



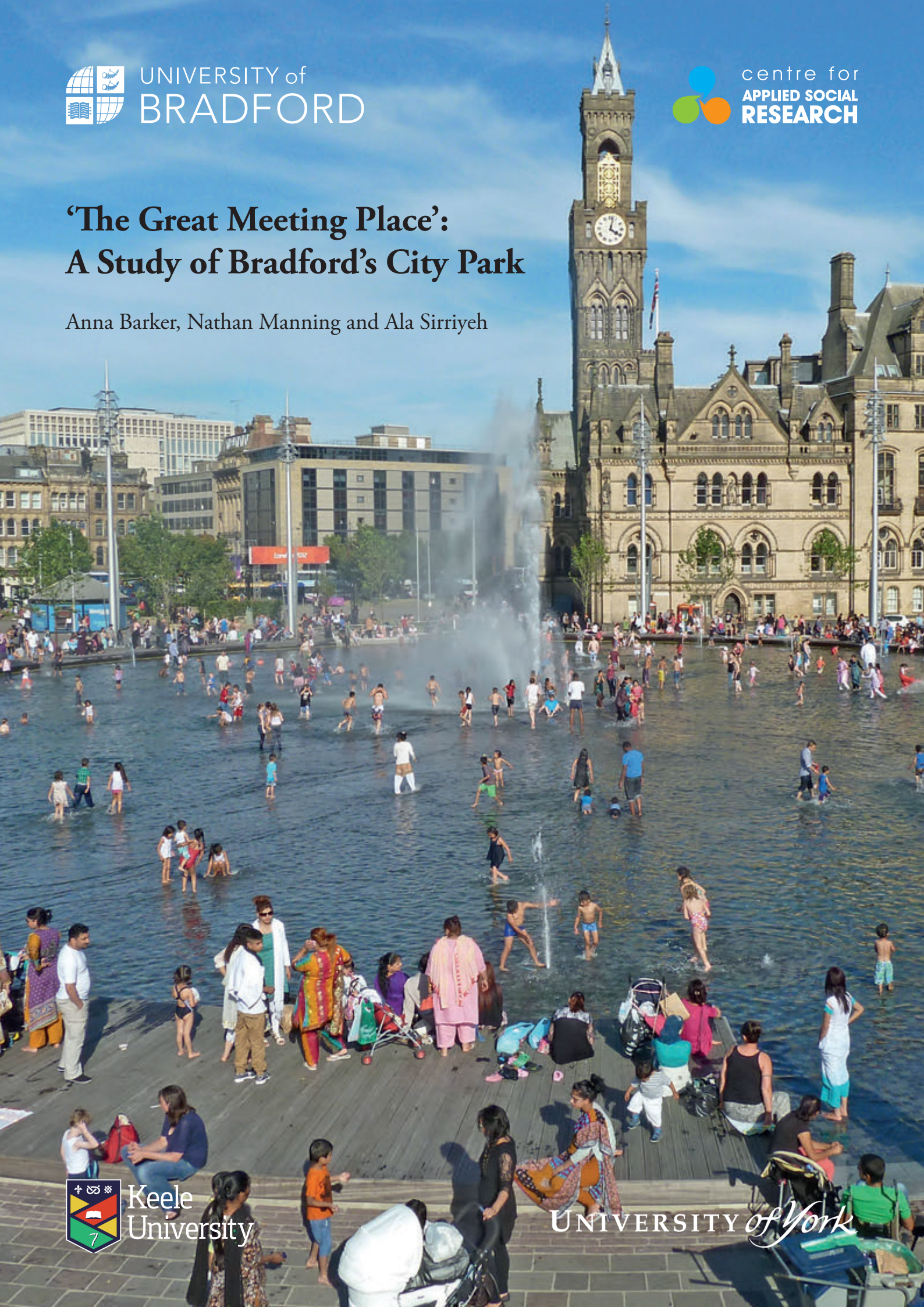
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APPLIED SOCIAL  
RESEARCH

# ‘The Great Meeting Place’: A Study of Bradford’s City Park

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Cover photograph: A sunny day in Bradford City Park, Bradford, West Yorkshire. Taken by Flickr user: Tim Green aka atouch on Saturday the 8th of September 2012. Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/atoach/7956965506/in/photostream>

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## Chapter One: Introduction

‘Parks are volatile spaces. They tend to run to extremes of popularity and unpopularity. Their behavior is far from simple. They can be delightful features of city districts, and economic assets to their surroundings as well, but pitifully few are. They can grow more beloved and valuable with the years, but pitifully few show this staying power.’ (Jacobs 1961 p.89)

Whilst Jacobs was writing in the 1960s, this observation is no less significant today. At the turn of the millennium, over one third of British public parks were assessed as in decline (GreenSpace 2001). The opening of Bradford’s City Park in 2012, underpinned by six years of development and consultation, was envisaged to be a place that is popular with the people of Bradford. It was also intended to have all the elements of a beloved space for it to have the staying power to become a delightful feature of, and an economic asset to, the City of Bradford.

The title of this report ‘the great meeting place’ reflects the core vision of the park. This term is drawn from the nickname given to the site by local authority staff involved with the planning and delivery of the City Park regeneration project. We have adopted this name for the report as it captures some of the key elements of City Park’s design, use and objectives which are explored in this study. First, it brings together people from diverse backgrounds in the city to share and enjoy the space and encounter one another in an informal and uncontrived way, without the demand for close bonds. This reflects the vision of the first public parks as spaces for social mixing (see below). As discussed in chapters three and four, this can have both positive and challenging consequences. Second, the park is free to access, located in the centre of the city (rather than in a particular neighbourhood) and is accessible by major transport routes. This enables the space to be open to all and become a ‘public resource’ that is often used by people for

planned and impromptu meetings. Third, City Park is used for a number of different activities including, different forms of recreation, commercial activities, art installations and awareness raising activities by charities and community groups. Therefore, as with public urban squares, City Park acts as ‘a meeting place’ where these different activities can be practiced within the same shared space (Faye and Le Fur 2012 p.3083). Finally, with the backdrop of the Grade I listed Victorian City Hall and adjacent to the ceremonial place of Centenary Square, City Park can also act as a symbolic meeting place between ‘old’ and ‘new’ Bradford, reflecting the continuity of the city’s historical identity while also incorporating dynamic and new directions for the city.

A year after its opening, in the summer of 2013, our research study set out to explore how members of the public from all sections of society use and share City Park. We were interested in their experiences and feelings for the site and what they think it has contributed to the City of Bradford. We also aimed to explore the experiences and perceptions of local businesses and workers who share the site, and the way the space is regulated and managed. This report details our research findings.

### Imagining City Park

The Victorians first recognised a need for city dwellers to have public parks to relax, unwind and mix socially. Designers of these parks also envisaged that they would help to

make urban environments attractive places to live and work and, therefore, would boost local economies and foster civic pride. They were seen as socially inclusive places where people from all parts of society could enter free of charge and mix together (English Heritage 2013). As we will see throughout this report, the ethos of City Park sought to retain these civic ideals.

Bradford has a population of nearly 525,000.<sup>1</sup> The city grew in prominence in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries during the industrial revolution when it became a major producer of textiles. This heritage is evident in some of the beautiful buildings that still remain from this era, although many are now in need of renovation. Bradford district has 6,500 listed buildings, more per head than Manchester or Liverpool (Bradford MDC 2010). Despite its prosperous past, the city now contains some of the most deprived areas in the UK. It is, however, a dynamic, socially and ethnically diverse area.<sup>2</sup> The city has a rich cultural heritage due, in part, to a long history of immigration dating back to the industrial revolution. Migrants have come to work and settle in the city from Germany, Italy, Eastern Europe, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and other parts of the world. Bradford is also home to the most visited museum outside London, the National Media Museum (Bradford MDC 2009) and the city has recently become the world's first UNESCO City of Film (*ibid*).

The Bradford City Centre Masterplan was produced in 2003 in the context of the decline in the city's fortunes and the stigma that has been experienced by Bradford since the riots of 2001. This 20 year regeneration strategy proposed a new setting for the city centre (Bradford MDC 2009). In recent years, urban public spaces have been a key

focal point within urban regeneration strategies (Faye and Le Fur 2012; Power *et al.* 2010). Bradford's City Park was 'the signature project' of this regeneration strategy (Alsop 2003). It is neither a traditional green space nor a traditional city square, but combines elements of these types of 'public open spaces' (Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions 2002). As one senior manager from the local authority remarked, *'We call the space "City Park" and we treat it like a park but it's not a green park in the sense that we are used to.'*

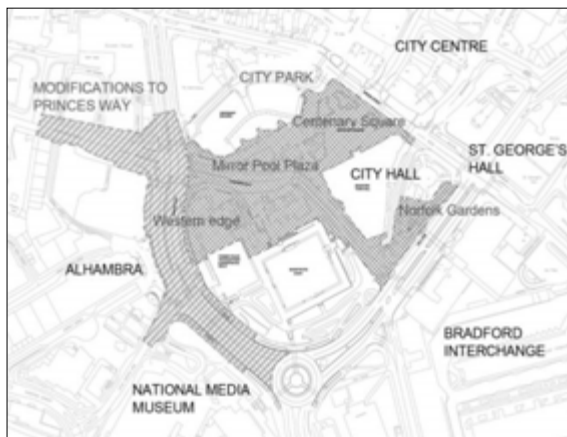
It was intended that City Park would 'be an iconic landmark for Bradford and a foyer to a new city centre' (Bradford MDC 2009). Five key objectives were outlined at the start of the development. These were:

- 'To put Bradford on the map – be a world class space that becomes a national destination, a regional and local gem and creates a memorable postcard image for Bradford.
- To be a place for people – a place for all ages and nationalities, cherished and used by the people of Bradford
- To be a place for events – a place for all types of activity, large and small scale events
- To be the glue that binds the centre of Bradford together – the pivotal link between the Media Museum and the city centre
- To be a catalyst for regeneration – changing the perception of Bradford and providing a setting for new business.'

Designing an 'attractive, inclusive and safe environment' was also a priority (*Bradford City Centre Area Action Plan*, Bradford MDC 2007 p.11). Feedback from a public consultation (Bradford MDC 2012) noted

that the city centre was considered by some to be unsafe and there were concerns about litter and crime. There was support for a water feature, but concern about the maintenance of this. Those who took part in the consultation wanted a secure space that was well maintained.

The City Park regeneration project consisted of five key areas (see Figure 1.1): the Mirror Pool Plaza, Centenary Square, Norfolk Gardens, the western edge and modifications to Princes Way. This was a large scale project and involved a significant amount of excavation, construction, transport re-routing, as outlined in chapter two. In this report we discuss the extent to which the objectives underpinning the planning of City Park potentially recapture a civic ideal of a public park and promote social inclusion.



**Figure 1.1: Layout of City Park** (Bradford MDC 2009)

### **City Park Today**

City Park is located between the central retail district and some of the city's key leisure attractions such as the National Media Museum and the Alhambra theatre. There are several entrances to the park providing a variety of points of access from around the city. Centenary Square provides the main 'gateway' into the park and City

Hall from the retail area of the city and Bradford Interchange Train Station. On the other side of the City Hall, the park can be accessed from Norfolk Gardens, where main city bus routes stop. Furthermore, there is a pathway with entrance points between the western and eastern edges of the Park and this is the main carrier of footfall from the University and College into the city.

The centrepiece of City Park is the Mirror Pool Plaza<sup>3</sup> designed to act as an interactive play resource and an events space. It is the UK's largest man-made water feature with over 100 fountains, a central jet rising to 30 meters and a 4,000 square metre Mirror Pool. Combined with the installation of laser lights, technical functions to create mist, fog and water causeways, as well as its simple function as a reflective water mirror, it has been designed to create different moods at different times of the day and night. It can also be drained and used as an events space. The Mirror Pool is surrounded by a wooden decking promenade dotted with benches overlooking the water. The curved design of the Mirror Pool Plaza resembles a modern amphitheatre, which creates the feeling of a stage and audience.

On a typical day, the fountains are switched on in the morning and the pool fills up during the day. The water is then drained in the evening and passes through a filtration system so it can be cleaned. The fountains are lit up in the evening. To date, City Park has received much acclaim and has won nine awards, including; for its design and fountains, use of lighting, local economic growth, and the broad appeal and accessibility of the site.

Aside from this centrepiece, City Park contains a number of other important



features designed to attract a variety of users and uses. The park is enclosed by a row of businesses, including restaurants, a café, a pub, a hairdresser, an art gallery and a news stand. A new City Library was opened shortly after our fieldwork finished. There is a big television screen (that is also used as an open air cinema during family event days) on the wall of the building where the businesses are situated. Outside the businesses, there are three grass areas contained within small stone walls which are a good height for sitting and sculptures often used by children who climb on and through them. On the western edge of the park there is a green landscaping 'buffer' which people use for sitting and sunbathing that acts as a visual barrier with the main road (Princes Way). A new building was constructed and enclosed within an earth bank which the public can walk and sit on but was mostly used by young people during our observations. The building contains a commercial unit, public toilets with a Changing Place which is a fully accessible toilet with shower fitting for those with complex needs and the office of the Park Custodians. At the time of our fieldwork, there was a temporary children's library called 'park and read'. On the southern periphery of the Mirror Pool there are the Magistrates Courts and the derelict former Police Station. City Hall is on the eastern periphery.

### **Policy Background**

The regeneration and re-branding of 'place' has become fundamental to the economic fortunes of cities (Crawford 2011). Consumption has become the dominant logic informing the re-branding of many post-industrial northern English cities. The official tourist information website for the nearby City of Leeds, for example, identifies 'stylish shopping' as the top attraction.<sup>4</sup> In

contrast, culture has become a central part of Bradford's re-branding (Bradford MDC 2014). According to Visit Bradford, in 2014 City Park is the second must see attraction after the National Media Museum.<sup>5</sup> We explore how City Park engages with issues of consumption and the potential inclusion of 'flawed consumers' (Bauman 2000) – those without the economic means to engage successfully in consumer practices.

The rejuvenation of public spaces features strongly in strategies for urban renewal and renaissance. Yet the social impacts of the regenerated city centres are often overlooked in the economic focus of many regeneration schemes (Worpole and Knox 2007). We explore whether City Park has the potential to reflect a form of 'moral urbanism' (Darling 2013), the idea that some cities have particular moral characteristics as a key aspect of their identity. Here, the focus is on the socially inclusive contribution of the park to the city. Fostering social inclusion has been considered as a strategic role of public space that can be promoted through parks and open spaces that are sustainable and meet the diverse needs of users. It has also been suggested that there is a potential for public spaces to enable casual social contact between different ethnic and age groups, fostering 'weak ties' (Watson 2006).

Public space is often viewed in pessimistic terms and understood to be under threat from a range of social forces. There are concerns over the privatisation, commercialisation or thematisation of public space (Bauman 1999; Minton 2009; Sorkin 1992), the retreat into the private (Sennett 1974), and the way cars have carved up the public spaces of cities (Habermas 1989). In contrast, Bradford's City Park is pedestrianised, has been used

for a variety of public functions and is a popular space with members of the public, gaining thousands of visitors on summer days and up to 21,798 on event days. Despite some on-going criticism, during the first summer it was open the site drew thousands of people to the heart of Bradford and was the scene of much relaxed and good natured conviviality amongst socially diverse groups. In the media Bradford is used to denote a segregated city, divided by ethnicity and faith (see for example the Channel 4 documentary *Make Bradford British*). Cities like Bradford also haunt politicians' claims that multiculturalism has 'gone too far' or the notion that contemporary Britain is defined by people and communities leading 'parallel lives' (Cantle 2001 p.9). However, the 'easy sociality' (Watson 2009 p.1582) that came to characterise City Park during the summer of 2012 runs counter to these popular narratives and stereotypes of Bradford.

### Study Outline

As social researchers working at the University of Bradford, we were keen observers of the site. The study pursued the following objectives:

- to explore how different social groups use and share this public space, examining the opportunities afforded by this public space for social encounters and their potential for enabling positive interactions between different groups;
- to investigate the management and regulation of the space by the local authority and police;
- to explore the contribution of the park to the regeneration of Bradford City Centre with a particular emphasis on perceived social impacts; and

- to promote a public conversation about Bradford, its public spaces, the city centre and how residents live together.

The research fieldwork was conducted during the summer of 2013 and comprised three stages:

#### *Stage One: Observation*

We started our research by observing who visited City Park and recorded field notes detailing the ways in which people used the space and interacted with each other. Given City Park is most utilised during the warmer months our fieldwork took place between mid-June and August. We anticipate that two factors had an impact on usage of the park during (part of) the observational period. First, some observations took place during the school holidays. Second, our observations intersected with a heat wave.

