



# The Usage of Parks

A Study of three Parks in Uppsala

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# Abstract

In today's world urbanisation is an on-going process, cities are growing and becoming denser, and places for recreation gain value. Therefore, urban parks are much appreciated by people living in cities. When the first public parks were planned, their main function was to increase health, hygiene, education and social life. In the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century the meaning of public parks to people's wellbeing gained attention and parks were planned to provide space for lively activities.

This paper focuses on parks' activities. The main aim is to investigate and discuss the connection between the park's design and its usage by studying three parks in Uppsala and observing their visitors. The three chosen parks are Stadsträdgården (City park), Engelska parken (English park) and Botaniska trädgården (Botanical garden).

Eight different categories of activities were distinguished during the studies: Meeting, resting, transportation, play, sport, culture, café and knowledge. The more diverse a park is in its character and structure, the more different activities are initiated. Although public parks attract more different groups of visitors when having diversity in usage, the most important activities are meeting and resting. These can include active or passive recreation, which means the possibilities for meeting and resting should be diverse, too.

# Sammandrag

Idag är urbaniseringen en pågående process, städer växer och blir tätare, och platser för rekreation vinner i värde. På grund av denna utveckling är stadsparker mycket uppskattade av stadsbor. När de första offentliga parkerna planerades, var deras huvuduppgift att öka hälsa, hygien, utbildning och socialt liv. I mitten av 1800-talet lyftes betydelsen av offentliga parker för människors välbefinnande och man började planera parker för att ge utrymme för mer livliga aktiviteter.

Denna uppsats fokuserar på parkers aktiviteter. Huvudsyftet är att undersöka och diskutera sambandet mellan parkers utformning och deras användning genom att studera tre parker i Uppsala och observera besökarna. De tre utvalda parkerna är Stadsträdgården, Engelska parken och Botaniska trädgården.

Under arbetets gång kunde åtta olika kategorier av aktiviteter urskiljas: Möte, vila, transport, lek, idrott, kultur, café och kunskap. Ju mer varierad en park är i sin karaktär och i sin struktur, desto mer olika aktiviteter initieras. Fastän offentliga parker attraherar flera olika grupper av besökare om de har en stor mångfald i sin användning, är de viktigaste aktiviteterna ändå möte och vila. Dessa kan innefatta aktiv eller passiv rekreation, vilket betyder att möjligheterna till möten och vila också ska variera.

# Introduction

The topic of this paper is the usage of public urban parks and their quality. What makes people prefer certain parks, while others are less interesting for them? Here, I focus on how visitors use parks and what different kinds of activities they carry out.

Nowadays when urbanization is an on-going process and the cities' density is increasing, places for recreation gain in value. It also plays a major role when people spend their free time outside. Parks are such a place for recreation and most people living in cities appreciate green areas nearby their homes. More and more people want to live close to work, not far away from the city centre and at the same time close to green areas. For most people it is therefore important to have an inviting place for recreation. Thus, parks in urban areas are highly valued and raise a city's standard of living.

Because of the important role that parks play today, I am interested in what they mean to their visitors. By studying three examples in Uppsala, I want to investigate what the different usages are and which characteristics a park should have, so that visitors are drawn to it.

## Background

This subject is interesting, especially for landscape architects, since it is the visitors that decide whether a park is attractive. By choosing one park over another, the visitors make a decision that the chosen park is more attractive to them. Urban parks are planned for the cities' residents, therefore it is interesting for landscape architects to know what characteristics the parks' visitors are attracted to.

Urban parks also have important meanings to humans, animals and their surroundings, but most of all they are designed for the residents. Recreation and health have been important reasons when opening city parks to the public (Nolin, p.247 ). Also, parks became representative for cities (Nolin, p. 69). However, most important is that people are supposed to use parks by spending their free time in it. Already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when urban parks in Sweden first became public parks, their purpose was to provide space for lively activities in addition to promenades (Nolin, p.24). Besides social meetings parks should imply a variety of activities, such as playing, sports and concerts (Nolin, p.247,300). That is why I want to discuss the popularity and quality of a park considering activities that visitors carry out .

Referring to Jan Gehl (2010, p.11) outdoor space has a high quality if so called optional activities occur. This means, besides necessary activities, like going to school or work, running errands or waiting for the bus, activities like taking a walk, sitting or sunbathing should take place (Gehl, p11). These optional activities says Gehl to be dependent on exterior physical conditions (Gehl, p.11). However, Gehl does not write about parks and other green areas, but this connection between activities and surrounding conditions in urban parks is what I am interested in investigating with this paper.

## Aim

The aim of this paper is to discuss which activities make a park interesting and attractive for its visitors, and whether the number of different activities influences the popularity and quality of the park. I wanted to identify the most popular and important activities that people carry out in parks. Also, I studied what the connection was between the parks' structures and their activities.

Questions that were considered during the investigation are:

- What activities are carried out in the parks, and are there a lot of different activities?
- What different kinds of groups of visitors can be seen in the parks, and what groups prefer which park?
- Is there a connection between certain activities and the design of the parks?

