

## Who Designs Urban Thicket?

Namiko Y. MINAI

葉袋 奈美子

Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering,

Faculty of Engineering, University of Fukui

福井大学工学部建築建設工学科

[nminai@anc.anc-d.fukui-u.ac.jp](mailto:nminai@anc.anc-d.fukui-u.ac.jp)

abstract

Urban thicket is an important factor for both ecological impact and quality of life for people. Since it usually does not produce any economical profit, it is difficult to maintain and keep it in good condition. In urban fringe of Japan, there are many private thickets that have been abandoned for a long time, and now exposed to a risk of urban development. Most of green in urban fringe area are private farming area, and composed an important roll of traditional farmers' life, as well as providing rich mineral for farming field. Urbanization has sprawled out to these farming area quickly in a last few decades, and at the same time farming in Japan decreased its power. Rice fields were turned out as housing sites since early stage, but deep hill which consisted thickets and northern site of the hills were left undeveloped. Recently, not being able to find flat land any more and development of technology to build on steep hills cheaply, many thickets started to be developed. Some people and some local governments started to find schemes to protect these thickets facing to risk of development.

Now there comes a problem of "who designs the forest"? These forests are not original natural forest. Farmers took care to be suitable for farming village, and this kept various kinds of wild life. Planting and keeping specific trees such as Japanese Oak or other broad leaved trees, is very hard work. Some urban residents recently started to take over this work for farmers. Local governments or citizen groups have started to discuss with owner of private thicket to offer public access to the thicket. At the same time, those people started to show their interests to plan the future for these thickets. There are various kinds of planning thought for keeping thicket in good condition.

This paper introduces various type of planning and managing thickets in urban areas of Japan, and discuss the possibility of future scheme for designing new public thicket. It should be one of good chance to deeply discuss how public design should be controlled, when different ways of thought are involved for designing.

## **1. Introduction**

There are quite many activities to support reserving green in and out of cities of Japan. Many more people are interested in related with thicket or flowers to make town or forests more beautiful. These activities make participants satisfied because it is a good exercise in fresh air and it is a something good for public.

Green forest/ park is one of the most time consuming piece to finish. Most of the green / parks are never finished. Trees are usually too small to give shade for people, and cools down the town.;

In this paper, I would like to discuss how citizen's idea or opinion shall be reflected to the management of green parks in Japan. There are several studies to regarding participatory designing and management process

## **2. Designing and Management of Ikuta-ryokuchi park (生田緑地公園)**

### **2.1 Outline of Ikuta-Ryokuchi (生田緑地)**

Ikuta-Ryokuchi Park, located in suburban housing district of Tokyo, is a large park which official designated area counts to 176 ha, contains various facilities such as golf course, science museum, Japan Open-Air Folk House Museum, and so on. Former "Mukogaoka-Yuhen Amusement Park" was mostly located in this Ikuta-Ryokuchi Park. It is now closed down because of financial reasons, and the owner, Odakyu Electric Railway company decided to transfer part of property (rose garden) to Kawasaki city. (see fig 1)

### **2.2 Designing of Ikuta-Ryokuchi**

Ikuta-Ryokuchi is a one of a hilly green spot along Tama-river, which is a boarder of Tokyo and Kanagawa prefecture. The area used to be a farming area until the last few decades, but now is a very much densely populated area with many small for university students and condominiums for young generation families (see fig 2). It only takes 20minits by train to Shinjuku, which is one of the major commercial and official towns in Tokyo, there is a strong pressure for accommodating young generation.

Ikuta-Ryokuchi was officially preserved in 1968, when the modern planning law was enforced, but its history of being designated as a green spot goes back to 1941 as one of the spot of Tokyo Ryokuchi Keikaku (Tokyo Green Planning).

In 2004, Kawasaki city office announced to hold a committee for making schematic plan for the whole Ikuta-Ryokuchi. There was a former plan for the whole park designed in 1994. It is called "Ikuta-Ryokuchi Urban Resort Plan". It is only 10 years since this plan was made, economical environment and several issues are raised regarding this plan.

Some citizen say that we do not need to have golf course here, and some people say that its club house needed to be renewed. A part of Ikuta-Ryokuchi was used as an amusement park called Mukogaoka-Yuh'en.

