

Towards a Methodology for the Assessment of Neighbourhood Design for Happiness

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Abstract : Urban and regional research in the new emerging inter-disciplinary field of happiness is seemingly limited. However, it is progressively being recognized that there is enormous potential for social and behavioral scientists to add a spatial dimension to it. In fact, the happiness of communities can be notably influenced by the design and maintenance of the neighborhoods they inhabit. The probable key reasons being that places can facilitate human social connections and relationships. While it is increasingly being acknowledged that some neighborhood designs appear better suited for social connectedness than others, the plausible reasons for places to deter these characteristics and perhaps their influence on happiness are outwardly unknown. In addition, an explicit step wise methodology to assess neighborhood designs for happiness (of their communities) is not known to exist. This paper is an attempt towards developing such a methodological framework. The paper presents the development of a methodological framework for assessing neighborhood designs for happiness, with a particular focus on the outdoor shared spaces in neighborhoods. The developed methodological framework of investigation follows a mixed method approach and draws upon four different sources of information. The framework proposes an empirical examination of the contribution of neighborhood factors, particularly outdoor shared spaces, to individual happiness. One of the main tools proposed for this empirical examination is Jan Gehl's Public Space Public Life (PSPL) Survey. The developed framework, as presented in the paper, is a contribution towards the development of a consolidated methodology for assessing neighborhood designs for happiness, which can further serve as a unique tool to inform urban designers, architects and other decision makers.

Keywords : happiness, methodology, neighbourhood design, outdoor shared spaces

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