## Delimitations

For the discussion the following parks were chosen: Stadsträdgården (City Park), Engelska parken (English Park) and Botaniska trädgården (Botanical Garden). All three parks are situated in Uppsala. The choice is based on the close location to the city centre, and the fact that they are urban parks. In addition, they are public parks, well-known in Uppsala, with each having different characters, making them interesting to study.



Figure 1: Overview of the three parks' locations in Uppsala.

To investigate parks in the same city is made easier by their closeness to each other. It is also more reasonable because the structure of the city does not change between each park. Being located close to each other, the same people in the parks' surrounding decide upon which of the three parks they would prefer to visit. This made it more interesting to discover why people choose one park over another.

In this paper, three aspects were chosen to be studied: activities in parks, different groups of visitors, including the ratio between them, and the parks' structure and design. Using these observations, the parks' quality and its popularity among certain groups of visitors was discussed.

History plays a major role in a park's development. There might have been changes in structure or size, or changes in the surrounding, but also people's needs might have changed because of growing and denser cities. A park can grow, new paths can be built along with new facilities. Although such changes influence a park's character, this paper focuses on the usage today and does not consider former usages.

I have divided the visitors in groups according their age since there are differences in interests related to people's age (Grahn, p.82). These groups are the elderly, adults, children and families with children and teenagers.

# Method

The work consists of two main parts: research by literature studies and observations in the parks.

## Literature studies

The first part of the work was literature studies to get background information about public city parks and their functions and qualities. These studies were used to get ideas about what is important to focus on when studying the parks. Also, it helped to set up my own method of studying them.

The following books are used during this study:

- Jan Gehl, *Life between buildings*: This book focuses on social aspects appearing at public urban places. Gehl writes about different kinds of activities in urban areas and what it is that initiates them. Gehl is trying to find a connection between physical conditions and the on-going social life in a city.
- Patrik Grahn, *Om parkers betydelse*: This book includes seven essays about how people experience parks and what needs they have that can be found in green outdoor places. The author also tries to investigate people's role concerning their surrounding and claims that different groups see parks from different perspectives.
- Catharina Nolin, *Till stadsbornas nytta och förlustande – Den offentliga parken i Sverige under 1800-talet*: This book describes the development of public parks during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It explains the process of planning and designing parks at that time and their functions. Examples from different Swedish cities as well as theories about garden planning are studied. Nolin gives a broad and interesting insight in garden planning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

For investigation of the parks, I used maps and books that helped me to get an overview of the parks' inventory, character, usage and history:

- Catharina Nolin, *Till stadsbornas nytta och förlustande – Den offentliga parken i Sverige under 1800-talet*: This book involves two chapters in which the focus is laid on certain design elements of a park, such as walkways, lawns, plants, waterways, buildings and facilities. Nolin explains the meaning and development of these aspects by using examples from Swedish cities.
- Eric Laufors, *Det gröna Uppsala. Uppsala stads historia VI:6*: This book describes the history and the function during the years of a selection of public parks in Uppsala. Each chapter focuses on one park and its development from planning the park to its latest usage.



## Observations

At first, I went to each park and took a short walk to get a picture of its character. It was a plain inventory to study the structure of the parks as well as the surroundings. Although it was without any valuation, the idea was also to get a first impression of what kind of functions the parks had.

I used 6 aspects that would help me to study and describe each park. The aspects favour a more structured and clear way of working.

Those aspects were:

- Surroundings
- Path systems
- Vegetation
- Spatiality
- Facilities and equipment
- Usage and activities

I chose these 6 aspects because they cover the most important characteristics to describe a park in a broad but also structured way so that it is easy to get an impression of each park.

To start with the surrounding, seemed logical as this includes the accessibility, which can also influence the parks appearance and function. I studied the distance to main points and landmarks in the city, function of buildings around the parks, and also roads nearby and other characteristics of the surroundings.

The aspect of the path system describes properties of the paths in each park; their design, material, structure and directions.

The third aspect, vegetation, includes a study of the variation of plant species, including sunny and shady places.

Spatiality follows the aspect of vegetation because it depends very much on how trees and other plants are arranged. It includes a description of the different spaces and rooms that a visitor can experience. This aspect is also an important way to describe the parks' character and variety.

In the aspect of facilities and equipment I discuss buildings like cafés, playgrounds and even benches and sculptures. Buildings that have administrative function are not regarded.

Together with the maps, literature studies and facts from the internet, I wrote a description of each park.

The aspect of usage and activities belongs to the second part of my work and covers particular aspects that concerned visitors' habits, as well as occasional activities in the park. I looked for the different kinds of usages that appeared and if there were a majority of certain activities or of certain groups of visitors.

All observations took place on weekends during spring months (April, May). The idea was to gather results when the weather was warm and pleasant enough to stay outside for a longer period of time. This choice was also due to the fact that most people have time during their weekends to spend more free time outside.

During the observation period I made several stops to make notes. On benches or other places where I had a good overview of the on-going activities, I stayed

longer, between 15 to 30 minutes, to write down my findings. Each observation could take up to 1,5 hours.

