

## ***Defining place-keeping: the long-term management of public spaces***

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### **Abstract**

There has long been a focus in urban landscape planning and design on the creation of high-quality public spaces, or *place-making*. Large amounts of capital continue to be spent on creating such spaces, without adequate thought given to, or resources made available for, their long-term maintenance and management of public spaces, or *place-keeping*.

While there may be continued policy rhetoric about the importance of *place-keeping*, particularly as public spaces are recognised for their important contribution to health, wellbeing, biodiversity and also their economic value, this has not however been supported in practice. There are examples in many cities where public spaces are subject to poor management and maintenance practices, clearly visible where vandalism, litter and damage to facilities and equipment occur, and people no longer feel safe or comfortable.

This paper argues that this uneven focus on place-keeping is not only due to a lack of resources but also to lack of understanding of the concept, its complexity and the wide implications it has for users, practitioners and policymakers. The paper aims to address this gap in knowledge by providing a detailed exploration and definition of place-keeping within the urban context. Place-keeping is not simply about the physical environment, its design and maintenance, but also encompasses the inter-related and non-physical dimensions of partnerships, governance, funding, policy and evaluation.

**Keywords:** place-keeping, place-making, public space, management.

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## Introduction

*Place-making* has long taken centre stage in urban planning and design, where capital funding is spent on the *shaping* and *making* of high-profile places in towns and cities all over the world (Roberts, 2009). Such places encompass a wide range of areas including parks, civic squares, waterways and open/ green spaces in housing estates, both publicly and privately owned and managed. Through place-making, the resultant high-quality public spaces are argued to be economically and socially beneficial for local communities and contribute positively to residents' quality of life and wellbeing. In light of these benefits, it is perhaps unsurprising that large-scale capital is spent on creating such places. However, what is surprising is the lack of priority given to the *place-keeping*, or long-term management of such spaces, once *place-making* has occurred. This paper will show that in the planning and design process, inadequate thought is given to place-keeping, often manifested as an insufficient pool of resources made available for the long-term maintenance and management of such places. Without place-keeping, public spaces can fall into a downward spiral of damage, disrepair and inadequate maintenance. This can potentially lead to manifestations of the 'broken window syndrome' where even 'cosmetic damage can invite more serious anti-social or even criminal behaviour' (Wilson and Kelling, 1982, cited in Nash and Christie, 2003, p. 47). This can lead to residents feeling unsafe in places which become unused in favour of others. Trying to restore such places to their former 'glory' can be a costly exercise, not just in financial terms, but also socially to regain users' confidence to use the place safely and comfortably.

This paper argues that this lack of focus on place-keeping is not only due to a lack of resources but also a lack of understanding of the concept, its complexity and the wide implications it has for users, practitioners and policymakers. The paper aims to address this gap in knowledge by providing:

- an outline of the research and policy context within which place-keeping sits;
- an in-depth and critical review of the concept of place-keeping within the urban context;
- a detailed definition of place-keeping as a combination of physical and non-physical dimensions; and,
- recommendations for further research.

## The wider context of place, place-making and place-keeping

In Europe it can be argued that there is an ongoing policy shift back towards the aims of the mid-19th and 20th century social reformers who fought for good-quality living environments for all residents which included the provision of publicly accessible green space. Place continues to be an important part of the discourse on urban social life, constituting a renewed interest in the concept (Roberts, 2009). While today's context may be very different politically, environmentally, economically and socially, there is growing consensus in theory and policy that open and green spaces are vital to urban life because of their significant contribution to urban dwellers' wellbeing (e.g. Newton, 2007). This perspective acknowledges that public open spaces 'provide a range of social, aesthetic, environmental and economic benefits' (Caspersen et al., 2006, p. 7). These benefits emerge from the perceived value that public space has for everyday quality of life, serving as 'a stage for urban publicness, sport, art, and cultural activities...for all members of society when they go about their daily business' (BMVBS und BBR, 2008).

The profile of place-making as a means of creating good-quality environments has been raised considerably since the late 1990s when area-based initiatives were adopted to address concerns with local and neighbourhood-scale social problems in deprived neighbourhoods throughout Europe (Carpenter, 2006). Put simply, it was claimed that urban regeneration in a deprived area can combat urban poverty, the ensuing environmental degradation, and promote economic growth (Urban Task Force, 1999). Belief in such claims continues today within the broad context of sustainability: in 2005 all EU-member countries endorsed the *Bristol Accord* and agreed to create more attractive places – or "sustainable communities" – where people want to live and work, both now and in the future' (ODPM, 2006, p. 9). As part of this focus on the quality of the environment is the *liveability* agenda adopted in cities around the world which endorses the provision of clean, safe and green public

spaces and streets (Carmona, 2007, Jonas and McCarthy, 2009). In the UK for example, there is a plethora of prescriptive urban design guidance on 'the art of making places for people' (CABE Space, 2005a, Urban Task Force, 2006, Homes and Communities Agency, 2007).

While tastes and habits have clearly changed dramatically since the advent of the public park in the mid-eighteenth century, particularly in the last half-century in terms of leisure pursuits, publicly accessible public space continues to play an important part in people's everyday lives. Recent research and policy focus on encouraging people, particularly children and teenagers, to do more exercise and to do it outdoors. Urban green and open space is considered a means of combating obesity, getting fresh air and using green space more passively as a restorative environment in which to 'unwind' and cope with everyday stress and mental illness (Abraham et al., 2010, Pretty et al., 2005, Mitchell and Popham, 2008). A growing body of research from around Europe shows that encouraging people to spend time in local green spaces can help improve mental health problems such as depression and work-related stress (Newton, 2007, Hansmann et al., 2007, Ulrich, 1979). Studies show that the closer people live to green space, the more likely they are to use it (Schipperijn et al., 2010) while other social benefits relate to sense of place, identity and spirituality with green space (Irvine and Warber, 2002, Konijnendijk, 2008). Further social benefits of open spaces include the opportunities for social interaction and engagement with people who might not be encountered elsewhere (Gehl, 2001, Whyte, 1980). Considerable literature focuses on the importance of spaces that all members of society can use with equal rights (Amin, 2008). There are also claims that urban open spaces can contribute positively to civic pride, sense of community and sense of place (McIndoe et al., 2005). The belief in such a relationship partly informed the creation of the public parks in the 19th-20th centuries around Europe as healthy places for all residents to spend time in and be proud of (Conway, 2000) alongside the long-standing premise, supported by recent empirical research, that urban open space can provide residents with respite from the daily pressures (Barbosa et al., 2007). Such benefits are however achieved only if people use the spaces: and key determinants behind use include the safety and comfort of all potential users (Luymes and Tamminga, 1995).

