

Sustainability | Individual communication

IC - (21029) - DEPLOYING CITIES AS RESOURCE FOR FOSTERING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

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Background and objectives

With roughly half of the global population living in cities and expected to rise up to 85% by 2050, urban environments become a central public health aspect, often perceived as health risk factors due to e.g., noise, pollution, crowding, and anonymity. Indeed, mental disorders show higher incidence in urban contexts compared to rural areas, generally increasing, e.g., due to the Covid19-pandemic as well as climate change. However, we argue that there is also a rich potential of urban environments to act as a resource for mental health and to address mental health issues in the public space.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

Based on the concept of salutogenesis and referring to the Restorative Cities Framework (Roe & McCay, 2021), we propose a strategy to identify various city characteristics to act as biopsychosocial resources and to derive minimal, resource-efficient interventions while utilizing already existent features of a city. We advocate inter- and transdisciplinary collaboration including researchers (e.g., from psychology, geography, design research) as well as citizen stakeholders, especially - but not only - vulnerable people whose needs are often neglected in urban planning. We illustrate one potential implementation of the concept that makes use of a variety of points of interaction between citizens and the urban environment along a designated trail across neighborhoods.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

With this approach, we aim for using evidence-based, salutogenic, psychosocially supportive design to help increase awareness for mental health in the urban context, thus contributing to a destigmatisation of the topic, and potentially foster mental health, social cohesion as well as place attachment. Focusing on mental health instead of mainly physical health and bringing this topic to the public space by implementing low threshold activities in the existing urban context, illustrates new directions of research for urban person-environment interactions, public health, and beyond.

Palavras-chave : urban environment, mental health, evidence-based design, restorative cities, salutogenesis