



Public policies in parks in Barranquilla for the generation of economic and social development

Políticas públicas en parques de Barranquilla para la generación de desarrollo económico y social

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Abstract

Introduction: The development and social impact generated in the parks of the city of Barranquilla has aroused great interest, as it has been a mechanism to promote social development and change in the dynamics of the local economy. Therefore, **Objectives:** the objective of this article is to analyze public policies applied to parks in the city of Barranquilla that influence economic and social development. **Methodology:** To carry out this analysis, a methodology was used whose hypothetical-deductive approach of a transversal nature, under the technique documentary analysis and unstructured interview, evidenced in its results that the current policies have allowed to generate more employment and to reduce the delinquency in the city, fundamental aspects for the social progress. **Consequently,** it is concluded that continued investment in the development and improvement of parks represents an effective means to promote sustainable growth and social progress in Barranquilla.

Keywords: Public policies; Social development; Economic development; Administration.

Resumen

Introducción: El desarrollo y el impacto social generado en los parques de la ciudad de Barranquilla ha despertado gran interés, pues ha sido un mecanismo para propiciar el desarrollo social y el cambio en la dinámica de la economía local. Por ende, **Objetivos:** analizar las políticas públicas aplicadas a los parques en la ciudad de Barranquilla que influyen en el desarrollo económico y social. **Metodología:** Para llevar a cabo este análisis, se empleó una metodología cuyo enfoque hipotético-deductivo de naturaleza transversal, bajo la técnica del análisis documental y la entrevista no estructurada, **Resultados:** se evidenció que las políticas actuales han permitido generar más empleo y reducir la delincuencia en la ciudad, aspectos fundamentales para el progreso social. **Conclusiones:** la inversión continua en el desarrollo y mejora de los parques, representa un medio efectivo para fomentar el crecimiento sostenible y el progreso social en Barranquilla.

Palabras Clave: Políticas públicas; Desarrollo social; Desarrollo económico; Administración.

Códigos JEL (Ciencias Económicas y Administrativas): J08, J38

Introduction

Urban parks represent a valuable asset for any city, not only for their recreational and aesthetic value, but also for the potential they offer to boost economic and social development (Medrano and Quintero, 2020; 2021). In the particular case of Barranquilla, a vibrant and constantly growing city in the Caribbean region of Colombia, the public policies implemented in its parks play a fundamental role in fostering sustainable progress and improving the quality of life of its inhabitants (Martínez-Valdés et al., 2020; Vargas, 2020; Bonells, 2021).

On the other hand, cities face various challenges such as rapid urbanization, climate change and the growing demand for services and opportunities, which has led to the optimization and adaptation of green spaces, which has become unavoidably relevant, as well as their efficient planning and management, given that they can promote employment generation, strengthen social cohesion, protect the environment and stimulate local economic activity (Boano, 2011).

It is relevant to note that parks were originally conceived as a counterpoint to the growing expansion of urban territory, being thought of as spaces that offered refuge from built-up areas and provided places for relaxation and contemplation of nature (Kong et al., 2021, p.1).

However, throughout history, parks have undergone constant transformation, as a result of factors such as COVID-19, which implied great advances in the development of these spaces (Dizdaroğlu, 2022), leading to various typologies that have represented different conceptions of what a park can be. This evolution, has allowed them to be promoters of social cohesion by providing shared spaces for the community (Peters et al., 2010). In addition, they have become crucial places for the preservation of biodiversity in urban environments, in addition to promoting improvements in the levels of social wellbeing and environmental quality in the city.

Parks go beyond a simple transformation in terms of their structure and function, since they allow exploring and influencing the behavior of different social and economic processes, among other factors, since space influences the experience of both individuals and communities, which makes it necessary for planning processes and the design of parks to be more inclusive, vibrant and beneficial spaces for all (Cedeño, 2005; Barón, 2021).

Urban parks, besides being inert and neutral spaces, reflect the configuration of processes, interactions and meanings linked to the historical, economic, social and spatial context (Martínez-Valdés et al., 2020). In this way, a fundamental connection emerges between the materiality of the park, the social and ideological practices that conceive it, and the urban experience that arises from both collective and individual perceptions (Vargas and Roldan, 2018). Which allows us to see how the behavior of the population when accessing public space

The park is used by the public, the activities conducted in the park, and how various social groups use it.

