

In both cities, open space management responsibilities are largely focused on local government. By contrast, in cities such as Tokyo this activity takes place within a comprehensive national policy framework, effectively creating a dual responsibility involving central and local levels of government. Hannover also falls into this camp. Its local authority is responsible for open spaces and their management, but important exceptions are found in nature conservation and the protection of garden monuments which are duties of the state government.

A clear distinction emerged in the case studies between day-to-day management and long-term development responsibilities, usually through the division of responsibilities within one overarching department. In Groningen, the management of open spaces owned by the municipality falls under the responsibility of various divisions of a single department, the Department of Physical Planning and Economic Affairs (ROEZ). Within this, open space management is the responsibility of the Urban Management Division, whereas open space development is undertaken by the Physical Development Division. The former is responsible for open space upkeep and replacement, the latter for expansion of the park system, reconstruction, and other large-scale changes. The arrangements are complicated by the facts that cleaning responsibilities for open spaces (including litter disposal) are carried out by Environmental Services, whilst the city architect plays a pivotal role in the relationship between new development and subsequent management.

Even where the majority of responsibilities for open space management were coordinated through one local government department, other departments also retained an involvement to a greater or lesser extent, such as those in charge of spatial planning, highways, sports and leisure, health, and real estate. In Zürich, for example, Grün Stadt Zürich (GSZ) is part of the city council's Infrastructure Department and has separate planning and maintenance units. As the parks/environment agency for the city of Zürich, GSZ is legally responsible for managing all urban open spaces, however, these responsibilities cease when open spaces have either large areas of hard surfaces or significant levels of traffic, in which case they are managed by the Traffic and Civil Engineering Office. Public sports grounds and swimming pools, by contrast, are owned by GSZ but managed by the Environment and Health Agency.

In some cities, a further local tier of government has a role to play. In Germany, large cities have had district councils for the last 20 years, and Hannover has 13 of them. The arrangement has the advantage that even if the city council does not regard open spaces as a priority, the district councils certainly do, and although their formal power is limited, their political influence is considerable. Political decisions regarding open spaces are first debated in the district councils before a political committee advises the city council on priorities.

Some cities are influenced at the more strategic level by regional policy. At this level, the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission sets general open space strategies for the metropolitan area of Minneapolis-Saint Paul through its Regional Parks Master Plan. The influence of strategic parks planning is also felt particularly strongly in the Melbourne area through the work of Parks Victoria which directly manages the urban open space network around Melbourne, whereas the City of Melbourne manages a much smaller area of open spaces in and around the city centre.

Local politicians played a decisive role in all but one of the cities examined. In Paris, for example, power resides in the hands of the elected city mayor who has ultimate decision-making responsibility for the Department of Gardens and Green Spaces. In Hannover, the mayor and the directors of the municipal administration are all politicians, and one of the latter is directly responsible for open spaces as director of the Environment and Green Spaces Division (FUS).

The exception to this general rule was Minneapolis, which is unique amongst large US cities in having an independent park board, separate from the mayor or the city council. Within the board, management responsibility lies with nine elected park commissioners, six of whom represent the six geographical districts of the city, whilst the other three represent citywide interests. Although the commissioners are elected, they are not politicians in the conventional sense because their remit is highly focused on developing general park policies and delivering open space management.

THE USE OF PRIVATE AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

As well as the multiplicity of public-sector roles and responsibilities apparent in the eleven cases, a range of private and third (community) sector stakeholders were also involved in open space management.

The extent of private sector involvement varies considerably. At one end sits Minneapolis, with almost no private involvement in public open space management. There, widespread contracting out has been avoided through a strategy of in-house job specialisation that cannot be matched by external contractors. Groningen, on the other end, has 80 per cent of maintenance work carried out by external contractors. In between these cases, the general approach seems to be one of using the private sector in various forms of partnership.

In Hannover, most new construction work within public open space is undertaken by private contractors. However, only 10 per cent of maintenance work is contracted out. More recently, city-owned sports fields have also been transferred to private sports clubs who receive a grant from the council to fund maintenance work. In Malmö, the Streets