



Shaping Cities for Health: Complexity and the planning of urban environments in the 21st century

**Report of the UCL–Lancet Commission on Healthy Cities
Wednesday 30 May, 14:30**

With almost 30 years' experience from the Healthy Cities movement, the features that transform a 'city' into a 'healthy city' are increasingly evident. What is less well understood is how to deliver the potential health benefits and how to ensure that they reach all citizens in urban contexts across the world. This is an increasingly important task given that the majority of the world's population already live in cities and that, with current high rates of urbanisation, many millions more will soon do so.

The UCL–Lancet Commission of Healthy Cities provides an analysis of how health outcomes are part of the complexity of urban processes, arguing against the assumption that urban health outcomes will improve with economic growth and demographic change. Instead, it highlights the role that urban planning can and should play in delivering health improvements through reshaping the urban fabric of our cities. The report considers this through case studies of sanitation and wastewater management (Mumbai), urban mobility (Bogotá), building standards (London), the urban heat island effect (London) and urban agriculture (Havana and Accra). These are followed with a discussion of the implications of a complexity approach for planning of urban environments, emphasising project-based experimentation and evaluation leading to self-reflection and dialogue.

The UCL–Lancet Commission on Healthy Cities is a major inaugural project of Sustainable Cities, the second of UCL's four cross-disciplinary Grand Challenges addressing major societal issues of global relevance. The commission's authorship includes contributors from four of UCL's ten academic faculties, from the Universities of Pelotas and Otago, and from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. The Healthy Cities report follows UCL's first Lancet Commission report, *Managing the Health Effects of Climate Change*, in May 2009.

Key Messages

- Cities are complex systems, so that health outcomes are emergent properties
- The urban advantage in health outcomes has to be actively promoted and maintained
- Inequalities in health outcomes should be recognised at the urban scale
- A linear or cyclical planning approach is insufficient in conditions of complexity
- Urban planning for health needs to emphasise experimentation through projects
- Evaluation leading to dialogue between stakeholders and self-reflection is essential

Conference Programme

14:00 Registration (Denys Holland Lecture Theatre)

14:30 Introduction:

Professor Richard Horton (Editor, The Lancet)
Professor David Price (UCL Vice Provost-Research)

14:40 Presentation of report and main findings:

Professor Yvonne Rydin, lead author (Planning, Environment & Public Policy,
UCL Bartlett School of Planning)

15:10 Additional perspectives from co-authors:

Professor Paul Wilkinson (London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine)

Professor Nora Groce (Leonard Cheshire Chair of Disability & Inclusive Development, UCL)

15:30 Respondents:

Phil Nedin (Arup Global Healthcare Business Leader)

Professor Sir Andrew Haines (Public Health & Primary Care, LSTHM)

16:00 Q&A:

Chaired by Professor Sir John Tooke (UCL Vice-Provost, Health)

17:15 Closing remarks:

Professor Richard Horton and Professor David Price

17:30 Drinks reception (Cissy Chu Common Room, UCL Faculty of Laws-Graduate Wing)



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