

RECONNECTING CITIES WITH NATURE : *So Man To* Evaluation of the Level of Local Open Spaces' Ecosystem Services and its Implication towards Well-being in Hong Kong

Research Background

- Personal contacts with our ecosystem, including plants, animals, and natural green surroundings, can benefit our well-being
- Hong Kong, a pro-development city, has decoupled us from nature
- Since available land within our metropolitan area is lacking and fragmented, our focus should turn towards smaller city parks such as sitting-out areas, rest parks, and community gardens to complement larger parks and fulfil our everyday needs towards nature
- Therefore, there is an urgent need for to understand the role of small-scale local open space and create a city as an ecology in which urban and natural systems overlap, cooperate and hybridise to enhance the citizens' well-being

Research Significance

Theoretical perspective:

1. fill the research gap by studying ecosystem services in the context of local open spaces
2. fill the research gap of how ecosystem services improve well-being, and how other factors come into play in this relationship

Practical Perspective:

1. Ecosystem services may get formal recognition and able to incorporate into the urban area
2. Urge policymakers utilizing these ubiquitous neighborhood parks and open spaces to perform better placemaking, eventually improving people's life

Research Questions

1. How can ecosystem services of urban parks improve our well-being?
2. To what extent local open spaces in Hong Kong can provide ecosystem services?
3. To what extent Hong Kong's local open spaces' ecosystem services can improve people's well-being
4. How does the relationship between ecosystem services and well-being vary among groups of people with different traits?

Research Method



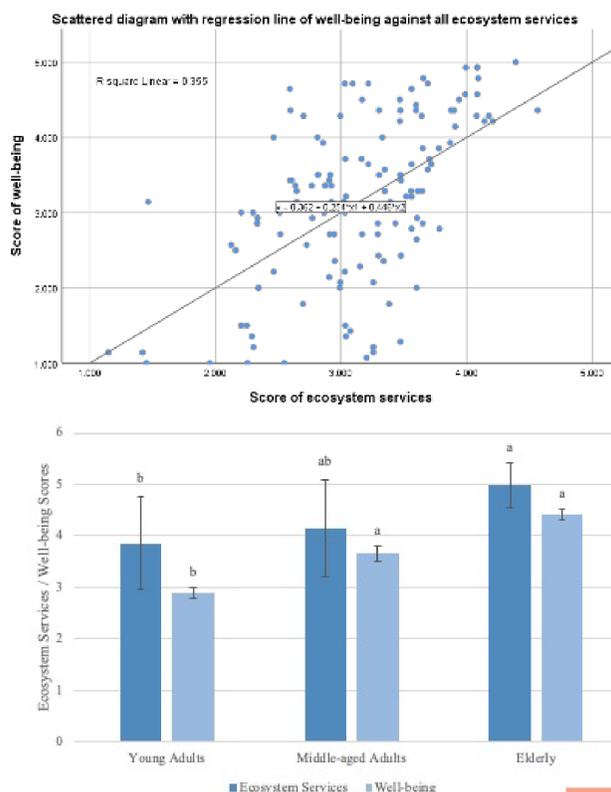
Questionnaire:
151 park users



Interview:
District Councillor

Major Findings

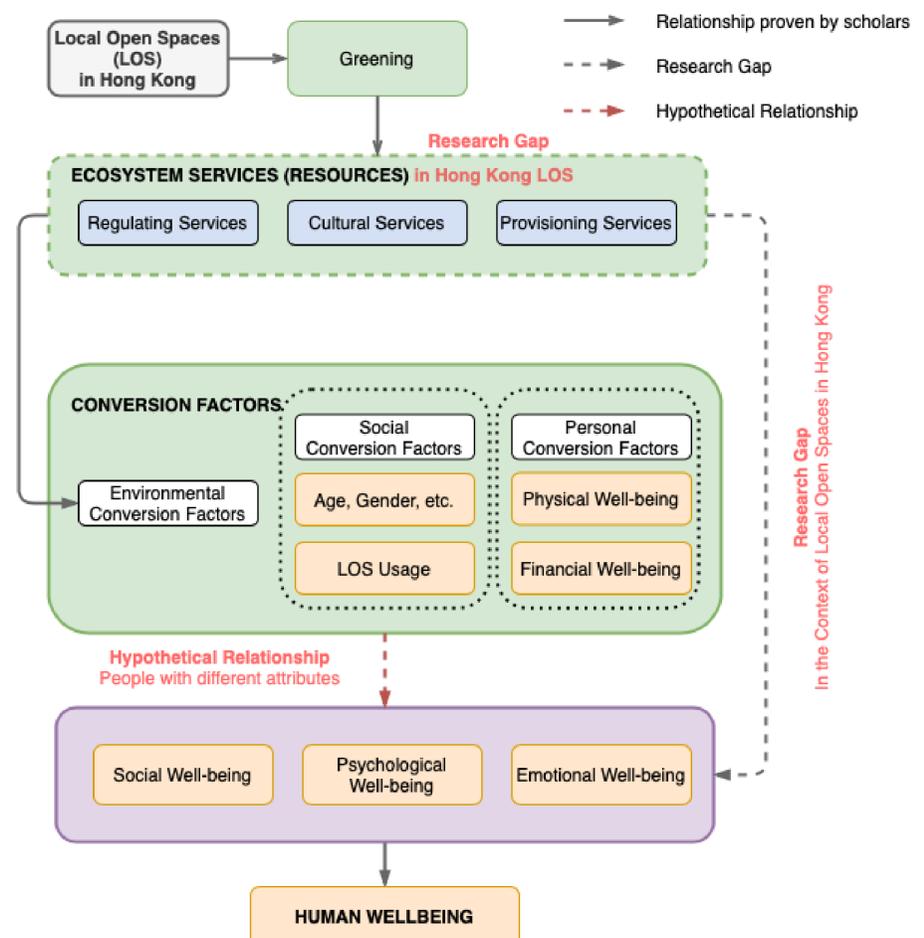
- People generally perceive that negligible LOS actually provide a satisfactory level of ecosystem services (ES)
- ES offered by LOS and well-being has a very tight relationship and the ES in LOS are major contributors to our well-being regardless of their limited size
- Cultural ES is more important in improve the well-being of the people than regulating ES in HK's context
- Age and frequency of using LOS foster the relationship while income and gender do not dictate the relationship



Major Implications

- Inclusion of provisioning services in LOS may further boost the well-being of the lower income groups, with the permise that they have the priority of using it with low admission fee
- Need for overhaul of the LOS planing process to empower stakeholders in the community to further improve individuals' sense of well-being

Theoretical Framework



- Involving different age groups in the open space planning process could improve the design of LOS and accomodate the needs of a wider population, eventually improving the well-being of the whole community
- Future urban open spaces may consider making use of remnant natural habitats as that can preserve local biodiversity whilst providing ES to the people