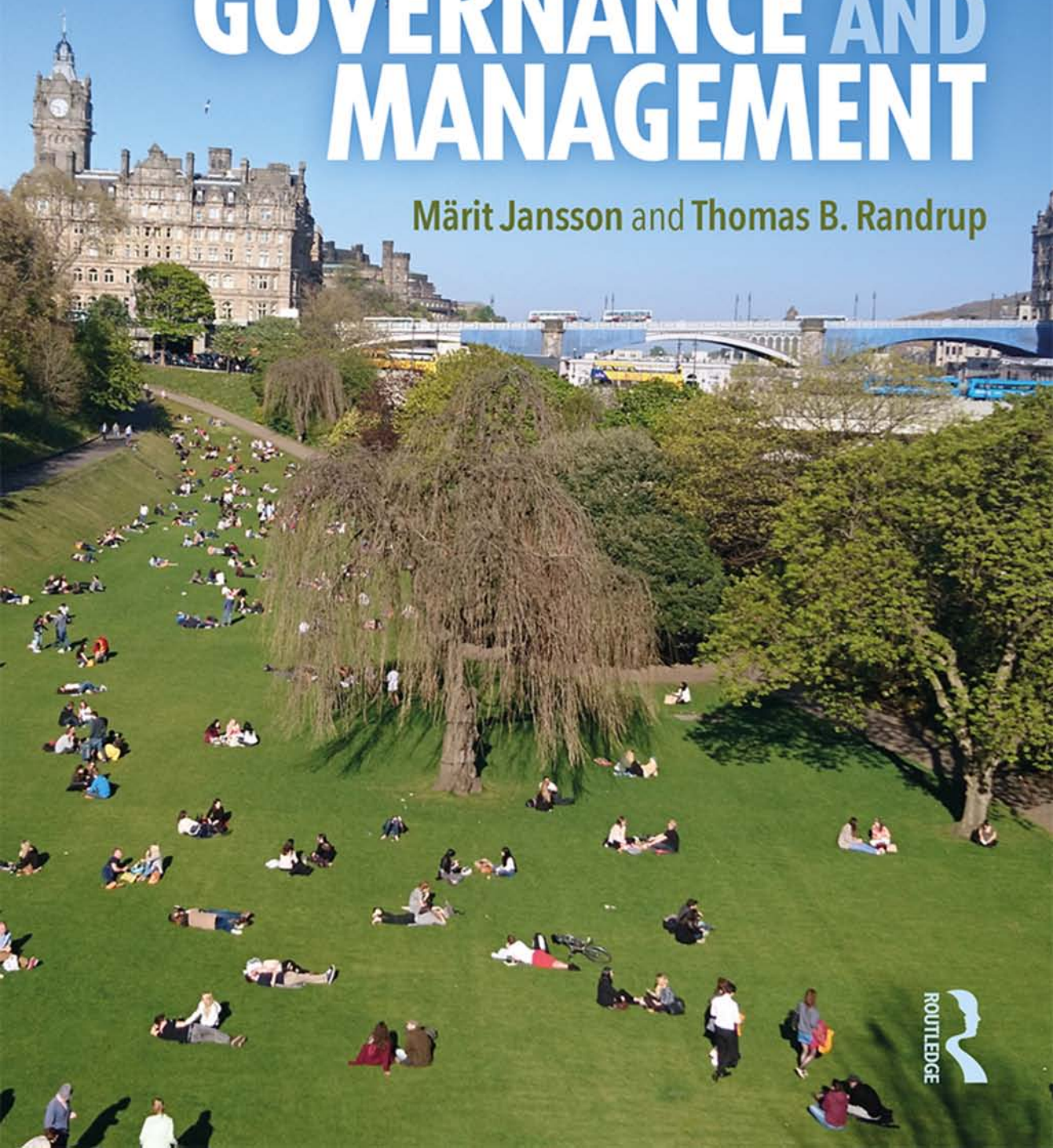# URBAN OPEN SPACE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Märit Jansson and **Thomas B. Randrup**

Urban Open Space Governance and Management

This edited volume defines and compares central aspects of governance and management related to urban open spaces (UOSs) such as long-term management, combined governance and management and strategic management of UOSs. Perspectives such as ethical considerations, user participation and changes in local governmental structures frame the governance and management of UOSs. Jansson and Randrup create a comprehensive resource detailing global trends from framing and understanding to finally practising UOS governance and management. They conclude by promoting positive changes, such as proactive management and strategic maintenance plans to encourage the creation of more sustainable cities.