Mukogaoka-Yuhen park was established in 1927 by railway company which ran from Shinjuku to this station. This amusement park was a established to bring people using the railway. There were formally rice fields on hills, but over a thousand trees were planted gradually, to make atmosphere of amusement park with green and flower. They had built facilities such as swimming pool, rose garden, railway museum and so on. This amusementpark was closed down in 2002. The hill was covered grown up trees and the cherry blossoms bloom very nicely in spring. Many people were very much disappointed with the closing down of this amusement park, as it was used in the 3 generations. There were even more people who worried that all the trees may be cut down, and housing development or some other big development might happen.

### **2.3. Schematic Plan (整備構想)**

Many citizens were interested in schematic planning process. Local government prepared a committee and tried to bring many people's opinion for the future Ikuta-Ryokuchi. There were many citizen groups that are acting there. Those people and other interested people gathered to the meeting and the schematic planning committee became something like workshop with over a hundred people attending.

It was a great mess. Each citizen, who are not very much familiar with this kind of meetings spoke out what they thought while there were also many people who could not express their opinion.

Participants gradually start to discuss amongst themselves, and exchange information and opinions. This network gave a good communication chance to each person who are related or interested into Ikuta-Ryokuchi Park. Before this, even there are many organization acting in the Park, each participant did not have chance to communicate to each other.

### **2.4 Improvement Plan (整備計画)**

In 2004 workshops for confirming design of the Ikuta-Ryokuchi park were hold. There were 8 meetings and participants could come to consensus to walking rout, water system, signs, and facilities including green. The plan also mentioned about the importance of citizen participation in management plan.

### **2.3 Maintenance plan (管理計画)**

In 2005 workshops for making maintenance plan was hold. Details for actual maintenance and improvements in the park are proposed. The contents are summerised

to protect, upgrade, and informing the park's attractive points. They also proposed to establish a management council for the park.

#### 2.4 Running the Management Council

In 2005, management council started its activities. It is still on the stage to search the management scheme suitable for the park. Various citizen organization acting in the park, and various sector of local government which are in charge sit together and started to discuss on the same table. Table 1 shows the variety of organizations and facilities in the Ikuta-Ryokuchi park.

Facilities	<p>Open air museum of traditional Japanese houses (educational section)          (日本民家園)</p> <p>Science museum for youth (educational section) (青少年科学館)</p> <p>Traditional Craft Art Center (伝統工芸館)</p> <p>Art museum of Taro Okamoto (岡本太郎美術館)</p> <p>Rose Garden (薔薇苑)</p> <p>Park management office of Northern Kawasaki (川崎市北部公園事務所)</p>
Citizen organizations	<p>Growing up thicket group (生田緑地の雑木林を育てる会)</p> <p>Protecting group of thicket valley and Buddha loach (生田緑地の谷戸とホトケドジョウを守る会)</p> <p>Protecting group of the nature of Tonmori-Valley(飛森谷戸の自然を守る会)</p> <p>Protecting group of field of fire fly(ホタルの里の畑を守る会)</p> <p>NPO Nature Survey Group of Kawasaki (特定非営利活動法人かわさき自然調査団)</p> <p>Study group of Ikuta Ryokuchi thicket(生田緑地雑木林勉強会)</p> <p>Fire Place Group (炉端の会)</p> <p>Protecting Green and Requesting for Recreational place in the Post Mukougaoka-Yuh'en amusement park</p> <p>Et al</p>

### **3. Brief overview of other thickets**

#### **3.1 Zama-Yatoyama Park (座間谷戸山公園)**

##### **1) Planning Process**

This is a greenery park. There are pond, information center, experience center of local thicket, and a library in this park. It is located in outskirts of Tokyo, middle of residential area. (see fig 5)

##### **2) Management**

Prefecture office is managing the park indirectly by using a foundation established by local government. Basic management and maintenance planning is controlled by this local office. However, there are 10 active resident groups using this park. The groups are Group of Nature findings, painting club, and so on. Rice field group is to cultivate rice field in the thicket.

There is a meeting held for all these groups. Leaders of each group get together and discuss some problems or future collaboration. This meeting is announced by the foundation of this park. The main management plan is made and implemented by the manage of this park, but voice of user is important information for management. Some organizations even support the management such as cutting grass of the thicket.

