

Local Recreational Areas: Accounting for Peoples' Needs in the Development and Selection of Planning Instruments

Harry Spiess¹, Margit Mönnecke², Karin Wasem² & David Kümin¹

¹Zurich University of Applied Sciences Winterthur, Switzerland
sph@zhwin.ch
kud@zhwin.ch

²University of Applied Sciences Rapperswil, Switzerland
margit.moennecke@hsr.ch
karin.wasem@hsr.ch

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Abstract: The goal of the 'ANAP' research project is to indicate how peoples' needs for and expectations towards local recreation areas can be met by the means of employing different planning instruments.

An in-depth analysis of the available literature reveals what people actually require and expect and the functional capacity of the planning instruments is illustrated by four case studies. Evaluation of these case studies not only gives rise to recommendations concerning the future implementation of the various planning instruments, it also yields proposals for improving their performance in future development phases.

Peri-urbanisation leads to the rapid disappearance of attractive open landscapes in built-up areas. As a result, there is less space available for local recreational purposes, and people have to travel increasingly far to find the kind of landscape they are looking for. In order to tackle and hopefully improve this situation in the long term, adequate instruments for controlling the way landscapes are developed within built-up areas are absolutely essential.

This research project aims to show how the different planning instruments can be implemented to achieve best outcomes for people seeking decent recreational areas. The planning instruments selected and developed have to be aimed at preserving an attractive landscape. The insights gained from this research provide the basis for recommendations concerning the future implementation of planning instruments, as well as for their future development.

The project 'ANAP' is a cooperative project between the 'Research Centre for Leisure, Tourism and Landscape' (FTL) at the University of Applied Sciences in Rapperswil (HSR), and the 'Institute for Sustainable Development' (INE) at the University of Applied Sciences in Winterthur (ZHAW). Other project partners include the Federal Research Institute for Forestry, Snow and Landscape (WSL), Green City Zurich (GSZ), Cantonal Agency for Spatial Planning and Survey of Zurich (ARV), Cantonal Agency for Waste, Water, Energy and Air of the Canton of Zurich (AWEL), and the Cantonal Agency for Spatial Planning of the Canton of Basle. Activities have started in 2003 and will end in 2006.

Research structure and methods

The project encompasses three main phases:

1. Analysis

In an extensive analysis of the literature on the subject, the needs of people looking for local recreation, and recent trends in the field of local recreation were identified and collected.

2. Evaluation

The planning instruments best suited to lead to the kind of local recreation facilities and landscapes that people want were evaluated. In addition, the usefulness of planning instruments for resolving potential conflicts between the interests of different stakeholders in the use of space was analysed. Towards this end, four projects in

which areas close to built-up areas have been re-developed were selected as case studies, and evaluated:

- a. Landscape-Development Concept (see Schubert 2000) ‘Limmatraum Zürich’
- b. Land-use concept ‘Allmend Brunau Zurich’
- c. Development planning Salina-Raurica (vicinity of Basle)
- d. Development and implementation concept Töss / Leisental (Winterthur)

The following methods were used in the evaluation phase:

- Analysis of existing studies
- Analysis of planning instruments
- Analysis of case studies
- Subject-specific interviews with experts

3. Conclusion

The insights gained from the research provide the basis for formulating recommendations for the implementation of selected planning instruments in order to ensure that peoples’ needs in the field of local recreation can be taken into account more effectively.

This paper presents two partial project-results - an overview of current trends in leisure and recreation, the case study ‘Töss/Leisental’ (Winterthur) - and the conclusion.

Overview of current trends in leisure and recreation

Table 1 presents the results of the analysis of the literature addressing current and future trends in leisure and recreation relevant for spatial planning in built-up areas. Trends indicate a continual, significant growth in both indoor and outdoor

Table 1: Leisure and recreational trends and their impacts.

Leisure and recreation trends		Current importance	Anticipated development over the next 10 to 20 years	Relevancy regarding recreation in agglomeration areas	
				Impact on the change of landscape (Quality)	Strain on landscape (Quantity)
Fitness sports, outdoor (Jogging)		●●●	→	●	●●●
Club sports, outdoor (football, tennis)		●●●	↘	●●●	●●
Indoor sports (badminton, volleyball, gymnastics, etc.)		●●●	↗	●	●●
Trend-sports	Soul sports (mountain biking, windsurfing, inline skating)	●●	→	●●●	●●●●
	Fun sports (para-sailing, verti-biking, bungee-jumping)	●	↗	●●	●●●
	Extreme sports (icefall-climbing, cave-diving)	●	→	●●	●
	Thrill sports (base-jumping, canyoning)	●	→	●●	●●
‘Being out in the open air’ (walking, hiking, biking)		●●●●●	↗	●●	●●●
Wellness		●●●	→	●	●
Event shopping		●●	↗	●	●
Amusement parks		●●	↗	●●	●
Mega events in sports and culture		●●	↗	●●	●
Virtual recreational offers (video games, play stations, virtual hotels)		●	→	-	-

Key:



low relevance
high relevance

recreational activities, even with no population increase. This will inevitably lead to an increased use of open spaces in built-up areas.

