Governance and the urban forest

Abstract

Governance can be defined as the stakeholders, institutions and processes involved in making policy and management decisions. Traditional forest governance in the United Kingdom (UK) involves the forest owner, government incentives and regulations, and occasionally the local community (e.g. through consultation over forest design plans). In contrast, in the urban context, the landowners, decision-makers and levels of public engagement are all much more diverse.

This paper presents an analysis of urban forest governance, which illustrates the range of challenges in which 'new meets old'. We conclude that while there are many examples of experimentation and innovation in developing the urban forest, it is important not to neglect the role of existing organisations, relationships and interests. Urban forestry needs to find a way of steering between radical change and existing structures.

To reach this conclusion we develop a framework for analysing urban forest governance in the UK, modified from a paper presented at a recent European Union Forestry Action Plan workshop. This framework consists of eight dimensions of governance: policies and laws; ownership, access and use rights; stakeholders and organisations; funding and delivery mechanisms; processes; knowledge management; and power. We illustrate this framework through a series of profiles of existing projects including the Community Forests (England), Cydcoed (Wales) and Woods in and Around Towns (Scotland), and compare ways in which these eight dimensions vary in these different contexts. This comparison across dimensions helps to highlight the innovative aspects within a project and to support learning across geographical and organisational contexts.

Keywords:

knowledge management, ownership, power, planning, policy, decision-making

Introduction

The great majority of research about urban forestry tells us about the technical challenges, and the social benefits, of planting and managing trees in the urban context. But to make all of this happen – to get to the stage where individuals and organisations are producing and planting trees, and where the social and physical environment is improved through the results – requires effective governance. There has been a great deal of interest in forest governance over the last couple of decades, some of which is reflected in international legislation, but it has received less attention in the urban context.

This papers sets out a framework for thinking about urban forest governance, based on discussions at a recent European Union Forestry Action Plan (EUFAP) workshop on Urban and Peri-urban Forestry, organised by the European Commission Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development (Lawrence *et al.,* 2011). It uses the EUFAP briefing paper as the starting point to examine case studies from across the UK, and explore ways in which urban forest governance is evolving.

What is forest governance?

Governance refers broadly to the processes and people involved in making decisions. There are different ways of thinking about governance. Some see it as a shift *from* government (i.e. hierarchical, top-down, centralised or specialised decision-making) *to* governance (i.e. more participatory, localised, partnership-based or distributed decision-making). Others see all of these as different kinds of governance. In a paper such as this, which seeks to explore what kinds of governance exist and how we can analyse them, it is more helpful to adopt a definition of governance which includes all of these.

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So, for our purposes, governance can be defined as the institutions, organisations, delivery mechanisms, knowledge and processes involved in making policy and management decisions.

Definitions of the urban forest itself include all the trees and woodland in and around urban areas (including street trees, gardens, parks, and community or local authority woodlands). Urban forest governance therefore refers to the structures, rules, partnerships and processes that shape decisions about urban and peri-urban trees and woodlands.

What is special about urban forest governance?

Traditional forest governance in the UK involves the forest owner (plus or minus a forest manager), national government (through incentives and regulations), and occasionally the local community (through consultation over forest design plans). In contrast, in the urban context, the landowners, decision-makers and levels of public engagement are all more diverse, making forestry decisions more complex.

In the context of global shifts in forest governance, urban forest governance is progressive and innovative but has received relatively little attention (Lawrence *et al.*, 2011). Compared with traditional rural forest governance, urban forest governance involves a much wider range of stakeholders, interacting with state and non-state organisations operating at multiple scales. The urban forest is intensively used for a wide range of purposes; social uses are more prominent than in rural or traditional forestry; and the resource is made up of a diversity of components including woodlands, park trees, street trees and gardens.

Finally, there are specific issues around trees, which combine beauty with threat to property:

> *Trees are unlike anything else in that they take years, sometimes centuries, to create, but only a few minutes to destroy; they are usually beautiful, but at the same time can be a source of major problems; they are stationary, but cause problems by their movement; they are part of the land on which they were planted, and yet can encroach into other land; and they may outlive many generations.* (Mynors, 2002)

It is these features – the diversity and competing land use demands of the urban context, and the specific and contradictory qualities of trees and forests, that frame the issue of urban forest governance.

