

The Routledge handbook of planning for health and well-being: shaping a sustainable and healthy future edited by Hugh Barton, Susan Thompson, Sarah Burgess and Marcus Grant, Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, 2015, 617 pp., ISBN 978 1 13802 330 7

Planning for health and well-being has enjoyed something of a renaissance in recent years, and *The Routledge Handbook of Planning for Health and Well-Being: Shaping a Sustainable and Healthy Future* (“The Handbook”) is a significant text which makes a valuable contribution to this developing field.

The Handbook is an edited book comprised of 41 chapters written by 61 contributors. The book’s title, describing the book as a ‘handbook’, is something of a misnomer, with the word having connotations of a conveniently carried, ready-reference or concise reference handbook. The reality is substantial, the hardback coming in at just under 620 pages; no bad thing, but not quite what I expected from the title. However, do not let the length deter you from reading The Handbook, as it is generally accessible, well-written and an excellent resource which would be of interest to a range of built environment professionals, academics and tertiary level students.

A key message of this book is that human well-being and health depend on the environments we live in, that these environments are complex, inter-related system webs, and that these realities need to be recognised and understood in our planning and development systems and policies. The authors provide tools, such as the Settlement Health Map, to promote recognition and understanding of these complex holistic frameworks, and to assist built environment professionals in perceiving issues and potential solutions from holistic perspectives rather than from fragmented silos.

The Handbook explores a wide range of dimensions relating to planning for health and well-being, with the book being organised into five parts. Part I, entitled *Perspectives*, provides a series of perspectives centred on the topic of planning and health, with the aim of providing an introduction and orienting the reader. *Perspectives* includes chapters relating to theory of planning, professional bridge building, health inequalities, climate change and unhealthy environments in poorer nations. A highlight of Part I is Freestone and Wheeler’s chapter on the history of health planning in the West.

Part II, *The Human Experience*, focuses on the health and equity implications of designed and planned settlements. Research relating to issues such as the ways in which human health is supported or hampered by where people live, work and recreate is examined.

From investigating place from the viewpoint of human experience, Part III *The Human Habitat* moves into exploring the nature of the places where humans live, examining the impacts on health and health equity which can be attributed to the combination of natural and built environments that are our modern urban habitats at a range of scales from streets and neighbourhoods to city regions. The chapters in this part focus on issues including obesogenic built environments, retrofitting suburbia for health and the contribution of urban nature and green space to well-being, through to air quality and water management.

Part IV, *Processes and Tools*, focuses on implementation of healthy interventions in practice, taking a practical perspective which may be of particular interest to built environment professionals, community groups and policy makers. This section investigates how decisions relating to

the built environment are undertaken, and examines a range of tools, processes and opportunities for creating “better” built environments.

The final section, Part V, *Healthy Planning in Global Practice*, reports on ways in which spatial planning is being used to promote health and well-being outcomes in a variety of locations in Oceania, Asia, Europe and North America. Beyond outlining the approaches taken, this section analyses and draws out general principles, transferable policy approaches and effective processes to offer planning solutions. This section notes that while context is important, many health issues are a focus of widespread concern and the authors identify areas of common ground in developing solutions. The book concludes with a brief Epilogue.

The editing of the volume has been handled with diligence, and the result is the text draws together a large body of knowledge and broadly functions as a cohesive and integrated whole, rather than as a series of discrete contributions. The Introduction, Epilogue and Overview of each part serve to integrate and explain the purpose of each section. However, more editorial discussion to connect the different parts of the book would be welcome, as well as the drawing out and discussion of key themes, and perhaps the highlighting of similarities and differences between contributions of particular interest.

The breadth of coverage of *The Handbook* is substantial, and the text reviews a comprehensive range of sources to cover this sizable topic. However, inevitably it is not possible to cover everything, and as with any book there are omissions, such as aspects relating to social housing and indigenous perspectives. As a reference book, *The Handbook* is accessible and is likely to be returned to and dipped into often.

Moving from substance to style, the quality of the binding of the hard copy of *The Handbook I* reviewed sadly did not match the quality of the written word; well before my reading was complete, the hard cover was separating from the pages.

The Handbook provides a convincing contribution to the field of planning for health and well-being. As one would expect with a collection authored by more than 60 contributors, the volume draws together writings of varying quality – many excellent and some occasionally less so. Overall, *The Handbook* is a valuable addition to the field of healthy planning, providing a rich source of research, information and insight which will undoubtedly serve to inspire and inform.

Kate Mackness

Environmental Planning Programme, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

 Kate.mackness@waikato.ac.nz

© 2018 Kate Mackness

<https://doi.org/10.1080/08111146.2018.1470958>

