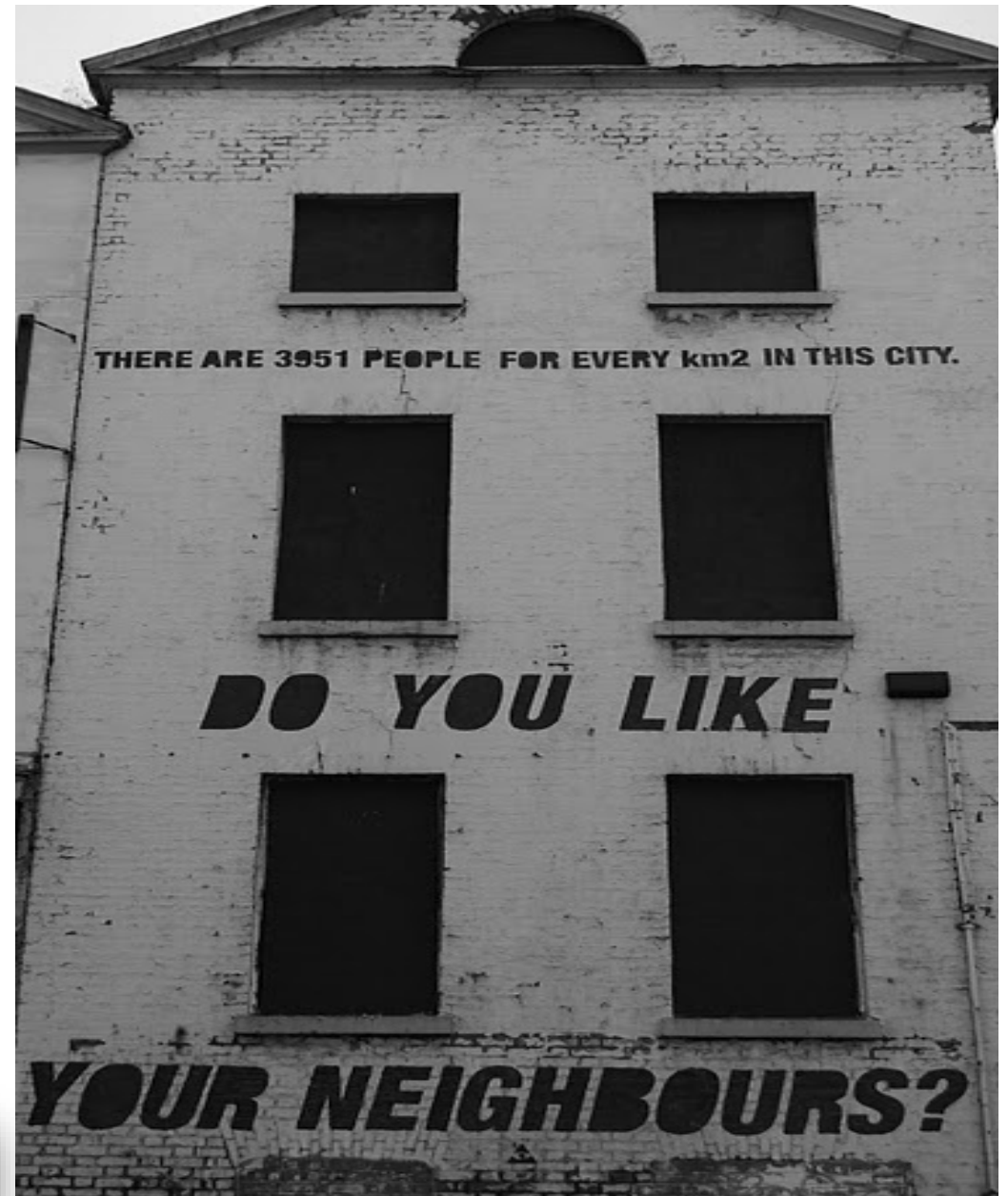# Places, Mental Health and Wellbeing

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Are Cities Good for us?

Benjamin Disraeli

"In great cities men are brought together by the desire of gain. They are not in a state of co-operation, but of isolation, as to the making of fortunes; and for all the rest they are careless of neighbours. Christianity teaches us to love our neighbor as ourselves; modern society acknowledges no neighbour."

The Urbanicity Effect – Mental Health

- Faris & Dunham (1939) "Mental disorders in urban areas": SZ was much more common in deprived inner city Chicago than its affluent suburbs.

- Wirth (1938): depression higher in urban compared to rural settings

- **Pedersen & Mortensen (2001): a dose-response relationship between time spent in urban environments in childhood and risk.**

- Sundquist et al. (2004): Sweden - 4.4 million adults. Those living in the most densely populated areas had 68–77% more risk of developing psychosis and 12 –20% higher risk of developing depression than the reference group.

- Peen, Schoevers, Beeckman and Dekker (2010) meta-analysis of urban-rural differences of mood and anxiety disorder.

