Facing the challenge of sustainability: Environmental policies and urban development in Mainz and Wiesbaden in comparison

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Abstract

The issues of improving the quality of the urban environment and providing healthy living conditions are key indicators of a sustainable urban development. Urban green spaces, especially the publicly accessible ones, such as parks, green squares, recreational areas, green belts etc., are crucial subjects of sustainable strategies in this field of urban development. Green spaces are not only part of the physical urban fabric and as such part of the image and identity of the city, they are also socially relevant usable spaces, providing opportunities to spend one’s leisure time and to participate in public life, and they also represent ‘nature’ in the city, as tangible habitat and as visible signs of the quality of the urban environment. This paper compares the way in which the cities of Mainz and Wiesbaden have dealt with the challenge of addressing these issues during the past twenty years. Local discourses and policies concerning green spaces as part of a sustainable urban development and their implementation are investigated, as well as social practices of using and producing green space, e.g. newly created or re-designed parks. By comparing the locally specific approaches of Mainz and Wiesbaden to the target of sustainability in a limited field of urban development, the overall question may be discussed, to what extent strategies of sustainable development and respective actions must reflect local tacit knowledge, specific habits, attitudes and patterns of arguing and acting, in short: local distinctiveness or patterns of ‘intrinsic logic’ in order to be successful.

Keywords:
green spaces, urban development, environmental policies, sustainability, Mainz, Wiesbaden

Introduction

Green spaces, such as parks, predominantly green squares or boulevards and alleys are substantial elements of the urban fabric, being important as physical open spaces and as representations of nature amidst the built environment. There is a high degree of complexity in the functions and significations they imply: Urban green spaces provide spaces usable for
leisure activities, they are spaces of encounter and communication, offer opportunities of social integration and community activities. At the same time they are recognized as visible signs and symbols of the quality of the urban environment, of the way environmental policies are defined and carried out, highly relevant for ecological issues like the urban climate and the preservation of certain habitats and species. Their design and shape reproduce aesthetic and stylistic preferences depending on the time of their production or re-design. Changing ways of urban life, changing habits and practices of using public spaces may be mirrored in the materiality of these spaces, which are perceived, reviewed and used in everyday life of citizens of all ages. Their shape also represents the – historically changing - predominant ideas of how much and what sort of ‘nature’ should be part of the built urban environment.

This paper introduces the subject of green open spaces in relation to the urban built environment and local strategies of a sustainable development, discussing examples of two case studies, the cities of Mainz and Wiesbaden. The research presented here is part of an ongoing comparative study \(^1\) addressing the question, how these specific cities have dealt with their green spaces in the period from 1960 – 2010, taking up the perspective of planning and environmental history. This study is designed to analyse if, and in which ways, green spaces have appeared as significant elements of their urban development and as key issues in the local debates on healthy, beautiful and ‘liveable’ cities, on policies and development strategies generated in order to improve the quality of the urban environment and the sustainability of the city. The comparative approach is chosen in order to examine if there are specific local characteristics concerning the handling of green spaces in the frame of urban development in the two cities serving as case studies. The expected findings of local distinctiveness will be discussed on the theoretical basis of the sociological concept of the “intrinsic logic of cities” (Löw/ Berking (eds.) 2008).

**Green spaces as an object of research**

The term ‘green spaces’ is used with a quite large range of implications and meanings, even as a technical term in planning science and landscape architecture\(^2\). So some terms need to be defined within the frame of this paper: Green spaces are urban areas which are predominantly uncovered with buildings but primarily covered or shaped by vegetation (with reference to Richter 1981). Development of green spaces as a technical term includes new designs or redesigns of green spaces, but also maintenance and restoration of existing green spaces. The investigation is restricted to a certain type of green spaces, the so-called ‘general public green spaces’ (following basically the typology by Richter 1981, with some light modifications): Public parks, historical gardens, temporary gardens and horticultural shows,

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\(^1\) „Cities and Green Spaces: On the intrinsic logic of cities in the field of green open spaces as part of urban development strategies and practices“ (working title), PhD-project at TU Darmstadt; the author is a fellow of the Graduate School of Urban Studies (URBANgrad).

