

Chapter 14

Smart Planning for Healthy Cities (Urban Space Is Not Just a Place)

Leading Cities to a Healthier Future

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ABSTRACT

Cities are constantly increasing their importance, from any point of view: population, energy, food, transport. Healthy cities aim at wellbeing for all by creating urban spaces capable of inclusive community prosperity. Place is the combined tangible and intangible context of a location. It includes the integrated urban ecosystem: the constructed, environmental, social, economic, and cultural status. It is a human, natural, and artificial habitat whose combined conditions are able to upgrade or harm health and wellbeing. Its significant impact on people's life happens through a variety of ways, positive or negative, physical or mental. There are several urban determinants that affect the health indicators, which help us measure this impact. This process is named health impact assessment. It is conducted via specific tools, and till now it showed us that the urban environment affects public health much more than the medical system. On the other side, only vigorous communities are able to ensure thriving culture and economy, urban and regional sustainability and development.

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1. INTRODUCTION

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This process is named health impact assessment, it is conducted via specific tools and till now it showed us that the urban environment affects public health much more than the medical system. On the other side, only vigorous communities are able to ensure thriving culture and economy, urban and regional sustainability and development.

2. PLACE AND HEALTH

Place is the combined social, economic, physical, cultural and historical characteristics of a location (Scottish Government, 2012). It is the part of people's life circumstances which relates to where they live and spend time. It encompasses both the physical environment (buildings, streets, public areas and natural spaces) and the social environment (the relationships, social contact and support networks that exist in a community) (NHS Health Scotland, 2016).

It is a human habitat whose diverse characteristics combine to create or undermine health and wellbeing. The characteristics of a place also bear upon the behaviour and choices of individuals who live there. Importantly, what constitutes a healthy place can vary for different groups within society. The elderly, young, disadvantaged and infirm, for example, all have particular requirements of a place if it is to support their health and well-being (WHO Europe, 2017).

These characteristics of place, and the interactions between them, have an important influence on our health and wellbeing throughout our lifetime. Some aspects of place will nurture and promote good health while others can be detrimental (Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2013). The distribution of these characteristics is not equal. Those living in areas of greater deprivation are more likely to be exposed to harmful environmental factors, such as poor air quality, and less likely to have access to beneficial ones, such as greenspace (Pearce, Richardson, Mitchell, Shortt, 2010).

The idea of place exists on many scales, from individual rooms and apartments to neighbourhoods, cities and city regions. Nevertheless, when people think of place in the context of health, they often think of physical characteristics: local buildings, streets and public and natural spaces. The concept of place also has social dimensions: the relationships, support networks, social contacts and other aspects of a community. Place can therefore be defined as a human habitat whose diverse characteristics combine to create or undermine health and wellbeing. The characteristics of a place also influence the behaviour and choices of the individuals who live there. Importantly, what constitutes a healthy place can vary between groups within society. Older people, young people, disadvantaged people and people with dis-

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