The urban forest in the wider context of urban governance

Of course, urban forest governance is not the only field of experimentation in urban areas, which are characterised by rapid social change and innovation. Within this context, the idea of partnerships – between government and non-government, and across sectors – has been particularly significant over the last decade or more.

Very briefly, studies of urban governance focus on partnership, community empowerment, and the role of 'path dependency' or inherited institutional arrangements, and the contradictions and tensions between these (Fuller, 2010). The field is one that is evolving rapidly, and in recent times has been characterised in the UK as 'a period of institutional instability' with an uncertain future (Davies, 2004). At the same time, the real effectiveness of empowerment has been repeatedly questioned. Some propose that empowerment may need strong independent community organisation capable of challenging governing institutions rather than simply participating in networks (Davies, 2007).

Urban forest governance: three challenges for integration

This area of governance relies on a particularly diverse body of legislation and policy – diverse across sectors, and diverse across scales.

Urban forests often 'fall between two stools' when it comes to legislation and policy, because of the diversity of resources (large woods, smaller woods, street trees, parks), ownership structures and administrative bodies. In many cases, there are no comprehensive policies for urban forests, but rather a patchwork of segmented policies, different spheres of interests and competition between different local authority/municipal bodies. Responsibilities for trees and woodlands are split between different departments, as demonstrated by research in many countries (Johnston *et al.*, 1999; Saretok, 2006; Britt and Johnston, 2008; Gerhardt, 2010). The information base for planning and management is often weak (Sangster *et al.*, 2011). Furthermore, conflicts over urban forests (and their use) have intensified and urban demands are rapidly changing.

A common thread across all of these governance components is the need for integration:

- across components of the urban forest and green spaces;
- between sectors;
- across scales (cities, urban/rural areas and countries).

Urban forestry would benefit from substantial integration and consolidation, and calls have been made for this (Britt and Johnston, 2008). However, urban forestry has seldom been subject to integrative policies (Konijnendijk, 2003; Knuth, 2005).

A framework for analysing urban forest governance in the UK

The following framework is based on the dimensions of governance set out in the EUFAP paper (Lawrence *et al.*, 2011) with the addition of 'power'. Power is implicit in many of the dimensions (e.g. policies, stakeholders, tenure, process) but it is useful to describe it explicitly in order to explore more directly this aspect, which is often hidden.

In this section we describe the eight dimensions of governance more fully, and in particular relate them to conditions in the UK.

Policies and laws

The legal and political rules and regulations that can affect urban forests and their management in the UK hail from statutes in an extraordinarily diverse range of sectors, including planning, forestry, nature conservation, plant health, transport, services/utilities and security. Additionally, there is considerable common and case law that applies to trees, the most important element of which is perhaps that relating to ownership. The result of this is a highly fragmented legal and political landscape with rights and responsibilities resting with many varied stakeholders, which Mynors (2002) describes as a 'wholly uncoordinated mixture'.

UK tree law has a long history; however, the majority of this has not applied to trees in urban environments. Whilst powers to plant trees have been vested in urban public authorities for some time (e.g. by the 1890 Public Health Amendments Act), this activity has only really occurred with the advent of town and country planning in the mid-20th century. Dandy (2010) concludes that legal aspects of governance do very little to encourage the retention or planting of street trees, and an examination of law relating to urban forestry more widely would likely yield the same result. In contrast, many legal structures, such as those relating to safety and utility services, encourage and facilitate the removal of trees from the urban environment.

Furthermore, departmental policies may actually conflict with each other. Tree officers may call for more street trees, whilst police or transport officials may object, and even demand the removal of trees, due to concerns over interference with CCTV security cameras or road safety. Laws can also impact upon people's interaction with urban trees with, for example, highway obstruction laws perhaps potentially affecting street tree use (Dandy, 2010).

