



Abstract Title: Green areas and connection with nature as tools for well-being

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Introduction

The human being needs the various goods and services offered by the nature to achieve well-being as the ultimate goal of that process called human development (Bunch, 2016). Costa Rica as a small, middle-income country with a green country brand where 5.4% of GDP is generated by tourism and 80% of tourism is nature tourism (World Travel Tourism Council, 2017); faces difficulties derived from an unplanned, spontaneous urbanism that impacts the welfare of the population.

Currently, 52.7% of the population lives in the Greater Metropolitan Area (GAM), which represents 3.8% of the national territory (Observatorio Urbano Gran Área Metropolitana, 2016). This concentration has caused changes in the land use in order to meet the economic growth (housing, infrastructure, roads).

The GAM went from a rural world to an urban world in a very short period. During that expansion, nature was not considered as a key element for the wellbeing of the population. Today's result is a chaotic city, with few green spaces and where the welfare of rich and poor depends on access to material goods. In general, Costa Ricans do not value contact with nature as a tool for their well-being.

Objective

To analyze the impact of direct contact with nature on the wellbeing of Costa Rica's GAM inhabitants to build a public policy proposal on the subject.

Methods

This is a qualitative research. The information will be collected through focus groups, in-depth interviews with key actors and participant observation.

Results

The study generated theoretical contributions and elements for the understanding of the association human well-being and contact with nature. It also putted into the national discussion the issue of nature and wellbeing through the discussion with public institutions of the role contact with nature has on the wellbeing of the population.

Conclusions

As cities grow, it is necessary to develop cities with urban environments that promote the health and well-being of citizens. The correct use of green infrastructure and urban green spaces is a key element to achieve this goal. Contact with nature is associated with better mental health, physical health, better perceived health status as well as reduced morbidity and mortality.

References

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