- Vassos et al. (2012): meta-analysis of urbanicity in schizophrenia.

- **Evans (2003) and Ellaway et al., (2009) the relationship is associated with perceived quality of place.**

The Urbanicity Effect – Wellbeing

**North West Mental Wellbeing Survey 2009 (& 2012):**
Compared to the other North West areas, people in Liverpool had lower general levels of MH&W across the lifespan. In particular Liverpool residents felt:

- Higher levels of anxiety and depression.
- Decreased sense of belonging to their community.
- Less participation in organizations.
- unable to ask others for help.
- unsafe outside their home.
- relative isolation
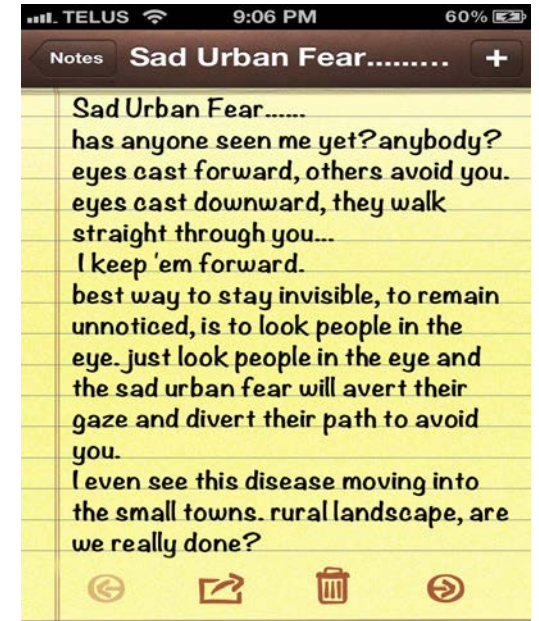
Mount Fear- Abigail Reynolds

North West Coast Household Health Survey:
Depression and wellbeing by ward deprivation
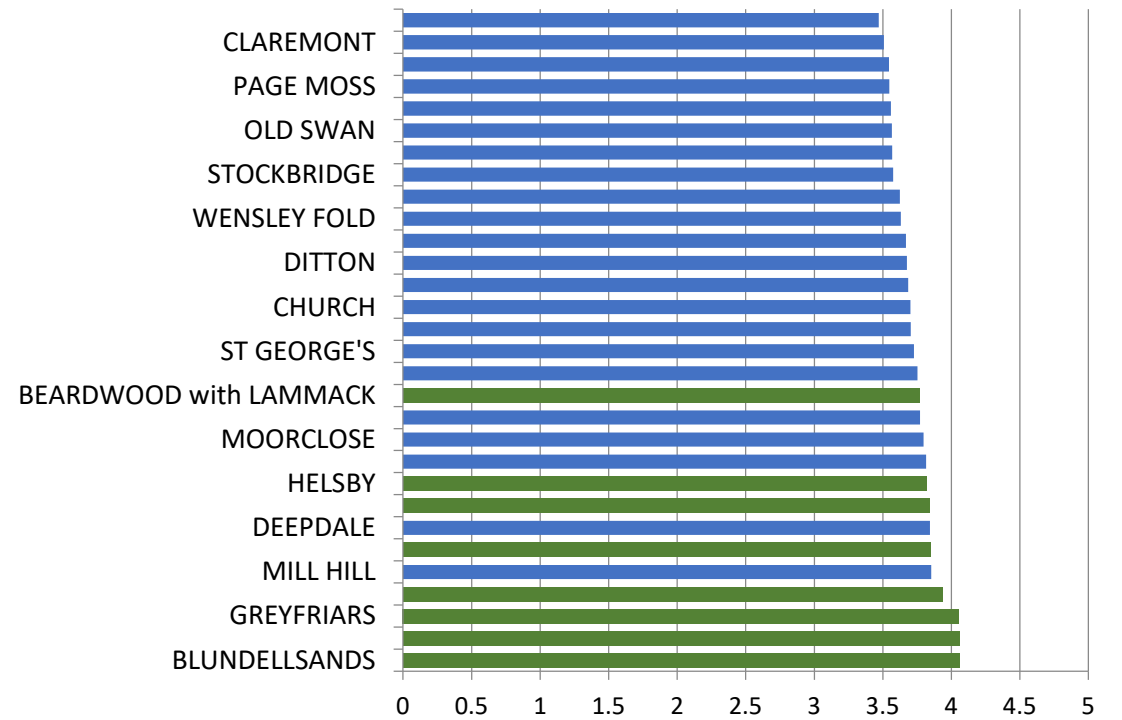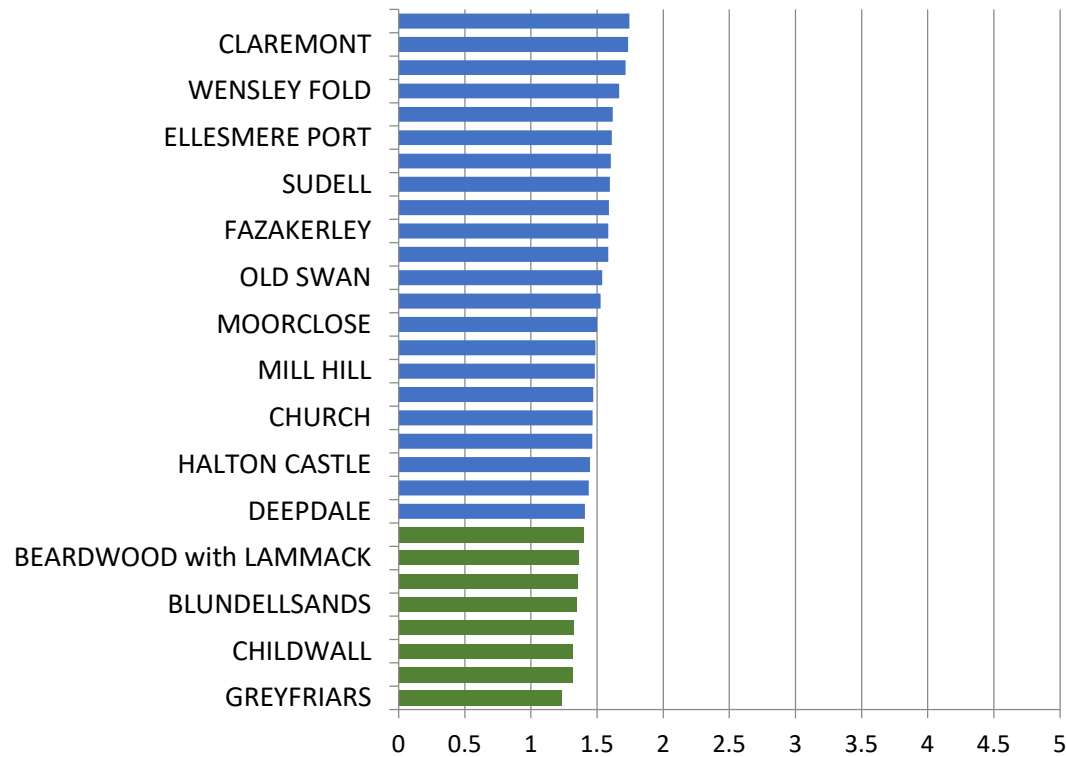
Bond to Place