This rather inadequate legal framework is counterbalanced, to some extent, by the now extensive organisational and corporate policy promoting the retention and planting of trees in urban areas. Regional policy has facilitated a number of urban and peri-urban forestry initiatives, often delivered in partnership (such as those delivering the Community Forests in England). Planning policy is also increasingly promoting urban forestry, albeit usually as a part of development, regeneration, urban greening and green infrastructure policy. Better still, some city authorities now have tree strategies which are parallel to and inform planning policies. The importance of urban trees is being increasingly recognised, which is useful in that it changes the debate and gets trees more prominently on the agenda.

Table 1 Key urban aspects of devolved forest strategies.

Country	Strategy document	Examples of urban related policy
England	*A Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests* (DEFRA, 2007) N.B. currently under review	Urban context mentioned throughout. One explicit aim is to create 'liveable neighbourhoods, towns and cities by using trees and woodlands as part of the green infrastructure which frames and connects urban and rural areas, improves the quality of a place, and regenerates brownfield and derelict land'
Northern Ireland	*Northern Ireland Forestry – a strategy for sustainability and growth* (Forest Service, 2006)	'existing Woodland Grant Scheme will be revised, focusing new afforestation on agricultural land close to urban settlements and planned in a way that will facilitate future public access.'
Scotland	*Scottish Forestry Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2007)	The vision, outcomes and objectives are relevant in urban as well as rural areas. This is emphasised particularly under Outcome 1 (Improved health and well-being of people and their communities) and Outcome 3 (High quality, robust and adaptable environment)
Wales	*Woodland for Wales* (National Assembly for Wales, 2006)	Key outcome 6: Urban woodlands and trees deliver a full range of benefits.

An important aspect of the policy context in the UK is the devolution of forestry to the constituent countries with the result that each has its own forest strategy. Key aspects of urban forestry in each are set out in Table 1.

Ownership, access and use rights

Although much urban forestry takes place on public land, most land in cities is private, and trees on private lands, such as in gardens, are a vital element of the urban forest. In order to include such areas in policies and programmes that seek to enhance public benefit, different processes and incentives are needed to encourage owners to manage trees in a way that contributes to the urban forest. One policy tool available to stakeholders is to change tenure, that is the set of rights and responsibilities associated with the land and trees. For example, when a public body buys post-industrial land to develop a community forest, the land moves from private to public ownership. This potentially has profound impacts on access and use of the trees. Public use of urban trees and forests, even on public land, can be impacted upon by various aspects of governance, such as property rights, the potential for obstructing a highway and the informal social norms that influence individual behaviour (Dandy, 2010: 26–27). Another option is to offer increased incentives for urban forest establishment and management (e.g. premium woodland grant schemes) to take account of the higher opportunity costs in urban and peri-urban areas (Bateman *et al.*, 1996, Crabtree *et al.*, 2001).

Management of the complex mosaic of ownerships and use rights in the urban context is complicated by poor information. The *Trees in Towns II* (Britt and Johnston, 2008) report noted that only 19% of local authorities surveyed in England had an accurate record of the percentage of their district covered by trees and woodlands, and only 8% had an accurate record of the percentage of the total area of trees and woodland in their district that was either publicly or privately owned.

Stakeholders and organisations

There has been a general trend for management of public urban space to be moved from local authority control towards direct or indirect involvement of other stakeholders (other public sector agencies, the private sector, community organisations and interest groups) (de Magalhães and Carmona, 2006). Successful urban forest governance relies on involving the right stakeholders, and these can be different from and far more diverse than stakeholders involved in 'traditional' forest governance in rural areas. The 'community' in cities is often less tangible, and consists of multiple and overlapping communities of place, interest and origin (Livingston *et al.*, 2010; Licari, 2011). In addition to residents and users of the area, there can be a multitude of interested government and non-government organisations, some with a strong emphasis on urban forestry (e.g. Trees for Cities (http://www.treesforcities.org) or Groundwork (http://www.groundwork.org.uk)). The objectives of these urban forestry stakeholders can, furthermore, be quite different from 'traditional' stakeholders with, often, far less emphasis being placed on pure economic objectives.

Funding and delivery mechanisms

Financial support also affects the opportunities to create and maintain urban forests. Projects and programmes are specific to particular spaces and times, and have their own internal objectives and structures that shape outcomes. There is a need for evaluation of funding mechanisms for urban forestry, including income generation from benefits.

