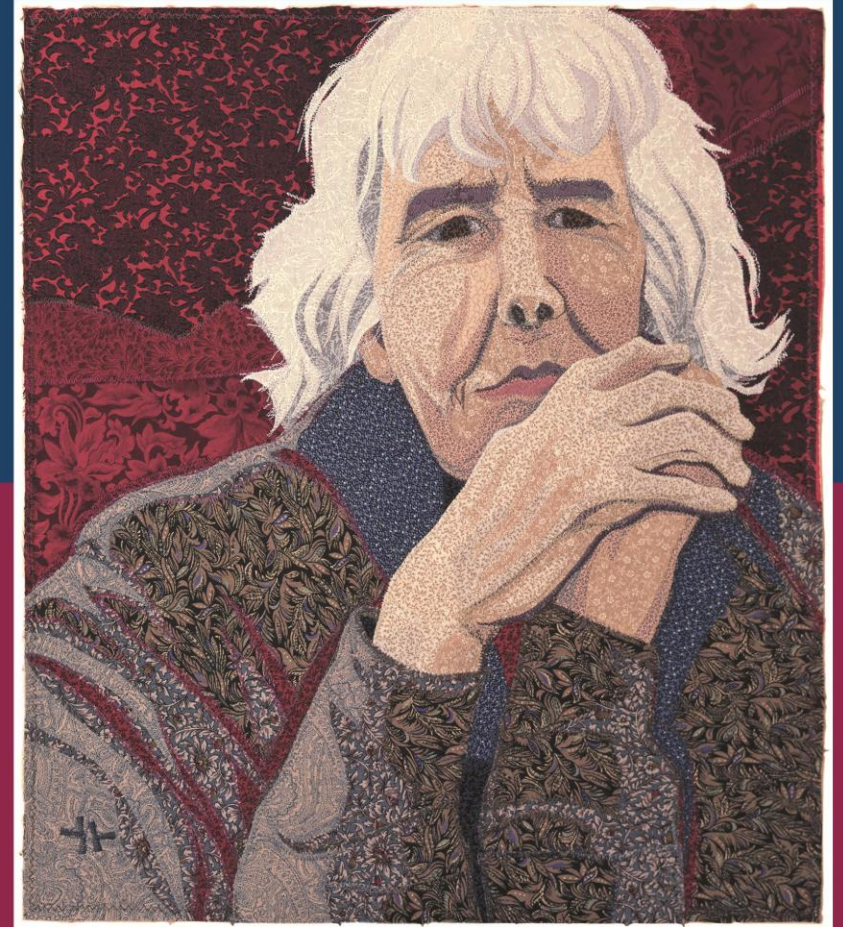


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▶ A HASTINGS CENTER SPECIAL REPORT

## **FACING DEMENTIA:**

*Clarifying End-of-Life Choices, Supporting Better Lives*



EDITED BY | NANCY BERLINGER, EMILY A. LARGENT,  
MARA BUCHBINDER, AND MILDRED Z. SOLOMON

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Coming in 2025

***Living with Dementia:  
Learning from Cultural Narratives in Aging Societies***

Nancy Berlinger, Erin Gentry Lamb, Kate de Medeiros & Liz Bowen, editors

This new report brings together perspectives from bioethics and humanities scholars, social science researchers, and social work and nursing researchers working with communities that include people with dementia.

It explores how cultural narratives—shared stories that convey and preserve ideas and values— shape public understanding about dementia, and shape the lives of people living with dementia and of dementia caregivers.



Is “silver tsunami”  
a good way to  
refer to  
population ageing  
– or not?







How do we picture a person with dementia, and why does this matter?





What makes a place a good place for older adults?

# Opportunities for thinking together about ageing societies in East Asia and elsewhere

Family caregiving -- what do we have in common?