I had some leading questions, such as: What activities can be observed in each park? Is there a group of activities that is more popular? What is the ratio between different groups of visitors? In which parts of the parks do certain activities appear? However, for my observations I decided against using a prepared questionnaire, because I wanted to be open minded for everything that happens, and to be able to write down whatever caught my attention that was related to the main questions. For all parks three observations took place.

At last, I discussed the main question with help of the results from my observations and literature studies.

# Results

In the following part of this paper I will describe my findings through literature studies and my observations of the three chosen parks.

## Literature studies

In his book *Life between buildings* (2010) Jan Gehl claims that people are attracted by other people and by their activities (Gehl, p.23). He writes about life on the streets and neighbourhood. In my opinion this fact should be possible to apply in general, including parks, since urban parks serve as meeting points, just like city squares do, only within a green environment.

Gehl also mentions the importance to assemble people and events (Gehl, p.81), this supports the idea of people being interested in other people and their activities. To Gehl, high quality of outdoor spaces implies places for optional activities, such as taking a walk, sun bathing, sitting or standing around (Gehl, p.11). This is of essence for parks, too. Parks should offer possibilities that people cannot find in their daily surroundings. This includes not only necessary activities; people should want and choose to visit there. Gehl mentions as well that such optional activities depend on the exterior physical conditions (Gehl, p.11), which means that all usage of a park for example has to be seen in connection to the park's design. Another of Gehl's statements is that outdoor spaces need to provide inspiration for action (Gehl, p.21). In a park environment this would encompass different kinds of facilities and features, such as the varying structure of space, vegetation and path systems, but also including playgrounds, other people and on-going activities, as mentioned above.

Patric Grahn mentions in his book *Om parkers betydelse* (1991) a similar theory to Jan Gehl's. He states that some activities are strictly connected to their environment, which means that the physical conditions have big influence on how a park is used (Grahn, p.89). Grahn also writes about all the different groups of people that visit parks. Each group has a different view on parks, with different demands (Grahn, p.279ff). For example, young families have different needs and interests within a park than elderly visitors do. Moreover, Grahn writes about different types of parks. Regarding public parks he says that these should have possibilities for passive recreation, emotional, active and creative participation, to satisfy people's needs for play and rest (Grahn, p.87).

Further to this, Catharina Nolin explains in her book *Till stadsbornas nytta och förlustande – Den offentliga parken i Sverige under 1800-talet* that parks are meant to satisfy the residents' need for more lively activities than just as a promenade (Nolin, p.24). Nolin refers to Eneroth (1859) and mentions also a variety of functions that parks are supposed to have. For example, parks should increase health and fitness, as well as education (Nolin, p.56).

In the chapters *Den offentliga parkens gestaltningselement* and *Den offentliga parken – mötesplats och umgängesmiljö* Nolin points out that already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century public parks should contain a large variety of design elements and facilities (Nolin 1999). She describes facilities and buildings that could be found in public parks, and ideals regarding parks' design elements. Thus, it was also important at that time to plan diverse parks with different activities and different groups of visitors.

All together, one can conclude that having a variety of activities is important, not just to the general public places in cities, but also in parks.

### Stadsträdgården

Stadsträdgården is a well-known and popular park in the centre of Uppsala. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was a hop garden and has been used for cultivation, students education, pasture and as a clay site until the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Uppsala Kommun's homepage). In the second half of that century parts of the park next to the river Fyris became a public promenade site for Uppsala's residents (Laufors, p.41). With the influence of the County Governor Robert von Kræmer and the Uppsala Trädgårdssällskapet (Uppsala Horticultural Committee) new plantations, like maple, elm and perennials, took place, and the park began to get its shape as we know it today (Uppsala Kommun's homepage).



Figure 2. Orientation map of Stadsträdgården, located at the main entrance of the park, Uppsala Kommun.

### Description

Stadsträdgården is situated three minutes walking distance from the city centre. Of importance is its location next to the river Fyris and the hospital, as well as to a swannery and a sports field. Uppsala Castle, as a landmark, can be seen from the park and it is just a short walk away. In the surroundings it is very busy concerning traffic and with restaurants, cafés, miniature golf, sports activities and a fitness centre close by, a lot of visitors are therefore automatically drawn to the park.

The park is easy to access from all sides. All entrances, but one, are handicap-accessible and there is no fence. However, to dampen loud noises from Sjukhusvägen and the hospital, shrubs and trees cover the west side of the park. On the opposite side, along the river, a boardwalk forms the border of the park and includes also the river as a part of the park.

Stadsträdgården is a rectangular shaped park with one side along the river. The main entrance is in the north-eastern corner, and from there runs a main path

parallel to the river. The other paths in Stadsträdgården are winding in their orientation, these lead the visitor gently and smoothly through the park. Along the river is a boardwalk, which is used as guest harbour on one side and for pedestrians to sit on the other side. All paths are of gravel except the area near the main entrance where there are sett pavings.

