

I am a Geographer ...

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Consultant

I am currently a PhD candidate in Geography at the University of Melbourne. My doctoral research analyses equity in access to urban green spaces (UGS) in Mexico City and its implications for residents' wellbeing. My primary aim is to enhance geographical knowledge and support policymaking with social scientific evidence, providing tools for evaluating, quantifying, and comparing the distribution and the quality of green spaces in the city, their impact on residents' wellbeing and the implications these features might pose on environmental equity in the city.

As the proportion of the population living in cities grows and urban health disparities continue to exist, approaches to reduce health inequities in urban settings are becoming a central topic in the development agenda. Geographic urban research has important implications in the design and implementation of public policies that are aimed towards a more just society. For example, the question of who benefits from the distribution of public amenities, such as green spaces, is extremely relevant in the urban Geography field.

From a public policy perspective, urban green spaces can be used as a tool to enable wellbeing opportunities, one that increases public savings associated with health spending and reduces long-term social care costs. The tools, skills, and knowledge that Geography provides can help to better plan the distribution of public facilities in cities, decreasing urban disparities. Through the use of ArcGIS, I am analysing the physical access to UGS based on the sociodemographic characteristics of individuals. Through geospatial analysis, I am defining the areas that have the highest UGS deficit in Mexico City, and the populations that are the most affected by this deficit. Furthermore, I am examining the social constraints or restrictions that inhibit the use of these spaces and, therefore, have a negative effect on the well-being.

Throughout my personal and professional development, what has most defined me and shaped my interests and objectives over the years is my home city. As the home to more than 20 million people, Mexico City is one of the world's largest metropolitan areas in the world. From a young age, I was keenly aware of the challenges urban areas face in developing countries – from the efficiency of public transportation, congestion and air pollution to the stark contrasts aroused by elite modern regenerations beside economically-disadvantaged people asking for money in the streets. I was compelled to explore what was



necessary to develop research, policies, and programs that might help my city and others grow into sustainable centers of prosperity. This curiosity about the intersection between urbanisation and development led me to pursue a PhD in Geography and a Master's in Development Practice.

Working for an international development bank or institution is one of the job prospects that geographers have if they want to impact in public policy decisions. Prior to starting my PhD, I worked as a consultant for the Strategic Coordination Group at the Inter-American Development Bank Group (IDBG) in Washington, DC. During my time at the IDBG, I was responsible for the oversight of Donors' Memorandums regarding the topics of inclusive cities and smart agriculture. This experience provided the opportunity for me to liaise with urban sector specialists like Andrés Blanco and Veronica Adler, who shared with me first-hand their experiences in housing and revitalisation projects across Latin America and the Caribbean. Because the continent is becoming increasingly urbanised, most of the IDBG's projects target urban development or urban populations. Yet, as is becoming increasingly clear, more specialists are needed to open new lines of investigation, in particular around the topic of public spaces and their impact on encouraging cities' inclusiveness, accessibility and shared prosperity. Geography has a key role to play in these investigations.