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ENHANCING URBAN LIVABILITY THROUGH GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Qamar ALMASHHADANI
ORCID ID - 0000-0003-1147-2000
M.Sc. Student, Department of Architecture, Istanbul Okan University, Istanbul, Turkey,
qaal-mashhadani@stu.okan.edu.tr
Asst.Prof.Dr. Eda Özsoy
Asst. Professor, Department of Architecture, Istanbul Okan University, Istanbul, Turkey,
eda.ozsoy@okan.edu.tr

ABSTRACT
Green infrastructure and landscape architecture play vital roles in creating livable cities. Informed by established theory and global case studies, the paper addresses how designing livable, sustainable urban areas with quality green space mitigates negative environmental conditions, minimizes adversity, and creates well-being. This paper identifies elements that contribute to making cities more livable through the development of urban resilience via green infrastructure. *etc*…….

Keywords:
Green Infrastructure, Urban Livability, Landscape Architecture, Sustainability, Urban Challenges, Vertical Greening, Climate Mitigation. etc…….

INTRODUCTION

The problems in these cities have grown progressively with rapid growth, environmental degradation, and climate change. These not only strain resources but result in increasing temperatures in the urban setting, and degrade air and water quality, hence affecting human health and ecological balance. Thus, green infrastructure and landscape architecture are essential tools through which holistic solutions to these various challenges can be transformed into practice. It could improve environmental quality, enhance social equity, and bring about economic resilience through the incorporation of green spaces into urban planning. It reviews the impacts of such strategies on livability in cities while bringing to light best practices that ensure sustainability in urban development. *etc*…….

OBJECTIVES

This research focuses on exploring sustainability principles integrated within urban green spaces to create livable cities. It highlights the potential of these areas in contributing to environmental sustainability, promoting social cohesion, and fostering economic development through innovative methods like water-sensitive urban design and rooftop greening.

Objectives:

1. Analyze the foundations for sustainable urban green spaces.
2. Assess the benefits of green infrastructure.
3. Research successful urban case studies.
4. Provide recommendations for sustainable urban development. *etc.*…….

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research integrates case study analysis, literature review, and comparative evaluation to explore the role of green infrastructure in enhancing urban livability. The approach includes analyzing and comparing the impact of green spaces through systematic literature reviews and focused studies of two key regions, Shanghai and Madrid, based on urban planning reports and secondary data. Comparative evaluations assess aspects like green space accessibility, socio-economic impacts, and policy frameworks.

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Key analyses involve thematic evaluations to identify recurring patterns, quantification of ecosystem services (e.g., air purification), and socio-economic benefit assessments (e.g., increases in property values). The study relies on secondary data, which limits generalizability. Ethical standards were upheld by appropriately referencing sources and ensuring confidentiality.

1: ENHANCING LIVABILITY IN CITIES

1.1 Definition and Importance

Urban livability is about the quality of life that residents of cities lead in relation to aspects such as safety, accessibility, environmental health, and social interaction. Livability is enhanced by well-cared-for greenery, which:

- Acts as a natural barrier to pollution through the improvement of air and water quality.
- Provides shade and cools surfaces, mitigating the heat island effect of the city.
- Supports mental and physical health through places for recreation and relaxation.
- Enhances social connection through common areas for interaction and cultural activities.

1.2 The main factors that affect livability

1.2.1 Environmental Amenity

Green spaces are important contributors to environmental sustainability because they act as:

- Carbon sinks in mitigating greenhouse gases.
- Supporters of biodiversity by providing flora and fauna with habitats.
- Manage storm water through permeable surfaces that reduce runoff and avoid flooding.

Figure 1. Stages of post disasters housing Parks with multiple shapes and areas green urban spaces. [https://www.freepik.com/premium-ai-image/topdown-view-bustling-urban-park-where-green-spaces-harmonize-with-city-structures].

1.2.2 Social Benefits

Socially, green spaces:

- Provide inclusive areas that foster equity by offering accessible recreational activities.
- Improve community well-being through activities that reduce stress and promote interaction.
- Encourage active lifestyles, reducing health issues such as obesity and cardiovascular diseases.

1.2.3 Economic Benefits

Economically, proximity to green spaces:

- Increases property values, thereby attracting investments.