As noted above, the complexity of ownership and access in urban and peri-urban contexts makes it necessary to provide a mix of delivery mechanisms and incentives, including grants.

The general shift of urban governance towards multisector partnerships, mentioned in the introduction, also affects forestry, particularly in relation to urban regeneration policy. Partnerships can be seen as power-sharing fora or delivery mechanisms (Ambrose-Oji *et al.*, 2010). In the urban context they are often both (e.g. the Community Forests).

Processes

A central tenet of urban forestry is the need for public participation, and the inclusion of a broad set of stakeholders. Urban forestry is already more socially inclusive than other types of natural resource management, and has been underpinned by the emergence of new types of institutions and networks to accommodate the organisational complexity. The actual processes used to involve the public and other stakeholders, and take account of their various interests, can range from consultations to more pro-active, grassroots forms of participation, and can draw on tools ranging from questionnaires to participatory mapping and planning. However, the use of these tools does not automatically lead to more participatory governance, as discussed in the section on power below.

Knowledge management

One component of studies on governance has focused on knowledge management, particularly on the balance of

'expertise' and 'local' or 'lay' knowledge. These questions are relevant to issues about whose knowledge is required to make urban forestry happen.

Clearly technical knowledge is needed to ensure appropriate trees are planted in a place and manner that will ensure their survival, and as already noted this knowledge is often lacking (Sangster *et al.,* 2011) or split up across different departments and roles (Britt and Johnston, 2008).

Relevant knowledge is not always specialist knowledge. Citizen science, or the collection of data about trees, wildlife, or environment, through a network of volunteers is one example of the wider pool. The Natural History Museum (London) is gathering information about city trees through its Urban Tree Survey, which calls on volunteers to send in records of trees in various urban spaces, for example cemeteries.

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation data provides some of the richest sources of evidence through which urban forestry experience can be consolidated. However, a review of community forestry evaluation (much of it urban) in Great Britain concluded that the evidence is incomplete and project driven (Lawrence and Ambrose-Oji, 2011). There is a shift of focus from biophysical (tree planting) to social impact, but monitoring and evaluation still focuses on outputs rather than longer term and wider outcomes. Qualitative evidence for empowerment and enhanced community cohesion and creativity suggests a wider range of intangible benefits. Many experiences are documented only anecdotally.

Power

At the core of many analyses of governance is the idea of a shift in power, away from centralised government towards sometimes various and dispersed non-governmental actors (Peters and Pierre, 2006), including communities.

Power can, in general terms, be conceptualised as the ability to achieve a desired outcome, although in policy analysis it has a relational/interactive dimension (Jessop, 1997; Sanderson, 2009), that is social and political actors are involved in relations where one has the ability to get others to behave in a way they would otherwise choose not to. Power can be exerted in various ways and at various levels. Actors are able to exert power over others' conduct through, for example, the threat of force, the creation of obligations or commitments or economic strength. Decision-making contexts can be shaped by actors setting the agenda and/or controlling the socio-cultural environment, which act to limit the ideas and opinions open to decision-makers.

Power relations permeate all aspects of urban forest governance from the obligations on tree owners created by legally binding liabilities through to planning committees' allocation of time for discussing tree issues on their agenda. The concept cuts across each of the elements identified in this section. Land (and hence tree) owners are perhaps the most powerful actors in urban forest governance (as is often the case in rural areas), due to their capacity to physically determine a tree's presence or absence in the landscape. This power is, to a certain extent, influenced by their legal obligations, and their economic capacity and knowledge to act. Organisations and individuals, particularly governmental bodies, that can define obligations, control engagement processes and/or have access to money and specialist knowledge can also be very powerful.

Communities, which are traditionally limited in economic and knowledge resources, are commonly less powerful. In some instances, urban regeneration initiatives can try to address power relations directly and explicitly – for example through the notion of community empowerment. However, the partnerships created by these initiatives can be tokenistic in this regard (MacLeavy, 2009). They can ignore or exclude some interests, instead promoting business and government agenda, and very rarely do they consist of genuine changes in power which would bind other actors to decisions taken by communities. This reflects a wider empirical critique of the governance concept, which questions the reality of claimed shifts away from centralised governmental power (Peters and Pierre, 2006).

