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## **What motivates people to participate in decision making and care-taking of urban green spaces? - Results from four case studies in Denmark and Sweden.**

### **Abstract:**

During the last decade there has been a growing interest in public participation in decision making and care-taking of different types of urban green space. Typically benefits of participation are described from a public and generic perspective, where possibility to develop new and deeper interactions and relationships between citizens and their living environment while mutually reducing the alienation to nature is emphasised as important motivational factors for involvement of urban populations in neighbourhood green space. In comparison, appreciation of citizens' motivations to participants has been less researched. Understanding what motivates individual persons to engage in neighborhood green, and which factors that trigger their participation can improve the theoretical appreciation of public participation and -democracy.

Based on four case studies from Denmark and Sweden, this paper examines citizens' motives to participate in urban green space development and care-taking. The cases were strategically selected to display maximum diversity in terms of top down/bottom up initiative; groups of participants; and type of green space. The cases include the development and maintenance of a public park, a tree-donor campaign, an urban agriculture project, and finally a neighborhood woodland. Information about participants' motivation was obtained through interviews, focus group interviews and questionnaires. Interviews and were transcribed verbatim. We used qualitative coding to identify different types of engagement and the underlying motivations. The coding was discussed and adjusted until we felt comfortable that the categories reflected the participants' experiences and motivations and could be used consistently.

The result showed a broad range of motives from altruistic to self-benefit. In all cases different motives co-interacted. However type of green space and nearness to participants' home were decisive factors for type of motivation. Perceived lack of maintenance of green space close to where participants resided triggered participation, simply because of a desire for orderly and well-kept green space in the immediate residential environment. In comparison, political and altruistic considerations were the main motives for participation in more public setting. However, the case studies revealed considerably changes in individual participants' motives from early to later stages of participation, where especially the 'meeting with friend' and the social interactions increased in importance. Conclusively, the results show that participatory tools and methods needs to be tailor to participants varied motives, and need to be flexible so as to adapt to changing motives along the course of a participatory programme.

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