The park has a big variation of plants and there are open grass areas as well as small and calm corners between bushes and perennials. The open fields of grass build an interesting and diverse contrast together with groups of trees or bushes and also hedges.

The main path, which is a part of a popular passage along the river, divides the park into two parts since it represents a barrier with its high frequency of cyclists and pedestrians. The much smaller part is the boardwalk next to the river, which one can reach by stairs since it is located (two or three metres) lower than the rest of the park. With that slope and the alley of trees in the back one feels safe to sit there and enjoy the view over the river.

The second part includes a number of different attractions and a big variation in vegetation. There are wide open grass fields, a dense and busy playground, small and intimate places next to hedges or flowerbeds, there is a field of accurate planted fruit trees with equal distance to each other, a quiet rose garden in the south part, a forest like area with big trees and shrubs which seem to be spread randomly over parts of the park in the north and Lycksalighetens ö, a pond with an island and beautiful flower arrangements which appear like a rare and tempting island in the park itself.

In the centre of Stadsträdgården is a small café with chairs and benches to sit outside and which is open only during the summer months. Close to the café you can find a playground that is also handicap-accessible. In the northern part of the park is Lycksalighetens ö and in the south of the café is Parksäckan, an open air theatre, and a rose garden.

## Activities

Visitors of Stadsträdgården use it for passive as well as for active recreation. The main path that runs parallel to the river Fyris is highly frequented and particularly used by cyclists, joggers and pedestrians. This path is popular as it leads all the way from the centre of Uppsala to Mälaren so that this can more or less be seen as a way of just passing through Stadsträdgården. Apart from this, there are not as many people on bikes or jogging in the rest of the park as on the main path.

People go for a walk since the smaller and more winding paths invite for longer walks or a stroll through the park. On the boardwalk at the river people take the chance to sit down and just relax while sitting in the sun or even go fishing. Visitors also sit down for a while in other areas of the park to have a break or enjoy the park.

Stadsträdgården offers a lot of possibilities to sit down and rest, such as benches and sun chairs, which are spread around the whole park. Most activities take place in the central part of the park or near the main entrance. Behind the café and near the rose garden are not as many visitors as in other parts. There it becomes calmer, less people actually stay there and the activities are more passive.

Students also use Stadsträdgården to study outside; they take a blanket on the lawn and enjoy the fresh air and their friends' company. A lot of young families

use the playground. Next to it is a café where people can have a break and enjoy their coffee outside in the sun. One of the three water elements in the park is Lycksalighetens ö with its colourful aquatic plants. This is a very popular place to enjoy a variation of plants and space. Especially tourists seem to be drawn to this place. People are invited to have a closer look to the plants since the path does not just go around the pond but over it, too. For those who are interested in plants there are information tags at some of the trees in the park where one can find the Swedish and botanical names as well as a telephone number one can call to hear and learn more about this plant. Another cultural feature is the outdoor theatre where the audience can sit outside on benches and enjoy a play or music. Such events happen only during summer months.

Stadsträdgården offers a lot of different possibilities for recreation – active and passive. The most popular activities are cycling, jogging, playing, sitting, resting and meeting. The park attracts also a wide range of people; such as residents, tourists, families with children, elderly, sportsmen, students as well as teenagers. There is no main group of visitors that uses the park more than others.

### **Engelska parken**

Engelska parken is Uppsala's oldest public park (Uppsala Kommun's homepage). The ground on which the park should be located was used for agriculture until in 1805 Karl IVX Johan approved it to become a promenade for Uppsala's residents (Nolin, p. 126). Due to this, there was originally a fence around the park (Nolin, p.128). The construction work didn't start before 1825 and took place during many years until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Laufors, p.24).

The large alley of lime trees, the walkways and about a hundred other trees were planted first (Nolin, p.127). In the beginning of the construction works a lot of plantations were made, although no perennials, but further on trees were sorted out to benefit the development of individual plants (Laufors, p.25). In 1854 the statue of Karl XIV Johan in the middle of the lime tree alley was set up (Nolin, p.128).



Figure 3. Orientation map of Engelska parken, located at the path next to Carolina Rediviva, Publisher unknown.

### Description

Engelska parken is located between the library of Uppsala University, Carolina Rediviva, and the English Park - Centre for the Humanities. The park is just a short walk away from Uppsala centre and even closer to Uppsala Castle. It is next to a graveyard and Botaniska trädgården. Along the east border is Dag Hammarskjölds väg and in the south Thunbergsvägen. The park is easy to access from all sides and even on the grass and meadow fields, there are no fences or shrubs that build up a boarder, except at the southwest side to cover the bike stands and partially at the south side along the street.

Today's path system consists of main ways with higher traffic frequency and short cuts that have developed during the years. Also, a broad alley of lime trees connects Carolina Rediviva in the North-East and the department of Uppsala University in the South-West. All paths are built out of gravel except all short cuts that consist of packed soil. The alley is the widest path with about 12 m width. On the main ways it is possible to cycle as well as to walk in smaller groups, whereas the short cuts are only small paths that lead through the meadows in the park. All ways lead relatively straight from one border of the park to another; there are no longer winding walkways.

