Redesigning public open space as ecological & cultural infrastructure: From Vancouver to Lahore

Part 2

Processes & interventions
Before exploring ways to expand and better connect Lahore’s network of open space, it is first necessary to explore the most important functions of ecological and (outdoor) cultural infrastructure.
There are many ecological and cultural functions of open space. And designs and interventions for open space typically are in response to protecting or enhancing particular processes.
Open space, as areas without buildings, protects natural habitat and provides membranes across the landscape to maintain local biodiversity (all species and ecosystems).
It is open space that is most important for the replenishment of watersheds and aquifers. Open space, therefore, supports natural services.
Some categories of open space resources and functions for ecological and (outdoor) cultural infrastructure include the following:
1. ‘habitat’
   - maintain & restore native habitat
   - maintain & restore natural processes
   - maintain & restore presence of all local biodiversity
   - wild species of importance to local cultures & economies
   - research
   - education
Shalimar Gardens
Much of the concern for ecological processes in open space planning and design is involving issues of water access and quality.
Alan Sonfist, view of 1978, Time Landscape: Greenwich Village, New York City
2. urban agriculture
  ❖ (human) food production
  ❖ urban forestry
  ❖ forage production
  ❖ domestic & sporting animals
  ❖ production of traditional, local agricultural products
Open space also provides outdoor cultural infrastructure maintaining aspects of heritage including traditional arts and landscape vernacular.
3. heritage
- protection of less disturbed archaeological sites
- preservation & restoration of landscapes, gardens & public spaces
- preservation & restoration of both vernacular & outdoor landmarks
Public open space provides informal areas for exercise and sports along with (healthier) alternative forms of transportation.
4. recreation

- sports and a range of physical activities
- tourism (historical, cultural, agricultural)
- group events
- rest and relaxation
- picnics, cafes & eating
5. visual & other aesthetic resources
- historic and iconic views (often of landmarks)
- typical views related to historical periods
- panoramas & vistas
- intimate views & spaces
view of Badshahi Mosque (Bilal Aziz)
Cultural neighbourhoods, routes and outdoor corridors can become as important as built, indoor museum spaces.
6. contemporary culture

- spiritual spaces
- public art
- performance art
- exhibitions
- outdoor cultural events
- outdoor educational space
7. non-motorized transportation

- walking & jogging (in areas with less air pollution)
- bicycling
- horse & camel
- carts
informal foot trail, Race Course Track
Lahore Open Space Charette
Step 2
Identification of types of open space & gaps in the network in each of the 4 'quarters' of Lahore
The 4 groups work together for another 10 minutes.

Take another quarter (move clockwise) of Lahore and map more of the open space on the previous group’s sheet of paper.
Within the pencilled outlines of open space made by the previous team, outline in felt pen:

- public space (green);
- institutional, neighbourhood & corporate space (brown or red); and
- private (blue).
In pencil, identify important gaps and threatened open space including:
1. gaps in connectivity (for forming a better connected network);
2. unprotected and threatened open space;
3. outdoor sites that warrant ecological and landscape design restoration and better management; and
4. outdoor areas that could support more culture and recreational activities.
There are many types and combinations of interventions for protecting, rebuilding, restoring, and reconnecting various aspects of networks of open space as ecological and cultural infrastructure.
What kinds of interventions will ‘work’ for Lahore is a question that can only be answered after prolonged, cross-sectoral discussions involving government, civil society, land owners, and other stakeholders.
1. interventions for protection & restoration of habitat
   • parks & ecological reserves
   • protected & restored woodland
   • linear corridors
2. interventions for protecting & re-establishing urban agriculture

- community gardens
- garden restoration
- linear corridors
- conservation of heritage crops
3. intervention for conservation of heritage sites

- protection of unexcavated sites
- restoration of gardens, ways and complexes
- protection of heritage sites and vernacular
4. expansion of outdoor recreation
   - removal of automobiles from more outdoor recreation areas
   - linkages of recreation areas through pathways
5. conserving visual & other aesthetic resources
   - development restrictions and design review guidelines for new building
   - further visual and other barriers with congested streets
6. nurturing contemporary culture
- programmes of urban art design and installation
- more cultural events and festivals regularly taking place on particular sites & specific neighbourhoods
7. fostering non-motorized transportation
   - pedestrian and bicycle paths
   - separation of bicycle and pedestrian routes from automobile routes
Lahore Open Space Charette Step 3
Identification of interventions to expand, better connect & rebuild the network of open space in each of the 4 'quarters' of Lahore
The 4 groups work together for another 10 minutes.

Take a third quarter (move clockwise) of Lahore and focus on the gaps identified in pencil by the previous group.
Review the gaps and the revise the initial spatial boundaries of the proposed expansions of open space and then outline the areas for interventions in black felt pen.
For with each area or site, identify at least two interventions to further build the network with one intervention involving:
1. acquisition or
2. ownership or management change or
3. a change in funding, administration or policy.
and another intervention involving a physical change through a design or redesign involving
1. an ecosystem and / or
2. built space and / or
3. art / cultural site and set of activities.
Development and choice of strategies is directly linked to priorities for social, economic and cultural development.
The following are some of the typical criteria used in strategy development for creation of more functional networks of open space.
Expansion of networks of open space as ecological and social infrastructure can be part of a project of reassertion of local history, culture, experience, and sensibilities.
Some practical criteria often involve proposals being low cost and having a high probability of success and sustainability.
Expansion of networks of open space can contribute to economic development and revitalization of impoverished neighbourhoods.
Expansion of networks of open space for ecological and cultural infrastructure should contribute to social harmony and not exacerbating economic disparities.
open space along canal near international border
Strategies and strategizing for development of better open space networks remains remarkably simplistic -- hence my interest in how people do things in such sophisticated crossroads as Lahore.
Strategies can be simplistic and ideological or eclectic and multi-layered.
A central factor in the success of the acceptance of a strategy is it being understandable and inspiring to broader sectors of a community as well as various levels of government.
Lahore Open Space
Charette Step 4
Identification of strategies to expand, better connect & rebuild the network of open space in each of the 4 'quarters' of Lahore
The 4 groups work together for another 10 minutes.

Take the fourth quarter (moving clockwise) of Lahore and evaluate the set of interventions proposed by the previous group.
Review the proposed interventions and possibly add a few more (but work with the ones outlined by the previous group).
Organize the interventions into types and lists and describe the overall interventions necessary in terms of at least 5 characteristics.
Describe the strategy in terms of 1 sentence and a name.
In conclusion, networks of public open space provide the basis for essential forms of ecological and cultural infrastructure -- processes on which city dwellers will increasingly depend.
Open space as effective ecological and cultural infrastructure requires careful planning, design, construction and maintenance that involve a great number of fields including
architecture, landscape architecture, environmental management, urban planning and design, archaeology, ecology, sociology, economics, cultural studies, government and investment policy.
Planning, design, and restoration of open space as ecological and cultural infrastructure constitutes both art and science with place and neighbourhood increasingly linked to contemporary culture.
Expansion and reconnection of public (and private) open space is essential to making more liveable and prosperous cities and it related to
cultural development, environmental management, heritage conservation, and economic development.