SYNTHESIZING MORE REALITY OR REALIZING MORE SYNTHESIS: METHODOLOGY FOR HEALTHY CITIES RESEARCH

Professor Evelyne de Leeuw
Evaluation aims, approaches and outcomes

Healthy Cities – strategic long term developments

An evaluation approach that recognises the dynamics

Dynamic research, research team, and research tools

Findings – and what Healthy Cities learn
What are ‘Healthy Cities’?

- Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms
- Participation in networking activities
- Sustained local support
- Coordinator and steering group
- City health profile
- Integrated planning for health
- Partnership
- Attending WHO European Network meetings
- Capacity building
- Attending meetings of mayors
What are ‘Healthy Cities’ - continuous

Number of cities

[Bar chart showing the number of cities from Q4 2008 to Q4 2012.]

- 2008 Q4: 2
- 2009 Q1: 4
- 2009 Q2: 18
- 2009 Q3: 12
- 2009 Q4: 12
- 2010 Q1: 10
- 2010 Q2: 6
- 2010 Q3: 14
- 2010 Q4: 6
- 2011 Q1: 8
- 2011 Q2: 2
- 2011 Q3: 4
- 2011 Q4: 2
- 2012 Q1: 2
- 2012 Q2: 2
- 2012 Q3: 2
- 2012 Q4: 2

[Cityscape background]
Research methodology

We needed to account for context; diversity; dynamics; complexity; etc....
Research methodology: realism
Projects, programmes, policies are driven by ‘theories’:

- not ‘scientific’
- but assumptions about causal, final, normative relations
- context; mechanism; outcome
Research methodology: synthesis

‘Knowing’ something is more than just appraising the ‘facts’:

(ἐπιστήμη, τέχνη, σοφία, φρόνησις, παρρησία)

(episteme – knowledge; techne – skill; sophia – wisdom; phronesis – (political) astuteness; parrhesia – speaking out boldly)

research ≠ knowledge ≠ policy ≠ change

CHETRE: ‘to co-create intelligence’
We shape our cities, ...’ (Churchill)

Professor Billie Giles-Corti

‘What gets measured gets done’

John Maynard Keynes

‘There is nothing a Government hates more than to be well-informed; for it makes the process of arriving at decisions much more complicated and difficult’
‘There is an epidemic of preventable disease’

‘This is a complex thing and there is no easy solution’

‘This is a complex thing but we must find an easy solution’

‘This is a complex thing so we will need to understand it better’

‘This has to do with Social Determinants of Health’

‘Some people make unwise lifestyle choices’

‘Those people need to be told to stop smoking and drinking’

‘Systems level institutional responses are required’

‘HiAP, governance, shared decisions, etc.’

‘…and has equity dimensions’
Complexity, wonder and excitement!

3D Obesity Map developed by Timur Burykin ©
Realist synthesis; DECiPHERr
(Developing an evidence-based approach to city public health planning and investment in Europe)

Decision-makers

- Education
- Economy
- Environment
- Health
- Housing
- Security

Living and working conditions → Lifestyle → Behaviour → Risk factors → Coronary Heart Disease → Burden of CHD

Coronary Heart Disease

1. Logistic regression
2. Observation
3. Biomedical

(plug-in; not necessarily new research:)

- Decide
- Invest
- Pathway/Mechanism/Dynamic
- Health Impact
- Cost-Benefit
**Data collection and processing**

- Annual Reporting Templates – ART  
  (on city changes & developments vs. designation)

- General Evaluation Questionnaire  
  (taking stock – health, well-being, equity)

- Structured case studies  
  (thematic; strategic; achievements)  
  (‘a-synchronous’ ‘interview’)

- Data mining  
  (Eurostat; national statistics bureaus)

- Designation files and document analysis
Healthy Cities Phase V evaluation: further synthesizing realism

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Abstract

In this paper, we evaluate the health benefits of a city-scale park in a case study of a city in England. The park was designed to be used by the local community, to provide a place for social interaction, and to improve the physical and mental health of residents. The park was located in a deprived area, and it was designed to be accessible to all ages and abilities. The evaluation involved a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, including surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

The results showed that the park had a significant positive impact on the health and well-being of the local community. The park was well received by all age groups and abilities, and it was used regularly by residents of the area. The park also had a positive impact on the local economy, as it created new jobs and helped to attract visitors to the area.

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of designing urban spaces that are inclusive and accessible to all, and that promote social interaction and physical activity. The results also suggest that urban planning and design can have a significant impact on public health, and that investment in urban green spaces can be a cost-effective way to improve the health and well-being of local communities.
Negotiated priority themes
(Healthy City values, WHO priorities, local politics, ‘beliefs’)

Establish data group
(qualitative, quantitative, resource experts, validation)

Establish ‘Mother Reports’ for each theme
(600+ pages of semi-processed data; total >6TB)

Data interrogation by theme lead authors
(Ask questions, hypotheses, cross-theme issues)

Write and validate papers
Synthesizing More Reality or Realizing More Synthesis: Time

For a bit of reflection: Resources, time, people . . .
Merci!

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