

Chapter 10

The Role of Urban Green Spaces in the Transformation of Community Ecosystem in Developing Countries

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to analyze the review the existing literature on some important features of urban green spaces such as the components, functions, services, community involvement, initiatives, and actions from an ecosystem perspective. The analysis begins from the assumption that urban green spaces are ecosystems of vital importance in enhancing the quality of life in an urban environment and supplying ecosystem services such as biodiversity and climate regulation. Meeting the needs of users is related with the functions and services that urban green spaces provide to communities. The methods employed in this analysis are the empirical literature and documents review, analysis of existing data on uses and users, interviews with authorities, and more detailed examination of a case specific data. Also, as some concluding remarks, some wider environmental, economic, and social initiatives for local authorities and communities are suggested that can justify initiatives by all represented and involved stakeholders. Finally, the study advances some opportunities, challenges, and further research.

INTRODUCTION

The history of life on earth is one of the living things surrounded by a natural environment which supplies water, fresh air, minerals, plants, vegetation, animals and all the fruits of nature, and so on to enjoy everyday life. However, these natural and environmental resources are not lasting forever and ever, must of them are either polluted and corrupted or extinguished by consumption. Urban populations are facing ecologically vital threats from over urbanization, such as they are water and air pollution, agricultural and forest lands are urbanized with vegetation removal and ground water overdraft. The ecological dimension of urban green spaces considers the objective and subjective components of a place providing a supportive habitat of biological diversity.

The renewal and increasing of urban green spaces considering the fast demographic growth and agglomeration should be accompanied by inhabitants' participation on environmental, social, cultural and economic actions and objectives to promote bio economy in urban biodiversity and sustainable development. Inhabitants should be informed and motivated to participate in environmental, cultural and educational activities and become active in designing and planning of urban green spaces. Public support and political involvement of citizens for urban green space development needs different actions. Public urban green spaces are accessible to and used by all the citizens. Arrangements of public activities and action on planned urban green spaces raise awareness amongst inhabitants of the city. For example, a public event can have the purpose to make users aware and educate them through experiencing and enjoying different activities organized by the urban green space.

In 2014, 54 percent of the world's population were living in urban settings and it is projected to reach 70 percent by 2050 (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs – Population Division, 2014). By the year 2020, around 62 percent of world's population will live in urban areas covering 2% of world land space and consuming 75 percent of nature resources. By the year 2030, two thirds of urban area that will exist has to be built in sustainable urban environments. In 1953, the seminal report on Park Life recognized urban green spaces as a vital component of urban environment and their role in social renewal (Comedia & Demos, 1995).

This chapter aims to contribute to the main topic of the book *Optimizing Regional Development through Transformative Urbanization* by presenting and analysis of the role of urban green spaces in the transformation of community ecosystems with emphasis in developing countries. The chapter begins by describing the components of urban green spaces to focus in the ecosystems functions and services. The methodological approaches are reviewed to understand the different functions that users give to urban green spaces and some of the most important factors contributing to a successful community involvement.

The analysis of the role of urban green spaces is centered on a discussion on the challenges and opportunities for public community action deriving from there some public initiatives and actions as concluding remarks. Finally, the analysis projects some future research directions.

COMPONENTS OF URBAN GREEN SPACES

An urban green space system is an important component in any community development, in housing, business, leisure areas, etc. (Baycan-Levent, 2002). Components of urban green areas are vegetation, water, accessibility, services of shelters, toilets, seating, playgrounds and sport areas, events and activities, environmental quality conditions and resources such as lighting, safety, litter bins, friendly staff,

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