#### **3.2 Itouzu-no-Mori park (到津之森公園)**

##### **1) Planning Process**

This is one of a few parks that the local government decided to make a park in the closed down amusement park. The former amusement park was called Itozu-Yuh'en. It is located in the suburban hill of Kitakyushu-city, which is one of the biggest cities in Kyushu region. It was open in 1932 and closed in 2000. Railway company made this park to have more user of railway. There was a zoo in this amusement park and it was the only zoo in this city. Most children in Kitakyushu-city had visited this amusement park for picnic or for excursion of schools. The amusement park was well known for its summer school as well. Expression education was very actively done in this summer school. Over 2000 children were involved to this summer school every year. Therefore, this amusement park was one of the sweet memory for many Kitakyushu citizen.

At the same time, when this amusement park was built, the surrounding area were rice fields, but now it is surrounded by houses, except for the north of this park is a forest park of the prefecture. When closing of the amusement park was announced, a quarter

of citizen asked Kitakyushu city government to take over the site for public use.

Local government decided to have thicket park with zoo. Several professionals were called to discuss the future plan. Some citizen groups even proposed the renewal plan. Some ideas by the citizen were taken into the new park's planning, but basically the plan was made by the professionals.

The characteristics of the new park is a wide range of citizen volunteer activity. Many people said that they would like to support the new park if it is opened by the local government. The local government collected citizen who are interested in volunteering in the zoo and started education and workshops for preparing. It started 2 years before opening the park. People have learned and discussed what shall citizen do as a volunteer. They themselves decided what kind of volunteer they want to do, and started to manage by themselves.

Main management scheme is decided and conducted by local authority, but guiding tour, growing up forest, educating children, and so on. Citizen here manages "software" of the new park.

### **3.3 Karasugawa Keikoku Ryokuchi (烏川溪谷緑地)**

#### **1) Planning Process**

It is located in the green forest of Nagano prefecture. It is neighboring to a national park. Some people were not very happy about the plan of this national park, because it was not very effectively using trees. Local government held a workshop for designing this green. It is a very large in area (63ha), and there is a river running, located in a valley.

The basic idea was to keep as forestry place, and also prepare space for people to play. This citizen group was not dismissed. They created a voluntary work organization.

#### **2) Management**

The management is basically done by local government office. Most of the parks in the Nagano prefecture were transferred management of parks to designated managing organization, but they decided to take care of this park directly, because citizen are involved.

It is pity that the citizen group is not "very" active, because most participant citizen have jobs and live, not very close to the forest. Major direction of management was basically made by local government, but they have a good contact with citizen group.

### **3.4 Nagaike Koh'en (長池公園)**

#### 1) Planning Process

This is located in one of the biggest new town, called Tama-New Town. It has a very clean and quiet pond with thicket around it. This is planned and made by public sector. But it is now shifted to managing NPO. This NPO is one of the active NPO in Tama-Newtown. This NPO is managing various projects in the New Town. There are several organizations for this group, but today is to focus on amangeme grop

#### 2) Management of the park

Management of the park is basically conducted by the NPO including the partner gardening company. NPO collects information of the user, but the total coordination is proposed by the NPO. They say it is necessary to have one concrete scheme for the planning.

### **2) Management**

Management is also done by the NPO. NPO carefully listens to other people' activity. Basic professional ideas are managed by a professional gardening company which is a partner of the NPO.

### **3.5 Maioka Park (舞岡公園)**

#### **1) Planning**

Maioka Park is a 28.5 ha park located in the suburban area of Yokohama City. It is also a hilly park. About a third is planned and managed by a citizen organization. The rest are managed by local government. It originally was planned to be a park with city park, but some people realized that some of the non used rice field should be used to keep the nature environment. They started to re-cultivate rice field just out side of Maioka Park site. It needed a greate effort to re-cultivate, but they could find supporters gradually and sceeded in recultivating. Local government decided to let this citizen group take care of whole a shallow valley. They now produced many rice fields, and on every weekend, there come many people to take part in the work of rice field, or to participate to activities held by this citizen group.

#### **2) management**

Citizen group takes care of rice field, and the surrounding thicket. They decided which trees to be cut down when, how shall we grow rice better, what kind of activity shall be good to have. Active members of the group do this discussion. They also have a school to educate about rice field and related activities. They can gain members who have similar way of thought towards the thicket and rice field. Local government taking cares

basically only facilities and there is no detail planning of trees or thicket.