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• Reduces energy costs by naturally cooling the city.
• Provides a boost to the local economies with the events and tourism activities.

1.3 Challenges in Urban Livability

Despite the benefits associated with these green spaces, some of the challenges which these places are facing have been pointed out as follows:
• Inefficient availability of land in highly densified cities.
• The distribution is not appropriately done, and hence the balance within different socio-economic groups cannot be achieved.
• Inadequate funds and inability of maintenance result in the degeneration of the green spaces with time.

2: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

2.1 Conceptual Foundations

Green infrastructure can be defined as a network of natural and semi-natural spaces that are consciously planned to provide ecosystem services, such as water purification, air quality improvement, and temperature regulation. Landscape architecture is a discipline concerned with the integration of ecological principles with aesthetic considerations in the design of space to be functional, sustainable, and pleasing to the eye.

2.2 Principles of Green Infrastructure

2.2.1 Connectivity

Connectivity makes sure that green spaces are not isolated but interconnected by means of corridors, paths, and networks that allow for:
• The movement of wildlife, hence increasing biodiversity.
• The mobility of pedestrians and cyclists within urban areas.

2.2.2 Multi functionality

Multi functionality advocates for the design of green spaces to serve a myriad of functions, including:
• Recreational functions, such as parks and playgrounds.
• Environmental protection functions, like wetlands.
• Public spaces for cultural and social gatherings.

2.2.3 Resilience

Resilience focuses on the creation of adaptable spaces that are able to:
• Resist environmental changes, including extreme weather events.
• Bounce back from disruptions in as short a time as possible with no loss of ecosystem services.

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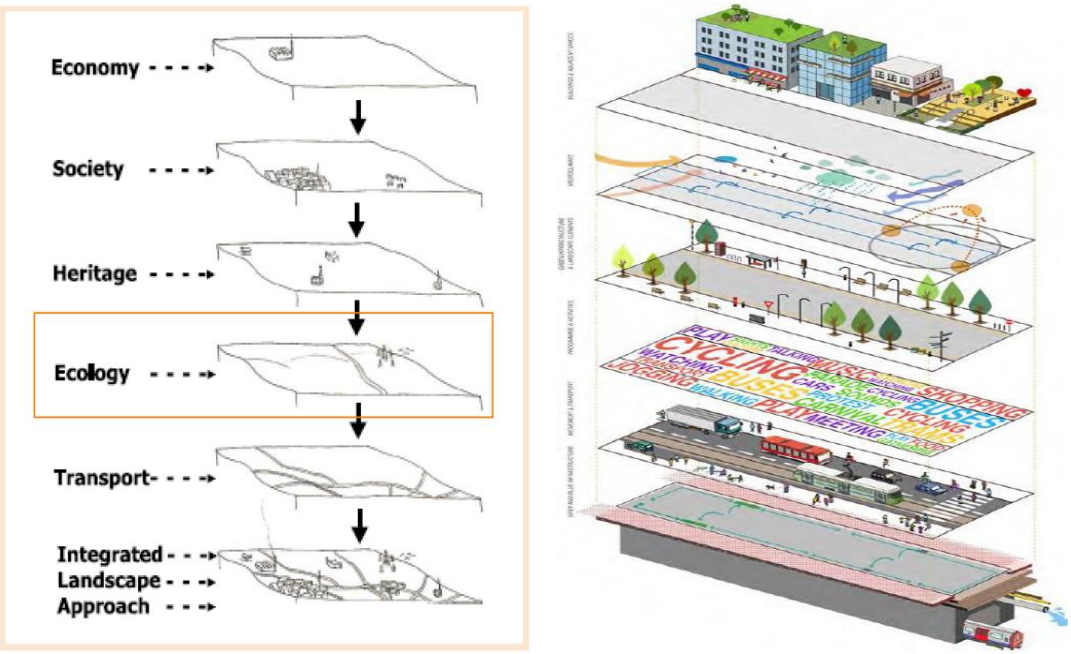

Figure 2. Illustrates the multiple layers of the site in integrated landscape planning [Green city guidelines, 2008, p23].

