

Public Spaces: Socioeconomic Challenges

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This Special Issue, entitled '*Public Spaces: Socioeconomic Challenges*' considers the concept of general well-being from the point of view of collective achievements and/or external conditions that can favorably impact the individual when implemented within an urban structure.

The generality of the presented papers prioritizes the use of objective, measurable and scientifically proven foundations to confirm that including certain urban or environmental contexts within an urban structure has the potential to provide benefits to the well-being of citizens, and, eventually, lead to better conditions to improve their life quality and the architecture of well-being.

As for the series of articles presented herein, the goal of this SI is to merely open the field up to a particularly wide range of possible reflections, which we expect to inspire future publications that can drive the creation even more focused contributions to clearly define the frontiers of a promising field of study. We ask the question how can measures related to urban or environmental architecture contribute to citizens well-being and how far can we expect such a contribution to be the aim of future public policy decisions? Naturally, despite the fact that is not a totally new concern, the consideration of these complex phenomena under a new umbrella and using innovative analysis techniques may bring some original approaches and new dimensions to the discussion.

This Special Issue calls for: (1) *Conceptual objectivity*: The economy of well-being and happiness has recently been proven to be an important area of study in which different authors have advocated for the fact that the happiness of populations is much more relevant to social well-being than the growth of a country's gross domestic product. This is a long-standing discussion because the acceptance of the importance of a broader concept of economic development, one that includes well-being, has been successively emphasized over the last two decades. The indicators chosen for the calculation of the Human Development Index that include the concept of well-being prove this, and they have been consistently upgraded to achieve a better and more suitable fit with the changing context. (2) *The need for measurable indicators*: Such a construct is closely related to the previous point. (3) *Public policies evaluation*: Ultimately, such indicators also serve to allow us to analyze and hierarchize the results of the investments and efforts made which, in substance, permit us to address the efficiency of public policies from a different angle.

There are two major concepts that intersect within the reflection that begins here, and they are quite different: Firstly, the concept of well-being related to healthier and pleasant life forms (as a cause) and happiness (as a consequence) is particularly complex. Both are linked to an inner balance whose fundamental contribution results from a harmonious self-being, but is also interconnected with the social environment integrating the individual or their group (and this is, from our understanding, a major condition). Secondly, the concept of well-being has multiple dimensions and theoretical perspectives. This SI helps to approach them. Herein, we merge the theory of the dynamic balance of well-being, the effects of life's challenges and the model of useful life development together, and we dare to conclude that it would be appropriate for a new definition of well-being to emerge that focuses on a state of equilibrium that could be affected by life events or challenges, and also by the environment. A definition that conveys the multidimensional nature of well-being



Citation: de Noronha, T. Public Spaces: Socioeconomic Challenges. *Land* **2024**, *13*, 544. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land13040544>

Received: 7 April 2024
Accepted: 12 April 2024
Published: 19 April 2024



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can help individuals and policy makers to reach a dynamic and interactive focus that is open to external intervention.

Within the above discussion, This SI aims to integrate this interesting set of papers, referring to experiences from across the world that can be included in the previous theoretical concept, into the above discussion.

1. *Inequalities and Injustices of Urban Green Regeneration: Applying the Conflict Analysis Perspective*, by Annegret Haase, points out how green regeneration has become one of the most powerful strategies for improving the quality of life in cities. The paper reanalyzes empirical evidence that was examined in earlier projects on a residential area in the city of Leipzig, Germany.

2. *Spatial Relations between the Theatre and Its Surroundings: An Assessment Protocol on the Example of Warsaw* by Agnieszka Starzyk Kinga et al. discusses theater as a field of human and team activity by examining the links between theatre architecture and public spaces and observing to what extent they become attractors affecting the activities within a city's cultural and social life. The subjects of the study are Warsaw theatres, in the context of their impact on the surrounding public spaces.

3. *Public Spaces, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: Connecting Disabled Entrepreneurs to Urban Spaces* by Helen Lawton Smith demonstrates the contribution of disabled entrepreneurs to public spaces in the United Kingdom, and the barriers to their full engagement in the local economy. She also discusses what measures can be taken to overcome the marginalization of disabled entrepreneurs. Where interaction is well established, such entrepreneurs add to the cultural richness of places, to personal and societal well-being and contribute economically through wealth creation.

