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# MP4 WP1.3 Transnational Assessment of Practice

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Bürgerpark  
Bremen

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**Introduction**

The Free and Hanseatic City of Bremen in North-West Germany is – like Hamburg – a Federal State on its own and consisting of two cities: Bremen and Bremerhaven at the North Sea coast. With a population of approx. 660.000 inhabitants Bremen is the smallest of the 16 German Federal States. Bremen covers an area of 325 square kilometres and Bremerhaven an area of 80 square kilometres. The city state is governed by the Senate.

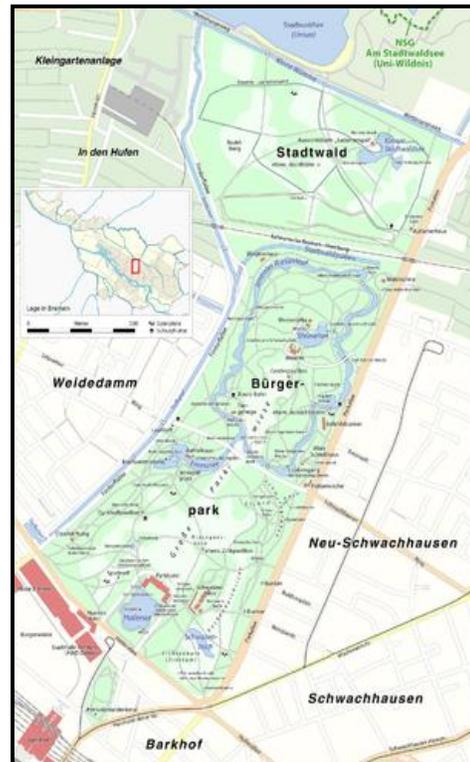
The city is 1,200 years old and has a longstanding Hanseatic tradition in trade and commerce. The case of the Bürgerpark Bremen is a fine example of civic pride and a private initiative derived from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Context**

Bremen’s Bürgerpark (people’s park) is one of Germany’s best-maintained country parks. Together with the adjacent woodland (*Stadtwald*), it covers an area of 202 hectares right in the heart of the city, stretching from the Central Station north towards the motorway and roughly parallel with the Weser river. East and West of the park are residential neighbourhoods adjacent.

The park is a very important open space for the city in terms of its ecological qualities, recreational functions and leisure and cultural facilities. The park is a symbol of civic pride and identification.

The Bürgerpark was founded through an initiative of merchants and representatives of the city back in 1865. The aim of this initiative was to create a people’s park (*Volkspark*) freely accessible for all inhabitants of this growing city. Many parks at that time were private and only accessible to richer people. The People’s Park made recreation and leisure activities available for everyone.



Between 1866 and 1884 the project was realised without public funding, covering 136 hectares parkland. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the adjacent 66 hectare woodland was planted north of the park. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the park was declared a listed monument. Many elements of the park still retain the original design from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Only some buildings derive from earlier, such as the “Park Hotel” and the “Kaffee Haus”. As the Buergerpark has been a listed monument

since 1984, changes to the park’s design are restricted.

Today the Bürgerpark is one of the largest inner-city parks in Germany (after Englischer Garten in Munich, Tiergarten in Berlin and Altonaer Volkspark in Hamburg). 70 per cent of the area is woodland, 15 per cent lawn and grassland and 7.5 per cent water. Footways cover an area of over 30 kilometres.

The Park is freely accessible all year round and over one million people visit the Bürgerpark each year with no entrance fee.

**The project and the 'place-keeping' approach**

In 1872 the Bürgerpark Association (*Bürgerparkverein*) was founded and still exists today. This private association is independent from any public authorities and has been wholly responsible for the management and maintenance of the park since it first opened. The responsibilities are fixed in the Articles as laid out by the Association. Exactly who carries out the maintenance activities is not specified in the Articles, but traditionally the association employs its own workforce for most of the activities.

Today the association has more than 2,600 members. The almost total private sponsorship of a public park organised and managed by an independent, apolitical private organisation is singular in Germany. Legally, the park premises are owned by the City of Bremen – but the association has the unlimited right to use it with all rights and duties. All buildings and infrastructures in the park are property of the Bürgerpark Association. In Bremen's preparatory land-use plan (*Flächennutzungsplan*), the Bürgerpark is designated as parkland. A change of use or downsizing of the area is almost impossible to imagine and would probably cause intense public protest.