"85% OF PEOPLE POLLED STATED THAT THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC SPACE HAS A DIRECT IMPACT UPON THEIR LIVES AND THE WAY THEY FEEL."

SEEN & HEARD, DEMOS, NOVEMBER 2007

"We exist inside the built environment – it's like asking a tortoise if his shell is important."

Lived Experience

Places of Paradoxical Pride & Shame – an Ambivalent Attachment to Place?

- **Hayden (2013):** *"…place comes to define people and .. they, in turn, define their community as in need of defence and not easily understandable to strangers."*

- **Stafford et al. (2008)**: Strong attachment to a deprived neighbourhood increases risk of depression.

Corcoran and Mansfield, 2018

"…because I feel <u>ashamed</u> being associated with part of that area when deep down people would come to the area and say 'oh my god look, looks rough round here'. <u>But the people are lovely</u>. I'm not <u>ashamed</u> to be associated… I'm <u>ashamed</u> of people that have got no <u>shame</u> in themselves and they just throw litter. Maybe I've used the wrong word of saying I feel <u>ashamed</u> because I'm not <u>ashamed</u> of coming from where I've come from because I've come from there all me life, and it's better for me because <u>I'm not a posh nob</u> or I don't try and be what I'm not."

(from Corcoran and Mansfield (2018)

Life History Theory

The qualities of an environment directly determine our life strategies and our wellbeing, emphasising the importance of place design and stewardship.

Perceived stable, reliable and predictable resources people plan their futures and develop the capacity to adapt to inevitable life stresses. They tend to cooperate with other future oriented people in their communities to overcome life stressors.

Perceived unstable, unreliable or unpredictable resources tend to prime thrill seeking hedonic behaviours. Un-cooperative, unplanned, now-oriented responses become the norm. There is little chance to overcome life stressors through co-operation.

Harsh environments and the future-discounting behaviours they prime have significantly negative impacts on individuals and communities.

