



# Granite Journal

*The University of Aberdeen Postgraduate Interdisciplinary  
Journal*

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Well-being and Health of People and Places

## **Editorial: Cross-discipline approaches to health and well-being**

Elizabeth Garner & Caitlin Yool, Granite Editorial Board

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It is challenging to pick a theme for an interdisciplinary journal— trying to find the right topic that will relate to the widest possible cohort of researchers. This issue’s topic, ‘Health and Well-being of People and Places,’ was inspired by the global events of the past few years, but also by a growing awareness that well-being is a vital facet of our lives. Research by mental health charity Mind (2020, 2021) showed how mental health outcomes had significantly worsened as a result of the pandemic, while medical research suggested that physical health outcomes, e.g. the obesity rate, were also negatively affected by the pandemic (Senthilingam, 2021). This has helped reignite the public debate around health and well-being, a debate which has gained a foothold in the media, educational institutions, workplaces, and elsewhere across society.

The range of responses to our call for papers shows that scholars from across a broad spectrum of disciplines are keen to contribute to research on this topic from their diverse perspectives. This issue of *Granite* highlights their unique approaches and demonstrates how environment, culture, technology, and communication are all interwoven with our health and well-being. An interesting insight made apparent in this edition is how the understanding of health and well-being can differ radically across disciplines and methodologies. Should they be measured qualitatively or quantitatively?

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Are they objectively determinable realities, or subjective perceptions that differ from person to person or from group to group?

Perhaps unsurprisingly, papers from contributors in STEM fields have tended to engage with a more quantitative methodology, treating health and well-being as a function of scientifically measurable data. For instance, a group of postgraduate researchers in Computing Science (Binti Mat Zahid et al, 2022) studied the impact of the pandemic on air quality in Scotland and England by processing and analysing relevant data, questioning what has been considered to be perhaps one of the few tangible positive health outcomes to result from the pandemic – environmental health, in this case.

Contributions from the social sciences and humanities, on the other hand, have focussed more on gathering qualitative data and analysing this by considering and contrasting different subjective interpretations. Art historian Ashleigh Black (2022) contributed her analysis of artistic portrayals of tuberculosis in the nineteenth century, drawing upon evidence of contemporary reception to outline how disease was subjectively understood in that period. Another area which has to balance the intersection between objectivity and subjective perception is the field of translation studies, whose contribution in this issue (Leonardi, 2022) uses the translation of an Italian medical paper as an illustrative example for the importance of accuracy in medical translation and how to achieve it.

Yet, despite this overall trend, several contributors have examined both qualitative and quantitative data, and have attempted to explore health and well-being as an area incorporating both objective data and subjective reported experiences – either those of the author or of study participants. Social Science (Ewen, 2022), for instance, invites us to consider both measurable data and more subjective evaluations of a local environment to analyse its effects on the people who live or spend time there. With the support of established criminological and sociological theories, the author argues that gaining insights into these effects by way of research, can and should contribute to improving crime reduction strategies. Finally, from Applied Health Sciences, Catriona Young (2022) analyses how to assess the effectiveness of community interventions in improving well-being, in what is probably the most direct engagement with the



coincidental “theme” of objective/quantitative versus subjective/qualitative data that has crystallised in this issue.

Overall, the diversity of approaches and subject areas found in this issue’s selection of papers demonstrates how valuable interdisciplinary research is for understanding health and well-being, both physical and mental. All of our authors make compelling cases for both the utility and the necessity of their respective approaches and the data they have used. In reading through this issue, the Granite Editorial team hopes that readers from all disciplines who have an interest in this topic will come away with greater insights into the work that is happening in other fields, and perhaps even inspire you to seek out opportunities to collaborate with researchers from other disciplines to make your own contributions to a more holistic picture of what it means for people and places to be “healthy” and “well”.

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- **Ashleigh Black** (Art History)
- **Janine Ewen** (Social Science)
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## Editorial references to outside works

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<https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n411>
2. Mind (2020). *The Mental Health Emergency*. [https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/5929/the-mental-health-emergency\\_a4\\_final.pdf](https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/5929/the-mental-health-emergency_a4_final.pdf)
3. Mind (2021). *Coronavirus: the consequences for mental health*.  
<https://www.mind.org.uk/media/8962/the-consequences-of-coronavirus-for-mental-health-final-report.pdf>

## Works in this issue

1. Farisa Dania Binti Mat Zahid et al (2022). *The impact of coronavirus-related lockdowns on air quality in England and Scotland*. In *Granite Journal* 7(1).
2. Black, A (2022). *Even in death she is beautiful: Confronting tuberculosis in art, literature and medicine*. In *Granite Journal* 7(1).
3. Ewen, J (2022). *A coastal criminological exploration: Approaching urban industrial strain using visual sensory methods in Aberdeen*. In *Granite Journal* 7(1).
4. Leonardi, L (2022). *The importance of accurate medical translation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic*. In *Granite Journal* 7(1).
5. Young, C (2022). *A systematic review of co-designed community interventions to improve well-being and the assessment of the tools utilised*. In *Granite Journal* 7(1).