Illustrated in full colour throughout, this book is an essential read for students and academics of landscape architecture, planning and urban design, as well as those with a particular interest in governance and management of UOSs.

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Contents

1 Introduction: urban open space governance and management – the long-term perspective

Thomas B. Randrup and Märit Jansson

Introduction and structure of the book

An urban open space (UOS) is mainly an unbuilt area within a populated settlement, comprising a combination of vegetated 'green', water-dominated 'blue', derelict 'brown' and/or hard-surfaced 'grey' elements. Increasingly, UOS is being perceived and documented as a vital element of the urban matrix (e.g. Qureshi et al., 2013; Wolff et al., 2018), enabling well-being for the ever-increasing urban population (e.g. Lee et al., 2015; WHO, 2016). UOSs range from playgrounds to highly maintained parks to informal and natural landscapes located in urban and peri-urban settings, and are often publicly accessible (e.g. Randrup & Persson, 2009; de Magalhães & Carmona, 2009). They are regarded as a source of numerous benefits and values, expressed as ecosystem services, for society (MEA, 2005). Governance and management of UOSs are key processes in provision of urban landscapes within an overall governmental framework and contribute to sustainable development.

We perceive governance and management to be approaches that can secure long-term provision of UOS and associated benefits.

In this book, we present UOS governance and management as these are performed, studied and taught, primarily within a Western European context but also worldwide. Experiences, findings and recommendations are described, analysed and discussed mainly in a local government context, which is often the most common governance mode for UOS management (e.g. Knuth et al., 2008; Carmona et al., 2010; Dempsey et al., 2014). However, we also relate them to other organisational and institutional contexts, such as international and national policymaking, cemetery management and management of outdoor areas around housing estates. Therefore, this book is of relevance in many contexts and parts of the world.

The book comprises 12 chapters divided into three main parts: (I) framing, (II) relations and values and (III) practice. Part I frames UOS governance and management by setting definitions of contemporary terms

and landscape approaches, explaining UOS as a historical social-ecological resource and placing it in an overall organisational framework. Part II describes the multitude of relations and values related to UOS governance and management, covering users' perspectives, ethical considerations and participation. Based on the two previous parts, the practices of UOS governance and management are presented and discussed in Part III. Part III also describes the concept of strategic management, discusses leadership and steering roles related to UOS management and provides tools and models for use in describing various aspects of UOS governance and management. The book concludes with a discussion on the future of UOS governance and management.

The origin of UOS governance and management

Historically, the importance of UOS and related development processes has increased as urban agglomerations have changed from small-scale settlements to various urban forms, including megacities. Urban areas can be defined areas, such as where man-made structures (e.g. houses, commercial buildings, roads, bridges, railways) cover a large proportion of the land surface or areas with high population density (Pickett et al., 2001). Throughout the world, the dominant pattern of migration within countries in recent decades has been from rural to urban areas. This is partly because improved technology has decreased the need for agricultural workers and partly because cities are seen as offering greater economic opportunities and better lifestyles (Rutledge et al., 2018). Today, over half the

world's population lives in urban areas, and the proportion is expected to increase to 66% by 2050 (UN, 2014).

