

# Urban planning dedicated to health

## Nina Lemaire,

Project Manager, WHO Healthy Cities French National Network, France,

## Anne Roué Le Gall,

Teacher-Researcher, Department of Environmental Health Sciences, School of Advanced Studies in Public Health, Rennes 1 University, EHESP, CNRS, ARENES – UMR 6051, France,

## Mathilde Pascal,

Climate Change and Health Project Manager, Occupational and Environmental Health Department, Santé publique France, France,

## Thierno Diallo,

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Nursing Sciences, Laval University, Quebec.

Seven years after the publication of the issue of *La Santé en action* devoted to “urban planning and health-promoting developments [1]”, this collection of articles testifies to the advances made towards integrating public health issues with development and urban planning projects and the areas for progress which remain. On the one hand, the context has evolved: climate change is not new, but we have more and more scientific evidence of its impact on physical and mental health, and on the quality of life of populations [2-4]. Its consequences are now more concrete, more visible, and form a part of people’s lives, with increasingly frequent and large-scale forest fires, floods, heat waves and droughts, for example. On the other hand, climate change has recently demonstrated even further-reaching implications through its role (amongst other factors) in COVID-19-type pandemics, diseases affecting animals and plants, etc.

Recognition of the complex interrelationships between human health, animal health, environmental and ecosystem health has led to the emergence and rise of the concepts known as Planetary Health and One Health [5], which are beginning to be integrated into public policies, for example in France’s fourth National Environmental Health Plan [6]. The first part of the special report – State of Knowledge – places healthy urban planning among these changes and

recalls the synergies between public health actions, approaches that protect the environment and biodiversity, and climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, highlighting the important convergences and co-benefits. Advances in recent years have thus shown that healthy urban planning is not an additional step or injunction, but a means of extending and strengthening considerations and efforts that favour the protection of the environment and the population’s quality of life. In particular, this involves offering a framework for understanding and grasping the interrelationships between development, determinants of health, health status, environmental state, and social and territorial inequalities in health, according to a “complex system” logic.

In other words, the concept of healthy urban planning was one that needed to be explained, one whose foundations and rationality had to be demonstrated. This has now been done, and the concept is being implemented encouragingly with an increasingly broad scope, meaning we now possess some feedback. This special issue of *La Santé en action* echoes the extent to which the subject has recently evolved in France. Beyond the integration of certain specific health determinants, for example active mobility or the presence of parkland, this report focuses on experiences of health integration in its global sense, i.e. via its multiple determinants, whether in the renovation of a school yard or an entire district, or even planning at municipal level. The examples also testify to the commitment of project stakeholders – commitment to building intersectoral collaboration between urban planning and public health, between researchers and field staff, between different institutions – which is necessary for the implementation of healthy urban planning. Finally, international examples bear witness to the global dynamics at work in moving towards healthy urban planning.

Faced with the technical nature of healthy urban planning, the feedback presented herein demonstrates the reciprocal value of collaboration between public health agents and planning stakeholders. This key report from *La Santé en action* therefore aims to reinforce the framework of such a shared culture.

It should be noted that, for all the examples presented in this report, the project leaders underline the difficulty of evaluating projects in robust scientific terms. If a great deal of feedback has been received, it does not necessarily have an analytical value in the sense of assessing the impact on the health of populations. The emerging message is that evaluation is complex and must be carried out over a long period of time. ■

## REFERENCES

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