Green spaces have also been identified as providing critical habitats for biodiversity and form an important part of the ecosystem in urban areas (Gaston et al., 2005, Barbosa et al., 2007). Trees and green spaces provide shade and cool (CABE Space, 2005b, Davies et al., 2006) which, in light of growing concerns about environmental change, explains why urban green space is highlighted as an important asset for climate change mitigation and adaptation. There is consensus that natural environments can contribute to aspects such as good air and water quality which bring environmental, social and economic benefits (ODPM, 2004). Empirical research findings by Irvine et al. (2009) on soundscapes in green spaces suggest that opportunities to access quiet, natural places in urban areas (highlighted above to be a benefit for mental health) can be enhanced by improving the ecological quality of urban green spaces. In this way, it is argued that ecological environments in a range of settings – urban, peri-urban, suburban and rural – must be provided, protected and maintained (Haughton and Hunter, 1994). However, conflicting demands on these settings – including pressure to create more housing and commercial development and with it the encroaching urban infrastructure – can endanger the existence and quality of such environments and have detrimental effects on biodiversity and habitats (Barber, 2005).

An obvious question emerges from the discussion above: if the importance of open and green space for urban social life is clearly shown in a growing body of evidence, why are some places left to deteriorate through lack of maintenance and investment in place-keeping? There is a disproportionately large body of urban design and planning guidance which focuses on the importance of place-making. Such guidance encourages well-designed, safe and inclusive places which are well-connected, environmentally sensitive and built to last (DCLG, 2006b, McIndoe et al., 2005, Burton and Mitchell, 2006). Such 'assets' should be managed 'effectively and appropriately' but guidance is often lacking in providing evidence of how this can be achieved in practice beyond

having 'the right skills and resources in place to manage...for the foreseeable future' (Homes and Communities Agency, 2007, p. 180). This is due to a paucity of empirical research testing the effectiveness of place-keeping approaches. It can be argued that this prescriptive design guidance tends to do two things when considering place-keeping. Firstly, place-keeping is often discussed as a postscript of place-making, which is underpinned by, secondly, an unsubstantiated assumption that effective place-keeping will simply happen which in practice is not always feasible or realistic, particularly when funding is limited. This reflects the prevailing view that the creation of places in the place-making stage of the design and planning process is, while perhaps not simply considered to be *more important* than long-term management, place-keeping as part of this process is certainly *less well understood*.

Examples of this lack of understanding and clarity are often found in practice relating to funding: the costs of maintenance of new or refurbished public spaces become apparent to local authorities only once a scheme had been implemented (Carmona et al., 2004b), a phenomenon encountered around Europe (Gallacher, 2005, Paget, 2010). There is also a disparity in practice, but invariably not highlighted in the literature, between the need to spend monies allocated for place-making (and any associated place-keeping) within a limited time-period, which hinders a long-term approach to place-keeping. In practice, this is manifested as an over-emphasis on the capital funds that often accompany place-making which, for accounting reasons, cannot be allocated against long-term care and maintenance. There are exceptions: for example, in Wellington, New Zealand, ongoing maintenance budgets are separated from one-off capital projects and managed over a 10-year financial planning system, allowing public space managers to plan ahead and invest consistently (Carmona et al., 2004a). However in the UK, the situation is unclear. When a public open space is created (or refurbished or regenerated with, for example, new features, planting, and/ or play equipment), the maintenance and management of that space is likely to fall under the remit of the local authority, which invariably does not receive supplementary funding to maintain and manage this extra public space, or support any extra skills or equipment required to maintain features (such as the perennial favourite, the amphitheatre). While national priorities may increasingly focus on the importance of maintaining the quality of parks and green spaces, it is local priorities which dictate how non ring-fenced resources are spent (CABE Space, 2006c). The local political context of trying to keep council tax low have been shown to influence directly (and negatively) the financial support for parks and green spaces (Woolley et al., 2004). At times of economic recession (such as the present moment), investment in public space tends to be precarious and disproportionately subject to tight fiscal pressures set by central government (CABE Space, 2005b).

The next section directly addresses the lack of consideration given to place-keeping by providing a detailed definition of the concept with reference to its constituent dimensions.

### **Defining place-keeping**

As there is no one definition of *place*, it is little wonder that there are different interpretations of associated concepts which, this paper argues, constitute *place-keeping* (DCLG, 2007, Roberts, 2009). This stems from the multi-faceted nature of the concept of *place* which encompasses:

