



Urban Green Infrastructure

Knowledge use in green infrastructure decision-making

Project overview

June 2017

About the Lab



The **UCL City Leadership Laboratory** brings together world-class academic scholarship, public authorities, international organisations, the private sector and local SMEs to create a unique environment for urban experimentation, research, teaching and – most importantly – action. The Lab sits within UCL’s policy-focused **Department of Science, Technology, Engineering and Public Policy** (UCL STEaPP) and has links across UCL’s network of urban research and practice.

Project Overview

'Safe, inclusive, accessible, green, and quality public spaces' is a weighty aim of UN-Habitat's New Urban Agenda. This is part of a wide, and growing, recognition of the need for a robust understanding of how green urban spaces might be planned, developed and managed to greatest benefit. This project employs the framing of 'Green Infrastructure' ("an interconnected network of green space that conserves natural ecosystem values and functions and provides associated benefits to human populations." (Benedict & McMahon (2002)); an increasingly used terminology in academia and practice in relation to the informed development of green urban spaces.

This 1.5-year project seeks to understand and improve the way in which different kinds of knowledge are used in decision-making around the implementation and maintenance of urban green infrastructure projects in South Africa and the UK. This study will develop academic insights and practical outputs, to improve the capacity of urban decision-makers to implement and manage green infrastructure projects. A major legacy of the work will be an appreciation of significant knowledge or skills gaps identified by those engaged with decision-making and implementation on the ground.

Aim

To understand and improve the way in which different kinds of knowledge are used in decision-making around the implementation and maintenance of urban green infrastructure projects.

Project Method

This study acts as a follow-on to work carried out in 2016 by the project team, reflecting on the 'Green assets and infrastructure' research project developed by the Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO) in South Africa. This phase focused on a review of existing academic and grey literature on green infrastructure in the region and a series of scene-setting interviews in the Gauteng City-Region, visiting and engaging decision-makers on knowledge use in existing green infrastructure projects.

In the second phase, further literature review is supported by in-depth, in person, semi-structured interviews conducted in the Gauteng City-Region, Durban and Cape Town in South Africa and London and Birmingham in the UK. Analysis of literature and interview outputs will be used to draw out predominant themes and areas of greatest interest, influence and challenge around urban green infrastructure. While it is not primarily intended to form a basis for direct comparison between experiences in South Africa and the UK, and detailed city / country case studies will be developed in each case, high-level common themes will be explored.

Project funding and collaboration

The core team is based in the UCL City Leadership Laboratory and UCL Department of Science, Technology, Engineering and Public Policy (UCL STEaPP). This project is conducted in collaboration with the Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO), a research agency that exists as a collaboration between the University of Johannesburg, the University of the Witwatersrand and the Gauteng Provincial Government, South Africa. This work builds upon established relationships between UCL STEaPP and GCRO and compliments previous and ongoing work around knowledge use and mobilisation in urban decision-making carried out by the UCL City Leadership Lab (e.g. Informed Cities, Urban Knowledge Formation). It is funded by UCL STEaPP internal pump priming funds (awarded: Nov 2016, funding period: Feb-July 2017).

Learn more and contact us

[Carla Washbourne](#) Lecturer in Environmental Science and Policy, UCL STEaPP / City Leadership Lab

[Christina Culwick](#) Researcher, GCRO

www.cityleadership.net - @CityLeadersLab