

A project celebrates its 25th birthday

The Landscape Programme including Nature Conservation for the City of Berlin

by Ingrid Cloos

B“Berlin: A limited habitat” is how the first brochure introduced the Landscape Programme including Nature Conservation (Landscape Programme) for West Berlin in 1984. How very true, when we think back to a time when the Berlin Wall was still standing. Once it had fallen, Berlin was considered a metropolis with unlimited potential for growth. But 15 years later the reality is very different. Investors and town planners are still asking the same questions as then: Why do we

need nature in the city? What is the point of landscape planning? What can landscape planning contribute to a city? Landscape planning addresses basic questions related to town planning such as how much urban density the inhabitants can tolerate, what opportunities for recreation should be provided, how to support the development of a wide range of flora and fauna in the city, or how to influence the ecosystem favourably in the long term. Town planners are currently preoccupied

with the continuing migration to the suburbs of certain classes of society fleeing from the city. The issue here is not the speed at which urban diversity is increasing, but the “perforated” or “interim” city.

One of the tasks of landscape planning is the general conservation and development of nature and landscape as required to preserve our environment. Despite numerous changes and many a disruption, a broad section of society considers that we should not live at the

Landscape in the city
Photos: Michael Kirsten





Gleisdreieck with Potsdamer Platz
in the background



“Green schools are good schools”
Senate Department for Labour and
Women’s Issues

expense of future generations. Catchwords and slogans such as “sustainability”, “the preservation of biodiversity” and “genius loci” determine the agenda.

Just how has landscape planning developed in Berlin since the Landscape Programme was first introduced? What was innovative then? What was unusual? What has proved its worth and what does the future need? This article attempts to answer these questions.

How it all began

25 years ago the Berlin Nature Conservation Act required that the first ever Landscape Programme including Nature Conservation (Landscape Programme) be drawn up within only a few years for what was then West Berlin. This marks a point in time at which almost all of the political parties discovered an affinity with nature conservation, environmental protection and even landscape planning, making these topics the subject of their electoral campaigns. At a technical level, a great amount of effort was put into collecting the basic information needed for an inventory of nature and the landscape, and into drawing up first suitable evaluation methods and procedures. The recruitment of additional administrative staff in 1985 speeded the process up considerably and made the Programme what it is today. The main objective of Article 1 of the Federal Nature Conservation Law is to conserve, manage and develop the efficiency of the ecosystem, the availability of the natural resources for human use, the fauna and flora and the diversity, characteristic features and beauty of nature and landscapes.

The four subjects focussed on in the Landscape Programme were based on these objectives. In 1988, the first ever development goals and measures were specified for the

whole city. Grouped according to subject, they form the basis of the programme plans:

- The ecosystem and environmental protection
- The protection of biotopes and species
- The characteristic landscape and
- Recreation and the use of open space

These were drawn from a non-analytical consideration and evaluation of all of the environmentally relevant base data and additional surveys together with data from the Berlin Environmental Atlas.

Exhaustive discussions and sometimes even heated arguments resulted from the Land Use Plan, a revision of which was drawn up simultaneously and passed by the Berlin Senate in 1984. Arguments became particularly acrimonious regarding the use of particular plots of land and the relationship between the two plans, as these aimed to settle the contradictions between town planning and independent landscape planning in Berlin and to find a development consensus. In 1986 300,000 objections were registered to the Land Use Plan and 5,400 to the Landscape Programme in a public consultation with the title “Berlin hat Pläne (*Berlin has plans*)”. A demonstration of 20,000 allotment holders was even held against the use of allotment areas in front of Schöneberg Town Hall, which was then the seat of the government. The Landscape Programme passed in 1988 was carried by a wave of approbation which was still apparent when a second public consultation was held on the Landscape Programme for the whole city after the *Wende* (fall of the Berlin Wall) and the reunification of the two halves of the city. Ultimately, the development of Berlin in conjunction with a programme for nature and the landscape was discussed at a political level. After the *Wende* the Landscape Programme and Land Use Plan were drawn up quickly in a simultaneous process. The positions and

arguments had altered considerably: “What’s the point of landscape in Berlin? there’s plenty of that in Brandenburg!”, or “Why don’t you move to Majorca then?” were just two of the often repeated phrases.