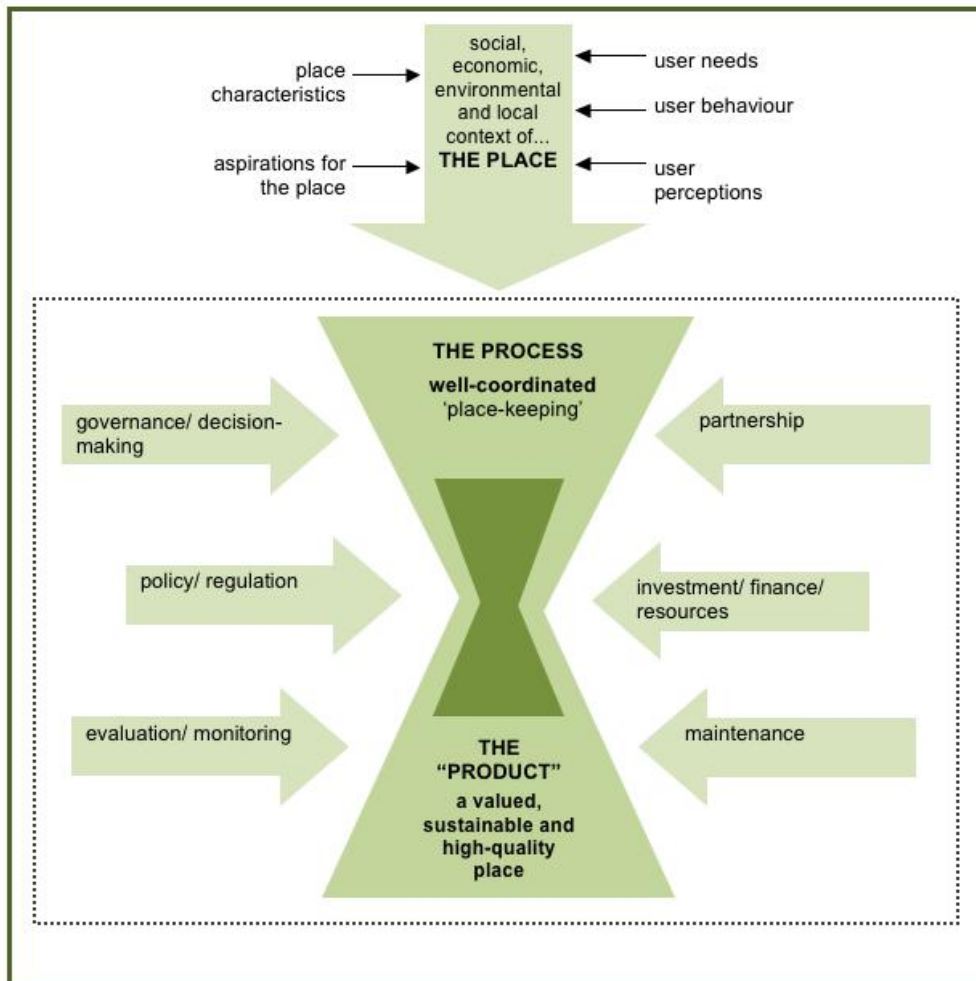
- the spatial environment in which one lives or spends time;
- the social environment, made up of residents and other users of a place; and,
- the political and cultural context, where decisions made and trends can directly influence a place – for example in terms of the provision of particular services and facilities.

Place can be described as a socio-spatial construct within local political and cultural contexts (after Jenks and Dempsey, 2007) which is underpinned by the 'new institutionalist' theoretical framework (Madanipour, 1996). New institutionalism provides a view of place-keeping which focuses on the institutions, or structures and mechanisms, which govern the ensuing relationships, process and interactions (Cohn, 2008, Smith et al., 2009, Healey, 1998). It permits a wider understanding of the urban environment by focusing on the physical and non-physical dimensions of space, (economic,

social, cultural and organizational) and the interrelationships therein (Smith et al., 2009, Carley et al., 2001). In this way, place-making and place-keeping can be described as ongoing processes which comprise physical and non-physical dimensions within a local context. Figure 1 outlines how *place* is multidimensional, providing physical and non-physical functions for a diverse set of users, and has a combination of characteristics contributing to the essence of 'place' (as opposed to 'space') (after Carmona and de Magalhães, 2007, CABE and DETR, 2000).

Place-, or area-, based responses to social problems emerge from the policy stance that the physical environment can positively influence wellbeing and quality of life. Examples of social problems increasingly experienced in urban Europe include rising crime rates and anti-social behaviour with an associated reduction in perceived safety (Carpenter, 2006). These are partly attributed to social and spatial disparities between rich residents in affluent and high-quality areas and poor residents in generally poorer quality of housing and environments in less affluent areas (Hastings et al., 2005). For example, fear of crime tends to be higher where there is a poorer quality environment with litter, graffiti and anti-social behaviour (Kullberg et al., 2009). It therefore follows that there is a clear need for place-making and place-keeping in socially and economically deprived areas.

**Figure 1. Conceptualisation of place-keeping**



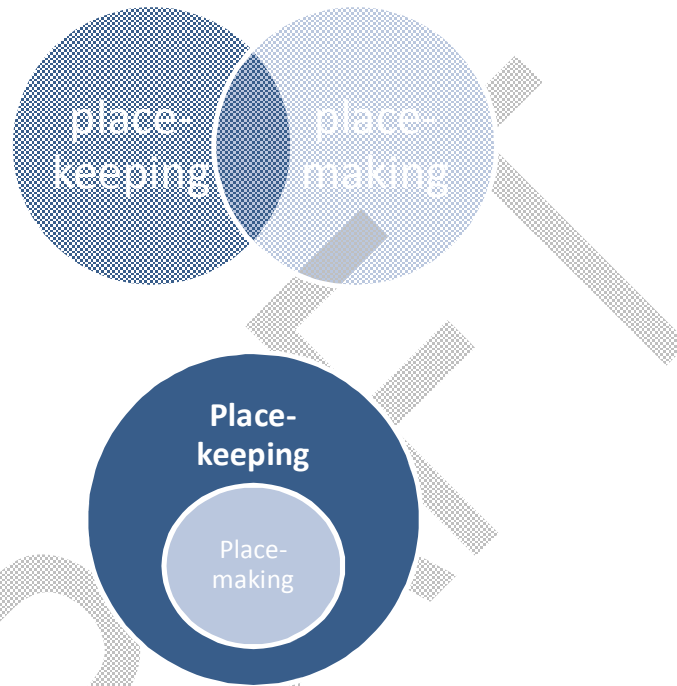
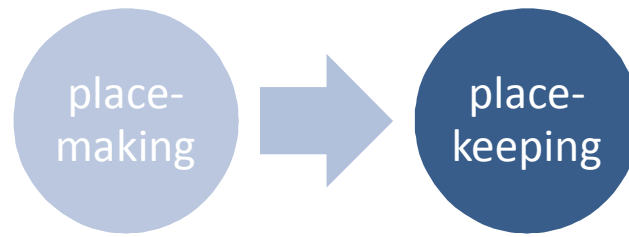
The concept of 'place-keeping', first coined by Wild et al. (2008), is defined here as long-term management which ensures that the social, environmental and economic quality and benefits the place brings can be enjoyed by future generations. Place-keeping relates to what happens after high-quality places have been created. It means maintaining and enhancing the qualities and benefits of places through long-term management. Many aspects of place take time to develop and mature: for example, increased benefits (e.g. biodiversity) are experienced when trees grow to maturity, or when a place is used for particular events (e.g. community festivals), this can contribute to a growing sense of community and place attachment over time.

