

Socially sustainable space appropriation in urban parks

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The poster we would like to discuss at the meeting in Berne presents a theoretical and methodical approach to apply the concept of “sustainable space appropriation” (Nachhaltige Raumeignung) in an empirical research project. The poster refers to the research project *Sustainable design, management and appropriation of urban public parks* within the NFP 54. We expect our research results to provide public authorities, administrators and planners with decision-making knowledge on the potential as well as the limits of landscape design and park management for a sustainable urban policy. Some preliminary results of the project will also be included in the poster.

Parks contain a great potential to raise the quality of life of urban citizens and foster social sustainability as they offer opportunities for equal appropriation of these sites. However, even though the use of the concepts *sustainability* and *appropriation* has been proliferating recently, these concepts still are highly contested and severely under-theorized. On a very general level the concept of sustainability is widely accepted as a governance-guideline on a local, national and supra-national scale (e. g. BFS et al., 2002). But it is highly controversial when it comes to the decision and implementation of concrete policies. Contradictions emerge for instance between economically privileged and under-privileged or between culturally diverse societal groups (Bauhardt, 2003). The concept of appropriation suffers from similar insufficient and inconsistent definitions in theory and practice. While Michel de Certeau (1988) for instance focuses on the individuals’ claims of urban territories exercised through everyday (physical) walking patterns (see also Fenster, 2004), Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of *appropriated physical space* – or synonymously *reified social space* – puts structural aspects and social power relations in the foreground (Bourdieu, 1991).

Our concept is based on the assumption that an adequate conceptualization of space appropriation processes must encompass both physical / material as well as symbolic, emotional and power related aspects both in theory and in empirical research. Our approach also stands out for its combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods, which are non-participant observations analysed with GIS on the one hand and semi-structured interviews analysed with Grounded Theory on the other hand.

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