We observed the park mostly on weekdays; during the morning rush hour where people travel to work and school, during late mornings and early afternoons where those in education and work are enclosed in their schools and office buildings, during lunchtime hours where workers showed their heads again, through to the hours after schools had closed their gates for the day and again to the peak travel post-work hours. At some points in the day's rhythm we did not anticipate seeing certain types of people use the park, such as children during school hours. During these times, we were interested in documenting use by other social groups, such as those people not in education, the unemployed, the elderly and retired, mothers with infants, students, homeless people, street drinkers and also those who might be attending meetings or appointments in the city (e.g. at the magistrates court, which has an entrance

from the site). In general, we did not spend time observing the park beyond 7pm. We also observed the park on some weekends, including several occasions when an event was being held in the park. In total, we observed the park for approximately 26 hours over 17 days.

Information was gathered on the types of visitors to the park (by age, gender and ethnicity), what they were doing, and the nature of social exchanges between people in the space. The regulation of the park was also observed, and whether there were incidents of crime and disorder or signs of conflict and tensions.

Our observations typically took place from points of the park with the greatest 'field of vision'. This allowed us to get a sense of the park as a whole. At times, we deliberately choose to sit in other points, where there was less natural surveillance to get a feel for these spaces. Our observations allowed us to add texture to our descriptions of the social space, the way it is used by different groups, the mood or feeling the space creates, and the range of social groups that use the space.

*Stage Two: Interviews with visitors to the park, professionals and businesses*

Following this period of observation, we interviewed 54 visitors to the park. We asked visitors about where they came from to use the park, their frequency of use, what they liked to do in the park and if they interacted with other people. We also asked whether they felt safe and what they thought of the space more generally, including their likes and dislikes. Finally, we asked what they felt the park had contributed to the City of Bradford.

The interviews were conducted *in situ* which provided further opportunities for observing the park. We attempted to speak with the broad range of people observed using City Park (which appeared to include people of all ages, ethnic backgrounds, genders and abilities) and the variety of ways in which the space was observed to be used (e.g. recreation, consumption, planned public events, walkway, meeting place etc.). Most interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis, but we found that some people liked to visit the space in twos and threes and some visitors (especially young people) preferred to be interviewed as such.

Typically, interviews lasted approximately 10 minutes, with some lengthier exceptions. This was primarily because visitors to the park were using or passing through the space (either on their lunch hour, passing through to/from the city centre, or had children to look after).

We also interviewed 12 professionals involved in the planning, management, maintenance, care-taking, security, events, as well as staff from six businesses surrounding the park. These interviews were typically longer and more detailed. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

*Stage Three: Public consultation event*

We held a public consultation event on 28th of August 2013 to provide some initial feedback on our research to the public and to gain further comments and insights from members of the public (see Figure 1.2). We displayed posters that presented some of the comments we have heard during interviews with users of City Park. We also put comments on bunting that was displayed around our gazebo. Members of the public were welcome to come and read other

people’s comments, chat with the research team and make comments of their own.



**Figure 1.2 Public consultation event**

The team also conducted three further interviews with the public. In total, we interviewed 57 park visitors (see Table 1.1 for a breakdown of this sample).

**Table 1.1 Sample of park visitors**

<b>Gender</b>	Female	27
	Male	30
<b>Ethnic group</b>	White British	32
	Black or Minority Ethnic background	25
<b>Age range</b>	16 – 25 years	23
	26 – 35 years	16
	36 – 45 years	6
	46 – 55 years	6
	56 – 65 years	4
	Over 65	2
<b>Area of residence</b>	BD postcode	47
	Non-BD postcode	10
<b>TOTAL N=</b>		<b>57</b>

## Structure of the Report

Chapter two explores the contributions the park has made to regeneration in Bradford. It suggests that City Park draws on some common features of urban regeneration schemes, such as the upgrading of physical space, and culture as a significant tool for city branding and an important catalyst for economic investment. However, there are also distinctive features of the park development that diverge from this mainstream model. This is seen most significantly in the emphasis on social inclusion and the shift from privatisation and consumption as a primary feature of regeneration (authored by Ala Sirriyeh).

Chapter three examines the notion of City Park as an accessible and inclusive public space which provides a number of public resources. It explores the ways in which the local authority attempt to create such a space and the extent to which it was experienced as such by park users (authored by Nathan Manning).

Chapter four outlines the rules and regulations governing the space and reports on the perceived appropriateness of the behaviours of visitors using the park. It draws on a variety of examples to illustrate the way the space is regulated and managed. It suggests that the approach to management, both in its vision at senior levels and in terms of the strategies used on the ground, which foster tolerance of a diverse range of publics and their respective behaviours, contributes to what we observed as a genuinely unoppressive, inclusive and playful space in the city (authored by Anna Barker).

Chapter five summarises and concludes our key findings from the study.

## Chapter Two: ‘The Best of Bradford’: City Park and Regeneration

This chapter explores the contributions of the City Park project to regeneration in the City of Bradford. It focuses on three main areas of impact: the design of the park and the new image it creates for Bradford as a place to visit; the role of the park in drawing residents and visitors into the city centre; and the perceived economic and cultural contributions of the park to the city.<sup>6</sup>The next chapter develops upon these ideas with a specific discussion of the park as an accessible and inclusive public resource for the people of Bradford.

### City Park Regeneration Plans

The development of City Park is part of a wider regeneration programme undertaken by Bradford Metropolitan City Council. Like many northern British cities, from the 1970s onwards Bradford began to experience a period of industrial decline. Nearby cities, such as Leeds and Manchester, have experienced a trajectory of post-industrial regeneration and growth, reinventing themselves as places to shop and consume. However, Bradford has struggled to emerge from this era of de-industrialisation. Alongside a long period of economic decline, Bradford has also faced negative public representations of the city, particularly following the riots of 2001 and continuing stigmatisation in media reporting on the city (Bagguley and Hussain 2008; Pearce and Bujra 2011).

The regeneration and re-branding of place has become fundamental to the economic fortunes of cities; ‘place’ has become a ‘product’, to be branded and sold (Crawford 2011). Similarly, Montserrat Degen and

Rose (2012 p.3272) comment that, ‘In a fiercely competitive global economy, city landscapes are increasingly under pressure to perform as marketable commodities, as “brandsapes”’. The vision for City Park emerged out of the 2003 Bradford City Centre Masterplan which proposed a new setting for the city centre. In this vision, the development of a ‘world class’ park in the heart of the city was to act as a landmark feature that would ‘put Bradford on the map’ within the region, and nationally. It had the dual aim of becoming a ‘local gem’ and a ‘national destination’. The latter can be understood within the context of the city’s attempts to reinvent its identity as a leading cultural destination and attractive place to visit (Bradford MDC 2014). The project was also a response to some of the patterns of decline and stigma outlined above. As a senior manager in the local authority explained,

*‘The whole of the city centre regeneration plan was about revitalising and regenerating the city centre and giving Bradford city centre back a purpose. It had seen a terrible downturn. It had been a very successful vibrant city and for decades the decline of industrial cities, particularly in the north had been quite dramatic and Bradford had suffered as much or more than most. So the City Park in itself was the biggest public realm scheme.’*

The design of the park took shape over six years. This was a large scale project costing £24.4 million and involved substantial levels of construction, including excavation, re-routing of transport networks and utility diversions, and the installation of a large



number of fountain and water feature elements (including mechanical and electrical elements and drainage). The project was stalled briefly due to challenges in securing funding. However, Bradford Council and its partners remained committed to delivering the project. This was an important project in its own right, envisaged to 'be the glue that binds the centre of Bradford together' (Bradford MDC 2009 p.4), linking the National Media Museum and the educational institutions with the city centre. The design and location of the park aimed, in part, to create an attractive focal point for businesses. It was also planned to host a range of different events drawing people into central Bradford.

The Mirror Pool Plaza centrepiece has received much of the attention in discussions and responses to the City Park development. As Faye and Le Fur (2012 p.3081-2) note, in many European cities, 'squares', 'plazas' and 'piazzas' have constituted 'a renewed focus for regeneration'. They suggest that this is 'due to their network interconnection role and their capacity to "encapsulate" the history and identity of the city'. In its planning, City Park was initially called the 'Park in the heart' capturing its central positioning within the re-imagining of Bradford. The name was later changed to 'City Park'. Both names can reflect the site's central location in the city, but also the ambition for the site to take a central position within the re-imagining of Bradford outlined in the regeneration plans for the city. In *Naked City*, Zukin (2010) observes that Time magazine listed 'authenticity' as one of the ten most important concepts of 2007. What is defined as 'authentic' is open to change as the construction of place identities shift (*ibid*). The ambitions for the re-imagining of Bradford suggest change and new

developments, but in combination with continuity and recognition of Bradford's history. The park can encapsulate both the old and changing identity of the city. Authenticity is not about remaining static and preserving a shrine of the past. It is about a more dynamic notion of identity that can incorporate change, to reflect a living and changing city.

### **The 'Puddle in the Park': Initial Doubts**

In the earlier stages of the park's development, there had been a degree of scepticism among some of the population of Bradford which attracted the attention of the national media. The Mirror Pool gained the nickname the 'puddle in the park' (Wainwright 2012). Three main explanations were provided for the level of scepticism expressed. First, the poor track record for completion on major projects in the city was raised. In particular, the extensive delays and lack of completion of the Westfield Shopping Centre site was cited as a major blow to confidence in the city to deliver on large scale projects:

*I do remember the hole in the middle of Bradford for so many years and I don't quite know exactly what went on with that with the contractors and the Council and everything else. But certainly it kinda, almost, put Bradford back 15 years, you know having that kind of happen to them.'*  
(White British, Male, 46-55)

This loss of confidence made it even more important, despite funding challenges, for the Council to deliver the completed project:

*The city had talked about a lot of projects for a long period of time but what it hadn't actually achieved was delivering those projects*

*and when the credit crunch occurred we were left in a situation where the Regional Development Agency had contracted and their offer of funding contracted as well and we were clear that as a public agency we needed to invest in public goods as in, you know, pure economic terms build a public asset so we then set about doing that job.'* (Senior manager, local authority)

The setbacks of specific projects were also discussed amidst a wider concern about a long history of stalled regeneration and lack of investment in the city. Comparisons were made between Bradford and the experiences of the nearby cities of Leeds and Manchester and there was a sense of relative deprivation: *'This city itself has apparently been in regeneration over the last 20 years, and yet we've seen no advancements.'* (British Kashmiri, Male, 26-35)

A second source of scepticism about the City Park project was in relation to the perceived risks in making such a significant financial investment. Doubts were raised as to whether the investment would produce financial returns for the city, what benefits would actually materialise for the city and if the park would be used and maintained appropriately: *'Certainly from where I was at the time most of the views expressed were from people who were cynical about it, thought it was potentially a waste of money.'* (Senior manager, local authority). At £24.4 million it was a high cost project, but this also reflected the large scale of the project.

*I think one of the big things, one of the public objections was that it was an expensive scheme and it is an expensive scheme. It's comparable with other schemes of its type so when you look at cost per square meter of public realm in London or Manchester or Sheffield it's comparable. It's not excessive*

*but it is a big scheme.'* (Senior manager, local authority)

The public consultation about the park raised two main issues around maintenance: i) the physical maintenance of the space with predictions that the water feature may become neglected and be a site of littering; and ii) that the site would attract anti-social behaviour, in particular that it would be used by heavy drinkers (Bradford MDC 2012). These issues are discussed in further detail in chapter four.

These issues were recognised by senior managers in the local authority who planned for the park to have a dedicated maintenance budget to:

*'Maintain people's confidence that the scheme will continue to be looked after and function. Other cities have turned off their water features [...] People hadn't quite anticipated the level of commitment required and I think you have to have somebody that's got that priority because if it is in and amongst a lot of issues it's easy to get lost.'* (Senior manager, local authority)

To ensure the durability of the park, high quality materials were used to build the site and the maintenance budget provides for dedicated park custodians, a cleansing team and a closed filtering system for the water in the Mirror Pool. The pool is drained down every night so the water can be cleaned. This was cited as a positive feature by the public, albeit there was limited awareness of this process.

Despite these early doubts about the scheme, there was a general consensus that attitudes had changed and become much more positive since the opening of the park. As one visitor to the park explained, *'The*

*main thing I like about it is that before it was built everyone was moaning about it. "I can't believe you're going to spend so much money on it" and now you hear people say, "It's nice, going to come here more often" (White British, Male, 36-45).*

Another visitor, reflecting on their own initial doubts, said, *'Like I said I was a quite sceptical but I think especially during months like this it's really nice to have somewhere to come into the city centre to sit out' (White British, Female, 26-35).* Only two members of the public we interviewed expressed a general dislike of the park as they thought the money could have been invested better elsewhere in the city. We cannot comment on attitudes more widely in the City of Bradford.

It appeared that negative preconceptions of the project had been challenged through the successful delivery of the scheme:

*'I actually think it was a turning point in the history of the city [...] I think it was the first major project that was delivered [...] It is of a scale and of an asset quality which makes Bradford stand on its own feet outside of any other city. It's not like we have one of them and every city has one of them. It's actually something we have that other cities aspire to which is extremely strong.'* (Senior manager, local authority)

### **Bradford's 'Showpiece'**

Critics claim that pressures to brand and market city landscapes can lead to 'a slew of visually similar places' (Montserrat Degen and Rose 2012 p.3272). However, comments from visitors to City Park suggest that the park seems to have avoided this problem. This may be a result of a significant attempt to recognise 'authenticity' (Zukin 2010) and create a place that would be a memorable iconic image for the city.

Power *et al.* (2010) identify ten key actions that supported post-industrial recovery in the seven European cities that they studied. One of the key actions they cite as having enabled recovery is the 'physical redesign and restoration of major landmarks' (*ibid* p.354), including public squares. They suggest that the creation of attractive public spaces has helped these cities to restore 'a sense of their intrinsic value and has helped rebuild civic pride' (*ibid*). In the Bradford City Centre Area Action Plan (BCCAA) it is observed that the visual appearance of open public spaces is important as it 'influences how many visitors they attract' and 'investment potential and business confidence' (Bradford MDC 2012 p.24). Warren and Gibson (2011) have also observed that public art and 'streetscape' strategies have been 'sought to beautify the built environment, marking a city "open to creativity"', which Florida (2002) has argued is a key to the economic success of contemporary cities. Zukin (2010 p.234) suggests that large scale public art works, festivals and other major cultural projects have become part of cities' toolkits 'to encourage entrepreneurial innovation and creativity' and compete with other cities.

### *Aesthetics*

One of the key contributions of City Park was the aesthetic transformation it brought about to this part of the city centre. For visitors arriving into Bradford by train City Park is often part of their first impressions of the city. Visitors to the park described it as an iconic showpiece for Bradford and a key focal point for the city: *'It's just nice to look at [...] People come from out of town. It's a showpiece.'* (White British, Female, 16-25) Another visitor described the Park as *'a little hidden gem.'* (White British, Male, 26-35)

Visitors commented on the way the new Mirror Pool, fountains and lighting features combined with longstanding traditional landmarks, such as City Hall, which serves as a backdrop: *'night time when it's lit up is when it's at its best I think. City Hall is amazing. Fantastic building.'* (White British, Male, 16-25). Many people enjoyed the vibrancy of the park during the daytime and the majestic qualities of the space in the evening: *'it is more beautiful in the evening because of the lights.'* (British Asian, Female, 16-25) (see Figure 2.1 below)

We received many comments on the photogenic qualities of City Park that reflect its potential as an iconic image for the city. One Bradford resident took delight in showing us his photographs of the park as he explained how he made special trips to the park to take photographs there. We often observed people taking photographs of the park's features and taking family pictures against the backdrop of the fountain sprays. Indeed, on social media sites there a number of photographs of the park taken by the public.

*'If you go on Flickr and see all the photographs that have been taken of it and there is a really rich database with people from all different places taking photographs of it because it's photogenic and that's a really important part of the city [...] Bradford was always photogenic because of its history [...] and now it's become photogenic for a level of modernity and success that was really quite beautiful.'* (Senior manager, local authority)

While contrasts between the old and new aesthetics of Bradford were highlighted, there was also a feeling of continuity and

authenticity as the new City Park development blended well into the existing landscape:

*'I feel it knits in very well. It feels very natural. It felt like it had always been there. When we took the fences down it didn't feel like, although it was new and exciting, it didn't feel like when a building goes up it kind of stands out like a sore thumb. It felt like it was knitted in with the rest of the city and that felt like a really fantastic achievement.'* (Senior manager, local authority)

The BCCAA Plan (2012 p.23) states that with regard to 'built form' in the city centre one option could be that 'the current approach encourages new contemporary design' while seeking to 'retain and repair the areas of historic value, and reinvent a new character in those areas where the historic quality has been lost'. This option has had support among respondents to the Plan (*ibid*). Zukin (2010 p.234) suggests that 'Reinventing authenticity begins with creating an image to connect an aesthetic view of origins and a social view of new beginnings.' Although it is still early days for City Park, the photographic practices that take place in the space potentially signal such a reinvention of authenticity, showing continuity and refreshment of Bradford's iconic and photogenic built environment, linking both old and new architecture in the city.

