



Natural Landscape and Environmental Gerontology



Diego Sanchez Gonzalez*

Department of Geography, Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain

***Corresponding author:** Diego Sanchez Gonzalez, Faculty of Philosophy and the Arts, Department of Geography, Autonomous University of Madrid, Campus Cantoblanco, 28049 Madrid, Spain

Submission: 📅 February 26, 2018; **Published:** 📅 March 26, 2018

Introduction

From the ecological studies, contributions are made to protect life against environmental threats, such as pollution, ecological degradation and climate change [1,2], as well as to prolong life through new multidisciplinary fields, such as environmental gerontology, where the environmental analysis of characteristics of the ecosystems make possible the compression of natural landscapes and their influence on the active and healthy aging of the place [3]. After decades of research, we discovered that the environment has a significant effect on longevity, stronger than initially expected. Now we know that the aging process is conditioned by genetic factors, variations in human development and, above all, the dialogue with the environment [4,5]. Precisely, environmental gerontology is an area of knowledge of gerontology that seeks to know, analyze, modify and optimize the relationship between the person who is aging and their natural, physical and social environment, from interdisciplinary perspectives and approaches [6-8]. Also, this new discipline strives to understand the socio-spatial implications of aging and its complex relationship with the environment at different scales, to allow social and environmental policies that allow successful aging [9].

In the advances in environmental gerontology indicate that the environmental context (natural, physical and social), explains to a greater extent life expectancy, longevity and the propensity to develop pathologies related to age, such as Alzheimer's and Cancer [10,11]. Precisely, economic globalization, overexploitation of natural resources and the effects of climate change are increasing the destruction of ecosystems and limiting the response and adaptation capacities of future generations [12]. Today there is a limited knowledge of the negative repercussions of the progressive disappearance of natural public spaces (forests, urban parks, green areas, trees) in the health of the population, above all in aging [13-16]. Research indicates that pollution and environmental degradation are increasing, while that our capacity decreases to cope with and adapt to the effects of climate change [17].

From the environmental gerontology are being discovered the positive implications of the next natural environments in the active and healthy aging of the place, addressing the influence of environmental factors in the construction of identity, and the promotion of the health and well-being of the elderly [18]. In fact,

natural environments, such as green areas, public parks, gardens and orchards, have tangible effects on aging, by stimulating activities of daily life, raising positive feelings, increasing satisfaction with the environment and improving the way where we live and build the places we inhabit [19]. In this sense, exposure to the natural elements of everyday landscapes positively affects the health and well-being of older people, generating a sense of connectivity and belonging to the natural environment due to the experiences and emotions related to the place, improving life daily, cognitive and sensory development [20]. Likewise, green public spaces favor healthy lifestyles, by reducing the effects of pollution and by mitigating the impacts of natural hazards, such as floods and heat waves, on the vulnerable aging population [21].

The natural environments stimulate the activities of daily life in aging, proving the power of nature in health and well-being, through the recovery and emotional, physical and spiritual maintenance of the individual. Precisely, active aging should suggest rewarding work by observing the aesthetic and stimulating elements of the natural landscape, such as water, plants and animals, as well as the development of daily physical activities, such as gardening and horticulture, that favor autonomy and maintenance of the state of health, as well as social relations and attachment to the place. In addition, the gardens and orchards allow passive and active rehabilitation experiences, through gardening and horticultural, obtaining therapeutic benefits by alleviating the symptoms of physical and psychological diseases, such as stress reduction and the general feeling of well-being for old people [22,23]. The natural landscape contributes in a therapeutic way to their daily life, by promoting their security, identity and connectivity with nature and community [3,24]. In this regard, the frequency, proximity and exposure to natural landscapes contribute to healthy aging, increasing proactive strategies in the face of environmental pressures, providing a greater perception of safety, and favoring outdoor activities, social encounters, and empathy and the environmental identity with natural environments.

Therefore, future research should consider the long-term impact of the characteristics of the neighborhood and, above all, of the natural environment, of the life expectancy of an individual, once it has been understood that through the control of the environment can influence the physical and emotional well-being

of older adults. In addition, we predict that in the coming decades social and health policies will pay greater attention to natural environments and, in general, to environmental gerontology, in the development of active and healthy aging programs in the place. In turn, the new gerontological evidence will contribute to designing cities that are more sustainable and friendly for the elderly. The unstoppable destruction of the planet's biodiversity and the increase of uninhabitable metropolises make it necessary to rethink our current relationship with nature, as well as to design sustainable proposals to face climatic and demographic challenges, and enable friendly environments where we can grow, live and aging of successful way in the place. Once again, we discover with astonishment that in Nature there are the teachings of daily life in community, the keys to reach a respectful dialogue with the environment, and the secret of a harmonious longevity. Today we are witnessing a promising new time where researchers from ecological approaches will collaborate closely and in solidarity with researchers of the health and social disciplines, especially, in the face of a society that is aging in a context of climate change.

