

Large-scale commercial developments such as the new BMW factory have in recent years changed the formerly rural character of the landscape around Leipzig.  
Design: Zaha Hadid, London, with Gross.Max, Edinburgh



LANDSCAPE CONCEPT, INDUSTRIAL PARK NORTH,  
LEIPZIG, GERMANY  
Client: City of Leipzig  
Landscape architects: Becker Giseke Mohren Richard –  
bgmr Landschaftsarchitekten  
Realisation: 2003 – 2005  
Area: 150 hectares

# Across the Periphery – Leipzig North

In response to the strong transformation processes of past decades, the City of Leipzig commissioned a spatial concept for its periphery. bgmr Landscape Architects developed an urban cultural landscape.

Travelling on the Autobahn A 14 along the northern periphery of Leipzig, between Halle and Dresden, one passes through outskirts that used to be rural, but in the last ten years have been transformed by large-scale commercial developments, a trend that will continue.

The current new land users who have colonised the area are the airport authority, a growing cargo transport centre, the trade fair Neue Messe Leipzig, the mail order centre Quelle and the car manufacturers Porsche and BMW. These large commercial units have their own access logistics that put a premium on performance and functionality, demanding regional and national links. Local networks, such as historical paths between villages, footpaths and cycle routes are not compatible with these systems and are consequently severed by their growth. Two different systems of mobility requirements collide here.

The displaced segments of the old landscape lie like relicts of a past era within this new urban fabric. A mass of mitigation measures have been superimposed, these, however, have been conceived solely with ecological ratings in mind,



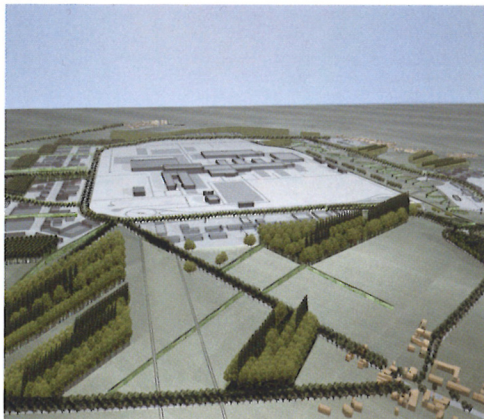
rather than to establish a new character in these left over spaces. It is not just the urban fabric that is being transformed, but with it the landscape. The changes are evident, and it is no longer possible to pretend that the old status quo can be preserved – but what does the new one look like?

The practices of Speer & Partner AS & P from Frankfurt and Becker Giseke Mohren Richard

bgmr Landscape Architects from Berlin/Leipzig were appointed by the City of Leipzig in 2001 to develop a spatial concept.

The “city sequence scenario” formed the basis of all subsequent spatial structuring. It proposes a string of different commercial urban development units along the motorway. A generous landscape corridor running from north to

The spatial concept of bgmr and AS & P reacts to the changes on the periphery of Leipzig and structures the space into urban development units and a landscape corridor.



south subdivides the east-west oriented commercial land uses. The image characterising the proposal is an undulating landscape. Within the individual development units this concept is reduced in scale, informing the detail design level.

One of the development units is the Industrial Park North, comprising more than 320 hectares of commercial and industrial uses; 200 hectares of this area are occupied by the new BMW factory. To provide the necessary access infrastructure a new railway track and a motorway interchange were provided, high-voltage masts and an a road were realigned, and new access and relief roads built. Five large rainwater retention basins were excavated and 150 hectares of statutory mitigation measures were implemented in the immediate vicinity.

The BMW factory is located on a levelled site, for which – to balance cut and fill operations – some sections of the undulating landscape were excavated and others visibly raised.

The factory has been a fast-track development. In 2001 the location was selected from 250 contenders, and by 2001/2002 the site was cleared. For the site preparation alone, 3.5 million cubic metres of soil were moved. Construction commenced in 2002 and the production of 160 BMW 3 Series cars per day is scheduled to begin within the next three years.