### **3.6 Den'enchofu-Seseragi Park (田園調布せせらぎ公園)**

#### **1) Planning**

This park is a part of former amusement park called Tamagawaen in Tokyo. It first turned to be a tennis club, but it was closed down after a while. Tamagawaen also has a long history since 1925. It grow many trees to give good atmosphere, and tennis club has also kept most of the green. This made the citizen of the area move. When the tennis club decided to close down, citizen started to push local government to buy it. It is now trying to open the area. Local government collected citizen's opinion and reflected to the planning and management of the green.

#### **2) management**

Local government take care of the park. There are 4 groups now that are registered to use the park in their activities. Junior Soccer Club is taking care of the multi purpose field. Other groups also take care of according to their interest.

## **4. Park planning and Management**

### **4.1 Planner of the Park**

Planning of the park may not be appropriate word to use. All the parks studied here already had many trees and natural items. Some even had flat lands for some activities. Local government has decided major policy of the park in most cases. All the parks had somehow brought in citizen's opinion, but the final decision was made by the local government.

Maioka park is one of the exceptions. The valley part is totally decided by the citizen's group. This reliance is based on their achievement until then. Local government staff is very much trusting citizen's groups decision.

Another exception is Ikutaryokuchi. It tried to draw a schematic plan by citizens' workshops. There are many groups active in the Ikutaryokuchi, and members from this group joined together in this meeting. Since there is no one strong policy or common way of thought, the discussion could not be efficient. I would like to here say that green is rather difficult to decide with newly encountered people.

### **4.2 management of the park**

Management is another difficult issue. Seseragi Park, Ikuta-Ryokuchi park, and Zama-Yatoyama park have voluntary groups of taking care. Ikuta-Ryokuchi has many



different groups to take care of the green or nature. “Green Management Conference” take care of the condition of the green with local government.

Karasgawa-Keikoku park and Itozuno-mori Park have prepared one voluntary organization and any voluntary people can be a member. In this type of organization, the group activities are deeply related to the management of the park by the public sector.

For Nagaike Park and valley part of Maioka Park, there are citizen group that is designated to take care of the place. In this kind of groups, clear policy can be prepared to take care of the park. Both organization are very much aware of ordinary citizen’s opinion who come to use the park, but basic way of thought is clearly designed by the organization.

When different organizations are acting in one park, there are more discussions how to manage the park, and it sometimes is very difficult to make consensus. We may call this as “discussion type” of management. On the other hand, if there is an designated organization to take care of the park, citizen who want to take part of management there, need to “learn” from the organization. We may call this kind of management as “educating type” of management.

## **5. Conclusion**

Parks with thickets are very nice place to have in the cities, but because it takes long time to bring up and need much effort to keep it comfortable. In Japan, there is either network type of citizen organizations can not be effectively, or one strong policy organization take care of the area. Can we not have system to be able to discuss with many citizens and citizen groups? I would see and try to search the possibility of more people to be involved for planning and management. This experience shall help to make master plan or other large scale planning with various people to be involved.

Den'en-chofu Seseragi Park (3.1ha) is also a converted park from a former amusement park. It first was converted to a tennis club, but now two thirds of the space is open for public and rest is used privately by religious association. It is green rich recreational area which utilizes the cliff line near Tama river.

. Itozuno-Moari Park was an amusement park, but now converted to a zoological park. It is located in the suburban area of the Kitakyushu city, neighboring to a natural

forestry prefecture park.

These three sites were amusement parks. They all existed over 60 years and they all had something but not an amusement attraction. Itozu-no-Mori had a zoo which used to be an only zoo in that region for a while. Some of animals were even donated by effort of voluntary association. Elephants were donated by effort of Junior Chamber, while Japanese government had no diplomatic relations. They also had a summer schools for children, emphasizing on mental education. These activities provide a deep affectionate for citizens. This kind of affection to the park is an effort of citizens for