\(^2\) Remarks on academic discourses in urban planning and landscape architecture always refer to the respective publications and debates in Germany.
green urban squares and streets (alleys etc as primarily transitory spaces). This type is chosen because these spaces are publicly accessible and multifunctional, so they offer a wide range of opportunities to use them, providing for the needs and wishes of different parts of the urban society. They are places of everyday life for many citizens, so their production, development and management and respective debates and changes are likely to be publicly perceived and discussed, not only by local authorities but also by citizen’s groups and the local media. Green spaces restricted to certain functions (such as sports grounds or cemeteries) or spaces which are strongly related to institutions like schools, hospitals etc. are not a subject of this study, neither are private gardens or greenery of housing estates.

Of course, the attribute ‘public’ with regard to urban open spaces must be put into perspective. Their degree of being public depends on four relevant dimensions (Selle 2003: 13-94): Who governs the production of a certain urban space? Who owns it, in legal terms? In which ways are uses (and users) controlled or regulated? What kind of ‘social character’ determines the possibilities of using a space, depending on its physical shape, its facilities and on the cultural conventions of behaviour they suggest. While the single green spaces are characterised by different qualities and different degrees of public accessibility etc., they form a major part of the green urban environment.

**Green spaces and sustainable urban development**

The conceptualisation of green space planning during the second half of the 20th century was characterized by changing specifications and varying emphasis on its different aspects:

Post-war green space planning was primarily stressing functional aspects, specified in the leitbild of “Die gegliederte und aufgelockerte Stadt” [The structured and de-densified city] (Göderitz, Rainer, Hoffmann 1957). During the 1970s, adopting green spaces to user’s needs and wishes became an emerging trend among landscape architects. Research results of the social sciences on urban spaces as social environment as well as on advantages of an increased citizen’s participation in planning processes became increasingly interesting to planners (see Gleichmann 1963, Nohl 1984, Spitthöver 1982). Considerations on user’s needs, differentiated relative to age groups, gender, (sub) cultures etc., different usage opportunities and their social implications were important aspects in structuring and designing urban green spaces. At the same time ecological issues emerged as important planning aspects, fostered by findings of the natural sciences and more and more often claimed by citizens in the course of the generally increasing awareness to the importance of a healthy urban environment. In this era, anyone stressing aesthetic and artistic aspects of designing the urban landscape would likely have become a suspect of promoting mere (and dispensable) decoration of the urban space.

Only a few years later, though, some landscape architects started to criticise the emphasis on these analytical, scientifically based planning strategies, which was understood to be “extremely boring and unsophisticated – having as much sex-appeal as allotment gardens”, as landscape architect Jürgen Milchert put it in retrospective (Milchert 2009: 7; Translation:
With the 1990s came the rediscovery of the artistic approach of landscape architecture had taken place.

Another line of development in the planning discourse affects the set of questions about the kind of environment, the sort of nature and the degree to which design and maintenance should be considered as adequate. Publication and projects by Louis Le Roy, Andritzky/Spitzer or Lucius Burckhardt became influential in German debates, promoting green spaces of high ecological value emerging best and most natural, when they were left alone. ‘Natural Gardens’ with a low degree of artistic intervention and low efforts in maintenance became an ideal, while the so called ‘Abstandsgrün’, a pejorative expression for green interspaces with rather poor design, offering close to no opportunities of using them, happened to be the most negative example. So planners were putting the emphasis on the idea that landscape architecture should most of all improve green spaces provision and the quality of the natural environment, according to citizen’s needs and wishes. In order to meet these goals, relevant findings of the social and natural sciences were integrated. Since the 1970s, the relationship between planners and citizens was also gradually and continually changing through the use of different planning methods: Participation, processes of public coordination involving the people affected by a certain project in their neighbourhood became more and more common. Ideally, planners should take over a new role of preparing, fostering and moderating discussions and participatory processes. However, the traditional self-conceptions of planners and architects as artists and experts still were existing, they were and are still vivid to this day.

De-industrialisation and demographic changes lead to massive consequences for urban development strategies. An expanded field of challenges shaped planning discourses in the 1990s: Issues like revitalising industrial wasteland, waterfront developments on former industrial sites etc. were asking for appropriate solutions. Sustainable urban development, with its ecological, social and economical implications, became a major task for green space planning as well. Parks and green squares should now satisfy a wide variety of claims: improving the urban climate, providing wildlife habitats, at the same time offer spaces adequate for everyday recreation uses, opportunities of social interaction, communication and integration and enable pleasure by being beautiful and foster knowledge by enabling an experience nature in the middle of the city.

