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Emerging International "UrbGreen" Network: Fostering Urban Green and Health by Good Governance

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Background

- Urban green infrastructure plays a fundamental role in promoting public health, enhancing environmental quality, and advancing urban sustainability.
- Effective urban green governance requires the integration of knowledge from multiple academic and professional fields.
- This international and interdisciplinary science-practice network focuses on the intersection of urban greenery, digitalization, and governance, from a health and sustainability perspective.

Aim

Through transatlantic collaboration between researchers and landscape architecture practitioners, the network aims to:

- improve guidance for urban green planning and management,
- strengthen links between research and practice,
- identify synergies and recurring conflicts between health, equity, and sustainability,
- document effective solutions, and
- develop policy recommendations to improve urban green governance and guidance practices.

Networking format & working method

- The network brings together experts from a variety of disciplines and sectors to evaluate existing planning and governance procedures in the field of urban green. This will include an examination of the full life cycle of urban green spaces, from planning and design through implementation, maintenance, evaluation, redesign, or abandonment.
- The networking activities comprise both online and in-person formats, e.g., (invitational) workshops and contributions to public conferences.
- Governance processes will be analyzed, and guidance materials including non-digital tools (e.g., standards, indicators, toolkits, checklists, case studies) and digital tools (e.g., GIS or AI-based) will be investigated to analyze their strengths and limitations.
- Methods include collaborative analysis, structured knowledge exchange, co-writing of publications, and shared learning.

Preliminary result:

As the start-up phase has shown, the role of good governance for fostering urban green and health is well-recognized. Network participants have started identifying areas for improvement, and developing practical suggestions.

Department of Health Sciences, University of Applied Sciences for Health, Bochum

Dirtworks Landscape Architecture, New York, USA

Medical School OWL, Bielefeld University (Coordination)
Network leaders:
Univ.-Prof. Dr. med Claudia Hornberg
Dr. Parisa Rahimitabar

Building Health Lab, Berlin

Rutgers Center for Urban Environmental Sustainability, New Jersey, USA

Center for Development Research, Bonn University

Duration & funding
International contacts were intensified in 2023/2024 with visits to the USA and have been further expanded in recent years. A suitable source of a 3-year financing is currently being explored.



The exchange-based outputs of this network concerning urban green governance and digitalization will be made available in the form of publications, dedicated website content, and engagement activities including workshops.

University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf, Hamburg

School of Global Public Health, New York University, New York, USA

Municipality of Paderborn

Faculty of Resource Management, University of Applied Science and Art, Göttingen

Detmold School of Design, OWL University of Applied Sciences, Detmold

Jordan University of Science and Technology, Irbid, Jordan

Institute for Urban Public Health, University Medical Center Essen

Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research, Leipzig

Discussion

The diverse expertise within the network facilitates the integration of interdisciplinary perspectives and supports the development of effective solutions and strategies for enhanced urban green governance. Through current and future research-practice collaborations, this network will generate innovative approaches to address complex urban green and health-related challenges.

Acknowledgement
We are grateful to our partners for engaging in the "UrbGreen" Network.

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