THE 20-MINUTE NEIGHBOURHOOD: A CONCEPT FOR THE COVID ERA?

Martin Ferry
European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde
EPRC Webinar, 3rd February 2021
OUTLINE

The regional policy context

The ‘20 min neighbourhood’: concept & principles

….in practice

Future prospects: COVID-19 & the ‘20 min neighbourhood’
THE REGIONAL POLICY CONTEXT
Looks across and within regional/local boundaries

‘Fine grained’ focus on local communities

Identifies specific potentials and difficulties

Develops locally-tailored measures
THE GREEN AGENDA & CLIMATE CHANGE

• Demographic shifts put pressure on urban areas, threaten sustainability of other places

• Congestion, pollution, and urban sprawl

• Urban communities (spatial and social) are vulnerable
THE IMPORTANCE OF RESILIENCE, WELLBEING

• Quality of life, wellbeing and resilience increasingly prioritised.

• Range of measures now look beyond economic growth

• Focus on health, welfare, poverty, access to services etc.
Dominant transport systems feed pressures:

- sustainability of urban areas (e.g. congestion, annexation of public space, physically segregating areas)
- locking-in unhealthy lifestyles (e.g. low physical activity, effects of urban sprawl)
THE ‘20 MINUTE NEIGHBOURHOOD’: PRINCIPLES & PRACTICE
“I wanted to break the segmentation of cities, because up to now modern cities have been based on social segmentation, economic segmentation and architectural and urbanistic segmentation”.

Carlos Moreno
Residents of every neighbourhood should have easy access to goods and services.

Every neighbourhood should have variety of housing types, of different sizes and levels of affordability.

Residents of every neighbourhood should have clean air and access to green spaces.

People should be able to work close to home or remotely, thanks to the presence of smaller-scale offices, retail and hospitality, and co-working spaces.
KEY COMPONENTS

Improve walking and cycling infrastructure
• Reallocating street space to pedestrians and cyclists
• Access to quality public transport

Create complex neighbourhoods
• Decentralising core services
• Encourage the flexible use of buildings and public space
• High-quality public realm and open spaces

Teleworking and service digitalisation
• Provision of wi-fi and high-speed internet,
• Neighbourhood co-working spaces
From mobility to accessibility

• Identification of daily necessities and quality of life amenities
• Assessment of transport modes within 20-min rule
• Proactive spatial planning and regulation
POLICY & GOVERNANCE

- Decide what is ‘accessible’
- Coordination: planning, policy, sectoral, territorial…
- Civic engagement: participatory budgeting, feedback, data gathering
- Role of local leaders, ‘champions’
BARCELONA: ‘SUPERBLOCK’ MODEL

Modifies road networks within 400x400m blocks

- Aim to reduce traffic close to zero
- Improves availability, quality of public space
- Improves health conditions due to lower air pollution
- Boosts local businesses
PARIS: ‘HYPER-PROXIMITY’

Pillar of Paris plan to be carbon neutral by 2050

- Strong local leadership
- Scaled-up pedestrian and cycle ways
- 70% car parking given to other uses
- Co-working hubs in neighbourhoods
- Flexible uses infrastructure, buildings
- Encouraging use of local shops
- Creating parks in school playgrounds
GLASGOW: ‘AVENUES’ PROJECT

Part of Glasgow City Region Deal

- £115m for city centre programme
- Integrated network of pedestrian and cycle routes.
- Free Wi-Fi, intelligent street lighting
- Improved lighting features
- Avenue of trees
FUTURE PROSPECTS: COVID & THE ‘20 MINUTE’ NEIGHBOURHOOD
“Many of us have come to appreciate our local shops and green spaces during the lock-down and are eager to build resilient communities where all our needs can be met within a 20 minute walk.”

COVID CRISIS PROVIDES MOMENTUM....

- **Increased focus on community wellbeing**, resilience, sustainability and ‘liveability’
- **Mass switch to “working from home”** and digital services
- **Efficient transport systems, accessibility to care** crucial in emergency
- **Walking and cycling** emerge as vital forms of mobility
- **Increased use of smaller neighbourhood shops**, shift from heavy dependence on centralised supermarkets.
- **Rethinking the night-time economy**, e.g. decentralisation towards a more neighbourhood-focussed approach
How does it apply in different urban settings?
• Implications for large cities, city-regions, towns, city centres

Is it a recipe for segregation?
• Inequalities and exclusions reproduced in uneven mobilities…

Does it undermine the vitality of cities?
• Prospects for dynamism, connectivity that drives cities

Are the resources available?
• Transformation requires capital investment in period of constraint
• Need for local capacity, leadership, ‘buy in’ from citizens, firms etc.
CONCLUSIONS

• Aims of the 20-minute neighbourhood fit with components of current regional policy thinking

• In the COVID era, it has clear attractions – if people are working more from home, infrastructure and service provision must take this into account

• There are difficulties in applying it across different urban forms in a sustainable and equitable way

• Challenge in finding the capacity to support it, and in ensuring stakeholders are engaged
SOME SOURCES


Interview Transcript: Prof Carlos Moreno on The Life Well Lived Podcast.

C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (2020) ‘How to build back better with a 15-minute city’

Waite, David, Thoughts on the Programme for Government – Glasgow City-region implications, Policy Scotland, 10 September 2020
Thank you.

martin.ferry@strath.ac.uk
www.eprc-strath.eu