

Towards Green(er) Cities: The Role of Spatial Planning in Realising the Green Agenda

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Abstract : The green hype is becoming stronger within various disciplines, modern practices and academic thinking, enforced by concepts such as eco-health, eco-tourism, eco-cities, and eco-engineering. There is currently also an expanded scientific understanding regarding the value and benefits relating to green infrastructure, for both communities and their host cities, linked to broader sustainability and resilience thinking. The integration and implementation of green infrastructure as part of spatial planning approaches and municipal planning, are, however, more complex, especially in South Africa, inflated by limitations of budgets and human resources, development pressures, inequities in terms of green space availability and political legacies of the past. The prevailing approach to spatial planning is further contributing to complexity, linked to misguided perceptions of the function and value of green infrastructure. As such, green spaces are often considered a luxury, and green infrastructure a costly alternative, resulting in green networks being susceptible to land-use changes and under-prioritized in local authority decision-making. Spatial planning, in this sense, may well be a valuable tool to realise the green agenda, encapsulating various initiatives of sustainability as provided by a range of disciplines. This paper aims to clarify the importance and value of green infrastructure planning as a component of spatial planning approaches, in order to inform and encourage local authorities to embed sustainability thinking into city planning and decision-making approaches. It reflects on the decisive role of land-use management to guide the green agenda and refers to some recent planning initiatives. Lastly, it calls for trans-disciplinary planning approaches to build a case towards green(er) cities.

Keywords : green infrastructure, spatial planning, transdisciplinary, integrative

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