Currently, landscape architects widely (and gladly) seem to agree that planning practice focuses (again) on an artistic, design-oriented approach to green space planning. The renaissance of the landscape architect as an artist started in the 1990s: “After decades of an ecologically oriented ideologization during the 1970s and 80s and after the partial emphasis of the requirements of natural preservation, landscape architecture […] finally admits frankly to its artistic assignment again […].” (Weilacher 2005: 15; Translation: M.F.)

On the other hand, there is also an intense discussion currently going on within the field, if and to what extent landscape architecture should make allowance for the wishes and aesthetical preferences of their customers, i.e. the users of green spaces, even regarding the design of parks and squares (see Tessin 2008; Rehwaldt 2009; Weilacher 2009, Milchert 2009). At the same time, empirical sociological studies on green spaces especially focus on
correlations of the form and style of green spaces, with their respective implications of usage opportunities, and the empirically measurable usage, the sort of users and the degree of user satisfaction (see e.g. Spitthöver 2009).

A third major line of professional discourse stresses the role of green spaces as elements of the sustainable city, investigates the positive effects of parks and green space systems on the urban climate and other facets of the urban environment and uses respective findings to strengthen the arguments for restricting land use, preserving existing green spaces and creating new ones, which should be designed as “sustainable urban parks” themselves (Lein-Kottmeier/ Ostmann/ Vogt (eds.) 2008).

The ideas and concepts of nature and landscape connected (implicitly) to these lines of development in landscape architecture and planning are varying strongly (see e.g. Höfer 2005, Körner 2004 and 2005). However different these concepts and the built green spaces evolving from them have been perceived and reviewed, and however differing the emphasis put on the multifaceted functions and properties of green spaces has been there seems to be a fundamental consensus on the relevance of green spaces in urban development. Since green space provision became a municipal duty in the course of industrialisation and urbanisation around the end of 19th century, green spaces were and are considered an important contribution to a healthy urban environment and to an acceptable quality of life in the city. Differing views among planners or citizens mainly spring from different ideas on how nature and landscape should be placed, structured, shaped and designed in the urban context. This opinion is based on a general assumption of positive effects of nature and everything ‘green’ on the physical and psychological health and well-being of city dwellers. Especially psychological effects are validated by a range of empirical studies in the field of environmental psychology (Flade 2008 gives an overview).

Preserving green spaces in urban areas gets relevant not only in quantitative terms of a sufficient provision with green spaces, but also regarding the qualities of these spaces, their design and facilities. What is considered as a high quality green space’, however, is subject to historical alterations. Generally, urban green spaces are assigned to this day with various functions: Because of their aesthetic, ‘decorative’ qualities they contribute to the design, the ‘beauty’ of the city. They also structure the city, either by connecting certain urban areas or by separating incompatible functional areas, such as highways and neighbouring residential areas etc. Green spaces are also considered to perform sanitary tasks, improving the urban climate, reducing the temperature locally and being beneficial for the air quality. They offer a wide range of possible uses and experiences (sports, leisure activities, recreation, communication, encountering ‘nature’ etc.). With regard to ecological aspects they provide habitat for plants and wildlife, and they contribute to preserving resources like water and soil (see Richter 1981: 14-17; Gälzer 2001: 23-50).

Issues of urban ecology came into consideration of planners along with the emerging environmental movement during the 1970s, their relevance even rose with the paradigm of sustainability. Additionally, green spaces are discovered as important elements of a
sustainable urban development not only in terms of their ecological functions, but also because of their social and cultural layers of significance.

Public green spaces offer opportunities to appropriate the city for individuals and various groups of the urban society, to meet, communicate and to negotiate different ways to use the city. In short: They can serve as places of social integration. They also provide possibilities to participate in debates and processes of planning and decision-making on issues of producing, (re-)designing and maintaining these spaces. Participation in social and political processes is a major target of sustainable development, allowing to activate local knowledge and to improve the acceptance of planning projects and the identification with the city. If parks and squares meet the ideas, needs and wishes of the local citizens, they are much more likely to be used and appreciated, so they can effectively contribute to improving the quality of urban life.