Problems and conflicts in the Bürgerpark can be observed relating to vandalism, waste disposal and the general behaviour of visitors (where they do not follow the park rules). The latest park rule states that use of the park after 10.30pm is forbidden all year round, except for restaurant clientele and official residents. Public debates have been stirred up if trees have to be cut down. The Park-Director must explain the reasons for these activities.



The Association's annual budget ranges between €2.0 to €2.5 million and has remained more or less unchanged for the last 25 years. During 20<sup>th</sup> century war-time and after the two World Wars, funding was difficult and the Association's spending was sparing.

This budget is used for the maintenance of the park, the renewal and modernisation of buildings, bridges and monuments, the maintenance and waste disposal on pathways and

playgrounds as well as for the salaries of the Bürgerpark workforce.

In the past funds have been used for the following projects, among others:

- Planting trees and rejuvenating the stock of trees;
- Maintenance of paths, bank and shore areas of water;
- Park benches, playgrounds, lighting;
- Maintenance of the buildings;
- Sports facilities;

- PR and Marketing activities;
- School instruction; and
- Administration.

The Bürgerpark Association permanently employs a full-time workforce of thirty people: one chief-gardener, twenty-one gardeners and other skilled workers for the maintenance of the park, four craftspeople (painter, carpenter and locksmith), one educational educator and three administrative staff. In addition, eight part-time employees are currently responsible for safety and security (park inspection) and hunting.

The breakdown of budget costs is approx. 65% for personnel costs, 17% for non-personnel costs and 17% for material investments. Cost increases can be found in some areas, e.g. regarding necessary investments in buildings especially in the last two decades, damages caused to the environment and increasing use of technical equipment for maintenance. The historic buildings and constructions in the park are particularly cost-intensive to maintain. For the central area of the park (*Zentralanlage*) there is a dedicated park maintenance concept. Continuous contact with the responsible public administration for protected areas is essential for the management and development of the park.

**Funding the Bürgerpark**

Funding sources of the Bürgerpark are numerous but mainly private donations, Tombola revenues, rental income and lottery funds:

<b>Approximate breakdown of the annual Bürgerpark budget by funding sources<sup>1</sup></b>	
Donations from private persons and companies	35 %
Lottery funds	14 %
Rental and leasing revenues	12 %
Tombola	10 %
Trust ( <i>Gräfin Emma Stiftung</i> )	9 %
Membership fees for the Bürgerparkverein	3 %
Legacies and inheritances + larger extra donations	17 %

Since 1953 the association is running the annual *Bürgerpark Tombola*<sup>2</sup> which is a very important source of finance for the park and for keeping an emotional relationship between the Bremen people and their Bürgerpark. The underlying idea can be described with one slogan from the Bürgerpark Association “One for all and all for one” (*Einer für alle, alle für Einen*). For one Euro you can buy a fortune and win one of a large variety of sponsored prizes (varying from sweets to cars).

The Tombola runs for a three-month period every year and generates annual revenue of up to €750,000. Due to legal restrictions only 5/8 of the Tombola’s revenue can be used for the Bürgerpark - the rest goes towards funding other green spaces and cultural projects in Bremen. More than €22 million has been distributed from the Tombola since its inception over 50 years ago.

<sup>1</sup> Table is based on information from Park-Director Werner Damke.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.buergerpark-tombola.de/>

*Private donations* for the park vary from very small amounts to very generous and substantial contributions. Besides financial donations it is possible to donate a bench or a tree in the park to demonstrate and strengthen personal rootedness in Bremen. In the past, single donations from wealthy Bremen merchants made the development of the park possible – today, private donations are used for the maintenance of this valuable and long lasting private initiative.



Since 2000 a dedicated Trust for the preservation of the Bürgerpark (*Gräfin-Emma-Stiftung*) has supported the activities and work in the park.

Approximately ten per cent of the annual costs for the Bürgerpark are covered by the New Year Donation made by private households and local companies. All donators are published in the local newspaper on New Year’s Eve as a sign of their engagement with the park.

Since 1980, a big Open Air Benefit Concert has taken place in the park every year. Performers and organisers support these concerts for free. Since this cultural event began, over €400,000 has been generated for the preservation and maintenance of the Bürgerpark.

Professional park marketing plays an important role for all fundraising activities. The marketing strategy consists of Public Relations (e.g. press releases, the publication of brochures and books, event organisation etc.) and several fundraising activities like those described above (e.g. New Year’s Donation, Open Air Benefit Concert).

