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## **GARTENSCHAU GARDEN FESTIVALS AS AN IMPULSE FOR THE RENEWAL OF SMALL GERMAN TOWNS**

FESTIWALE OGRODOWE GARTENSCHAU JAKO IMPULS DLA AKTYWIZACJI  
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### **ABSTRACT**

Garden shows and festivals are largely associated with the presentation of landscape architecture and gardening skills. The leading events include annual temporary exhibitions such as the British Chelsea Flower Show or the French International Garden Festival in Chaumont-sur-Loire. Annually organised regional and national garden festivals known as *Gartenschau* pursue quite a different agenda. Their priority is to improve the quality of public space through meticulous planning aimed at delivering specific economic indices, and hence providing each project with funding.

This paper discusses a programme of activities leading to the organisation of *Gartenschau* at both regional and national levels. The author presents research examples, disclosing compositional assumptions and economic effects achieved. The author also discusses social reception of *Gartenschau*, since at the time of the economic crisis the increase in property prices resulting from higher quality of space raises objections from local communities.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The significance of green areas for urbanised space is not to be underrated. The supply of green spaces improves the city's spatial structure, raises the quality of inhabitants' lives and is an important factor increasing the value of real estates [17]. The areas covered with greenery play significant biological roles, especially in terms of oxygen production, purifying air of gas and solid pollutants, regulating water circulation, water filtration as well as providing the environment for the development and migration of numerous plant and animal species. Green spaces also play important social roles: the access to open areas is thought to be a necessary condition of sustainable development and is a fundamental factor impacting inhabitants' quality of life. Consequently, active biological areas come as a basic material of the *Natural Urban System* [15; 17]. The form and operating principles of the Natural Urban System impact local communities. Resultantly, numerous publications on gardening and landscape architecture and garden art shows, exhibitions and festivals are increasingly popular. Major events in this domain include the British Chelsea Flower Show and the French International Garden Festival in Chaumont-sur-Loire. These festivals are a display of designers' and gardeners' artistic and technical skills. The cyclical events attract scores of visitors every year, emerging as a tourist attraction and a tourist destination in their own right. A five-day show staged annually in royal Chelsea gardens in London is visited by over 150,000 tourists from all over the world [14]. The location of those festivals is permanent, exhibitions being the only thing that has changed over the years. This kind of organisational formula boosts tourist traffic over a short period of time but it has no long-lasting impact on the spatial structure of the host cities. They are organised mainly to present current design trends in landscape architecture and gardening art. The role of

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garden festivals organised in Germany, commonly referred to as *Gartenschau*, is understood in quite a different way. The idea of paramount importance behind German festivals is to permanently improve town-planning structure and the quality of urban spaces and/or revitalise abandoned and desolate areas. The show of gardeners' and architects' competences is one of the tools used to promote the event and comes as a factor supporting the financing of the events.

### **ORIGINS OF GERMAN GARDEN FESTIVALS**

The organisation of garden exhibitions in today's Germany dates back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The shows were initially of a local nature; however, dynamic development and growing popularity of the shows enabled the preparation of the first international event that was held in Hamburg in 1869. In the 1930s, the yet uncoordinated system of organising garden shows was legally and organisationally regulated. The outbreak of World War II halted the development of garden festivals, though 1945 saw the first show, held in Erfurt. The first post-war *Bundesgartenschau* – a national gardening show – was opened in 1951 in Hannover. It came as a display of gardening skills, and the profession of a gardener was recognized as "royal." Ever since, national garden festivals saw a continuous evolution. Initially, they were prepared to present the latest achievements in the field of gardening technologies and art, gradually evolving into initiatives aiming to revitalise the urban fabric. Over time, the series of national festivals was complemented with regional events, *Landesgartenschau*, each of them under relevant state parliament's care [6; 8]. Since 1993, a body responsible for the organisation of national and international gardening shows (respectively *Bundesgartenschau* – BuGA and *Internationale Gartenausstellung* – IGA) in Germany has been Deutsche Bundesgartenschau-Gesellschaft (DBG). Basic goals of this company are to develop, plan, implement and fund garden festivals and green spaces delivered for the needs of the shows [8].

