

WHAT DO DANISH USERS WANT FROM THEIR URBAN GREEN SPACE?

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Abstract

What is it that makes people use urban green space? What is it that makes users prefer one green space over another? What is it that determines which activities users do when visiting a green space?

Worldwide green space managers and planners would like to be able to answer these questions in order to increase or optimise the use of 'their' green spaces. Especially with the increased attention for the importance of urban green spaces as contributor to higher liveability, quality of life, and the various health benefits associated with the use of urban green spaces, knowledge about the factors influencing use becomes more important.

In this paper we introduce a so-called ecological approach (Giles-Corti 2006, Sallis et al. 2006, Woodside et al. 2006) to serve as theoretical framework to identify and structure factors influencing the use of urban green space. The ecological approach looks upon human systems as if they were ecosystems, with its many dependent and interrelated factors. For both the human and the ecosystem, understanding how the system and its components function is essential when proposing changes. Hypotheses based on this theoretical framework were tested using a postal questionnaire among 2500 residents living in the city of Odense, Denmark.

About 1300 respondents answered our questionnaire and results from our study show that the use of urban green space is depending on a combination of personal and environmental factors. The relative importance of personal versus environmental factors varies among different population segments, indicating that different approaches are needed to stimulate each population segment to make more use of urban green space.

The environmental factor that has the most influence on green space use is distance to green space, but green space quality as experienced by users is almost as important in explaining green space use.

In conclusion we can therefore say that the green spaces of the future should not only be close to people but also provide the desired experiences to be used more.

Key Words

Parks, Denmark, User preferences, Experience values, Park Characters

Key References

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