URBAN FORESTRY IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY
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Abstract. The increasingly multicultural character of modern urban society creates challenges and opportunities for the urban forester. For the urban forestry strategy to respond effectively to contemporary social issues, it must include policies and programs that promote social inclusion and the involvement of disadvantaged ethnic communities. This can be accomplished through a distinct community strategy. Although the fundamental principles of community involvement still apply, their application needs to reflect the multicultural diversity of the individual city or neighborhood. The education, consultation, and participation elements of the community strategy are delivered through a wide range of events and activities specifically designed to promote social inclusion and the engagement of ethnic communities.

Key Words. Urban forestry; social benefits; multicultural societies; disadvantaged communities; social inclusion; community strategies.

The populations of cities around the world are becoming increasingly multicultural in character (Knox and Pinch 2000). This is not a new phenomenon; immigration has played a major role in the history of many cities, particularly in North America (Berkin et al. 1995). However, over the past century the world has changed enormously. Globalization in the economic, political, and cultural spheres has dramatically changed the scale and character of immigration and has radically altered the population composition and dynamics of the modern city. Many cities now attract large numbers of new residents from other countries and continents, with languages and cultures quite different from those of the host nation. War and political strife in troubled parts of the world continue to lead to new influxes of refugees and asylum seekers.

Many cities are becoming increasingly polarized into distinct neighborhoods of different social class and culture (Knox and Pinch 2000). Residents from similar backgrounds tend to cluster together for mutual support and protection, and to preserve group identity and culture. Immigrants often arrive with limited financial resources and tend to settle in depressed, inner-city neighborhoods characterized by a poor physical environment. High unemployment, poor health, and low levels of education and literacy frequently accompany such neighborhoods, which are sometimes considered breeding grounds for violence, crime, and an organized gang culture.

In the popular media, the problems faced by multicultural societies tend to receive the most coverage. Ethnic communities and host communities can both see their identities, traditions, and economic prospects as threatened by the other (Giddens 2001). These fears breed intolerance, discrimination, and racism, and have a cancerous effect on community relations. In many cities over the past few decades, explosive urban riots sparked by racial tensions have shattered community relations and shaken the complacency of governments that have failed to address the underlying causes of this conflict (Keith 1992; Saltzstein 2003). In the climate of fear and suspicion that now pervades many urban areas, it is easy to forget the positive contribution of successive waves of immigration to the economy and life of the nation (Brown and Hanna 1996).

The challenges and opportunities of the multicultural society should concern everyone, from governments to individuals. Urban foresters must also address these issues if they are to operate successfully within the context of the modern city. They can do this only if they have an awareness and appreciation of the complexities of contemporary social issues.

THE LANDSCAPE OF THE MULTICULTURAL CITY
As well as understanding the social dynamics of the multicultural city, urban foresters also need to be aware of the social character of their landscapes. In cities throughout the world, the density and health of the urban forest in residential areas often coincide with the economic status of the people who live there. In the poorer neighborhoods, there are frequently few trees, private gardens, or public open space. Communal open space between high-rise flats and tenements is often just a broad expanse of mown grass with hardly a tree in sight. These neighborhoods often have a high proportion of residents from ethnic backgrounds.

A sense of territoriality and well-being can play a major role in how members of different ethnic groups perceive their local landscape (Burgess 1995; Loukaitou-Sideris 1995). Is it viewed as safe and familiar or as potentially threatening? High levels of crime, anti-social behavior, and racial harassment may discourage residents from putting themselves in what they regard as exposed positions in public open space or woodland. The most vulnerable in the community, such as the elderly, women, and young children, are likely to have heightened concerns about safety. In cities marked by racial tensions and frequent conflict between different community groups, the demarcation of entire neighborhoods into distinct territories can be quite pronounced (Johnston 1994, 1995).