However, while the park's aesthetic contribution to the city centre was praised, the public drew a sharp contrast between this park and the derelict or poorly maintained buildings around the site:



**Figure 2.1 City Park at night** (Bradford MDC)

The dereliction and inactivity surrounding the former Odeon cinema building which runs along the western edge of City Park was commented upon by several people (see Figure 2.2).



**Figure 2.2: The former Odeon cinema**

*I can't wait until this scaffolding is down [points to old Odeon]. You go in the middle [of the Mirror Pool] and you know, everywhere you look. It could be improved over there. Let's get rid of the old police*

*station and put something there. Once we get rid of the scaffolding, Bradford could look nice. It's just making it look a bit messy at the moment.'* (British Asian, Male, 26-35)

Another person commented that the side of the Mirror Pool Plaza in front of the courts was not fully utilised. *'Round there is a massive empty spot. There is just a vacant area. Here is the focal point [where the businesses are]. There is nothing happening over there.'* (British Asian, Male, 26-35)

Although critical, these comments can also potentially signal the raising of people's aspirations and expectations about the development of Bradford's City Centre.

#### *Atmosphere*

Describing City Park, the website Visit Bradford (2014) states that, 'City Park has many moods. It can be a cool, tranquil and



misty space, a huge, reflective watery mirror, a bubbling, squirting, and splashing fountain display, a brilliantly lit aqueous interactive laser artwork or a thunderous water spout, shooting over 30 metres into the air’.

The physical design played an important role in creating the atmosphere of City Park. Montserrat Degen and Rose (2012 p.3272) state that, ‘sensory experiences are central to the design of urban built environments’. People commented that the atmosphere present in the park altered according to the time of day. In our morning observations we saw people sitting alone on benches looking out across the water as the fountains created gentle arcs of water across the Mirror Pool as it began to fill. We often saw people walking through the park to work and deliberately choosing to walk through the Mirror Pool in between the causeways (arcs) of water. In the afternoons there was a much more high energy atmosphere as children played in the water, often shrieking and splashing. The big central fountain would sometimes be turned on during this time which would cause much excitement. Indeed it could also be turned down to calm the atmosphere if the custodians felt it was becoming too charged. The space was described as a ‘chill-out place’ for the city where people could meet up with friends and relax. One member of the public stated that its atmosphere meant that, *‘It’s the best of Bradford really.’* (White British, Male, 16-25). Another visitor we spoke with said, *‘I could quite easily spend an entire day here, you know [...] it’s just relaxing. Maybe it’s because of the water and the fountains [...] just everyone seems to be enjoying themselves.’* (White British, Male, 26-35).

The sociable nature of the space was commented on and seen as being a unique offer in comparison to other city squares they had been to in England:

*‘It’s made the city more attractive. The atmosphere of the city definitively [...] I think it’s more like France and Germany. I think generally they should have them in more cities in England because it makes a nice atmosphere, it’s good for recreation.’*  
(White British, Male, 16-25)

City Park is an example of the aesthetic upgrading of physical space highlighted by Power *et al.* (2010) as an important feature of city regeneration. Young *et al.* (2006 p.1690) have observed that the process of re-imagining that takes place as post-industrial cities attempt to forge ‘cosmopolitan’ identities ‘can result in the ‘cleansing’ of public spaces to rid them of ‘undesirable’ elements to achieve an aesthetic upgrading of city centres for economic ends’. They argue that this can lead to social exclusion. Consumption appears to be the driving force behind which ‘good consumers’ are attracted and ‘flawed consumers’ – those without the means to engage successfully in consumer practices – are excluded (Bauman 2000). However, we would argue that this process has not taken place to this degree in City Park. Chapter three will explore how the park’s developers sought to foster a more socially inclusive space.

### **Drawing Residents and Visitors into Bradford**

Jacobs (1961) observed that the location of parks is a key to attracting visitors and that parks need to be located on routes that people pass through. In all our observations we saw people using the park as a destination, but also walking or cycling through the park in various directions. As one young woman said, the park is *‘Really convenient, right in the city centre.’* (British Asian, Female, 16-25)

Parks benefit from having ‘demand goods’ such as events, activities and facilities; a ‘use-value’ for the public that act to draw them in to visit the park (Jacobs 1961 p.107). From our observations in the park and interviews with visitors we identified a number of use-values that the park held for members of the public which served to draw them into this space. Some people also commented that in attracting visitors, the park had also served to draw people back into Bradford city centre more generally.

*‘It’s nice that people have a reason to hang round Bradford for a start.’ (White British, Female, 16-25)*

*‘It’s definitely drawn us back into Bradford because there was quite a long period where we felt there was just nothing, just a few shops, not really much to come in for, but now that this is here. It’s brought a lot more people into Bradford.’ (White British, Male, 36-45)*

However, others contrasted the draw of City Park with the lack of attractions they perceived in the city centre more broadly. *‘Well there’s not much in the city here. Bradford is a dead city to be honest. This is the only place now. There’s no shops you can go round, nothing.’ (British Indian, Male, 56-65)*

We asked the public how often they used City Park and in what ways they used the park. Many of the people we spoke to lived in Bradford. People visited the park from home, work and before or after running errands in the city centre. In addition to those who had travelled a relatively short distance, we also spoke with people from further afield, including Leeds, Keighley, Halifax, Wigan, and Hull, many of whom had been drawn to City Park because they do not have a similar venue in their cities.

*‘Take her [daughter] to the parks’ but there isn’t much to do. There’s nothing like this in Morley [...] I think it’s brilliant. They should do something like it in Leeds. There’s nowt in Leeds is there? [...] What makes it good? ‘The water int it?’ (White British, Male, 36-45)*

Many of the local visitors (from Bradford and nearby locations) were regular visitors to the park, with some visiting the park several times a week for a number of hours at a time, while others would walk through on their way to work, stopping briefly to sit down or to visit one of the businesses on the park. Many visitors came with family (particularly small children) or friends, while others used the site as a convenient meeting place. We also spoke to people who liked to come alone and soak up the atmosphere (and any available sunshine). As we might expect for an open space with a large water feature, most people were more inclined to visit in warmer weather:

*‘We only come if there is summer and sunshine and there is no raining. We always check the weather before coming.’ (Pakistani national, Male, 26-35)*

Nonetheless, others made it clear that they still enjoyed the park in cooler weather. One person came for lunch everyday rain or shine, and others made use of some of the businesses in the park when the weather was not good enough to sit outside.

*‘If it was raining we would perhaps come here but then go straight to Starbucks or something.’ (White British, Female, 16-25)*

The park was used in a wide variety of expected, and perhaps unexpected, ways; and of course the same person may use the

park in different ways on different occasions. Indeed the versatility of the space was commented on as a positive feature.

*'I mean the beauty about it is it can almost be drained almost instantly. So you know, while you might have fountains, playing, at the moment in 10 minutes time there might be nothing there – someone's putting stalls up for an event, you know, curry festivals or whatever.'* (White British, Male, 55-65)

*'We wanted it to be somewhere that people would come back to so it's somewhere that has different flavours at different times of day. So we didn't want people to think I've done that, seen that and not come back again.'* (Senior manager, local authority)

This reflects Jacob's (1961 p.103) comments that parks need stimulating elements to cater to the different uses and moods of the people using the park at different times. She writes,

'Even the same person comes for different reasons at different times; sometimes to sit tiredly, sometimes to play or to watch a game, sometimes to read or work, sometimes to show off, sometimes to fall in love, sometimes to keep an appointment, sometimes to savor the hustle of the city from a retreat, sometimes in the hope of finding acquaintances, sometimes to get close to a bit of nature, sometimes to keep a child occupied, sometimes simply to see what it offers, and almost always to be entertained by the sight of other people'.

City Park is both a destination (impromptu or planned) and, due to its central location in the city, a thoroughfare. Some of the people we spoke to were walking through the park on their way to somewhere else,

but spent little time in the park itself. Others used the park as a place for a walk:

*'Yeah, we walk through it if we're going shopping.'* (White British, Female, 16-25)

*'Sometimes I walk around it. In the morning I walk through the middle [to work]. When it's warm, I walk past the water; I like the breeze from the water.'* (White British, Male, 16-25)

*'It only takes me seven minutes to get here from my house so we come here after dinner for a little walk round then go back to bed.'* (British Asian, Male, 26-35)

As mentioned above, some visitors to City Park had made impromptu stops on the way to other destinations or while waiting for appointments. This space drew such visitors in because as one person said,

*'There's somewhere to sit [...] I've been around the area for ten years and there was never really anywhere to sit in the centre of Bradford. So it's quite nice having this here.'* (White British, Female, 26-35)

*'You can sit down and it's clean here whereas some parks you go and it's really dirty.'* (White British, Female, 16-25)

Having space to sit and dwell drew people to the park as a site for relaxation, either alone or with friends.

*'It's an opportunity to sit down and reflect, sometimes, sometimes that's all you want to do.'* (White British, Male, 56-65)

*'What it has given the city which it didn't have before is somewhere to just go and dwell and just sit. It's a destination in its own right. People do just go there to be there. I*

*don't think there is anywhere else in the city centre where people would go specifically out of their way just to sit and enjoy the environment so I think that is something that it does do.'* (Senior manager, local authority).

Due to this opportunity for sitting and relaxation, City Park offered a venue for people to visit on their lunch breaks, whether bringing their lunch with them and sitting outside or eating in restaurants on the site. Office workers used the outside space for lunch, particularly in summer months. For some this was a continuation of lunchtime habits before City Park was built, but others had used to stay in their offices or only go out on brief errands, as described by these two friends.

*I would go out for the reason I went out for and then would congregate at the relaxation area at work.'* (British Asian, Male, 26-35)

*I would normally still come here. I would sit opposite the town hall over there.'* (British Asian, Male, 26-35)

Often those who were sitting and relaxing in the park would sit around the perimeter of the Mirror Pool, facing the water. Bradford Council and the Fountain Workshop Ltd have recently been awarded The Marsh Award for Fountains, given for 'the best use of moving water in the regeneration of urban public space' (Telegraph and Argus 2014). The Mirror Pool and numerous fountains which form the centrepiece of City Park have proven to be extremely popular with children. One of the things not reflected in the quotes from interviews is that for a great many of the interviews we recorded in City Park you can hear children playing in the background – laughing, squealing, talking, splashing:

*'Oh yeah, we normally take the kids down here and that, you know it's a beltin' place for them to sort of run around and stuff, and just enjoy themselves.'* (White British, Male, 26-35)

While many children visiting City Park seemed to delight in the mirror pool, its use varied amongst adults we spoke to:

*I would never use the fountains like that but walk through it. It's a nice place to come and sit.'* (White British, Male, 16-25)

*It's for the children really, isn't it? It's nice to look at but I wouldn't go in there.'* (White British, Male, 16-25)

*If it's nice I go in for a quick paddle.'* (White British, Female, 26-35)

*I like it when it's hot and the big fountains are up and I'm in the middle, that's my favourite [laughs].'* (White European, Female, 16-25)

The Mirror Pool Plaza is a very open space, although there are some young trees around the perimeter. This offers good views, which visitors with children appreciated so that they could keep an eye on them. However, one visitor thought the park could benefit from more shelter provision in both warm and wet weather:

*The only thing is that there are no sheltered areas. When it's raining it would be nice to have somewhere dry. When it's like this [sunny] as well; I brought my grandma down here and she struggles a bit with the heat and we have to leave quite early because there's no shade.'* (White British, Male, 36-45)

While people from outside Bradford came to the park as visitors, some locals,

particularly those with children, also encountered the space as a day out in their own city.

*'We live in BD7. It's not such a far distance only a mile from home. We walk here. The walking is part of the family time. City Park is the destination. You can actually see a range of things [...] that is the main place you can go and relax in Bradford so it has really added.'* (Black African, Male, 26-35)

Many commented that a key draw of the park for them was that it is a free venue with entertainment for children (see chapter three). Some visitors had combined a trip to City Park with visits to the Media Museum or Impressions Gallery. Similarly, at times, the big screen caught people's attention, particularly when films or sport were screened. On the family activity days held once a week during the summer, there were often more people than there were seats available. This was the case when we held our public consultation event at the end of August 2013 (when *Finding Nemo* was being screened).

*'I mean showing [Finding] Nemo [...] having like an outdoor cinema is fantastic, you know it's a great thing. You know we spend so many months in this country kind of hold-up in our little houses, so to get out and create that alfresco feel, is fantastic.'* (White British, Male, 46-55)

However, unless special events like this were screened, in our observations we noticed that people generally did not engage much with the big screen. One person suggested that better use of it could be made.

*'I've come down here a few times and there's not many people around and it's got Springwatch. Nobody's watching it! I just*

*find it really strange'. I mean I've never been down when the big events are on [...] I'm sure it was really good when the Olympics were on but I've never been around. Yeah they could use that better.'* (White British, Male, 16-25)

### **'Creative Cities' and Regeneration**

Zukin *et al.* (1998 p.629-30 cited in Mah 2012 p.177) define an 'urban imaginary' as 'a set of meanings about cities that arises in a specific time and cultural place'. They observe that this is in part made up of 'often hierarchical-meanings places hold in the popular imagination' (*ibid*). Creative and cultural development has frequently been used by cities as a strategy for economic regeneration (Warren and Gibson 2011) and involves creating or nurturing a particular set of meanings and images about a city that can potentially transform negative perceptions held in the popular imagination. As Warren and Gibson (2011 p.2706) state, 'The normative script is that cities shrug off rust-belt identities and adapt economic development policies that foster "creativity", diversify local economies, create jobs, attract tourists, and appeal to a creative class of immigrants'. They observe that such strategies include the beautification of places and investing in iconic buildings and architectural developments.

A ten year cultural strategy for Bradford has recently been outlined in the report Bradford: A Leading Cultural City 2014-2024. This report states that, 'Culture will be positioned as central to the economic and social future of the City – a vital heartbeat in its transformation. It will be considered in everything we aspire to do as a city' and that the city 'will re-imagine' itself; creating a new narrative about belonging, pride and passion. As a City it will be confident, bold and inventive and proudly claim its position



in the UK as a leading cultural destination' (Bradford MDC 2014 p.2). The report draws attention to the city's existing UNESCO City of Film status and observes that this status has enabled Bradford to 'connect with a growing number of creative cities around the world'.

Both the public and local authority staff spoke of the national attention given to City Park following the television of the performance of Bollywood Carmen by the BBC in June 2013. It was envisaged that this would create possibilities for attracting visitors to the city who have an interest in arts and culture.

*'People visit, see it on telly, the recent Bollywood Carmen, makes people more aware of Bradford town centre.'* (Local authority worker)

*'It's put Bradford on the map. I'm sounding a bit cynical and blasé about how many awards we've got but they are national awards. In some cases international awards and it shows. It has sold Bradford in a good light. Too often on the national and international stage we've been highlighted for negative things and actually that recognition has really bumped the national esteem in which the city is held up.'* (Senior manager, local authority)

City Park has given Bradford a versatile performance and events space in the city centre. One young person explained that the park was an important venue addition to the city saying that it is, *'The only place with cafes and events, you can come to like festivals. It's nice.'* (White British, Male, 16-25) A senior manager in the local authority reported that national, international and local artists appreciated the space and had been attracted to the site due to the design and versatility of the space.

Following the return of the Bradford Festival event (now being held in City Park) links had also been made with venues, bars and restaurants elsewhere in the city to create a bigger programme of poetry, music and arts exhibitions in the city.

*'The city centre benefited from it because that's the thing with events. Although City Park is the prime space, we're trying to think also of that connecting with the rest of the city centre so therefore we might have connecting entertainment throughout the rest of the city centre. It's important to think about it as a bigger picture.'* (Senior manager, local authority)

Some members of the public suggested that the park would benefit from more accessible information about what events there are in the park and when the fountains are to be turned on. This would be an addition to the online information about events which is currently available on social media sites.

*'It would be nice to have a timetable. We weren't sure when the water was going to be switched on. We spoke to someone who was quite grumpy. A timetable so we don't have to ask, especially summertime.'* (British Pakistani, Female, 26-35)

### **Economic Impacts**

Calculations for the economic impact estimates for City Park events between March 2012 and December 2012 were 233,000 additional visitors and a spend of £2.66 million. The estimated calculations for 2013 were 150,000 additional visitors and spend of £1.94 million (personal communication with senior manager in local authority).

While we do not seek to evaluate the economic success of City Park in this report, we were interested in the perceptions people held about the park's contribution to the city and this, inevitably included some perspectives on the economic impact of the park. We found that people we spoke to responded differently depending on their perspectives and different understandings of the aims of the City Park development. According to local authority staff and local business employees, some businesses in the park and nearby (especially the pub) had benefited financially from their location in City Park and increased footfall to the site.

*'If anything's ever going off in that square, in summer especially, erm, we get rammed, really rammed. Like everyone will come in and because we can sell drinks to people going outside, they'll come in and we'll give 'em in plastic and they'll sit in the square. So we get a lot of people coming in and going straight back out. But then it's just busy constantly, even if there's not events on, if it's just a sunny day, really busy [...] It's done the world of good for our business anyway, I don't know about other people, but we've benefited massively from it.'* (Local business employee)

There were anecdotes of Nandos restaurant (located on the periphery of City Park site) selling out of chicken during the park's launch event and of Primark seeing a spike in sales of swim wear, towels and children's clothes.

