

Notes on the impact of a new park on the socio-economic structure of an urban area

The relationship between well-being, quality of life and urban spaces is a function of the presence and density of parks and gardens, in particular for the population of children and adolescents.

According to the *Legambiente* survey (2019, published in *sole24ore*), the province of Palermo is in 90th place in terms of urban green spaces and, for example, in 88th place for cycle paths. <https://lab24.ilsole24ore.com/ecosistema-urbano/indexT.php>

<https://www.openpolis.it/la-spesa-dei-comuni-per-il-verde-urbano-e-la-tutela-ambientale/>

Notes on the state of the art regarding the relationship between the presence of city parks and the development of a neighborhood

Parks improve the state of urban areas on three axes:

- the first is the economic one. In fact, as reported in Harnik (Urban Green, 2010), as the density of urban greenery increases, the value of the surrounding houses increases and, at the same time, the presence of surrounding houses increases the value of the man-made green urban space, because it activates a series of actions with a more or less explicit economic content (presence of refreshments, services and supplies for outdoor leisure activities, etc ...), generating a positive recursive effect between the development of parks and urban buildings, which will therefore evolve hand in hand.
- The second axis is the social one: the presence of open green spaces for multifunctional use makes it possible the improvement of the quality of life also due to the growth of opportunities for public socializing; in particular for some social categories (eg "families", "children", "elderly") green spaces become places of aggregation in conditions of natural health, as an alternative to other spaces that have recently become places of public sociality, especially in suburbs, such as shopping centers.
- The third axis is the cultural one. Through the presence of green spaces it is possible to reproduce models of care and attention of nature that attribute different and virtuous meanings to the space one lives in: in short, one educates oneself in the care of greenery and common goods, increasing the level of "participation civic ". In addition to this, green spaces, especially in temperate climate areas, are well suited to host events and cultural activities of different nature "en plein air".

Ex-ante evaluation of the territorial context of reference in relation to the current use of collective spaces

In the most recent studies (ISTAT, 2020, Report on the territory) the average availability of usable green space per inhabitant is defined as "green quota". Therefore, the distribution of green areas in the capitals of the Italian metropolitan cities helps to define this "green

quota”, which thus becomes an element of characterization of the territory of the cities. The availability of greenery directly usable by citizens is highest in Venice and Turin, with 37 and 19 m² per inhabitant respectively. (ISTAT, 2020, Report on the territory).

Overall, 85% of green areas are attributable to historic greenery, large and small urban parks and the presence of sports areas and other areas (school gardens, urban and botanical gardens, etc.).

Genoa, Palermo, Catania and Messina are at the bottom of this ranking, where each inhabitant has on average less than 6 m² of usable green space, also because in the last three cities over half of the green areas present are not accessible or usable. Finally, Rome, Milan, Turin, Florence and Bologna should be mentioned for the usability of the green areas, where 70% or more of these areas are made available to citizens. (quoted in ISTAT, 2020, Report on the territory 2020. Environment, economy and society, Rome, p. 150)

Ongoing and ex-post evaluation scenarios of the effects of the intervention on the urban area of reference.

The Ministry of the Environment has published a document on the national strategy of urban green, which explains the ministerial plan and the consequent strategies for increasing urban green and its impact on a series of factors, on well-being, in a broad sense and on the economy; some general aspects are also mentioned, including that relating to safety, accessibility, environmental education and awareness of environmental issues (including, for example, the initiative known as tree day).

(Full document on:

https://www.minambiente.it/sites/default/files/archive/allegati/comitato%20verde%20pubblico/strategia_verde_urbano.pdf)

The park with its 110,000 square meters of greenery will contribute substantially to the increase in urban green shares, at least with reference to the area of the second district which has just over 70,000 residents, thus increasing, with a single intervention, the green quota available per resident in that area.

In the assessment of the well-being and benefits brought by an intervention, not only the economic aspects are identified, but different dimensions linked to different aspects and measured by ISTAT through the so-called BES ("Fair and Sustainable Well-being") which includes a set of indicators that include twelve different dimensions: 1) Health; 2) Education and training; 3) Work and life time balance; 4) Economic well-being; 5) Social relations; 6) Politics and institutions; 7) Security; 8) Subjective well-being; 9) Landscape and cultural heritage; 10) Environment; 11) Research and innovation; 12) Quality of services.

Obviously, an intervention linked to the increase of green surface would have a different positive influence on the different dimensions, but it could certainly have an influence on everyone, even if not always measurable and evaluable.

The tools for assessing the citizenship of the interventions must provide in some way a comparison between the expectations prior to the intervention, and the perceived quality of the same, measured through a series of questionnaires to be administered to a sample of the population and stakeholders before during and after the intervention.

The results of the analysis of these questionnaires will obviously have to combine comparisons between ex-ante and ex-post measurable quantities, such as: the amount of accessible green provided in the design phase and that actually usable after a reasonable time after the intervention. It is also desirable, given the low propensity, at least in the past, to maintenance of the interventions, that this ex-post evaluation activity extends to periods subsequent to those of the immediate opening of the spaces, following the completion of the intervention. Such follow-up evaluation interventions would stimulate the maintenance of the declared quality objectives.

For the strictly economic aspects these could be some elementary examples of questions, both ex-ante and ex-post, and some of these should essentially be asked to operators in the real estate sector: How much would you value a house of 100 square meters. in this neighborhood?

How much would you be willing to pay for the same house having the public green around?

How much would a building in this area currently be (commercially) valued?

How much would a building in this area be (commercially) assessable (at the time of the implementation of a public green intervention)?

How much would a building in this area be (commercially) valued 2 years after the public green intervention?

As in any evaluation process, the design must be made explicit at the beginning of the program. The wide range of use of both quantitative measurement and qualitative evaluation tools aims to expand the range of dimensions / concepts / indicators to be used in order to make the entire evaluation project transferable to other urban contexts.

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