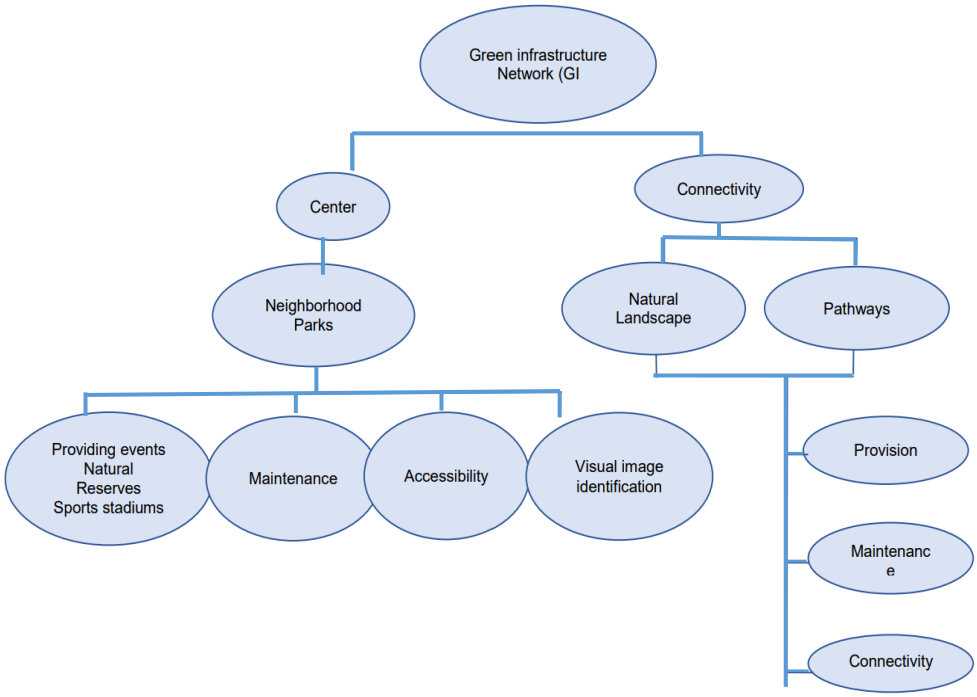

Figure 3. The elements of the green infrastructure network and they are functions [Green city guidelines, 2008].

2.3 Landscape Architecture's Contribution

Landscape architecture enhances the urban environment by:

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• Devising spaces that balance ecological health with human needs.
• Incorporation of native species for sustainability and reducing maintenance costs.
• Site-specific solutions for flood-prone areas and high-density urban areas.

Figure 4. Illustrates the components of the green infrastructure network. [Green city guidelines, 2008].

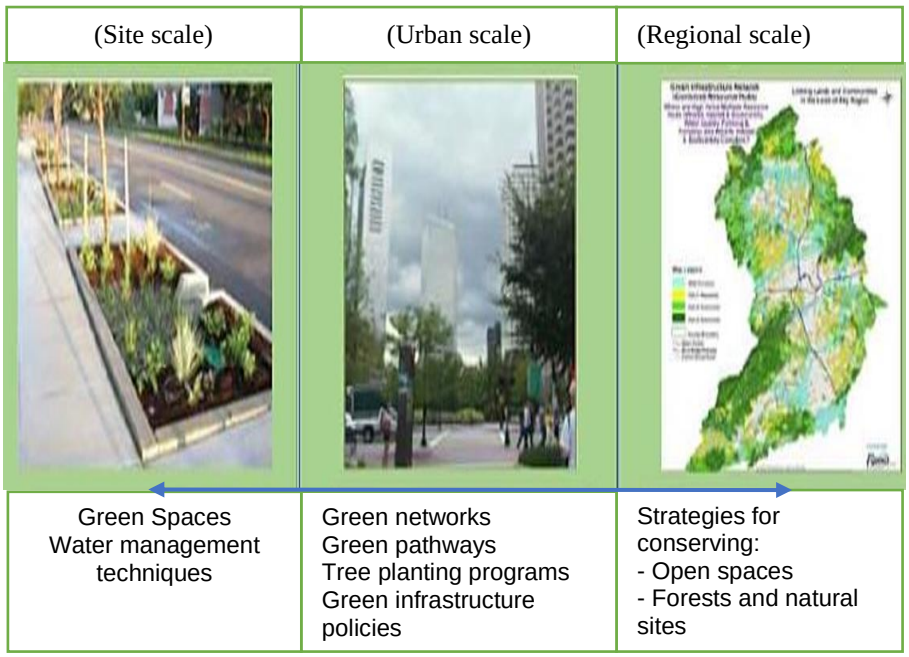

Figure 5. The green network levels interact to ensure connectivity, reducing urban development's environmental impacts [Greening the Grey, 2013, p. 15].