Furthermore, while a move from local government control to more distributed control might be seen as self-evidently 'good' because more 'participatory', in fact there are many questions around the implications and accountability of those involved (de Magalhães and Carmona, 2006). In the wider context of discussion about the centrality of partnerships in urban governance, some question whether *more* participation can enhance the power of certain stakeholders at a cost to the representativeness of local government. Conversely, the focus on neighbourhood renewal and the importance of 'people' and 'places' has encouraged the emergence of a new form of 'community leader' who is seen as more in touch with the problems of local disadvantaged groups (Hemphill *et al.,* 2006).

Again power, participation and equitable representation do not necessarily map on to each other.

Case studies

In this section we apply these eight dimensions of urban forest governance to some examples from across the UK, in order to build up a more systematic analysis of how governance approaches are developing.

Cydcoed (Wales)

Policies and laws: Cydcoed, developed under the *Woodlands for Wales* 2001 strategy, was a programme which aimed to use community forestry to deliver social inclusion and to create social capital. It was targeted at Objective One areas of Wales (i.e. 'less prosperous areas' of the European Union, with GDP below 75% of the regional average), and was developed to help deliver Welsh Assembly Government aims to facilitate active community involvement in 'the environment' as a way to empower people, increase social cohesion, address health inequalities and provide work experience.

Ownership, access and use: 163 community groups linked up with land under a wide range of ownerships, but the majority (including most of the urban examples) were local authority owned.

Stakeholders and organisations: Forestry Commission Wales (FCW), the Cydcoed project team, community groups, project steering group. Initiatives ranged from small school grounds projects, through to those managed by tenants and residents associations and partnerships, to social enterprises and woodland businesses. Institutionally, although the Cydcoed team sat within FCW, it was originally positioned at 'arm's length'. This was intended to give it some autonomy, and also to help the team proceed unencumbered by the sometimes negative perceptions that communities hold of the Forestry Commission.

Funding and delivery mechanisms: Cydcoed was funded through the EU Objective 1 programme and the Assembly Government's Pathways to Prosperity scheme. The programme was aimed at communities classified by the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation as being the most deprived and where there was no access to community greenspace for relaxation and exercise. It was a £16 million programme that gave 100% grants to 163 community groups across the West Wales and the Valleys region (Owen *et al.*, 2008). A key aspect of the project was that funding covered 100% of the community groups' needs. This was particularly valued by the groups, many of whom consisted of volunteers.

Processes: Within the scope of the overall programme, projects were very demand led. Project proposals were written by community groups; those that were successful then implemented them with support from project officers.

Knowledge management: Many of the groups were made up of volunteers with little experience of fund raising or project management. Project officers provided support in legal agreements, consultations, project development and planning, and long-term sustainability.

Monitoring and evaluation: A one-off, in-depth evaluation of the whole programme focusing on 24 community projects (Owen *et al.*, 2008). The report provides a wealth of detail including quantiative and qualitative indicators.

Power: Although there were issues around ownership and power-sharing on public land, many aspects of Cydcoed are seen as contributing to community empowerment. Funds were given directly to community groups themselves to manage and although professional help was available if required groups controlled and contracted services as needed. One group commented, 'Now that we have the money, the County Council has to listen to us!' In the case of Cydcoed there are significant learning points around the internal power structures of organisations. The Cydcoed programme was placed somewhat remotely from mainstream everyday business within FCW, and to some degree this led to difficulties in communicating the experiences of the project, and to achieving organisation 'ownership' of the important contribution made to social forestry.

