

Dr. Somnath Ghosal
Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta

"Policies and Land Use for Public Parks and Gardens in Big Cities"

American Centre, Kolkata 5th December, 2012

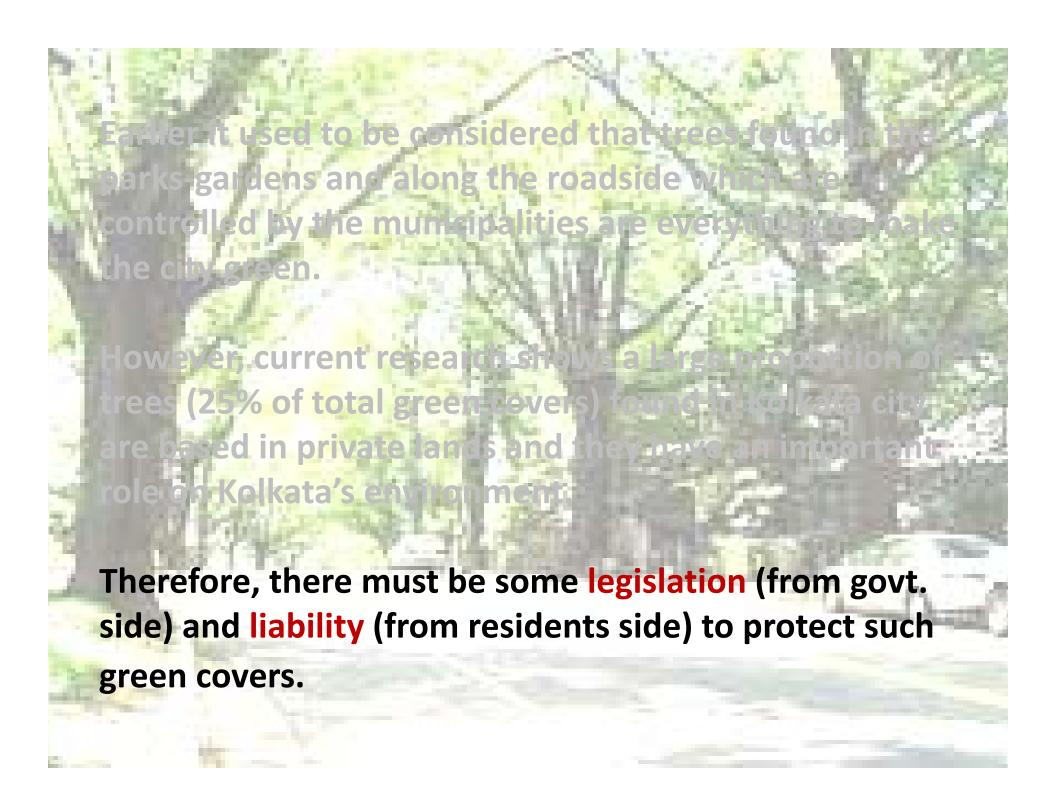
What 'Green City' is?

Green city is generally defined as the art, science and technology of managing green covers in and and around urban areas for the physiological, sociological, economic, aesthetic and ecosystem benefits that trees provide to the society.

Konijnendijk, Ricard, Kenney & Randrup, 2006

Earlier it used to be considered that trees found in the parks-gardens and along the roadside which are controlled by the municipalities are everything to make the city green.

However, current research shows a large proportion of trees (25% of total green covers) found in Kolkata city are based in private lands and they have an important role on Kolkata's environment.









- 1) Socio-cultural/economic life (Social responsibility)
- 2) Health (mental/spiritual)
- 3) Ecological/environmental (Open air/outdoor activities)

'Multidisciplinary' approach including subject areas like forestry, sociology, health, environment, planning, history, geography (physical as well as human), public policy, economics, anthropology, architecture and demography were used to examine the role that green covers can play from socioeconomic, health and environmental perspectives.

The scope of green covers in Kolkata city area can be portrayed based on three issues –

- 1. The vegetation structure (native & existing)
- 2. The location of green covers (central business/commercial area, within corporation residential area, sub-urban or peri-urban areas...)
- 3. Socio-environmental advantages and values that carried by these green covers



Historical

Started in late 19th century; New Jersey passed a law in the 1890s for the management of city trees (Ricard, 2005; Williams, 1989). The term 'urban forestry' was first used in 1894 (Cook, 1894).

During the early and middle years of the 20th century, many states and municipalities in North America had shade tree programs and professionals.