Prosocial
Place
research programme

Mental Health, Deprivation & the Neighbourhood Social Environment: a Network Analysis

Total Sample Mixed Graphical Network
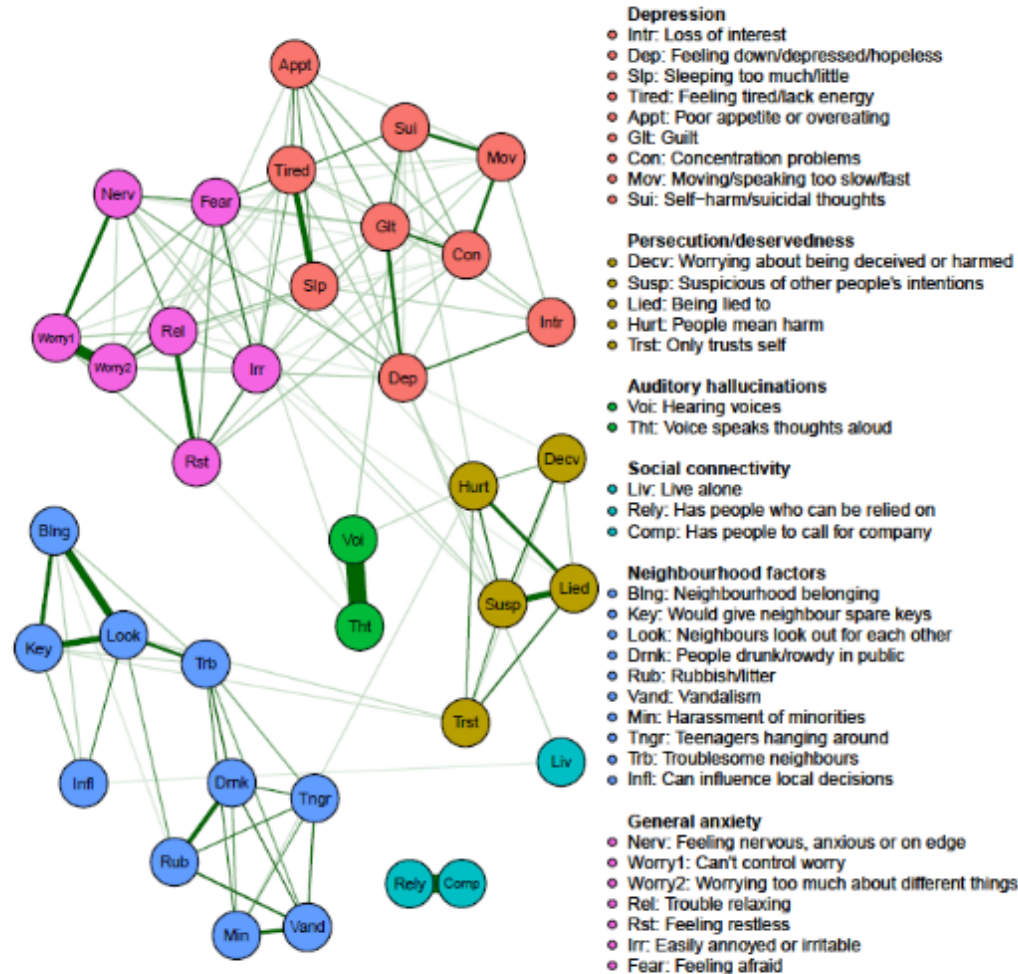
McElroy et al. 2019

Mental Health, Deprivation & the Neighbourhood Social Environment: a Network Analysis

Low Deprivation (n=1,310) Moderate Deprivation (n=1,192) High Deprivation (n=1,168)
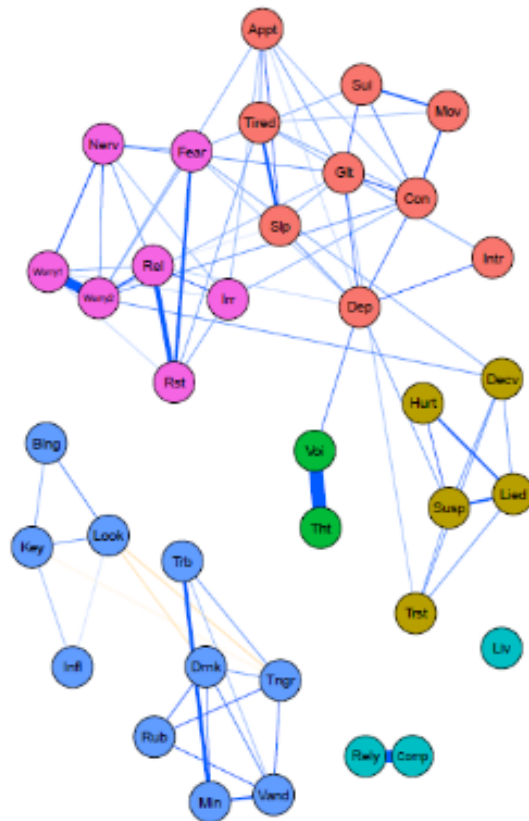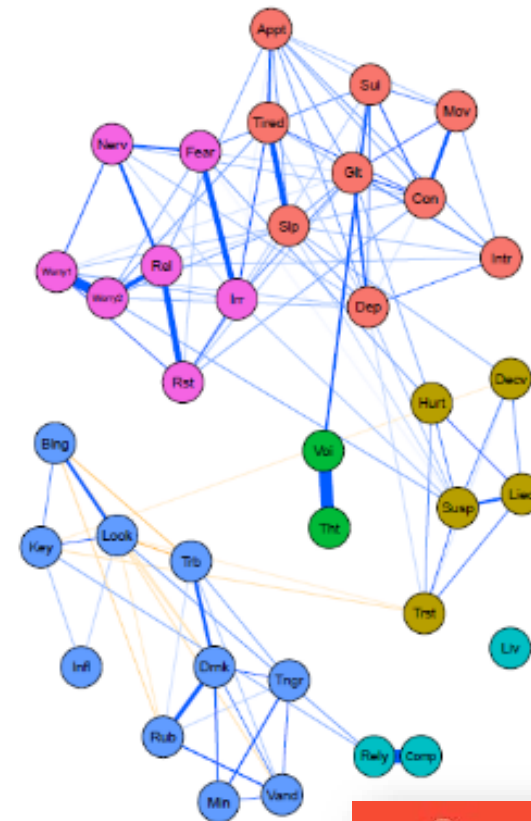
McElroy et al. 2019