[Sources: Owen *et al.*, 2008; Lawrence *et al.*, 2009]

Mersey Forest (England)

Policies and laws: The Community Forests Programme in England was established in 1989 and focused initially on 12 urban areas. One of them, in northwest England, was the Mersey Forest. The 30-year Mersey Forest Plan sets a target of creating 8000 hectares of new community woodlands over its 30 years, bringing a wide range of environmental, economic and social benefits. This provides a policy framework for each local authority, enabling the implementation of policies and opportunities for changing land use. Since the launch of the Community Forests, new policy drivers have emerged which support them including social inclusion (or environmental justice), climate change and a focus on 'green infrastructure' formalised through spatial planning processes. Over time, the Community Forests have been increasingly seen as regional (rather than national) delivery mechanisms and have felt less supported by national policy.

Ownership, access and use: The programme has focused on use of a wide range of land including local authority land, public forest estate and privately owned land.

Stakeholders and organisations: The Mersey Forest Partnership includes seven local authorities as well as the Forestry Commission, Natural England and businesses including United Utilities. The Forest supports a network of 11 community groups who care for their local woodlands and get people involved long-term in their local environment. The then Department of the Environment was involved in approving forest plans.

Funding and delivery mechanisms: Initial funds from the Countryside Commission, along with FC Woodland Grant Schemes. Over time as central funding has reduced more effort has been directed to obtaining specific project-based funds to support the teams.

Processes: The Partnership, led by the local authorities, put in place 'core teams' (known as Forest Teams) to coordinate and enable activity. Their first tasks were to develop a long-term Forest Plan (30–40 years), to develop the Partnership, and to extend the interest and involvement to other groups and organisations. The Forest plans were developed with extensive public consultation and guidance from public bodies, and had to be approved by the then Department of the Environment, before start-up. As such, the processes were 'top-down' and bureaucratic, yet a wide range of community based projects have evolved within this framework .

Knowledge management: This varies across such a large project. Focusing on one example, Woolton Village Residents Association has gained accreditation to use land and woodland management equipment so that it is able to undertake tasks such as mowing and tree maintenance work on council owned land (Woolton Woods). Members of the group feel that success is based on proving to public agencies the ability of the community group to undertake complex tasks such as woodland management planning and mechanised maintenance tasks, and the support of third sector organisations such as the BTCV in relation to skills training and insurance.

Monitoring and evaluation: The Mersey Forest is well documented with abundant evidence (Lawrence and Ambrose-Oji, 2010). Indicators include basic quantitative measures such as number of people using woodlands, and number using woodlands at least once a week, combined with qualitative indicators and quotations from residents indicating an enhanced sense of place and community.

Power: This varies across such a large project and would merit further study. For example, Woolton Village Residents Association (Woodland Trust *et al.*, 2011) noted that the group has come to a limit in terms of financial and activity capacity and needs to be looking at how to take things to the next level. They experience power resting with politicians who prevented the group from felling trees and entrepreneurial management.

[Sources: Lawrence *et al.*, 2009; Mersey Forest, not dated)]

Newlands Green Streets (northwest England)

Policies and laws: Newlands contributed to the delivery of policy at various scales including the Regional Economic Strategy, city/regions plans, Regional Forestry Framework and UK Sustainable Development Strategy and Sustainable Communities Plan.

Ownership, access and use: Green Streets focused on planting street trees, so 'ownership' rested with the local authorities acting as Highways Authority. By virtue of public location, access to and use of the trees is unrestricted.

Stakeholders and organisations: Green Streets adopted a broad partnership approach (which varied in composition between individual sites) and featured a strong community engagement effort (although the project fell slightly short of meeting all of its 'engagement' targets). There were many partner groups. Along with those representing sectors of the community and individuals, organisations included government bodies (e.g. Northwest Regional Development Agency [NWDA], Forestry Commission), environmental groups (Groundwork) and schools.

Funding and delivery mechanisms: Green Streets was funded via a combination of Newlands Project core funds (e.g. NWDA £300 000 2007–9) and 'match' funding from the European Union and local authorities.

Processes: Collaborations and partnerships were coordinated by project teams within two existing forestry organisations (Mersey Forest and Red Rose Forest). Community consultation processes varied between individual street sites, but successful examples included working with local groups (e.g. Black Environment Network) to engage and draw on local expertise.

Knowledge management: Use of 'visualisation' software to allow stakeholders and funders to see the final objective landscape. Local knowledge, particularly in relation to

community consultation, was sometimes obtained from local community groups.