Due to Engelska parken being one of the oldest parks in Uppsala the trees have grown very tall. The lime trees in the alley build a dense unit and all trees together build an uniform roof of leaves. Under the trees you find a meadow consisting of different sorts of grass, herbs and flowers. In the central parts of the park the meadow is not as high as in other parts. This meadow is only cut twice a year and in the traditional way with a horse pulling the cutting machine. Engelska parken doesn't have any flower beds, it contains a small number of bushes and

hedges around a playground, next to bike stands and near a memorial of Folke Bernadotte.

Engelska parken is a small city park which is easy to overlook because of its size. There is no main entrance either. The whole park has a character of an evenly grown grove. There is no obvious structure, except for the alley that has a straight direction. The remaining trees are equally spread over the park and there is no contrast between wide, open areas and small, private rooms. Because of the new existing short cuts, which have become quite popular, the structure of Engelska parken has become more busy.

The facilities and equipment in the park consists of a playground, benches in combination with tables and two memorials of Karl XIV Johan and Folke Bernadotte.

### Activities

The most obvious feature about Engelska parken is its main activity to pass through the park. People may use it on a daily basis, on the way to the bus stop or to the centre or just simply on their bikes on way to work. However, they don't stay for a longer while in the park. Some people go for a walk and make Engelska parken just a part of their stroll by passing through it.

Besides walking and cycling, playing on the playground, meeting with friends and sitting on the benches are popular, too. Picnics on the grass are not very common in Engelska parken, however students seem to like to spend their breaks between lectures in the park. The park is popular with parents with baby carriages. One can also see some cultural activities like playing instruments, or events organised by social clubs.

Visitors to Engelska parken belong to all different kinds of groups; young families with children, elderly and adults including students. However, the group you see less in the park are teenagers.

Although Engelska parken doesn't have a high variation of activities it is highly frequented because of people using the park to pass through it. Most common activities are active ones like walking, cycling or playing. Other popular activities are both active and passive, such as walking one's dog, relaxing and sitting on the benches.

### Botaniska trädgården

Botaniska trädgården is the oldest botanical garden in Sweden. It is part of Uppsala University and has in its first years been located near the river Fyris. Today you can find Linné Trädgården at that place. Botaniska trädgården was founded in 1655 by Olof Rudbeck and after a fire, when large parts of the park were destroyed, Carl Linnaeus became responsible for the botanical garden (Botaniska trädgården's homepage).

The garden expanded quickly and in the year 1787 Gustaf III donated the castle garden to the university to turn it into a new botanical garden (Laufors, p.13ff). The castle garden was originally designed in baroque style and has been restored according to the plans from 1750. All plants have then been moved from the old botanical garden to the new one in the former castle garden and since then it has been enlarged several times (Botaniska trädgården's homepage).

Before relocating the park it was open only for students and professors of Uppsala University, but with that change it became accessible for parts of





and pass in a playful way through the plantations in the park. The material of all the ways is gravel.

In Botaniska trädgården can be found approximately 11 000 species – indoors and outdoors (Botaniska trädgården's homepage). In the baroque garden trees are cut in shape and were planted in a certain pattern, lawns are enclosed by hedges, shrubs are cut in shapes of pyramids and because of the mostly low and young vegetation, there are only few shady places. In the other half of the old botanical garden trees and shrubs are arranged more freely and are not cut in a specific shape. There is a higher variation in dense and wide plantations. Also, the trees have grown taller and the grass fields are not as short cut as the lawn in the baroque part. The new botanical garden, south of Norbyvägen, contains in addition to many different species of trees and shrubs a broad selection of perennials, also water plants and useful plants. The plants are arranged in groups according to their origin, usage, kinship or habitat (Botaniska trädgården's homepage). The majority of the plants in the new botanical garden are very young and have not yet grown tall.

Botaniska trädgården consists of three parts that are very different in their characters. By the division of the new and old botanical garden by Norbyvägen the old and the new botanical garden don't feel very connected. However, the entrances on both sides of the street face each other exactly and consist of the same metal gate which facilitates the connection between them.

The two parts of the old botanical garden are very contrasting. The front part, designed according to plans from the baroque time, is strict in its structure, symmetrical and feels wide because of the broad ways and the panorama of the castle. The other part of the old botanical garden includes more smaller rooms that invite the visitors to explore the vegetation. There is also a contrast between the open grass fields and the smaller groves for example.

The third part, the new botanical garden, has a large variety in its structure. There are little islands of plants arranged into groups that build intimate rooms but also wide lawn and colorful flowerbeds. Trees and shrubs are wide spread in the whole garden. Another aspect that supports variety is the work with the terrain, there are little hills that build a contrast to the plain lawn. Aquatic plants and useful plants on the other side are arranged in a strict pattern. This whole part of the botanical garden invites its visitors to explore and experience all the different characters it has.

