

EVALUATION

1.1 PLACE-KEEPING - AN ISSUE THAT MATTERS

Open spaces are highly relevant locally and citywide. They can range from the small pocket-park in a neighbourhood to a large park of citywide or even regional importance. They can be either grey (squares and streetspace) or green (parks), and can fulfil multiple functions for social life: cultural activities; biodiversity and ecosystems; and business environments.

They also have an economic value for both public and private sectors through individual and commercial spending power and the proven impact on surrounding property values. So the role of place-keeping (maintenance, care, joint responsibility and ownership in the broadest sense) within the long-term safeguarding of open spaces is not only important for cohesion within local communities but can create economic benefits as well.

Why must it be sustainable? Because in economically difficult times, place-keeping budgets are the first to suffer, despite their significant contributions to health, wellbeing and local economy. And while funding is available for construction and retrofitting, it is not available for maintenance or staffing; and while political credit exists for exciting new open spaces, it does not do so for their day-to-day management. Poor or non-existent place-keeping can lead to a waste of resources due to the cost of future regeneration when it is cheaper to systematically maintain.

1.2 WHY IS IT AN ISSUE FOR POLITICIANS?

For place-keeping to become an integral part of planning, design and economic improvement at the most fundamental level, the baton must be carried by the politician who has it in his/her power to ensure it is given the same level of importance within masterplanning and regeneration as place-making.

And place-making needs to be accorded the same gravity as other dimensions of well planned urban infrastructure. Economy and prestige, and health and happiness have their roots in, and benefit from, well designed open spaces sustainably cared for long term.

There is a political choice to be made: safeguard open space investments and their positive effects or condemn them, their surrounding communities and local businesses through underfinancing.

1.3 THE FIVE THEMES

MP4 analysed some of the many good place-making and sustainable place-keeping examples throughout Europe which bring together public and private stakeholders and create strong, longstanding partnerships.

This process identified five themes particularly pertinent to quality, sustainable place-making and place-keeping, namely: governance, partnerships, finance, policy, and evaluation. These are the catalysts for enduring open spaces and enriched neighbourhoods.

This document deals with Evaluation. Its four sister documents each discuss one of the following themes: governance, partnerships, finance and policy.

Oostkampus Park



2 EVALUATION - KEY ISSUES

Evaluation is an assessment based on the systematic collection and analysis of data, whether quantitative or qualitative, in order to aid decision-making. **Evaluation is not undertaken as an academic exercise for its own purpose but is a tool to improve processes and results, and in effect to improve public spending or save public money.** The prerequisites for evaluation and monitoring include an evaluation strategy, methodology, instruments, and resources.

In the context of MP4, evaluation of place-keeping refers to both the monitoring of the process and retrospective evaluation of the results on the ground. Monitoring the process of place-keeping involves investigating issues such as: how are place-keeping activities developed? Who makes important decisions? Is it clear who has what role and responsibility for? Are decision-makers accountable? Are all potential participants involved? The evaluation of the results of place-keeping, in turn, involves investigating whether the place is well-maintained and well-used.

In practice, people often evaluate open spaces and their maintenance intuitively, with this evaluation potentially influencing business location decisions, property prices and the overall image of a place, for



Vardens Park, Copenhagen

example in the media. **This can have social and economic consequences for an area, and may have political significance.**

Appropriate measurement of place-keeping, however, is difficult. Many indicators measure the quality of open space, but not the place-keeping itself. They also often only measure the results of place-keeping rather than the process. And there is the question of how one measures the less tangible aspects of place-keeping such as local sense of identity and wellbeing. Bearing this in mind, it needs to be said that a number of indicators are widely used in measuring the quality of

open and green spaces, and can be used in the measurement of place-keeping (as process and as product). These include: awards (e.g. the Green Flag Award in the UK); competitions; user satisfaction surveys; surveys of public space use; community involvement; evaluation of procurement and contracting; value for money; cost-benefit analysis; staff retention and skills development; and sustainability indicators.

Evaluation can be based on objective or subjective measurements. Objective measurements tend to be easier to determine, but may be limited in the information they provide, particularly in relation to the less tangible aspects of place-keeping. The use of subjective measurements raises the issue of whose views should be considered. A key decision is whether to rely on expert views or user views, or a combination of both.

Last but not least, evaluation can be ongoing or a one-off measurement. In addition, the latter can be done during the process or after it has been completed (ex-post). Ex-post evaluation is possible, and has its value, for place-making activities. But place-keeping, by its very nature, is an ongoing activity, so while evaluation of place-keeping will usually be done during the process, there is greater scope for it to be an ongoing activity too.



HafenCity Hamburg

3 EXPERIENCE FROM THE MP4 PARTNERSHIP

The following projects from the MP4 context demonstrate new approaches in the evaluation of place-keeping activities across Northern Europe.

3.1 LÖVGÄRDET AND ERIKSBO, CITY OF GOTHENBURG, SE

Sociotop mapping; innovations in social mapping

Lövgärdet and Eriksbo are two housing estates from the 1960s and 1970s with under-used adjacent nature areas (lake and green spaces). They are mostly occupied by a deprived community and the physical environment needs to be renewed. The MP4 pilot project aimed to do so in a sustainable manner, encouraging socio-economic growth and long-term improvements to increase the attractiveness of open space. New evaluation tools were used in the planning of the areas, including the Gothenburg Sociotope map as background information which was used in the overall analysis of the park's situation within the city. The methods used show user preferences in the areas as well as qualities and weaknesses in the green structure. The information is used to choose the most profitable places for investments. It also presents ideas about how to direct the development of these places.