*'I know comments back after the launch. It was so busy and people were in the city centre. There was a knock on effect and even places like Primark. Primark was selling out of towels and socks and things. I think it's that point of ensuring that it isn't just those businesses.'* (Senior manager, local authority)

Others were more sceptical, commenting that the businesses in park have a different clientele from the regular users of the Mirror Pool. One local business employee explained that although they are open during events, they did not think the park helps their business as 'people come for the events'. They observed that the park is generally quiet except for event days or when the weather is good or with people going to and from work. They do not get a lot of browsers from among the park visitors.

Some visitors and frontline workers pointed out the lack of revenue raising options in the park itself, the contrast between investment in the park and lack of investment in the shopping district in the city centre, the major delays in the Westfield shopping centre development on the other side of the city centre and the closure of venues like the Odeon cinema.

*'The only thing that the park changes is it will make people aware of Bradford town centre and come to visit. It's not something that people will use all year round but it has its impacts. But it's not something massive. Small part to play but not massive.'* (Local authority worker)

*'To me, I can't see where it's generating money from. [...] I think they could have spent [the money] on something else.'* (Local authority worker)

*'Ah, this city here is ah, in a state of beggary, bankruptcy and misery. So it actually frustrates me to see stuff like this because they could have spent, ah, whatever they spend here they could have spent elsewhere. Ah, but then again you see people here and they enjoy themselves on a daily*

*basis, especially when the sun comes out, so perhaps my opinion is not counting for much then.’ (British Kashmiri, Male, 26-35)*

We asked the man cited in this latter quotation where the money could have been spent. He talked about the need for a shopping centre in Bradford.

*‘We have four, as I know, four charity shops and very few shops. Precisely why a lot of the people that live in the city actually go to Leeds to do their shopping. There’s nothing left here. And for locals who have lived here for the majority of their lives, it’s a very, very difficult ab, moment.’ (British Kashmiri, Male, 26-35)*

While other members of the public held more optimistic views, there was a wide perception that investment in Bradford’s city centre was needed.

*‘It [Bradford] needs an injection somewhere, either regional injection or something going on somewhere. I mean I live in Leeds where there’s a new building popping up every five minutes, and that’s not necessarily a great thing either – just another building popping up, like, you know. I’m not saying that’s what Bradford needs, but it needs an injection of something. If you could repeat something as good as this, somewhere else or cement it then it’d be great, yeah.’ (White British, Male, 46-55)*

*‘If we want to buy clothing we go to Leeds but general local stuff we come here.’ (White British, Male, 26-35)*

However, in our interviews with local authority staff it was noted that the City Park development has been a catalyst for businesses moving in nearby, such as Provident Finance which occupies an office

block on a road overlooking the park. It was hoped that the park will also be a catalyst for further investment by other businesses and organisations. The park was not envisaged as being a complete solution in itself to economic regeneration on its own, rather as a piece in a wider jigsaw.

*‘What it’s done is rejuvenate or give an indication that we’re serious about rejuvenating Bradford city centre. It’s not an end in itself. It’s part of the jigsaw that we’re putting together about how we want Bradford to be.’ (Senior manager, local authority)*

It was also regarded as a catalyst for growth due to the confidence it had given the city.

*‘I think it’s given a boost to confidence. Aside from the social aspects which I’m really keen on, there is also a serious economic objective for the park and things change. I think it’s been a boost for positivity. It’s given Bradford people something to be positive to talk about the city centre. It’s no secret that people hadn’t been particularly happy about elements of the city centre and local people are quite down on Bradford [...] Whereas, City Park has given people something to latch on to. To focus on. To be proud of. I think it’s quite important.’ (Senior manager, local authority)*

A number of visitors to the park and staff members explained that their understanding of the City Park scheme was that it was not purely about financial investment and profit. A key element of the scheme was about social investment in the city and the creation of an inclusive public space. Visitors commented on such examples of inclusion that they had witnessed.

*‘It’s utilised by a lot of people. Kids playing, people enjoying themselves. A lot of*

*taxpayers' money has been spent on building the park so it's good that it gets used. It's ideal. It's good that the public are getting use from it. No graffiti or nothing like that. Nobody's vandalised it.'* (White British, Male, 16-25)

*I know we had our worries about the cost and whether people would use it and you know, people were saying it's a waste of money and what were they doing, blab, blab. Ah, but I think it's proved them wrong, I really do. we came down didn't we on one of the days after school, and it were absolutely packed out! So, you know, people are really getting into using it, you know [...] It's a real addition to the city. And I do think people come to Bradford to have a look at it.'* (White British, Female, 65+)

*It's definitely not been a waste of money. It's bringing people together. This space it never really got used not like it does now.'* (White British, Male, 26-35)

A senior manager in the local authority explained their understanding of the social ethos and values behind the scheme:

*'So the City Park in itself was the biggest public realm scheme. A lot of the other schemes were about bringing in other businesses, bringing in direct investment. This was very much about creating the environment that we want people to take ownership of, people to recognise as high quality and to really make people feel differently about the city centre so it had a much broader role than the other projects in some sense because it is both aimed at residents in terms of having ownership and pride in the city but also visitors and tourists in them coming and experiencing a different Bradford to perhaps what they were expecting.'*

Such an ethos responds to critiques of urban policies from commentators such as Mandanipour (2010 p.445) who has observed that, public open spaces have 'changed from being embedded in the social fabric of the city to being a part of more impersonal and fragmented urban environments' and how some public spaces have turned 'into residual places of avoidance rather than encounter'.

Meanwhile, reflecting on Whyte's concerns about disused space and lack of sociability in public spaces at the end of the 20th century, Low *et al.* (2005 p.1) suggest that, 'In this new century, we are facing a different kind of threat to public space - not one of disuse, but of patterns of design and management that exclude some people and reduce social and cultural diversity'. The values of social inclusion highlighted around the City Park scheme could be regarded as an example of a particular manifestation of 'moral urbanism', which Darling (2013 p.1785) has explained as 'the discursive and affective construction of particular cities as imbued with moral characteristics'. These issues are explored in further detail in chapter three.

In addition to being a socially inclusive space the City Park development also aimed to foster a sense of pride and ownership of the space by Bradfordians.

*'I think it's given the city confidence. That's the biggest issue. It's given us confidence to be seen as a place. It's given it ambition. The city's got lots to do but that's a very strong step. It's a foundation, it's a building block.'* (Senior manager, local authority).

This manager commented on the sense of ownership and enjoyment of the space that was visible in the way that people had

embraced the park and found both anticipated and unanticipated ways of using it.

*'I think the fact that people use it as we hoped they would and in different ways and in other ways that we didn't anticipate but the fact that people really embraced it that's what I really love about it that people enjoy it.'*

Local authority managers involved in planning and developing the park hoped that City Park would become embedded in the narrative of Bradford as an everyday space used by local people on a day-to-day basis, but also as a site for memorable special events in the city, such as Bollywood Carmen and the Bradford Festival. Drawing on Tuan's (1977) work on place and sensory experience, Montserrat Degen and Rose (2012 p.3276) discuss, 'the importance of repeated and routine engagements with places'. It is through these routine, habitual practices, that particular experiences and memories become tied to particular places. City Park is still a young space, but there seems to be potential that such anticipated and unanticipated everyday uses of the park, in addition to some of the special events held there, may serve to build such memories and connections to this site.

### **Conclusion**

The City Park development was a large scale public realm scheme involving significant financial commitments and extensive physical transformations of the site. This chapter has explored the park's

contributions to regeneration in Bradford through examining the aesthetic upgrading of physical space, the cultural contributions of the park and the site as a catalyst for further economic investment in the city. Although there was scepticism from some Bradfordians at the start of the development, since the opening of the park there appears to have been a significant transformation of attitudes as people have visited and enjoyed spending time in the park. City Park draws on some common features of urban regeneration schemes such as the attention to the upgrading of physical space and the culture as a significant tool for city branding and as an important catalyst for economic investment. However, there are also distinctive features of the park where it diverges, to some extent, from these trajectories. The most significant difference is the inclusive nature of the park as a free resource and accessible space for Bradfordians and visitors to the city. Unlike familiar models of urban regeneration, City Park is not led by a primary emphasis on privatisation and consumption. It offers an opening up rather than cordoning off of public space. Finally, it's original and imaginative design offers a potentially iconic and unique postcard image for Bradford that is distinctive to this city and is authentic to the origins and identity of the city; yet offers a refreshed vision for Bradford. Chapter three will now develop on the phenomena of 'moral urbanism' to explore some of the social contributions of the park in further detail focussing on social inclusion.

## Chapter Three: City Park as an Inclusive Public Resource

‘... cultural change is based on small practical accommodations that work their way around, or through, difference, rather than on any conscious attempt to shift the cultural identities and practices of local residents.’ (Amin 2002 p.970)

Bradford is a multicultural city and one of the striking things about City Park on a busy day is the great range of social diversity on display. Indeed, one of the spurs for this research was witnessing the sharing of public space in the park by groups diverse in age, gender, religion, ethnicity and social class. This chapter develops the notion of ‘moral urbanism’ and the social benefits of City Park. It explores the ways in which City Park attempts to be an accessible and inclusive space whilst providing the city with a number of public resources. At a time when public space is increasingly pressured by the forces of privatisation, commercialisation and securitisation, City Park shows some signs of bucking these trends. Despite the park’s general inclusivity, some groups and behaviours were deemed inappropriate and we explore some of the limits to the park’s inclusive ethos.

### Imagining City Park as ‘Accessible’ and ‘Inclusive’

The development of City Park was part of a wider regeneration programme undertaken by Bradford City Council. As noted in the introduction to this report, the development project had several objectives. Of particular interest to this research was the imagining, design and management of an accessible, inclusive and welcoming space.

The development of City Park entailed efforts to make the space physically accessible for the great range of people who might seek to use it. The local authority worked closely with the Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE) to design a space that would be considerate to the needs of various visitors with sensory impairments or disability, as well as children and

adults (see CAE 2009). The effort to create an accessible site was commented upon by several staff from the local authority<sup>7</sup>:

*‘The whole ethos behind the scheme was that it was accessible to everybody and that it was accessible and of interest to everybody so that there was something that appealed to a very broad demographic without being bland and without being overly sanitised. [...] it’s easy to design for able bodied average people but what we wanted to do is make sure that people with mobility issues, people in wheelchairs, people pushing prams, that everybody could move round the site safely and easily and that every element of the scheme is accessible to everybody who is able to get here.’*  
(Senior manager, local authority)

*‘You would be hard pressed to find someone who couldn’t enjoy City Park. One of my colleagues, she works primarily with people with disabilities and learning difficulties; it’s a great tactile sort of place. If you can’t see it you can hear it.’* (Senior manager, local authority)

In addition to being physically accessible and holding interest for a range of people, it was also imagined that City Park would be inclusive and draw together very diverse groups of people:

*‘When we were designing the space we talked about it as ‘The Great Meeting Place’ and you do get a diverse range of people down there – I hope that’s what you’ve seen – in terms of ethnicity, culture, age. At different times of day it does have a very broad mix. And what we hope is that that opportunity to mix and that opportunity to meet with different people that you may not come into*

*contact with in other areas of your life. You may go to a predominantly white school and never meet another Asian person in your neighbourhood and that just by having that opportunity to interact and engage it does encourage communities to understand more about each other and it gives an opportunity for that to happen, and informally and casually.’ (Senior manager, local authority)*

Nicknaming City Park ‘the great meeting place’ is a very appealing idea because it captures so much of what goes on in the space. The park is the nexus between the old centre of Bradford and some of the newer educational and cultural institutions like the National Media Museum. The contemporary design of the Park itself knits together several time periods including the Victorian City Hall and the mid-twentieth century magistrate’s court. Unlike many contemporary urban spaces it is pedestrianized, allowing people space to meet and talk (Habermas 1989). Located in the city centre it belongs to the city rather than to a particular neighbourhood, which provides for the park to belong to everyone. Being in the city centre and accessible by major transport routes increases the potential for the park to draw a socially diverse crowd. Like other large, central public spaces, City Park is often used intentionally and unintentionally as a place for individual or group meetings. The senior manager above talks about City Park providing the opportunity for individual meetings across social difference in a casual and informal context.

Beyond these individual encounters, and as discussed throughout this report, we would argue that City Park provides a place for locals and others to come together and meet in a variety of ways – as participants in an event, as audience members, as sports fans celebrating Bradford City’s promotion to League One, as members of diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds, as mourners commemorating the loss of life in the Bradford City stadium fire in

1985, as Bradfordians showing pride in sexual diversity, as children at play.

The events programme deliberately sought to hold events that would appeal to a broad audience. The emphasis was on bringing together social groups from across Bradford’s neighbourhoods:

*‘I think really it’s trying to get a broad range of activities that will suit different audiences to come together at the same time. We’re trying to have as many events that bring lots of people together. The launch proved that. We wanted people to come and see the space to see what it was like. We don’t want anything that is too down one particular street that is kind of [...] Let’s open up. Let’s get communities in together. So it is a very wide audience, wide age group that we want to see in there together.’ (Senior manager, local authority)*

Some events were thought to have achieved this ideal:

*‘The really nice thing about Bradford Festival in particular was I think it had a really nice multicultural feel; people from all different sorts of backgrounds enjoying the space and the events that were on.’ (Senior manager, local authority)*

The socially diverse mix of people using the Park was noted by many of the frontline workers we spoke to:

*‘All race, colour, creeds, and that’s what Bradford wants. I think it’s quite proud of being quite diverse and everything like that, so you know, bring it on, bring it on. [...] But I think this Mirror Pool, has more or less got people together, to be, you know, more interactive, to be more diverse – I think it’s been good, yeah. I think it’s been good.’ (Frontline worker)*



*'All ages. All ages going up to old people coming to have a sit down, people come read papers, sit here for hours, some people. Coming down all the time [as he does for work] you see certain people who come everyday. And ah, it's nice to see different sort of people coming, instead of like, because we get bad publicity don't we in Bradford. A lot of it is bad publicity, innit? And ah, what else? Different cultures. [...] You see people talking to each other, having a chat: someone's sat on a bench there and they say, 'alright, are you?', and have a chat together. I don't know if you know, but there used to be a road through here, and bus stops [inaudible]. There was nowhere for people to meet, nowhere for people to go were there. Now they've built this, everybody meets down here. And everybody gets on basically...'*  
(Frontline worker)

Comments like these from local authority staff make it clear that not only does City Park draw a socially diverse crowd, but that the opportunity for interaction, mixing and sharing of public space is thought to promote positive inter-cultural experiences and a coming together which might help change perceptions about Bradford. Their remarks reflect the notion that interaction in particular circumstances has the ability to undermine prejudice and stereotypes of unknown others (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). More specifically relevant to many of the local authority workers is that these ideas reflect recent policy emphasis on 'community cohesion' (e.g. Cantle 2001) and the need for 'integrated communities' with shared commitments. Despite this top-down policy context, City Park does not seek to be a proscriptive space. Instead, it is open-ended and capable of facilitating inter-cultural interaction, but this is not forced, contrived or necessary.

Members of the public also commented upon the social diversity of City Park visitors, and some also thought this mixing was conducive to

relieving 'tension', bringing people together and promoting community feeling:

*'It helps people get on. A few years ago you could always sense the tension walking around town. Groups of Asian lads then groups of white lads. There was definitely segregation going on. But now with all of this, all the kids play together. When they grow up they will be more likely to get on together. That's brilliant.'* (White British, Male, 36-45)

*'Another good thing is you see people from all other cultures. They are gathering and sharing their values and they sit together. [...] I think it minimise the gaps between people, their thinking. They can sit together. Usually people do not go particularly...usually where there is one culture. There is only eastern cultures, British people wouldn't go there and if it is only British culture, Asian people wouldn't like to go there. So it's a place where everybody comes.'* (Pakistani national, Male, 26-35)

*'It's good for community gatherings. I find that if there is quite large events on you get a good mix of community.'* (Black British, Male, 46-55)

Other visitors downplayed ethnic and cultural differences, which are routinely evident in City Park. They too emphasised very positive evaluations of the park. Their remarks also highlight the pleasure visitors derive from seeing children playing:

*'Yeah, it's a nice atmosphere, like you know, little kids enjoying themselves, the families around.' [...] 'It's beautiful.'* (British Pakistani, Male, 16-25)

*'I mean when it's nice weather it sort of cheer you up, sort of thing. And you're lookin' at the people, children playing, things like that, it's an enjoyable thing.'* (Indian, Male, 55-65)

*It's my favourite place in Bradford. [...] it's atmosphere. Everyone comes here to chill out. I love City Hall and the fountains are nice. You get the students and the college students and the workers and people bringing families out. It's a really nice thing. It's a really good idea. It's worked really well. (White British, Male, 16-25)*

Unlike many other urban spaces, City Park is notable for the way it draws together children and adults (see Vanderbeck 2007). Children are not cordoned off in a designated area like a playground. As discussed below, it is also worth noting that city park does not just attract parents with children, but is popular with teenagers and young adults as well as elderly people.

