

RESIDENTIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS ON THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF OLDER ADULTS IN EUROPE

Dhanalakshmi Tamatam*, Magdalena Pichlerova,** and Viliam Pichler*

* Department of Natural Environment, Faculty of Forestry, Technical University in Zvolen

**Department of Landscape Planning and Creation, Faculty of Ecology and Environmental Sciences, Technical University in Zvolen



INTRODUCTION

It is estimated that over the next 30 years, the proportion of elderly people is to almost double from approximately 12% to 22%, with 2 billion people of 60+ by 2050. A decline in physical activity during old age has been demonstrated in various studies (Nygren et al. 2007; Oswald et al. 2011) that people spend more time in and around their own homes in their later years. However, few studies have focused on the association between housing tenure, housing quality, and subjective wellbeing (SWB) in terms of mental health. Even the comparison between housing and SWB in the different countries of Europe may depend on differences in the national housing context (Iwarsson et al. 2007b). The need to understand the interrelationship between housing and well-being in later life is highly relevant, especially with regard to good mental health and quality of life (QOL).



AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aims:

- Our study aims to explore the relationship between subjective and objective aspects of housing and its influence on older adults' physical and mental health in Europe.
- We believe housing is more than just a dwelling. So we will include the importance of community and neighborhood as their wider environment at multiple levels (physical, perceived, social environment, and not only their home).

Objectives:

- The main objective is to examine subjective and objective aspects of housing and their impact on health in early to late old age, while health is mainly understood in terms of autonomy, participation, and well-being.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The relationship between housing and well-being for the elderly has been well documented (Lawton and Nahemow, 1973) by identifying housing as part of the individuals' environment.

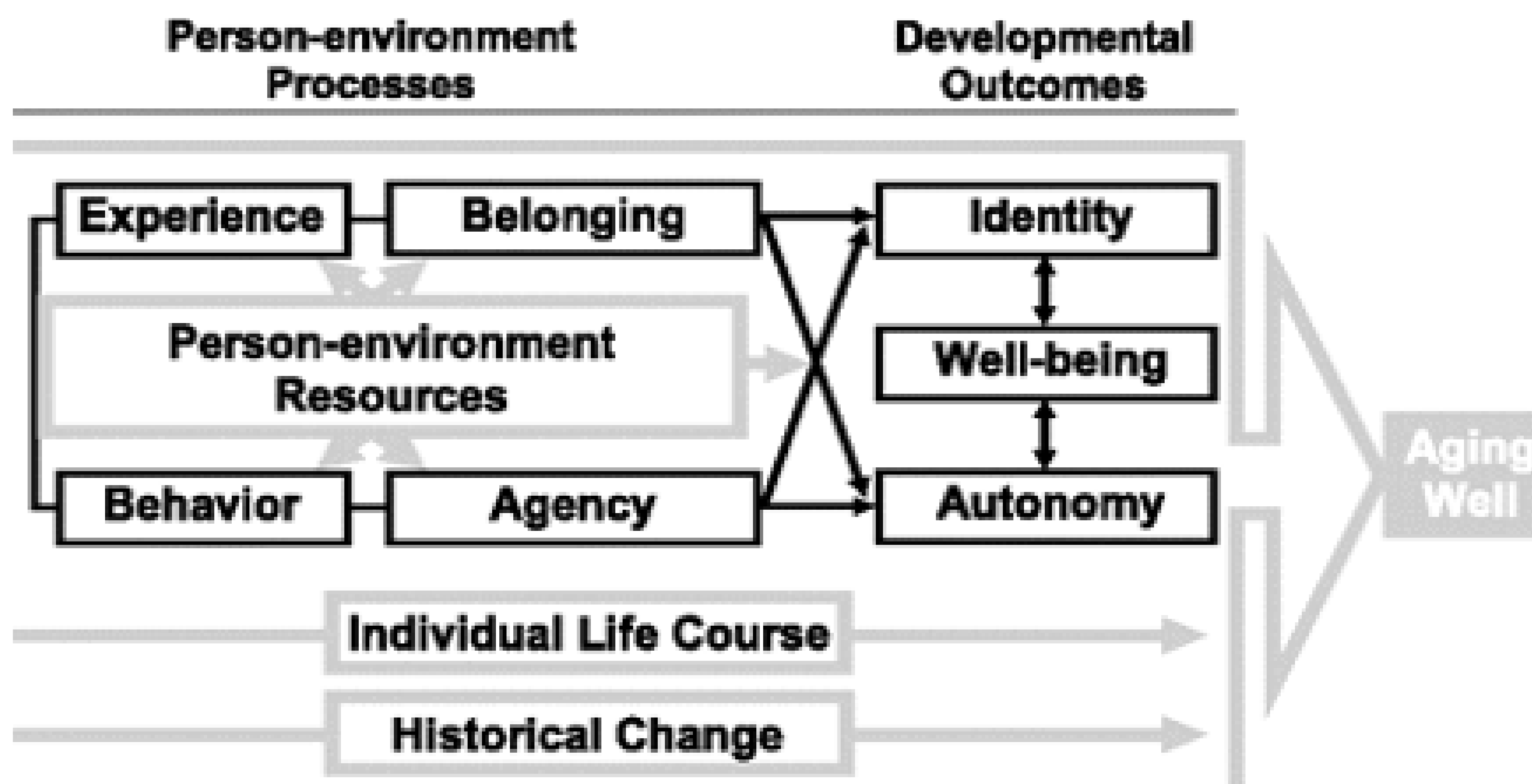


Figure: Conceptual framework: Interplay of belonging and agency, aging well, and the environment.

