<http://www.diva-portal.org>

This is the published version of a paper published in *Garden History*.

Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Schantz, P. (2004)

The National Urban Park in Greater Stockholm: Background, legislation and implementation.
Garden History, 32(2): 279-280

Access to the published version may require subscription.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:gih:diva-3767>

NOTE

THE NATIONAL URBAN PARK IN GREATER STOCKHOLM: BACKGROUND, LEGISLATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

In December 1994, the Swedish Parliament unanimously decided to establish a large area covering 27 square kilometres between Ulriksdal, Haga-Brunnsviken and Djurgården, in Greater Stockholm, as a National Urban Park. The first National Urban Park in the world, it has been seen as an innovative way of protecting an important cultural landscape that also contains important ecological areas and is of significance as a recreation area. This note illuminates the decision, the legislation and its implementation.

BACKGROUND

The area contains a number of historic landscapes: the hunting park Djurgården and the baroque garden at Ulriksdal, which were created in the seventeenth century, followed by the formation of English landscape gardens at Haga-Brunnsviken in the eighteenth century. These royal parks are integrated in an old agricultural and naturalistic landscape near the centre of Stockholm. For many centuries, this landscape has been a spacious and beautiful recreation area with a complex of biotopes and a wealth of cultural heritage, which have been well preserved due not least to royal privileges hampering urban development. The proximity to the city has made this area easily accessible to the urban population, but at the same time attractive for other types of land use, and during the twentieth century it has been encroached upon step by step, despite the often expressed contrary wishes of parliament.¹

In the early 1990s, there were a substantial number of development proposals for Ulriksdal–Haga-Brunnsviken–Djurgården, despite its status as an area of national cultural interest. Proposed development amounted to a building area of 1 million square metres.² This critical situation for the park landscape led to a clearly creative process that resulted in the development of the Act for the National Urban Park.³

THE LEGISLATION

The legislation for the National Urban Park opened the way for the formation of National Urban Parks in general. The criterion for giving an area legal protection as a National Urban Park is that it is of national interest, which is significant for national cultural heritage, and for ecology and recreation in a municipality or densely populated region. The National Urban Park Act states:

The Ulriksdal–Haga-Brunnsviken–Djurgården area is a National Urban Park. In a National Urban Park, new built-up areas and new installations may be created and other measures taken only if this can take place without encroaching on the park landscape or natural environment and without the natural and cultural values of the historical landscape being otherwise damaged.⁴

The regulations for the protection of the National Urban Park are strict. Even if new houses, roads or any other built features are of the greatest importance for the development of the area or of local trade and industry, they are still forbidden within the National Urban Park.⁵

THE IMPLEMENTATION

Over the past decade since the National Urban Park Act was established, there have been positive developments by the municipalities in charge of the legal planning instruments for the area. An example of that is developmental work in the field of biodiversity. However, at the same time there has been a loss of biotopes in biological core areas and connectivity zones as well as changes in landscape scenery in the direction of more urban elements in the rural landscape context. However, in comparison with the threats of development to the area before the legislation came into effect, the outcome is not at all bad, with about five per cent of the exploitation volume planned before the legislation was realized.

But why has the Act not been able to stop development altogether? Independent studies of the impact of the legislation point to the fact that the preservation of the National Urban Park has not been a priority for those municipal bodies

in charge of planning. Here real-estate owners and construction companies have continued to influence the planning process. And in studies of the Environmental Impact Assessments and other descriptive material coupled to detailed development plans, there is evidence of a failure to investigate or identify natural and cultural values or environmental impacts. This has been interpreted as part of a strategy to avoid the intention of the law.⁶ Furthermore, the County Administrative Board of Stockholm has been too relaxed and has implemented the Act too leniently in terms of maintaining the national interest.⁷ However, it is also clear that more negative developments would have occurred without the legislation, although the intention behind the National Urban Park Act that 'the development of the National Urban Park should aim at strengthening the area's natural, cultural and

recreational values and protecting biodiversity' remains to be fulfilled.⁸

Despite the problems described above, it can still be concluded that the formation of the National Urban Park in Greater Stockholm represents an important step towards the management of natural, cultural and recreational resources close to urban areas. The formation of the law represented a clear, innovative political process, and it is therefore understandable if there is a need for development of the law as well as a system of checks and balances connected to it.

PETER SCHANTZ

The Research Unit Movement, Health and Environment, The Åstrand Laboratory, University College of Physical Education and Sports, Box 5626, SE-114 86 Stockholm, Sweden

REFERENCES

¹ Riksdagen, *Jordbruksutskottets betänkande 1991/92:JOU10. Miljön kring Djurgården–Haga-Brunnsviken–Ulriksdal* (Stockholm), pp. 3–4.

² Part of them are listed in *ibid.*, pp. 68–9.

³ *Regeringens Proposition 1994/95:3 Nationalstadsparken Ulriksdal–Haga-Brunnsviken–Djurgården.*

⁴ The Environmental Code, Chapter 4, §7.

⁵ Staffan Westerlund and Bengt Hamdahl, 'Om lagen och möjliga utvecklingslinjer', in *Nationalstadsparken – ett experiment i hållbar utveckling*, edited by Lennert Holm and Peter Schantz (Stockholm: Formas, 2002), pp. 23–9; English summary, pp. 252–3.

⁶ Peter Schantz, 'De saknade kulturvärdena'; 'Lagstiftning och rättstillämpning. En

granskning av rättsfall'; and 'Lagtillämpning och konsekvenser', all in Holm and Schantz, *Nationalstadsparken*, pp. 171–209, 213–37; English summaries, pp. 258–60.

⁷ Daniela Fröberg, 'Implementeringen av lagen. Ett statsvetenskapligt perspektiv', in Holm and Schantz, *Nationalstadsparken*, pp. 51–76; English summary, pp. 254–5.

⁸ *Regeringens Proposition 1994/95:3 Nationalstadsparken Ulriksdal–Haga-Brunnsviken–Djurgården*, p. 43.

The National Urban Park on the Web:

<http://www.ekoparken.org>

<http://www.haga-brunnsviken.org>

<http://www.nationalstadsparken.org>