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**Autor:** Handschin, Lukas  
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# INTEGRAL PLANNING AND ACTION WITH A VIEW TO OUTCOME

Grün Stadt Zürich, the city of Zurich's Office of Parks and Open Spaces, has in the last ten years systematically re-oriented procedures and planning instruments, concentrating and networking the available forces. **Lukas Handschin**

Professional maintenance of green spaces in the city of Zurich began in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century with the appointment of Caspar Hartmann to the newly created post of city gardener. Until then, the promenades had been looked after by ordinary city employees, but in the opinion of the city council, they were not up to the task and in particular had no horticultural knowledge. Their work for example consisted in preventing the entrenchment Fröschengraben (now the Bahnhofstrasse) from turning into a stinking quagmire. When the quayside was inaugurated in 1887, having been reclaimed from Lake Zurich by rockfill, and with the incorporation on 1 January 1893 of eleven hitherto autonomous communes located around what is now the city centre, the remit of those responsible for promenade maintenance broadened considerably.



*In her artist garden Nora Fehr has provided a home for the prohibition notices banished from the parks since 1977.*





*The landscape architects Carola Antón (left) and Dominique Ghiggi explain their ideas on the design of the Pfingstweid, Zurich's first public park, which is being built by a team of women.*



*Light and shade: on fine summer evenings there is one long row of bathing towels in the arboretum on the left bank of the lake.*

### **Parks as a public amenity**

In 1900, Gottlieb Friedrich Rothpletz became city gardener, and in 1902 was appointed head of the newly created city gardens department. His influence can still be seen for example in the Josefsbiese, conceived in the spirit of the German landscape architect and social reformer Leberecht Migge as a public park, and in the nearby woods as recreational areas for the city-dwellers. The second wave of incorporation of suburban municipalities followed in 1934, which once again extended the city gardens department's sphere of action and area of responsibility. In 1959 Walter Frischknecht advocated the transfer of responsibility for the subsequent use of the sites of the first Swiss gardens exhibition which took place that year, known as G159, along with further design tasks, to the gardens department. Under his leadership, numerous amenities were created, for example the rose-garden in the grounds of the Muralten estate (1960), the lakeside path (1963), the Utoquai lakeside promenade, (1971), the boardwalk along the former entrenchment Schanzengraben (1984) and the iris garden in Belvoir Park (1985).

The "respectable" nature of strolling and promenading in the public green spaces remained the rule into well into the 1960s. It was not until 1977 that the last "Keep off the Grass" notices were removed from the Pestalozzi Park in the vicinity of the main railway station. In 1988 the city council lifted the ban on bathing in places other than public swimming pools, as it no longer saw any possibility of enforcement. Since then pressure of use, especially in the parks in the lower basin of Lake Zurich, has been increasing by the year. Today, in addition to the horticultural maintenance aspect, the focus

is on customer orientation. Through such measures as the setting up of public electric barbecue grills, the Office of Parks and Open Spaces has reacted to changed visitor behaviour patterns and to new sporting fashions such as slacklining in order to preserve for future generations the high amenity value of the lakeside facilities.

After the people of Zurich had started a number of initiatives in 1985 for the preservation of green and open spaces, the Gardens Department drew up an open-spaces plan, which also saw the creation of the nature-conservation desk in the city administration, followed in 1989 by a Department for the Conservation of the Garden Heritage, still the only institution of its kind in the whole of Switzerland. When the city's Heritage Department completed its list of buildings worthy of protection in 1986, it was realized that the gardens surrounding historic buildings could not be simply covered by the umbrella term "grounds", but rather that an ensemble was not complete without its surrounds, and that the latter had therefore to be treated with just the same attention as the building itself. Thereupon the two garden historians Judith Rohrer and Silvia Steeb drew up a list of some 850 properties which were put under protection orders by the City Council in July 1989. Since January 2011, the lists of garden heritage and nature-conservation sites have been on the city's land registry information website, where all restrictions on real property rights are publicly accessible.

### **Strategic new approach**

In 1996 agricultural matters, previously the province of the city's Health and Economics Department, were transferred to the Civil



Engineering, Disposal and Recycling Department, and integrated with the Gardens Department, which was renamed the Gardens and Agriculture Department. In the following years, Zurich was the scene of a huge amount of building activity. The need for green and open spaces to be preserved in the urban environment became increasingly important. In 2000 Ernst Tschannen was given the task of merging the three departments responsible for gardens, agriculture and forests. The new department which was created under his direction has since borne the name "Grün Stadt Zürich" (literally: "Zurich Green City", but translated officially by the civic authorities as "Office of Parks and Open Spaces"). This created the preconditions for a strategic new direction, combined with a development towards integral planning and action geared to consequences and effects, along with a streamlining of planning instruments.