Ongoing communication with the public is also of importance. Bürgerpark receives intense media coverage in local newspapers and TV broadcasts. The variety of public events, guided tours etc. allows considerable contact with the public. The Association has published an annual report for its members and the public for over 20 years and holds an Annual General Meeting.

### **Transferable aspects of the case study**

According to the chair of the Bürgerpark Association and Park-Director, some factors can be directly attributed to the long-lasting and successful history of the privately run Bürgerpark:

- Importance of a high quality standard: Good place keeping in the park is the overall priority to preserve the Bürgerpark to a very high standard;
- A variety of fundraising activities targets as many people as possible;
- The Bürgerpark has opportunities for great personal identification for, and engagement of, supporters and donators;
- Building and keeping personal contacts is important between the Association and supporters of the Bürgerpark;
- Professional Marketing and PR is in place for all activities.

The variety of fundraising strategies and instruments for the Bürgerpark is very interesting for potential transferability to other contexts.

The overall intense personal and emotional relation between Bremen's citizens and "their" Bürgerpark cannot be easily transferred via "copy and paste" to other locations and public spaces in Europe. The specific relation in Bremen is based on a long tradition grown since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the circumstances of Hanseatic civic pride. But nonetheless some ideas for fundraising like the Tombola or the donation strategies might be valuable for and transferable to different situations.

The idea of setting up a dedicated Association responsible for the open space may be very inspiring for other cases. Questions regarding the funding and organisation of this association have to be clarified in detail. However, a purely private association such as that in Bremen is probably not possible in many other cases. In this way, it can be questioned whether a success story like the Bürgerpark could be repeated in the same way today.

A final important issue regarding the transferability of the Bürgerpark concept relates to the success factors identified above: A high quality standard and the importance of personal contacts and opportunities for personal identification with the open space are critical. These factors could be transferred to other places but they demand the dedication of people working for the preservation and maintenance of the open space.

## Glossary

**'Place-making'**: creating high quality places that people want to visit, experience and enjoy. It implies a people-centred approach which emphasises designing spaces that promote health, wellbeing and happiness. Such spaces engender a sense of belonging and connection for those who use them.

**'Place-keeping'**: relates to maintaining the qualities and benefits – social, environmental and economic – of places through long-term management. The management required to maintain these qualities and benefits, the approach adopted and the timescale will depend on the 'place-making' aims, the available resources and the life span of the 'place'.

**Partnership**: is defined as agreed shared responsibility between public, private and community sectors. It is a relationship which, in this context, is normally formed between governmental and non-governmental sectors – i.e. it is a manifestation of governance relationships.

**Engagement**: is a cross-cutting issue which describes successful models of working with communities and encouraging appropriate use. Engagement is an aspect of governance particularly relevant in forms of participatory governance and is intrinsic to the concept of 'governance' as defined below.

**Governance**: relates to the relationship between and within government and non-governmental forces. The term implies wider participation in decision-making than representative democracy or other forms of government, recognising a wider range of actors other than the state, and allowing for varying governance contexts and processes.

**Finance**: describes financial models for efficient long-term management.

**Policy**: is discussed within the context of embedding best practice into spatial planning and other policy.

**Valuation**: describes the economic impacts of improvements to open spaces, but also relates to wider socio-economic and environmental benefits.

## Notes on this report

This report forms part of the output from MP4 Making Place Profitable – Public and Private Open Spaces, a project funded by the EU through its Interreg IVB North Sea Region programme 2007-2013.

This report is based on the findings from written answers from Mr. Werner Damke (Park Director of Bürgerpark Bremen), who granted permission for MP4 members to use his responses in this report. This underlying questionnaire was using the question schedule used in the data collection for all the case studies. The report was finalised in Dec 09-Jan 10 and all details are correct as of that time.

Additionally the author used desktop research and literature review on Bürgerpark Bremen for compiling this case study.

The photos are reproduced from online sources (buergerpark.de and wikipedia.org) with permission from the Buergerpark Bremen Association (Buergerparkverein).

### **Websites about Bürgerpark Bremen**

<http://www.buergerpark.de/en>

[http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/B%C3%BCrgerpark\\_Bremen](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/B%C3%BCrgerpark_Bremen) (in German)

### **Literature on Bürgerpark Bremen**

Damke, W. (2004) Die Marketingstrategie des Bremer Bürgerparkvereins. In: Arno Brandt, Wilken von Bothmer, Michael Rohde (ed.): Marketing für Gärten und Schlösser. Rostock.

Guttman, H. and Mönch, J. (1990): Der Bremer Bürgerpark. Bremen.

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