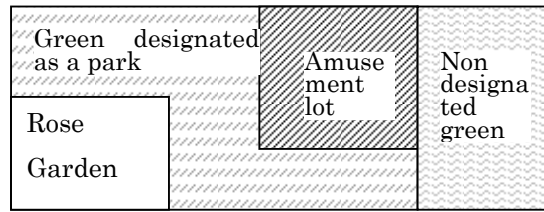


Fig 1 image of Mukogaoka-Yu'en property

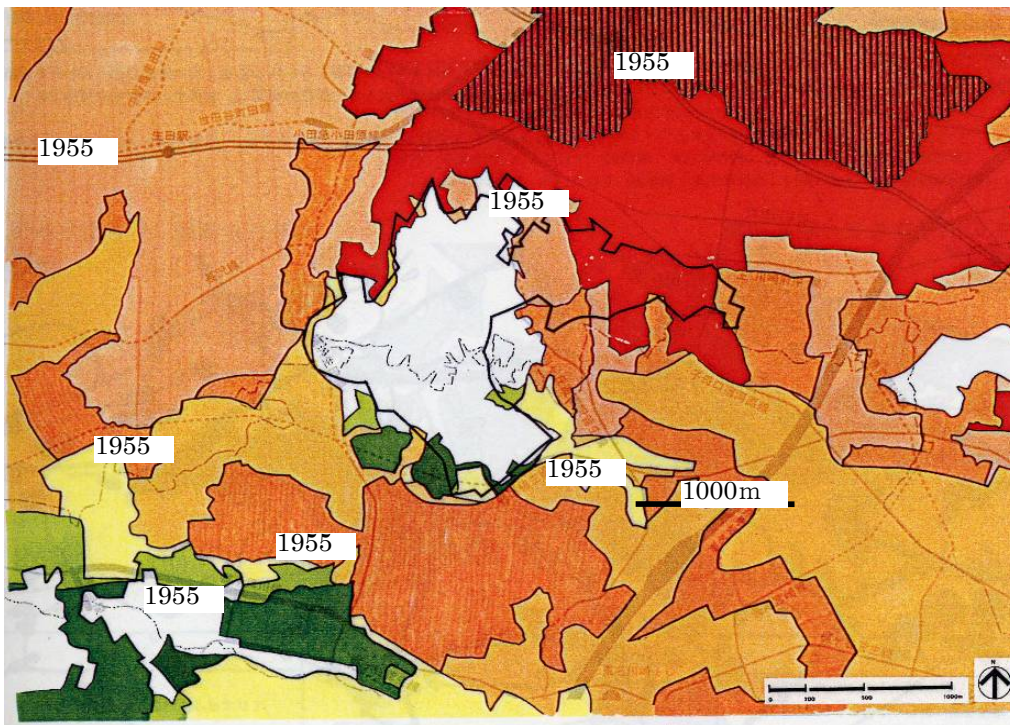


Fig 2 DID area in chronology

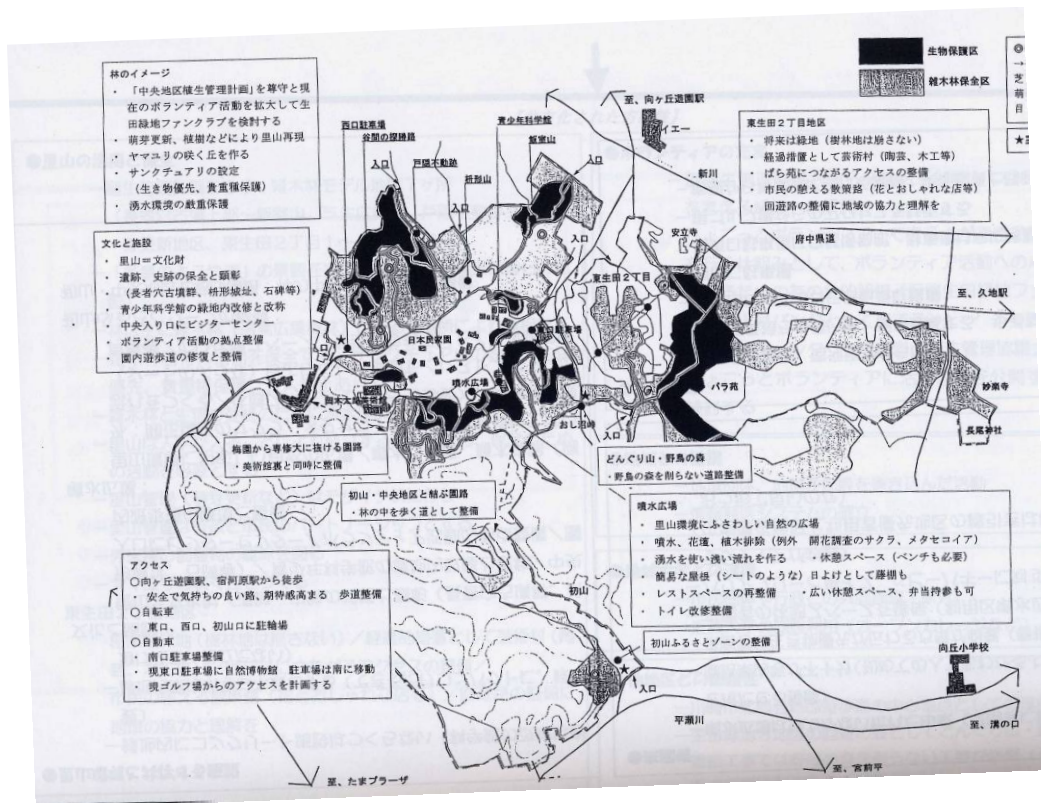