Perception of public open spaces naturally influences the ways in which they are used (Burgess 1995; Loukaitou-Sideris 1995). The level of use is not just a function of perceived safety but also reflects attitudes regarding recreational and aesthetic value. Perceptions of the benefits of urban trees and landscape can vary considerably among different ethnic groups (Fraser and Kenney 2000). Urban landscapes are often quite uniform in character, usually reflecting the horticultural and landscape traditions of the host culture (Rishbeth 2002). While ethnic influences have enriched the music, food, and fashion of modern urban society, they have found little expression in its public open spaces.

The under-representation of ethnic minorities in the urban environmental movement has been widely observed (Ricard 1993; Iles 1998; Fraser and Kenney 2000; BTCV 2002). Many reasons may account for this. Residents of urban ethnic communities may consider the environment less of a priority compared to more pressing social or economic concerns. Other reasons may include lack of time or opportunities to participate, a sense of alienation from the surroundings, or a sense of feeling marginalized from mainstream community action. One significant barrier to involvement may be a popular perception of the environmental movement as being elitist, cliquish, and dominated by people who are white and middle class.

URBAN FORESTRY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The urban forestry movement has a tradition of caring about social issues. This is not surprising, since the aim of urban forestry is to improve the quality of life for urban residents. The planting and management of trees is simply the means to that end, and not the end in itself (Johnston 1985). While the sociological benefits of urban trees and forests are now widely recognized, their practical implications often receive limited consideration in the delivery of urban forestry programs.

The urban forestry movement in the United States has shown some interest in promoting social inclusion among ethnic communities (Berry 1991; Parris 1991; Sando 1991; Ricard 1993; Iles 1998). There has also been a considerable amount of relevant research in the fields of leisure, outdoor recreation, and the use of parks and open spaces (Pincetl 2002). However, there has been virtually no coverage of the subject in the British urban forestry literature. In Britain, interest has come mainly from environmentalists and landscape professionals. Initially, a significant influence in promoting this interest was the example of cultural gardens created in the Lower East Side of Manhattan (New York City) in the 1980s (Johnston 1989a).

As governments throughout the world become more aware of the need to promote social inclusion among ethnic communities, the urban forestry movement must respond or run the risk of losing political influence and social relevance. Programs that embrace the entire population not only attract the support of the whole community, but also the support of central and local government as it pursues this agenda.

While effective urban forest management depends on a good knowledge of the trees and woodlands, urban foresters should also be familiar with the social complexities of the communities they serve. Urban forestry is as much about people as it is about trees, and knowledge of the trees is only half of the equation (Johnston 1989b). A detailed survey of the urban forest should be accompanied by a social survey that focuses on the composition and dynamics of the local population. As with the tree survey, this should be updated regularly. Basic demographic, economic, and social data for different administrative districts can be obtained from the most recent government census, and then supplemented by information and data from local sources.

Resources for urban forestry programs should be directed primarily at those areas where they are most needed. This principle is readily applied to the trees for which maintenance work is scheduled according to the most immediate priorities. However, it is often forgotten when it comes to the people who live and work in the forest. Urban foresters have a responsibility to give priority to disadvantaged communities that are currently gaining the least benefit from the urban forest. While they may pride themselves in "state of the art" programs in the leafy and affluent residential districts, less fortunate areas should not be overlooked. Social class or cultural background should not regulate access to the benefits of the urban forest. If an urban forestry strategy is to respond effectively to contemporary social issues, it must include policies and programs that promote social inclusion.

While this paper focuses on disadvantaged ethnic communities, these are not the only socially excluded groups in urban society. Urban foresters also need to respond to the needs of other marginalized groups, such as women, the disabled, the elderly, and the unemployed.

COMMUNITY STRATEGIES AND ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

Any urban forest strategy should also include a community strategy that focuses on engaging local communities and ensuring maximum benefit from their involvement. Although the importance of having an urban forestry strategy is now widely recognized, the idea of including a specific community strategy is still very new, let alone any reference within it to engaging with ethnic communities. In developing a community strategy for multicultural areas, the fundamental principles of community involvement still apply. However, their application should reflect the distinct multicultural characteristics of the individual city or neighborhood.

