

Urban renewal improves the health of neighbours in Barcelona

- *The Neighbourhoods Law by the Government of Catalonia (2004-2011) improved the wellbeing of the residents from intervened neighbourhoods in Barcelona.*

- *The European project SOPHIE has demonstrated a positive health effect of this urban renewal plan on women and men, especially those from manual social classes.*

Barcelona, June 18th 2014. - Our surroundings affects our health, therefore interventions on the urban environment could have effects on our wellbeing. Results from a new study led by researchers of the European project *SOPHIE* indicate that the Neighbourhoods Law had a positive effect on the health of the resident population of the intervened neighbourhoods in Barcelona, and reduced inequalities in health.

The Neighbourhoods Law, implemented by the Government of Catalonia between 2004 and 2011, led to large-scale urban renewal interventions across Catalonia. The government co-funded with municipalities interventions in neighbourhoods, mostly deprived, that focused on physical improvement, social integration and economic gains, in order to improve living conditions of residents.

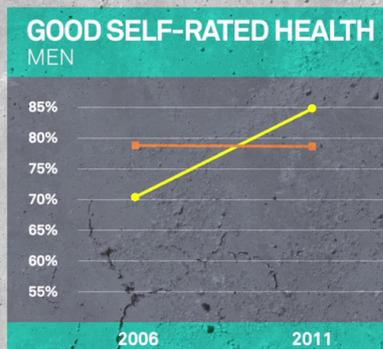
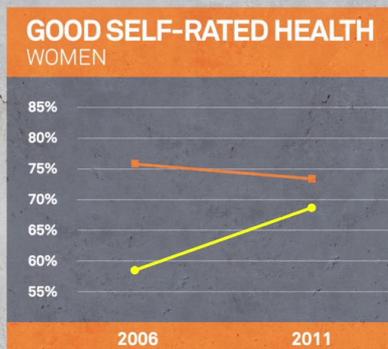
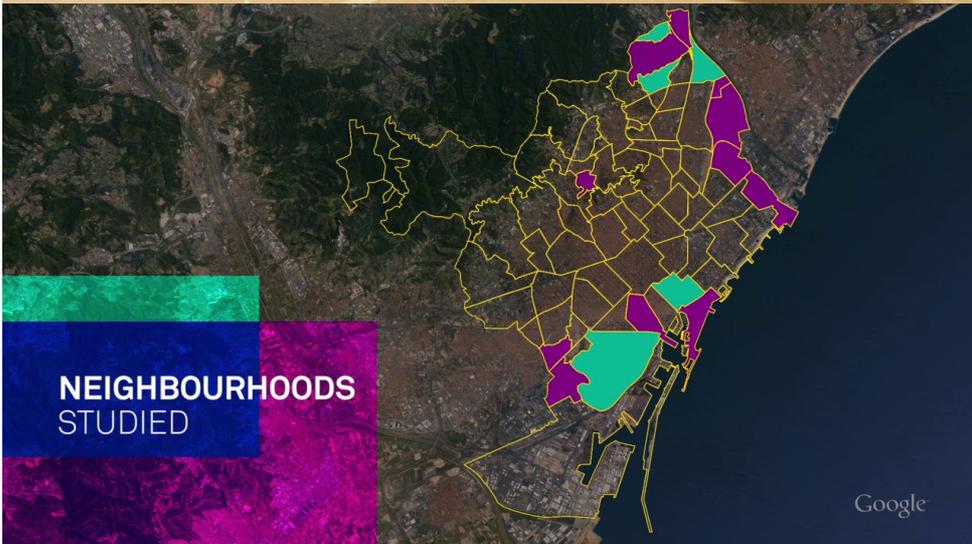
The authors of this study, published in the *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, assessed the health of women and men of different social classes living in five renewed neighbourhoods in Barcelona and compared them to people of non-intervened neighbourhoods with similar socio-economic conditions. The study has evaluated two indicators from the Barcelona Health Survey: self-rated general health and mental health status based on a psychological distress questionnaire. The collected and compared information, from 2001, 2006 and 2011, has allowed to evaluate the effects on health due to these interventions.

The results show that health perception of both women and men has improved in the neighbourhoods in which intervention programs have been developed in the framework of the Neighbourhoods Law. According to the lead author of the study, Roshanak Mehdipanah, "we have observed an improvement on the whole population, with a major effect on the manual social class, thus resulting in reduced social class inequalities". Mental health has remained stable in renewed neighbourhoods as opposed to its worsening in men of non-intervened neighbourhoods. Thus, the Neighbourhoods Law seems to mitigate the adverse effects of the crisis in mental health, especially among men.

Researchers have concluded that projects that include improved accessibility, walkability, equipments, social integration programs and perception of security, among other interventions, are effective to improve the health of their residents.

A 5-minutes video has been produced to disseminate the results of the evaluation:
<https://vimeo.com/92917895>

Snapshots from the video "Urban renewal and health" based on the evaluation of the Neighbourhoods Law



Intervened neighbourhoods 
Comparison neighbourhoods 

Find the original article here:

Mehdipanah, R., Rodriguez-Sanz, M., Malmusi, D, Muntaner, C., Diez, E., Bartoll, X., and Borrell, C. (2014): "The effects of an urban renewal project on health and health inequalities: A quasi-experimental study in Barcelona". *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*. Epub 2014 May 6.

<http://jech.bmj.com/content/early/2014/04/30/jech-2013-203434>

Other publications about the Neighbourhoods Law evaluation:

Mehdipanah, R., Malmusi, D, Muntaner, C., and Borrell, C. (2013): "An evaluation of an urban renewal program and its effects on neighborhood resident's overall wellbeing using concept mapping". *Health and Place*. 23, 9-17.

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1353829213000695>

This study uses an innovative qualitative technique to understand the perception of neighbours about the effect on their wellbeing of changes that had occurred in their neighbourhoods.

Mehdipanah, R., Malmusi, D, Rodriguez-Sanz, M., Muntaner, C., and Borrell, C. (2014): "The evaluation of an urban renewal program and its effects on health and health inequalities in Barcelona (Spain)". *Presentation at the International Conference on Urban Health*.

<http://slidesha.re/1qakdTf>

This presentation shows the methods, results and conclusions of the mixed-methods evaluation used to assess the health effects of the Neighborhoods Law in Barcelona.

The present study is part of the **SOPHIE project**. <http://www.sophie-project.eu>

SOPHIE aims to identify and evaluate the impact of social and economic policies on health inequalities. The project has put a particular attention in increasing the involvement of affected stakeholders (civil society and deprived population groups), working both locally and across Europe. This project is funded by the European Community's Seventh Framework Programme.

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