References

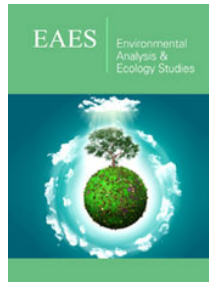
- Parmesan C, Yohe G (2003) A globally coherent fingerprint of climate change impacts across natural systems. *Nature* 421(6918): 37-42.
- Wong BM, Candolin U (2015) Behavioral responses to changing environments. *Behavioral Ecology* 26(3): 665-673.
- Sanchez-Gonzalez D, Adame LM, Rodriguez-Rodriguez V (2018) Natural landscape and healthy ageing in place: the case of the cumbres of monterrey national park in Mexico. *Bol Asoc Geogr Esp* 76: 20-51.
- Wu YT, Prina AM, Jones A, Matthews F, Brayne C, et al. (2015) Older people, the natural environment and common mental disorders: cross-sectional results from the cognitive function and ageing study. *BMJ Open* 5(9): 007936.
- Sanchez-Gonzalez D (2015) Physical and social environment and aging from environmental gerontology and geography. *Socio-spatial implications in Latin America. Rev Geogr Norte Gd* 60: 97-114.
- Wahl HW, Scheidt RJ, Windley PG (2004) *Annual review of gerontology and geriatrics. Focus on aging context: socio-physical environments.* Springer, New York, USA.
- Scheidt RJ, Schwarz B (2012) *Environmental gerontology: what now?* Routledge, New York, USA.
- Rowles GD, Bernard M (2013) *Environmental gerontology: making meaningful places in old age.* Springer, New York, USA.
- Rodriguez V, Sanchez-Gonzalez D (2016) Approaches to environmental gerontology in the Mediterranean Europe and Latin America: Policy and practice on ageing and place. In: Diego S, Vicente R (Eds.), *Environmental gerontology in Latin America and Europe. Policies and perspectives on environment and aging.* Springer, New York, USA, pp. 11-44.
- Wahl HW, Iwarsson S, Oswald F (2012) Aging well and the environment: toward an integrative model and research agenda for the future. *The Gerontologist* 52(3): 306-316.
- Geller AM, Zenick H (2005) Aging and the environment: A research framework. *Environ Health Perspect* 113(9): 1257-1262.
- Bellard C, Bertelsmeier C, Leadley P, Thuiller W, Courchamp F (2012) Impacts of climate change on the future of biodiversity. *Ecol Lett* 15(4): 365-377.
- Kaplan R, Kaplan S (1996) *The experience of nature: A psychological perspective.* The Cambridge University Press, New York, USA.
- Kaplan R, Kaplan S (2003) Health, supportive environments, and the reasonable person model. *American Journal of Public Health* 93(9): 1484-1489.
- Sanchez-Gonzalez D, Egea C (2011) Social vulnerability approach to investigate the social and environmental disadvantages. Its application in the study of elderly people. *Pap Poblac* 17(69): 151-185.
- Patrice M (2003) *Conflits urbains pour la protection de la nature dans une métropole mexicaine.* In: Patrice M, Corinne L, Muriel R (Eds.), *Conflits et territoires.* François Rabelais University, Tours, France, pp. 103-117.
- IPCC (2014) *Climate change 2014: impacts, adaptation and vulnerability.* Cambridge University Press, New York, USA.
- Falk H, Wijk H, Pearsson L (2012) A sense of home in residential care. *Scand J Caring Sci* 4(27): 999-1009.
- Zhang J, Howell R, Lyer R (2014) Engagement with natural beauty moderates the positive relation between connectedness with nature and physiological well-being. *Environ Psychol* 38: 55-63.
- Sanchez-Gonzalez D, Cortes MB (2016) Attractive public spaces in the active and healthy aging. The case teran market, Aguascalientes, Mexico. *Rev Estud Soc* 57: 52-67.
- Norton B, Coutts A, Livesley S, Harris R, Hunter A, et al. (2015) Planning for cooler cities: A framework to prioritise green infrastructure to mitigate high temperatures in urban landscapes. *Landsc Urban Plan* 134: 127-138.
- Kweon B, Sullivan W, Wiley A (1998) Green common spaces and the social integration of inner city older adults. *Environment and Behaviour* 30(6): 832-858.
- Sanchez-Gonzalez D (2009) Environmental context and spatial experience of aging in place: the case of Granada. *Pap poblac* 15(60): 175-213.
- Finlaya J, Franke T, McKay H, Sims-Gould J (2015) Therapeutic landscapes and wellbeing in later life: Impacts of blue and green spaces for older adults. *Health & Place* 34: 97-106.



Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

For possible submissions Click Here

[Submit Article](#)



Environmental Analysis & Ecology Studies

Benefits of Publishing with us

- High-level peer review and editorial services
- Freely accessible online immediately upon publication
- Authors retain the copyright to their work
- Licensing it under a Creative Commons license
- Visibility through different online platforms