In the 2006 "Grünbuch der Stadt Zürich" (The Green Book of Zurich) edited by Cordula Weber, the then head of open-space planning, the open-space plans of 1986 and 1999 were further developed in specific directions. They formed important foundations for safeguarding green areas in the building and zoning regulations, triggered the formulation of landscape development concepts, and directed attention to the upgrading of rivers as recreation areas. The comprehensive and integral presentation of the green and open spaces in the "Green Book" and of environmental management designed to enhance the green effect by means of binding processes and targets with a time horizon of ten years, along with their linkage with postulates and indicators in relation to sustainable development, is regarded well beyond the confines of Zurich as innovative and pioneering, as is the close dovetailing of the strategic, conceptual and operative planes and the systematic monitoring of success rates through benchmarking.

The reorganization included a change to effect-oriented administration with a global budget. This involved concentrating the almost 30 products and services in five product groups: understanding and promotion of the natural environment, natural and open spaces, management of buildings and open spaces, natural products, and services. These product groups form the foundation for annual planning, controlling, and submission of the global budget. Product steering is managed via performance agreements negotiated annually. The results of the regular outcome checks in respect of customer satisfaction, importance for the target groups, the quality actually attained, and the cost-benefit ratio serve to optimize and correct performance and are likewise inputs to product-steering, annual planning and the overall strategy.

On the basis of the management goals set out in the "Green Book", the last two years have seen, in addition to the already established concepts such as the avenue concept, the formulation of further themes and specialist concepts in respect of cemeteries, playgrounds, the geographic information system, agriculture, nature schools and "green knowledge", food from the school garden, allotment gardens, the maintenance and improvement of valuable

natural spaces, and the procurement and maintenance of vehicles and machines as well.

The "Schwamendingen tree analysis" was also completed in 2010. It was the first comprehensive tree census of a whole district, including private land. The analysis is supplemented by recommendations on safeguarding and further developing the tree population, and sets out framework conditions for preserving the character of a district conceived as a garden city. The knowledge obtained by the study, along with the recommendations, which can certainly be applied to other districts too, can be used for the further planning of how we deal with trees in the urban environment, a subject of much emotional public debate, to which the Office of Parks and Open Spaces will give more emphasis in the coming years.

#### **Focuses for the next decade**

The city trees constitute one of a total of six green themes among the 2011–2014 legislative focuses for the Civil Engineering, Disposal and Recycling Department, to which the Office of Parks and Open Spaces belongs. The other emphases relate to 1) an active role in open-space consultancy, in order to safeguard high quality in the living and working environment through advisory services, partnerships and project support, 2) the documentation and assessment of changes in green spaces, 3) the encouragement of interim use of brown-field sites and further alternative utilization, 4) the encouragement of green roofs and façades, and 5) the further ongoing upgrading of river banks, and the opening up of streams.

With the planned construction of the Pfingstweid, a neighbourhood park in the development area Zurich West, the series of new parks which have been created since 2001 in the north and west of the city will be complete for the time being. The Office of Parks and Open Spaces will turn its attention increasingly to the enhancement of the green effect by bringing its influence to bear on land owned not by the city, but, for example, by housing co-operatives, real estate companies, or church parishes. Likewise the focus will increasingly shift to networking and intermeshing with the belt of suburban locations around the city.

#### **Participation promotes acceptance**

In the planning and construction of parks and open spaces, and in the development of concepts, the Office of Parks and Open Spaces is banking on customer closeness and participatory processes. The formulation of the two landscape-development concepts "City of Zurich Limmatt Area" (2006) and "Hönggerberg-Affoltern" (pre-print 2011) were each accompanied by a number of workshops and other events with a large variety of user-groups from the public, as well as specialists from the departments involved. From 1998, under the project title "Natur ums Schulhaus" (Nature Around the Schoolhouse) and with the active participation of children, teachers and parents too, more than 40 school buildings and their grounds were re-designed in a more child-friendly and nature-friendly



fashion. The first public playground to be laid out with the help of children was opened in the Hardau district in 2007. Since then, time and again, more extensive playground refurbishments and new installations have been developed in joint workshops with partners such as the children's and young people's participation of the Social Services Department, and, as far as possible, also implemented together with the children.

The run-up to the competition for the Pfingstweid was also accompanied in 2009 by a participation process entitled "Das schönste

Grün" (The Best Green). The plots in the district were included as integral components in the competition programme. Such attempts to balance different user needs could in future be carried out more efficiently and more effectively using social media: exchange possibilities accessible to all in social networks such as Facebook, blogs, online forums and similar platforms. The Office of Parks and Open Spaces also intends to rethink the classical paths of customer relations and strike out along new routes of interactive communication, knowledge transfer and customer loyalty in order to reach new categories of user.



*In spring 2009 children helped to build the playground they themselves had designed at the Leimbach community centre.*



*New forms of use: In 2009 the interim use of the grounds of a market garden in the Seebach district allowed the establishment of a temporary inter-cultural garden.*

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