

Sustainable Park Management with Citizen Participation of the Awaji Island Regional Park

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Abstract

Many efforts have been made to improve the management of large-scale green spaces. How to manage large-scale green spaces and their active uses, as well as how to build relationships with local communities have been important issues. For this research, I reviewed the actual status of management, use and citizen participation at large-scale regional parks in Hyogo Prefecture. In addition, I studied the sustainable management through citizen participation of the Awaji Island Regional Park, where I have been involved for several years. I conducted various projects related to the use and management of the park, and examined the direction of citizen participation by conducting questionnaires and interviews. ① Through interviews about the park, I collected opinions, including good points, problems, and potential solutions through physical and programming measures. ② I examined what kinds of activities should be conducted in the park in order to revitalize park use and stimulate the surrounding communities. ③ I examined the current status of citizen participation while citizens carried out activities of their own planning. ④ I studied what is necessary to sustain park events and other activities.

As a result, I came to the following conclusions. ① Provision of information that is easy to access, including signs in the park, explanation of routes in large parks, and other techniques that help people become familiar with park facilities, is very important. ② Local community events, and programs that draw out the willingness and capabilities of volunteers are effective. ③ Several different types of participation exist, including volunteers, guests, staff who work continuously for the project, coordinators, and professional specialists. ④ To sustain citizen involvement in the use and management of large-scale parks, a system that includes coordinators should be developed.

Key Words : Park Management, Citizen Participation, Maintenance, Events, Planning

1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Traditionally, the theme of park management has mainly meant the maintenance of facilities and vegetation, but recently more importance has been placed on issues such as the promotion of active use

by the local community and visitors. Examples of projects aimed at revitalizing the active use of parks are the creation of educational facilities and park redevelopment. There are also trial projects of park management with public involvement in many places. Chiba¹⁾ and Iwamura²⁾ have written reports about these issues, but they focus on the process of planning

and citizen participation in park maintenance. There are not enough reports that describe the roles of coordinators in park management for citizen participation and projects for active use.

In Hyogo Prefecture, Japan, the Park Management Board of Arimafuji Park in Sanda City, PMO Ashiya of the Ashiya City Park, and Enjoy Awaji Island Park Association of the Awaji Island Regional Park are new examples of large-scale park management.

In this paper, I define "park management" as activities related to comprehensive park management and promotion of park use with citizen participation, particularly for city parks. Concerning large-scale green space management, our great challenge is to determine how park management can build connections with local communities and promote active use. For this paper, after reviewing the status of large-scale parks in Hyogo Prefecture, I studied how park management of large-scale green spaces should be developed and considered future prospects by examining the activities of the Enjoy Awaji Island Park Association. In this paper, I focus on the promotion of use through citizen participation.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

I first examined the status of use with citizen participation of large-scale green spaces through examination of Hyogo Prefectural parks, and then analyzed the continued participatory use of the Awaji Island Regional Park, which I have been involved in for more than 4 years. By conducting some trial use and projects for park management, and through questionnaires and interviews, I explored the direction of sustainable participation by citizens. Specifically, I pursued the following. ① Park good points, problems and their potential solutions were examined from both physical and programming perspectives through workshop activities. ② I analyzed the types of

activities that should be done to promote park use and vitalize surrounding communities. ③ I identified types of citizen participation while citizens implemented activities that they proposed themselves. ④ I examined what is necessary to sustain the continuation of events and other activities to promote the use of parks.

III. RESULTS

1. Examples of Park use by Citizen Groups in the Large-Scale Parks of Hyogo Prefecture

To determine the present status of the use of parks by local community groups and residents in planned events, I calculated the total number of events held in Hyogo Prefectural parks and the breakdown of the organizing groups. Figure 1 below shows the present condition of park use programs carried out from 2002 to 2003 in 15 parks in Hyogo Prefecture. This chart reveals that many events have begun to be held in Hyogo Prefecture parks in recent years. However, most of them can be categorized as either events organized by park management or events in which space was borrowed by established groups. Only 25 programs involved active use by local residents and events in which the park itself was made more open to local communities. 22 of those were held in Arimafuji Park. These programs were implemented by local residents or held by staff with resident collaboration. The three programs held in Awaji Island

Fig. 1. The total number and the breakdown of events of Hyogo prefecture parks

The total number of events	464
Event that are held by park management organizing office	214
Events that its park space is just lent by an established group	205
Events that are planned and acted by local groups	25

Park were planned by the Enjoy Awaji Island Park Association, which was organized by local residents.

2. Analysis of Activities Conducted with Citizen Participation in the Awaji Island Regional Park

The following figure shows the process of the activities (Figure 2).