Late 1970s and 80s the concept was strengthened in the USA (Johnston, 1996; Jorgensen, 1993; Miller, 1997; Koch, 2000).

Only Ontario, Canada has included the practice of urban forestry in its legislation (Forest Act 2000).

(The initiatives were all taken to protect city environment from rapid urbanisation)



and

3) Health benefits (spiritual/a space for breathing)



Research shows that with the rapid socioeconomic transition in Kolkata, the native urban biodiversity and ecology, in which native dwellers (human being) also play an important role, are under severe RISK threat too.



- 1) Economically well-off
- 2) More productive to their work place/home
- 3) Aware about cultural and social values
- 4) Bit concern about nature





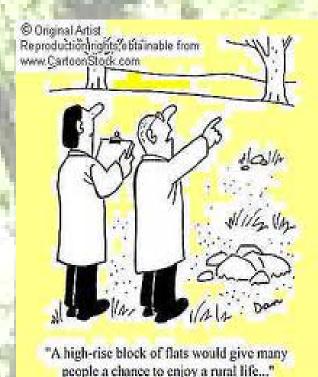












While in cities of the Global North, green areas are receiving more importance for public health and social welfare.

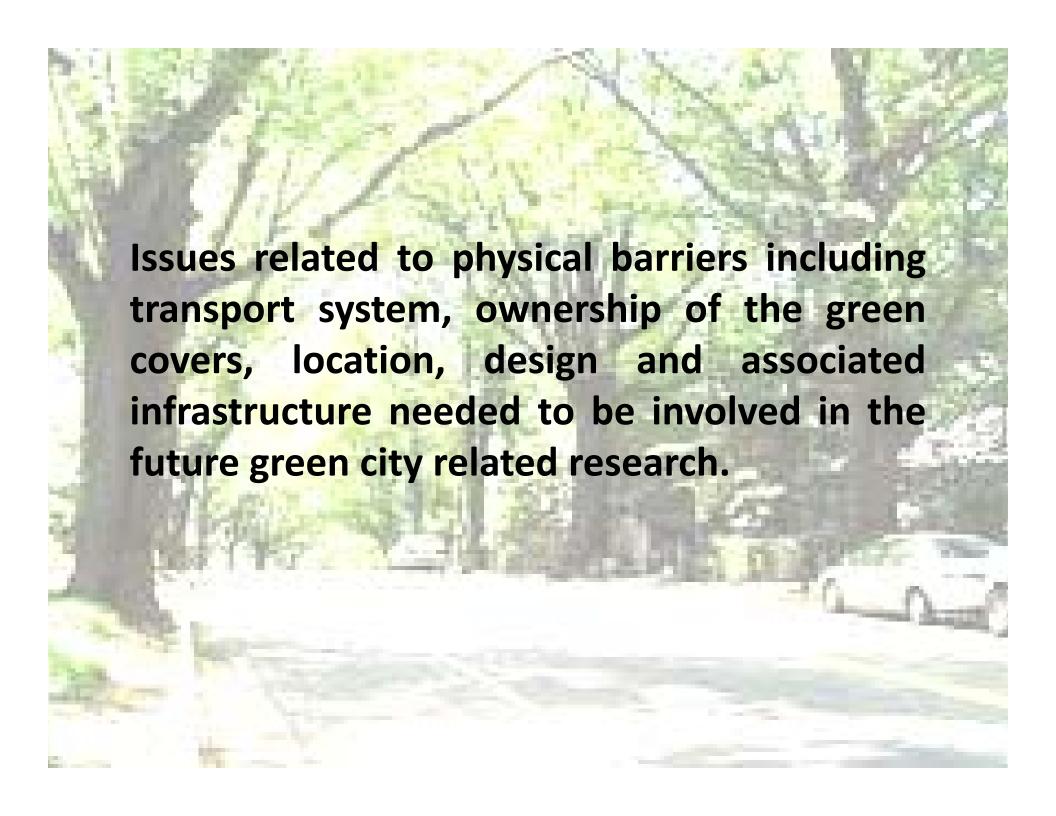
Unfortunately, unplanned built-environment reducing 'open green space' in Kolkata.

Is it mitigating the demand of 'common city life'?

Threats for Kolkata green covers are -

- 1. Spatial limitations
- 2. Adverse climatic condition including air pollution
- 3. Shortage of running water
- 4. Pressure from commercial and residential constructions
- 5. 'Imported' city planning
- 6. Political issues





Conclusion

Top-down and bottom-up approach must work hand-in-hand

Environmental awareness among city dwellers may play a constructive role to develop the idea of green city.