The organisation of *Gartenschau* in the present formula may become one of major instruments used for the revitalisation of urban space [1; 3; 13], mirroring contemporary town-planning trends, including *green infrastructure* and the so-called *Green Urbanism* [5]. Garden festivals also stimulate the region's tourism and culture [3; 8] and support the local business scene, especially in the organisation of regional festivals [9; 8]. These large events make up an essential element of the system in which the landscape architecture and gardening sector in Germany operate – the festivals conclude regional and national competitions. Attendance of regional and state authorities, including the Chancellor of Germany, to the opening of the shows and major side-events evidences the high importance of gardening shows, especially international and national ones [10]. The shows also play a role of playgrounds on which new gardening and landscape architecture technologies are tested [8]. The verification of intense use enables widespread incorporation of those technologies in projects developed in subsequent years, including those with a rank lower than that of garden festivals.

### **PLANNING AND PREPARING A GARTENSCHAU**

Nationwide *Bundesgartenschau* garden festivals are held biennially whereas international gardening shows (*IGA* – *Internationale Gartenausstellung* / *IGS* – *Internationale Gartenschau*) – every 10 years. Regional garden festivals are usually held biennially, sometimes intertwined with "small festivals" in the form of urban *green infrastructure* projects, as it is the case in Baden-Württemberg [1; 5; 8]. National and international shows are organised on a grand scale, whereas regional events are usually smaller and more locally oriented, mainly due to a lower budget.

Due to a wide range of transformations and substantial costs stemming from this kind of ventures, the organisation of garden festivals is subject to certain restrictions. Procedures for processing qualifying applications favour selection of the projects most likely to achieve a spatial and economic success. To facilitate the investment process, decisions about awarding the rights to organise *Bundesgartenschau* are made every few years and cover 3-4 subsequent events. We know of cities that will host the shows through to 2021. The number of applications submitted by towns for each package well exceeds the



number of festivals envisaged. The choice is made out of many proposals, those best prepared winning the competition. Also application to regional *Landesgartenschau* garden festivals is subject to restrictions, the communes often putting forth their candidatures several times before they are finally awarded the right to organise a show.

The preparation of an event of this kind, usually lasting half a year, is spread across many years, as shown in the table 1. This process can be divided into two stages: pre-application and post-application. The first stage takes place at the level of communes, which declare their willingness to organise a garden festival; it is most often the case, though, that the festival is supported by representatives of DBG or a competent regional body awarding rights to organise an exhibition. First of all, special regulations are incorporated into local law to make public and private spaces available for the needs of the future festival. Contents of a local development strategy and documents equivalent to the Polish Land Use Plan precisely envisage the way city space should be developed. One of assumptions defined in those documents is the improvement of the supply and quality of public green spaces and green belts connecting areas valuable for their natural and cultural significance [3]. During the planning process of a garden festival, an available pool of space within the city is defined, and a site of a future *Gartenschau* is selected out of this pool. Experts determine nodal and dependent zones located in the vicinity of the principal site of the show and transport routes connecting individual zones of the show. It is also possible to expand the festival area with other places situated beyond the principal area of the show that may benefit from the impact range of the event (e.g. *LaGa Rosenheim 2010*). A decentralised layout will be employed in a *Bundesgartenschau* held in 2015 in Havel, north-west of Berlin. This project covers 5 towns, among which a joint network of tourist initiatives will be developed. The main goal behind this project, besides the revitalisation of selected areas around those towns, is to create and reinforce the image of the region as a tourist destination [4].

An immensely significant factor crucial for the financial success of a project is to provide correct estimates regarding the potential number of festival visitors, since ticket sales revenues substantially cover indirect costs of festival organisation. Overestimation of the visitor stream may result in a significant deficit in the festival budget. This happened with the organisation of *IGA Hamburg 2013*. A comparative analysis makes use of data provided by past events held in towns with a similar size. The pool of visitors is divided into three groups. (1) Those visiting the festival travelling directly from their living places, the event being their only travel destination. This category consists of people living 2(4) hours' drive by car or train from the show. (2) Visitors for whom the visit to the festival (one day) is a part of their vacation. (3) Tourists using accommodation near the festival, for whom the festival is the main travel destination. Statistically, inhabitants of the town organising the festival make up 12-29% of all visitors, tourists travelling 120 minutes or more from their living places account for about 60%, the visitors making up the group (3) accounting for between 11 and 30% [3]. The number of those visiting garden festivals in small towns (Aschersleben, Reichenbach) is about 1.5 million people, whereas in medium-sized towns (Koblenz, Rosenheim, Magdeburg, Potsdam) – even 3.6 million [2]. A different measure is used for the stream of tourists visiting garden festivals organised at the tier of German regions (*Landesgartenschau*) and at the national tier (*Bundesgartenschau*). This situation results from two factors: the significance of the *BUGA* brand and the scale of projects, much greater and more spectacular in the case of national festivals. For the *Bundesgartenschau* in Erfurt planned for 2021, estimate data shows that the show will be visited by between 1,675,000 (a defensive version) and 2,500,000 people (an optimistic version) [3]. According to realistic assumptions, the show will be visited by about 2 million visitors. A correctly calculated number of visitors is a basis upon which to design the appropriate transport system within the festival area, with the consideration of the suitable number of permanent and temporary parking places for cars and coaches and a system of railway and bus transport routes, as well as the number of and distribution of entrances and service facilities such as: cashier's offices, information points and rest places. The elements considered during the process of preparing *Gartenschau*

