



**Fondation pour un Centre pour le Développement Socio-Eco-Nomique  
(Centre for Socio-Eco-Nomic Development, CSEND), Geneva.**

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**Position for the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the Open-Ended Working Group on  
Ageing 15-18 April 2019, New York.**

***Space making and Intergenerational cooperative housing  
for sustainable ageing, inclusive communities and  
autonomy and independence of older persons.***

(767 words)

This statement is made on behalf of CSEND and the members of the World Healthy Ageing Consortium, an international multi-stakeholder group united to strengthen the economic, social and cultural rights of older persons. We have organised international events with policy makers, researchers and scholars on social, cultural and economic issues related to ageing. A UN Library Talk on “Ageing with Dignity” was organised with large participation of Chinese and Japanese delegates in Geneva in 2017. In 2018, we participated in conferences on Aging in Chengdu, China and in Tunis for the International Institute of Administrative Sciences focusing on governance and policy making of Aging and conferences on Space Making in Dijon, France.

What follows is based on the discussions and insights that followed these events.

The 10th session of the Working Group must recognise the importance of the creating new living spaces for inter-generational and inclusive co-existence which will provide a sense of belonging and community participation for older people. This requires the following:

First, with growing age, older persons inevitably lose relatives and friends who die away and often older persons also lose the sense of family when their children leave and move to their own homes or apartments. A sense of loneliness is the consequence, which can further deepen should their neighbourhood also change due to urban renewal projects and renovation of their building. Renovations of older buildings often results in higher financial and social costs since tenants are often driven out of their home and of their familiar neighbourhood.

These life cycle losses shrink older persons’ psychological living space, engender a sense of isolation, loneliness and abandonment which often deepens should the older persons not be able to find adequate housing because of financial hardships or simply loss of family ties and social networks

(Saner, Raymond, 2018).

Once living in their oversized family homes is no longer financially affordable, older persons or couples might prefer to move to smaller two-three room apartments rather than be told or forced to move to a retirement or nursing home. Yet a transition to comfortable and age- appropriate housing facilities might be too expensive and hence not possible for older persons who do not enjoy a well-off pension scheme or for older people living in rural or remote territories.

Still, a careful cost and benefit analysis might prove that a move to an obstacle-free and age- appropriate new home would be beneficial in the longer term especially for older persons. Yet, such a move means taking difficult decisions. The question then becomes where an older person could or couple move to if staying in their old homes is no longer possible.

Older persons look for possibilities to overcome their sense of isolation and are looking for ways to re-integrate into a new housing environment that provides affordable rents, security, and connection with other persons- young or old. Such a move could result in a renewed sense of well-being.

Co-housing, or co-living, or housing cooperatives aim to mix private and shared living spaces in a way that meets the need for both privacy and a sense of community and support. Housing cooperatives in Germany also called “Baugruppen” (groups of building homes) is a prominent international example of active cross-generational housing (Lloyd Alter, 2017). The following points characterize space making based on novel inter-generational housing designs namely:

First, residents of co-housing units are typically involved in the design process to ensure that the final building meets the personal needs of the older tenants. Second, the design includes some mix of private dwellings and shared spaces and encourages community interaction. Shared spaces can be as minimal as a garden or laundry, or as extensive as a common kitchen, lounge and guest facilities. Third, residents are usually actively involved in the governance of the property.

These new forms of inter-generational housing offer older persons affordable rents, modern and age adequate rooms, proximity to other persons of different age levels and hence opportunities to re-create social space and psychological bonds crucial for positive aging.

For co-housing to become mandatory reality, the Open Working Group must acknowledge the need for a healthier form of housing aligned with the aging process of all people in all parts of the world, developed or developing.

The Open Working Group must acknowledge the diverse challenges facing all countries and must provide a policy framework in the form of a legally binding international convention of human rights for older persons to protect their economic, social and cultural rights and dignity everywhere and to encourage architects and city planers to support inter-generational space making.

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