The aspirations of place-keeping are clear: the overriding goal is to create a high-quality, sustainable space which is valued by users who want to visit it again and again. The issue with determining the extent to which a space fulfils this aim is the subjectivity involved in defining *high-quality*, *sustainable* and *value* (Burton and Dempsey, 2010). Furthermore, the specific context within which place-keeping occurs is highly variable, indicating a wide variety of interpretations and definitions of the underlying aim. It can be shown however that place-keeping forms an increasingly important part of 'green plans' to preserve and sometimes create green space that are often developed at the city-scale and can be found in the UK, Denmark, Australia and Sweden among other countries (Carmona et al., 2004a).

Place-keeping encompasses dimensions of long-term open space management – maintenance, partnerships, governance, policy, funding and evaluation – which have not been considered before as part of a holistic concept (Figure 1). These dimensions are inter-related and can be applied at a number of different scales such as site, neighbourhood, city and region.

It is helpful to consider place-making and place-keeping as part of a dynamic and continuous process: the ongoing *process* of place-keeping maintains and enhances the *product* of place-making as a valued, sustainable and high-quality place within a particular local context. It is important to note the difficulty of divorcing the process from the product when considering the dimensions of place-keeping. For example, maintenance can be described as both a process (e.g. a cleaning service provided by a stakeholder) and a product (e.g. a wall cleaned of graffiti) (Carmona et al., 2008). Community engagement can likewise be considered an ongoing process of involvement in a range of programmes and events, or leading to a tangible outcome such as the decision not to erect a mobile phone mast (Bovaird and Löffler, 2002, Dempsey et al., 2009). Conceptually, this dynamic relationship might be considered as: a) place-making which leads to place-keeping as distinct activities; b) place-making which is influenced by place-keeping which can be manifested (and conceptually modelled) in different ways, e.g. the use of high-quality materials to help reduce maintenance over time; and c), ideally, a two-way inter-dependent relationship between the two where place-keeping is considered from the outset as integral to place-making (Figures 2a-c). The inter-relatedness of the concepts mean that it can be argued that place-making encompasses place-keeping as management forms an integral part of the creation or making of a place. However this paper takes the position that place-keeping focuses on the long term when considering place: place-making can therefore be considered as the creation, or re-creation, renewal or regeneration of place that occurs within the longer-term process of place-keeping. As outlined earlier, there tends to be a clear distinction between place-making and place-keeping in practice, which stems from specific activities on the ground as well as the funding streams. This will be discussed in more detail later in the paper.

**Figures 2a-c. Place-making and place-keeping: different ways of conceptualising the relationship.**



*Maintenance* encompasses a range of land management techniques and the day-to-day operations required to ensure the ‘fitness for purpose’ of a place (Barber, 2005, Welch, 1991). It relates to a place’s condition and cleanliness – how well it stands up to everyday use – and is incorporated within a longer-term process of management. It also relates closely to the design of the place: for example, specific features and landscaping may require particular maintenance equipment and expertise: e.g. high-pressure water cleaning for natural stone, a range of mowing equipment for grassed amphitheatres or specialist knowledge for particular planting.

The term *partnership* describes an association of two or more partners which has been developed here as agreed shared responsibility for place-keeping. While no particular partnership model is prescribed in this paper, third sector and local/ community organisations should be involved in place-keeping. This has the benefit of ensuring the exchange and sharing of knowledge within the local context forms an integral part of the long-term management of the space (Wild et al., 2008). *Governance* is closely related to partnership and reflects a shift from *government* or the *executive role* where the state acts as the primary governing body (Smith et al., 2009) to describe the relationship between and within the range of stakeholders, usually governmental and non-governmental, involved in the decision-making process, a part of the state’s *enabling role* (Lawless et al., 2009, Bovaird and Löffler, 2002). *Community engagement* is an aspect of governance particularly relevant in forms of participatory governance (Murdoch and Abram, 1998). It describes models of working with communities and encouraging appropriate long-term use, and engagement in the management, of the space through e.g. community programmes, events and activities.

*Investment, finance and resources* describe the range of financial models used for efficient long-term management. Ideally, funding is in place for place-keeping from the outset of the project and may come from a range of sources. This also relates to resourcing in more general terms and includes staffing, training and skills. However, it is clear that funding and resources for place-keeping is a contentious issue as the discussion below shows.

*Policy* can relate to place-keeping at different scales – national, regional, local, site-specific – and aims to embed best practice into local planning, urban design and other related disciplines. Place-keeping is often written as policy guidance and not statutory legislation, however related aspects may be covered by specific legislation (e.g. health and safety regulations). Rules and regulations can also be employed (e.g. through signage) in an attempt to overcome potential conflicts of use with the aim of long-term positive use of and behaviour in the space.

Place-keeping *evaluation* monitors the process and product of place-keeping by assessing the economic, social and environmental benefits. The underlying aim is to improve place-keeping and deliver the associated benefits more effectively and efficiently with fewer resources. This may be evaluated through regular surveys of public use, satisfaction and attitudes towards the space and the use of award schemes to improve the quality of the space (e.g. Green Flag in the UK). Evaluation may also be used to monitor procurement options, staff development and retention to challenge existing practices and raise standards (Barber, 2005, Carmona et al., 2008).