include changes in the intensity of traffic of people visiting the festival for its whole duration, including peak months falling on vacation periods and days of key events being a part of the show, with a week and day breakdown. However, the organisation of each festival is a totally different task, hence the results of previous events do not guarantee that the success will be replicated in other years and regions. Additionally, the number of tourists who visited a given show is not the only criterion of evaluating the quality of such events. Just as the final financial outcome of a show, this result should be relativized, too. The most important aspect is long-term prospects for the revitalisation of urban spaces that will serve generations to come [8].

TABLE 1. Staging of the organisation of <i>Gartenschau</i>		
Preparation stage	Time [t - years]	Type of project
Pre-application stage	-13 (8 - 15)	Development of the Commune / Regional Development Strategy; incorporation of relevant provisions in the Land Use Plan of the commune; purchase of land necessary for the organisation of the festival.
	-10 (6 - 14)	Development of a Feasibility Study for the organisation of <i>Gartenschau</i> ; selection of urban areas that could be used for the organisation of a <i>Gartenschau</i> based on the provisions set forth in the Strategy and the Study; application for the organisation of a gardening show.
	-9 (6 - 10)	Submission of an application for the organisation of a show; <i>Gartenschau</i> organisation planning phase.
Post-application stage	-8 (5 - 7)	Reconstruction and revitalisation works in areas requiring prior preparation; possible demolition works.
	-6 (5 - 6)	Establishment of a company responsible for the organisation of a garden festival.
	-5 (3 - 7)	Announcement and conclusion of a competition for a <i>Gartenschau</i> project.
	-4 (2 - 3)	Elaboration of the concept, arrangements with administrators of the site, conservation and environmental bodies; performance of some of the works on privately-owned festival areas.
	-3 (-2 - 4)	Launch of construction works at the festival site; planting plants in privately-owned areas.
	-2 (1 - 3)	Organisation of events preceding the show, including a visit to the construction site; planting plants in publically-owned areas.
	0	Ceremonial opening of <i>Gartenschau</i> .

Table 1 Staging of *Gartenschau* organisation

If an application for the organisation of the festival has been approved, a process of intense preparations for the festival can begin. The most important tasks at this stage include establishment of a company that will formally organise and conduct an architectural competition for the development of the festival site. *Gartenschau* may be delivered under two legal formulas. It



is possible to set up a company with 100% of assets owned by the commune. In this case, the commune needs to pay royalties for the *BuGa* trademark to *DBG*. Another option is to set up a commune company with *DBG*'s share.

A competition for a *Gartenschau* site development plan is usually of an international character. The choice of a winning concept is made by a jury mostly composed of experts in the field of architecture and landscape architecture, naturalists and landscapers. Representatives of local authorities can provide advice on details of local laws and evaluation of proposed infrastructural solutions. A concept winning the first prize usually enters the development stage. The winning design is further elaborated, many of the landscape architecture and floral arrangement spaces being designed by local companies, which can advertise themselves this way. One of increasingly popular ways of developing festival spaces, which at a given moment are not necessary for the city to function and do not provide valuable leisure sites, is to subject them to spontaneous and natural vegetation, without tending them, or to develop extensive quasi-natural arrangements with perennial plants, including native species [7; 3].