4. *Hotel Rooftops as a Space for Consumption in Historic Centres* by Pere Mercade-Mele et al. demonstrates that, in Spain, such structures represent new spaces for tourists' consumption of unique and special experiences. They explain how the commodification of rooftops together with the use of information technology may impact a city's tourism planning and management.

5. *Citizen Participation and Knowledge Support in Urban Public Energy Transition—A Quadruple Helix Perspective*, by Peter Nijkamp et al. refers to the implementation of far-reaching changes in public energy supplies for the local energy policy in Rotterdam in the Netherlands. The paper maps out the conditions for sustainable energy provision and use, emphasizing the role of citizens in a quadruple helix context. Citizen participation in the energy policy and use of digital devices are proposed as useful tools for the interface between citizens and municipal policy.

6. Taking a similar perspective to the previous paper, *Waste Management and Territorial Impact in the Canary Islands* by Juan C. Santamarta et al. points out how insularity challenges the development of Europe's outermost regions. They describe the case of the Canary Islands and their waste management difficulties due to tourism. The authors propose the valorization of waste with the use of by-products such as biogas or compost, thereby promoting recycling within a circular economy and improving the residents' quality of life and the sustainability of the islands.

7. Also related to land management is the next paper, *Testing and Enhancing the 8R Framework of Responsible Land Management with Documented Strategies and Effects of Land Reclamation Projects in Indonesia* by Walter Timo de Vries and Iwan Rudiarto. This article reviews the implementation of different strategies for land reclamation in Indonesia and their effects, and how the 8R framework could improve conditions when both the operational details and external effects of a land management intervention are known. The results demonstrate the need for integrated land management and development strategies.

8. From a more general perspective, *Digital Technologies and Public Policies Applied to Green Cities* by Maria José Sousa confirms the ways in which digital technologies and public policies are fundamental to cities defining their urban greening strategies by using a systematic literature review, a Delphi study with experts and a policy analysis. The findings highlight the focus on the interaction between actors in policymaking, the interpretive

approaches used to examine the application of technologies in urban greening problems and how policies reflect the social construction of problems. The conclusion points to urban greening profiting urban centers together with non-urban environments such as agricultural hinterland areas, forest spaces around the cities and rural–urban interfaces.

9. *A Systematic Review of a City in a City: An Aerotropolitan Perspective* by Emeka Austin Ndaguba, Jua Cilliers and Sumita Ghosh. This research uses a systematic literature review of aerial life and aeronautical studies to prove that, although airports are frequently cited as being outside of urban centers, recent data related to the growth of aerotropolis contradict this analysis. In fact, various pull and push factors represent the life cycle of aerotropolis in urban enclaves. New analytical methods such as the use of an AI databank and a hybrid method combining VOSviewer and Citespace software bring new insights allowing for the establishment of parameters regarding aerial life, knowledge about the technologies adopted and the quality of stakeholders, in addition to the existing relationships between urban space, urbanization and geography. In addition, they highlight the development of ICT and smart technologies, which correspond to the multiple potential strategies that exists for the development of sustainable airports, such as eco-innovation, greenovation and social innovation. The novelty of this study contributes to the concept of transit-bound tourism.

10. *Does Fiscal Decentralization Affect Regional High-Quality Development by Changing Peoples' Livelihood Expenditure Preferences: Provincial Evidence from China* by Dingqing Wang, Enqi Zhang and Hongwei Liao explores the strengths and limitations of China's fiscal decentralization system from the perspective of peoples' livelihood expenditures. Their findings demonstrate that fiscal decentralization has an inverted U-shaped relationship with regional high-quality development, significant for the innovation, greenness and openness dimensions. Furthermore, in the process of constructing regional high-quality development, fiscal decentralization will increase the preference for healthcare expenditure, improve the modern public health system and indirectly promote regional high-quality development. This will lower the preference for social security employment expenditure, neglect the basic resident social security employment problem and slow down the process of high-quality development. This paper provides an important theoretical and practical basis for the improvement of the fiscal system and the improvement of social welfare levels in the post-COVID-19 era.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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