Editorial Introduction

Green Open Space for a Healthy and Comfortable Urban Life

Guest Editors

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As a city becomes urbanized and achieves high density, urban green space plays an increasingly important role. Urban green space is one of the essential infrastructures in the city. It serves as a healthy and comfortable living environment to urban dwellers as well as its ecological, social and recreational functions. However, it is a difficult task for cities to increase urban green spaces because of expensive land prices and the constant pressure of development. Therefore, the urban green space we already have should be appropriately evaluated and managed to perform to high quality standards.

This special issue gave rise to six studies. They are studies like the therapeutic function of urban forests to the urban dweller, the typology of informal green space in the city, school commuting environment in new urbanist residential spaces, “walkability” or “bikeability” as an indicator to assess a green city, and the study of urban tree management to adopt the current climate change threat.

The green space in the city is not limited to formal parks and gardens. [Kim, M., Rupprecht, and Furuya \(2020\)](#) categorize and map the green areas and perceive them as “Urban Interstices” in Ichikawa City, Japan. The study notes that urban green spaces provide mental, physical and psychological benefits to the residents as well as social, environmental and economic functions to the city. The “informal green space” can serve as an auxiliary green space in the city. This study categorizes six types of “informal green spaces” with a field survey based on form, vegetation and accessibility. Lastly, the study discusses how people perceived these informal green spaces through interview.

Conventional neighbourhood design in urban suburbs of the United States provides a comfortable space by providing residents plenty of natural environment. However, conventional neighbourhoods are reducing active travel opportunities because of the car-centred mobility system. Without a car, residents find difficulty in traveling. Moreover, children and elderly people find movement more difficult on foot. New urbanist neighbourhoods, on the other hand, have been created in a way that enhances access to commercial facilities and public green open spaces and encourages the use of pedestrian roads rather than cars. [Lee \(2020\)](#) conducts a study on the active travel of children living in the new urbanist neighbourhoods using

GPS to see if children increased their active travel compared to conventional neighbourhoods. In the results, the study finds that active travel increased in all aspects of activity in new urbanist neighbourhoods. This empirical research shows that new urbanist design principles, which consider public parks, pedestrian ways, the location of schools and residences, positively contributes to children's healthy outdoor activities.

Walkability in the city is an essential element for a healthy city. The study defines “walkability in a residential environment that promotes walking or cycling in safety with comfort, and the attractions of daily life.” [Kato and Kanki \(2020\)](#) study a “walkability indicator” to visualize a future population change in the Osaka metropolitan area, Japan. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) analysis was conducted to examine how the walkability indicator influenced the future population change. The walkability indicator showed that public housing development areas and urban sprawl areas would be vulnerable to depopulation and shrinking cities.

Bicycle-friendliness is also essential for a pleasant urban environment. European countries such as the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom have been already expanding bicycle lanes in the city and encouraging the use of bicycles in daily life. [Chevalier and Xu \(2020\)](#) summarize studies on theories and policies of these bicycle-friendly cities in western countries. Furthermore, the study focuses on how to apply those policies into Chinese context. The study conducts a questionnaire survey targeting Shanghai citizens to identify their awareness and consciousness of bicycle use in their daily life. Finally, the study discusses specificity of Chinese bicycle culture.

Climate change is a critical challenge to maintain the green environment of a city because landscaping tree plantings are vulnerable to climate change. [Kim, S., Yoon, and An \(2020\)](#) conduct a questionnaire survey with landscape professionals in Korea to explore their perception and awareness of climate change in their business, landscaping plant management. The study finds that climate change is already a significant threat to landscape professionals in their business, and among the many risks, heatwave damage to landscaped trees in Korea was the most mentioned issue.

The urban forest serves as a healing space in the overcrowded and stressfully busy city. Compared to the far distant nature area, it is easier to access and visit urban forests regularly. [Jang and Son \(2020\)](#) examine urban forests as a restorative environment using the Perceived Restorativeness Scale (PRS), targeting the Hongneung Forest in Seoul, Korea. This study finds that the urban forest works as a therapeutic environment, and among the group of visitors, elderly women had a high recovery effect, and people who are staying for three hours show a high performance.

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