

The Contribution of Experience Scapes to Building Resilience in Communities: A Comparative Case Study Approach in Germany and the Netherlands

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Abstract : Citizens in urban areas are prone to increased levels of stress due to urbanization, inadequate and overburdened infrastructure and services, and environmental degradation. Moreover, communities are fragile and subject to shocks and stresses through various social and political processes. A loss of (a sense of) community is often seen as related to increasing political and civic disintegration. Feelings of community can manifest themselves in various ways but underlying all these manifestations is the need for trust between people. One of the main drivers of trust between individuals is (shared) experiences. It is these shared experiences that may play an important role in building resilience, i.e., the ability of a community and its members to adapt to and deal with stresses, as well as ensure the ongoing development of a community. So far, experience design, as a discipline and academic field, has mainly focused on designing products or services. However, people-to-people experiences are the ones that play a pivotal role in building inclusiveness, safety, and resilience in communities. These experiences represent challenging objects of design as they develop in an interactive space of spontaneity, serendipity, and uniqueness that is based on intuition, freedom of expression, and interaction. Therefore, there is a need for research to identify which elements are required in designing the social and physical environment (or 'experience scape') to increase the chance for people-to-people experiences to be successful and what elements are required for these experiences to help in building resilience in urban communities that can resist shocks and stresses. By means of a comparative case study approach in urban areas in Germany and the Netherlands, using a range of qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, participant observation, storytelling techniques, and life stories, this research identifies relevant actors and their roles in creating building blocks of optimal experience scrapes for building resilience in communities.

Keywords : community development, experiences, experience scapes, resilience

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