Promoting the involvement of ethnic communities in the delivery of public services must be firmly on the public authority's policy agenda. The drive to ensure that this happens should include initiatives from central government in the form of legislation and statutory codes of practice for public authorities (CRE 2002). Then, local politicians and senior managers must be genuinely committed to these policies and not just indulging in "tokenism" to give the appearance of doing something positive. If relevant policies and programs are to be developed and appropriate resources allocated, commitment must come from the top of the public authority, which will then be reflected in the activities and culture of the whole organization.

A community strategy as it relates to ethnic communities should have two strands. Developing a multicultural approach is not just about engaging with people from ethnic backgrounds; it is also about educating and involving the host community and making it more receptive to other cultures. These dual strands reflect the two vital aspects of ethnic identity: how people see themselves and how others see them. The strategy should focus on promoting positive attitudes and perceptions among the whole community. The aim is to encourage people to work together toward a shared vision of an inclusive society that will benefit everyone. Within the community strategy, work with schools and youth groups should be given a high priority.

To be effective, the community strategy must include far more than just "fine words" about the need to promote social inclusion. It should also include a detailed management plan with recognized performance indicators or benchmarks. As with any management plan, actual performance should then be regularly measured and monitored. Initially, measurements of performance may have to be quantitative to obtain some indication of progress, but these should also move eventually toward qualitative indicators (Johnston 2001).

The strategy must include measures designed to promote the community's own ability to get involved. The emphasis should be on capacity building and not just on provision. While expertise and resources from the public authority may be generally available, ethnic communities may have difficulty accessing them. Training schemes and other initiatives should be organized to focus on building a community's capacity to develop, acquire, and gain access to the skills required to plan and manage projects. However, resident involvement in urban forestry projects does not necessarily lead to empowerment; a successful outcome depends on many different factors (Westphal 2003)

A community program should include a balance of education, consultation, and participation strategies that are specifically designed to deliver it (Johnston 1989b). If any of these elements are not represented, the impact of the program will be limited.

EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

The most difficult task in delivering any community strategy is to generate sufficient interest to motivate residents to become involved (Johnston 1989b). Of course, those with keen interest in trees and the environment will welcome the chance. However, for the majority of urban residents, trees have little significance in their everyday lives and it is often unrealistic to expect an immediate response. Stimulating interest requires a long-term strategy of education and information. This can be done through a variety of media, such as advisory and promotional materials about trees and tree care; environmental education projects for schools and youth groups; informal lectures to community groups; "open days" at the urban forestry unit's operational base; and exhibitions and displays in community centers, schools, libraries, and other civic buildings.

In delivering an education strategy for multicultural areas, the design and promotion of these educational events and activities must take into account the need to promote a socially inclusive image. A multicultural interpretation of the urban forest is an essential part of this strategy. While the landscape may be uniform in character, the range of plants that grow there is invariably multicultural, with different species of trees from around the world. An effective way of introducing the whole community to the multicultural nature of the urban forest is through guided "tree walks" around parks and streets. Trees that originate from the countries of origin of ethnic communities can be highlighted. The informal nature of these guided walks also allows a valuable opportunity for social interaction among the participants.

The use of language is a particularly important issue in the delivery of education and information programs in multicultural communities. For basic practical reasons, the urban forester often needs to be able to communicate multilingually. This is simply the most effective way of getting information across to the greatest number of people. From administrative forms to educational leaflets, urban foresters must be conscious of when they should adopt a multilingual approach. Access to interpretive facilities should be an essential part of the resources available to the urban forestry team.

Apart from its role in effective communications, language is also an integral part of the culture and identity of human communities (Giddens 2001). By using the language of ethnic communities in educational literature and other program materials, urban foresters can confirm, reinforce, and demonstrate respect for this cultural identity.

On the subject of language, it is worth mentioning that some terms in the environmental vocabulary can have unintended but nonetheless damaging connotations for ethnic communities. Perhaps the most common example is the use of the terms "native" and "alien" to describe the

origin of plants (Fenton 1986). Even in an urban context, some professionals have adopted a philosophy that "natives are good" and "aliens are bad." Not only is this an inappropriate classification for plants in the urban environment, but these terms can easily be construed as offensive. Less insensitive and more appropriate terms can and should be used (Wong, no date).