In the old part of Botaniska trädgården the Linneanum is in the center of the park. This building contains an orangery and a large cactus collection, also the Linnésalen, which is a grand hall with a statue of Linné, and the Thunbergssalen, which includes a natural history collection.

In summer, when the plants of the orangery are placed outside, temporary exhibitions, concerts or other festivities take place at Linneanum (Botaniska trädgården's homepage). In addition, a fountain is located in the centre of the baroque garden and there is a pond south of the Linneanum. The old botanical garden also has a couple of benches and even a public toilet. In the new botanical garden, there is a café and a tropical greenhouse. Benches are generously spread around the garden, there is also a public toilet, a small pavilion and a minor water fall, hidden in one of the plantations.

## Activities

The most specific aspect of Botaniska trädgården is education. The main function of a botanical garden is to provide and preserve a great variety of plant material. People come to Botaniska trädgården to enjoy and also learn about the different species. Going for a walk and stroll through the plantations to experience the different characters of the park is a very common and popular activity. Visitors sometimes stop and start discussing about plants that they find especially interesting.

In the café people sit down and have coffee and conversations with friends and also benches are used for picnic and to enjoy one another's company. Cultural activities are important, too, especially in the baroque garden where the visitors come to see temporary exhibitions or enjoy occasional festivities.

Another special activity is sightseeing. Because of the closeness to the castle, a lot of tourists come to Botaniska trädgården and take pictures while going for a walk. Cycling is mostly seen on the main paths because the majority of the cyclists only passes through the park. Botaniska trädgården also invites students for reading, studying or taking a break between their lectures. There are not many playful activities in the park. In the new botanical garden you can see families with their children, who run around between the islands of plantations, and in the baroque garden it is popular to play boules on those wide walkways.

In Botaniska trädgården you can almost find all different groups of visitors, however the group you see less is teenagers. There are arranged guided tours for school classes but in their free time they don't seem to come to the park. Especially elderly seem to enjoy the quiet character of the baroque garden and the great variety of plants in the new botanical garden. A group that also enjoys the park is families with children and a special category are tourists and students that use the park often and regularly.

Botaniska trädgården offers occasional cultural events that attract different kinds of groups of visitors but its main character is influenced by its function. Education plays a major role and that is why most activities in this park are calm, like going for walk and reading.

## Categorization of activities

When observing the parks' visitors in all three parks it became clear that there are different types of activities that can be distinguished. Those types of activities (including some examples) are:

- Meeting (sitting, chatting, picnic, together in a group)
- Resting (relaxing, taking a break, watching, observing)
- Transportation (going for a walk, passing by, cycling, jogging)
- Play (on the playground, football, kubb, frisbee)
- Sport (jogging, martial arts)
- Culture (theatre, music, art, exhibitions)
- Café (drinking, eating at coffee house)
- Knowledge. (learning, studying, education)

Due to these categories it is possible to discuss the parks in a clearer and more structured way.

# Discussion

Parks are in general a popular place to meet people and friends and just spend time together. For this purpose it does not have to be a certain occasion but it can be activities like sitting together and chatting or eating. All activities that belong to the category of Meeting were very popular in all three parks. This kind of activity does not require much feature; benches or a place on the lawn are suitable. However, in Engelska parken fewer visitors sat down on the grass since it is only been cut twice a year and it grows higher than a short kept lawn. That might be a reason why people prefer the benches over grass at Engelska parken.

Another activity occurred in all three parks and which belongs to the category of Resting. This is a type of passive recreation and one of the simplest but at the same time most important forms of activity that you can find. Passive recreation means for example sitting, seeing and hearing. For this usage placement is important. According to Gehl (2010, p.27ff) people like to be near other people even though they are not active themselves. This could be observed for example on playgrounds at Stadsträdgården or even on sides of a grass field where visitors were playing or having picnic. People that want to rest and just take a break need a place to sit down, they are passive in their actions but it doesn't mean that they want to be completely by themselves.

At Stadsträdgården one can be sure to meet and see other people due to the high frequency of visitors which depends on the closeness to the city centre. However, depending on the people's preferences, they sometimes prefer calmer places for resting. Some people like to read at a more quiet and intimate place for example. At Botaniska trädgården and also at Stadsträdgården there are such places and the visitors seem to appreciate this. Engelska parken and Botaniska trädgården are close to different departments of Uppsala University and therefore it is easy for students to spend a break between lectures in one of the parks.

The passive activity of resting becomes more present in these parks than in Stadsträdgården. Here the location of the park is of importance. Another aspect is light exposition. When the park contains benches that are exposed to the sun people can join sunbaths as they do in Stadsträdgården. The baroque part of Botaniska trädgården is also very sun exposed however visitors don't come to sunbath. This is due to the few numbers of benches in that area. In Engelska parken all trees are equally spread and the park appears like a grove in the middle of the city. With this not very contrastful character it also attracts more easily those who like to just have a break and enjoy a bit of "nature".