Monitoring and evaluation: The project was evaluated according to NWDA and match funders' criteria through an independent consultancy (Pathways Consulting). The Evaluation Report identifies some key recommendations (i.e. lessons learned) for future street tree project implementation.

Power: Residents were usually given the choice of whether to have a tree outside their home or not (through an 'opt-in' or 'opt-out' approach), and in a few cases were allowed to choose a tree. The Evaluation Report concluded that 'Our sense is that most people were informed but not consulted in any great depth *nor involved in shared decision making processes* regarding tree planting on their street.' (Pathways Consulting, 2009: 17) (our emphasis). Untrained individuals were, in the majority of cases, unable to participate in the actual tree planting itself given the practical difficulties, and safety issues involved, in doing so. While the consent of community groups and individuals was clearly a key concern, and may have prevented unwanted tree planting, it is clear that the final presence or absence of street trees in this project was determined by the funders, administrators and operational actors.

[Sources: primary research; Pathways Consulting, 2009]

Trees and Design Action Group (London)

Policies and laws: This initiative works with the status quo – particularly in relation to urban design, and the place of trees in that, but has also influenced the development of the new London Plan.

Ownership, access and use: Public spaces, and trees in new developments in London.

Stakeholders and organisations: Arboriculturists, urban designers, architects, landscape architects, urban planners.

Funding and delivery mechanisms: Trees and Design Action Group (TDAG) is an informal forum, hosted by a commercial urban design company, and without direct funding. Delivery is through discursive process – in other words, stakeholders meet and share information about trees in urban design, and through the discussion process achieve understanding which then influences planning outcomes. The formalisation of TDAG as a partnership is currently being considered by members – with varying degrees of enthusiasm.

Processes: The discussion forum meets approximately every two months. Meetings are always well attended by core members and others.

Knowledge management: The aim of TDAG is to bring together different kinds of knowledge in order to increase understanding of trees in urban design. TDAG seeks to combine these different knowledges, at expert level. In particular, architects are seen as holding the most specialised and elite form of knowledge. Many architects are keen to include more (potentially large) trees in urban design but do not know how to. Therefore, they need to access the knowledge of arboriculturists.

Monitoring and evaluation: Currently informal. Evaluation is implicitly favourable in that the London TDAG is now being replicated in Birmingham and South Wales. In the words of one member, 'Participation in TDAG leads to a better quality of work, and enables us to influence the agenda.'

Power: The development of TDAG, and its success, is based on an explicit recognition that different status is given to different expert groups within the urban planning process. In the words of one former local authority tree officer, 'We are low down in the food chain.' Planners are much higher in the food chain. Architects and urban designers have more ability to influence the planners, so the tree officers need to work behind the scenes with these experts, in order to influence those who make the decisions.

[Sources: primary research]

Woods in and Around Towns (WIAT, Scotland)

Policies and laws: In October 2003, the Forestry Minister asked Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) to find ways of bringing woodland expansion and forestry benefits closer to where the people of Scotland live and work. The Minister identified three priorities for action:

- move the urban forestry agenda forward in Scotland, in partnership with local authorities and other stakeholders;
- build on progress being made with urban local authorities' indicative forestry strategies;
- secure examples of progress through pathfinder projects.

The WIAT Initiative is also a focus for developing FCS 'health and well-being' priorities in urban Scotland by:

- providing more opportunities to access woods for learning, activity and enjoyment;
- increasing the contribution of woodlands to the quality of our towns and cities; and
- increasing opportunities for communities to be involved in, and benefit from, management of their local woods.

Ownership, access and use: Mostly local authority owned; some National Forest Estate (i.e. FCS).

Stakeholders and organisations: Forestry Commission, local authorities, volunteers and friends groups.

Funding and delivery mechanisms: The WIAT Challenge Fund aims to bring urban woodland into sustainable management and improve recreation facilities by carrying out an agreed programme of work. Challenge funds derive from EU funding as part of the Scottish Rural Development Programme. The funding is targeted at woods within 1 km of settlements with a population of over 2000 people (the WIAT area). The aim is to regenerate the woodland environment close to centres of population, improving the quality of life for people living and working there. The type of work that could be supported includes:

- development of woodland management plans;
- silvicultural work to improve woodland structure and condition;
- construction of new or improved recreation facilities including footpaths.