2.4 Implementation Strategies

2.4.1 Green Corridors

Green corridors connect isolated habitats, reducing ecological isolation. Examples include tree-lined streets, greenways, and wildlife passages integrated with urban development.

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2.4.2 Vertical Greening

Vertical greening would fully utilize green cover at maximum in areas with constraints on space availability through the following:

• Green walls provide insulation for buildings and reduce energy use.
• Rooftop gardens manage rainwater and reduce urban heat.

2.4.3 Water-Sensitive Urban Design

Water-sensitive urban design involves integrating water management into the design of the urban form through:

• Rain gardens provide a source of runoff reduction.
• Permeable pavements are installed for infiltration.
• Wetland establishment for natural water filtration and habitat support.

CASE STUDIES

3.1 Madrid: Vertical Landscapes and Urban Cooling

Madrid has answered the problem of urban heat through:

• Conversion of facades into vertical green walls to cool surrounding temperatures with better air quality.
• Expansion of green roofs for storm water management and urban flooding.

Detailed Analysis:

The living wall at CaixaForum is one of Europe's largest vertical gardens and a sure sign that Madrid takes matters of sustainability very seriously. The policy of Biotope Area Factor ensures that a minimum percentage of vegetation is guaranteed in new developments, balancing urban density and ecological restoration.

Figure 6. Vertical/Ecological System in Spain: Providing habitat in dense urban environments using creative space design adds value to urban wildlife. [Green city guidelines, 2008].

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Figure 7. Urban Greening in Bilbao, Spain: Greening of the railway track. [https://www.trackopedia.com/en/encyclopedia/infrastructure/superstructure/track-greening].

Figure 8. Illustrate the "Madrid Natural" project, outlining local strategies to address global climate change. [Source: Arup's Vision of the Spanish Capital].

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3.2 Shanghai: Water-based Green Infrastructure

Shanghai is capitalizing on its riverfronts by:

• Turning riverbanks into public parks that bring people together.
• Designing raised paths to connect urban and nature continuously.

Detailed Analysis**:**

The Huangpu Riverfront Redevelopment Project integrates the ecology back into the urban environment. Such features as permeable walkways, native vegetation, and floating wetlands will de-risk flooding and improve the capacity for recreation among the residents of Shanghai. As such, these initiatives are illustrative of how Shanghai has been innovating ways with the use of blue-green infrastructure in water management.

Figure 9. Increasing the width of the platform and reducing the number of car lanes it gives a sense of security. [Source: Xin Min, 2011, P43].

- A careful study of this project shows the application of many Indicators related to the sustainability of green spaces, including:

1. Cultivation of plants and trees and use of plants for visual insulation Y
2. Achieve the greatest amount of shading.
3. Restoring the green space environment and disciplined consumption of resources
4. Multi-functional
5. Isolating the levels of movement to provide the greatest amount of safety and openness of axes. Movement and visual on the banks of the river
6. Taking advantage of the banks to increase social interaction
7. Reviving the site's historical features and highlighting the river and its banks as a space Green.

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Figure 10. Expanding the platform space by flying over the river without cross his path. [Source: Xin Min, 2011, P29].