A very important feature for the category of Transportation are the paths. Engelska parken is an excellent example where the planning of the walkways did not work well. The park has many short cuts. This may be because of its closeness to a lot of important buildings, like Carolina Rediviva, student accommodations, the castle as well as a bus stop. These are main points that a lot of people want to reach by taking the shortest way. This results in the fact that Engelska parken became a park where people don't visit but pass through. Other characteristics supports this fact, too. People can access the park almost from every side since there are no fences or walls and the hedge exists only partly, and all the paths lead straight through the park instead of being winding and inviting visitors for a stroll.

Also, when observing the parks I noticed two kinds of transportation. The first one only applies when people have to run errands, which means they don't stay longer in the park but pass it. The second one, on the other side, is going for a walk in the park. The latter needs walkways that invite to a stroll so that people can explore the variety of the park. As Nolin (1999, p.109) describes it, a park should provide a high diversity so that visitors tend to come back.

In Stadsträdgården the walkways circle around the pond, there is a very special boardwalk next to the river and a lot of crossing ways offer different possibilities. In Botaniska trädgården people tend to stroll through the park for different reasons. They stay and enjoy the view over the castle and the Linneanum, they want to take in the history of the park, and also see all the different plant species. Although it may be different reasons, it is the same cause, the diversity of the park.

Cycling and jogging belong to the first kind of transportation. In Botaniska trädgården it was noticeable that the gates seem to be a problem for these activities which results in less cyclists and joggers in this park. For joggers the experience they have in the park can be a criteria for choosing their track, although they don't stay in the park very long, they might become regular visitors if the park is interesting and diverse.

A very important activity for children is playing. Playgrounds in green areas attract a lot of young families with their children and location doesn't matter as long as the playground is clean and easily accessible. When groups of teenager or adults play they don't use the playground. They need space for football, kubb or frisbee. These kinds of sports requires wide and open fields. As seen in Engelska parken, these activities do not appear in grove-like parks. One playing activity was only carried out in Botaniska trädgården, it was boule. For that game one needs an plain gravel ground and that can only be found in this park.

Besides jogging, cycling or playing football there are other sport activities that can appear in a park. They are not that many but they definitely enrich the variety of activities. Two examples that I observed in Stadsrädgården were martial arts and yoga. Requirement for this kind of sport is enough space for a smaller group of people since in this case it was an organised meeting for those who want to do sports together. It might also be possible that such meetings happen regularly.

The cultural aspect appeared to be very important, too. At Botaniska trädgården one can not deny the presence and importance of the park's history. Also, certain cultural events have become popular and attract a lot of visitors. Not only in Botaniska trädgården but also in Stadsträdgården, with music and theatre, and in Engelska parken where social clubs organise meetings. This activity occurs mostly not regularly but because of the rareness it is more special and becomes attractive to more people. However, it requires a lot more work because of the organisation of the events and also space, e.g. a scene or indoor room, is needed.

Besides picnics people enjoy eating and drinking in a café. In Stadsträdgården and Botaniska trädgården one can see that it is a popular feature and attracts a lot of visitors. Both cafés have the possibility to sit outside. In Stadsträdgården, the café is close to the playground and very central in the park. Because of that it is a rather busy area and one can watch a lot of activity around it. Also, it is very exposed to the sun. The café in Botaniska trädgården on the other hand is in the new part of the park and not central located. It is close to the entrance and people

can sit under fruit trees in a calm area of the park. Despite the different characters of the cafés, they both attract a lot of visitors.

The category of Knowledge is less popular. In Engelska parken and Botaniska trädgården students sometimes come to study, which is because of the parks' close location to the departments of Uppsala University. In all three parks there are also memorials, but when studying the parks, no one came to read the signs and learn about them. In Botaniska trädgården the purpose to convey botanical knowledge is more than clear and attracts a lot of people who are eager to learn about plants and even school classes. But not only the knowledge is important to visitors that stroll in the park, many of them just want to enjoy the beautiful flowers by looking at them. In this case the activity learning is not implied. One way to share knowledge in an interesting way is to have guided tours as there are at Botaniska trädgården for example. People don't tend to stop to read information signs as it can be seen in Stadsträdgården. There one can find the trees' names on small tags and get more information about them, but when studying the park no one came to read these tags.

Making a park interesting to all groups of visitors requires a wide range of possibilities. People in different ages have different demands. Children need space for playing, a playground is the simplest way to attract this group. In Botaniska trädgården people come for other reasons than playing, which explains that not many children go to this park. Activities that attract all different groups of visitors and are very important are meeting, resting, sitting, relaxing. These kinds of activities are mostly passive by their nature and one could think that people who want to rest need calm places where they can be alone. However, after observing the three parks it was clear that, when planning for activities like meeting, sitting, resting, it is important to vary the location. These activities should be possible at different places, such as calm corners, busy walkways, beautiful flowerbeds or even close to the playground.

The group of teenagers was seen less in the three parks. They usually want to "hang" with friends, which falls under the category of meeting and resting. Most of them are not interested in playing or sports anymore, at least they don't do that often in parks.