3.2 FRIENDS OF FIRTH PARK SHEFFIELD, UK

Mapping community capacity

The Friends of Firth Park is a voluntary residents' organisation with an interest in the local park. The group has worked in collaboration with Sheffield City Council for many years, and has been fully involved in the decision-making around the redevelopment of a derelict pond in the park to provide a multipurpose area. In order to evaluate the degree to which community organisations such as the Friends of Firth Park can continue to be involved in times of economic and political flux, and to aid evolution of roles and responsibilities, MP4 developed a suite of community capacity mapping methodologies. Six factors of capacity were identified which affect the community partner's ability to contribute to place-keeping. These are:

- capital
- commitment
- skills base
- motivation
- communication and
- political influence.

Through a focussed investigation carried out in partnership with the Friends, Sheffield City Council and other stakeholders, the associated importance of network connections was also revealed. Recommendations generated by this work are now being utilised by Friends groups to guide and sustain their future development, and by council partners to understand how best to target resources to support this.

3.3 EMMEN REVISITED EMMEN, NL

Village-wide evaluation

Emmen Revisited (ER), a joint-venture organisation between Emmen Municipality and the Housing Corporations operating within the municipality since 1998, aims to improve the social and living environment in urban districts and villages. In the small village of Barger Compascuum, ER worked with local community in a structured approach to establishing community representative bodies which were involved in decisions around the design of the redeveloped village centre pedestrian-friendly shared space. The success in the place-making stage has led on to continuing collaboration between the community representative body and ER in establishing joint place-keeping. Evaluation of place-making was carried out jointly by specialists and residents at several points during the process. Evaluation will take place again with the same group, after the project site has been used for several months. In the meetings between the community representative body and ER the process to establish appropriate place-keeping arrangements is continuously monitored and evaluated through discussion.

Emmen Revisited



Lövgärdet

Further information:
Gothenburg
www.goteborg.se

Further information:
Friends of Firth Park
www.sheffield.gov.uk



Further information:
Emmen Revisited
www.emmenrevisited.nl

4. KEY FINDINGS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

After analysing the practice of place-making and place-keeping around Northern Europe and implementing innovative pilots in five partner cities, the transnational MP4 partnership has come to the following key findings and policy recommendations on the evaluation of place-keeping based on practical experience:

- Monitoring and evaluation can be an expensive activity, often taking lower priority in relation to actual capital investments and other budget items. However, its importance in decision-making and the scope for reducing future costs as a result from lessons arising from evaluation needs to be acknowledged, and evaluation needs to be budgeted for at the beginning
- In place-keeping of open spaces evaluation can be used to: promote the space to users; assist internal determination of priorities for action; and ensure value for money. In addition to generating useful information for decision-making, evaluation of place-keeping can also engender community commitment if it is carried out jointly with local residents on a regular basis
- The approaches used should depend on what the evaluation is for. It is usually fundamental to have: a baseline; and a



monitoring and evaluation plan, which should be considered from the beginning and needs to identify what is going to be monitored and evaluated. Only relevant indicators should be employed in order to optimize efforts and investments. Indicators need to be integrated if a meaningful picture is to be achieved

- Robust indicators are needed to convince people that long-term investment is worthwhile
- Evaluating economic, health and wellbeing benefits of place-keeping is important but difficult. A distinction needs to be made between direct and indirect benefits and impacts
- Involving users such as voluntary residents' associations can provide on-the-ground monitoring of open spaces for a limited

cost and can help tap into relevant personal and cultural beliefs. Extra attention and support is needed to ensure the qualitative level and consistency between the various monitoring programmes

- Qualitative evaluation can often be less highly regarded by public authorities, but using people's stories (e.g. video interviews) to demonstrate social capital generated by the space can be a powerful tool in proving to authorities that the project has produced real benefits
- While baselines are important to measure against, they are not always directly applicable, e.g. in cases where the transformation of the space and of its users is substantial, or where the population may be transient
- If frequent or ongoing evaluation involving residents is set up, appropriate mechanisms or intervals need to be found to ensure that too much detailed input does not conflict with project development and delivery
- The process should be evaluated as well as the end results, in order to identify how to improve the process in future
- Stakeholders may see evaluation as potentially threatening, and this needs to be considered when designing the monitoring and evaluation process in order to avoid it interfering with the building of trust.

MP4 is a European project (2008-2012) that focuses on innovative approaches for planning and designing, maintaining and using private and public open spaces. MP4 stands for 'Making Places Profitable, Public and Private Open Spaces.' It was funded through the European Union Interreg IVB programme for the North Sea Region. The nine project partners in six countries demonstrated how place-making, which is improving open spaces physically, can offer positive social and economic benefits on the long run. Its main aim, however, was to identify transferable successful methods of sustainable, long-term maintenance (place-keeping) and to influence planning policies from European level downwards to local neighbourhoods to ensure place-keeping is not only incorporated into citywide masterplans, but given as much consideration as place-making in every open-space investment.

For more information on MP4, please visit www.mp4-interreg.eu.



City of
Göteborg



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

HCU

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Lawaetz-Stiftung