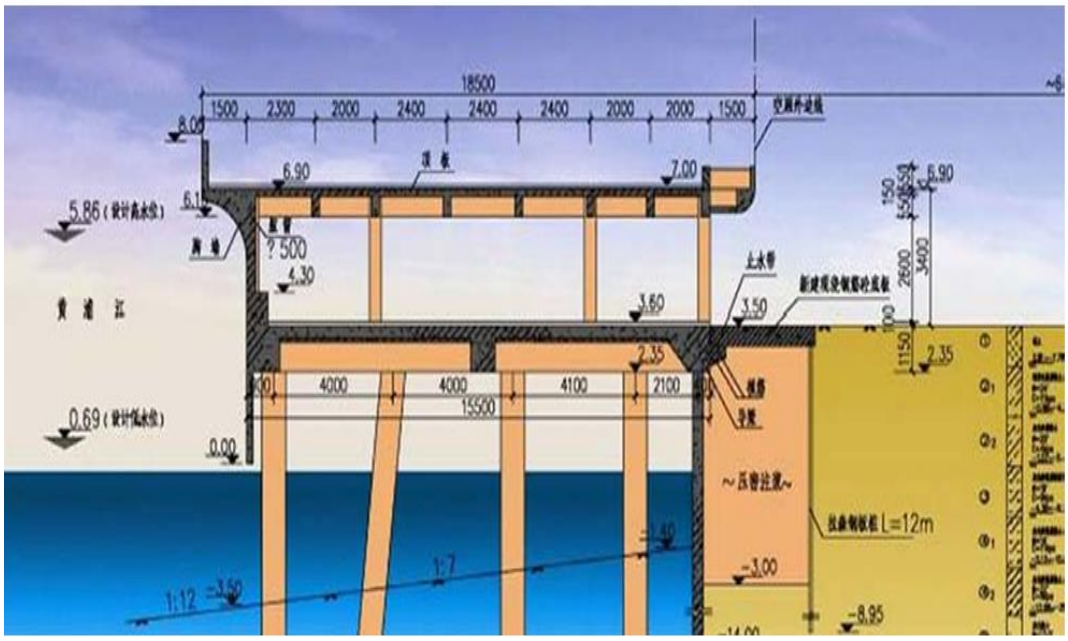

Figure 11. Create a floating platform that does not obstruct the movement of water, allowing the viewer to interact with the river. [Source: Xin Min, 2011, P29].

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4 Enhancing Livability through Green Infrastructure

4.1 Addressing Urban Challenges

Green infrastructure provides practical solutions for urban challenges by the following:
• Heat island mitigation using tree canopies for shade and reflective surfaces.
• Prevention of flooding in urban areas through wetlands and permeable material.
• Air quality improvements because plants absorb carbon dioxide and pollutants.

4.2 Improving Social Equity

Accessible green spaces bridge socio-economic gaps in:
• Equitable access to recreational opportunities.
• Providing areas for cultural and social interaction in a non-exclusive manner.

4.3 Economic and Environmental Sustainability

economically, green spaces save healthcare costs by promoting active lifestyles. Environmentally, they:
• Enhance biodiversity due to better connectivity of habitats.
• Host renewable energy generation projects, including rooftop photovoltaic installation integrated with green roofs.

4.4 Policy and Governance

Prioritizing Green Infrastructure: Policymakers must integrate green infrastructure as a fundamental component of urban planning frameworks. This involves setting clear targets for green space allocations, ensuring compliance with international sustainability standards, and aligning local policies with global climate goals.
Funding Mechanisms: Public-private partnerships can bridge financial gaps. For example, municipalities can offer tax rebates or subsidies to incentivize developers to include green roofs and parks.
Zoning and Legal Frameworks: Establishing zoning laws that mandate the inclusion of green infrastructure in new developments ensures long-term sustainability. Legal frameworks can also protect existing green spaces from encroachment and degradation.

5 Recommendations and Future Directions

5.1 Policy-Level Recommendations

Policy frameworks should:
• Incorporate a minimum percentage of green cover in the urban master plan.
• Facilitate public-private partnerships for funding and maintenance of green spaces.
• Implement incentives for sustainable practices, including offering tax breaks for green roofs.

5.2 Design Innovations

Innovations in design shall include:
• Modular green infrastructure adaptable to various urban settings.
• Multi-purpose spaces: recreation, conservation, agriculture.
• Smart green space management technologies: enabled irrigation systems.

5.3 Future Research Directions

Future studies need to be directed toward the following aspects:
• Long-term effects of green spaces on urban microclimate.
• Advanced ecological modeling in view of optimizing design relating to green infrastructure.
• Exploring community-driven initiatives for sustainable urban greening.

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CONCLUSION

Green infrastructure and landscape architecture are not dispensable. Indeed, by embedding a number of multifunctional green spaces within the realm of urban planning, towns and cities can tackle some crucial challenges related to the physical environment, social equity, and economic resilience. Knowledge that can be drawn from this research underlines the need for innovation in design and inclusive policies toward sustainable development in urban settings—to healthy and lively cities for future generations.

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