Local Area Wellbeing Inequalities

What do we attend to?
Visual cues to threat

What do we Attend to?
Top Down and Bottom up Attention

The urban environment includes physical characteristics, cues influencing perceptions, regulating social attitudes and emotions and contributing to psychological stress or wellbeing.
Pertinence or salience theory argues that we will attend to threat–related cues for shorter time before deciding to escape.

We used eye tracking specs to investigate attention to residential images asking how nice is this place and how threatening is this place in a within-subjects design:

- the threat focus would result in less overall distance travelled by the eyes and fewer fixation points compared to the 'desirability' focus – partially supported with significantly fewer fixation points in threat condition.
- different fixation points – related to Prospect-Refuge theory (Appleton, 1975) and/or biophilia (Wilson, 1984)

What do we attend to?

Blue = fixations for how nice
Red = fixations for how threatening

What do we attend to?

Corcoran et al. 2019

Feeling the City –Expressed Emotions

Corcoran et al. 2018

Walking the City –
Judgements of Threat and Trust

- Judgements of how threatened walkers feel in the more deprived area was determined by the personal resilience score of the walkers

- Judgements of how trustworthy the residents of the neighbourhoods are was determined by the judged wealth of the residents and walkers' scores on a paranoia scale.

- The tipping point or tolerability – cues to threat and resource. When do cues to impoverishment become psychologically intolerable?

- And how does this relate to place stigma?
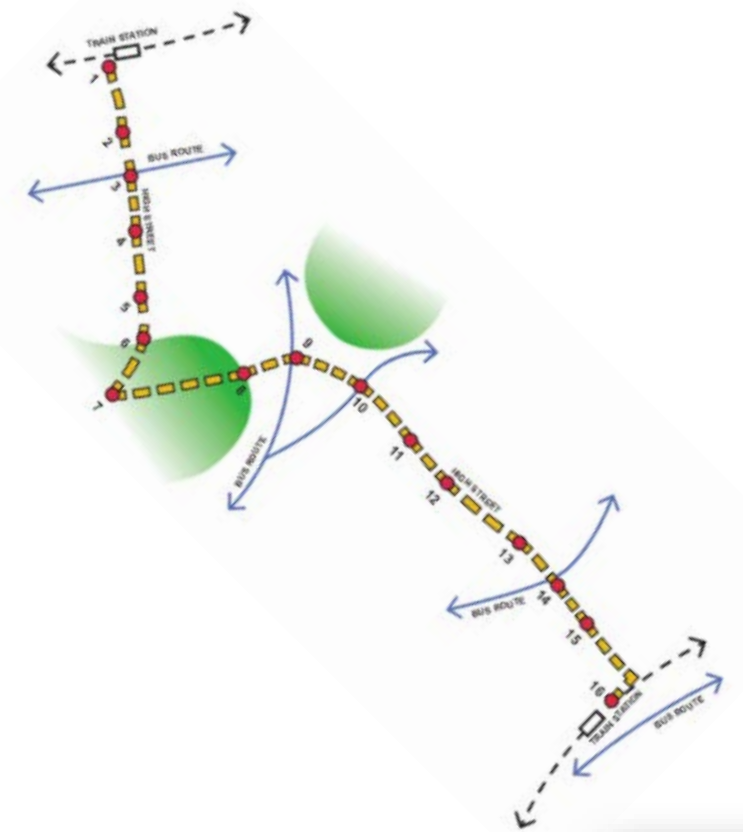
Places of Opportunity:Halton Healthy New Town – Community Insights