Media coverage of the urban forestry program can do much to shape public perception of it. While the media ultimately decide how and what they chose to report, every effort should be made to encourage the promotion of a socially inclusive image. Television, radio, and newspaper coverage can all be used to show that people from ethnic backgrounds can and do get involved in its community events and activities.

CONSULTATION

Consultation with the local community about issues relating to the urban forest is essential to establish the perceptions and preferences of different groups (Johnston 1989b). However, this exercise can be difficult with ethnic communities that feel marginalized from mainstream community activity. Additional efforts beyond the norm should be made to encourage the expression of views and opinions. Public meetings should be held at appropriate community centers and staffed by an interpreter, preferably from within the community. Policy documents should be available in multilingual versions to encourage comprehensive feedback. Local tree committees, which act as a forum for discussion about urban forestry issues, should include representatives from the larger community organizations.

While it is important to ensure that consultation exercises are socially inclusive, the precise level of consultation needs to be considered carefully. There is a danger of "overconsulting" about trees with all communities living in economically depressed and neglected neighborhoods. Disadvantaged ethnic communities may feel they are being "overdosed" on a subject that is not that significant in comparison to jobs, housing, crime, racism, etc. In some cases, there may be a reaction against the urban forestry program if this is seen as just an excuse to avoid tackling the more important issues (Johnston 1986). Therefore, it is vital to link the benefits of urban trees with these more pressing economic and social issues on the residents' agenda.

PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

A major aim of the community strategy is to connect people with their trees and green spaces, both physically and psychologically. For residents from ethnic communities that feel alienated from their immediate surroundings, this connection can be built by encouraging them to participate in specially designed open-air events and activities.

An excellent way to encourage an ethnic community to identify more closely with its public open spaces is to hold a multicultural festival in a local park. These festivals include a wide range of activities, such as music, dance, theater, and informal sports, designed to appeal to all age groups. These entertaining and relaxing events give a favorable impression of the park and may encourage residents to visit it on a more regular basis. A festival also allows all sections of the local community to come together to celebrate cultural diversity and interact socially. In neighborhoods where one ethnic group forms a major proportion of the population, the theme of the festival can focus specifically on that culture. For these events, there may be advantages in arranging them to coincide with special days in the cultural or religious calendar. A time of general celebration for the community is likely to attract more interest in the event. However, when organizing any event or activity, it is also important to be aware of constraints that may come from specific cultural preferences or religious beliefs.

Projects that link the arts and the environment allow for cultural expression within the context of an environmental message, and are thus particularly appropriate for ethnic communities. The British organization Common Ground has pioneered a range of imaginative projects. For instance, on Tree Dressing Day, local residents and school children decorate and celebrate the living trees in parks, gardens, playgrounds, and other open spaces (Common Ground 1993). This is actually a modern echo of an ancient custom in many religions and cultures (Altman 2002).

Community tree planting schemes are an invaluable way to allow local residents to make personal imprints on their landscape. This can be particularly significant in neighborhoods where there are few private gardens. Involving residents in the design and establishment of these schemes promotes awareness and appreciation of the trees and may also reduce the risk of vandalism (Johnston 1985). For ethnic communities, the benefits are further enhanced if some of the species of trees come from their own country of origin. Site conditions will obviously limit the scope for tree selection, but urban foresters and city planners can often accommodate a wide range of appropriate trees. This idea of promoting cultural identification with the trees and landscape can be extended to the creation of cultural gardens. These are entire gardens in which the plants and landscape design reflect a distinct cultural theme, giving the community a familiar, friendly, and culturally expressive neighborhood open space that is distinctly its own (Johnston 1989a; Agyeman 1995). Cultural gardens can be designed, established, and maintained by the residents themselves on derelict and vacant sites and also within established parks, open spaces, and school grounds.