A comprehensive study on “European Common Indicators: Towards a Local Sustainability Profile” investigates the “Availability of public open areas3 and services” (European Commission (ed.) 2003:79-93) as a relevant indicator of sustainable policy-making and its implementation.

So green spaces generally seem to be positive urban elements, but there is still the question left what amount and what shape of green space is historically considered as reasonable and adequate. Analyzing the urban development of Mainz and Wiesbaden with a special focus on green spaces in both cities is lead by this set of questions: Which ideas of nature, what kind of green spaces have been preferred and set as a target, based on what kind of criteria and reasoning? What kind of green spaces have –consequently - been newly built or redesigned from the 1960s on?

Analysing the levels of materiality, social and discursive practices: Objectives, theoretical framework and methodological approach

How have green public open spaces been dealt with in the context of urban development during the period from 1960 to 2010 in the cities of Mainz and Wiesbaden? This is the main question addressed here, and it includes the question, how the complex of concepts of urban

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3 “Public open areas are defined as:
- public parks, gardens or open spaces, for the exclusive use of pedestrians and cyclists, except green traffic islands or dividers, graveyards (unless the local authority recognises their recreational function or natural, historical or cultural importance);
- open-air sports facilities, accessible to the public free of charge;
- private areas (agricultural areas, private parks), accessible to the public free of charge.” (European Commission (ed.) 2003:79)
environment, nature, garden and landscape has been treated, which aspects, actors and narratives have been influencing these issues of urban development. The study focuses on analysing relevant environmental policies, urban development guidelines and projects (e.g. newly created or redesigned parks) being discussed and realized (or rejected) in Mainz and Wiesbaden from 1960 onwards. In addition, the study traces the respective local practices and discourses and the different actors being involved in decision-making and the reasoning that became accepted in these cases.

Two highly interrelated intentions are pursued: First, an analysis of the design and development of green open spaces as an essential part of the urban development from a historical perspective should contribute to the planning and environmental history of both cities.

In order to reconstruct the development of open spaces in both cities it is necessary to describe the material level of the built environment as an artefact (parks, squares etc.) in its history and current shape. The levels of practices and discourses which refer to the field are also to be analysed and put in context with the overall professional discourses in the field of urban development, planning, landscape architecture, cultural heritage and nature protection as well as the wider public discourses on nature and ecology emerging with the environmental movement in the 1960s, and the different approaches to the challenge of sustainability and their specifications in Germany. The comparative approach allows for exploring distinctive features in the respective local discourses and practices against this background. The period specified starts from the stage of the beginning critique of functionalist urban planning, it comprehends as well the era of environmental movement and ends with current debates on sustainable cities. During this time issues related to green open spaces and nature in the city were highly relevant in professional discussions as well as in public debates about the quality of the urban environment.

As the subject of urban green spaces is a complex and multifunctional phenomenon, its analysis affords an appropriate approach to cover all relevant aspects. So the study is designed as a comparative multi-level analysis which focuses on

1) the physical urban fabric and its structures, green spaces as constructed artificial urban nature, as elements of the built environment
2) local social practices of producing and using open spaces and
3) local discourses and modes of representations concerning green spaces

These levels are to be distinguished analytically for the purposes of the study, though in fact they are strongly linked and interdependent spatial facets.

A second question should be raised as a further perspective: if – and if yes: in which ways – locally specific approaches, practices, and discourses might reflect certain habits, attitudes and patterns of arguing and acting in the processes of discussing, deciding, implementing and reviewing urban environmental policies, development strategies and projects in this field. The sociological concept of the ‘intrinsic logic of cities’ (see Berking, Löw (eds.) 2008; Löw 2008), which serves as a theoretical basis and a working hypothesis. It focuses on the
specificity of cities and asks for the reasons for the generally well-known phenomenon that
cities are credited with peculiar attributes, by citizens as well as by guests and tourists. In
short, the question is about the logic behind the inevitable fact that cities have highly specific
and ‘typical’ features and that things ‘work’ differently in different cities. The concept
suggests that there are certain specific patterns, habits and attitudes based on tacit knowledge,
and that there are tacit processes at work in giving meaning to a city or in the way local
decisions are made. Its starting point is the main question: What is it that accounts for the
specific character of a city? Findings of local distinctiveness in the field of this study will be
discussed within this context.