With a booming metropolis expected, landscape planning was confronted by a potential growth in the population of up to 300,000 in the city and up to 1.5 million in the region, and 550 hectares of new building land for commercial businesses, offices and retail. A speedy decision was made to abolish allotment areas in central locations – a topic which had been hotly contested beforehand – as a means of securing in return agreement at least to the free space system and to the climatically important mitigation areas and recreation areas on the city’s outskirts. The speed at which progress was made becomes clear when we consider that the government bodies were involved and the public invited to give comment in 1993 and the resolution passed in 1994. As public discussion has always been considered highly important for landscape planning, information on the Landscape Programme was published on the Internet for the first time in March 1998. The information is aimed at both the interested layman and the professional public, and is updated on a regular basis. With the information available in English, French, Russian and Spanish, queries are received from all over the world. The site registers up to 70,000 hits each month.



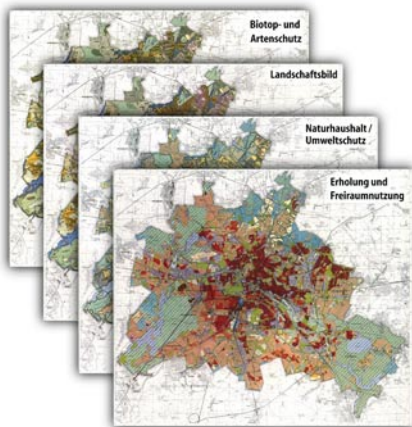
Mitigation measures included the re-opening and landscaping of sealed surfaces
Senate Department of Urban Development



Plants for courtyards in Bismarckstraße
Senate Department of Urban Development

Interaction with preparatory town planning

The Landscape Programme complements preparatory town planning and as such sets the qualitative goals for and demands of urban planning. The two plans, which are an important basis for future urban development, do not contradict one another, as they have a common



The four programme plans
Relations between the two plans
– changes of use are shown in the
Landscape Programme
(outlined in black)

root. However, the Landscape Programme focuses on a discussion of conflicts of use resulting for example from new infrastructure locations and plans for further building land for residential use and industry, commerce and services. These areas are shown as having “a change of use in accordance with the Land Use Plan”. Planned new sections of motorway were deliberately not included in the Landscape Programme. The Programme concentrates on existing natural features and the landscape and evaluates and determines development objectives and the appropriate measures or packages of measures required for their improvement. This demonstrates, if you so wish – and are prepared to use the word – the “sustainability” of landscape planning. The way information is presented in the Landscape Programme is successful from a planning point of view, as urban planning guidelines, which are completely dependent on the planning process, have proven to be not so much sustainable as adaptable at short notice. It is thanks to the simultaneous formulation of the two plans that Berlin is one of the few Länder whose town planning performs well in a national comparison, as the Landscape Programme makes the objectives of landscape planning (as set out in Article 1 of the Federal Nature Conservation Act) more manageable and easier to implement. This was confirmed by a representative survey carried out by the Technische Universität Berlin on behalf of the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation and presented in March 1998. The survey confirms that the interests of nature conservation and landscape planning find their way into the planning process when well-researched information is available. The Landscape Programme, which evaluates the current situation and defines development objectives and methods, and the Land Use Plan, which

specifies the type and extent of usage, together form the basis for urban development.

Together, the environment of the times and political support made it possible to draw up an extremely differentiated and significant programme. The subject of environmental protection was high on the list of public priorities, and landscape planning offered what could be considered a comprehensive overview of the natural resources, characteristic landscapes, recreation and the protection of the biotope and species. Until then there had been no suitable instrument to enable the implementation of such interrelated thinking, which was anyway very limited in the individual departments. Further development has only taken place over the last few years, one example being the EU Water Framework Directive.

The Landscape Programme has gained in importance as time passes: It is becoming more and more matter-of-course for town planning to take the Programme into account, and it is frequently commented upon and used as a basis for decisions.

Changes to political urban objectives where preparatory town planning is concerned affect around three quarters of the Landscape Programme. It became necessary to make an alteration to the Berlin Nature Conservation Act to ensure that specifications were not included in the Landscape Programme quasi after the fact, i.e. based on what had actually been ordered by the town planners. The process has now been simplified so that in future only independent changes caused by the interests of nature conservation and landscape planning will be subject to a complete revision process; if preparatory town planning has already taken the Landscape Programme into account when revising specifications, the simplified amendment process may be used.



