

Nature-Based Activities on Urban – Green Requirements of Nature-Based Activities in an Urban Environment

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Introduction

The exertion of nature-based activities is no longer related to rural or suburban spaces. Especially nature-based sport plays a major part in daily recreation and is requested within the communities. As an effect of growing demand for semi-natural areas in cities, a higher pressure on nature and conflicts between different user-groups has been recognized. These conflicts are a result of lack of practicable planning-guidelines for nature-based sport in an urban environment. In particular, sport-development-planning, the traditional instrument for planning activity-spaces, has fewer concepts to integrate urban green into their work. Planners have concentrated on building and managing facilities over the last 50 years and were not able to deal with nature-based activities.

Methods

Until the late 1980s the Golden Plan was the main tool for planning sport facilities. The aim was a homogeneous supply of sport facilities on the basis of strict parameters as e. g. sport area in m² per capita. As a consequence, there is a stock of 170.000 facilities in Germany which are greatly subsidized up to a degree that is no longer acceptable. In that consequence it was necessary to change planning strategy. It switched from an area-wide supply of facilities to a demand-driven strategy. The result was two main concepts for planning sport facilities: “The Guideline for Sport-Facility-Management” (BISP 2000) and “The Integrated Planning” (Rütten, Schröder & Ziemainz 2003). Both strategies start with a sur-

vey to identify the sport behaviour of the local population. Afterwards it is possible to calculate the needed facilities with a statistical procedure by using “The Guideline”. “The Integrated Planning” analyses the results of the survey in a “round-table-discussion” with all participants of the sport system. Then the participants work out a sport-development-concept in a dialogue-process.

However, both methods focus on built sport facilities. The importance of active outdoor-recreation is mentioned in both, but with no relevance for practical planning.

Results

It is important to integrate nature-based activities into planning strategies because general developments in society have affected sport and lead to massive changes in exertion sport (Wopp 2005). The changes with main effects are individualisation and excess of ageing. As a result competitive sports are demanded less while there’s a higher request for endurance sports. Being fit and healthy are the most named motives for doing sport. Nature-based activities such as running, walking and cycling are always among the top 5 activities in surveys about favourite sports within the communities (Hübner 2004, Kirschbaum 2002).

Regarding these developments it seems to be necessary to expand current planning-strategies through concepts for nature-based activities.

Conclusion

The project “nature-based activities in urban areas” wants to do basic research for a development of planning-guidelines. The aim of the project is to create a model of an ideal space for nature-based activities in urban areas. Which image of nature do sportspeople have in mind when doing nature-based activities in an urban environment? Which elements of landscape are preferred and what infrastructure is needed?

The project started with monitoring an urban park with infrared-counters (trafX) in September 2005 to identify user-frequency during the course of a day. In combination with quantitative surveys it was possible to identify a peak of use in the late morning and one in the afternoon. It was also possible to detect preferred paths and areas of low interest within the park.

But fieldwork within the project has shown that monitoring of user-frequency and doing quantitative surveys are just the first step to improve urban green for nature-based activities. The results of the quantitative research allow no conclusions about the quality of the environment needed. To identify these needs it was necessary to operate with qualitative methods in addition to the quantitative research. A photo assisted method, the visitor employed photography (VEP), has been adapted to the urban environment and the researched activities get and categorize information about the quality of preferred landscapes. Corresponding to the categories, different types of spaces are developed.

The presentation will discuss the latest results of the project and give an outline of the question of ideal activity space.

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