The project is designed to identify (if possible) patterns of intrinsic logic within the field of
urban development, referring to the subject of green spaces4. Theory states that patterns and
practices implying the intrinsic logic of a city can be found in very different fields, its edifices
and its urban planning as well as, for example, in literary sources on the city (from novels to
accounts of a journey) or in typical events and urban festivities etc. (Löw 2008: 77). Local
social practices, discourses and material artefacts produced in a certain city mirror collective
inherent patterns of acting, “not scrutinized certainties” (Löw 2008: 77; translation M.F.),
which are inherent to individual action, routine and attitude, but are usually not reflected but
effective in a hidden way.

Thus, this study analyses the historical development of green spaces and the practices and
discourses referring to that. Various types of sources are relevant: maps, plans, descriptions
and other archive material, articles published in local newspapers5 and magazines,
publications by the municipalities and their respective departments (planning, environment,
city marketing etc.), record of the council’s meetings etc. are used to reconstruct the historical
development of selected green spaces of the stated type. Green spaces which have been newly
created or significantly altered (or which have been designed but eventually rejected) during
the period of investigation are analysed in further detail, especially those projects which have
caused public debates or maybe even conflicts in the process of decision-making. These
sources are also used to trace practices of producing parks, green squares etc. in terms of
making up development strategies and defining a respective ‘leitbild’ as well as planning,
constructing and maintaining specific spaces. The way they are used, i.e. the frequency and
duration of staying in a certain park and the types of actions the park is used for, and the way
they are perceived and assessed by their users can be investigated - at present - by monitoring
these practices or by interviewing citizens6. Tracing historical modes of respective practices is
more difficult: Historical plans only give hints of intended uses, and some sources allow
insight conveyed by the media. So analysing archive materials will be combined with some

4 The study is part of a series of PhD -projects and other ongoing research of an interdisciplinary research group
at TU Darmstadt.
5 Wiesbadener Tagblatt, Wiesbadener Kurier, Allgemeine Zeitung Mainz, Mainzer Rhein-Zeitung, local
supplements of Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and Frankfurter Rundschau
6 There is a study on some parks in Mainz providing empirical data, see Timoshkina 2001.
(members of staff of local administrations, local urban planners and landscape architects, members of citizen’s groups and ‘Bürgerbeiräten’ [advisory committees on issues of urban development] etc.). The legal framework of planning on a local level is also being put into consideration: planning law, development strategies and programmes on the national level as well as on the level of the federal states Hesse and Rhineland-Palatinate and on the level of the Rhine-Main-Region. Ideas and targets stated by these regional and supra-regional guidelines have been taken on (or neglected) in different ways in Mainz and Wiesbaden, so it is productive to trace those ideas which became influential on the local level and ask for the argumentations for and against such measures.

The historical study on the levels of materiality, practices and discourses can be connected with the overall sociological problem by referring to the approach by the sociologist Andreas Reckwitz. He claims that a sociological analysis of cities should generally integrate exactly those levels of spatially arranged and combined material artefacts, social practices which produce urban materiality and its spatial structures and are at the same time influenced by it. Social practices again integrate discourses and systems of representations which give specific meaning to a city (Reckwitz 2008 and 2009).

Local strategies, political decisions and public debates on the subject of urban green spaces are characterised by recurring narratives and lines of rationales which refer to a certain hidden, not consciously considered logic in local actor’s attitudes, values and concepts of a ‘good and liveable city’ and of nature and green spaces as elements of the city. So material results, the ‘green’ parts of the built environment, can be interpreted as manifestations of this ‘intrinsic logic’ – this is the adapted working hypothesis focusing a precise cut-out of the field of urban planning.

**Case studies: Mainz and Wiesbaden**

The two cities compared here, Mainz and Wiesbaden, have been chosen according to a most similar cases design: They are immediate neighbours across the river Rhine and as such generally similar in terms of the regional natural conditions and the landscape they are embedded in. Both cities are capitals of a federal state (Hesse, respectively Rhineland-Palatinate). They are also reasonably similar in size, population (Wiesbaden: 272 342 inhabitants (July 2010); Mainz: 200.178 (June 2010)7), density and economic situation. Their historical urban development, on the other hand, has been quite different, with significant consequences for the location, the sizes and functions of green open spaces.