Construction works associated with festival arrangements begin at the latest 3 or 4 years before the show's beginning, though some preparatory works related to the organisation of the *Gartenschau* might be delivered as early as the pre-application stage. In order to provide the society with information about the progress of works, within 1-2 years before the festival opening, side-events and site visits during construction works are held. Those interested in technical details on how to deliver certain solutions may get to know technologies of conducting works in the field of landscape architecture.

The organisation of garden festivals at national and regional levels is more and more subject to social debate, or even social criticism, though an overall image of those projects is still quite positive [10; 3; 8]. The critics point to occasionally inappropriate approach to the pre-existing green spaces within the festival site [10], mismanagement of natural resources and social costs of the increase in the value of real estates in the areas adjacent to *Gartenschau*. From the perspective of the Polish tax system, an increase in the value of an apartment or a house is of no significance. However, provisions of German law make incidence increase, since the value of property tax depends directly on the value of the property [16]. Another weakness of festivals is the lack of ideas for further development and management of the areas of the show and, as it often happens, the commune's financial incapacity to maintain an attractive arrangement after the completion of *Gartenschau* [8]. In connection with numerous protests addressed to the communes organising national and regional garden festivals, it has become customary to organise a referendum in which inhabitants vote for or against launching preparations for the organisation of *Gartenschau*. The level of emotions related to this topic is evidenced by the outcome of voting over the organisation of *LaGa Giessen 2014* and *BuGa Mannheim 2023*, in which slightly over 50% of voters voted for the organisation of the show.

### **ENGINEERING GARTENSCHAU BUDGET AND FINANCE**

The finance, including identifying potential sources of festival funding, is planned already at the pre-application stage, while developing a feasibility study. The financial programme involves designing a capital budget and a budget for indirect costs, related to the process of preparation and functioning of *Gartenschau*. Funds earmarked for developments cover, among other things, costs of preparing necessary infrastructure (roads, permanent car parks, and bus and railway stations, etc.), development of parks and gardens, leisure areas and permanent green spaces (planting trees and shrubs), renovation of buildings and urban squares, and revitalisation of degraded areas [3,4]. Indirect expenses include festival staff costs as well as operation of interim car parks, *DBG* licences, temporary planting and maintenance of an orderly condition, among others. Based on the example of a feasibility study for *BuGa Erfurt Erfurt 2021* [3], we can point to potential funding sources of a festival.

Capital costs are covered mostly from the budget of the commune-organiser and its dependent bodies. It is assumed that own funds cover at least 50% of financial needs. Today, EU funds, along with funds from state and regional budgets, make up a principal source of supplementary funding. Those engineering *Gartenschau* budgets at both national and regional levels seek to secure funds from programmes for tourism and cultural development as well as environmental protection and conservation of monuments [3;6]. Indirect costs are covered mostly from entry ticket sales revenues as well as lease, licence fees, sales of promotional materials, sponsorship grants and sales of beverages and food at the show [3; 8].

Estimate data shows that about 25% of expenses related to the organisation and operation of the festival go back to the city budget in the form of various direct and indirect taxes and fees. Additionally, each 1 EURO spent on the organisation of the show generates EUR 5-6 in revenues. In this light, the improvement of space, including the development of new green areas, comes as an additional benefit, at the disposal of local communities [8]. Works related to the preparation and maintenance of the show provide jobs and improve financial performance of local enterprises. It is estimated that 90% of works delivered in connection with the festival are executed by companies based in the same region. The event itself might provide as many as 1,000 jobs related to maintenance of green areas, logistics, finance, security and other aspects crucial for the festival to succeed [12].

The organisation of a *Gartenschau* is not always a financial success. Unduly optimistic assumptions, as was the case with *IGA Rostock 2003*, inadequately positive social reception of some arrangements during the organisation of the *Bundesgartenschau München 2005*, or the inability to reach a political consensus and poor promotion of the event (*IGA Hamburg 2013*) may result in a deficit upon the festival's ending. Depending on the scale of losses, one might still relativize the deficit by recognising the benefits from improved public space or development of leisure areas, very attractive and popular among local communities. This was the case with the final outcome of *Bundesgartenschau München 2005*: the deficit exceeded EUR 160,000, with the budget amounting to EUR 107 million. In this case, social benefits in the form of revitalised urban space and new extensive parks justify the financial loss. The largest failures among garden festivals include the *Internationale Gartenausstellung (IGA) Rostock 2003*, closed with a multi-million loss and, as the latest information shows, *IGA Hamburg 2013*. Its financial result will amount to a loss of EUR 37 million. The evaluation of these three festivals will provide a basis for changes in upcoming festival programmes.