Very unique features are Linneanum and the tropical greenhouse in Botaniska trädgården. These two buildings and the baroque garden attract a lot of tourists and they are what makes the park special. The park with its unique character attracts tourists and also elderly more than the other two parks, which means that these groups of visitors are especially interested in culture and education.

The popularity of a park increases with its diversity. Since the different groups have different interests and demands a park should have a high diversity so that people can explore the park in different ways and have the possibility to discover new things each time they visit. If visitors want to use a park for resting but also for sports they don't need to go to different parks for each activity. Nolin refers to Forsberg's project for the construction of a botanical and zoological garden at Kungliga Humlegården in Stockholm in 1868, when she wrote that visitors gladly come back to the same park if it has a high diversity (Nolin, p.254). For example, Stadsträdgården was the park with the highest variety in visitors and was also the one with the most variety in activities.

Although a high variety in activities increases the popularity, it is most important to have a diversity in places for resting and meeting. In cities, the main reason to go to a park is recreation. For most people this means to spend time outside and take a break from everyday life. Since it is such a basic activity and does appeal to almost all groups of visitors, it should be especially regarded.

## Conclusion and reflection

All three parks do have different characters but still they have some activities in common. There are usages that do not need a lot of equipment or features, like resting and meeting. Those are the most common and popular ones. Another important aspect is variety since this can attract different groups of visitors. As Grahn (1991, p.279ff) puts it, different user groups have different demands, and Stadsträdgården is a great example for that since it attracts all groups of visitors.

Also, it was interesting to compare visitors' habits with Gehl's statement about people and human activity attracting other people (Gehl, p23). His hypothesis could not be supported by observations in the parks. Just in Stadsträdgården, it was obvious that people are attracted by other groups of people. In Botaniska trädgården and Engelska parken on the other hand was no such appearance. It is not only about activity attracting even more activity. For example, passive recreation like sitting is also more often found near other people that play or have a picnic. For children it is more clear that they are drawn to other children, playgrounds and other places where there is a lot of activity.

On the other side, Gehl's second hypothesis that optional activities are necessary for outdoor spaces with high quality, could be proved. The activities that people in the three parks joined most where meeting and resting. According to Gehl these are optional activities (Gehl, p.11). This means that these kinds of activities attract most visitors in a park.

Stadsträdgården is a good example that in a park with high diversity one also finds most different types of activities. The connection between diversity (of vegetation, path structure, facilities, equipment, character, exposition) and the number of different activities supports that Grahn was right with his proposition about the need of diversity. Even though there are usages that do not need certain equipment and that are also very popular at the same time, it is an advantage to have a number of different features or cultural events that attract more diverse groups of visitors and help to make a park more popular.

In this paper popularity and also quality was measured related to the amount of visitors and especially the different groups of visitors. Since I was interested in the usage of the parks, the focus was on activities and people's habits. This is a very specific aspect and there are many more ways of investigating a park.

The aspects I chose to study (activities, different groups of visitors, including the ratio between them, and parks' design) have a strong connection to each other. People choose parks depending on what they want to use the park for. This choice depends on the parks design and if it is suitable for the visitors purpose. Also, the activities that people want to carry out depend on the age and living situation of each person. Because of this strong connection I found it interesting to study these aspects. However, this paper is explicitly about three parks in Uppsala and does not imply that this is a general way of investigating parks.

Most important to say, is that the way I used the terms popularity and quality of the parks does not reveal anything about the parks' value. Even though there are many visitors in a park, it does not imply that this park has a higher value than others in general, it only demonstrates that it is much appreciated by these certain groups of people that visit the park. The baroque garden in Botaniska



trädgården is under protection according to the Swedish National Heritage Board. This is an example of historical value, which I didn't focus on during my work. Other examples are ecological values as well as values of health and representation.

Due to the fact that the three parks are very different in their characters they all have different possibilities and potentials, but since many factors can change with time, the meaning of the parks may also be different after a couple of years.

Botaniska trädgården for example is under construction in some parts of the park. There are plans to have more plants and a pond. By doing this the park could become more popular and crowded. Engelska parken could invite more visitors for a longer stay by increasing the diversity in space and vegetation. Flowerbeds could attract other groups of visitors. The trees are old and some day there might be another occasion of sorting them out which could result in changes in the space and exposition.

This work represents only a small part of a wide subject. During my work, it became obvious that there are more aspects that can influence a park's usage. All the aspects I used for studying and discussing the parks are closely connected to each other and can not only be seen separated from each other. Therefore it could be interesting for further estimation to have a closer look to their connections to each other including history and the development of the parks or even a more detailed study of the surroundings and where in the city visitors of the parks come from. Other ideas would be to study the factor of accessibility for handicapped people or to compare parks in different cities. For my work I also chose a rough classification of groups of visitors. There it may be interesting to include groups such as students, tourists or handicapped people.

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## Illustrations

### Photo

Figure 2-4: Taken by Antje Böhme

### Aerial photo

Figure 1:

Google Search (2010). Keyword: *Uppsala map*. (electronic). Accessible: <<http://www.geo.uu.se/images/karta.jpg>> (2010-06-04)

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