

Editorial

Health impact assessment for health promotion, education and learning

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Health impact assessment (HIA) is increasingly recognised as a core aspect of health promotion practice. It enables possible health futures to be considered in more meaningful and evidence-informed ways, based on a structured assessment process, and for changes to be made to enhance potential health benefits. Importantly, it also seeks to identify potential differential impacts, and to make changes to enhance the health equity of proposed projects, plans, programs and policies.

This special issue on HIA has been produced under the auspices of the International Union for Health Promotion and Education's Global Working Group on HIA. The Working Group brings together international experts to support the development and use of HIA to advance health promotion.

The present issue includes a diverse range of experiences and practices, theoretical explorations and discussions that reflect the maturing state of HIA internationally. Importantly, it incorporates a substantial number of papers describing HIA's use in French-speaking contexts, which reflects the diversification of HIA practice and its welcome adaptation to new countries and settings. The articles in this issue collectively show how HIA can be used to inform, shape and influence projects, policy and practices.

HIA opportunities for health promotion are considered in different decision-making and planning contexts, including urban planning, transport planning, major project development, industrial processes and intersectoral policy settings. Examples from each of these settings are included in this special issue.

Diallo *et al.* (1) present findings from an examination of how health is considered and integrated into four different forms of impact assessment with a focus on climate change mitigation

policies at the local level in Switzerland. This has always been a topic of debate within HIA: how the health dimension is or can be included within a variety of already established forms of impact assessment. This paper provides dual insights into (i) the opportunities for health to be considered in these other forms of impact assessment and (ii) how the effects of greenhouse gas emission reduction will have an impact on health.

Feyaerts *et al.* (2) discuss the use of HIA in real-world policy-making, and explore the tensions of its instrumental use. The authors emphasise the need for a focus on conceptual learning within HIA in order for HIA to realise its potential as more than a technical activity.

Roué-Le Gall and Jabot (3) engagingly describe the development of HIA in France, which has until now focused on transport and urban planning under the supportive auspices of the Healthy Urban Planning framework and the Healthy Cities movement. The article describes four HIAs in detail and explores avenues for greater integration of HIA into other impact assessment processes.

Tetteh and Lengel (4) set out an agenda for HIA's use in relation to e-waste in Sub-Saharan Africa. The authors identify an increasing crisis in the proliferation of e-waste and its potential to have a significant impact on human health. The article makes a strong case for mandating HIA's use in recycling regulations as a mechanism to prevent many of these impacts before they are realised.

Tillgren and Berensson (5) present an important paper on how HIA has been and is being used and promoted in Sweden as a way to better inform policies at the local level. This study draws on comparative data from 2001 and 2013 focusing on the implementation of HIA in local municipalities. The article describes a decrease in the use of HIA in

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municipalities across Sweden and seeks to identify the factors that have led to this change. Political changes and shifts in administrative culture are identified as major determinants of this shift, along with ambiguity about which agencies are responsible for HIA as a process. Despite this, HIA's use has continued to evolve and provides lessons for other contexts and countries.

Nour *et al.* (6) describe the use of contribution analysis to evaluate the impact of HIA at the municipal level. Contribution analysis appraises causality under real-life circumstances, but has not been widely used to evaluate HIA. This paper uses this approach to examine the impact of three HIAs on decision-making and implementation in the Montérégie region in Québec. A clear link is found between the use of HIA and the priority afforded to health issues by municipal actors.

Tremblay *et al.* (7) present a case study on the use of knowledge brokering for HIA, also in the Montérégie region in Québec. The paper describes how this approach enhanced the use of public health information and knowledge in municipal government decision-making, not only by engaging municipal government in the HIA process but also through the development of shared knowledge.

Together these articles represent a meaningful contribution to the literature on HIA and its use to advance health promotion and health equity. They encompass a number of new and novel applications of HIA, and present a number of

technical and theoretical advances. We hope you enjoy reading them.

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