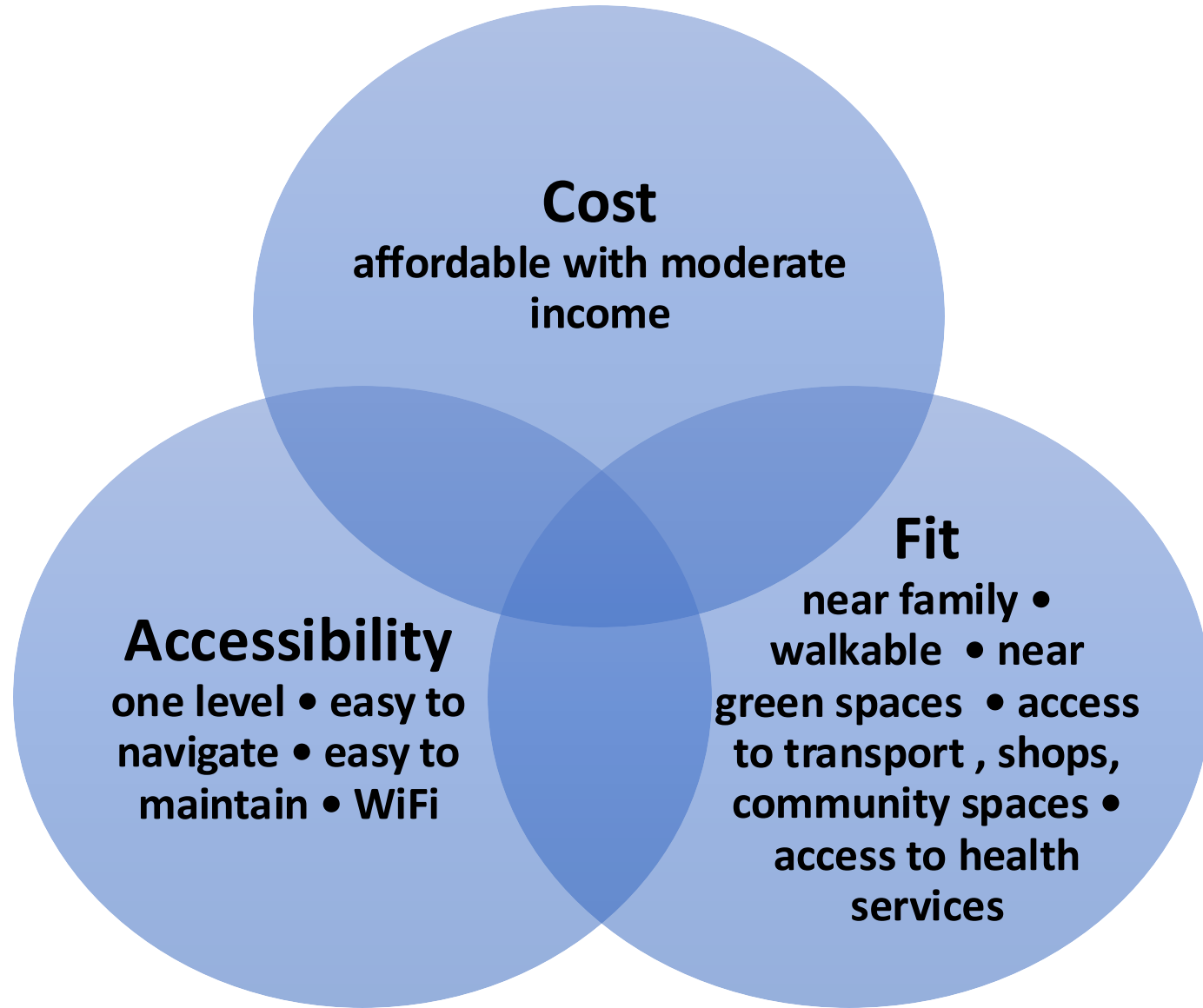
- There is no term equivalent to filial piety in English
- The Confucian virtue of filial piety would be widely recognised in the US in Asian and non-Asian communities as doing what one should do for one's parents (“they took care of me, so I have to take care of them”)
- There is heavy reliance on families to provide, manage, and finance care in the US, especially in dementia care
- There is growing concern that hospitals are discharging patients with care plans that heavily burden families, raising questions of informed consent as well as fairness

# Opportunities for thinking together

Housing and neighbourhood – what do we have in common?

- Older adults need housing that is affordable, accessible, and a good fit for a person whose mobility may be limited
- Cities in ageing societies tend to have expensive housing
- Housing outside of cities may be more affordable but less accessible/more isolated
- Research on how people with dementia experience their homes and neighbourhoods suggests how data from environmental gerontology can inform community planning, including housing development

*Dementia and Place: Practices, Experiences and Connections* (1st ed.). Bristol University Press. R. Ward, A. Clark, L. Phillipson, eds. 2021. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1z7kgwx>



"Housing Choice for Older Adults,"  
The Hastings Center, 2025.



# Opportunities for thinking together

Technology, ageing, and care – what do we have in common?

- A common idea in ageing societies is that “technology” is the “solution” to population ageing – robots will take care of us, smart technologies will keep us safe, chatbots will be our friends
- It’s crucial that technologies intended for older adults/caregivers are co-designed *with* these users so technologies are useful and easy to use
- What are the limits of using technology to replace human experiences and connections?

多謝你

谢谢

Thank you!

Questions? Ideas? [berlingern@thehastingscenter.org](mailto:berlingern@thehastingscenter.org)