|  |
| --- |
| **Assessing the impact of urban development projects on social cohesion: testing an analytical framework for health impact assessment** |
| **Background/Objectives**  Health impact assessment (HIA) is a method assessing the health impacts of policies and projects not directly health related, before their implementation, to make them more favourable to health. This approach in France has been mostly applied to urban development projects. As decision-makers are increasingly more concerned by social issues, HIA has to analyse these elements in depth. However, mechanisms on how built environment influence social environment and health are numerous and not always clearly identified. This paper will present an analytical framework we elaborated to assist in the assessment of the impact of urban projects on social cohesion, as a determinant of health, to be used for HIA’s analysis.  **Methods**  To build the framework, we conducted a literature review to clarify concepts and understand how the built environment influences the social environment and its different components. We identified specific elements of the built environment that have an effect: spatial components (urban design, public spaces, accessibility, walkability, functional mix) and human factors (social diversity, feeling of safety). We declined these dimensions in questions to ask and variables to assess. We then tested that framework on two HIA, to refine it and to assess its usefulness.  **Results**  The capacity of urban projects to generate social cohesion (such as social interactions, social support, shared interests and values, feeling of belonging to a same community) depends on components of projects (organization of residential diversity) as well as on social dynamics (economic and cultural gap between groups…) and related policies (housing, education, social…). The framework constitutes a useful tool for HIA. It opens the way for considering social issues in a more detailed way with a specific lens on equity. Thanks to a variety of variables, it rebalances the analysis between environmental and social aspects.  **Discussion**  Due to the literature using the social concepts in a variety of ways, this framework has to be improved in order to better clarify how impacts are being measured taking into account both individual and collective levels. Testing this framework must be pursued in order to improve its validity and increase HIA’s capacity to explore the links between urban projects and health through social impacts. This model could be adjusted to be used in HIA on other policies.  **Keywords**  Built environment, equity, health impact assessment, social cohesion |