In the first year, the participants examined good points, issues and possible solutions through workshops. With the support of local residents, professionals and NPO groups, they suggested both physical and programming changes. They also made plans in which local people could actively use the park and distributed information to locals by publishing newsletters.

Starting from the second year, they held consecutive events, all of which were planned and managed in partnership with locals, park management officials and professionals. They also published newsletters to inform local people about these events.

In the third year, the participants continued to hold events and strengthened the organization by establishing rules. The Park Management Board was set up in parallel with the Enjoy Awaji Island Park Association. Members of this board discussed issues with group organizers, government staff, park officers and professionals. They also diversified their activities and applied for subsidies.

They held both large and small events throughout the fourth year and conducted educational programs to create a structure where local people could join in the maintenance and management of flowerbeds in the park on a voluntary basis.

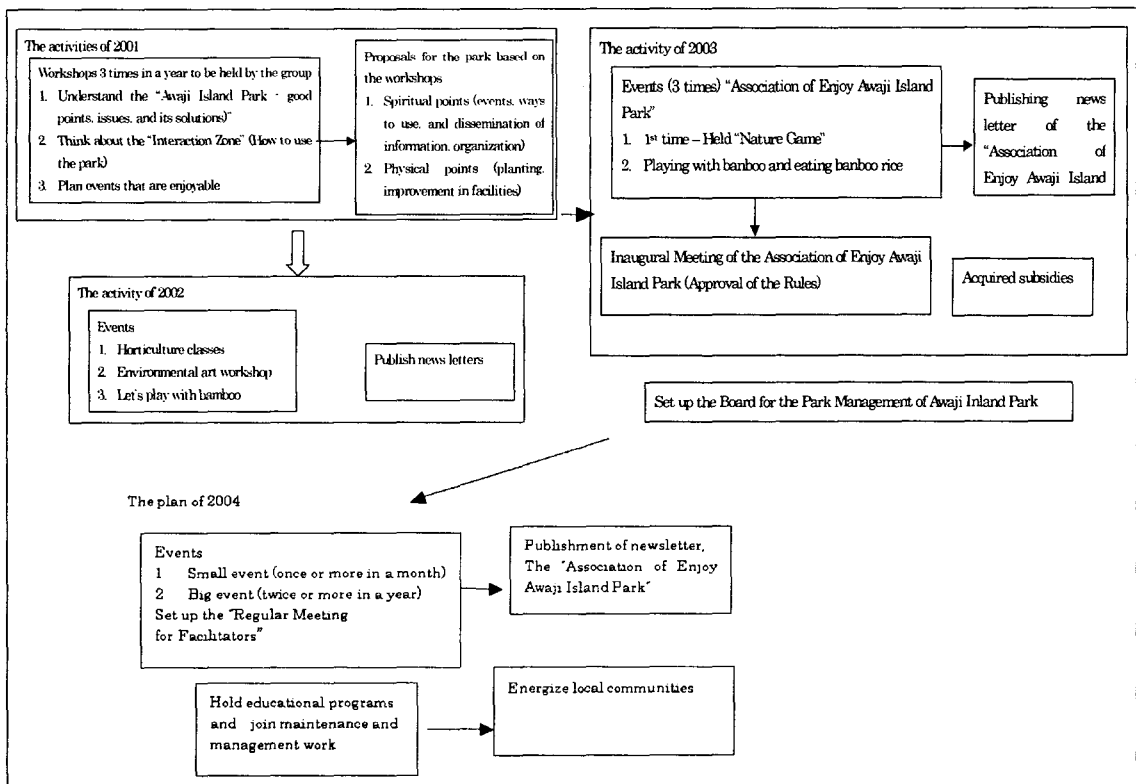


Fig. 2. The past activities conducted by the Association of Enjoy Awaji Inland Park

Fig. 3. How did you feel about the programs?

	1 st event Class for Horticulture	2 nd event Environmental art workshop	3 rd event Let's play with bamboo
Participants	54	27	66
Very much satisfied	95.8%	77.8%	84.4%
Satisfied	4.2%	22.2%	12.5%
Ordinary	0.0%	0.0%	3.1%
Not satisfied very much	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Hard to feel satisfaction	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	N=24	N=9	N=32

Fig. 4. How did you feel as a volunteer staff?

	1 st event Class for Horticulture	2 nd event Environmental art workshop	3 rd event Let's play with bamboo
1 Very much satisfied	50.0%(7)	25.0%(2)	27.3%(3)
2 Satisfied	12.9%(9)	62.5%(5)	35.4%(4)
3 ordinary	7.1%(4)	12.5%(1)	35.4%(4)
4 Not satisfied very much	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
5 Hard to feel satisfaction	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
回答数(N)	14	8	11

Fig. 5. How did you feel for the activities in Awaji Island Park?

