

CASE FOR STUDY n° 4

LENE-VOIGT PARK (LEIPZIG, GERMANY) RENATURALISATION THROUGH PARTICIPATORY CO-CREATION

OVERVIEW OF THE REGENERATION PROJECT

Type of brownfield: Railway junction

Budget: € 3,18 million

Starting date of the project : 1998

Current status of the project: Completed

Type of intervention : Permanent

Intervention area: Green urban area

LOCALISATION AND GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

Country: Germany

Region: Saxony



Town: Leipzig, 597,000 inhabitants

Geographic context: A post-socialist city undergoing shrinkage after the Reunification but recently benefiting from socio-economic attractiveness

DESCRIPTION OF THE INITIAL BROWNFIELD

The former railway site “Eilenburger Bahnhof” was built in 1874 in a dense residential area, in the eastern part of Leipzig (Reudnitz-Thonberg district). It was used as railway junction – mainly for freight transport -until the 1970s but was then abandoned until 1998. This rectangular area measuring 11 ha and 800 meters from the western to the eastern edge, was inaccessible to the inhabitants and suffered from degradation and soil contamination. While the railway section belonged to the former DR (then Deutsche Bahn after the Reunification), adjacent areas were privately owned until 1998, when the Municipality bought them.



REGENERATION PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Following the approval, in the 1990s, of the city-wide Urban Development Plan for Residential Development and Urban Regeneration (STEP W+S) and the District Plan Leipzig East, the Municipality decided to develop green areas and recreational spaces to enhance quality of life and counteract shrinkage and migration towards Western *Länder*. One of the key actions was the transformation of a former railway junction into a multifunctional green area, later called Lene-Voigt Park and inaugurated in 2001. The aim was to implement a participative co-creation of the new park, by organising landscape architects' competitions, workshops, focus groups, site visits, children camps and seminars, in which stakeholders could openly discuss their desires. In this regard, the main goal was to address the needs of different age groups and give them a chance to communicate their expectations.

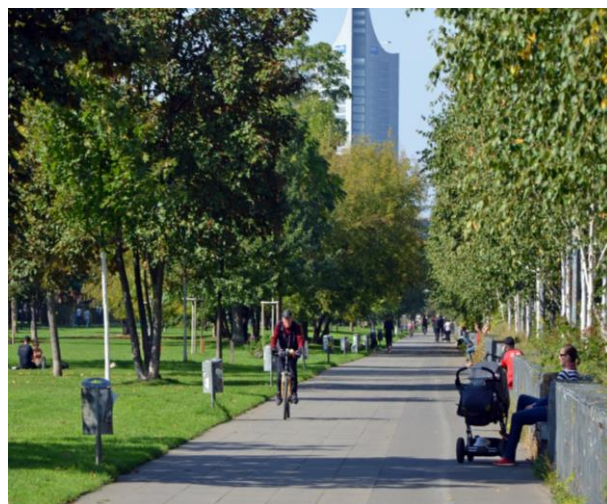
RESULTS

The park includes areas adapted to different users and age groups’ expectations. A main lawn area is used for recreational purposes and considered as a “silent” area. A portion of the park also includes sport spaces and playground (“active” areas for volleyball, table tennis, etc.). Side lots for urban gardening activities have been realised. Hedges and brick walls separate the different activities to minimise potential conflicts. The overground pipeline has been kept to preserve the identity of the place. Sealed tracks for cycling and walking have been implemented, connecting the park to the district’s main streets. At the district level, the Lene-Voigt Park has contributed to an increase in the number of inhabitants (+ 7000 between 2000 and 2020) and real-estate prices (+13% between 2008 and 2017), as well as a decrease in vacancy rate and population’s average age. Despite the gentrification trend in Reudnitz-Thonberg, partially explained by the presence of this new green area as a positive location factor, not all the initial ideas worked out in the way they had been planned. For instance, gardening activities did not last over the years. The overuse of public spaces leads to several management difficulties, such as the presence of trash piles and slow grass growth. The park has quickly become very popular among sportsmen and women, who found the area more suitable for jogging than other historical parks in Leipzig, but also among students and teenagers.

CONTEXT AND ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT



Leipzig is known for the early implementation of integrated urban development strategies. To counteract shrinkage and falling birth rate, the Municipality has strongly invested in green areas to reevaluate the image and quality of life of its neighborhoods. In this regard, the creation of Lene-Voigt Park has been considered as a key intervention, notably because of its strategic position and attractiveness potential (79% of Reudnitz-Thonberg district's public space has been rehabilitated between 2000 and 2020). Moreover, the area was considered as too narrow by private developers, making it difficult to invest in building construction. Recently, the park has inspired a larger green masterplan foreseeing a green corridor around the Eastern part of the city (*Parkbogen Ost*).