Consequently, this research will analyze the public policies implemented in Barranquilla's parks to evaluate their contribution to the economic and social development of the city. Strategies focused on promoting entrepreneurship and attracting investment will be studied, as well as those aimed at improving social inclusion, community welfare, health and equity.

In addition, the challenges and opportunities faced by Barranquilla in the implementation of such policies will be explored, considering citizen participation, the allocation of resources and inter-institutional coordination. Lessons learned from successful experiences in other cities that can be adapted to the local reality will also be analyzed.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Public policies to promote economic and social development through investment in urban parks and recreational spaces are a fundamental strategy in modern urban planning (Ocampo, 2008). These policies seek to take advantage of the tangible and intangible benefits that parks can provide to a community, fostering interaction among diverse stakeholders and promoting the general welfare of citizens.

In the context of Barranquilla, public policies aimed at urban parks have a significant potential to catalyze economic growth and improve the quality of life of the inhabitants, which is why the following is a description of a series of elements that, from a theoretical point of view, have influenced the development of these sites.

Parks as sites that generate health and social well-being.

In the current context of accelerated urban growth, there is a pressing need to understand in depth how people experience and perceive their environment. In this sense, Li et al. (2020) highlights the importance of delving into this knowledge, as it has been found that various physical attributes, together with the management of green spaces, play a fundamental role in the comfort, environmental perception and satisfaction of individuals (Grijalba and Martinez, 2015; Lopez, 2022). It is relevant when urban parks have acquired an essential role in municipal policies, even becoming the only source of access to green areas at times. This transformation is due to the aggressive urbanization experienced by cities, which in turn causes a marked shortage of green spaces.

In addition, problems such as the reduction of natural environments, coupled with growing concern about environmental quality, have an impact on the health and well-being of the population, which has led to a focus on urban parks as a viable solution for the conservation of green areas. In addition, these spaces not only serve a

ecological, but also play an invaluable role in the structure and dynamics of cities (Czortek and Pielech, 2020; Gaudereto et al., 2018; Neckel et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2020).

On the other hand, it is essential to bear in mind that urban parks are spaces that provide city residents with opportunities to connect with nature, constituting the predominant portion of public green areas available to citizens (Nagendra and Gopal, 2011; Neckel et al., 2020). In addition to their environmental advantages, they offer facilities for a wide range of recreational, sporting, artistic and social activities, even generating positive economic impacts (Bahriny and Bell, 2020; Faggi and Zuleyka, 2019; Tu et al., 2020).

Effective management and planning of urban parks have the potential to turn cities into more pleasant and sustainable environments (Ayala et al., 2019; Perelman and Marconi, 2016). Since they are considered multifaceted environments, their use varies according to various characteristics, such as their design, size, landscape configuration and ease of access, elements that influence the provision of the benefits mentioned above (Deutscher et al., 2019).

From a social perspective, recreational use of parks emerges as one of the main dividends that citizens obtain by taking advantage of them. These benefits are rooted in the direct contact between the population and the components of the natural environment, manifesting in both physical and mental improvements (Luo et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2020). In addition to fostering integration and social interaction among residents (Sim et al., 2020), parks provide a diverse range of environmental benefits through the ecosystem services they provide. The presence of vegetation in these spaces establishes them as vital hubs for biodiversity within urbanized environments, while contributing to climate regulation and the hydrological cycle, in some cases maintaining their inherent conditions (Czortek and Pielech, 2020; Luo et al., 2020; Nagendra and Gopal, 2011; Nielsen et al., 2014; Ruiz et al., 2015).