UOS management can be traced back to the Western industrialised world in the 1850s, which involved overcrowded slums and streets filled with rotting garbage, dead animals and overflowing human and animal waste. Dogs and other animals ran wild in poorer neighbourhoods, and pigs functioned as street cleaners. Cholera epidemics resulted in a death rate in London, United Kingdom, that was higher than at any time since the plague (Black Death) in 1348–1349 and caused wealthier residents in New York City, New York, United States, to flee to the countryside, while the disease ravaged the poor (Bloomberg & Frieden, 2005). This prompted designers Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux to create Central Park in New York. They used the work on the park to demonstrate the need for reform of the social agenda and to develop means to achieve this reform by creating a public park which would improve public health for those not able to escape the city. This was one of many park developments of that period in urban centres in the Western world suffering from the harsh urban living conditions of industrialisation (see Figure 1.1). Another example, Victoria Park, was established in 1840 to meet the need for a park in the East End of London, where a rapidly growing population resulting from the development of the docks and industry had led to overcrowded housing and associated poor health and low life expectancy (Tower Hamlets, 2017). In Sweden, the 'Swedish Workers Association' was formed in Malmö in 1886, and prominent local Social Democrats thereafter founded Folkets Park (People's Park) in central Malmö. Folkets Park is believed to be the first park in the world initiated and developed by a collective

(i)

Figure 1.1 (i) The green space of Central Park in its very dense urban setting of New York City.

movement with the aim of making a significant social change. Today, the park is under the management of the local government of the City of Malmö.

Local governments and other steering bodies in the 1850s thus had clear incentives to use UOS as an instrument for creating areas promoting social benefits

(ii)

(iii)

Figure 1.1 (ii) Terraced houses bordering Victoria Park, London. (iii) Historic maintenance operations in Folkets Park, Malmö. *Source*: (i) Trent Szmolnik on Unsplash, (ii) Peter Neal, (iii) © Malmö stadsarkiv.

7 Participation in urban open space governance and management

Hanna Fors, Bianca Ambrose-Oji, Cecil Konijnendijk van den Bosch, Helena Mellqvist and Märit Jansson

Why participation in urban open space?

In the past, local governments have been responsible for the management of public urban open space (UOS). However, recent years have seen an emerging trend for user involvement in UOS management (Mattijssen et al., 2017; Sheppard et al., 2017). User participation in urban planning and management issues dates back to the 1960s, when local governments – for example in the US and UK – started involving users in urban and regional planning as a response to contemporary criticisms of professionally based rational comprehensive planning (Smith et al., 2014). The work of Patsy Healey (1997) contributed to establishing and developing more collaborative approaches to planning. In the specific case of green spaces, such as parks and other UOSs, user participation is currently promoted not only in terms of contributions to planning and design but also most recently in terms of ongoing management. International policies and initiatives, such as the

Local Agenda 21 Action Plan (UN, 1992), the European Landscape Convention (CE, 2000) and the Aarhus Convention (UN, 1998), all of which advocate involving users more closely in decisions regarding UOSs, have contributed to this widening remit. The underlying idea regarding user participation is that UOS can only be planned and managed in an appropriate, democratic, robust and sustainable way if its users are directly involved and their needs, perspectives and capabilities are effectively integrated (Van Herzele et al., 2005; Sheppard et al., 2017).

Various benefits of participation in UOS management have been highlighted. User participation in UOS management has the potential to benefit local governments, participating and non-participating users and UOSs. Users have been found to benefit from participation in UOS management through an increased sense of satisfaction with their neighbourhoods (Nannini et al., 1998), with greater recreational and social use (Jones, 2002; Glover et al., 2005) and an increased sense of attachment to green

spaces (Van Herzele et al., 2005). When a user (sometimes denoted 'connoisseur') is invited to participate in actual planning, a new expert is introduced and an exchange of knowledge emerges that strengthens trust between participating stakeholders (Mellqvist, 2017). Participation can also address environmental justice issues (e.g. Rutt & Gulsrud, 2016) and lead to UOS quality being perceived as higher among participating users (Fors et al., 2018a). However, a review of the scientific literature on user participation in UOS planning and management found that, while many potential benefits of participation were discussed, few were empirically tested (Fors et al., 2015). This implies that many benefits of participation seem to be taken for granted, especially whether participation actually improves the quality of physical UOS.

User participation in UOS governance and management has gained increased attention with the introduction of the various international policies, research studies and development of new trends, such as urbanisation and individualisation. User participation is becoming a more emphasised aspect of UOS management and a main pillar for UOS governance (Jansson et al., 2019). This chapter addresses the need for theories and appropriate methods to support participatory approaches within these practices.