The Wuhle River valley – part of the green system, and a focal point of future mitigation measures

Combined swale/
French drainage system

Replacement measures
by the Berlin-Spandauer
Schiffahrtskanal

Implementation of Objectives

The Landscape Programme has made it possible to take urban development plans, development areas, regional planning, the plans of the neighbouring Brandenburg and its municipalities, competitions, individual projects and the development of overall approaches into account at all levels of town planning. Because of its binding character for the authorities, responsibility for implementation of the Landscape Programme lies with all public sectors and authorities of the city of Berlin, ranging from the actual initiation and design of the project through to its implementation. Direct implementation is based on the nature conservation instruments: the binding landscape plans, the fulfilment of the Impact Regulation, landscape planning concepts, the Protected Zone Order, programmes for

the support of individual species, nature conservation authorisations etc. The Landscape Programme has achieved its most concrete level of implementation in projects such as the *Plants for Courtyards* programme, or the *Green Schools are Good Schools* project.

The development plan

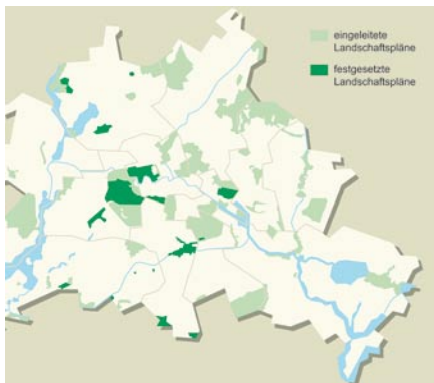
The options available for specifying landscape planning content in development plans continues to be a permanent subject for discussion. A total of 19 fundamental textual stipulations has been drawn up, ranging from areas which require landscaping through those which must be planted with trees and shrubs in accordance with the character of a particular location or with greenery for walls and

roofs to the prohibition of surfacing for roads and accesses which reduces water and air permeability. Discussions with colleagues from the town planning department have brought both new classifications (e.g. for mitigation and replacement measures) and a better mutual understanding of the various applicable laws.

Environmental Impact Assessment / Landscape Conservation Support Plan

The official planning procedures are of particular importance for technical contributions to other plans which are taken from the Landscape Programme. This provides information on the current status of nature and the landscape anywhere in the city, together with an evaluation and the development

objectives. If nature or the landscape are encroached upon, the four programme plans can be used to assess the mitigation measures needed on that plot of land or the replacement measures necessary elsewhere. Even before the Federal Nature Conservation Act was amended the Landscape Programme provided information on measures suitable to improve the environmental situation anywhere in the city to anyone involved in the process, whether surveyor or a member of the relevant authorities. The addendum to the Landscape Programme introduced the Overall Urban Mitigation Plan, establishing new priorities in the city.



Areas with Landscape Plans

The Landscape Plan

The Landscape Plan is the level at which the Landscape Programme is implemented. Its formal independence and binding nature as a statutory instrument gives the Landscape Plan the necessary weight at a political, administrative and public level. The planning level is equivalent to that of the development plans, unlike in most of the Länder (except the “city states”), where landscape plans are drawn up for whole municipalities at the level of the Land Use Plan. Landscape Plans are now in existence for around 16% of Berlin’s urban area.

In practice, decisions in respect of building permits or the use of land, for example, must be reconciled with the relevant Landscape Plan on a daily basis, as the regulations set out in a Landscape Plan are not allowed to contradict

the mandatory decisions of town planning.

Here, too, the necessity and success of landscape planning can be seen.

One instrument developed for inner-city structures is the “Biotope Area Factor” (BAF), which is defined in the BAF Landscape Plan. A “green factor” was formulated for inner-city districts by a large number of specialists, setting out the necessary proportion of areas effective for nature based on the layout of the buildings. The objective is to achieve the BAF no matter what changes are made to building land so as to strengthen ecosystem functions. In real terms this means planting greenery for facades and/or on roofs, and re-opening the surfaces in courtyards for the creation of green areas and to allow rain water seepage. The BAF Landscape Plan sets new standards for sustainable, green urban development and

- is generally put into practice on the basis of building permits,
- is simple to calculate and currently serves as a model for 21 BAF landscape plans, and
- is accepted by many architects and builders, and has become common practice.

Since its inception, information on this method has even been requested from abroad, from countries such as Canada, Italy, Denmark, Finland and Puerto Rico, where it has been adopted unchanged or modified for use.

Information on the Biotope Area Factor is also available on the Internet, with worked examples in English and French.

The Sealed Surface Mitigation Ordinance (BVA-VO)

This building law compromise of 1993 (cf. *Stadt und Grün*, 1/1999) was applied over a one-and-a-half year period and was only a short episode in the history of Berlin. The object of the Ordinance was the implementation of measures to counterbalance the surfacing of land. These include

- semi-natural landscaping or the re-opening of surfaces which did not necessarily need to be sealed,
 - greenery on at least half of the walls and roofs,
 - ensuring the seepage of at least half of the rain water,
- or to accept alternative measures.