Doing to.
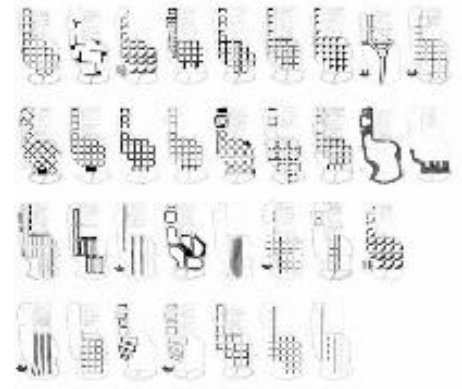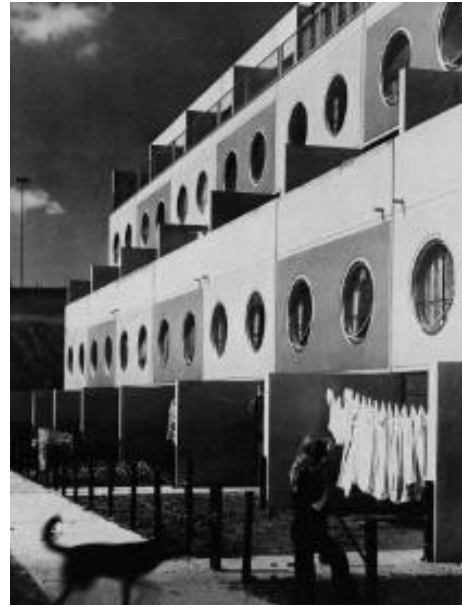
Doing with.

Halton Healthy New Town – Youth Workshops

How do the places we live in effect our health and wellbeing?

- **Noticing mess:** *"...its hard to have fun with friends outdoors because facilities like parks are being destroyed by graffiti and litter" - "Dull and rundown" - "Abandoned houses. Rough" - "Litter" - "Graffiti"; "Vandalism"*

- **Feeling scared and vulnerable:** *"Fear of what is around the corner from you" - "Not feeling safe" - "Children's parks that get taken over by groups of older people"*

- **Getting around:** *"Access via public transport" - "Expensive transport" - "Buses are rubbish"*

- **Nothing to do:** *"Being in isolated areas can make people feel down" - "No where local to go with friends" - "No activities can damage a person's wellbeing"*

Prosocial Place
research programme

Halton Healthy New Town – Youth Workshops

What would make a good place for everyone?

- **Activities for all:** *"Access to activities/ facilities –if there's none it encourages loitering"; "Places for kids with no cost";; "Having evenings where young and old people can get together and bond" ; "The ability to talk to others, regardless of age is important -> get together to talk"*

- **A Sense of Community and Neighbourliness:** *"A sense of belonging in the environment you're in is very important to stay happy" - "If people around you are happy, it will have a positive effect on your life"*

- **Safety, Traffic and Transport** : *"…if people don't feel safe they don't want to be there" - "Street lamps" - "A good transport system makes life easier"*

- **A Clean and Pleasant Land:** *"Having a good environment around you" - "Taking pride in your environment" - "More art" - "Colourful" - "Good up-keep of the forests and paths" - "Parks that everyone can access"*

How Does Community Infrastructure Improve Wellbeing? Outcome Mapping

OUTCOMES	Community hubs	Events	Public realm design
+ Relationships	_	YES	YES
+ Cohesion	YES	YES	YES
+Trust	YES	_	YES
+Participation	YES	YES	YES
+Belonging/Pride	_	YES	YES
+IWB/Health/Activity	YES	_	YES
+Networks	YES	_	_
+Heritage/Culture	_	YES	_
+Feeling safer	_	_	YES
+Skills/knowledge	YES	_	_
+Local economy	_	_	YES