The trend towards even more rapid sequencing of activities (recreation, sports, work, family), or towards the simultaneous practice of different activities ('multi tasking') will increase, and will become an important factor in the development of local recreation areas in European agglomerations.

However, the focus on trend sports should not be over estimated. Focussing on Germany, Opaschowski (2004) finds that only a small fraction of the population is attracted to 'trend sports' and that the demographic trends towards an ageing population will lead to an increase in more relaxing activities such as walking, hiking and cycling.

Evaluation of the Development and Implementation Concept Töss/Leisental (Winterthur)

All case studies used a three level evaluation grid (figure 1) with only one adding a fourth level to evaluate the impact of the respective project on sustainable development. In addition to the in-

depth examination of the planning documentation, three to five expert interviews were carried out in all case studies.

By way of an example, the methodological concept and some of the results of the evaluation of the Development and Implementation Concept Töss / Leisental (Winterthur) are presented below.

The case study "Töss" investigates a small project whose aim it was to allow a river to re-find its natural course. At the end of the 1990's, a decision was taken to allow the river more freedom in certain sectors rather than to renovate existing dams. Up to the present, only a few interventions have been implemented. The development of the landscape is mainly left to the forces of the river itself.

During the compilation of the Development and Implementation Concept, several potential conflicts between goals such as groundwater supply, forest use, protection of nature, and research requirements were identified. Authorities managed to reduce the conflict potential by creating a trans-disciplinary 'core group'. As a result, it was possible to plan and implement the project comparatively quickly.

Levels of evaluation	
I	Evaluation of objectives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Which objectives with respect to recreation were considered in the planning? ▪ Have objectives been operationalized? What design features are planned for implementation? ▪ Does the planning process include the expectations of relevant stakeholders?
II	Evaluation "state of the art"
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent are the requirements included from a professional point of view? ▪ To what extent are the requirements of future users implemented? ▪ To what extent should further aspects of recreational use of space be implemented?
III	Evaluation of the Process
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What instruments have been implemented in order to assess future users' expectations? ▪ How has the involvement, collaboration, participation of stakeholders been organised? ▪ Has a solution been reached that gains wide acceptance among relevant stakeholders? ▪ What conflict solving strategies are ready to be implemented?
IV	Evaluation of the contribution to sustainable development (where available)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ecological dimension: to what extent has living space for people, animals and plants been preserved, and to what extent can natural resources be used, taking into account the quality of life of future generations? ▪ Economic dimension: to what extent has the well-being and development capacity of the economy been considered? ▪ Social dimension: to what extent has society (people, their lives and development, solidarity and well-being) been considered?

Figure 1: Levels of evaluation (Source: Based on Mönnecke, 2000).

It is interesting to note that the interests of people looking for local recreation opportunities were only included marginally. Nevertheless, when questioned on the subject, comments made both by experts and by passers-by at the actual location of the project, indicate a high level of acceptance of the river project's goals. Future research will have to validate whether or not the following quote is universally applicable: "as long as we shape attractive river landscapes, people will come to see them".

Conclusion

A comparison of the four case studies based on the dimensions presented in figure 1 lead to the following conclusions.

Dimension I: Evaluation of objectives

The goals formulated in the planning documents are principally dedicated to aesthetics (e.g. within the context of rehabilitating river sections) and infrastructure (e.g. roads and pathways). The categories relating to the use of natural environments (e.g. the creation of natural areas requiring no maintenance suitable for children and young people), resolving conflicts (e.g. between various leisure activities such as cycling and walking, or between leisure activities and environmental protection), and the designation of areas for leisure (e.g. areas for peaceful, contemplative relaxation, fun and games etc.) are considered to a lesser degree.

Dimension II: Evaluation "State of the Art"

All case studies concentrate on up-grading the leisure potential of less attractive areas – e.g. opening up streams, rehabilitating natural environments. Additional leisure-time opportunities will be created, such as skating and cycling facilities along the banks of the Sihl and the Limmat.

Only the implementation concept of the project "Allmend Brunau" systematically determined the needs of people seeking leisure and relaxation before the planning process.

The needs of future user groups – which should be taken into account - are not explicitly addressed in the case studies. The reason being that it is rather difficult to give substantial weight to potential fu-

ture user groups in the participation process since current users and inhabitants are generally not prepared to consider such needs when "their" local leisure facilities are at stake.

Dimension III: Evaluation of the Process

All planning processes examined included some form of collaboration in different phases of the processes. However, the precise form of collaboration was different in each project. In all case studies, the participation process led to improved communication and collaboration between the various actors (authorities, politicians, citizens):

- Involvement of the local population
- Involvement of young people (e.g. skate-boarders and cyclists in the Allmend Brunau case)
- Improved exchange between cantonal, community and state authorities
- Focused public communication work involving experts (Töss/Leisental)

Thanks to close collaboration between different actors throughout the planning processes, various goals were achieved. However, the right selection of participants to involve is a key factor for success.