**Mainz: Grey core and green belt**

Mainz, having been a politically important fort city as well as a highly important Roman Catholic episcopal see from medieval times on, was enclosed in its fortification until the first

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urban expansion was realised from 1874 onwards. Parts of the fortification as such have not been demolished until after World War I, respectively 1930, which is very late compared to most German cities. For centuries, Mainz was a city of high density where green spaces were rather scarce, the existing ones located at the fringe of the medieval city centre, such as the ‘Wallanlagen’, which were created in the early 1930ies along the line (and remains) of the former fortification (see Glatz 1999, Schindler 1962a, 1962 b, Pritzl 1993, Clausmeyer-Ewers 2000).

The ‘Wallanlagen’ are a series of small formal parks and gardens, accompanied by an ample landscape-style park providing a green belt with promenades. The special gardens are explicitly designed for different user groups: There are flower gardens and an evergreen garden as quiet spaces for elderly persons, and there are gardens for younger people and families, with large meadows allowing playing and sports, additionally children’s playgrounds etc. The whole park system was created in the course of an urban extension project, based on a concept of green spaces as a necessity to improve the living conditions in dense cities. In Mainz, this strategy of improving the green spaces provision for social reasons was influential from 1928 onwards. The ‘Wallanlagen’ still exist, still being very close to their original design. They are well maintained and meanwhile recognized as cultural heritage. In the 1980s, a small part of the park complex was redesigned as an ecological garden, shaped and maintained according to the principles of natural gardening, showing various types of habitats like ruderal areas, traditional mixed fruit orchards etc. Such a showcase of urban nature was a typical project of the 1980s, following the emphasis on imparting knowledge on ecological issues.

The ‘Wallanlagen’ are connected to the ‘Stadtpark’ (Municipal Park) and the ‘Volkspark’ (Public Park): The ‘Stadtpark’ was created in 1819/20 as a landscape garden outside of the fortification, on the area of the famous baroque gardens of Favorite Palace, which were destroyed in 1793. A redesign by garden architects Heinrich and Nikolaus Siesmayer in 1888/89 shaped the park in its current landscaped style. A formal rose garden was added in 1925, some further redesign was done in the course of planning activities in preparation of the city’s 2000-year-anniversary held in 1962 (see Blisch 2009). Some formal flowerbeds in the landscaped areas still remind of the gardening fashion of the 1960s. The ‘Volkspark’ originated in 1932-35, when it was designed as a large park providing generous space for sports, play and festivities, spaces where citizens could spend their leisure time in an active way. Currently, a new design concept (2008) is being realised, which wishes to increase the aesthetic value and to extend the variety of utilization opportunities. Users tend to go for a walk in the ‘Stadtpark’, sit on benches in the rose garden and chat or read a book, rather quiet and traditional ways of utilization predominate. In the ‘Volkspark’ on the other hand, people do sports, play soccer, families spend summer weekends with picnic and barbecue there, playing facilities are used intensely. If the current changes in terms of shape and design also will change these practices is to be observed.

Improving the provision with green spaces was also one of the aims of the urban extension called ‘Neustadt’ (New Town), planned and constructed in the late 19th century. According to
The typical historicistic scheme green spaces were integrated as squares with trees and a representative, decorative formal design (regular, symmetric flowerbeds, paths, fountains etc.). Most of the original shape is not preserved, but the general spatial structure and some elements still exist, although Mainz was destroyed heavily during World War II. Again the preparations for the city’s anniversary 1962 led to a major re-creation of some of these green spaces. The most important example is ‘Kaiserstrasse’, originally created in 1874 as the main axis of the ensemble. It was transformed from a formerly historicistic avenue or series of representative squares in the middle of an ally of planes to a usable space with small units of fountains, benches and rose-beds distributed asymmetrically in large lawns between the trees (see Stadt Mainz 1995). Some playing facilities were added. Any representative character should be avoided, even the walkways were shaped in an asymmetrical way, combining some remaining parts of the original mosaic pavement with modern concrete slabs.