It is important to highlight that urban parks have a significant impact at the individual level, as they play a key role in promoting public health (Yuen and Jenkins, 2020). Several studies have corroborated that natural spaces within cities have the potential to address various health problems (Deng et al., 2020; "Parques en Barranquilla", 2023). These parks provide an environment where people can recharge, relax, and engage in physical activities to improve their well-being, allowing them to escape the stressful routine of urban life (Deng et al., 2020; Ma et al., 2021; Wan et al., 2020; Guarda-Saavedra et al., 2022). In addition, they can evoke significant memories and sensations at particular moments in people's lives (Salazar-Arenas, 2007; Grijalba and Martinez, 2015), which is evidence that the regular use of parks contributes to improving aspects such as physical and mental health, given that it addresses elements such as improving stress, anxiety and mental fatigue, among other diseases that affect people's health (Perez, 2014; Yuen and Jenkins, 2020).

Exploring Parks: Studies on their perception and development in the city of Barranquilla.

In the context of urban spaces and in particular in the city of Barranquilla, parks play an essential role in providing places for meeting, recreation and connection with nature ("Parks in Barranquilla", 2023). The relationship between people and these spaces goes beyond their physical existence, due to the perception of individuals, which plays a fundamental role in how they experience and relate to parks on an individual level.

Several factors, such as the feeling of safety, the presence of natural elements and other environmental elements, have a significant impact on the emotional experience of people when interacting with these environments (Wagner et al., 2020; Wan et al., 2020; Weijs Perrée et al., 2020), which has been seen to have a positive influence on the population of the city of Barranquilla according to the study conducted on parks in Barranquilla: 8 out of 10 users perform physical activity (2023).

Considering the above, it is therefore relevant to understand how users perceive and experience these spaces, as this is essential for the design, planning and effective management of urban parks, ensuring that their benefits are fully exploited and enjoyed (Song et al., 2020; Yeshitela, 2020). Thus, fostering a positive perception not only contributes to the preservation of the quality of these spaces, but also promotes the improvement of the well-being, comfort and sense of security of those who use them (Weijs-Perrée et al., 2020).

It is important to note that when the perception of parks is positive, they play a fundamental role in the creation of healthy interaction environments, fostering a sense of security among people (Álvarez, 2014). This factor, in turn, favors the attraction of visitors and stimulates commercial and physical activity within these spaces. For this reason, it is of vital importance to develop strategies that guide the management of urban parks. These strategies should be based on local policies that address the needs of citizens (Perelman and Marconi, 2016), as the aim is to strike a balance between ecological objectives, aesthetic considerations and leisure opportunities. It is crucial that this approach not only reflects the perspective of the park administration, but also the opinion of its users, as noted by Talal and Santelmann (2020).

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a hypothetico-deductive approach of a cross-sectional nature, with the purpose of evaluating the validity and implications of various theories, as mentioned by Klimovsky (1971), Gómez-Gómez (1995), Hernández et al. (2005) and Farji (2007). This is done over a specific period of time, using a documentary review methodology that covers articles, books, book chapters and legislation updated between 2000-2022. Through this

This exhaustive review seeks to analyze the implementation and benefits of the generation of public policies in the parks of the city of Barranquilla, as well as to evaluate the impact they generate in the environment and in the local economic development of the city.

This research is situated within a qualitative approach, following the perspective proposed by Medina (2001), which seeks to describe and understand the various data identified in the course of the study. In relation to the objective and development of this article, the documentary analysis technique is used, which García (1993) and Sánchez et al. (2021) point out that this technique facilitates the collection and consultation of information, contributing to the construction of a product that provides substantial knowledge on a specific topic. This methodology allows for an effective analysis, classification and synthesis of the information gathered, to be contrasted with the interviews of high-level public sector officials.

Based on the above, the following was taken into account:

1. Inclusion criteria

- Research study period from 2000 to 2023.
- Texts in Spanish and English
- The documents covered are articles, books, book chapters and updated legislation between 2000-2022.

2. Database selection

The databases that were addressed in the research include Scopus, Dialnet Plus, Redalyc and Google Scholar.

3. Mechanism for data search strategy

The UNESCO thesaurus was used as a search mechanism to identify terms for research purposes:

Table 1
Search criteria.

Descriptor UNESCO	Término en español	Término en inglés	Vocablos cercanos
Política ambiental	Política ambiental	Environmental policy	Medio ambiente
Parque público	Parque público	Public park	Ciudad de parque
Parque urbano	Parque urbano	Urban park	Parque
Bienestar social	Bienestar social	Social welfare	Salud y bienestar

Note: Own elaboration.