The success of the BVA-VO lay in a direct approach to investors, builders and architect, who were apprised of the results of internal

discussions and given advice on the best way of incorporating mitigation measures. If they were unable or unwilling to carry out these measures they were liable to pay a fine.¹⁾ The funds thus generated were spent by the districts on other measures in public areas. Although this Ordinance was only effective for a short time, the technical consensus reached means that the values and principles determined then are still referenced today for smaller or simple cases. The legal basis for the BVA-VO ceased to apply when the Federal Building Code was amended on 1st January 1998.

New Priorities

In view of the city’s financial crisis, urban planning in Berlin could also be threatened. Urban expansion is currently not an issue, and there are no public funds available for building. Although urban development is the main sufferer, landscape planning is also affected. That landscape planning is the way to low-priced solutions, particularly at times of household deficits, is something which still needs to be made clear. Other cities have already made headway here, as can be seen in the example of the conferences on negative city growth in Cottbus, Halle, Leipzig or Dresden. Despite a considerable increase in the number of open spaces (the demolition of 49 nurseries and schools in just one district), Berlin has not yet addressed the subject from a conceptual point of view. It would seem that the addition of further green spaces to a district is unwelcome, as the need to economise curbs investment in expensive areas. In the past it was exactly these small or even minute areas which were allocated to the departments for nature conservation and green spaces, incompatible as they are to planning in a well thought-out open space system. But these left-over slivers of land are a burden, as follow-on and maintenance costs are far too high. Surely the way forward is to concentrate on a coherent green space system with large areas which can be used in a variety of ways, and incorporating crucial key plots. It is important that the allocation of funding for the care and maintenance of Berlin’s parks be re-assessed to ensure that their importance for the whole city is understood. At the same time, not only the more confined technical criteria should be taken into consideration for 80% of the parks, but also socio-spatial development tendencies.



Platz der Republik: A prestigious green square in the government quarter

Landscape planning and its methods is needed for the development of green and open space and must identify solutions for the future.

In its Urban Development Concept 2020 Berlin identifies three priorities from the landscape and open space planning segment as follows:

- The Mitigation Plan,
- The closing of gaps in Berlin's 20 major green routes, linked together by a network of biotopes and
- Strategies for interim "green" use.

These should be discussed at a political level, which will increase their importance. It remains to be seen whether this will result in changes in green policies, but it is already clear that landscape planning must become flexible, sustainable, and in part more project orientated if it is to keep pace with current challenges.

The directives of the EU must be dealt with, including demands made by the Water Framework Directive or the introduction of the Strategic Environmental Assessment. First successes have already been achieved by the Water Framework Directive, with a contribution to the water department which lists habitats dependent on groundwater and elucidates the threats they are subjected to.

Since the introduction of the EU Directive 2001/42/EU on Strategic Environmental Assessment the question has arisen as to how far a modernisation of the Berlin Landscape

Programme might not be necessary in respect of cultural and tangible assets, the protection of humans, including health, or synergies and interaction between the protected assets so as to put the other technical plans and decision processes on an even more comprehensive basis. One thing everyone agrees is that landscape planning already fulfils a large number of the components required both by the Strategic Environmental Assessment and by the documentation thereof in the Environmental Report. Having said that, it will continue to be unable to forecast environmental impact, including interaction or cumulative impact and the resulting conflicts. For this, planners are needed who can draw and process the relevant conclusions.

The questions are many, but one thing is certain: landscape planning and its interdisciplinary approach can react sooner to new demands than specialised sector planning can.

A fundamental objective of landscape planning in Berlin and the Landscape Programme continues to be to find fair planning solutions which, without losing a feel for the city as a whole, integrate the plot into its local surroundings and make the most of the limited space available in the city, and thus avoid retrospective environmental repair, which only ever successful to a limited extent

and is associated with considerable costs. The dissipation of valuable open space does not solve economic problems. All it does in the limited habitat of the city is to stop the construction of intelligent, forward-looking buildings and prevent the short-term safeguarding of resources needed on a daily basis.

Note

¹⁾ The fine was calculated on a simple basis: In projects for areas larger than 30sqm it amounted to DM 25 (Euro 12.78) per square metre of newly sealed surfaces, and for every square metre of vegetation destruction over 200m² to DM 50 (Euro 25.56) plus a further DM 25 (Euro 12.78) for the destruction of ecologically valuable biotopes (independent of the quality, as biotopes are protected under the Berlin Nature Conservation Act).

Source:
Stadt+Grün, 10/2004