Current trends and approaches to participation in UOS development

As a result of the increased interest in user participation, different ways of including users have been tested. A variety of participatory approaches are actively promoted by managers on the strategic level

(top-down), facilitated by various organisations and initiated by users (bottom-up). Some of the trends affecting green space governance and management in Europe, but also relevant for North America and worldwide, are described in Box 7.1. Associated examples of participatory projects and actions in UOS management are shown in Figure 7.1.

Involved – but to what degree?

The concept of participation may be defined in various ways, but the important signifier here is *user* – implying that the target group is mostly relatively local to the UOS. Users are a specific part of the public – namely, the people or groups that regularly or potentially inhabit and interact with a space. Users can also be described as either 'communities of location', i.e. a group of people living in the same geographical location, such as a neighbourhood close to an UOS, or 'communities of interest', i.e. a group of people brought together due to their common interest in using the same UOS (e.g. Seyfang & Smith, 2007). When these users participate in the management of, and decision making about, a publicly accessible UOS, the term 'public participation' is also relevant. 'Public participation' and 'public involvement' are often used interchangeably, but their meanings can entail different nuances. The term public involvement includes the public in decision making without necessarily guaranteeing that they actually have any impact on the end result (World Bank, 1993). In contrast, in her seminal work on public participation, Sherry Arnstein (1969) stressed that participation should give access to process and a degree of power to affect outcomes. The use of these terms as synonyms shows that participation

BOX 7.1: TRENDS IN USER PARTICIPATION IN UOS

Several societal trends currently affect participatory governance practices for UOS in Europe (Van der Jagt et al., 2016). Four of these trends are described next.

1. Linking up with sociocultural objectives

Public involvement in green space management is often linked up with sociocultural objectives, finding mechanisms to improve social cohesion, supporting users with less power or facilitating integration of immigrants. However, there is little attention in current research on how to involve different groups in modes of participation that move beyond consultation towards empowerment and self-organisation.

2. Promoting e-governance

E-governance facilitates participatory green space governance. It is becoming increasingly common to include the use of electronic Internet-based communication tools in governance activities, such as online consultation platforms, participatory GIS and mapping of green space issues. Another example of this is participatory budgeting, when local governments invite users to submit their ideas on how to develop local green spaces. Winning proposals are implemented for a dedicated part of the municipal budget, and in this way, users influence what is done with their city.

3. Fostering of public-private partnerships

Cuts in maintenance budgets have forced local governments to find alternative solutions in order to maintain public UOS quality. This has increased outsourcing of public green space maintenance to private actors and led to a third trend: fostering of public-private partnerships where, for example, private businesses sponsor maintenance of a local public green space.

4. Engaging in urban agriculture and local food production

Many local governments across the globe promote and engage in community-supported urban agriculture and local food production. Urban residents in many parts of the world are showing increasing interest in knowing more about the origins of food, understanding the health benefits of gardening and wanting to encounter biodiversity. This has led to the initiation of many urban gardening initiatives. Urban gardening initiatives create unique UOSs, such as allotment gardens, community food gardens, orchards or vineyards. A rather new urban gardening practice in Europe, North America and elsewhere is to make use of former industrial or infrastructural areas (i.e. brown space) through temporary and 'pop-up' gardening projects, often linked with objectives to foster social cohesion.

Figure 7.1 Examples of four current trends in user participation. (i) School ground greening in Malmö, Sweden. (ii) E-governance using children's maps in GIS. (iii) Public-private collaboration in Mexico City where some businesses have taken responsibility for maintenance of public planting areas outside their premises. (iv) Davie Village community garden in Vancouver, Canada. *Photos*: (i) Jansson et al. (2014), (ii) Ulla Berglund, (iii) Elizabeth Shelley and (iv) Märit Jansson

notions can range from consultation without influence on decisions to integrated cooperation (World Bank, 1993), a range that raises questions regarding what ideals of participation processes and outcomes to strive for.