Table 2.
Search and selection process by inclusion criteria

Base de datos	Búsqueda según la dimensión	Periodo de búsqueda	Primer Resultado	Resultado después de criterios de inclusión	Documentos totales seleccionado
Scopus	"Bienestar social y parque" o "Social welfare and park"	28/06/2023	16500	50	60
	"Política pública y parques" o "Public policy and parks."		14000	150	
Google Scholar	"Bienestar social y parque" o "Social welfare and park"	25/07/2023	16500	150	30
	"Política pública y parques" o "Public policy and parks."		14200	120	

Note: Prepared by the authors.
For the evaluation phase, 120 documents were included.

4. Selection and analysis of studies.

Initially, the titles and abstracts of the articles retrieved were examined. This action made it possible to eliminate duplicates and organize the articles according to the established inclusion criteria that followed the hypothetico-deductive approach of a cross-sectional nature. The articles were then evaluated using the exclusion criteria, according to their relevance to the research objectives.

RESULTS

In the first stage, an exhaustive analysis of the titles and abstracts of the articles retrieved was carried out. This initiative allowed the elimination of those duplicates present and the ordered arrangement of the articles according to the predefined inclusion criteria. In a second stage, the articles were evaluated using the exclusion criterion as a filter, considering their relevance in relation to the objectives of the research in question.

4.1. Selection and analysis of the studies reviewed.

In the initial phase of analysis, the decomposition of the bibliometric variables is carried out.

The table below presents the bibliometric variables corresponding to the articles included in the synthesis. The table below presents the bibliometric variables corresponding to the articles included in the synthesis.

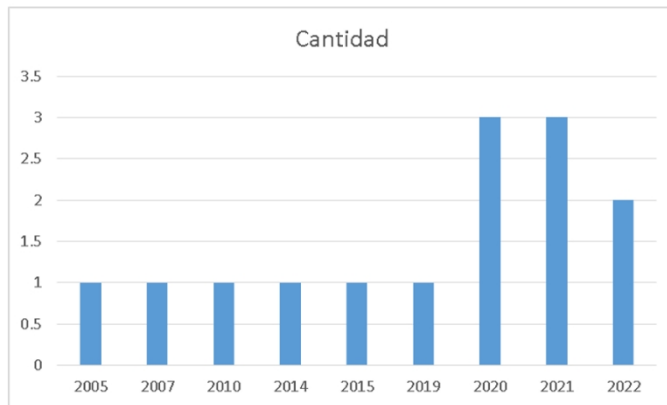
Table 3.
Bibliometric variables

Base de Datos	Autores	Año	Tipo de investigación	País	Idioma
Google Scholar	Álvarez Cuellar, F.	2014	TP	Colombia	Español
Scopus	Ayala-Azcárraga, C., Díaz, D., & Zambrano, L.	2019	CT	Países Bajos	Inglés
Scopus	Bahriny, F., & Bell, S	2020	IM	Suiza	Inglés
Google Scholar	Barón Rodríguez, Y.	2021	TP	Colombia	Español
Google Scholar	Cedeño Pérez, M.	2005	TD	España	Español
Scopus	Deng, L., Li, X., Luo, H., Fu, E., Ma, J., Sun, L., Zhou, H., Shi-Zhen, C., & Jia, Y.	2020	ACT	Alemania	Inglés
Google Scholar	Dizdaroğlu, D.	2022	AC	Turquía	Inglés
Scopus	Farji-Brener, A.	2007	AC	Venezuela	Español
Google Scholar	Grijalba Rosero, N., & Martínez Pérez, S.	2015	TP	Colombia	Español
Scopus	Guarda-Saavedra, P., Muñoz-Quezada, M., Cortinez-O'ryan, A., Aguilar-Farías, N., & Vargas-Gaete, R.	2022	ACT	Chile	Español
Google Scholar	Hurtado Olivera, E.R.	2021	TM	Colombia	Español
Scopus	Kong, X., Sun, Y., & Xu, C.	2021	ACT	Países Bajos	Inglés
Scopus	Orstad, S. L., Szuhany, K., Tamura, K., Thorpe, L. E., & Jay, M.	2020	ACT	Suiza	Inglés
Scopus	Peters, K., Elands, B., & Buijs, A.	2010	IM	Alemania	Español

Note: CA - Content Analysis; CA - Qualitative Article; ACT - Quantitative Article; MI - Mixed Research; TM - Master's Thesis; TP - Undergraduate Thesis; TD - Doctoral Thesis.

