

Leveraging Spatial Capital for Pandemic-proof Living Environments

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LEVERAGING SPATIAL CAPITAL FOR PANDEMIC-PROOF LIVING ENVIRONMENTS (973)

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Studies suggest that communities with greater social and economic capital are better equipped to deal with crises such as the covid-19 pandemic (Kiruthu, 2014; Pitas & Ehmer, 2020). Although social, economic, and cultural capital influence the impact on a community during a pandemic, it is spatial capital that anchors the community to a physical space. Depending on access, ownership and control of physical space, spatial capital becomes an enabler or a discriminator. It plays a critical role in creating, sustaining and shaping spatial inequalities. However, spatial capital has been scarcely studied in urban planning and even less so in terms of its operationality in research and practice.

Through this study, we redefine spatial capital and propose a novel operational framework - AURA - to measure the ability of different groups to Access, Utilize, (right to) Refuse and Adapt the spatial capital. The framework is used to understand how spatial capital has affected varied communities' abilities to endure the impact of the pandemic by examining the scale, typology and user relationships of various spaces before, during and after the covid-19 pandemic.

Methodologically, the paper will review existing theory arriving at initial framework indicators to analyse the forms, roles and attributes of spatial capital on a neighbourhood scale. We will then conduct a comparative analysis of case studies in selected neighbourhoods in Mumbai, India and Rotterdam, the Netherlands. The case study research will consist of a grounded approach and multi-perspective analysis to examine spaces of various scales, ownership and functions to understand how groups generate, use and engage with spatial capital. The inferences and lessons from the case studies will further help modify, upgrade and develop the analytical framework as a tool for broader use. The further stages of work include identifying weak spots in the neighbourhoods and formulating evidence-based spatial suggestions that contribute to making healthier cities for all.

As observed globally during the ongoing pandemic, the already marginalised and vulnerable communities have suffered the greatest negative impact, bringing a renewed interest in the issues of spatial and social justice. By bringing evidence from the most vulnerable neighbourhoods of two diverse contexts, we add an empirical perspective to the evolving knowledge of spatial capital. We hope the framework can serve as an analytical and decision-making tool for contexts beyond the two countries to help reduce spatial inequality and contribute to ongoing efforts towards just and equitable cities.

Keywords: Spatial capital, Spatial inequalities, Post-pandemic city, Just City

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