Involving residents in the design of planting schemes is also an opportunity to address concerns about crime and safety in public open spaces. Recent research has shown that barren open spaces that are devoid of vegetation are no safer than green ones. Carefully designed planting schemes on inner-city housing estates can not only create a more liveable environment but can actually reduce crime levels and promote safety (Kuo and Sullivan 2001; Kuo 2003).

Some species of trees have important cultural and religious significance for different ethnic communities (Altman 2002). The symbolism of these trees can be woven into events and activities to heighten their impact and increase their appeal. Trees can also be powerful symbols of peace, reconciliation, and hope. Tree-related events and activities that focus on these aspirations can be especially appropriate in areas marked by racial tensions and conflict (Johnston 1994, 1995)

In efforts to involve different ethnic communities, refugees and asylum seekers are often overlooked. They may experience particular difficulties assimilating into society and identifying with their new surroundings. They often arrive traumatized from their recent experiences and are housed in temporary accommodation with the constant fear of relocation or deportation. As part of the Environments for All initiative, a project in Scotland is doing its best to address this issue. It takes groups of asylum seekers on day trips to plant trees in the beautiful setting of the Scottish mountains and lakes (Goodwin 2002). The project allows participants to mix socially in a relaxing setting away from their stressful urban environment, and it creates an opportunity to contribute to the host country through practical environmental work.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND SUPPORT

Any program of sustained community involvement will benefit greatly from a network of volunteers to support and deliver it. These volunteer networks, such as the national tree warden program in Britain and the citizen forester program in the United States, can provide a vital link between the public authority and the local community. The volunteers can represent the views and wishes of the community and act as a catalyst in generating community involvement in the urban forestry program. In a multicultural city, efforts should be made to recruit a mix of volunteers that reflects the ethnic diversity of the population. In many programs, the volunteers' area of operation is their own local neighborhood. In areas where the majority of residents are from a particular ethnic community, there may be distinct advantages in recruiting volunteers from within the community. Not only are these volunteers likely to have a good "inside" knowledge of the community, including linguistic fluency, they could also play a vital role in gaining the community's acceptance and support for the program.

As much as possible, the urban forestry program should aim to work with existing groups within the ethnic communities. Again, this is important with any community strategy, but particularly with ethnic community groups that may feel marginalized or ignored by public authorities. By recognizing and working through these groups, an urban forestry program not only can strengthen its role in the community, but can also gain valuable advice and access to important contacts.

Promoting social inclusion in the urban forestry program need not be a burden on existing resources; instead, it can be an opportunity to attract new funding. In pursuing this, urban foresters must be prepared to "think outside the box" of traditional sources of funding for trees and environmental projects. Social inclusion is an issue that is moving rapidly up the political agenda in many countries. In turn, this is being reflected in the amount of funding available for these projects from government agencies and charitable bodies. The omission of tree projects in their funding criteria does not mean they are ineligible. The funding body may simply be unaware that urban forestry programs can be an excellent way of promoting social inclusion. Funding should also be sought from the private sector. Sponsorship proposals could be targeted initially at businesses that might be the most receptive. Examples might include local companies that hire a large proportion of their employees from ethnic backgrounds, or successful business people who might want to support projects within their own communities.

Practical advice and support for developing social inclusion in environmental initiatives is available from a variety of sources (see Some Useful Web Sites, below). Central and local government agencies have specialist staff that can advise on individual projects or organize training and awareness courses. This assistance is also available from nongovernmental organizations that are already working in the field. In Britain, the Black Environment Network has extensive experience with involving different ethnic communities in a wide range of environmental initiatives and is keen to pass on this experience to new projects (Wong 2003).

Universities and colleges that offer courses in urban forestry must include the subject of social inclusion in their curricula. The new master's degree in urban forestry offered by the University of Central Lancashire in association with Myerscough College has recognized the importance of this issue in the management of the urban forest. It has two modules that give considerable emphasis to contemporary social issues such as social inclusion, and there are opportunities for students to gain practical experience working with ethnic communities and other marginalized groups.