In the immediate vicinity there was a quite special type of green space designed and constructed in 1981: A so-called ‘Green Bridge’ crosses a four-line road with heavy traffic which separates two parts of a residential area. This pedestrian bridge is a broad concrete construction with different stairs and ramps between terraced shrubs and trees (in large beds integrated in the construction) leading up to the main platform with flowers, benches underneath pergolas, a little fountain, a cascade etc. The place is clearly not only intended to be a safe way of crossing the street, but also to offer a (at least to some extent) ‘natural’ environment which is agreeable and invites to stay for a while. Artist Dieter Magnus created the design, in cooperation with the local authorities. The bridge connects a large part of the ‘Neustadt’ to the bank of the Rhine and its green spaces, a large playing ground located in a green square is functioning as a link between the bridge and the river.

The green spaces along the bank of the Rhine (‘Rheinuferpromenade’) are another example which is very important for the everyday life of Mainz citizens. A regulation of the river made it possible to broaden the bank (up to 25 m), and in 1868 a new planning divided the bank in two levels (see Fischer 2004). The upper level was designed as a promenade between a double row of trees (planes), while the lower level still served as a pier, where ships were loaded or unloaded. Several parts of the bank were reshaped in 1964, 1972/73 and 1995, in each case in the contemporary style. New areas were designed to invite people not only to walk along, but to stay for a while, with benches, flowerbeds, sculptures and fountains. In the 1990s, the bank was considered to be in a very unsatisfying state, being heterogeneous and badly maintained. This diagnosis led to a major planning project: In 1998 a committee was established which should discuss the problem on the basis of a detailed survey. Participants of this so-called ‘RheinUferForum’ were representatives of the municipality and the local administration, residents, advisory architects and members of citizen’s groups. The public was involved as well. As a result of this process, a master plan and a detailed catalogue of measures were developed, which were meant as a set of suggestions (see Stadtplanungsamt Mainz 1997, 2000). Parts of them have been realised by now, and the concept is still acknowledged as a starting point of future designs. The whole waterfront area is estimated as a main focus of open space planning in Mainz as well as in Wiesbaden. There are topical considerations on a joint application for being the location of the National Horticultural Show.
in 2021 which would predominantly take place along both banks of the Rhine and include several islands.

**Wiesbaden: A green ‘spa city’**

Compared to its neighbour Mainz, Wiesbaden was a little and rather unimportant town for centuries, although it was well known for its hot springs from Roman times on (see e.g. Friedrich-Pauly 2003 on Wiesbaden’s urban history). Its rapid urban development mainly took place during the 19th century when spa uses and tourism were fostered and the respective infrastructural and environmental necessities became the leading principle of the local urban development strategies. Having about 2200 inhabitants in 1800, the city grew enormously in a short period: In 1900, ca. 86,000 inhabitants were counted. Wiesbaden was getting increasingly popular, international guests and high nobility frequently visited the city and its spa facilities, even the German Emperor could be welcomed here. Thus, Wiesbaden became a famous “Weltkurstadt” (“world spa city”), the beauty of the city and the surrounding landscape as well as the “adequate society” inspired many rich people to settle there. As this development focused on the needs and wishes of the spa guests, Wiesbaden was and is provided with large green spaces planned and realized as an inherent part of the urban structure: promenades and alleys and several large landscape parks which connect the centre to the open landscape, providing beautifully landscaped promenades.