It is critical to *coordinate* the overlapping dimensions of place-keeping. For example, the day-to-day maintenance of the space will involve various land management techniques, a range of stakeholders and varying levels of available resources; there will also be a need to follow specific regulations and undertake ongoing evaluation. All of these require coordination, which may manifest itself in a long-term public space strategy document or management plan. The following sections explore these dimensions of place-keeping in more detail.

#### **Maintenance activities in place-keeping**

There is a clear link between maintenance and the perceived quality and use of public spaces (Dempsey, 2008). Although the term 'quality' in relation to landscape is subjective (Burton and Dempsey, 2010) potential public space users are very clear about what they expect from a good-quality place. This includes variety, opportunities for play, sensory stimulation and provision for young people (Dunnett et al., 2002). People are hesitant to use spaces which are poorly maintained and are more likely to use spaces free from litter, dog mess and are equipped with good-quality facilities such as bins, toilets, play areas and sports areas (ibid., Shoreditch Trust and OISD, 2009). The level of maintenance can also strongly influence the image of an area as a place in which to invest. Creating a 'neat and tidy', 'cared-for' immediate and wider landscape setting was found to be an indicator of the perceived 'quality' of potential office locations (Burton and Rymsa-Fitschen, 2008).

The level of maintenance required is related to the type and characteristics of the space as well as its users and its social, economic and environmental context. A higher level of maintenance may be expected of a civic square with clipped hedges and rows of annual bedding than of an urban nature park where grass may be allowed to grow long and shrubs grow into their natural shape. Standard management practices aim to maintain landscape elements of an open space such as grass and shrubs in the same condition (CABE Space, 2006a), however the maintenance requirements of a space may change over time reflecting seasonal use and plant growth, changing user requirements or site context as the site matures. This indicates that a standardised regime, which lacks the flexibility to respond to change over the long term, may not be effective. It may therefore be more a question of 'whether the right work is done at the right time' rather than of how much work is carried out (Carmona et al., 2004a). While it is most often the local authority which oversees the maintenance and management, local residents and community groups are increasingly becoming involved in the process. This may be prompted by local concerns that standards are not high enough



and organised to access more resources, such as the 'Friends of Group' which can access funds not available to the local authority.

### **Partnerships and governance in place-keeping**

Achieving place-keeping depends on strong partnerships and effective governance/ decision-making. The *state-centred model* is identified as the typical starting point for many public spaces where a local authority plans, delivers and maintains the place in question with minimal external input (Burton and Dempsey, 2010, de Magalhães and Carmona, 2009). It is often argued that this model can suffer from inertia where processes have remained unchanged for decades and may be subject to excessive bureaucracy and lack of responsiveness (de Magalhães and Carmona, 2009). Different urban management partnerships have emerged due to what Broadbent and Laughlin call a 'liberalisation in thought' and a liberalisation of rules governing who provides and delivers public services (2003, p. 332). Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are increasingly widespread in open space management (Loader, 2010) as examples of what is described as a *market-centred model* (de Magalhães and Carmona, 2009), such as large-scale town centre management programmes (England and Sweden), and Business Improvement Districts (UK and Germany). Place-keeping PPPs involve a private, profit-driven organisation employed by the public sector, often in a contractual relationship which can (but not always) call on resources from outside the public sector (Carmona et al., 2008). The *user-centred model* is another example of devolved responsibility from the state where user-based organisations such as 'Friends of...' groups, local interest and community groups, charities and other non-governmental organizations are involved in place-keeping. These organisations are not-for-profit and have a 'direct interest in the quality of the public spaces and related services primarily for their use value' (de Magalhães and Carmona, 2009, p. 125). Networks are very important in this model, with hierarchy abandoned for a more horizontal approach using formal and informal networks and contacts, making use of local knowledge and enthusiasm (Wild et al., 2008). There is widespread consensus in theory and policy that a partnership approach to public space management is an effective one (Bovaird, 2004, Carpenter, 2006) and it is suggested that a combination of the state-, market- and user-centred models could prove most advantageous for effective public space management (de Magalhães and Carmona, 2009).

*Governance* describes the relationships between and among the range of stakeholders, governmental and non-governmental, involved in the decision-making process. This reflects the conceptual and policy shift in Europe, North America and elsewhere (Geddes, 2006) from *government* where the state acts as the primary governing body to a *new local governance* with a strong focus on community engagement (Bovaird, 2004, Delgado and Strand, 2010).

There is no consensus on the definition of governance: it is a contested concept (Smith, 2004). For Jenkins (2004), it is based on government working with non-governmental sectors, including the private sector, and the processes of interaction between them. A less neutral definition of governance describes it as a form of negotiation used to formulate and implement policy that looks to actively involve community, voluntary and other non-governmental stakeholders with the public sector (Garcia, 2006). Democracy underpins these ideas of governance, although it is argued to imply 'a wider "participation" in decision-making than representative democracy or other forms of government...[accepting] a wide spectrum of actors other than the state, and thus, varying governance contexts and processes' (Smith, 2004, p. 64). The traditional public-sector led approach to governing is technocratic in nature, where the 'experts' are in control of the place-keeping decision-making: the polar opposite to a democratic approach (although this depends on the definition of democracy) (Irwin, 2006, Cohn, 2008). These technical experts solve place-keeping issues using their specialist knowledge and expertise, which is at odds with the identification of complex social 'wicked problems' which are claimed to be solvable only when taking a democratic approach (Bovaird, 2004). It therefore follows that values of good governance in place-keeping include 'openness, accountability, transparency and inclusiveness' (Delgado and Strand, 2010, p. 145).

