

obligations for managing public spaces, and in some cases the power to define management objectives. This is done either through straightforward service delivery contracts, or as part of a development agreement in which private provision and/or management of public space results from negotiations around the conditions for, and outcomes from, private property development. The contracting out of street cleaning or park maintenance services, common in the UK, are examples of the former, whereas the public-private spaces in the US are examples of the latter. In both cases, these arrangements involve a business, profit-making logic on the part of the contractor (the agent), either directly profiting from a management/maintenance contract, or indirectly profiting from the performance of the development of which the public space is a part, and, in part, because of it.

Contracts in one form or another are an essential part of this process, and are more clearly expressed in terms of a principal-agent or client-contractor relationship (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002: 82–4). In these, one part – usually a public-sector agency – defines the services to be delivered and sets the standards of delivery, policy obligations and legal requirements. The other – normally a private agent – delivers those services in return for financial gain. For the private sector, even when not imposed by planning, zoning or other urban policy regulations, such collaborative relations can be justified by the characteristics of public space and public space management as commodities from which profit can be made and, given the externalities created by public space, by its potential to maximise the utility derived from ownership of surrounding property. For the public sector, they represent a way to fund public services by means other than the public purse. The rationale here is the same one underpinning the development of public-private partnerships (see Bailey 1995, Harding 1998):

- increasing public service budgets by tapping into private resources;
- bringing in skills and expertise not available to public-sector agencies;
- securing levels of service in excess of those normally provided by the public sector;
- creating more responsive, user-led management strategies for business-sensitive public spaces.

Although private management of public space is not a new phenomenon, its re-emergence as a practical policy option in post-welfare state societies runs contrary to many accepted notions of the direction of social progress. It is more established in the US, but it is rapidly gaining ground in other industrialised societies, especially in Europe, in spite of concerns about some of its implications. This is precisely the process denounced in the

increasingly vast literature on the ‘death of public space’ (see Mitchell 1995, Sorkin 1994, Smith 1996, Kohn 2004 – see Chapter 3).

In the UK, this model came about as an extension of privatisation and the use of contracts in other public services, notably health (see Sullivan and Skelcher 2002). Service delivery through private contractors is now common in a range of services such as street cleaning, graffiti removal, verge maintenance, tree pruning, etc., as a way of buying-in expertise and lowering fixed operational costs. However, this is not only about the private delivery of public space services as planned by a local authority or another public-sector agency. Increasingly it involves the total design and delivery of services in particular areas, or even the private provision of a framework of design guidelines and service standards for public spaces that are privately owned and managed.

#### COORDINATION

This privatised delivery of public space management and its constituent public services, dominated by contractual relationships, has important implications for the key dimensions of coordination, regulation, maintenance and investment. Whereas in the previous model coordination was essentially a matter of devising better, and more integrated links between public-sector organisations at different levels, here this is compounded by the need to coordinate the outcomes of public-private arrangements and contracts. Therefore, besides the normal vertical and horizontal coordination mechanisms within the public sector, coordination requires considerable attention to contract specification and the negotiation of public-private agreements, as well as to their monitoring and enforcement. Hierarchical structures might secure adherence to commonly-agreed practices and objectives among public sector organisations, but clear and detailed specifications of outputs and outcomes and penalties for non-compliance are required in the case of contractual, multi-sector relationships (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002: 84).

Detailed contractual specifications might ensure that particular public space management tasks are carried out to pre-defined standards, frequencies and levels of outputs, as in the case of street cleaning or waste collection, thus securing the desired level of public space quality. Similarly, clearly drafted agreements on, for example, the use, access, opening hours and maintenance standards of a privately built and owned public space, can help to ensure that such spaces feel ‘public’ by their users. In most of these cases, coordination is about making sure that private contractors or developers conform to public space policy objectives. However, detailed contracts and agreements are not necessarily effective in dealing with situations in which great flexibility is required, or where public space management involves a wide range of private actors.