Of the variables addressed, 14 documents stand out, including theses and articles, 8 Scopus articles, 6 Google Scholar documents of which 3 are undergraduate theses, 1 master's thesis, 1 doctoral thesis and 1 scientific dissemination article. If we analyze by language the number of articles is 50% in Spanish and the other 50% in English, where 20% of the publications are from Colombia.

Figure 1
Number of scientific articles produced per year



Note: Own elaboration

4.2 Relationship between social welfare and park.

The link between social well-being and urban parks is undeniable, since as cities experience rapid urban growth, the need to understand how people interact with their environment becomes crucial, given that the importance of urban parks in the comfort, environmental perception and satisfaction of individuals is of great relevance (Alvarez, 2014). This relationship is the result of a series of interconnected factors that influence the human experience within these green spaces.

First, the presence and management of urban parks play a central role in people's quality of life in increasingly dense urban environments. These parks are not only valuable for their ecological function, but also provide residents with access to nature and opportunities for a variety of recreational and social activities. Parks act as havens of tranquility amidst the hustle and bustle of urban life, allowing people to unwind, relax, and rejuvenate (Deng et al., 2020). These natural environments within the city can also improve people's physical and mental health, relieving stress and anxiety and providing a space for physical activity and recreation.

In addition to the individual benefits, urban parks foster social interaction and community cohesion; these spaces offer meeting places where people can socialize, participate in group activities, and strengthen bonds. The diversity of activities in parks promotes the inclusion and participation of many people, which contributes to building a stronger community and a sense of belonging.

From an economic standpoint, urban parks can generate benefits through tourism and related economic activities. People often visit the parks as tourist destinations, which can boost the local economy through spending in

lodging, restaurants, and nearby activities. In addition, investment in the creation and maintenance of parks can generate employment in areas such as landscape design, landscaping and facilities management (Kong et al., 2021, p.13).

4.3 Relationship between parks and public policies

Public policies are instruments that government uses to address specific societal problems and challenges, and in the case of parks, these policies have a direct impact on the experience of people and the configuration of public spaces (Wan et al., 2020).

The creation and maintenance of urban parks are closely linked to political decisions and urban planning. In this sense, public policies have the responsibility to ensure the availability of green spaces that are accessible to all citizens. This accessibility is essential to encourage social interaction, recreation, physical exercise and contact with nature (Bahriny and Bell, 2020). Through specific measures, such as the allocation of budgets for the creation and maintenance of parks, the zoning of green areas in urban plans and the implementation of regulations for environmental conservation, public policies can influence the equitable distribution of these spaces and their quality.

User perception of parks, as mentioned in the brief, is critical. This is where public policy plays an essential role in promoting safety, comfort, and visitor satisfaction. Investments in adequate lighting, design of safe trails, presence of security personnel, and implementation of regular maintenance programs are aspects that can be addressed through well-designed public policies. These actions not only improve the user experience, but also contribute to visitor attraction and increased economic vitality in the surrounding areas.

A crucial aspect highlighted in the brief is citizen participation in defining public policies related to parks. Listening to the voices of the community is essential to understanding their needs and preferences. Citizens can provide valuable perspectives on how they want parks to be configured, what activities they would like to see, and what measures they consider important for their safety and well-being (Alvarez, 2014). Public consultation and collaboration with local organizations can enrich decision making and ensure that the policies implemented are effective and truly responsive to the needs of the population.

In addition to the above aspects, public policies can also address the environmental sustainability of urban parks. Biodiversity protection, water conservation, and the promotion of green design and construction practices are essential components of a comprehensive public policy for green spaces in a city.