Carmona et al (2004b) advocate an integrated approach to decision-making in public spaces which involves multiple agencies. It is claimed that new types of urban governance adopting a partnership approach are required for area-based initiatives dealing with urban deprivation around Europe due to its multi-faceted nature which demands a multi-agency approach (Carpenter, 2006). Therefore the need to carefully coordinate such a group (with different and potentially conflicting aims, resources and priorities) is critical. Despite the core ideas underpinning governance being based on inclusiveness and democracy, Irwin (Irwin, 2006) argues that, in practice, a fundamentally technocratic approach is often taken to place-keeping. He claims that a dated assumption is made about the public being insufficiently knowledgeable and who must therefore be educated by more knowledgeable experts in government. However, local residents can bring local, rich knowledge to the decision-making process via, for example, 'Friends of Groups' and local trusts, which can contribute to effective place-keeping.

### **Funding place-keeping**

Funding is fundamental to place-keeping. In the UK between 1979 and 2000, there were significant funding cuts for public space management, estimated at £1.3 billion, dramatically reducing numbers of skilled, experienced (and perceived to be expensive) workers which adversely affected the quality and use of local authority-managed parks and public spaces (CABE Space, 2006b). This move was attributed to the fact that such spaces do not constitute a service that local authorities are legally obliged to provide and so are not as important politically as other areas such as health, education or safety (Barber, 2005). Such budget cuts do not necessarily equate to efficiency gains, which may not be measured as such assessments in place-keeping evaluation are also often not prioritised or effectively funded (CABE Space, 2006c). Such precariousness of funding allocation is encountered around Europe and elsewhere (Carmona et al., 2004a). While the importance of long-term funding is widely acknowledged in the literature, how to secure it in practice is often not addressed which points to a critical gap in knowledge.

Generally speaking, funding for the creation/regeneration and maintenance of public spaces mainly comes from the traditional public sector model through funding allocations via the relevant local authority departments. Funding is also provided through specific projects and initiatives. These include the Local Democracy and Self-Government programme in Sweden led by social housing provider Poseidon (Castell, 2010) and the Big Cities regeneration programme in the Netherlands (Dekker and van Kempen, 2004). At the more localised scale, other examples of public sector monies might include rental income as well as revenues from parking, road charging and events (Carmona et al., 2004b).

In the UK, to ensure that adequate public space is provided for residents, open space creation is in part funded by Section 106 obligations (recently amended in policy as the Community Infrastructure Levy) (DCLG, 2010). Planning permission for (housing, commercial, retail) development is contingent on such an agreement, which is increasingly used to support the provision of infrastructure such as public space (Living Places, 2010). Practice guidance states that contributions for the long-term management and maintenance of public space should take into account the time lag between the initial place-making costs and 'its inclusion in public sector funding streams' or when costs are recovered: 'pump priming maintenance payments should be time-limited and not be required in perpetuity by planning obligations' (DCLG, 2006a, p. 11).

The private sector is also called on to contribute to public space place-keeping when they engage in contracts for the public sector (Lindholst, 2009a), or PPPs such as town centre management and business improvement districts (Coca-Stefaniak et al., 2009, Schaller and Modan, 2008). The contracting-out of services to the private sector can have an impact on how funding for place-keeping is earmarked. Lindholst (2009a, p. 6) discusses the negative impact that contracting-out to the lowest bidder can have on the quality of place-keeping, because 'payments [are] relatively independent of performance'. Furthermore, he finds that in practice there are examples of underpriced contracts which are essentially under-resourced and where maintenance and

management are not implemented. Warnings are made elsewhere that contracting-out should not be considered as an exercise in cost-cutting, but can be effective if an outcome-based approach is taken (Carmona et al., 2004a). This is particularly suitable for increasing biodiversity in open spaces, as there would not be an annual cycle of work and funding which may potentially hinder progress over the longer term (CABE Space, 2006a). Sustaining funds for maintenance and management of the space over the short-, medium- and long-term is therefore critical and a major challenge for practitioners and policy-makers. With hindsight it is easy to see how landscapes age and change but it is sometimes not possible to anticipate future changes when the space is first created or developed. With this in mind, it seems clear that an effective long-term management plan could include the renewal of facilities etc. and not focus solely on the day-to-day maintenance, which is the case with current grounds maintenance contracts (Carmona et al., 2004a).

Place-keeping partnership models such as private finance initiatives (PFI) and PPPs can reduce the pressure on the public sector to finance large-scale projects, often with investment based on debt finance (Adair et al., 2000), while passing the responsibility to the private sector for an agreed set of specifications. Payments are typically made by the public sector based on performance or throughput after the competitive tendering process designed to ensure transparency and value-for-money (Zitron, 2006). However, there are negative aspects: in the case of housing, PPPs and PFIs have been criticised for putting economic interests ahead of the social wellbeing of *all* prospective residents, particularly those in social housing (Minton, 2009).

Other funding models for place-keeping include endowments which can provide monies through the interest gained on a large initial investment (CABE Space, 2006b). Endowments form the basis of the operations of the UK's Land Trust (previously the Land Restoration Trust) which provides long-term sustainable management of public spaces across England in perpetuity as part of community-led, environmentally-informed regeneration (Land Trust, 2010).

An increasing proportion of funding for place-keeping is provided by the charity sector, such as the UK's Heritage Lottery Fund, which allocates monies via independent distribution bodies (Grimsey and Lewis, 2005). Monies can come from funds open to the community sector to which public sector bodies do not have access. While conservation and restoration logically form part of long-term place-keeping activities, it should be underlined again that such funding tends to be primarily for place-making projects and not place-keeping.

### **Evaluation of place-keeping**

It is widely acknowledged that there are many benefits to the provision and use of public space in urban areas (Baycan-Levent et al., 2009, Mielke, 2008), as outlined at the beginning of this paper. It therefore follows that this value afforded to public space has to some extent been measured, in different ways such as access to green space and indicators of health and recovery from illness (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989, Mitchell and Popham, 2008). There is indeed an extensive and broad literature on the evaluation of public space and the underlying need for such measurement. However, many of these indicators measure aspects and factors which are *associated* with place-making and place-keeping, or partly measure them but do not directly measure these concepts per se. This points to a critical gap in knowledge.

