

Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) re-confirms that disabled people enjoy the right to live in the community on an equal basis with others. The drafting and negotiation process of Article 19 indicates that the right to community living is somehow constructed along with the ideological trend of de-institutionalization, and the typical 'institution' in this context is the asylums in Goffman's essays. In comparison with the western context, the socio-cultural context of China, as well as other areas of East-Asia, assigns less significance to such typical 'institution' in the disability-related realm. Instead, it demonstrates the traditional practice that disabled people are cared for by their families and, at least, physically stayed in the community. Accordingly, the transposition of Article 19 in China calls for rethinking the dichotomy of community and institution, and further examining the meaning and indication of community living.

This essay investigates how people with psychosocial disabilities understand, pursue, and practice their right to community living. With the empirical methods of participatory observations and interviews, it examines three key questions: (1) where the community is; (2) whose community; (3) how to understand the interaction between different dimensions of the community. By comparative analysis of different forms of community-based services, it tries to point out that the traditional forms of community-based services are not sufficient for supporting persons with psychosocial disabilities to live and be included in the community. An important approach to be taken is to empower the community, transform the existing community-based resources into what can be mobilized by persons with psychosocial disabilities, and support them to mobilize the community-based resources in an initiative and dynamic ways. From this perspective, the scope of the community, and the role of the family, the community-based service providers, and the other subjects in the community may all be re-shaped.