Involvement of users in UOS planning and management is generally seen as good and desirable, but it is not always clear what it means in practice in terms of the degree of actual involvement and how much power is transferred from, for example, local governments to participating users. Figure 7.2 presents different ways of describing the level of user participation. Apart from the 'spectrum of public participation in forest and woodland planning', none of the ladders and spectra described next is specifically developed for participation in UOS management, but all may,

11 Strategic management of urban open spaces

Thomas B. Randrup and Märit Jansson

Introduction

Urban open space (UOS) managers address many of the current environmental and ecological trends and challenges prevailing in society. These include climate change adaptation and mitigation and solutions for modern urban challenges that range from urban stormwater management (Petit-Boix et al., 2017; Qiao et al., 2018) to urbanisation and increased densification of cities, leading to increased pressures and loss of UOS (Soga & Gaston, 2016), individualisation and an increased human demand for engagement and involvement (Buijs et al., 2016), as well as demographic changes resulting in increased pressure on public funding (EU, 2017). There is a general understanding, and demand, that such challenges can be dealt with or even solved by active governance and management of UOS. Nature-based solutions involve the use of green and blue spaces as a response to future urban challenges, such as concerning climate change and human health (EC, 2015; Albert et al., 2019). Nature's Contribution to People (part of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) (Díaz et al., 2018) and the United Nations

Sustainable Development Goals are efforts to address human dependency on nature in restoring and developing not only urban areas but also human life in general. This places great demands on the actors responsible for UOS governance and management.

Frequently asked questions within a UOS organisation are as follows: How can we be efficient without compromising the usability of UOS? Do we have the best people in all positions? Is the organisation an inclusive and attractive working environment? How are the values of the organisation expressed in ecosystem services of UOS (see Chapter 8), and are these sufficient to meet the needs? Each question may require its own approaches and involve both long-sighted and short-term thinking. This calls for a strategic approach to UOS management.

Strategic decisions are needed in an everyday context but affect the long-term well-being of an organisation (Fitzroy & Hulbert, 2005). Within UOS governance and management, and in many other circumstances, managers will be expected to deal with strategic decision making on at least two levels: (i) leading personnel and steering the organisation in the right direction efficiently, effectively and as a good, inspiring working environment and

(ii) managing UOSs so that they remain relevant and valued by users. The management literature has long recognised the difference between being a leader and being a manager (see Box 11.1). According to Zaleznik (2004, p. 2), 'A managerial culture emphasizes rationality and control', where 'a manager is a problem solver' and 'from this perspective, leadership is simply a practical effort to direct affairs; and to fulfill his or her task'. Fitzroy and Hulbert (2005) also make a clear distinction between management and leadership. In line with Kotter (1996), they define management as being about keeping the organisation operating, while coping with complexity. Effective management requires systems and procedures to handle this complexity, using devices such as standard operating procedures, planning and budgeting systems. In contrast, leadership is described as being about change, developing visions and strategies but also about aligning people with that vision and inspiring them to make it happen. The problem for UOS managers may be to address some or all of the aforementioned challenges, while also making UOS relevant for users. Doing so requires leadership in order to direct multiple stakeholders (staff, politicians, users and various interest groups) to achieve this goal.

In this chapter, we describe the characteristics of an UOS organisation in relation to leadership and management. Specifically, we focus on strategic management as a combination of both leadership and management and describe long-term strategy making and governance. The main focus is on the local government perspective, but the leadership and management approaches described apply also to many other organisational settings dealing with UOS.

Characteristics of a UOS organisation

Leadership and management actions will always be conducted under unique circumstances depending on the characteristics of different executives and employees, the goals of the organisation, the financial situation, prevailing labour market conditions, etc. Despite each UOS organisation (local government, contractor, consultant, housing company, etc.) facing different realities and at different stages in the process (planning, design, construction or maintenance), many basic conditions are common to all UOS organisations (see Box 11.2). As described in Chapter 4, the UOS sector in general is characterised by many

BOX 11.1: DEFINITIONS

Manager: A person who is responsible for a certain group of tasks or a certain subset of an organisation, including a team to achieve the designated tasks. A manager is a 'problem solver'.

Management: The art of managing and coordinating an organisation, including setting the strategy of the organisation in order to achieve certain goals.

Leader: A person who is in control or in charge of people or an organisation. A leader 'sets the direction'.

Leadership: The art of motivating, inspiring and directing a group of people to act towards a common goal over a substantial period.