

Chapter 8

Eleven innovative cities, many ways forward

The practice of open space management

This chapter continues the comparative study of public open space management and follows the analytical framework sketched out at the beginning of Chapter 7. Whereas that chapter looked at the context for public space management, this chapter looks at management processes and practices through the four key dimensions of coordination, regulation, maintenance and investment. It examines how the eleven international case study cities have dealt with those four topics and it concludes with key general lessons that can be taken from their experience. As before, boxes throughout the chapter looking at individual cities and detailing relevant aspects of their open space management practices provide the empirical background for the discussion. The four dimensions are each discussed in turn in the first four sections of the chapter. A final section draws out conclusions from this work.

Coordination of public open space management activities

A wide range of stakeholders play a part in public open space management. A key objective is therefore to understand their roles and responsibilities in the different international contexts and to examine how they are defined and coordinated.

Roles: the key stakeholders

Both within and outside local government a wide range of stakeholders have an interest in public open space management or are directly involved in its delivery. These ranged considerably amongst the eleven

cities and sometimes revealed a fragmented network of responsibilities. In Groningen, for example:

- housing corporations manage spaces around their housing estates;
- the Water Board manages the banks of canals and waterways;
- an independent trust owns and manages nature reserves in and around the city;
- green spaces around public facilities (e.g. schools and hospitals) are managed by their respective departments;
- the national government manages the open space along the national trunk road network.

Yet despite this seeming fragmentation, the city has managed to maintain high-quality open spaces, suggesting that the mechanisms for, and coordination of, management responsibilities may be more important than the particular structure of responsibilities.

Universally, it seems, local government carries primary responsibility for managing public open space, although management operation may involve a broader range of actors who may also be responsible for certain discrete categories of space. Århus is typical: the municipality is responsible for managing the landscape, forest areas, parks and other public open spaces; the royal grounds are also managed by the municipality in return for public use; whilst garden allotments and golf courses are managed by user organisations. In Curitiba, the majority of public open space is council property, and the Municipal Secretariat of the Environment (SMMA) has overall responsibility for its management. SMMA is directly involved in planning and maintaining public open spaces, licensing land uses, and land division of protected private land, as well as for the felling of trees on public and private land (Box 8.1).