This book is the result of a Public Health Education and Research Program (PHERP) Innovation grant, which brought together academics from a range of institutions across the country to consider what is the role for public health practitioners in the sustainability governance process. As such, it represents a leading network across Australia. Indeed, beyond the named authors, at least 17 others from 10 universities were involved in a web-based discussion group, each of the chapters received considered reviewing from between two to six people, and there was an expert advisory group of 10 additional people from Canada, US, New Zealand, Sweden, and Australia. It was a mammoth effort.

I provided the title to a number of friends in the environment and sustainability field and asked them what they would have expected in a public health book with this title. Interestingly, they focused on the content areas, such as, infectious diseases and ecosystem disruption, urban form and health, environment and child health, intergenerational inequity, poverty and disease, and so on. They were surprised to see that the chapters were titled: living, listening, grounding, knowing, scoping, acting, innovating, and managing. So perhaps, the subtitle for the book should more clearly reflect what the authors sought to do, that is, consider how the public health practitioners contribute in the sustainability governance process.

The public health response for sustainable development, the core concern for the book, is outlined in Figure 1.1, in section 1.1, on the third page of Chapter 1. This figure suggests that sustainable development is the current era of public health practice, where our major risks come from global stress, and the public health response is no longer a matter of technical solutions or lifestyle change, but one of governance solutions.

So taking the intent of the authors (about governance process) as a starting point, the reader would find an excellent guide to the global policy frameworks and the action tools that should be part of the public health practitioners’ armamentarium. The boxes and diagrams within the book provide clear illustrations of some of the complex concepts. The activities suggested within the chapters are useful teaching tools. Each chapter is further augmented, at its beginning, with a summary, key words, chapter outline, learning outcomes and learning activities, and readings. In other words, a very user-friendly resource book for teaching.

The book recognises the diverse disciplines and policy frameworks that contribute to the discourse on sustainability and health, and these are provided in chapters 2 and 3. Subsequent chapters provide strategies and tools for practitioners - ranging from analytical frameworks as DPSEEA, to public participation strategies, to tools for introducing change and innovation, to options for managing different organisational forms. The book tries to pack a lot in, and as such, is necessarily a high level summary of these frameworks and tools.
For those uninitiated in the relevant content areas, the book will seem abstract. For those who have been working on introducing change in public health practice, the book will be a useful reference volume as it brings together a diverse set of ideas and practices and makes sense of their interrelationships. The book is remarkably evenly written for a volume with at least five authors, and points to the importance of the workshop and chapter review processes built into the book writing process. As the book was pilot tested with students prior to its finalisation, I suspect it will be readily used in a teaching environment.

For my hard-nosed friends who work on the global stage of environment and sustainability, however, they were hoping for something a bit more performance and results oriented.

Note: Declaration of interest. The reviewer is the PhD supervisor for one of the authors - G. Verrinder.

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