In her work on urban spaces, Sophie Watson talks about 'rubbing along' 'as a form of limited encounter between social subjects where recognition of different others through a glance or gaze, seeing and being seen, sharing embodied spaces in talk or silence, has the potential to militate against the withdrawal into the private self or private realm.' (2009 p.1581, see also Watson 2006) Watson argues that these often limited and minimal forms of encounter we experience when sharing a public space have a role to play in challenging racism and prejudice about unknown others. While our research is not able to evaluate the effect of City Park on levels of racism or prejudice, the benefits of sharing space with diverse others was commented upon by many of the people we spoke to and was also evident in our observations. City Park is clearly a space where 'rubbing along' occurs (see Figure 3.1).

Nonetheless, as Amin (2002 p.969) reminds us, 'Habitual contact in itself, is no guarantor of cultural exchange. It can entrench group animosities and identities, through repetitions of gender, class, race and ethnic practices.'

However, City Park has thus far evaded being territorialised; it remains a very open and public space with the potential to 'disrupt easy labelling of the stranger as enemy and invites new attachments' (Amin 2002 p.970). This may in part relate to its very expansive design which is less conducive to being colonised by particular groups. Further, the design and physical space of City Park also helps to create a kind of 'easy sociality'. The whole park has a circular orientation and the oval Mirror Pool provides a central focus. With the fountains or steam vents in action there is usually something to look at even on a cold day. On warm days the Mirror Pool is typically brimming with children, young people and parents splashing about and playing amongst the fountains. To borrow from Jacobs (1961 p.105), 'in effect, this is a circular arena, a theatre in the round, and this is how it is used, with complete confusion as to who are the spectators and who are the show.' The combination of children and water is a heady but mundane mix which provides a shared activity and accentuates commonalities (family, children, play) amidst cultural difference. The shape of the park and the activity at its centre facilitates the lingering, people watching and limited encounters which promote 'rubbing along'. To draw on Amin (2002 p.972) again, 'If common values, trust, or a shared sense of place emerge, they do so as accidents of engagement, not from an ethos of community.'

Of course, any positive effect City Park may have on inter-cultural interactions would be insufficient if not broadly reflected in other areas of social life, in what Amin (2002) calls the 'micro-publics' of workplaces, schools, sports clubs and the like. And these suggest the importance of wider measures to foster civic and political engagement and representation, minimise inequalities and provide strong sanctions against racial and cultural hatred.



**Figure 3.1: City Park during the Bradford Festival, 2013**

### Including Young People?

Young people's presence in and use of public space has a long history of rousing concern amongst adults (e.g. Finch 1993). Young people are frequently understood as a spoiling presence, a threat to public order (e.g. Brown 2013; Collins and Kearns 2001; Gray and Manning 2013). As such, they are often subject to surveillance and various restrictions and regulatory regimes (Bannister and Kearns 2013; Valentine 1996) and routinely squeezed out of public space (Minton 2009; Mitchell 2003). The regulation of young people in City Park will be explored in the following chapter, but here we can note that young people and children have been prominent users of City Park. The families we spoke to who were visiting with children and teenagers and young adults visiting with their friends, all spoke of feeling welcomed and comfortable in using the space.<sup>8</sup> This was reflected in comments by a senior manager from the council:

*'I think young people have really embraced it [...] they previously were invisible in Bradford so I don't know where they were or where they've come from so its clearly given them somewhere that they feel a connection with and that's something we should respond to. I think people with families. Bradford was not somewhere you would see people with young children other than going to and from a shop or going about their business whereas people come down with their children to use the space.'* (Senior manager, local authority)

During our observations and interviews it was clear that the park was popular with teenagers and young adults and some told us why they liked the space and how it had drawn them into the city:

*'Before it [City Park] was here Bradford wasn't really a nice place to go to. There wouldn't be*

*anything that I would want to go to.’ (British White Male, 16-25)*

*It’s in the centre of the city and it’s nice how everybody can meet up and events can happen here. It’s just a fun place to be.’ (British Asian, Female, 16-25)*

As will be discussed in the following chapter, unlike other urban spaces young people were generally welcomed in City Park and treated with light touch regulation.

In contrast to the positive views above, one of the young adults we spoke to felt the site had little to offer those who weren’t children:

*There’s a lot to observe on a nice day like this, but very little you can utilise. For somebody who’s twenty-six years of age, there’s nothing I can do here. ... The people that are enjoying themselves, they all happen to be small, very, very young. ... It’s their moment, it’s not for us.’ (British Kashmiri, Male, 26-35)*

Parents talked about how they liked the space and thought it was well-designed for children:

*It’s such an open space you can see what’s going on so if you’ve got kids you can see them even if they are quite far away from you. You feel safe because it’s so shallow, the water.’ (White British, Female, 26-35)*

Unlike many urban spaces, City Park attracts and retains lots of young visitors. In addition, parents and young children really like the park and, as noted above, the park has helped to draw families back into the centre of Bradford. Despite these overall positive evaluations, it should be noted that at least one of our respondents thought the park had little to offer young adults without children.

## **City Park as a Public Resource**

Our interviews with local authority staff also made it clear that the park was envisioned to be a public resource for the city and Bradfordians. We can think of this as a kind of ‘moral urbanism’ (Darling 2012), an attempt to imbue City Park with moral characteristics around shared equal access and the creation of public amenity:

*It’s somewhere that people can go without having to pay. There is no entrance fee. We took a specific decision to make the public toilets free to access because we wanted it to be a facility for the park. The city centre is ringed by some of the most deprived neighbourhoods and we wanted people to be able to come down with their children. They don’t have to buy coffee to sit out there, they don’t have to pay anything to get in, they don’t have to pay to use the facilities, the toilets. It’s a really fantastic resource that’s open to everybody and anybody without exception as long as they don’t offend other people with their behaviour.’ (Senior manager, local authority)*

*[...] I wanted the citizens of Bradford to be able to be tourists at the weekend and during the day and for free [...] you know not to be having to pay for everything. To be actually able to enjoy public space for free. That was really important.’ (Senior manager, local authority)*

Again, these intentions for the park are reflected in the observations and experiences of various local authority and police employees.

*The park, for obvious reasons, is much, much busier in the summer [...] It’s my observation that the people that use it are not just there, like you’d go to a park for a couple of hours wouldn’t you; a lot of the people arrive are there for the whole afternoon right through until the early evening. I observe that these people are for economic reasons or just for cultural reasons these are the type of people who can’t afford or do not take their children away to the seaside for the day, go on day*

*trips, go on a holiday so they've started more and more now to use City Park as a day out. It's a cheap alternative. It's lovely for the children.'*  
(Police employee)

*'[...] poor families haven't got money to go you know, to the coast. ... but there's still like fountains where people are enjoying themselves.'*  
(Frontline worker)

*'A lot of people in Bradford have quite a tough time – it's no secret. We have some of the most deprived communities in the UK. City Park really, I believe, has enhanced people's experience of the city centre. It really builds quality of life. [...] Go down there on a sunny day when the park is operational and you just think. You see thousands of kids and I believe that quite a lot of them come from places that might not necessarily have a back garden. They might not have access to a car to get to a beach and all that sort of stuff and so they can come down. There are these tiny little ones splashing about. You can hear them. If we have the windows open here [in the office] you can hear the squeals of delight. You know I believe it really improves people's quality of life; these sorts of experiences.'* (Senior manager, local authority)

Local authority staff also commented upon how the park is used by visitors. A senior manager was surprised at the number of families using it and how keen they are to use the fountains and Mirror Pool:

*'I was surprised at the numbers of families that were down. It doesn't have to be a really hot day. [...] I noticed this morning they were there quite early; nine o'clock already there and ready to go into the water. [...] But certainly I don't think any of us were expecting to see so many families and children playing in the water as there's been last year and this year.'*

As will be explored below, the great popularity of City Park with 'poor families' and individuals may not have been expected and has raised some concerns, but it is striking that the park was, at least in part, designed with them in mind. As a number of recent studies have shown, public spaces and city centres are increasingly designed to squeeze out those without the means to engage in the consumption that dominates urban life (e.g. Hodkinson 2012; Mitchell 2003; Young *et al.* 2006). In contrast, local authority workers are aware of Bradford's economic deprivation and have created a space which is mindful of these conditions. As noted in the previous chapter, the park has also given people somewhere to simply sit and be – somewhere to linger. The notion of the park as a public resource for Bradford was also evident in the local authority's approach to event planning and promotion:

*'All the events we've done so far are free events and they're [typically] non-ticketed events because it's an open space. It's unfenced, unticketed space which I think works brilliantly for the free flowing festivals.'* (Senior manager, local authority)

*'It's about building a positive relationship with people locally first and then extending out. I think what people have sometimes done is forgotten local people and gone out and found that local people have not necessarily been ambassadors so this time we wanted to build that relationship first.'* (Senior manager, local authority)

Several visitors also talked about the public nature of the space, that it did not cost anything to use and provided various resources and amenities for public use:

*'it's lovely! I mean, you know, where else can you go for free that's this nice?'* (White British, Female, 65+)

*I think it's great for children. I think the fact that a lot of water parks closed down for health and safety as I grew up. There were quite a few and then they all seemed to get closed down because of health and safety. This is fab that this is available for the kids. It's clean and tidy and the fact that they drain the water at night means you don't worry about bacteria or glass at the bottom. You can see that it is well maintained and there is no worries about health and safety really.' (White British, Female, 36-45)*

*It's fairly relaxed isn't it? It's a nice space and it's not overcrowded with shops.' (White British, Female, 26-35)*

*[...]. There are new public toilets in the park which is good as a lot of public toilets have been closed down.' (British Pakistani, Male, 16-25)*

*I like it because they [her children] can just go in and it's free and they can go in and have a play. I don't have to be worrying thinking 'oh god' because I can see them from here ... there's lots for them to do and it's better than swimming where you have to pay for it. Here they can just come in and out and splash around. ... Yeah you can just watch them and have a coffee. Or we can go in there for a bit [points at the Children's Library].' (White British, Female, 26-35)*

*[...] If we can't afford to go out we bring 'em [her children] 'ere.' (White British, Female, 26-35)*

It could be claimed that the kind of public space and public resource that Bradford has created could only occur in a context where property prices are relatively low and commercial motives for development are hampered. Bradford has been trying to secure a major shopping development in the city centre for some time, but negotiations stalled in the wake of the recent financial crisis and recession. In a more

prosperous city one would imagine commercial pressures would prevail and press regeneration projects towards more privatised, business and consumerism oriented developments (e.g. Minton 2009).

### **Just how inclusive is City Park?**

Thus far we have established that the local authority intended City Park to be an accessible and inclusive public space and that these intentions are generally borne out in the experiences of members of the public. Nonetheless a number of concerns were raised by park visitors and frontline workers about behaviours, individuals and groups found in the park. Given the way many city centres have prioritised commercial interests and focused upon those with the ability to pay for various services and products; if City Park does buck this trend it is worth exploring just how successfully it does so.

The Mirror Pool and fountains which form the focal point of City Park raised a number of concerns from members of the public and those working on the park. Unlike many other water features, City Park's Mirror Pool and fountains were designed to be interactive and get people's toes wet:

*'Most people see water and they want to get in it. That was our intention; people interacting with the water and not having to tell people not to get in because it's slippery or because it's dangerous.'* (Senior manager, local authority)

Another senior manager explained that City Park is a mixed space which requires a careful balance between the civic and ceremonial and its more sociable and interactive features:

*'There are other spaces across this country that are very ceremonial and very civic and that [City Park] is quite a lively spot and it is a balance between how lively and how civic it becomes and*

*you know how safe and also how free. You know there's a line to be drawn and it's very difficult to manage that line so that is what I'm always looking for.'* (Senior manager, local authority)

The balance described above is reflected in the buildings which surround City Park – the eateries and shops, the court building and Bradford's City Hall.<sup>9</sup> In the middle is the large interactive Mirror Pool (see Figure 3.2). Such a 'lively' and interactive water feature is unusual for a city centre and some concerns were raised during our interviews:

*'So if [...] you are going to let people get in and get wet they are going to do what they are going to do. People found it a bit...um...undignified, not quite as civilised as they might like. I don't know what the right word is. I'll try to think of the word. I think it is quite a sophisticated scheme but it has this less sophisticated side to it which is quite funny. I think people find that quite shocking because they expect it to be pristine and pretty and promenading rather than dipping in with bikinis and stuff.'* (Senior manager, local authority)

Police and local business employees made comments about how 'rowdy' and enthusiastic users of the Mirror Pool can be:

*'But then when you observe it [the Mirror Pool area] later on and you've got the adults in the water and it all borders on getting a little bit out of control [...] It borders on getting a little bit out of control and spoiling it for people who just want to enjoy it and bring their children. I know a lot of people who won't bring their children down to the pool when it is busy. It gets too rowdy.'* (Police employee)

*'I'm not quite sure whether it's being used in the way that it would have been – the conception of it would probably have been more ornamental –*

*whereas it's being used very differently.'* (Local business employee)

A member of the public raised concerns about semi-clad adults using the Mirror Pool:

*'There are a few people who come down here and you think, it's not a lido, it is a fountain. They go a little bit over the top with what they are not wearing.'* (White British, Female, 26-35)

Reflecting these anxieties, one staff member raised concerns about the potential exposure of young children paddling in the Mirror Pool. Nobody we spoke to had witnessed inappropriate behaviour or described people acting suspiciously, but an ambient concern about 'paedos' was noted.

*'The pool is an attraction. It's cool. I think it's an attraction for mums and to bring the children. But when the children are getting naked, I think that's wrong. You don't know who is walking about.'* (British Pakistani Female, 16-25)

These kinds of concerns about children and adults disrobing in public highlight the importance of context in interpreting nakedness and states of undress (Cover 2003; Goffman 1963). Such concerns might not seem out of place at a beach or public swimming pool, but in an urban context they can be viewed differently:

*'When there are concerns about children semi-clad going into the water in their underwear or in their nappies – people don't have that response to those scenes on the beach. People's response to people relaxing in that way in an urban environment is very, very different. We call the space 'City Park' and we treat it like a park but it's not a green park in the sense that we are used to so the behaviours that people are used to, don't challenge in green parks or beaches, I think they do challenge in that urban setting.'* (Senior manager, local authority)





**Figure 3.2: City Park on a warm summer's day, 2013**

Beyond concerns about how the Mirror Pool is used, a local business employee thought standards of behaviour in general were too lax: *'You could walk around in your underwear and I don't think anybody would say anything to you.'* This person also thought there were cultural differences between white and Asian notions of acceptable behaviour:

*'We have a lot of Asian clients that come in here, that wouldn't dream of: they don't drink, they don't do drugs and they don't let their kids take their clothes off and run around in the pond.'*

He also thought these cultural differences mean events held in City Park that have an Asian theme or are aimed at an Asian audience failed to attract their support:

*'...because we [White British] always think we have to placate the Asian community, however, it's usually not supported, you usually find that nearest of them aren't bothered – ironic. Putting things on for a minority of the population and the minority population won't come down here at night [...] These girls that are here [employees], my Asian girls, they're not allowed out at night. They wouldn't be allowed to come down to City Park – it just wouldn't happen.'*

These comments about cultural differences in standards of behaviour were isolated and as such it is difficult to determine how relevant they are.

A more widely shared concern related to the consumption of alcohol in the park. The following chapter will explore the regulation of drinking in the park, but here we can note the ways in which respondents positioned certain groups and behaviours as inappropriate and requiring response.

*'The lake, the ornamental lake over there, has become a paddling pond for children, which again is no bad thing. Um, there used to be a lido, a there used to be a public swimming pool in the, in Bradford, in the parks, but with the wonderful hindsight of our funding council, that was all taken away, years ago. So now people with no money, or that have very little money, have got nowhere to go that they can afford, but what they do do is they come down here and put the kids in the pond and go across and sit outside Wetherspoon's.'* (Local business employee)

*'As a space I think it works fabulous, the events that are put on and all the different activities and different people that it attracts to the city centre. As a water feature, in the height of summer, absolutely not. I think when you see it later in the afternoon when it's, in my opinion, at its worst, next to a city hall, which is like a fabulous building next to the courts, and you just look at all these screaming, often drunk, people you think Bradford has lost every ounce of dignity. It's just horrendous. But early morning when the children are in it, fabulous.'* (Police employee)

A local business employee thought the free events held in the park drew in people looking for free entertainment and a drink:

*'If it's free and it's entertainment they'll [white working-class people] come down, regardless of*

*who's on, out of curiosity. The Bollywood thing's a curiosity thing, oh maybe they'll get to see somebody famous and it's free and the pub's; there were a load of bars down here – see it were just a load of drinkers coming in on the bus to see a free concert. It didn't appeal to the Hindu community, which is Bollywood – they're too sophisticated. The Asians at that time of night would be home with their own families.'* (Local business employee)

Staff also raised concerns about alcohol abuse in the park. A local business employee thought the park not only attracted drunks but a whole range of 'undesirable' people:

*'Well first of all I like the City Park, um, the design is good the layout is good. [...] It's particularly working well for the events that Bradford have been putting on. It's a good central point, ok. The downside of it is it's also a central point for the dossers, the drunks, the druggies, the pickpockets, the lowlife er, finding this also a central point. [...] I see it goin' on. I see people getting arrested, I see people lying – I come here in the morning, to open up at 8 o'clock on a Friday/Saturday morning, there're people asleep on the grass out there. You know, whether they're homeless or whether they just got drunk or whatever the reason. I just see it. There's some very sad people and Bradford's very poor – there's a lot of very poor people in Bradford city centre.'*

This was not a common perception amongst those we spoke to. In fact, a member of the public thought the popularity of City Park had squeezed 'undesirable' people out of the city centre:

*'This space it never really got used not like it does now... used to be down and outs here, but so many people here now pushes all that out of the town centre.'* (White British, Male, 26-35)

Nonetheless, both sets of comments highlight that creating a welcoming space for some might mean the exclusion of other social groups. And both respondents would presumably rather have 'undesirable' people and behaviours removed from the park.

