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**Call for Papers: special issue**

## **Urban systems for sustainability and health**

**Guest Editors:**

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**Deadline for abstract submission: 30 July 2020**

Negative consequences of human activity represent an unprecedented threat to both human health and planetary health - defined as “the health of human civilisation and the state of the natural systems on which it depends” (Whitmee et al., 2015). If emissions continue unabated, a child born today will live in a world 4 °C warmer than the pre-industrial average, with significant threats for food security, water, disease transmission, and exposure to extreme weather conditions (Watts et al., 2019). These human activities and the subsequent changes to planetary health may also have implications for human wellbeing, including an individual’s happiness, comfort, and sense of purpose. Transformative changes are urgently needed to mitigate the threats to planetary and human health. Recent epidemics (SARS, MERS, COVID19) have revealed the need for a systems-based approach to reducing risk and combatting the spread of diseases.

Cities are complex systems (Siri, 2016, Rydin et al., 2012), with interactions between various factors e.g.: urban density, ‘green’ infrastructure and open space, housing, transport, waste management, water and sanitation, air quality, health systems, and city governance. With an increasing majority of the global population now inhabiting urban areas (United Nations, 2018), it is essential that cities reduce their environmental footprints and increase their resilience to environmental change whilst protecting and promoting planetary health. Rapid urbanisation is occurring world-wide, often with little attention paid to the sustainability of such growth, and sustainability and health in existing cities and districts can suffer from lock-in created by the built environment and infrastructure.

There are, however, significant opportunities to realise urban population growth in a sustainable manner which provides co-benefits for human health, wellbeing, and equity (Giles-Corti et al., 2016). In particular, urban policies and development have significant potential to improve population health and wellbeing, but this potential is typically unrealised (Kleinert et al., 2016). At the global levels, key initiatives such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 3 (Good health and wellbeing) and 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) aim to improve population health and sustainability in urban environments (United Nations, 2017).

There is a critical need for evidence on how to achieve the far-reaching transformation of cities needed to address vital environmental imperatives for population and planetary health in the 21st century. It is also necessary to understand how best to use this research evidence to inform decision-makers and the public about the pathways of development that provide the greatest opportunities for health and sustainability, and to track progress towards the fulfilment of agreed goals. Additionally, identifying methods and factors crucial to successful implementation of development strategies must take full account of the complex interactions between different urban systems.

### **Aims of this special issue**

This special issue seeks to explore how these multiple challenges can be addressed through development and implementation of evidence-informed solutions in a variety of different contexts (mature cities, rapidly expanding urban areas, shrinking cities, and informal settlements; Global North and Global South); political systems (high

centralised, decentralised, autocratic, democratic) and scales (city, neighbourhood, street, building). Papers are sought on a variety of topics that model, track or evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of different policies or practices, as well as the interaction between various systems. Evidence is sought from different contexts from which we expect distinctions, complementarities and comparisons to be drawn for informing equitable development pathways for improving sustainability and public health in cities. In particular, we are interested in research that accelerates the implementation of large-scale 'transformational' changes that improve health and sustainability in low-, middle- and high-income settings, and across different socioeconomic and demographic groups.

**Papers in this special issue address key urban topics including but not limited to:**

- Systematic/scoping reviews of evidence on potential solutions for healthy sustainable urban development
- Methods for tracking progress towards city-specific sustainability and health goals, and/or studies that compare city development trajectories
- Modelling or evaluation of urban health and wellbeing, including: energy provision, transport infrastructure and operation, green and blue infrastructure, climate, air pollution, emissions, health systems, housing, water, sanitation, and waste management
- Behavioural science, systems thinking and participatory methods to inform and develop intervention strategies and/or understand processes for implementing change
- Public engagement and capacity building
- Studies into the use of research evidence on sustainability and health by decision-makers and other stakeholders in public policy
- Studies into the effectiveness of methods of dissemination, communication and engagement to help drive change
- How health systems identify and reduce risks of disease and epidemics in urban planning and infrastructure
- Policy analysis of health intentions / outcomes in the regulation of urban infrastructures
- Theories of change for sustainability and health

**Briefing note for contributors**

You are invited to submit an abstract for a journal paper in this special issue of *Buildings & Cities*. In the first instance, please send a **500 word (maximum) abstract** defining the scope, methods and results to editor **Richard Lorch** [richard@rlorch.net](mailto:richard@rlorch.net) by **30 July 2020**. The initial submission should include:

- the author's and all co-author's names, affiliations and contact details
- the question(s) in this Call for Papers that the abstract and intended paper addresses
- the abstract (300 - 500 words maximum) which explains the research question(s), method(s) and key findings

**Timeline**

<b>Deadline for abstract submission:</b>	<b>30 July 2020</b>
Full papers due:	30 January 2021
Referees' comments	09 April 2021
Final version due	01 June 2021
Publication	August 2021

**Buildings & Cities**

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**Questions?**

If you have a question, please contact:

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