EXPECTED RESULTS

We expect that the difference in SWB between older people with small and large properties is somewhat smaller in countries with a high level of housing quality than in countries with lower housing quality. However, it is likely that we will also identify deviations in some countries or regions where there may be other external indicators impacting SWB. Finding these deviations will ultimately help identify high impacting and non-residential factors that are the drivers to elevating SWB.

RELATED LITERATURE

- Iwarsson, S., Wahl, H. W., Nygren, C., Oswald, F., Sixsmith, A., Sixsmith, J., & Tomsone, S. (2007). Importance of the home environment for healthy aging: conceptual and methodological background of the European ENABLE-AGE Project. *Gerontologist*.
- Lawton, M. P., & Nahemow, L. (1973). Ecology and the aging process.
- Nygren, C., Oswald, F., Iwarsson, S., Fange, A., Sixsmith, J., Schilling, O., et al. (2007). Relationships between objective and perceived housing in very old age. *The Gerontologist*, 47(1), 85–95.
- Oswald, F., Jopp, D., Rott, C., & Wahl, H. (2011). Is aging in place a resource for or risk to life satisfaction? *The Gerontologist*, 51(2), 238–250.

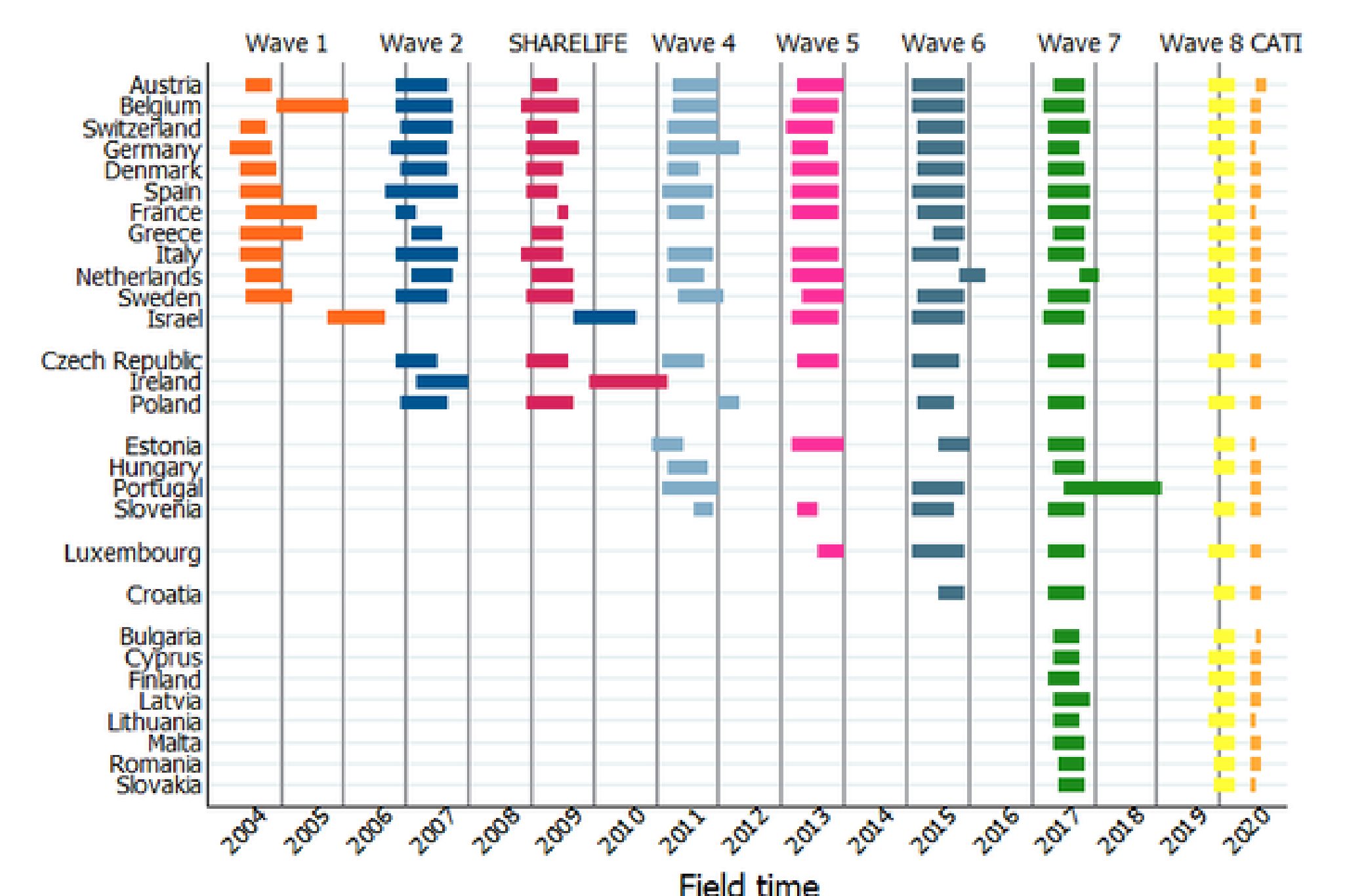
METHODOLOGY

a) Data Set:

- Data will be derived from the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) Wave 7 (www.share-project.org), which contains information on the health, socio-economic status, social and family networks of adults aged 50 and over in 27 European countries (N = 77,216).

b) Analysis:

- From each household, we will select one family respondent from a single household to answer questions and select those older than 50 for the analysis.
- Linear regression models would be estimated for all countries together in a pooled model. Then individual countries would be assessed to compare the relationship between housing and SWB between countries. We will use self-reports of life satisfaction to measure SWB.



SHARE: Overview of the data collection period