

Call for Membership

“Urban Planning for Health Equity”

The Academy for Territorial Development in the Leibniz Association (ARL) is currently establishing an international working group (IAK) “Urban Planning for Health Equity” and looking for participants. The members of the working group will work for approximately three years together and address the topic from inter- and transdisciplinary perspectives.

About the Academy

The ARL is an interdisciplinary forum for research and practice in which spatial and planning-related knowledge is generated and communicated in dialogue. The ARL is member of the German Leibniz Association and a non-university forum and competence centre for sustainable spatial development. The research focus is on spatial structures and developments, their causes and effects, and policy and planning options for their management. Holistic, integrative and future-oriented perspectives taken on complex, spatial-social challenges, characterize the work of the Academy. The close honorary cooperation of actors from spatial and planning-related research and practice forms the core of the Academy’s work. In its function as a transdisciplinary network, the ARL researches spatial structures and developments as the basis and expression of social practice. In addition, it is a place of scientific reflection on planning.

Scope: Urban Planning for Health Equity

Urban areas are for several reasons in the focus of discourses on spatial development: the trend of urbanisation worldwide is unbroken. Cities are not only places of spatial and social segregation, but also of health inequalities. In 2016, in a series of the journal *The Lancet*, cities were emphasized as “important social determinant to health”, highlighting the multiple relations between urban planning, mobility and health outcomes via factors such as air and noise pollution, inactive lifestyles, social isolation and exposure to crime.¹ Various forms of health inequity are observed as there are unequal micro-environments and opportunities for healthy living within the cities: Influenced by urban environmental factors, life expectancy from birth varies up to eight years between different neighbourhoods in European Cities. The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has amplified urban health inequity, revealing the consequences of unequal access to adequate housing, quality green spaces and health infrastructures. Therefore, the pursuit of developing urban areas that are healthy, sustainable and just is a common concern of practitioners and scientists around the globe.

This working group on Urban Planning for Health Equity addresses different ARL research fields. It mainly refers to the field of demographic and socio-economic change as it deals with an integrated view of health equity, environmental justice and quality of life for different communities living in European cities today. Spatial development, urban planning and urban design are key determinants of health equity, which have rarely been researched in a transdisciplinary and international perspective. This includes the living conditions that are developed, designed and planned to allow communities regardless of their level of marginalisation and deprivation to live more healthy lives. Therefore,

¹ <https://www.thelancet.com/series/urban-design>

aspects of health and environment, physical activity, mobility, and digitalisation, inclusion and participation in decision-making will be on the agenda.

The role of meaningful involvement and participation of different communities in decision making following the concepts of procedural environmental justice and empowerment in the sense of enabling individuals is an important determinant of health for these communities. Therefore, it is important for a vital urban planning for health equity.

Facing the effects of a worldwide pandemic, we investigate urban planning in its potential to mitigate urban health inequity in three perspectives: 1) short-term measures like lockdowns, 2) inequity in SARS-CoV-2 effects determined by urban health inequity and 3) long-term effects and conclusions for a post-pandemic city, e.g. building up sustainable resilience against new emergencies.

The working group focuses on European cities as entities that are shaped by similar cultural, economic and historical backgrounds, a joint political and administrative framework, similar public health challenges, but vary in approaches for urban planning and urban design.

Research Questions

- What are the key determinants of health equity for different communities in urban areas? Which indicators could represent these determinants?
- How do we deal with multiple environmental burdens as determinant of health inequity?
- How can inclusive design become the standard in spatial planning?
- What are innovative concepts of community health care?
- How can health equity impact assessment (e.g. taking intervention generated inequalities into account) be integrated into urban planning and design processes?
- What are innovative approaches of participation in urban development meeting the requirement of empowerment and procedural environmental justice?
- What are benefits of health equity interventions for sustainable urban development?
- What lessons do we learn from the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic for urban health equity?
- How can urban health inequities be visualised and communicated to decision makers?

Products

The working group aims at

- developing a report compiling answers to the main research questions.
- providing online content for the platform arl-international.com
- developing and documenting a set of approaches to visualise health inequities (maps, photo, film, ...).
- illustrating elements of best practice approaches by learning from international experiences.
- establishing a close partnership with a leading journal to disseminate its progress and results to an international audience in spatial planning, urban planning, architecture and public health.

The joint products may include a special edition, white paper, opinion pieces and vice versa a temporary membership from working group members in the editorial board of a journal.

Organisation

The working group will consist of 12 members representing different European countries, from practice and research. It will run for three years and have three meetings of two days, one per year. The kick-off meeting will be held in Bochum, Germany. The 2nd meeting will be in Vienna, Austria. The place

of the 3rd meeting will be agreed upon in the working group. Regularly (quarterly) online sessions and interim working phases will take place in between. The work will be supported by scientific and administrative staff from the ARL headquarter and an organisational assistant.

In thematic workshops, which will be held as face-to-face meetings, specific topics will be discussed in detail. Exchange with other international ARL working groups are intended. Colleagues from non-European countries will be invited to specific workshops following the idea of global learning.

Application

The Call for Membership is addressed to representatives of different disciplinary approaches (e.g. public health, (medical) geography, spatial planning, sociology) who have solid expertise on public health and spatial planning in European cities and who are interested in contributing actively to the aforementioned objectives of this working group. Applications from both researchers and practitioners of all stages of experience, all gender and ages are welcome.

If you are interested in participating in the working group, please submit your statement of interest (in digital form) by

08.04.2022

In your application you should

- briefly explain your personal interest in participating and draw your research perspectives and potential contributions to the working group (max. 300 words),
- illustratively present your relevant professional skills and experience in a short (max. 2 pages) CV including the bibliography of your most relevant publications/projects,

Please send your application in digital form to Martin Sondermann and Vanessa Mena as the responsible contact persons in the academy:

mena@arl-net.de

Questions regarding the topic and objectives of the working can also be send to Prof. Dr. Heike Köckler, hsg – Hochschule für Gesundheit: heike.koeckler@hs-gesundheit.de

Contact

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