

Therapeutic landscapes and the functioning-based WHO approach of healthy ageing: Results from the German Longitudinal Urban Cohort Ageing Study (LUCAS)

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Introduction

The WHO has developed a new conceptual model of healthy ageing (WHO 2015). Rather than considering healthy ageing from the perspective of the presence/absence of disease, this functioning-based approach is oriented towards developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables wellbeing in older age. This functional ability is linked both to the individuals and the interaction between the individuals and their environment. In the Longitudinal Urban Cohort Ageing Study (LUCAS), a representative metropolitan setting in Hamburg, Germany, we examined whether the concept of therapeutic landscapes could be valuable to better understand processes supporting functional ability maintenance.

Methods

LUCAS is an ongoing cohort study comprising more than 3,300 community-dwelling seniors 60 years and older which has been established 25 years ago. One aim is to describe individual trajectories of ageing by documenting changes of functional ability from robustness to frailty and disability by the use of the LUCAS functional ability index. In 2009 and 2023 the LUCAS survey contained specific questions on therapeutic landscapes. Participants were asked about sources of power (e.g., nature, family, faith) to get through difficult phases of life and to identify places (e.g., buildings, green/blue areas) where they feel comfortable and can replenish.

Results and discussion

We analyse replies of 1,954 participants (median age 75.6 years, 61.5% female) from LUCAS wave 2009 and discuss these results in the light of their place experiences regarding changes in functional ability as reported during wave 2023.

Primary authors: KISTEMANN, Thomas (GeoHealth Centre, Institute for Hygiene & Public Health, University Hospital Bonn); Dr DAPP, Ulrike

Presenter: KISTEMANN, Thomas (GeoHealth Centre, Institute for Hygiene & Public Health, University Hospital Bonn)

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