There are many existing awards, competitions and measures of quality in open, green and public spaces, including international 'Nations in Bloom' award, the international Blue Flag Award given to good-quality beaches and marinas and the UK's Green Flag Award for good-quality parks and public spaces. Such award schemes represent good practice in maintaining and managing public space (Barber, 2005). Other indicators include the measurement of attitudes and satisfaction, the actual provision of services and facilities, community involvement (Carmona et al., 2004b), surveys of public space use, staff retention and skills development (CABE Space, 2010) and evaluation of procurement and contracting-out processes (Barber, 2005).

Value-for-money is an important consideration for all sectors, and is assured only if taken into account early on in the place-keeping process to ensure fair competition (Grimsey and Lewis, 2005). It is argued that insufficient attention is given to the long-term evaluation of value-for-money (Broadbent et al., 2003). While exactly how long-term place-keeping is considered to be is unclear, some PPPs and contracts can extend to as long as sixty years, indicating the importance of evaluation both throughout the process and once a project is operational (Grimsey and Lewis, 2005).

There are clearly many aspects of place-keeping that can be measured, but others that are less simple or tangible to evaluate. The quality of landscape, for example, is a complex concept which is difficult to measure, in part due to its dynamic nature and relationship with the seasons (Burton and Ryma-Fitschen, 2008). These can include benefits such as aesthetic beauty and air quality that cannot be captured using traditional financial valuation methods (Choumert and Salanié, 2008). To some extent this is because such aspects are subjectively assessed on the part of the person experiencing the space (Dempsey, 2008). There is a small but growing body of research which looks to apply a monetary value to public space and its associated social, economic and environmental benefits (Mielke, 2008, Allin and Henneberry, 2010). A significant challenge to achieving this is how to quantify in financial terms non-physical and indirect aspects of public space and the place-making/ place-keeping processes underpinning them (Bell et al., 2007). For example, health benefits might be quantified as savings made to a hospital's budget (ibid.) while anti-social behaviour reduction might be measured as savings to fly-tipping budgets; but it is less clear how biodiversity might be measured financially (Chevassus-au-Louis et al., 2009). It is therefore often the case that one is not able to measure a number of place-keeping aspects. This may also be due to lack of skills, but also because of time and cost constraints. It should also be noted that benefits experienced in a space as well as user needs may change over time alongside the changing nature of the space itself, which adds further complexity to evaluating place-keeping (Mielke, 2008).

#### **Policy: contextual frameworks**

It is clear from the literature that the political context has a profound influence on place-keeping, how it is manifested, who is involved and how it is funded. Within the dominant paradigm of sustainability which increasingly underpins policy, research and practice, a conceptual link (albeit as yet not fully tested) has been made between increasing the quality of the physical environment and improving social disadvantage in neighbourhoods (Walsh, 2001). This link is manifested as the 'area-based initiative' which has been applied to deprived neighbourhoods throughout Europe (after Carpenter, 2006). Put simply, the argument is that urban regeneration in a deprived area can combat urban poverty and the ensuing environmental degradation, and promote economic growth (Urban Task Force, 1999).

An example of an area-based initiative is the widespread adoption around Europe of 'urban renaissance' policies which aim to promote economic growth and combat urban poverty and decay' (Urban Task Force, 1999). Government policy, e.g. in the UK and the Netherlands, promote urban living and working in vibrant, compact and sustainable communities (Stead and Hoppenbrouwer, 2004, VROM, 1997). In the UK, this has been translated into policy focus on *liveability* which has been described as a necessary ingredient of a sustainable community (Brook Lyndhurst, 2004). Liveability policies impinge on place-keeping because they 'focus on people's perception and use of their local built environment within their everyday lives, and how well that local environment serves a range of human needs' (Stevens, 2009, p. 374). Thinking about place-making and place-keeping, relevant aspects include how a space is designed to attract people to come and use it, and also how durable and robust is the physical environment. However, regeneration funding on the whole does not focus on the long-term management of places: current interpretations and applications of urban regeneration (certainly in the UK) appear to be synonymous with place-making, with no provision for place-keeping. Rare exceptions to this rule include the UK's 5 year Single Regeneration Budget and 10-year New Deal for Communities programmes, providing initial public funds to create third sector

organisations that might be involved in place-keeping over a longer period of time to become self-funding (Lawless et al., 2010).

Such area-based regeneration is argued to be a powerful political tool as it reinforces the perception that deprivation is bounded within particular areas and, as such, funding in these areas can seem to have a greater impact (after Carpenter, 2006). This comes with the caveat that such area-based regeneration can have unsustainable consequences such as a rise in property prices, the displacement of local communities (who may be priced out of the market) and potential gentrification (ibid., Walsh, 2001). Furthermore, following this paper's contention that place-keeping does not necessarily follow regeneration efforts once the funding is spent, it is clear that there is a need to examine how effective such regeneration is in the long term or if only *temporary liveability* is achieved. It may be possible to turn around disadvantaged areas but only if a long-term support mechanism is in place, which is incompatible with short-term political goals and funding streams (Hull, 2006).

Historically, for the most part, public space in many parts of Europe is state-provided and state-managed (Carmona et al., 2004a) although this is increasingly changing. There is growing acceptance of the need for alternative service delivery, or 'any form of public provision other than direct delivery by the state to the public' (Cohn, 2008, p. 32). This has been attributed to a new regime of benchmarks and best practice, propelled by what Cheung describes as the 'ascendancy of New Public Management' (NPM) (Cheung, 2009, p. 1034). This is exemplified by the freeing up of the market to improve the quality of public services and the performance of public agencies (Taylor et al., 2001, Lindholst, 2008) emphasising the decentralisation of responsibilities (Carmona et al., 2004a).

