

Building Cities' Biodiversity Portfolios: The Mapping of Urban Natural Assets in Kampala City, Uganda

Ecosystems health is in so many ways a premise to human wellbeing. Well-functioning ecosystems provide a steady flow of goods and services including but not limited to food, climate regulation, nutrient cycling, and aesthetic amenities. Today, however, many ecosystems and the services they provide are under increasing pressure most so in the densely populated urban areas. Kampala city with a day time human population of about 3 million people and an annual population growth rate of 4% was ranked as the 13th fastest growing cities on the planet. It is therefore no wonder that from 1989 to 2010, corresponding with explosive population growth, the area of developed land within the city increased from 27% to 78%. This development occurs at the expense of the natural assets it replaces together with the goods and services they provide. Moreover degradation of these urban natural assets impedes on the ability of the city to deliver services in a cost effective way and hampers its resilience.

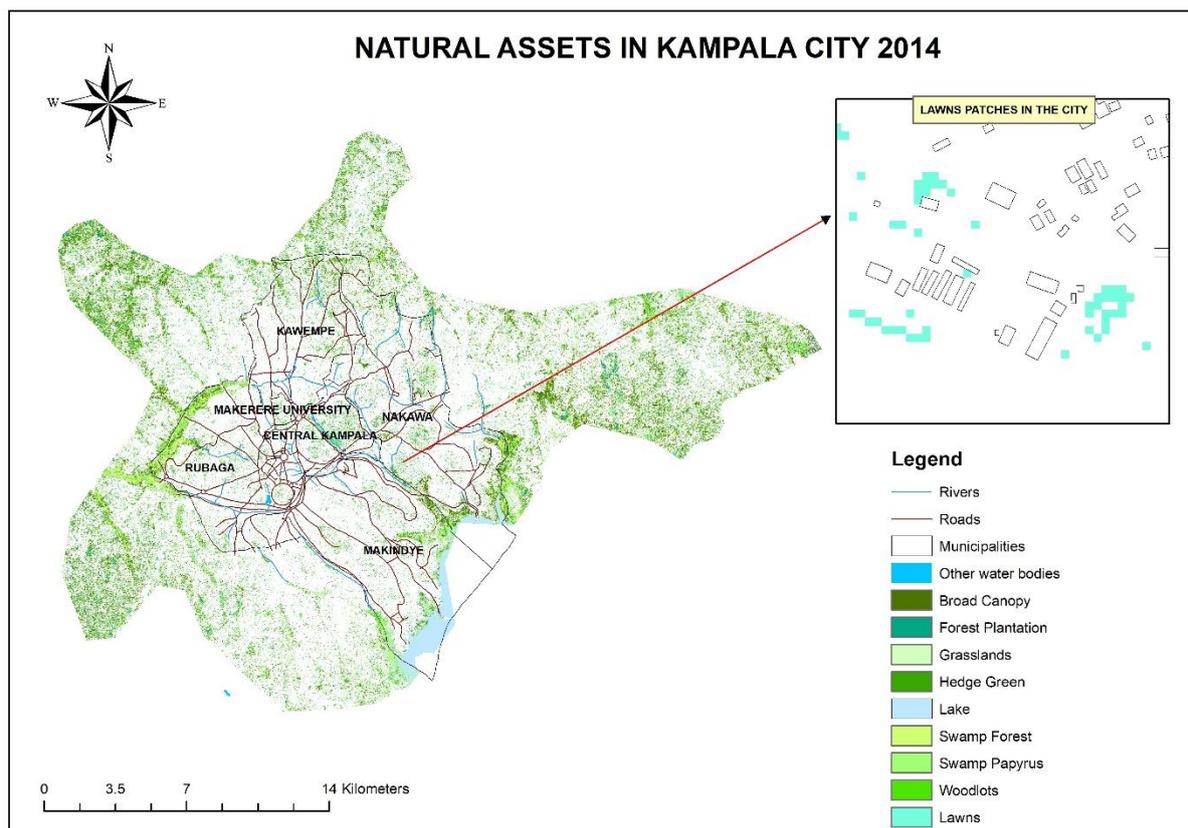


Figure 1: Urban Natural Assets in Kampala City Area

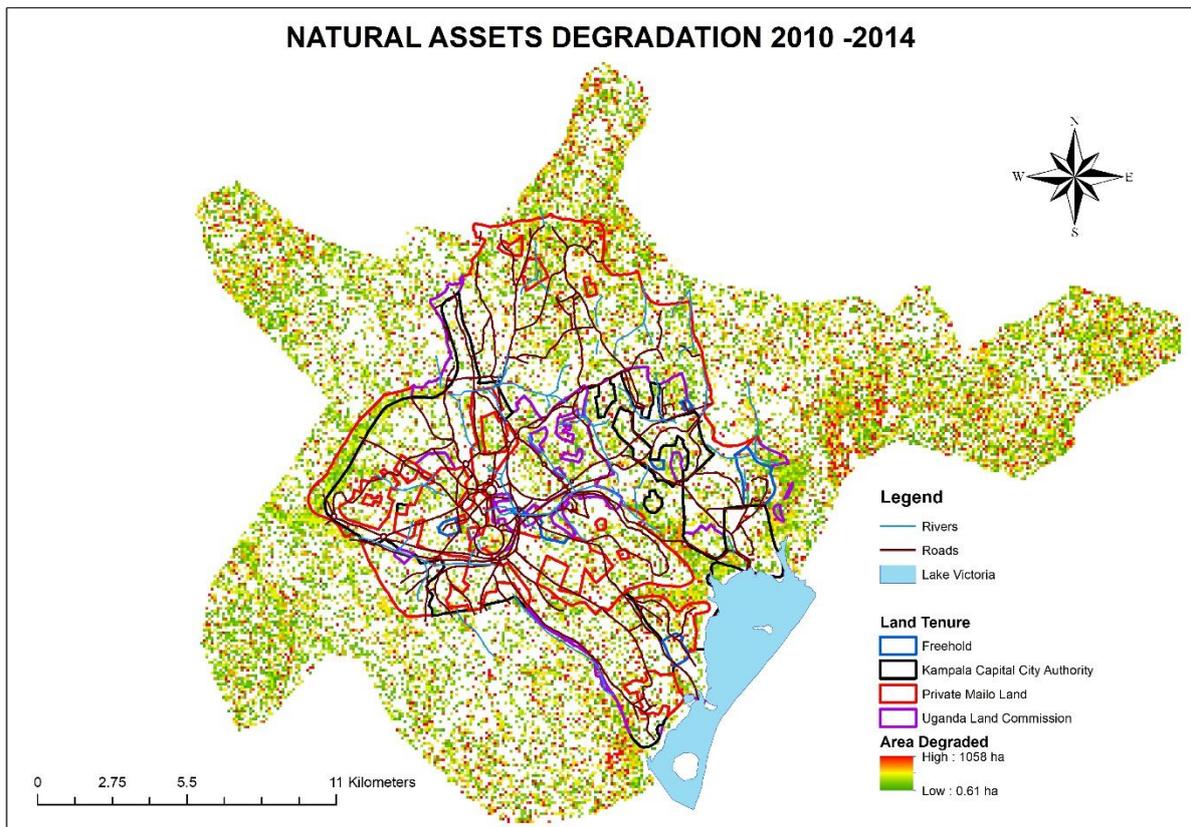


Figure 2: Urban Natural Assets Degradation in Kampala City Area

Although Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) acknowledges the value and contribution of the city's natural assets, efforts to conserve and develop them have been to a large extent limited. In an increasingly capitalist world, for an ecological landscape to remain intact, it must of necessity compete with other assets in the portfolio of wealth owners in the city economy which is seldom the case. The common understanding is that loss of most natural assets is associated with failure to value them and consider the values they provide in current policy and management domain. Since in fact failure to identify and value ecosystem benefits at all is tantamount to assuming that ecosystems are not natural assets.

Several attempts to fill this information gap by identifying, mapping, and valuing the city's natural assets have been made. However there is need to review and streamline these attempts, develop a guideline for future urban natural assets mapping methodologies and monitoring processes, identify urban natural assets hotspots with priority on ecosystem services, vulnerability to land use change, and to climate change. There is also an overarching requisite to make the urban natural assets mapping and monitoring process more participatory and all-inclusive. Moreover expansion of this mapping to Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area (GKMA) will provide a larger better landscape of making observations and inferences.



Figure 3: One of the natural patches along a road



Figure 4: Boundary hedges are great conservancies of biodiversity in Kampala City