

Spatial diversity of cultural ecosystem services flow in a large city. Naturally nature?

The presented research project concerns the relationship between a man and nature in a large city. Although urban areas are unlikely to be associated with natural environment, it brings many benefits to urban dwellers. Some of them are of cultural character and are called cultural ecosystem services. These include, for example, the opportunity for recreation or environmental education and aesthetical appreciation of nature. Such opportunities are provided by publicly available green areas: parks, urban forests, but also river valleys, meadows, etc.

We will be looking for answers to the following questions:

- Do the residents of a big city have a need to contact nature and what does the term “nature” actually mean to them?
- How spatial, social and environmental factors shape the way in which city dwellers use nature for cultural purposes?
- How do people enjoy nature in the city center and how do they do it in the suburbs?
- Do forests and other green areas located on the border of a large city attract residents from the city center searching for wilderness; or are they rather a substitute of urban park for residents of suburban areas?
- Do those who like nature present higher level of environmental education and are more likely to visit urban green spaces?
- To what extent the managers of public green spaces and the providers of facilities influence behaviours and nature attitude of visitors?

The research will be conducted in Warsaw and within its border zone. We will use the methods used by both social and environmental researchers. Spatial analyses will be the particularly important element of the whole study, as they allow to develop maps of cultural ecosystem services and to show how cultural use of nature in the city center differs from that in the suburbs.

This project aims to contribute to the further understanding of human–nature relation in cities and development of the concept of cultural ecosystem services. The acquired knowledge and the developed methods will help to better understand the role of urban green areas in shaping the relationship between man and nature.