

ICEP 2021 Abstract

Topic: Architecture, design and human behaviour → Inclusive design

Title: Understanding the Impact of Transformations in Urban Planning and Design on the Wellbeing of Vulnerable Groups: A systematic review of Happy Places for All

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Background: Sustainable Development Goals urge to design urban communities that promote health, wellbeing, and equality. Crucially, the psychological impact of urban design is poorly understood, especially among vulnerable groups. Thus, the question on what urban transformations create 'happy places for all' deserves investigation. This systematic review synthesised the evidence on the impact of transformations in urban design and planning on the wellbeing of vulnerable groups.

Methods: Adopting the PRISMA guidelines, we searched multiple electronic databases to identify empirical studies that described the impact urban design or planning interventions on psychological wellbeing of vulnerable groups (i.e., children, women, older people, people with functional limitations, low socio-economic status, or from a racial minority).

Results: We found 10 studies that described either holistic approaches to neighbourhood regeneration (n=4), or targeted interventions to urban green spaces (n=3), roads/paths (n=3), security measures (n=1). Vulnerable groups were actively involved in the process of change in three studies. Overall, interventions that increased access to, and use of, local amenities promoted wellbeing and satisfaction, but vulnerable groups who felt not involved in the process of change were more negatively impacted, especially older people, families with children, and people with low income.

Conclusions: This review shows an important gap in the evidence on the impact of urban planning and design transformations on the wellbeing of vulnerable groups, with limited studies available and mixed findings. Engagement of vulnerable populations in urban transformations is an important psychological enabler which should be capitalised upon to create happy and equitable urban communities.

Reference:

Cassarino, M., Shahab, S. & Biscaya, S. 2021. Envisioning Happy Places for All: A Systematic Review of the Impact of Transformations in the Urban Environment on the Wellbeing of Vulnerable Groups. *Sustainability*, 13, 8086.