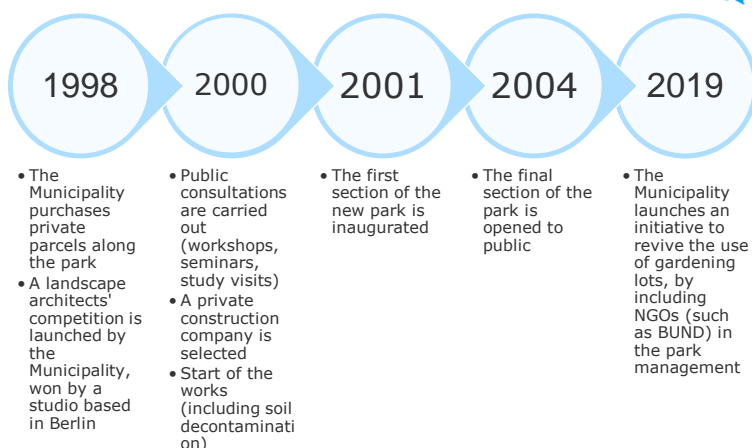


IMPLEMENTATION PHASES



The regeneration project has been carried out through three "traditional" phases:

- A design phase, lasted from 1998 to 2000
- A progressive implementation phase, lasted from 2001 to 2004
- An adjustment phase, currently ongoing, in which the Municipality tries to minimise some of the unsatisfactory results and mitigate negative impacts (gentrification, vandalism, abandonment of gardening lots, overcrowding).



SUCCESS FACTORS



- The use of innovative participative tools to design public space and foster the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders (different ages and backgrounds), in the framework of an anticipatory and flexible management
- An effective overlapping of both bottom-up and top-down processes.
- A project coherent with the city's needs and an ambitious upscaling decided by citizens: the park triggered an increasing demand in green spaces and led to the ongoing initiative of Parkbogen Ost (a network of green areas along the former urban railway)

OBSTACLES AND DIFFICULTIES MET



- High costs due to soil decontamination
- Practices of public space use differ from the ones originally designed (sport and gathering activities rather than gardening, leading to a strong overcrowding of lawn areas)
- Brick walls convey an image of insecurity and increase the risk of vandalism
- The branding of Lene-Voigt Park has fostered gentrification in the area. This trend is criticised for reducing social mix and for penalising low-income population.

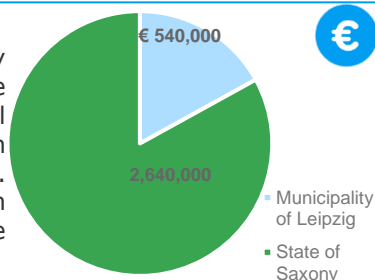
GOVERNANCE OF THE PROJECT



The regeneration of Lene Voigt Park has been led by the Municipality of Leipzig, which selected an architects' office in Berlin and a private construction firm. Local stakeholders, associations, residents and practitioners have participated in the project. Recently, associations such as BUND – Friends of the Earth have been involved to revive the gardening activities.

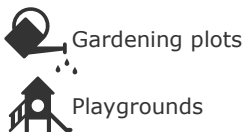
FUNDING

The Municipality contributed to one fifth of the overall budget between 1998 and 2001. The second section was financed by the *Land of Saxony*.





- First section of the park (opened in 2001)
- Second section of the park (opened in 2004)



Above: a satellite photo of the Lene Voigt Park.

Source: Google Maps

On the right: a map representing the path of the future Parkbogen Ost, a green corridor with cycling paths around Leipzig. The Lene Voigt Park is indicated in black

Source: Stadt Leipzig



SOURCES

- Ali L. et al., 2020, Gentrification through Green Regeneration? Analysing the Interaction between Inner-City Green Space Development and Neighbourhood Change in the Context of Re-growth: The Case of Lene-Voigt-Park in Leipzig, Eastern Germany. Land, 9, 24; doi:10.3390/land9010024
- Kabisch N., 2019, Transformation of urban brownfields through co-creation: the multi-functional Lene-Voigt Park in Leipzig as a case in point. Urban transformations, 1; 2.
- Stadt Leipzig, 2017. Masterplan: Parkbogen Ost : [online](#)
- Interview with René Zieprich and Daniel Ghin (Municipality of Leipzig) 24th March 2022.