4.4 Barranquilla and its policy of recovery of parks in the city

It is of vital importance to understand that the project for the recovery of parks in the city of

Barranquilla has been under development since 2011. During this period, about 206 parks have been intervened in the city (Alcaldía de Barranquilla, 2022) out of a total of 285. This initiative has had a significant impact on the physical and emotional health of the population, in addition to considering parks as fundamental elements of the social environment that drive economic and social development (Vargas and Roldan, 2018).

In addition, the recovery of parks has contributed to the reduction of crime. According to the Mayor's Office of Barranquilla (2022), a 15.4% reduction in crime rates was observed for the year 2022 compared to previous periods. This statement aligns with the comments of Alberto Salah, who highlights how the parks policy has had an impact on the reduction of problems such as drug addiction and common crime (Martínez-Valdés et al, 2020; Martínez, 2022; Maassen, 2023). Salah (Maassem, 2023) also highlights the continuous learning in areas such as gardening and management of the natural environment, which has contributed to the proper maintenance of parks.

On the other hand, the city of Barranquilla aspires that parks and public spaces become tourist assets, seeking to become a "city of parks", according to the vision of Mayor Jaime Pumarejo and the manager of the ADI (District Infrastructure Agency) Alberto Salah (Mayor of Barranquilla, 2020). This approach seeks that these spaces not only promote health and wellness, but also foster economic development and become tourist attractions for the city's inhabitants, thus generating new forms of growth in the social environment.

However, such policy still needs to be further strengthened since satisfaction is above 70% in the north of the city. In particular, the Metropolitan, Southwestern and Southeastern localities register figures of 41%, 47% and 56%, respectively, according to the latest report presented by the Universidad del Norte (Carvajalino, 2019). For this reason, although the benefits in terms of physical, emotional and economic health have been recognized, current policies related to parks should be oriented towards promoting equity.

DISCUSSION

Several of the studies we have seen above show that the presence of green spaces in urban environments has positive impacts on quality of life, mental and physical health, and community cohesion. The notion that parks act as havens of tranquility and opportunities for disconnection and recreation is consistent with previous research highlighting the therapeutic role of nature in cities. In addition, the idea that parks foster social interaction and community building is a significant point of convergence.

On the other hand, the emphasis on the relationship between parks and public policy is an aspect that is often overlooked in research on social welfare and parks.

urban. Therefore, public policies play a crucial role in the creation, maintenance and effective management of parks, and how these policies can influence people's experience in these spaces.

It is worth mentioning that policies can affect the accessibility, safety and quality of parks, adding a new level of understanding of the importance of effective planning and governance in the creation of green environments in cities. In addition, it is noteworthy that citizen participation in the definition of public policies related to parks can make a valuable contribution to the development and strengthening of parks.

CONCLUSIONS

The main conclusions on public policies applied to parks in Barranquilla are that urban parks play a crucial role in the quality of life of people in growing urban environments, as they provide access to spaces close to nature, recreational and social activities, and are spaces for refuge and tranquility in urban life.

In addition, they improve the physical and mental health of people, relieving stress and providing spaces for physical activity as highlighted in the theoretical review, as well as being an element to promote social interaction and community cohesion by providing meeting places and group activities.

On the other hand, public policies are essential to ensure the equitable availability and quality of green spaces in cities, since they can address accessibility, safety, comfort and satisfaction of park users, making it possible to establish which elements should be strengthened. Therefore, public policies are an essential element in the configuration of urban green spaces, their impact on social and economic wellbeing, and the need to consider the voices of the community in decision-making, but they must also take into account that they must be equitable in terms of their application in the territory of the city of Barranquilla.

Finally, it is advisable to take into account that, for the generation of new public policies, it is important that they be oriented towards strengthening the infrastructure of the parks in an equitable manner, independent of the location, they should take into consideration taking advantage of the environment and using it to strengthen the infrastructure of the parks themselves, maintaining a balance between the environment and socioeconomic development. It is also necessary to develop in-depth studies on the impact of public policies on urban development focused on parks but involving elements such as technology and the environment, since these could be articulated given the constant changes in the world that could generate new forms of social and economic development.

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