

Urban Health and Strategic City Planning: A Case from Greece

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Abstract : As urbanization is becoming a major stress factor not only for the urban environment but also for the wellbeing of city dwellers, incorporating the issues of urban health in strategic city planning and policy-making has never been more relevant. The impact of urbanization can vary from low to severe and relates to all non-communicable diseases caused by the different functions of cities. Air pollution, noise pollution, water and soil pollution, availability of open green spaces, and urban heat island are the major factors that can compromise citizens' health. Urban health describes the effects of the social environment, the physical environment, and the availability and accessibility to health and social services. To assess the quality of urban wellbeing, all urban characteristics that might have an effect on citizens' health must be considered, evaluated, and introduced in integrated local planning. A series of indices and indicators can be used to better describe these effects and set the target values in policy making. Local strategic planning is one of the most valuable development tools a local city administration can possess; thus, it has become mandatory under Greek law for all municipalities. It involves a two-stage procedure; the first aims to collect, analyse and evaluate data on the current situation of the city (administrative data, population data, environmental data, social data, swot analysis), while the second aims to introduce a policy vision described and supported by distinct (nevertheless integrated) actions, plans and measures to be implemented with the aim of city development and citizen wellbeing. In this procedure, the element of health is often neglected or under-evaluated. A relative survey was conducted among all Greek local authorities in order to shed light on the current situation. Evidence shows that the rate of incorporation of health in strategic planning is lacking behind. The survey also highlights key hindrances and concerns raised by local officials and suggests a path for the way forward.

Keywords : urban health, strategic planning, local authorities, integrated development

Conference Title : ICMUPDGI 2023 : International Conference on Municipal Planning, Urban Design, and Green Infrastructure

Conference Location : Barcelona, Spain

Conference Dates : June 19-20, 2023