It is worth mentioning a few figures showing the scale of projects related to the organisation of garden festivals in Germany. The organisation cost of the *Landesgartenschau Reichenbach 2009* was EUR 21 million. The contribution from the budget of the State of Saxony was 75% [9]. The budget of *LaGa Nagold 2012* was EUR 16.1 million, with the total area of 16 ha [5], *BuGa München 2005* spent EUR 107 million [4] to improve the quality of 190 ha, *BuGa Koblenz 2010* – EUR 112 million to develop and ensure the maintenance of an area of 48 ha [2]. *BuGa Gera/Ronneburg 2007*'s budget of EUR 147 million was allotted largely to the revitalisation of post-excavation areas of a former uranium mine [8].

## **EXAMPLES OF PREVIOUS LANDESGARTENSCHAU SHOWS**

### **Reichenbach im Vogtland 2009**

The town dates back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, when some of the first records about the Christianised Slavonic settlement appeared. Just as many towns in the former German Democratic Republic, Reichenbach has struggled with the problem of population exodus. This process began as early as the 1950s. Ever since, the city's populace dropped from 35,000 (in 1946) to below 20,000 (in 2012). The garden festival was aimed at revitalising post-industrial sites, located in naturally and scenically sensitive areas stretching along a valley, among hills, with an old town located in the north and a forest park in the south (Il.1). As a result of a design competition, the old town zone and the valuable leisure area in the forest were connected



with an extensive public park. The project consisted in building a pedestrian flyover leading from the old town to the park over a busy regional road and revitalising the old town and suburban areas. Over 100,000 trees, shrubs and perennial plants and 130,000 bulbs were planted. Today, with the improved quality of public spaces and an attractive park having been delivered in the vicinity of the historical city centre, the role of the city as the region's principal centre has been recuperated. All facilities, either renovated as part of or developed specifically for the *Gartenschau* serve the local community. A large share of plants planted, including extensive perennial arrangements at post-industrial sites, has been kept in place, and this raised the city's attractiveness

### **Aschersleben 2010**

The IBA Stadtumbau Sachsen-Anhalt 2010 project, covering 19 small and medium towns, involved the organisation of a *Gartenschau* garden festival as an instrument to improve spatial structure. Aschersleben is one of the oldest towns in Saxony-Anhalt. In connection with a drop in population since 1990 (a decrease from 32,500 in 1990 to 27,100 in 2008), the populace is forecast to further fall to about 22,000 in 2025, which necessitates a reduction in the number of buildings by demolishing 1,200 houses in suburban areas and concentration of the residential use in the historical city centre. The motto of the IBA was "From the Outside to the Inside – Focusing on the Centre." The motto of the garden festival was: "Natur findet Stadt." Some houses in the city centre were demolished, too, and temporary artistic installations were put up on empty plots, bearing in mind, though, that new developments would be delivered there in future. An inextricable goal of the project was to raise the quality of public space by developing attractive leisure and rest areas as well as interesting public urban spaces. Future use objectives were defined for the city: development of education, business and improvement of the quality of urban space. A new educational use was granted to the buildings of a former cardboard factory, complemented with a new wing with a contemporary design. The immediate vicinity of the educational facilities was the principal space of the *Landesgartenschau 2010*, which, since the end of the garden festival, has functioned as school park space. An important element of the city's spatial structure revitalised as part of the *Landesgartenschau* is a riverbed of the Eine River, which crosses Aschersleben. Previously closed in a channel, the river was opened, and its banks are now lined with walking and cycling routes, gladly used by inhabitants.

