


Chapter 8

Urban Green Innovation: Public Interest, Territory Democratization, and Institutional Design

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ABSTRACT

This chapter has the objective to analyze the elements of urban green innovation based on the guarantee the public interest, decentralize the infrastructure to democratize the territory, and innovating the institutional design to address the complexity of the challenges in the city. The method employed is the critical analysis supported by a review of the literature and consult to experts in the field. It is concluded that the urban green innovation capacity planning has a critical role in urban innovation development in specific areas of economic growth, social inclusion and equality, environmental sustainability, health, education, business, etc. To achieve these aims, urban green innovation requires to guarantee the public interest, the democratization of the territory, and the new institutional design.

INTRODUCTION

Cities are very different lively ecosystems brooding places of urban innovation, imagination and creativity. Cities shape and are shaped by the vision of urban green innovation ecosystem elements that anchor investments into environmental and sustainable development. Larger cities generate more innovations because the interactions between people socially distant to each other and weak ties, aggregating information when they meet (Arbesman, Kleinberg and Strogatz, 2009; Granovetter 1973). Large cities have more educated and transient people (Arbesman et al. 2009).

Urban green innovation may have the objective to improve the high technology and services business labor market while restructuring old urban industrial and shrinking areas creating new urban development mixing economic, science, media, leisure and living activities. Green innovative technologies processes supporting the green urban environment may become more complex when affecting the pace of changing

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the city. Urban green innovation challenges sustainable and environmental development of the city at various scales and across sectors. The multi-level conceptual analysis of urban green innovation takes into consideration the micro, meso and macro niche levels the corresponding innovations, socio-technical regimes and landscapes (González & Rossi, 2011).

The contribution made by this chapter is the realization of an analysis of the concept of urban green innovation from a social perspective of transformation of the planning creation structure, based on territorial democratization processes that are capable of evolving institutional design with the aim of defending the public interest (Burt, 2005).

Defining need of urban green innovation is a first step required to advocating investment in specific local spaces and areas and encouraging external funding support. The intention to introduce urban green innovation requires an enhanced level of corporate governance environmental responsibility and sustained level of implementation of the city's environmental strategies and policies to put urban green projects into practice and overcoming of environmental challenges and risks. Integrating environmental sustainability, economic growth and social development issues into urban green innovation into an in-depth approach represents a challenge ((González & Rossi, 2011). Other innovative urban green projects are related with alternative and renewable energy saving buildings, neighborhoods and spaces.

There are different approaches can be used, each one with different reasons and ends, for example: radical versus incremental, environmental performance, etc. Urban green innovation essentially intends to respond to the environmental changes and new societal expectations, integrate sustainability issues into the achievement of economic growth, social development, environmental sustainability, community welfare and good (Xerez, and Fonseca 2011).

Urban green innovation practices contribute to sustainable urban planning of infrastructure and urban green areas. The cities and urban undertakings are innovation hubs for urban green areas with relevant impacts on economy, technology, social, organizational, etc. Urban green areas are a potential testing ground for innovations in several issues and disciplines. Urban green areas are hot spots for green innovation (Burch and De Luca, 1984; Krott, 1998). Innovation can be social, technical, socio-technical, ecological, socio-ecological and environmental.

Urban green innovation may contribute significantly to urban sustainable development providing an opportunity for research to define a new direction for green environments (Cronon 1991; Goudie 1994; Forman 1995).

DECENTRALIZE THE INFRASTRUCTURE TO DEMOCRATIZE THE TERRITORY

Public interest is related with the well-being and welfare of the general public where all the society has a stake in opposition to the private interest related to the welfare of a person or firm. Public interest covers a wide range of issues, principles and values of legitimate public concern in the best interest of the whole society. The public interest in green and sustainable urban planning cannot be defined in objective terms as it has unsatisfying results in terms of green innovation in urban green areas, aesthetic and social dullness, necessary urban infrastructure and services, etc. (OECD 2003). However, normative planning has the tool of descriptive science, evident in the notion of public interest or common benefits of planning solutions.

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