what works wellbeing

Relative Costs and Wellbeing Effects of Community Infrastructure Interventions
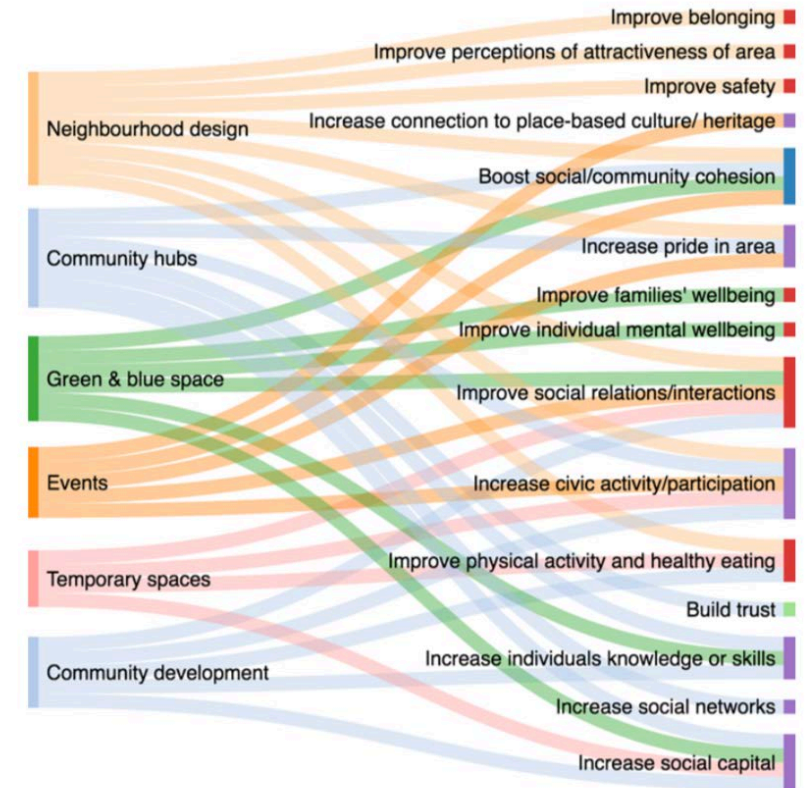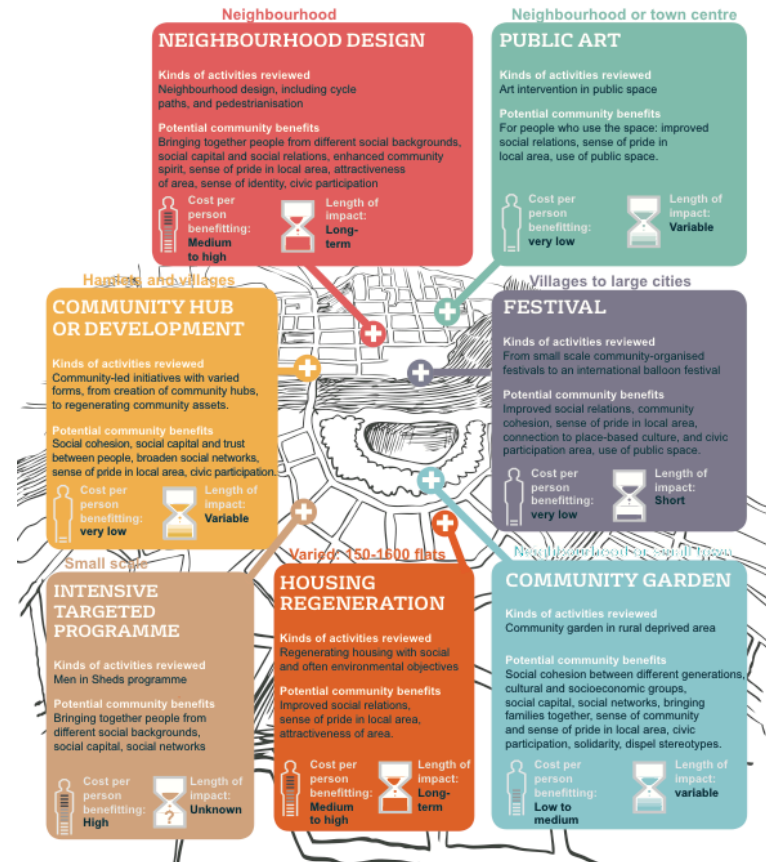
No evidence that top down regeneration schemes improve individual or community wellbeing.

Bagnall et al. 2018

Top-down Interventions: Thriving or Surviving?

Garden Festival Wales 1992

"Prozac Village" 2013

Highest Wellbeing Inequalities 2015

"10,000 people are prescribed anti-depressants per month in Blaenau Gwent, South Wales."

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2351291/One-people-town-anti-depressants-Is-local-GPs-fear-benefits.html#ixzz3GbqtPS8D

Ten most unequal		
Local authority	Mean Standard Deviation	Average of 4 ONS questions
Blaenau Gwent	2.5	7.24
Liverpool	2.4	7.11
Neath Port Talbot	2.4	7.36
Merthyr Tydfil	2.4	7.26
Knowsley	2.4	7.13
Sunderland	2.4	7.36
Rotherham	2.4	7.30
Kingston Upon Hull	2.4	7.34
Inverclyde	2.4	7.33
North Ayrshire	2.3	7.29