Another local business employee thought the Wetherspoon's based on the park drew in drinkers and led to drunkenness:

*'Where there's a Wetherspoon's there's gonna be drunks, that's just how it is really. It's the same in my hometown as well. [...] If they hadn't built this and there was still a Spoon's there – still be the same problem [...] I think the Wetherspoon's and the kind of people it attracts, especially on nice days, can cause some trouble. And like, especially working here, when it's a bit later, I've seen like a couple of fights breaking out here [in City Park]. But I mean I think that's only because its [City Park] made it into such a nice area it's become quite a focal point for a lot of people and a lot of people are drawn to it.'* (Local business employee)

A few members of the public mentioned concern over heavy drinking in the Park, but generally did not describe bad behaviour as a result of alcohol. Nonetheless, at least one respondent thought heavy drinking had increased in recent times as seen in this exchange:

*'I come for a meal the other day and I noticed there is a hell of a lot of alcohol abuse and a lot of like you know groups of youths drinking.'*  
*'Yeah but you're in Bradford aren't you?'*  
*'Yeah but not as much as there used to be!'*  
*'[...] this is the thing, seeing kids that I know are 16-17 years old drinking alcohol on the streets. Between 7 O'clock to 8.30. Round here is a surprise though because there didn't used to be that much. (Both British Asian, Males, 26-35)*

The concerns and criticisms discussed above run counter to the positive responses we heard from most respondents. Nonetheless these concerns highlight the challenge of creating an inclusive public space in the centre of a multicultural city which is undertaking regeneration in the wake of deindustrialisation. Bradford has relatively high levels of unemployment and deprivation and the park aims to attract all comers, which has generated some anxieties.

It is significant that none of the concerns raised above relate to ethnicity. There is some veiled talk about the white working class, but concerns centre around the use of the water fountains and drunkenness. Rather than the talk of segregation, 'parallel lives' or failure of multiculturalism which characterises public and political debate about multi-ethnic Britain, here we see a broadly inclusive public space which is the site of 'rubbing along', a mostly amicable sharing of space across age, gender, ethnicity and social class. Also in contrast to public and political debate are the positive ways in which people spoke about sharing space with different unknown others.

## **Conclusion**

City Park is a space which can facilitate the kinds of minimal interactions that promote rubbing along. But this relies on the Council's ongoing investment in the park and leadership to sustain it as an accessible, inclusive public resource. Moreover, the users of City Park must maintain the ethos of openness, civility and fun which they have cultivated since it opened in March 2012.

The following chapter examines behaviours in the park and the way these are regulated and managed.

## Chapter Four: The Behaviour and Regulation of City Park

'In its certain specifics of behavior, every city park is a case unto itself and defies generalizations.' (Jacobs 1961 p.90)

This chapter reports on the behaviour of City Park as we observed it during the summer of 2013, before going on to explore the way the space is regulated and managed.

### The Civic Ideal of a Public Park

The first public parks created by the Victorians offered an alternative form of recreation to the tavern. They had the lofty ambitions of improving public behaviour with a harmonizing influence on social relations between loosely connected strangers from disparate groups of society (Conway 2000). According to this ideal, the design of these parks featured serpentine paths, which created opportunities for people to see and be seen; using natural surveillance to discourage unacceptable behaviour and foster self-regulation. In addition, these parks combined tight rules of conduct for the public with dedicated park keepers who had responsibility for enforcing rules against those who transgressed the parks' regulations and byelaws. In parks characteristic of the early Public Parks Movement visitors were strictly kept to pathways, strategically placed benches, bandstands and other park furniture, permitting people to delight in their beauty principally as passive observers.

Since this time, there have been significant changes in ideas about how public parks should be used. Alongside these changes in use, there has been a loosening in codes of conduct for the public, a move from park users as passive observers to active agents in the production of park life, and a decline in dedicated park keepers (albeit in recent years there has been some belated recognition of the importance of this

role). Capturing these shifts, Pettigrew (1937), a superintendent in Manchester's first public parks, documented in his manual *Municipal Parks: Layout, Management and Administration* that he saw 'parks developing from beautiful lungs confiding visitors rigidly to footpaths and enforcing a considerable number of restrictions' to 'places of active participation and recreation'. These changes have had important implications for the behaviour of public parks.

The values and the principles informing how Bradford's City Park was imagined, designed and managed borrow some ideas from these early public parks, particularly the presence of dedicated park keeping staff and the importance of 'designing in' natural surveillance. However, it departs from these early models quite considerably in other ways. For senior managers involved in designing the space, the civic ideal of a public park is one where there are slightly looser restraints on social behaviour, to permit a broad range of users of all ages and cultural backgrounds. Bradford MDC's background information on City Park states that it was designed as a 'place for people' (2009 p.4). The ethos of City Park is that it should be accessible to the diverse population of the city without being bland and 'overly sanitised'. The code of conduct for the public is more relaxed and the assessment of behaviours as problematic is context-dependent, combined with an approach to regulation informed by the principle of tolerance. These ideals will be drawn out throughout this chapter using a variety of examples.

Moreover, the park's design, which includes interactive features, particularly the water

fountains and Mirror Pool, were envisioned to make people an active part of the park's setting. According to Jacobs, a park comes to life when it is activated by the presence of people. The best parks, she believed, are 'stage settings for people' (1961 p.105). Parks without people are like fountains deprived of a water source. They do not function and have no valuable use: '...people do confer use on parks and make them successes-or else withhold use and doom parks to rejection and failure' (Jacobs 1961 p.89). The presence of ordinary people is the main attraction of a park. This simple but pertinent observation was made by Whyte in his extensive observation of urban plazas: 'What attracts people most, it would appear, is other people' (2012 p.203). People, therefore, are the most important feature of parks. The physical features of a park, its layout and grounds are important in so much as they encourage and facilitate a parks' active social life. The civic ideal of City Park connects with Jacob's belief that the purpose of parks should be on their everyday social functionality; 'for general bread-and-butter use as local public yards' (1961 p.91).

### City Park's Regulations: Shades of Grey

We can understand something about the behavioural setting of a park through the codes of conduct and regulations that govern the space, and through the mechanics of upholding rules and regulations. Historically, the rules and regulations of public parks have varied widely, partly a product of local byelaws. There remain wide variations in the behavioural restrictions found in urban parks.

In City Park, there is a presumption of free access to the space, albeit access can be denied. The park's regulations are posted on public notices displayed at all entry points (see Figure 4.1). The byelaws do not permit skateboarding and roller-blading. Specific design features had been installed to discourage these behaviours.

The main rule that has been introduced relates to the use of glass items in and around the Mirror Pool given the danger this presents to children playing in the water. Dogs are to be kept on leads at all times and are not permitted in the Mirror Pool. Young children are expected to be supervised at all times by their guardian mainly due to the risk presented by the water. More broadly, the public notices warn visitors that 'disruptive' behaviour (undefined apart from the specific restrictions listed) may lead to those responsible being escorted off the premises and, where behaviour persistently flouts the park's restrictions, people risk being excluded from the space.



Figure 4.1 City Park's rules and regulations





**Figure 4.2 Children playing in the Mirror Pool and water fountains on a summer day**

Source: Tim Green <http://www.flickr.com/photos/atoach/7956965506/in/photostream>

‘One of the best things about water is the look and feel of it... it is not right to put water before people and then keep them away from it. But this is not what has been happening... Pools and fountains are installed, then immediately posted with signs admonishing people not to touch.’  
(Whyte 1980 p.210)

City Park does not contain signs admonishing people from interacting with the water fountains (see Figure 4.2), telling people to keep off the grass areas, to refrain from cycling, or even banning people from drinking alcohol. A deliberate decision was taken to limit the number of specific restrictions on people’s behaviour in the park, other than those set out in the byelaws, and to keep signs within the grounds of the park to a minimum:

*‘We didn’t want to have lots of signs up saying “Don’t play in the water”, “slip hazard” – that*

*kind of thing [...] The signs generally are the legal requirements we have to say about byelaws and so on.’ (Senior manager, local authority)*

Rather than setting out tight codes of conduct, listing behaviours that are allowed and not allowed, the public notices appeal to visitors to use the park ‘sensibly’ with ‘respect for the rights of others’. In this way, the approach to the governance of the park seeks to engage its visitors in forms of self-regulation. It implies a need for visitors to be aware of their own behaviour and be active in the process of

assessing it as appropriate within the context of an urban park setting. An implicit expectation is that visitors adjust their behaviour or activities depending on who else is using the space; that they self-police.

*'So what we do try and do is encourage people to behave responsibly and respectfully to one another and to a large extent because the space is a busy space particularly on hot sunny days like today there is an element of self-regulation [...] The very fact that you are in the close proximity with other people suggests that your behaviour is curtailed or you respond in a particular way.'*  
(Senior manager, local authority)

This recognises that a great deal of the everyday policing of society is done by citizens themselves (Shapland and Vagg 1988). Many visitors talked about regulating their own behaviour in the park. A common example was tidying up and putting litter in the bins, to keep it clean and well-maintained. Some mothers also described informally intervening in child disputes. Others described themselves as active observers of the social order, ready to intervene if necessary, although they reported no incidents of actually intervening. One unemployed young person talked about aiding processes of natural surveillance and looking out for 'undesirables':

*'Even though I drink [sometimes in City Park], I still have sommat' in me that says, "you know what, keep an eye out", you know what I mean, care for the people, innit. If someone needs my help, I'll help em. A man, woman, black, white, Chinese, whatever.'* (British Pakistani male, 16-25)

Despite some levels of self-policing, the decision to limit restrictions within the park nonetheless created a place that needed close supervision and management:

*'That is quite a lively spot and it is a balance between how lively and how civic it becomes and you know how safe and also how free. You know there's a line to be drawn and it's very difficult to manage that line.'* (Senior manager, local authority)

This comment recognises the challenges of creating a space that tolerates a range of activities and behaviours, but also constitutes a civil and enjoyable place that people want to go to, and the difficult balance this demands for park managers and guardians.

The sociological concepts of 'tightness' and 'looseness' offer a way of understanding behavioural settings (Goffman 1963). In parks generally, the normal 'tighter' constraints on social behaviour are 'loosened'. This does not mean that in a park *anything goes*, but there is an ethos of tolerance of a greater level of difference in a park than in other contexts. People expect to see and experience different things in a park, including acts they may not usually approve of, that they might not expect to see or tolerate in other situations. In essence, parks are spaces of difference where diverse groups come together to share a common space. In this way, public parks may be understood as 'loosely defined behavioural settings'. Seeing the park in this way helps to explain why some acts are less likely to be thought of as 'improper' (Goffman 1963 p.215).

Many observers of parks have noted the relaxed appearance of people who visit parks and a lesser concern to conceal a range of personal behaviours one might normally seek to do in public gatherings. Observational studies of city parks have been keen to note their higher degree of informality, casualness and the lack of close social ties to others. As Goffman notes, writing in the 1960s:



‘... in a park he can engage intensely in exposed mutual-involvements by quarrelling, love-making (to a degree), or shouting to a friend coming up the path; he can immerse himself in auto-involvements as he cleans out the wax from his ear, eats chicken from a basket, or massages the muscle of his leg; he can loll in apparent disengagement, go into a brown study [deep thought], and even exercise less than usual care about not appearing to be engaged in occult matters’ (1963 p.199).

A public park may be attractive because of its more relaxed rules of behaviour. In this sense we may regard it as a semi-liminal space in which normal social mores, customs and restraints are (temporarily) loosened.

### **Perceptions of Behaviour in the Park**

We asked park users, businesses and professionals who worked on the site or had responsibilities for patrolling the park how appropriate they perceived people’s behaviour in the park. Somewhat surprisingly for a public place that attracts thousands of visitors on a sunny day, each with different interests and expectations, our interviews revealed very few examples of occasions when it was felt the park was used inappropriately such that it would warrant some level of formal or informal intervention. It was more frequent to talk about the ‘the odd isolated incident’ and some minor infractions of the rules, than any pattern of anti-social behaviour. Many users of the park stated that they had ‘*not witnessed anyone behaving badly*’ or ‘*noticed any incident that would make [them] uncomfortable*’. We noted very few occasions where interviewees expressed that their use or enjoyment of the space had been negatively affected by other people’s behaviour. These incidents tended to focus on the use of abusive language, but it was generally not perceived as a major problem:

*White British, Female, 16-25: Some people come through and use abusive language... Not even being drunk just being rude.’*

*British Asian, Male, 16-25: ‘Yeah but it’s not a major problem.’*

Despite public drinking being cited as one of the least desirable behaviours in the park, only on very few occasions was this felt to cause a disturbance or infringe upon others using the space. Our observations also provided support for this.

Overwhelmingly interviewees suggested that City Park was perceived to be used appropriately by the broad variety of people who came to the park. Almost all the visitors we spoke to expressed their great enjoyment in using the park and felt that this was a shared value:

*‘It’s fine, relaxed and having a nice time.*

*Everybody is here for the same reasons.’ (White British, Female, 26-35)*

*‘What better?! Sat around, relaxed, kids enjoying themselves, parents enjoying themselves, yeah, smashin.’ (White British, Male, 56-65.)*

*‘I sit over here and watch the people, the people’s behaviour, especially I watch the kids, you know they enjoy it, have fun, they enjoy it a lot [...] it’s a peaceful environment.’ (British Asian, Male, 26-35)*

Senior managers and workers from the local authority expressed generally positive impressions of people’s behaviour in the park. They felt that the public generally upheld the desired standards of the park:

*‘It’s not perfect, but I’ve been impressed by the way the public look after it in terms of litter and everything else [...] I think that demonstrates what they think of it. If there are people who feel*

*ownership over it they will look after it more.'*  
(Senior manager, local authority)

*'People are generally respectful of using the litter bins.'* (Local authority worker)

However, local businesses had quite contrasting views about behavioural standards in the park, as the following contrasting comments illustrate:

*Interviewer: Do you think people use the park appropriately?*  
*'Absolutely, I mean when it's very sunny there's loads of people in there [the Mirror Pool] swimming and bathing. There's always people on the grass, which is always really good – enjoying the sunshine. There's never really any trouble during the day [...] Which I think, especially when you have such a high concentration of people in one area, especially in a city like Bradford, it could potentially happen [...] there's been no vandalism here or anything, I think people in Bradford respect it. Definitely respect what they've done here.'* (Local business employee)

*'In summer it was every day, that was hard. People were just drinking and leaving rubbish around, I didn't like that. That was a little bit too messy.'* (Local business employee)

The relaxed ethos did not meet universal support. For other businesses, the tolerance practised towards so called 'undesirables' and the restricted use of enforcement and dispersal of these groups, meant that the park as 'a great meeting place' did not always have positive overtones and disrupted business interests:

*'If they're not careful, they'll turn a showpiece into a doss house... a central meeting point for people that want to drink all day, sleep on the – you know it's been a bit scuffy and a bit of a doss house and they haven't been moved on. People that are sleeping, that are obviously drunk, haven't been moved on.'* (Local business employee)

This view point reminds us that urban spaces are sites of possible conflict and will often attract contested understandings of who are considered acceptable users of public spaces (Warpole and Greenhalgh 1996). In the wider trend of urban renaissance through inward investment, this frequently means that: 'The culture of respect is manifest largely as a mode of conduct – namely, consumption' and, as a consequence, public places are often 'reclaimed through the exclusion of those who do not conform to this mode of conduct' (Bannister *et al.* 2006 p.924). For some, this may mean the removal of drunks and rough sleepers, whilst for others the threshold of 'undesirables' is much lower. Studies of other city parks found opposition by local traders to the use of water fountains as a children's play facility, as this was seen to detract from its ornamental attraction to shoppers (Worpole and Knox, 2007). However, we did not encounter this form of opposition by local businesses. Both visitors and businesses commented that they liked seeing and hearing young children playing in the water.