Lastly, efforts should be made to ensure that the composition of the urban forestry workforce reflects the ethnic

diversity of the local community. There also needs to be recognition of this diversity by accommodating cultural differences in the workplace (Fonseca 2002). Not only is this often a legal requirement to comply with fair employment and equal opportunities legislation, it is fundamental to the promotion of a socially inclusive image. A recent study conducted throughout the United States has shown that ethnic minorities are significantly under-represented in the urban forestry workforce (Kuhns et al. 2002).

CONCLUSIONS

Urban foresters must respond to the challenges and opportunities of the multicultural society. An awareness of the sociological benefits of urban trees and forests should be accompanied by an urban forestry strategy that effectively addresses contemporary social issues such as social inclusion and the needs of disadvantaged ethnic communities. This can be achieved through a community strategy that incorporates education, consultation, and participation elements specifically designed to promote the involvement of distinct ethnic groups. A long-term aim of the strategy should be to encourage these residents to plan and manage their own community projects and initiatives.

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SOME USEFUL WEB SITES

Black Environment Network
www.ben-network.org.uk

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Environments for All
www.btcv.org/efa

Commission for Racial Equality
www.cre.gov.uk

Common Ground
www.commonground.org.uk

Human Environment Research Laboratory
www.herl.uiuc.edu

Learning Through Landscapes
www.ltl.org.uk

Social Exclusion Unit, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk

The Runnymede Trust
www.runnymedetrust.org

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Résumé. Le caractère multiculturel croissant de la société urbaine moderne crée des défis et des opportunités pour le forestier urbain. Dans la stratégie du forestier urbain pour répondre de manière efficace aux problèmes sociaux contemporains, on se doit d'inclure des politiques et des programmes qui font la promotion de l'inclusion sociale et de l'implication des communautés ethniques défavorisées. Même si les principes fondamentaux d'implication de la communauté s'appliquent toujours, leur application se doit de refléter la diversité multiculturelle de chaque ville ou quartier. Des éléments d'éducation, de consultation et de participation dans la stratégie communautaire sont donnés au travers d'un large éventail d'événements et d'activités conçus spécifiquement pour promouvoir l'inclusion sociale et l'engagement des communautés ethniques.

Zusammenfassung. Der zunehmend multikulturelle Charakter moderner Städte schafft Herausforderungen und Gelegenheiten für den Stadtforstbeauftragten. Für die urbane Forstwirtschaftsstrategie muss, um auf die zeitgenössischen gesellschaftlichen Fragen zu reagieren, die Politik und Programme zur Integration benachteiligter ethnischer Kommunen einschließen. Dies kann durch verschiedene Strategien erreicht werden. Obwohl sich die wesentlichen Prinzipien der kommunalen Entwicklung noch immer bewähren, muss ihre Anwendung die multikulturellen Unterschiede der individuellen Stadt oder Nachbarschaft berücksichtigen. Die Ausbildung, Besprechung und Teilnahmebedingungen der kommunalen Strategie werden durch ein breites Spektrum von Ereignissen und

Aktivitäten geliefert, die darauf zugeschnitten sind, soziale Einbeziehung und Engagement ethnischer Gruppen zu fördern.

Resumen. El incremento del carácter multicultural de la sociedad urbana moderna crea desafíos y oportunidades para el dasónomo urbano. Para la dasonomía urbana la estrategia para responder efectivamente al tejido social contemporáneo, incluye en su mayoría las políticas y programas que promuevan la inclusión social y el envolvimiento de las comunidades étnicas en desventaja. Esto puede ser logrado a través de distintas estrategias comunitarias. Aunque aún se aplican los principios fundamentales de envolvimiento de la comunidad, su implementación necesita el reflejo de la diversidad multicultural de la ciudad individual o el vecindario. La educación, consulta y participación de los elementos de la comunidad son deliberados a través de un rango amplio de eventos y actividades específicamente designados para promover la inclusión social y el compromiso de las comunidades étnicas.