	1 st event Class for Horticulture	2 nd event Environmental art workshop	3 rd event Let's play with bamboo
1 Like to join from the beginning	11.3%(2)	44.4%(4)	50.0%(6)
2 Like to join as a voluntary staff	50.0%(7)	55.6%(5)	16.7%(2)
3 Like to join casually	57.1%(8)	11.1%(1)	33.3%(4)
4 Not willing to join	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
回答数(N)	14	8	12

Fig. 6. The people that participate to the park management

The people that participate to the park management	1 st event Class for Horticulture	2 nd event Environmental art workshop	3 rd event Let's play with bamboo
● Citizens: Local community residents and other park users	1	1	5
● Public organizations: Park management office, Department of parks in Hyogo prefecture, District council	3	3	3
● Educational organizations: universities, local public schools	2	3	3
● NPO groups: Wide area theme NPO groups, community board, other small groups	10	3	1
● Professionals: Consultants, coordinators, environmental artist	2	2	7

As stated above, park use with participation of local residents has been energized through various types of

Fig. 7. The rolls of coordinator for the events

	Date	Content	Coordinator role
Workshop	June 4th	Learning about the park; good points, issues and solutions; use of the park; planning an event	Briefing with park management officials; coordinate with URA (Oasis Annex organizing staff); staff meetings brochure preparation and distribution; pamphlet and material creation
Staff schooling	July 29th	Horticulture Class	Briefing with park management officials; coordinate with URA; staff meetings brochure preparation and distribution; pamphlet and material creation
Events	August 11th August 24th	Horticulture Class, Environmental art workshop, Let's play with bamboo; preparation for above	Briefing with park management officials; coordinate with URA; staff meetings invitation preparation and distribution; pamphlet and material creation; venue set-up; program planning and implementation; photography; questionnaire survey
		Publication of newsletter	Photography; content preparations; meetings with park management officials and staff; illustration; negotiation with printer; publication and distribution

programs and plans that have been conducted in parallel.

Furthermore, participants' senses of achievement from the events were analyzed. For example, the results of the questionnaire given to participants regarding 3 events in the year 2002 are as follows (Fig. 3). The events of the Enjoy Awaji Island Park Association were managed by 8 to 21 volunteers each time, with the total number of participants in each event ranging from 54 to 66, including the volunteers.

The participants' evaluations of each event were rather good, with questionnaires showing that participants had a good feeling about each of these events, 77.8% to 95.8% responded that they were "Very satisfied" and 96.9% to 100% of the responses were "Satisfied" or "Very satisfied." Many people (65.9%) also answered that they would like to receive

information about future events. However, the evaluations of the volunteer staff changed from "Very satisfied" for the first events to "Satisfied" for the Environmental art workshop. Finally, their evaluations were mostly "Satisfied" and "Average" for Let's play with bamboo (Figure 4). Regarding future activities, more participants tended to seek more active involvement in later events, saying, "I would like to join casually" (57.1%) after the first event, to "I would like to join as a volunteer in the future," (55.6%) after the second event and "I would like to join from the planning stage" after the third event (50.0%) (Figure 5).

The types of participation were analyzed, identifying many participation forms, including citizens, government staff, educational organizations, NPO groups, and professionals (Figure 6). Citizen participants could be further classified as guests, repeaters, and volunteer staff/hosts.

Finally, the many roles that coordinators play were examined. Who fills them and how people can take parts in those roles is a big issue (Figure 7). In order to manage events, much continuous and planned work is necessary. The roles of the coordinators who manage this in a comprehensive manner are important. A system in which only the park management office or citizen volunteers do this work is difficult to sustain. Coordinators should have some professional skills including editing, coordination and negotiation capabilities as well as a comprehensive perspective.

IV. CONCLUSION

The use of citizen participation events has not been sufficient in large-scale green areas such as prefectural parks. I made the following observations from participation in various events and my research results related to the Awaji Island Prefecture Park.

In order to build an organization with locals and citizens from a wider area participating, the process of consensus making and information dissemination is very important. Local citizen involvement from the planning stage for implementation of events and management itself is desirable. The participants should include people from public organizations, educational and research institutions, local neighborhoods, wide area citizen groups, and professional backgrounds. To carry out the events or programs, complicated and continuous work is necessary. Such work is difficult for only volunteer staff to implement, so coordinator involvement is necessary. To realize these recommendations and make citizen participation in active use and management of large-scale green areas sustainable, creation of a comprehensive system is indispensable.

REFERENCES

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