Processes: Closely tied in with knowledge management and monitoring and evaluation – see below. The WIAT programme aims and processes have evolved through three generations. There is a strong focus on provision of operational support. For example, 'The grants will assist the two Councils to carry out initial tree safety, woodland management, path construction, way-marking and interpretation in 6 woods in Stirling.' (Clackmannanshire Council, 2007).

Top-down participation is implied. For example: 'The physical work on the ground will be complemented by events run by the Councils' Countryside Ranger Services and volunteer organisations to encourage local people to get out and about to enjoy, learn more about and get involved in volunteer tasks in their local woods.' (Clackmannanshire Council, 2007).

Within this structure there has been considerable reflexivity (policy learning) so that the aims and processes have evolved. This is summarised under 'monitoring and evaluation' below.

Knowledge management: A move from technical forestry knowledge, to incorporate landscape architects' knowledge, and from there an attempt to incorporate local perception and opinion.

Monitoring and evaluation: Has progressed through three levels:

- appraisal, i.e. 'identify problem' (2004); baseline study (2006) and output monitoring (2006 onwards);
- repeat on baseline (2009); owners survey (repeat of appraisal) (2010);
- (participatory) outcome monitoring (planning now, for implementation 2011).

Power: To date, relatively centralised decision-making; but the shifts in process described above point to explicit attempts to shift the balance of power from top-down attempts to encourage local involvement, to more locally led needs definition and control.

[Sources: interviews; Forestry Commission Scotland, 2006; Ward Thompson *et al.*, 2008; FCS website http://www.forestry.gov.uk/wiat]

Conclusions

These case studies are only a small sample of the many projects which could have been profiled here, but they are ones that will be well known to many UK urban foresters and related professionals. By profiling each project under the same set of dimensions, we can start to see how particular components of governance are being used and developed in the UK.

While laws are relatively static in the examples given here, we can clearly see the range of scales at which **policy** is implemented, and the opportunities for learning across these scales. Even national programmes such as Cydcoed and WIAT are implemented in particular priority locations. These locations provide important contexts for such projects but there is rich potential for more cross-scale comparison.

Focusing on **ownership**, we see the great significance of local authorities across all contexts. Very little has been written about the role of local government in forest management, and a shift of attention to the urban context underlines the need for this. A study conducted in 2009

found that there is also very little analysis of how ownership and other formal aspects of governance affect the ways in which individuals and groups use urban forests and obtain various benefits from them.

It is perhaps surprising that the **stakeholders** in many of these examples are largely professionals. Cydcoed and the Mersey Forest provide contrasting examples, but some effort had to be made to find examples relevant to the 'urban' focus. We can take two immediate lessons from this: one is that 'community participation' is not as common as might be expected; the other is that interactions between professionals (and their professional/organisational cultures) are also challenging and merit particular attention.

Linked with this, the examples do not self-evidently illustrate particularly participatory **processes**, and even the examples which involve residents as stakeholders are government or expert led. **Knowledge management** also focuses on technical knowledge. The projects profiled here provide good examples of **monitoring and evaluation** but this is not typical of urban forestry in general.

All of this supports the need for a case-by-case analysis of **power**. In some cases local initiative is being blocked by existing power structures, some of which are perhaps subconscious, but others are more obvious to those facing them. Professional cultures, expertise and status are shown here as a significant component of these power relations, and affect stakeholder interactions, participatory processes and the application of knowledge.

The processes, actors and institutions involved in planning and developing the urban forest are often 'experimental' and 'innovative' – but perhaps they are not always consciously so, and we might be missing opportunities to learn from this innovation. Furthermore, it seems that some of these innovative aspects of urban forest governance arise simply from the need to work within existing structures and relationships, based on historical institutional structures and pathways to decision-making. To achieve its multiple goals, a more urban forestry, which involves more people more actively, needs to find a way of steering a path between radical change and existing structures.

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