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Innovative Approaches to Researching Landscape and Health
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While this is an example of pioneering activity, I felt there could have been a more critical debate of the Act and its impact on community land ownership. Criticisms of the legislation’s operation made by Wightman (2007) are alluded to briefly, but further discussion of these would have been pertinent, not least in order to advance ideas of how the Coalition Government’s recommendations for supporting local community action elsewhere in Britain may manifest. For example, it is stated that the delivery of these local projects can be fraught with conflict (p. 218) and further discussion on how such conflict was negotiated by communities and planning authorities given the book’s wider debate regarding the need for a reappraisal of attitudes towards the countryside. While the authors argue that community land ownership can bring about the necessary change in some locations, there is also the possibility that vested interests and dominant attitudes as to what and for whom the countryside is for will prevail. Furthermore, the role of rural housing enablers receives only a cursory mention in some of the chapters and a greater discussion of their potential role in supporting community-led initiatives would have been interesting.

I would highly recommend this book to academics with an interest in the rural environment, students seeking an understanding of how Britain has arrived at the point of a rural housing crisis, and to anyone with an interest in the future development of rural Britain. Given the current proposals to loosen planning policy in England, providing communities with significant responsibility for housing development through a Community Right to Build, this book is prescient in the nature of its recommendations and should be considered required reading in the context of current policy developments.

References

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**Innovative Approaches to Researching Landscape and Health**
Catharine Ward Thompson, Peter Aspinall & Simon Bell (Eds)
*Abingdon, Routledge. 2010, 290 pp., £49.99 (hbk)*
ISBN 9780203853252

*Innovative Approaches to Researching Landscape and Health* is the second book to be produced by the Open Space research centre since its inception in 2001. While their first publication centred on the inclusiveness of outdoor environments, this volume focuses its attention on outdoor environments and their implications for health. While research into the salutogenic aspects of the landscape has expanded rapidly in recent years, this book is a worthwhile attempt to make a new contribution to this field and elucidate the gaps in the
research to date. Given growing concern about increases in lifestyle diseases and constraints on public expenditure, the timeliness of this book is also clear.

The volume is divided into four broad sections that focus on theory, evidence, methodology and application respectively. The key contribution of the section devoted to theory is to introduce the concept of affordances, which is returned to throughout the book. Initially, Heft (chapter 1) discusses this concept in the context of people’s perceptions of their environment, highlighting that affordance theory is preferable to traditional theories of perception as it regards the landscape as not only a visual stimulus but also an arena for action. The measurement of affordances in a landscape is then addressed by Moore & Cosco in chapter 2 with a discussion of behaviour mapping and its use to assess the specific impacts of design interventions on the usability of spaces.

The evidence section consists of three chapters. In the first (chapter 3) de Vries discusses the existing evidence for the causal mechanisms underlying the positive correlation between health and the availability of green space. While suggesting that stress relief and social contact offer the most plausible explanations of this correlation, he notes a paucity of research in certain areas (most notably for social contact). In their examination of evidence, Bull et al. (chapter 4) restrict their attention to physical activity specifically, rather than a broader notion of health. In this chapter, the authors identify gaps in the current evidence base and detail the different forms of research that may improve these gaps, together with the conceptual and practical challenges in doing so. In chapter 5 Grahn et al. focus their attention on stress-related illness. They begin with a discussion of the evidence for the therapeutic effect of natural environments more broadly before detailing their implementation of a therapeutic garden. This chapter also draws on the concept of affordances in its presentation of ‘scope of meaning/scope of action’ theory.

Within the section focused on methodology, two key ‘innovative approaches’ are presented by Little (chapter 6) and Aspinall (chapter 7). In his chapter Little discusses personal project analysis as a method for evaluating the restorative benefit of environments and emphasises that the level of restoration gleaned from a setting will depend on the personal projects an individual is pursuing. Aspinall then introduces conjoint analysis as a method of examining people’s preferences in both house purchase and use of open space. Aspinall presents this method as particularly valuable for evaluating the relative preferences for specific environmental design features and stresses this contribution as useful for designers.

In the application section, Conroy Dalton & Hanson (chapter 8) examine the application of the ‘space syntax’ approach in research, discussing how the design of outdoor spaces can motivate or deter individuals in their use of these spaces and offer three key ways in which this approach can be applied to natural environments. In her consideration of application, Ward Thompson (chapter 9) details the issues of applying research from a number of disciplinary perspectives to the design of spaces, emphasising (with a comparison of personal projects analysis and affordance theory) that a difference in focus between studies can lead to very different design recommendations.

While the chapters mentioned above offer many interesting perspectives, the volume is not without faults. A key point to note is that the chapters included do not appear to fit entirely into the sections in which they are presented. As Bell (chapter 10) notes, the majority of chapters address more than one section focus and this leads me to question the validity of having sections at all. Chapter 2 serves as a good example of this.
While it is included in the theory section, the chapter itself is largely devoted to the advantages of using behaviour mapping and may therefore sit more easily in the methodology section.

The range of perspectives offered, while bringing interesting content, also presents some issues when the book is regarded as a whole as the volume suffers somewhat from a lack of coherent thread. While all chapters address some aspect of the relationship between landscape and human health, each author defines landscape and health in a different way with some contributors such as Aspinall restricting their discussion of landscape to the neighbourhood park and others examining a much broader notion of environment. This is also the case in their attention to health as some authors investigate general wellbeing while others have a much narrower focus. Evidently, this diversity of content does however offer some benefits, improving the relevance of the volume and making it an interesting read for landscape designers and academics alike.

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Restless Cities
Matthew Beaumont & Gregory Dart
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From his balcony window, looking down at the rue Rambuteau, Paris, a 90-year old Henri Lefebvre (1996) wrote that in order

to understand and analyse rhythms, one has to let go, through illness or technique, but not completely . . . yet, to capture a rhythm one needs to have been captured by it. One has to let go, give and abandon oneself to its duration. Just as in music or when learning a language, one really understands meanings and sequences by producing them, that is, by producing spoken rhythms. (p. 219, italics in original)

By describing this complex ‘city-symphony’ in vivid detail, Lefebvre’s attention was diverted towards those ‘minute little things’ that very often get cast aside as ‘mundane’ when trying to describe the ambiance of a street corner, the sound coming from a busy boulevard set in motion, or a long forgotten district. The apartment window acts as a kind of rhythmic vantage point in which old Lefebvre could pick up the pauses in traffic; the chaotic sound of halting materialities; of commuters passing each other by, refusing to acknowledge one another; sudden surges of movement and of flight, a ‘burst of speed of tens of cars accelerating as fast as possible’ (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 220).

Restless Cities is a welcome addition to previous literature, which has attempted to blend urban theory alongside various sources of writings on the city and literature