Aside from some differences, it was more commonly agreed amongst the professionals we spoke with that on late afternoons during the hot weather, the park got a bit 'too drinky' and had an edge about it. This is perhaps where restraints were considered too relaxed and people's conduct was looser than desired. The atmosphere of the park was perceived to change throughout the day, with the morning and early afternoon perceived to be the most pleasant time to use the space. Whilst we received numerous comments about the parks' positive contribution to the reputation of the city, as discussed in chapter two, the park scene on some afternoons were not particularly 'dignified', as a police employee reported:

*'[...] especially when the weather is nice, the mood and the atmosphere and the people that are there just gradually change as the day goes on. So*

*you've got your drinkers, then you've got your families who are there that are drinking, you know, parents are drinking, you've got unsupervised young children, young adults, teenagers just being totally unruly. As the day goes on, in my experience, it gets progressively worse.'*

The time of the day was also an important factor in park users' accounts of appropriate behaviour. Whilst many of the park users we spoke with generally tended to come to the park during daylight hours (which is likely to reflect the times when we conducted the interviews), some speculated about the possibility for disorder during the evenings:

*'I've never been on a night but I can imagine what it would be like; people getting drunk and abusive.'* (British Pakistani, Female, 16-25)

Others who had visited the park after dark told us of some undesirable behaviour and incidents they witnessed:

*'Once last year me and my friend managed to wonder back through the park at about 2am. We found two Chavs very openly using Class A drugs in the middle of the park.'* (White British, Female, 16-25)

*'Sometimes people fight outside the pub there, particularly at night time.'* (White British, Male, 46-55)

*'Saw a fight here. He was pretty drunk. It was at night time. Police officer came but it wasn't dangerous or anything. They just had a disagreement. It wasn't serious.'* (White British, Male, 16-25)

Some people claimed that they would avoid the park after dark. However, this did not discourage them from appreciating the park's vibrant atmosphere during the day.

## **Guardianship of the Park**

Behaviour in a public park depends to a large extent on how it is regulated and policed, both formally and by the people themselves. A dominant trend in the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the gradual decline of dedicated park keepers (Lambert 2005).<sup>10</sup> Park keepers perform important secondary social control functions (Jones and Newburn 2002), traditionally combining 'working' (maintenance) and 'watching' (security) roles. The loss of park keepers has been associated with the declining physical condition of public parks and the perception of them as unsafe (Conway 2000). Since the turn of the century, however, there has been a belated recognition of the importance of the presence of dedicated park staff and a renewed emphasis on visible policing in public places to provide reassurance to citizens. These personnel influence public impressions about the degree of security and 'guardianship' present in an area (Innes and Fielding 2002). These ideas have been central to the management of City Park:

*'I think what's really critical is the space is looked after well and we try very hard to keep it clean, to keep it well supervised because people's experience is key. If the first time you come you see a very dirty environment you think that's the norm and how people value it.'* (Senior manager, local authority)

This comment also captures the need for environments to be 'civilising' to attract civil and respectful behaviour (Bannister *et al.* 2006 p.926). The quality of parks and their standards of maintenance have been related to user behaviour (Cabe Space 2005; ENCAMS 2001). Poor standards of maintenance communicate a lack of care and authority (Cabe Space 2005).

A key source of guardianship and regulation is provided by the visitors themselves. As a well populated space, particularly during summer

days, people frequently pointed to the high level of natural surveillance provided by the level of people using or passing through the space, as well as the businesses and civic buildings that surround and enclose the sight and provide passive surveillance. That there were lots of eyes upon the park meant that people felt *'there's not many ways you can misuse this place'* and added to people's sense of enjoyment and their perceptions of safety:

*'It's a very open place so any behaviour can be easily observed [...] There is no reason to be scared.'* (Black African, Male, 26-35)

Given this high level of guardianship, for parents, City Park provided a relatively safe arena for outdoor play:

*'I used to be a childcare worker – and I like it because I can see everywhere. I can see where she [granddaughter] is and what she's doing all the time.'* (White British, Female, over 65)

However, a consequence of the space being perceived by the public as well guarded and safe was also a loosening of parental controls on children, which had led to cases of children being reported missing:

*'[...]because we get so many people in a concentrated space, lots of children as well, missing kids, really young children going missing, because of their age they can be quite high risk [...] So that is one of the main issues. Sometimes we get 6, 7, 8 a day.'* (Police employee)

This issue also arose during our observations of the park. During one of the family event days we observed a private security officer, who was part of a team contracted to provide additional guardianship of the park during these events, walking around with a young child in search of her parents.

Visible figures of authority, including the Park Custodians, the cleansing team, city wardens and the police, were nearly always visible in the park at some point during the times of our observations. Often these authority figures seemed to be having conversations with members of the public and people they know, be active in maintaining the grounds of the park and have a style of observation that was relaxed, rather than an intense patrol or watching style. Only on very few occasions did we observe some form of intervention by an authority figure. However, there did not appear to be much problematic going on that would require intervention.

Visitors to the park generally perceived there to be a good level of visible presence by authority figures in the park.

*'There's always wardens.'* (White British, Female, 26-35)

*'I'll tell you what I do like about it. It's patrolled by the Police which makes you feel a bit safer doesn't it?'* (White British, Male, 36-45)

Combined with this, the Magistrates Court bordering the site and nearby police station were perceived to be effective deterrents to inappropriate behaviour:

*'No, not with the magistrate's across here; I think it's a, a sign not to do that. This place is regularly patrolled by the police. Just from where I'm sat at the moment I can see a police officer. Um, and the actual police station is only about two minutes that way.'* (British Kashmiri, Male, 26-35)

Occasionally, the research revealed comments from the public for *'more rounds from the wardens'* and *'more police'*. However, many people felt satisfied with the level of guardianship presence in the park.

Representatives from the local authority and the police felt that joint-working in relation to patrols of the park could be improved in a way that would maximise visibility with the limited resources available:

*'I don't think we've got it quite right yet in terms of people patrolling and having a visible presence yet.'* (Senior manager, local authority)

*'We are partner agencies but we don't work together as closely as we should. Their wardens are told to go and patrol the park. We're told to go and patrol the park. There's no joint communication where perhaps we could. You know, you do this time, we do that time or one-and-one to try and make better use of the resources.'* (Police employee)

We asked about the management of the park on a day-to-day basis and how various people and agencies work together. Whilst there were systems in place to share information about issues that required immediate action, there appeared to be fewer mechanisms in place to discuss park life and more general intelligence:

*'There is a lack of information sharing between wardens and police officers. If there's something pressing they'll call us and they'll feed us that information if there's a problem. But just general what we call "intelligence" that doesn't need immediate action, it's not shared.'* (Police employee)

Moreover, as we shall see below, there were some issues within the park such as public drinking that divided opinions. Open discussions between the police, local authority, other stakeholders and businesses may prove useful in thinking about the management of these issues more fully.

## Managing Behaviour in City Park

It has become common over the past decade or so for successive governments to talk of a no tolerance approach to anti-social behaviour in public places (Home Office 2004; 2012). This populist rhetoric has had a much stronger influence on styles of governing the public realm than have approaches informed by an appreciation of diversity and difference, underscored by values of mutual respect and tolerance.

The style of management of City Park, both on the ground and as formulated at senior levels, seems quite relaxed about what people do and tolerant of a variety of behaviours, as long as they are not seen to bother anybody or infringe the right of others to use the space. We observed many examples of behaviours illustrating this liberal approach: young children climbing on and through the sculptures, especially the one with the hole in the middle that is at a good height for them; people with little else to do sleeping for hours on the park's furniture (see observation 4.1); young people doing wheelies up and down on their bikes (observation 4.2); groups of young people congregating and hanging around; children, clothed and unclothed, running in and out of fountain's streams of water and paddling in the Mirror Pool; and even people on the margins of society, public drinkers and rough sleepers, found a space in the park. Our observations, supported by interviews with users of the park, suggested that those who shared this space were rarely concerned by these range of behaviours. In fact, many people described City Park as a place that *'welcomes everyone to do their own thing.'* (White British, Male, 16-25)

**Observation 4.1** A young man reclines on top of the oval sculpture. He has his legs stretched out and is resting propped up on his right elbow with his head in his hands staring out over the Mirror Pool. His boxer shorts hang loose out of

his trousers. Later, he looks very still and relaxed, possibly sleeping. People chat around him. An hour and half goes past, he remains there in his own bubble. During this time, no one appeared to notice him, intervene or obviously mind his presence. (Lunchtime, 10 June 2013)

**Observation 4.2** Bicycle users in City Park vary; some use it as a throughway, whilst others cruise around, do tricks or perform. During our period of observation, we frequently made reference to the presence of a young lad doing wheelies up and down on his bike, at times when the park was more or less busy. During all of these occasions, there were no obvious signs that other users of the park seemed to be troubled by this behaviour and no attempt was made to stop them. (Post-work hours 26 June 2013)

In terms of managing and policing a public space, the idea of setting out to define clear rules of acceptable behaviour can be attractive in that it allows personnel with responsibility for upholding them to do so with clarity:

*'I think if people are coming to enjoy it they would be happy to see oh this isn't allowed and that's not allowed. I don't think it's going to detract from the place at all. These are things that reassure people that there are rules and it's safe so I think the signs should be bigger and more of them.'* (Police employee)

Some members of the public and local authority workers also suggested the need for greater signage around the park, albeit this was less concerned with specifying standards for acceptable conduct and more to do with supplying greater information about opening times of the park's facilities, details about events and times when the fountains and Mirror Pool would be operational. Some local authority workers police employees felt that greater

signage would reduce possible conflictual relations with the public.

There is little room for discretion and tolerance to difference in an approach that gives little or no flexibility to the context of behaviours. Operating within a rigid framework for social behaviour also leaves little place for unplanned spontaneity, creativity in the use of space and the 'stimulation' (as well as possible threat) that can arise from exposure to difference. As Sennett observes, "Exposure" more connotes the likelihood of being hurt than of being stimulated... assuming that these differences [between people] are more likely to be mutually threatening than mutually stimulating' (1991 p.xii). The unpredictable, and even the disconcerting, is a part of city living.

Senior managers of the local authority recognised that strict codes of conduct and over-zealous forms of policing of any deviations leaves limited space to understand the motivations of individuals or to consider behaviours in context-specific terms. For local authority senior managers, the earlier noted civic ideal of a park is one where there are slightly looser constraints on social behaviour and attention is paid to important contextual issues that frame the acceptability of behaviour:

*'It's a slim line to say there's someone cycling through there, well actually what's the problem? The cyclists are they knocking anyone down? No. Are they going to fast? No. If they're going at high speed and they knock over a kid that's a real problem but if people are behaving as a community in a mature manner [it shouldn't be considered a problem].'* (Senior manager, local authority)

Interviews with local authority management suggest that the approach to regulation of the park is largely one of relaxed toleration.

*I think if you are in a busy space like that you do have to be tolerant of other people because we all have different values, we all have different standards, we all have different preferences, personal behaviours. You have to tolerate each other.’ (Senior manager, local authority)*

Largely this meant that enforcement is restricted to acts believed to have a negative impact on other people’s enjoyment of the park. For example, in relation to public drinking a senior manager from the local authority stated that:

*‘...you can drink in the space but if you are seen to be drinking anti-socially or you are drunk then your alcohol can be confiscated by the Police. So we don’t prohibit people from drinking but that makes it quite difficult to manage. Sometimes it’s easier to be very black and white and say “no drinking” but we don’t want to do that...’*

An approach to park management that introduces discretion into the assessment of behaviour as acceptable or unacceptable, as a consequence, blurs the boundaries for civilian personnel working on the ground as to the threshold of behaviour that should or should not be enforced. It also requires frontline workers to be skilled in powers of negotiation and persuasion of others to adapt their behaviour. This approach recognises that order is largely maintained through ‘soft’ policing (Innes, 2005) without recourse to the use of force (and enforcement) wherever and whenever possible (Bittner, 1974).

*‘What we really ask is that [...] all the uniform services down there, are proactive and encourage positive behaviour. So we discourage negative behaviour but by encouraging people to behave positively and proactively. We do still enforce but the approach is very much one of trying to create a culture of positive use of the space and tolerance.’ (Senior manager, local authority)*

For some personnel, working within these ‘shades of grey’ is not an easy task, particularly when the public appeal to them for ‘decisive action’, as the following local authority worker illustrates:

*‘Now the other day there was someone with a glass bottle and I said to him “you can’t drink from a glass bottle because it is dangerous”. He said, “Who are you to tell me that? If a police officer asked me to move I would move but with you I am not” [...] Users of the park expect that us to take immediate action. People want us to do the Police job which we haven’t got the right to do.’*

Historically, it was the responsibility of the park keeper to enforce the regulations and byelaws. As Conway has noted, ‘Without them any nuisance or breach of order would be subject to criminal law, which was inappropriate for trivial offences’ (1991 p.203). Park keepers have always noted a tension between their role as a caretaker and that of ‘watchman’ and enforcer (Lamert 2005). Senior managers in the local authority appreciated these tensions, and defined the key difference between what they saw as park management issues and matters that required enforcement:

*‘It’s a really difficult role working in a space like that because you have to approach people. You put yourself in a situation where you don’t know what the response is going to be [...] If they feel the situation is violent or they feel threatened then the recommendation would be you ring the Police. That’s not about a management issue. That is about a criminality issue, a law enforcement issue, rather than just a case of advising somebody about behaviour.’ (Senior manager, local authority)*

Although as the above example illustrates, on the ground, these differences can be less clear-cut for workers since when advising people to



change their behaviour failed, this meant it became an enforcement issue.

An approach that fosters tolerance to a variety of behaviours broadens the accessibility and inclusiveness of the space and tames tendencies by public authorities, so prominent in literature on the governance of urban spaces nowadays, for 'blandness', homogeneity and sterility (Minton 2009). Conversely, 'intolerant responses' frequently make little or no attempt to inculcate moral values, appeal to normative standards or seek to adapt behaviours to make them more 'tolerable' (Kearns and Bannister 2009). Rather, they merely try to remove the behaviour in one way or another, usually through dynamics of exclusion or dispersal. City Park, however, exhibits a range of strategies for managing behaviour that sought to foster forms of 'ameliorative co-existence' defined as attempts 'to moderate the expectations and behaviours of both the "perpetrator" and ourselves so that we "get along" better' (Kearns and Bannister 2009 p.138). The examples of responses to public drinking and young people illustrate this.

#### *Public drinking*

Workers and businesses sought to foster understanding of the dangers of using glass items in the Mirror Pool and encourage responsible ways of drinking. The strategies of providing plastic cups and advising people on their behaviour are example of a tolerant response that fosters 'ameliorative co-existence' (Kearns and Bannister 2009). Those who came to the park on a regular basis to have a drink appeared to be familiar with the codes of conduct around drinking. On one occasion, a drinker was observed requesting plastic cups for himself and his friends from a Park Custodian. They were heard expressing a desire to consume the alcohol within the rules of the park. The offering of plastic cups by businesses on the site and by Park Custodians provides both the

opportunity and means for adapting behaviours in the park and was a way of leveraging conformity to the rules in return for the benefits provided by the park.

*'They do mostly [use the park appropriately] but it's just odd people... That's why they give you plastic cups. I sit here and have a drink but every time I come here I make sure my mess has been cleaned, but everyone is not like that.'*  
(Indian/White British, Male, 46-55)

Some local authority workers developed strategies that involved getting to know the regular drinkers, which made it easier to encourage people to comply with the park's rules:

*'I get to know people, some of the drinkers, the regulars. I find it easier that way to manage.'*

What attracted some people to use the space was this tolerance towards public drinking:

*'Because you can drink that is why a lot of people use the space [...] You see the same families arriving sort of from one time on with all the cans.'* (Police employee)

However, the policy of allowing alcohol to be consumed within the grounds of City Park proved more controversial with the police, particularly as it required the provision of additional resources to manage, which was 'taking resources away from other areas':

*'We've created a great attraction for the city centre, the events are brilliant, but drinking becomes a drain. Alright people can drink and if they're drinking in an anti-social manner we can take their drinks off of them but it's about preventing it before that happens [...] it would help if it was made into a non-drinking area.'* (Police employee)

Whilst in the main the approach was largely one of relaxed toleration, we encountered two occasions where park users had been escorted off of the premises for drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana. During one interview with an older man he explained he had come to the park that morning to have a drink whilst watching the golf on the big screen. He did not seem drunk and was happy to participate in a conversation, whilst keeping an eye on the state of play. He said, *I shouldn't be sitting here having a drink of beer' (Indian/White British Male, 46-55)* and explained that he was only having the one can of beer before going home to cook some lunch and read a book. He was upset that the public library had been closed, stating that he was an avid reader and did not like spending time in his flat recently as it had been found to contain asbestos. He recounted a previous occasion when he was drinking in the park. The drinker felt that he had been treated unfairly and disrespectfully by the police, reporting that a police officer *'stood on my cans of beer'* before escorting him off the premises. He felt that asking him to leave was *'perfectly in their right'* as *'you're not allowed to drink [anti-socially] in public places'*, but perceived the manner in which this occurred to be unfair. Some half an hour after the interview, he was observed being approached by the police who had asked him to leave the park.

