Healthy Cities in the Post-COVID-19 Era

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Hong Kong, relatively few deaths from COVID-19
Healthy Cities in the Post-COVID-19 Era

Part 1: Health, Wellbeing, and Place
Many connections

Part 2: Models for Healthy Places
Models deal with places and processes, populations, and technologies

Part 3: Paths Forward
Modest changes likely
What is Health? The Health Perspective

WHO 1948

Physical well-being

Mental well-being

Social well-being

What are the Causes or Determinants of Health?

Places are part of the picture

Chronic rather than infectious diseases are the big killers (as they are generally)
Many Connections between Health and Place

**Exposures**
- Air quality
- Climate change
- Disasters
- Infections
- Noise
- Pollutants/toxics
- Safety hazards—accidents, crime
- Water quality

**Connections**
- Accessibility to services
- Healthcare access (physical)
- Social capital/connections
- Universal design

**Supports and challenges**
- Healthy eating
- Mental health/well-being
- Physical activity

**Differ by populations**
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Almere, Netherlands
What is an Example of a Healthy Place?

Typical definitions:

Places where healthy people live

Places with features thought to be health promoting

Places deliberately planned and designed with a comprehensive suite of features to promote health
Places Designed to Be Healthy

The city and neighborhood scale

Classic healthy places
(a) healthy built environments
(b) collaborative healthy cities

Population-based lenses
(c) age-friendly
(d) child-friendly

Technology-focused places
(e) healthcare industrial cities
(f) smart health environments

Classic Healthy Places

Idea: Develop a physical and/or institutional structure to support health

(a) Healthy built environment

(b) Healthy communities’ inter-sectoral collaboration

Narrow: cycling city
Broad: the best of the WHO Healthy Cities, healthy new towns
Belfast Healthy Cities

Our vision is to be a leader in creating a healthy, equitable and sustainable city.
Population-based lenses
Idea: Focus on populations with health vulnerabilities—old and young

(c) Age-friendly communities

(d) Child friendly community

Narrow: adding senior exercise programs or child participation
Broad: best of the WHO Age Friendly Communities

UNICEF Child Friend Cities Initiative Goals (1996-)

- The right to be heard
- The right to be safe
- The right to social services
- The right to family life, play and leisure
- The right to be valued, respected and treated fairly

Cities For Play

Lessons from Singapore:
Designing Child Friendly Neighbourhoods

Image: Car-free street day, Kampong Glam Singapore, photo by the Housing Development Board
Older people tap transit card for longer crossing time in Singapore

Health Technology Cities
Idea: Harness technology for the economy and/or heath monitoring and assistance

(e) Healthcare industrial city

(f) Smart health environment

Narrow: adding gadgets
Broad: combining technology with Classic Healthy City approaches

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ampel-Singapur-11-fws.jpg
Builds on the Mayo Clinic for economic development and some livable community features

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Models deal with (a) places and processes, (b) populations, and (c) technologies

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Modest changes likely

To make big changes use many strategies at once.

Example of cycling in the Netherlands, Forsyth et al. 2017 Creating Healthy Neighborhoods

Four Paths

Path 1 Forgetting
Path 2 Preparedness
Path 3 Sectoral shifts
Path 4 Healthy communities
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Modest changes likely but more comprehensive collaborations would help

Mexico City, Mexico, social housing