### **Rosenheim 2010**

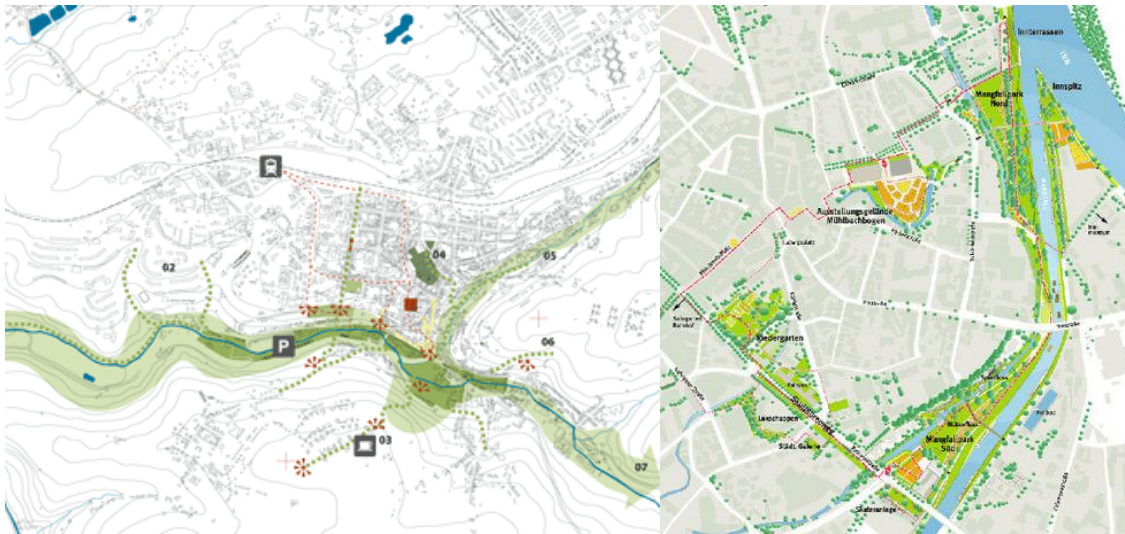
The aim of the festival was to revitalise a district located in the immediate vicinity of the historical city centre, develop new green areas in the urban fabric and open, renaturalise and provide broader access to watercourses flowing through the city: banks of the Inn River, Mangfall and Hammerbach streams, and a raceway in the city centre (II.2). Works conducted on the banks were also aimed at improving the city's flood safety. Architectural and landscaping activities consisted in developing bridges and footbridges connecting banks of rivers and streams as well as an observation platform at the mouth of the Mangfall stream to the River Inn. As Rosenheim is a major timber industry centre, the bridges were built mostly with wood. The central show place was arranged in the area of Mangfallpark, located on the River Inn.

Since the garden festival ended, new premium residential developments were delivered. They are surrounded by green spaces and located in the vicinity of extensive, newly developed leisure areas. Mangfallpark, a multi-use park space that covers, among other things, a kayak route for children and areas for those doing other sports, stretches for 1.5 km along the banks of the Mangfall Stream and the River Inn. The project delivered addresses the need for protecting the city's riverside areas against centenary water while at the same time retaining valuable aesthetic assets of the space and the possibility of using it for rest and recreation.

A factor that allowed to attract a number of visitors during the festival were cyclically changing flower exhibitions and numerous cultural and educational events. The arrangement of plants was based on seasonal plants changed from spring through summer to autumn, complemented with exhibitions organised on a smaller scale. Point exhibitions were aimed at presenting selected groups of plants or thematic arrangements such as ikebana or funeral decorations.

## CONCLUSIONS

The organisation of *Gartenschau* garden festivals provides a stimulus for the local economy and the community of the town hosting them. The festivals generate additional material resources and funds. The organisation of the shows reduces the time of completing certain developments from 10-15 years to 2-3 years. The city's organisation of a *Gartenschau* boosts the local economic situation in many sectors, accelerates renovation programmes, and facilitates development of tourism and cultural networks. It also contributes to increasing the share of private capital in public and private projects. *Gartenschau* shows come as a playground where we can test new technologies subsequently put into daily use. The organisation of a festival also contributes to improving the local labour market, generating a number of jobs related to the maintenance of green space, financial services, security services and logistics. The number of jobs generated at each time may amount to 1000 people. An immensely important aspect is, above all, the long-lasting impact on town-planning activities and urban spatial structure.



II. 1 Spatial and programme concept related to the organisation of LaGa 2009 Reichenbach im Vogtland [source:www.stationc23.de]

II. 2 A site of LaGa 2010 Rosenheim [source: <http://landesgartenschau.bayern-online.de>]





Il. 3 Garden festivals are a display of designers' skills and a playground for testing new landscape architecture technologies. LaGa Aschersleben 2010 [author's photo]



Il. 4 Organisation of garden shows is aimed at improving facilities for flood protection. Plants planted include natural species; natural succession of vegetation is permitted. LaGa Rosenheim 2010 [author's photo].

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