Prosocial Place research programme

Community Wellbeing : developing a socio-ecological framework
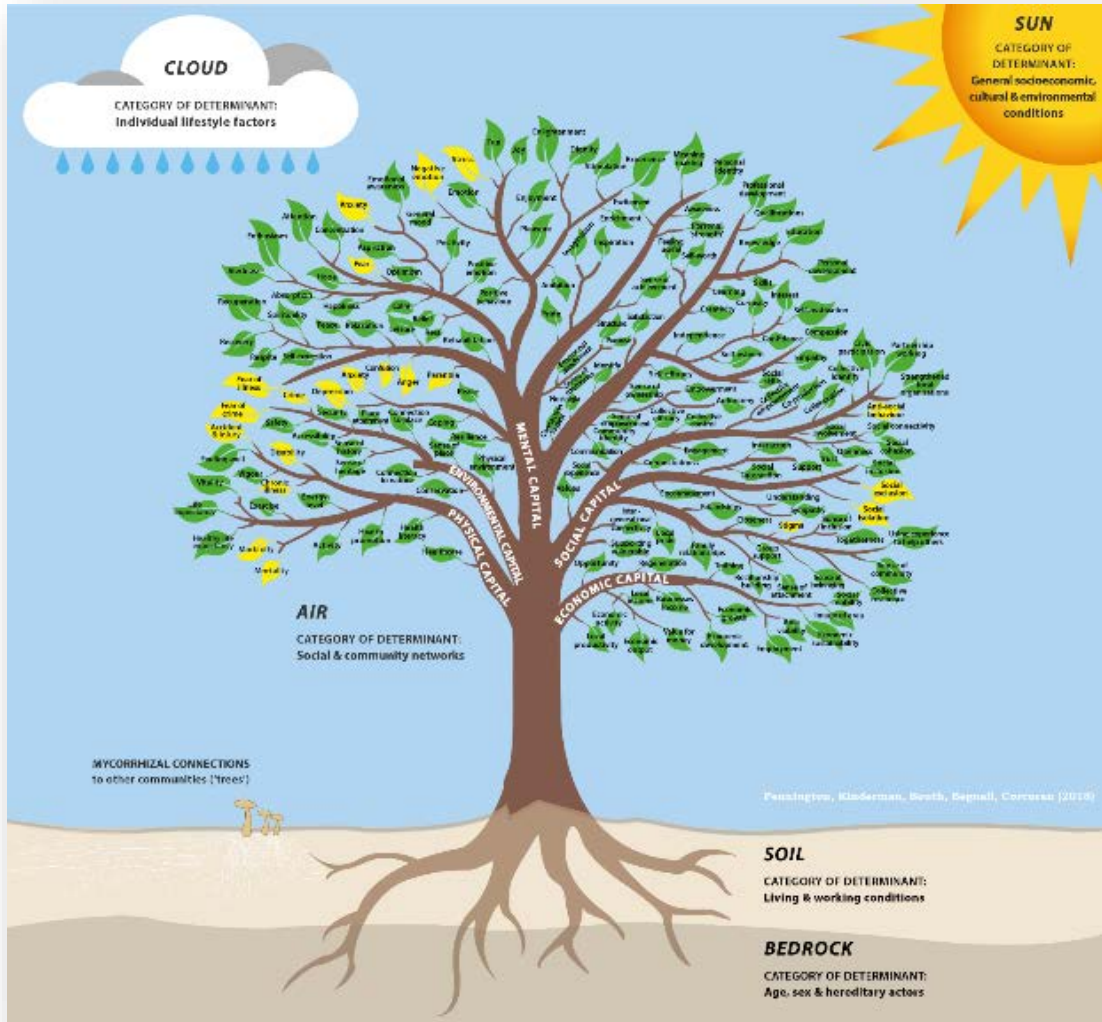
Wellbeing in Place Perceptions Scale

Atkinson et al. (2019) conceptual review of community wellbeing :the ability to sample a collective view of how a place or a community is doing is central to moving the concept and measurement of community wellbeing forward.

Wellbeing: feeling good and functioning well. Places / communities that feel good and function well.

Community Wellbeing determinants: "the combination of social, economic, environmental, cultural, and political conditions identified by individuals and their communities as essential for them to flourish and fulfil their potential" (Wiseman & Brasher 2008).

Place: a location or space endowed with meaning (Lewicka, 2009). A geographical area of meaningful activity and/or of having a focus on making identifiable intentional change as defined by stakeholders, organisations or community.

To work at **hyper-local scale** - street, parish, district, ward.

Wellbeing in Place Perceptions Scale

2 sections
1: perceptions of the 5 thematic determinants of community wellbeing/ wellbeing in place (i.e. the mental, social, health, environmental and economic capitals).
2: integrated perception of community wellbeing.

Section 1 EGs of 20 questions
People seem satisfied with their lives here (M)
People feel they can rely on each other around here (S)
Around here there are enough opportunities to do things that help to keep people fit and well (H)
Most of the streets, roads and public spaces in this area feel safe and are enjoyable to be in (En)
Around here people have enough opportunity to find good quality jobs, training or education locally (Ec)

Section 2: Community Wellbeing
1) There are strong networks of relationships and support between the people who live around here
2) The people who live here feel they can take action to improve things and influence decisions made about their area
3) The people who live here feel they belong here
4) No-one is left out in this community
5) This area has a physical environment that helps people to feel good and function well
6) This area contributes positively to the wellbeing of the people who live here

The Power of the People and Place Bond

CRILS and The Reader (Phil and Jane Davis, Josie Billington)