A dominant manifestation of NPM is the public-private partnership, mentioned earlier. The PPP is based on financial investment from both parties; the project is carried out by the private stakeholder with ultimate responsibility held by the public stakeholder. PPPs are widespread in some European countries such as the UK, France, Netherlands, Italy and Germany (Bovaird, 2004) but less well-known in others such as Denmark (Lindholst, 2009b). The PPP emerged in the UK and Germany as part of the respective governments' drive to modernise, reorganise and improve public services by harnessing the skills of other sectors (Bovaird and Löffler, 2002). An important example of the PPP in the urban context is the Business Improvement Districts (BID), a model which finances capital and maintenance improvements to a designated area through by mandatory taxes/ fees paid by the private sector (Kreutz, 2009). BIDs are supported in policy in Germany (Section 171f of the Federal Building Code (BauGesetzbuch BauGB)) (ibid.) and the UK (Local Government Act, 2003) (HMSO, 2003, Hogg et al., 2007).

NPM critics point out that the top-down bureaucratic nature of NPM-led public service provision and delivery can lead to inflexible and inefficient processes that are difficult to speed up or change when there is a need to adapt to, for example, economic recession (Cohn, 2008). It has also been pointed out that this approach can generate conflict between service funders and providers when public and private interests are not compatible (i.e. public good versus profit-driven interests) (Taylor et al., 2001). There is also a danger of interests becoming overly-compatible, where long-term partnerships 'may be suspected of undermining competition between potential providers' of management services (Bovaird, 2004, p. 200).

#### **Coordinating place-keeping: bringing the dimensions together**

Alongside these inter-related dimensions, the contextual variables at play in place-keeping point to the need for taking an holistic approach to place-keeping through close coordination and good leadership, especially where ownership and management of spaces become divorced (Carmona et al., 2004a, Westling et al., 2009). Such coordination should aim to ensure that high-quality place-keeping is delivered by skilled service providers competitively to a high standard which is evaluated regularly. It has already been pointed out that all three sectors should be involved in place-keeping –

public, private and voluntary –to make the most of a wide range of necessary skills, knowledge and resources which would be missing in a unilateral or bilateral partnership.

Effective place-keeping coordination can be achieved when collectively stakeholders have both a strategic and a local focus on long-term quality and efficiency, which is underpinned by reliable resources with a monitoring process in place. There is also a need for knowledge transfer among and between stakeholders which can help raise the profile of place-keeping. In this way, it is hoped that such an approach to place-keeping can bring about political commitment and real policy change.

Coordinating place-keeping in practice can however be difficult. For example, stakeholders often have different underlying interests: for example, different sectors may not be able to commit time and resources to place-keeping activities depending on the varying short- or long-term economic interests in the project (Adair et al., 2000). Another barrier to place-keeping coordination relate to fragmented funding streams which have conditions attached for funding to be allocated within a limited time period, which can undermine the long-term approach required for place-keeping. In practice, this is manifested as an over-emphasis on the capital funds that often accompany place-making which, for accounting reasons, cannot be allocated against long-term care and maintenance. A further barrier relates to the management approach taken: ‘over-management’ can create commodified and homogenised spaces, while ‘under-management’ can result in poorly designed, unsafe and unused spaces (Carmona, 2010).

To address these barriers and the overriding gap in knowledge about place-keeping, it is necessary to examine examples of place-keeping in practice in a rigorous way to analyse the effectiveness of different approaches taken in practice.

#### **Implications of place-keeping in practice: scope for empirical research**

While this paper provides an important first step, to understand the concept of place-keeping fully, it is necessary to examine it empirically and in practice. This calls for an identification of different place-keeping approaches, which, as this paper suggests, are diverse and numerous, particularly in light of the number of inter-linked dimensions and the potential stakeholders involved. It also calls for evidence to test the extent to which engaging in place-keeping brings about social, economic and environmental benefits for users over the long term. Furthermore, in light of the current economic downturn, there is a clear need for finding innovative and low-cost ways of implementing long-term maintenance and management, particularly when, as this paper has indicated, in practice place-keeping is low down on the political agenda.

The ‘MP4: Making Places Profitable, Public and Private Open Spaces’ project goes some way to addressing some of these gaps in knowledge. This is an EU INTERREG-funded project which brings together urban and rural landscape practitioners from the North Sea Region countries of England, Scotland, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium with academics to explore place-keeping in practice. The research aims of the MP4 project are to:

- explore the extent to which positive socio-economic impacts of open space improvements are/ can be maintained in the long run;
- provide workable solutions to address maintenance and management requirements with a view to mainstream best practice in place-keeping across the North Sea Region; and,
- explore how place-keeping innovations can be embedded into policies at every level.

The MP4 project explores examples of place-keeping practice in seven European countries to engage in a process of transnational learning in a range of public and private open spaces within different political, social, economic and environmental contexts. It also examines and evaluates innovative place-keeping practice, both existing and occurring as part of the project itself in a number of ‘test-bed’ pilot projects in Sheffield (England), Göteborg (Sweden), Emmen (Netherlands), Bruges (Belgium), Hamburg (Germany) and Aarhus (Denmark). More information can be found at [www.mp4-interreg.eu](http://www.mp4-interreg.eu) .

While this project focuses much-needed attention on place-keeping, this discussion in this paper also points to a wider need for place-keeping practitioners to engage in processes of post-occupancy evaluation to ascertain the extent to which long-term open space management does and should achieve project aims and supports users. To date, this has not been conducted with any critical appraisal (see Gallacher, 2005 for a notable exception). This points to a significant gap between place-making and place-keeping, which runs parallel to the perennial problem of how to secure funding over the long term: there is no requirement for open space designers and managers to conduct an evaluation of a space once it has been created or regenerated, and there is certainly no mechanism in place to assess the extent to which a space is successful over the long term. Along with the non-statutory status of open space provision and management, this highlights the precariousness of place-keeping in practice. Having said this, the importance of local open space cannot be underestimated, nor can the attachment felt by residents and users, indicating that a community-oriented place-keeping approach may be a particularly effective one. Research is clearly needed which examines and evaluates the practice of place-keeping if the social, environmental and economic benefits of open space are to be fully understood and harnessed for all residents and users.

DRAFT

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