Participative processes lead to new expectations of those involved. It is important that the goals of collaboration, the possibility to influence participants and especially the relationship between collaboration and decision-making are clearly defined and communicated.

However, the analysis also revealed the limitations of participatory processes, especially when applied to events that target a very heterogeneous audience. Not all participants were able to accommodate the views of others, keeping strictly to their initial position. As a conclusion, participatory processes are instruments best used for the analysis of requirements, and needs, rather than for resolving conflicts.

It is safe to assume that participatory processes have led to a broader acceptance of the various projects within the relevant population. Most of the requirements and objections expressed could be accommodated in the design of the projects. In all the case studies, certain stakeholders felt they

had been inadequately included in the process. In such cases, it was found to be important to continue the dialogue with these groups, and to keep looking for potential solutions acceptable to all participants concerned. A suitable concept concerning information and communication, at both the planning and the implementation phases proved to encourage acceptance.

Dimension IV: Evaluation "Sustainability"

Only one case study (Töss) was evaluated relative to its contribution to sustainable development. Whether projects are really economically efficient, ecologically viable and socially acceptable can only be precisely evaluated when the initial steps towards transformation have been taken, and the consequences of the measures employed can be observed at least to some degree.

On the level of development and transfer concepts, it becomes clear that the main focus of the planned measures is seldom equally distributed between the three sustainability dimensions: economy, society, and environment. In the Töss case study, for example, the main focus clearly resided on the ecological dimension.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are the result of the evaluation of both formal and informal planning instruments, and the analysis of the four case studies.

- Combination of formal and informal planning instruments: In order to implement goal- and result-oriented planning instruments, the following elements should be combined with a clear purpose in mind: formal instruments, such as general guidelines on spatial planning, usage planning and zone selection planning, are mainly suitable for ensuring and establishing leisure requirements. Informal instruments, such as landscape development concepts, forest development planning and Local Agenda 21 are especially suitable for dealing with the needs of individuals seeking leisure.
- Creation of "nature experience" as well as spaces to encourage learning about nature: Within the planning framework for the future, it is important to pay more attention to the needs of both children and young people. Natural areas requiring no maintenance (e.g. quarries, gravel pits, former fields, areas in the forest) which are left to themselves and which can be designed and changed have become rare in residential areas.
- Orientation on success factors: previously gathered experience and knowledge for identifying success factors shows that project results are not only influenced by the content structure of a project, but also by the procedural form, the way a project is carried out, and the behaviour of the participants. The studies undertaken by Wolf and Appel 2003, Stoll 1999, Brendle 1999, Wiener and Rihm 2002 offer an overview of success factors for the planning and transfer of projects within the fields of sport/leisure/tourism/mobility and nature protection.
- Equal and timely inclusion of all relevant actors: It is essential to ensure that all relevant actors are equally included in all phases of the planning process.
- Win-win situation for all participating actors: If the planning process is to succeed and be accepted, it is absolutely vital that it results in an improvement of all individual actors' situations (win-win situation).
- Speedy transfer of measures: A speedy transfer of measures encourages motivation and ensures that the same people can be involved at all stages, from conflict resolution to transformation.
- Monitoring and controlling: To ensure that the measures taken are effective, it is essential to ensure that both the measures and regulations are monitored and adhered to after implementation.

- Establishing a communication concept: Successful planning processes contain communication concepts, which describe how agreements, measures and regulations are communicated to all the relevant parties concerned.

Further research requirements

The following areas require more research.

- Selecting participants to be included in the participation process: The evaluation of the four case studies revealed that the careful selection of participants is a major challenge. The difficulty resides in the necessity to identify all those persons who will be affected, either positively or negatively, by a specific project. At the same time a high number of participants is likely to substantially complicate the process.
- Significance of the soft location factor “local leisure”: Additional sound knowledge of the significance of the “soft” location factor ‘(local) leisure’ compared to the classical location factors is absolutely vital and necessary. This would provide planners and politicians with the necessary arguments to increasingly include leisure aspects into planning processes. Local leisure-time facilities are increasingly being seen as a relevant marketing factor for communities, towns and regions. The most immediate and nearest leisure facilities available play an increasingly important role when choosing either where to live or where to set up a business. However, the relative importance of the leisure factor compared to other classic location factors (e.g. availability of highly qualified employees, communication networks, taxation, etc.) remains unclear.
- Representative surveys on leisure-time needs outside the forests: In order to counteract the sometimes extremely high numbers of people who visit nearby forests, and the constantly diminishing proportion of open and green spaces, more effort should be put into making agricultural and cultural landscapes more attractive for leisure time activities.

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