

Short introduction to Leipzig's Pilot Project: the former army firing range

Location

The former army firing range, part of the "Green Bow Paunsdorf", is a pilot project of the European scientific project GreenKeys 2005-2008. The "Green Bow Paunsdorf" is part of Leipzig's largest current outdoor development and a key project of the Green Circle System Leipzig located in the north-east of the city. The whole project covers a landscaped area of 120 ha adjoining the edge of prefabricated housing slabs "Heiterblick" in Leipzig-Paunsdorf.

The residential area is characterized by high density, missing leisure facilities and recreation opportunities for the citizens. There are no foot paths for visitors across the landscape and for the connection to the hinterland and also insufficient amount and quality of green spaces.

The open space system is situated between former barracks and an army firing range, on the edge of prefabricated housing estates, which were built in the 1980s for about 20,000 residents. The borders in the east/south are settlements (terraced houses built in the 90ies) and the urban woodland "Paunsdorfer Cypse".

It is anticipated that the planning concept will be attractive for use by the local residents and also contribute to the improvement of existing green spaces. Former army districts, fallow land and the "Paunsdorfer Cypse" will be incorporated into a new park ring to form a contemporary landscaped garden. The conceptual design framework for the park ring is focused on a 'parkway promenade'. This will form the basic structure for the green belt around the residential area. According to the planning concept a landscape park with a lake, sports park and several playing facilities will gradually evolve alongside new features associated with urban nature protection. Both objectives will be achieved by combining landscape architecture and innovative nature protection ideas: "nature protection through utilisation". The implementation of the overall project will occur gradually with completion expected by 2011.

Development goals

On one hand, the area of the Green Bow is to become a recreational area for the residents of the neighbouring housing estates, but the space is also to be a protected living space for animals, some of which are threatened with extinction. The two requirements were unified by means of landscape architecture and innovative natural protection planning to form a model solution. This in turn has been augmented by a scientific pasture concept for extensive nature development, especially for the former army firing range, worked out by poserplan. This aim and slogan stands for the complex and innovative landscape development around the corner of prefabricated housing slabs in combination with exemplary strategies for nature protection and alternative maintenance concepts. Therefore the pilot project is an example for rehabilitation of Derelict Land into Green Spaces.

The site has lain fallow for some years before the planning process started. Therefore valuable biotopes have developed but also became damaged. Rare species disappeared, suppressed by growing shrubs.

Within the public participation process for the overall project of the Green Bow also a consultation concerning the former military area started from the beginning in 2002. The view and interests of the key-stakeholders (local housing companies, local citizens organisation, NGOs for nature conservation, citizens, farmers and offices of the municipality) which are directly affected from the project were actively involved in the planning and development process through public workshops, meetings and periodical public information (leaflets, papers, newsletters e.g.).

In 2004 an extensive pasture system was developed. In order to reduce new shrubs and to save the rare biotop complexe the City of Leipzig authorities initiated the extensive pasture project with heck cattle and wild horses. The development of the area took place when adjoining parts of the parkway promenade, e. g. the terrace at the Citizens Park was build. This ensured the year round availability of the existing mosaic of open habitats, shrubs and intermittent wet zones in the unique 35 ha (approx) ecological complex. The ecological goal was to keep mesic grasslands and to support rare species. The NABU, a national initiative for nature protection, contributes to the project. A circular pathway have been build to be able to experience the biotop, the horses and cattle.

Current Situation

Several old buildings e. g. garages, barracks and guard towers had been demolished, former waste dumping had to be checked. In 2004 robust cattle and horse species entered the site. Primigenius, a non-profit enterprise takes care for the animals.

For the protection of the animals a paddock fence (length 2 km) was build. To protect the area against uncontrolled use the idea of a circle path with bridges, signs and view points was born, planned and build in 2006. The path way around the entire pasture site was built as a construction of wood and steel, with lillte bridges and catwalks in sensitive areas to protect the fauna.

A new concept-mixture for experiencing nature is tested here the attempt to combine nature preservation with witnessing as an adventure. An extensive green space management system shall ensure the sustainable management of the area and to reduce municipal maintenance costs as well. In 2006 a monitoring started of the extensive pasture concept.

Additionally, the animals have, in a way, provided a sustainable emphasis for the former military area – a nature experience around the corner. Passing the circular path varied views were offered, the animals and rare species can be sighted. Heck cattle and Przewalski horses are attractive and confiding animals. They increase the experience of the Green Bow Paunsdorf and of Leipzig North East region. Since 2006 several young animals have been born, each of it got a name – examples of good parenthood. Some guided tours have been organised until now, the people are interested in all details of nature protection at site.

Additionally adjoining brown and agricultural land will be pastured by sheep since 2006, considering different goals of nature protection and development.

Contact partners are the Parks and Recreation Office Leipzig and the Local Citizens Organisation of district Paunsdorf.

Internationally, it is anticipated that the project will be valued as an example of good practice. The participation process with the residents and the maintenance concepts have been recognised as being exemplary processes. The scientific project will be documented on site on an information panel: www.greenkeys-project.net.