

Health: The Design, Planning and Politics of How and Where We Live

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

The role of municipal governments in solving health problems of urban communities in post-transitional Poland.

- **Format:**

Presentation (in-person)

- **Author(s) Name:**

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- **University or Company Affiliation:**

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- **Abstract (300 words):**

Poland's health care system (which is central government responsibility) is chronically underfunded and there are often months-long waiting lists for medical procedures. Moreover, the health situation of population in Poland is much worse than that of many European countries, especially in comparison to Western Europe. Chronic diseases, particularly cardiology diseases and cancers, and in recent years also diabetes is a serious health, social and economic problem. Although local governments in Poland have no formal role in health care delivery, they have the ability to promote health in their communities through healthy community design, parks and recreation facilities and healthy living programs, health-related policies, and building partnerships with non-profit and community organizations.

The main aim of the presentation is to show whether and how local governments in Poland and urban planning can shape an urban environment to promote residents' health and whether urban health policies and actions are well designed to prevent ill health caused by environmental and social determinants. During my presentation I will focus on several case studies based on municipal governments within the Metropolitan Area Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot, located in the north of Poland. I would like to show the examples of individual cities but also how the whole metropolis cooperates in terms of common health initiatives. There are several important questions on relation between local government decisions and residents' health: what is the impact of local government actions on the health of local communities? Do these actions contribute to eliminating differences in the level of health of the population? To what extent are these actions addressed to the local circumstances and needs of the inhabitants? Addressing those problems is particularly crucial in times of health care system crisis that exists in Poland.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Joanna Stepień:

Currently I work as assistant professor in the Department of Economic Geography at the University of Gdańsk, Poland and I am responsible both for giving lectures for undergraduate and graduate students, as well as for conducting researches. My main present research interests concern environmental and social determinants of urban health in post-transitional Eastern Europe, with the focus on metropolitan regions. Europe is facing nowadays rapid demographic changes and aging processes and those processes are more dynamic in Eastern part of Europe. This aspect form additional challenges for academic studies on health of society. Before joining my department at the University of Gdansk, I have been working for 10 years for governmental institutions (bot regional and central) in Poland. My main responsibility was to conduct researches (also large quantitative surveys on city residents) and analysis on socio-economic situation of the country, and on reginal level. I have experience in conducting lectures for both undergraduate and graduate students in different scope of topics like: city development planning, local and regional strategic planning, urban geography, economic geography, and housing economy. Moreover I am responsible also for supervising of masters' and doctoral seminars at my department. Please find more details on <http://en.kge.ug.edu.pl/2015/05/joanna-stepien/>