fig 3 Outcome of the workshop

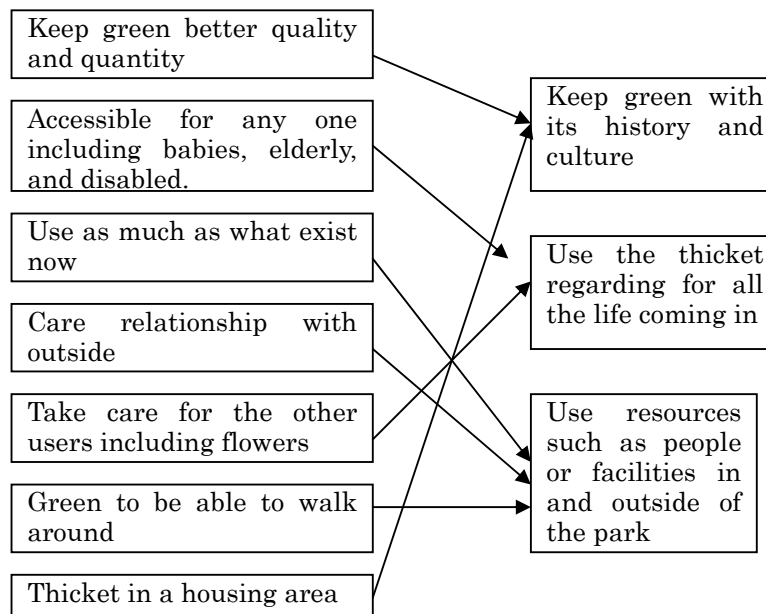


Fig 4 summary of basic ideas for Ikuta-Ryokuchi Park

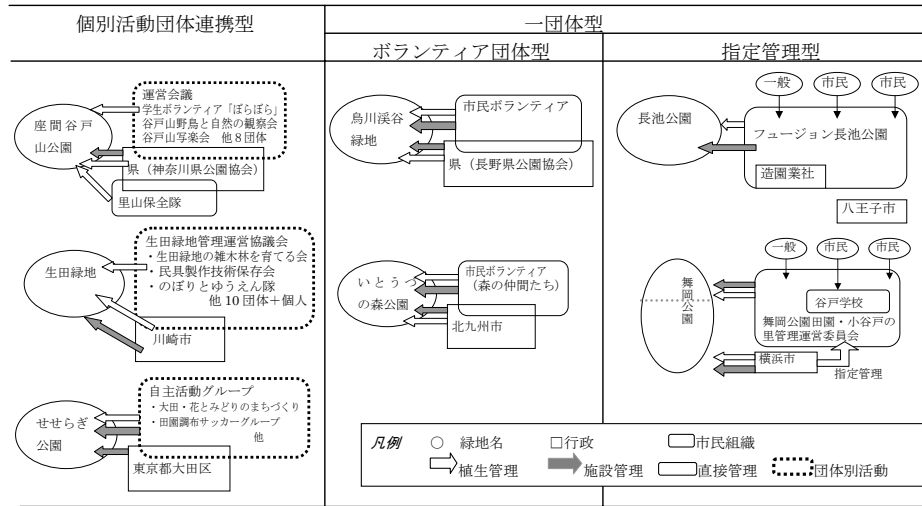


Fig 5 Management sector of studied parks