On another occasion, we interviewed a teenage boy sitting on one of the grass areas in front of the businesses. He said he smoked 'weed' in the park, but expressed, *I know I shouldn't smoke in front of the kids' (British Pakistani Male, 16-25)*. He reported that he had been stopped by the police in the park and had his drugs confiscated and then been 'moved on'. He felt that this was a legitimate and justified response to his behaviour, as *'it's not a bad thing because there are kids about'*.

The above examples raise the issue of the importance of procedural fairness in managing interactions with the public, and the negotiation skills required by frontline personnel. Research on procedural justice suggests that the police can build or undermine their relationship with the public by the manner in which they exercise their authority and explain their actions when interacting with people in public (Tyler 2013).

#### *Young people*

Another example whereby the management of the park sought to foster 'ameliorative co-existence' was in relation to young people. Recent years have seen a growing problematisation of young people in public space and the subject of intrusive forms of policing (Crawford 2008; Bannister and Kearns 2013). In particular, it has been noted that some policing strategies do not draw a clear distinction between the *presence* of young people and their *behaviour* (Crawford and Lister 2007 p.x). Such methods of policing have been criticised for the messages they impart about young people's status and value in society as well as the consequence of 'criminalising youth sociability' (Crawford 2011 p.513). Senior managers within the local authority were sympathetic to these debates and desired City Park to be a place that was, within limits, tolerant towards all members of society, which included young people:

*I think the whole point of the City Park is that it is a place for everyone and young people are just as important as every other part of the population. I think it is very difficult for particularly 13-17 year olds that are pre-pub age. They want to be out somewhere socialising with their friends. They want to be out somewhere they feel safe. I think what we don't want to do is push them out of somewhere that has that level of supervision and safety and quality and put them somewhere dingy and unsupervised and make them feel unsafe so*

*it's how we accommodate them and encourage them.' (Senior manager, local authority)*

A routine concern of young people, raised by a range of research studies (see for example Barker 2014), is the manner in which they feel unfairly stopped, questioned and moved on while in public spaces. City Park provided a particularly interesting contrast to this experience. One young person contrasted what she described as the 'welcoming' nature of the park with the way she and other young people have been received in commercial places of the city:

*'It's good to chill in and you don't need to move on. If you are like in a shopping centre you have to move on and you can't sit there for too long because people are going to herd you and things like that.'* (White British, Female, 16-25)

Many young people expressed that the park offered them a place to linger, freedom sit around and 'hang out' with their friends. For example, a group of three teenagers we spoke to (who lived in cities across the Yorkshire and Humberside region) said that they used City Park as their 'meeting place'; to talk, 'hang out' and catch up. Prior to its development, they had met up around the city's Interchange Train Station and congregated on the streets. They contrasted the gloomy nature of their previous gatherings with now having a safe space to meet that was welcoming to young people and aesthetically pleasing to relax in. As one member of this group said, it is a *'good safe place for young people to come to'* (British White, Female, 16-25). Many young people expressed that they *'Feel welcomed as young people. Don't feel threatened.'* (White British, Male, 16-25)

However, it was recognised that there was a cohort of young people whose behaviour was less desirable and needed closer management. According to a police employee, a group of young people who had used the park for skateboarding had received warning letters, and had been given maps to indicate *'where they can skate and where they can't skate'*. More generally, a police employee talked about offering reminders of the rules and advising young people on their behaviour, rather than moving them on or escorting them from the park:

*'...a lot of it is intervening before its starts [...] walking around speaking to them [young people] letting and just let them know I hear the language, I know what they are doing, "just be careful", "don't do that". It's just constant, constant warnings.'*

One of the key findings from this study of City Park is that the approach to management, both in its vision at senior levels and in terms of the strategies used on the ground, which fosters tolerance of a diverse range of publics and their respective behaviours, contributes to what we observed as a genuinely unoppressive, inclusive and playful space in the city. Iris Marion Young (1990 p.241) defines the 'unoppressive city' as where 'the public are heterogeneous, plural, and playful, a place where people witness and appreciate diverse cultural expressions that they do not share and do not fully understand'. This research found that City Park has the potential to represent this.

## Chapter Five: Conclusions and Policy Implications

‘Dullah drove into what was left of [Bradford] city centre. For years now it had resembled a ghost town but recently, it was more like a building site. Dead and dying buildings, some over a century old, others, sixties experiments gone wrong only months after they were put up, some of the bigger stores having closed down or moved out years before. On every other corner, some joint that sold things, mostly useless and unnecessary things, for a pound. Worst of all, the place was empty of people, not like it used to be when I was a kid. Town had a buzz, a sense of importance, maybe even pride but as we drove through, barely a pulse registered. [...] For a long time, it seemed the council higher-ups were defeated, resigned to the centre’s death but the building sites, the new developments signalled some kind of hope, some kind of medicine.’ (Alam 2012 p.149)

The excerpt above comes from *Red Laal*, a novel based in the City of Bradford written by Yunis Alam during the period in which City Park was constructed. The quotation alludes to Bradford’s wealthy industrial prime during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, then to a later time when ‘town had a buzz’ and up to the recent past when ‘barely a pulse registered’ in the city centre. After a long period of decline, there are signs of a revival in Bradford. The City Park redevelopment led by the council shows investment and belief in the city’s future.

We undertook this research on City Park because we thought it offered something new, unique and exciting to Bradford. Before starting our fieldwork we were struck by: the size and attractiveness of the public space created; its popularity; the sense of fun brought to the city by the unique fountain displays and the children playing in the Mirror Pool; the relaxed and good natured sharing of space by different social groups; and the generally light touch approach taken to regulating the space. To explore some of these aspects of the park we: conducted numerous hours of observation in the park; spoke to a range of people visiting the park; and interviewed people involved with the development and daily management of the park, as well as

people working in the businesses based on the park.

This concluding chapter will review some of our key findings and draw out some of the implications from our research for local practitioners and policy-makers. We hope that our report will help promote a dialogue with the public and between agencies about living together in Bradford.

Chapter two showed us that while some people initially held doubts about the City Park development, these people generally changed their views after the park opened. Some of the concern was connected with previous setbacks and disappointments such as the Westfield shopping centre development and the cost of the project. People were also concerned that the park may not be properly maintained. In contrast to these initial concerns, numerous park visitors commented on how clean and well-maintained the space was. There was also a suggestion that the completion and success of City Park had given the city a renewed sense of confidence.

Many park visitors commented on the beauty and attractiveness of the park and the aesthetic contribution the development has made to the city centre. The site was also

popular with photographers, with many photos featuring on social media sites like Flickr and Facebook. Nonetheless, for some, the development of City Park highlighted the need for further improvements elsewhere; the old Odeon was a focus of comment as were other nearby derelict buildings. The success of the City Park project appeared to have raised aspirations and expectations for wider regeneration activities in the surrounding area and the park was viewed by some as a catalyst for further investment in the city.

The relaxed and welcoming atmosphere was regularly commented upon by various staff and park visitors. We saw how the space and its atmosphere varied according to the weather and changed during the course of the day – through changes in the visitors attracted, the use of the fountains and lights.

City Park has created a central hub for residents passing through the city centre. It is used in mundane everyday ways by locals as they walk or cycle to work, go shopping, meet friends, have lunch, or visit one of the nearby civic or cultural institutions. In addition, the park contains and hosts various ‘demand goods’ which attracted both residents and visitors from further afield. The simple fact that City Park offers people somewhere free and clean to sit down, relax and linger, was commented upon by numerous members of the public.

The space itself and its capacity to serve as a venue for various cultural events will form a key part of the council’s future strategy to redevelop Bradford as a creative city.

A range of indicators suggest that the park has had an economic impact via additional visitors and their spending whilst in Bradford. Some businesses seem to have

done particularly well out of the development. Some members of the public and staff were concerned about the lack of revenue making options within the park itself and a small minority thought the money could have been better spent elsewhere. An evaluation of the economic impact from the park, with the findings made available to the public, could be useful for enabling a dialogue with those who are unsure of its contribution or who have concerns economic investment in the city. The need for further economic development projects in Bradford was mentioned by several people even if they thought the park was a welcome addition to the city.

The council and members of the public were also clear that the park was a social investment and had generated benefits beyond any economic boost. For example, the achievement of creating an inclusive public space was commented upon, as was the notion that the delivery of this unique and very popular space had given Bradford confidence.

Chapter three built on the notion of City Park as an inclusive public space and explored the ways in which the council attempted to achieve this and the extent to which it was experienced as such by park users.

Senior managers within the council explained that the ‘ethos’ behind the park was that it should be physically accessible to many different people and also be a place of interest to a broad range of visitors. In helping design the space it was clear the council had tried to be mindful of the needs of differently abled people and the range of uses the park would be put to. With regard to developing an inclusive space we heard how events are planned to draw a wide

audience and ‘get communities together’. Based on our fieldwork it was clear that the park had been successful in drawing a very socially diverse crowd.

It was also clear that the senior managers and frontline workers we spoke to thought the opportunity City Park provided for socially diverse people to interact and share public space helped promote positive inter-cultural experiences. Indeed, we heard similar comments about the park promoting interaction and helping people to ‘get on’. In contrast to top down directive government interventions designed to promote ‘community cohesion’, City Park provides a much more open-ended space; one where limited and minimal forms of ‘rubbing along’ were permitted to emerge, but not forced or contrived. Given the benefits seen from this approach, this model potentially offers a broader lesson for public policy in this field.

This chapter also discussed children and young people’s presence in the park. The Mirror Pool was very popular with children and young people. City Park provides an increasingly rare opportunity for children and adults to share public space. Children are not cordoned off in a separate area, even though some adults thought the Mirror Pool was primarily an area for children. In addition, the park was popular with many teenagers and young adults, as a place to relax, meet friends and enjoy the atmosphere. While parents and children clearly appreciated the space, a few people thought that there was little to actually do beyond people watching as activities catered primarily for families.

Another key way in which City Park creates an inclusive space was through its provision of public resources and amenity. There was

a clear intention by the local authority to create a park which did not require visitors to pay to be there or use its facilities. Many local authority employees noted Bradford’s economic deprivation and commented upon the way visitors used the park as an inexpensive entertainment or a substitute for going to the seaside. In the context of the current age of austerity, the importance of vibrant and accessible public spaces becomes even more significant. In contrast with many recent urban developments which typically squeeze out those ‘flawed consumers’ (Bauman 2000) without the means to pay, the local authority has diverged from this path and created a public resource for Bradford and its residents.

Despite the park’s generally accessible and inclusive ethos, and the various measures taken to achieve this, some park visitors and behaviours raised concerns. We heard how the local authority attempts to strike a balance between the civic and ceremonial aspects of the park and its more ‘lively’ and interactive dimensions such as the Mirror Pool and fountains. Some people thought the Mirror Pool had a tendency to get ‘too rowdy’, while others raised concerns about semi-clad children and adults being inappropriate in an urban setting.

This chapter showed that the development of City Park had broadly been successful in creating an accessible site which attracts a very socially diverse crowd. Nonetheless, establishing a public space which aims to welcome all visitors in a city grappling with regeneration amidst a long period of industrial decline and socio-economic deprivation presents ongoing challenges.

Chapter four took a detailed look at the behaviour and regulation of City Park. At the outset it was noted that the local

authority wanted to limit the number of specific restrictions on people's behaviour and keep signs about park rules and the like to a minimum. Public notices in the park call upon visitors to use the park 'sensibly' and with 'respect for the rights of others', thereby encouraging forms of self-regulation.

In general, our interviews with park visitors revealed very few examples of occasions when it was felt the park was used inappropriately such that it would warrant some level of formal or informal intervention. Despite public drinking being cited as one of the least desirable behaviours in the park, only on very few occasions was this felt to cause a disturbance or infringe upon others using the space.

The vast majority of interviewees thought City Park was used appropriately by the broad range of park users. Frontline workers and senior managers also tended to share these positive impressions of behaviour in the park. However, views amongst those working in local businesses contrasted sharply, with some thinking it was used appropriately, while others noted problems with drinking and littering. A local business employee was concerned the park attracted a range of 'undesirable' people and risked becoming a 'doss house'. In this sense, the park as 'a great meeting place' did not always have positive overtones. It suggests the need for park managers to be aware of conflicting views of appropriate use, as this may impact, on the one hand, on future business investment and, on the other hand, on the inclusiveness of the space.

City Park employs a number of staff with responsibility for cleaning, maintenance and custodianship duties. The visibility of these staff and police, alongside park visitors,

helped cultivate natural surveillance and the sense that there are many eyes on the space. This guardianship and natural surveillance helped create feelings of safety. A potential consequence of these feelings of collective guardianship was a loosening of parental controls. The police told us that on busy days they regularly deal with missing children. The police desired a system for dealing with this issue, such as '*a big post for missing people in a few different languages*'.

In talking with the police and local authority employees it became apparent that while some systems for sharing information were in place, these could possibly be improved and augmented. The development of a forum to discuss park life and mechanisms that share forms of intelligence that do not require immediate action were desired by some interviewees.

In general, we found a liberal approach to managing behaviour in the park was deployed with enforcement restricted to acts believed to have a negative impact on other people's enjoyment of the park. This typically meant a range of behaviours were tolerated as long as they were not seen to bother others or infringe on their right to use the space. We explored the examples of public drinking and young people to demonstrate the ways in which the park tries to promote 'ameliorative co-existence', whereby the expectations and behaviours of both the 'perpetrator' and other users of the park are moderated so that both are accommodated. This approach has implications for training and skills development of workers in their interactions with the public, to ensure procedural fairness. A wider implication for public policy in relation to urban governance is that this study showed that an approach to managing public parks that fosters tolerance



and forms of ameliorative coexistence broadens the accessibility and inclusiveness of space. The approach to regulating behaviour in City Park aligns with the park's broader ethos of being accessible and welcoming to a socially diverse public. The approach to behaviour management fostered self-regulation and tolerance of others and helped create an open, inclusive and playful space.

This was a modest scale study of City Park and as such it has limitations. Future work could draw upon a larger sample and seek to specifically engage children under 16 years of age and park users with disabilities. Further research could also explore the park during the evening.

In conclusion our research indicates that City Park is highly valued by our sample of park users and provides a number of benefits and public resources for residents and visitors. These include a confidence boost for Bradford, aesthetic upgrading of the site, free and accessible amenities, attractions for visitors, and a performance space that contributes to enhancing the city's cultural and arts reputation. It is by no means a solution to the challenges faced by the city in recent years, but can be seen as one piece of the jigsaw and, potentially, a

catalyst for further investment in the city. The park also offers important lessons for public policy in the area of the management of diversity and inclusion. The capacity for 'rubbing along' and sharing space amidst social difference, and a liberal approach to regulation seems to be working and has helped to create a safe, playful and welcoming space for people to enjoy. This creation of an inclusive public resource has in part been enabled by the balancing of commercial interests with other priorities in the project's development. It remains to be seen how this will be managed in the long term and whether the pursuit of further investment in the city will emphasise commercial interests at the expense of the social objectives of the City Park project.

The park is still a young space, but we envisage that given the factors highlighted in this report there is potential for it to help change perceptions of the City of Bradford. As noted at the outset, parks are volatile spaces. There was every sense from our research that, in the words of Jacobs (1961 p.89), City Park has the potential to 'grow more beloved and valuable with the years'; providing there is sustained investment and engagement with the park as an inclusive playful space offering public resources for the City of Bradford and its residents.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Based on 2011 census results, see:

[http://www.bradford.gov.uk/bmdc/government\\_politics\\_and\\_public\\_administration/2011\\_census](http://www.bradford.gov.uk/bmdc/government_politics_and_public_administration/2011_census)

<sup>2</sup> 22 per cent of the population are under the age of 14 and 36.1 per cent of the population are from a minority ethnic background (Bradford MDC 2012)

<sup>3</sup> The original village of Bradford ('Broad Ford') was built across a stream that runs into the River Aire. Therefore the Mirror Pool re-introduces water as a visible and key feature in the city (Bradford MDC 2010)

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.visitleeds.co.uk/#>

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.visitbradford.com/inspiration/Bradford-City-Park.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> This study does not evaluate the economic success of the project. Whilst the chapter draws on some statistics provided by Bradford MDC to indicate some economic impacts, the chapter is primarily concerned with outlining the perceptions of our interviewees.

<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that while we observed people with disabilities and mobility issues using the park, we did not manage to interview anyone with such conditions.

<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that we did not interview young people not using City Park so our data may be biased towards positive responses.

<sup>9</sup> The site also contains a memorial to the 56 victims of the Bradford City stadium fire in 1985.

<sup>10</sup> A report of a Select Committee inquiry into town and country parks in 1998–9 noted the 'drastic reduction' in the number of park keepers. By 1996 only a third of public parks in England and Wales still had dedicated staff (see Lambert 2005).