‘Kurhaus’ [spa building], ‘Bowling Green’ and two ‘Kurparks’ [spa gardens] established the core of the social spa facilities (baths and other facilities were integrated in several hotels). They were located apart from the actual town centre, which was considered as an old, unattractive area and thus became enclosed and covered by new architecture and alleys, forming the so-called ‘Historical Pentagon’. The first ‘Kurhaus’ (built 1807-10) was replaced by a larger one 1904-1907 (designed by architect Friedrich Thiersch). ‘Bowling Green’ and ‘Kurpark’ were created at the same time, the latter in the style of an English landscape garden, modified by Carl Friedrich Thelemann in 1852, several further changes took place later on. The second spa garden ‘Warmer Damm’ was realized around 1860, again designed by Thelemann (see Modrow 1998). The whole ensemble is preserved to this day, in spite of some damages during World War II (and some comprehensive modernist, but never realized post-war development concepts), but with some alterations and additions from the 20th century (playing areas, sculptures). Today they are highly estimated as works of garden art and cultural heritage on the one hand, but on the other hand they are frequently used for all sorts of events (open air concerts, festivities, markets etc.). There is clearly a conflict between the aims of preserving, restoring and maintaining them properly, and the wish to use them as extremely attractive scenery for purposes of city marketing and different businesses. This problem is a constant subject of public debate in Wiesbaden (see e.g. Poser 2002). A vehement discussion emerged on the project of building an underground car park underneath the ‘Bowling Green’, which was realized in 2005. The whole green space was demolished, including two rows of old planes which were allegedly unstable. After constructing the car park, the green space was rebuilt in a modified way, the trees were replaced. Four entrance
pavilions to the car park now add to the ensemble with its lawn and fountains in the centre of the space. This project showed exemplarily the substantially diverging positions of preservation, city marketing and environmental interests. Other parks, for example a landscape park (‘Nerotalanlage’) along one of the five valleys which connect the city centre with the surrounding landscape of the Taunus, have been restored according to original plans, with extensive support by an initiative of local residents. During the 1970s several existing green spaces were reshaped in order to change them into spaces usable for the recreation of residents. The redesign of a historical cemetery, ‘Alter Friedhof’ 1974-77, is a very interesting example. At that time, the rich supply of historical gardens was considered insufficient because of their lack of facilities enabling play, sports activities and other everyday utilizations instead of serving primarily as a beautiful decoration of the city. Hildebert de la Chevallerie, director of the garden department 1970-98, implemented contemporary park concepts by redesign (see Chevallerie 1976). Existing trees were preserved, 150 of the tombstones – many of them valuable as works of art or as monuments of Wiesbaden’s history– were transferred to some areas along the wall of the cemetery. The whole area was reorganized with a new system of walkways, several playgrounds and sports facilities. Areas for sunbathing and picnic were created. It is reported that residents soon used the leisure park frequently (Landeshauptstadt Wiesbaden 1979: 240). Today it seems to be still popular and quite well maintained.

**Intermediary conclusions**

As this paper describes an ongoing study, any conclusions drawn at this point can only be tentative. As the few examples may illustrate, both cities were confronted with similar challenges within the period of investigation. The actors involved in planning the urban environment were focusing on adjusting existing green spaces or creating new ones with an increasingly user orientated approach. Ecological aspects and the experience of nature came into view, sustainability as an objective was applied to green space planning. The relevance of aesthetical quality and the ideas of quality in design as such changed with contemporary lines of professional debates on the respective ‘leitbild’.

A main difference can be found in the initial situation: Wiesbaden was a city richly provided with historic green spaces of high quality, which were perfectly fit to answer to a wide range of user’s wishes, with little need to add new elements. Wherever certain qualities or facilities were missing, reshaping an existing green space seemed to be quite easily realized, even if it was a project as unusual as redesigning an important historical cemetery. Planning strategies in Mainz had to focus on substantially improving the quality of existing green spaces and on creating new ones in different parts of the city. The density of the city centre and the lack of green spaces led to creative projects like the ‘Green Bridge’.

Mainz has established a structure of green spaces with a great variety of types and design qualities. Improving the provision and making the best of the given conditions seems to be a rather pragmatic, but apparently successful approach.
Fields of action – and possible conflicts – in Wiesbaden often refer to the target of preserving or restoring the historical parks, which seems to be consensual only at first sight. Although everyone apparently appreciates the ‘green’ character of the city and the parks in general, there are severe differences in the various answers to the question how a specific park should be dealt with best. Preserving the image and atmosphere of the ‘world spa city’ seems to be a common wish, but on the other hand, in cases concerning specific parks, restoring cultural heritage and preventing it from damage often seem to be less important in decision-making than economic interests. Exclusive events need prestigious sceneries, at the same time integrating facilities like underground car parks, in order to make a visit to Wiesbaden comfortable for tourists and guests.

For the time being, these interpretations are early attempts to understand some aspects of the way local practices and discourses on green spaces in the context of urban development ‘work’ in Mainz and Wiesbaden. Tracing their ‘intrinsic logic’ will require further investigation in the course of this study.
References


