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## Editorial

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Volume 13 titled ‘Exploring Human Well-Being and Community Dynamics’ of the peer-reviewed journal *plaNext–Next Generation Planning* is here. Partially derived from the 16th AESOP Young Academics Conference ‘In Search of Well-Being in Liminality: No Longer-Not Yet’ that took place in Istanbul between April 5-8, 2022, it includes one research paper previously published online. We are delighted to present this latest volume, which draws together a diverse collection of research papers delving into the complex dynamics of human interaction with the living environment, social participation and community development. While originating from different geographic and disciplinary backgrounds, the four papers featured in this volume share a common theme: the complex interplay between individuals, communities, and the places they inhabit.

The theme of ‘Exploring Human Well-Being and Community Dynamics’ encapsulates a rich tapestry of interdisciplinary research examining the diverse connections forged among inhabitants, societies, and their spaces. Grounded on a multidimensional understanding of well-being, this theme integrates insights from sociology, urban planning, economics and related disciplines to unravel the factors influencing human well-being within communal settings. Research in sociology has long emphasized the significance of social structures and community ties in shaping individual well-being. Contemporary scholars have expanded upon this perspective, incorporating concepts such as social capital (Woo et al, 2023; Sanchez-Garcia et al, 2023; Putnam, 2000) and community engagement (Bernstein and Isaac, 2023; Kawachi & Berkman, 2001) to explore the dynamics of collective well-being. The idea that communities play a vital role in shaping the health, prosperity and happiness of their members forms a foundational aspect of this research topic.

The planning literature contributes to this theme by investigating the design and functionality

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of spaces that foster community well-being. Lynch's (1981) seminal work on the image of the city and Gehl's (2010) studies on human-scale urban design underscores the importance of physical environments in supporting social interactions and, consequently, individual and communal well-being. Migration studies, as reflected in the work of Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) or Nikolopoulou et al (2023), shed light on the role of immigrant communities in economic and social development. Balambar Ergan's contribution to this volume, which investigates how ethnic economies foster immigrant integration into communities, enriches our understanding of the economic factors influencing immigrant integration.

Additionally, grassroots initiatives, as exemplified by Chen's examination of build-by-people trials in Shanghai, highlight individual agency in transforming private spaces into public assets, thereby fostering a sense of community and belonging. Furthermore, Jin's research on the correlation between social capital and neighborhood maintenance in gated communities aligns with the broader discussion on the social determinants of health (Marmot, 2005). This study delves into the impact of social networks on community well-being and the maintenance of living environments in the urban space with an emphasis on the forgotten spaces.

The first paper, authored by Xinxin Cao and John Sturzaker, elaborates on the motivations of citizens participating in Neighbourhood Plans in North West England. By exploring the factors influencing individual engagement in local planning processes, this paper unveils the multifaceted nature of civic participation and its implications for effective community development. The second paper, by Şelale Balambar Ergan, examines the role of immigrant entrepreneurs in the kebab sector in Milano, Italy. This study highlights how ethnic economies can serve as a pathway to integration for immigrant communities, offering valuable insights into the dynamic relationship between entrepreneurship, culture, and economic development. In the third paper, Xuwei Chen explores the transformation of private and semi-public spaces in Shanghai through build-by-people trials. This research investigates how individuals can actively contribute to reshaping urban environments and fostering a sense of publicness in everyday life. It emphasizes the importance of grassroots initiatives in city planning and development. Finally, the last paper, authored by Meiling Jin, delves into the correlation between social capital and neighborhood maintenance in gated communities within Suzhou industrial park, China. This study provides valuable insights into the role of social capital in community upkeep, revealing the intricate dynamics between residents' social networks and the quality of their living environment.

As editors of this volume, we are intrigued by the common thread that runs through these studies, highlighting the pivotal role of individual and collective actions in shaping communities and urban spaces. Whether it is citizens engaging in local planning, immigrant entrepreneurs contributing to urban economies, individuals transforming private spaces into public assets, or residents maintaining gated communities, the central theme is clear: human agency plays a pivotal role in community development and the evolution of urban environments.

These four papers serve as a reminder that communities are not static entities; they are vibrant and ever-evolving ecosystems shaped by the motivations, actions, and aspirations of their members. We hope that this volume inspires further research and discourse on the multifaceted and dynamic nature of human engagement and its impact on the communities we inhabit.

The theme of this volume draws from a rich array of literature spanning sociology, planning, migration studies and public health. By examining the multifaceted interplay between individuals, communities, and their environments, researchers contribute to a holistic

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understanding of the factors that shape human flourishing within diverse social contexts. We extend our gratitude to the authors for their insightful contributions and to our dedicated reviewers for their invaluable feedback. We hope that you find these papers as thought-provoking and enlightening much like we do.

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