Architect Zaha Hadid from London, with landscape architects Gross.Max from Edinburgh, won the competition for the central building of the BMW plant. They designed it in a dynamic architectural language to form the “nerve centre” of the factory. The production

The Industrial Park North with the BMW factory is part of the commercial development units. Spatial integration is based on a patchwork system that allows the later addition of commercial and landscape modules.



The construction of the 200-hectare factory site also required new infrastructure projects. The spatial concept puts emphasis on roads, dams and railway tracks and turns these into features of the new urban man-made landscape.

process between bodyshell work, paint shop and assembly, and the lines of movement of the workforce cross each other at several points. The technical and administrative centre is thus articulated in the architecture and landscape proposal. Even the extensive car parks for visitors and workers in front of the central building strengthen the design concept in their relation to the

building. Dense walls of poplar trees express dynamics and provide orientation. Zaha Hadid's design has recently received the Architecture Award of Leipzig.

An industrial plant of these dimensions with 24-hour production capacity must be sited at a considerable distance from neighbouring villages and other suburban land uses. How should

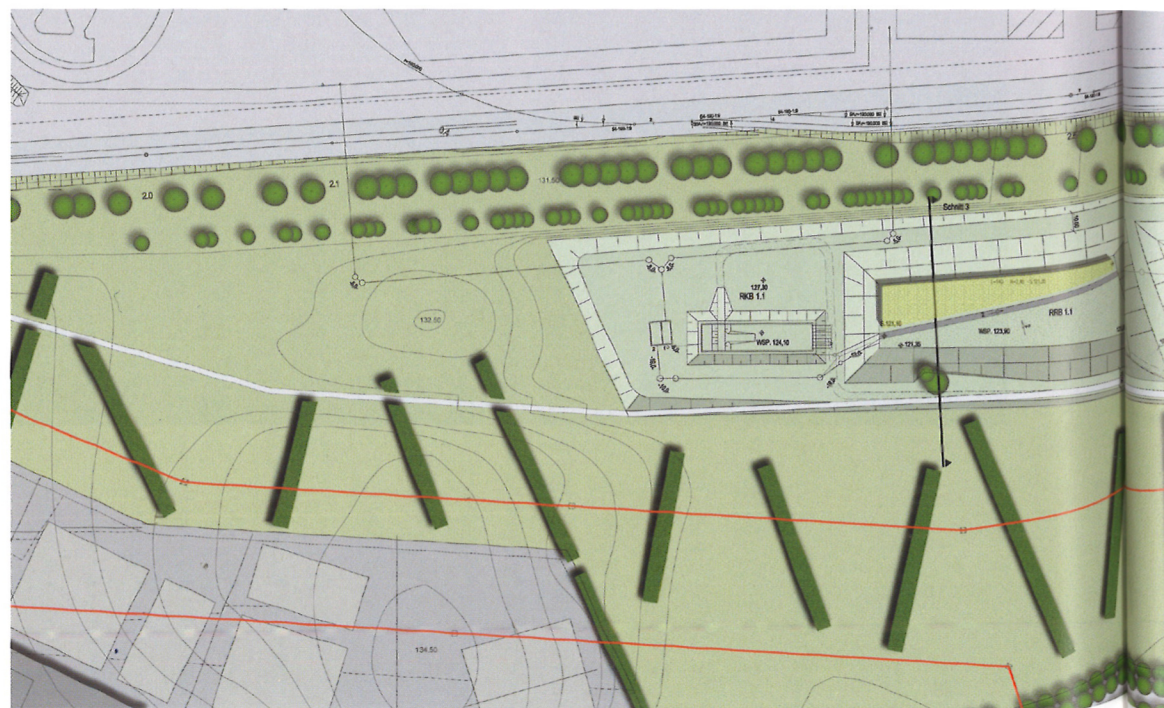
the interspaces be designed when the common urban planning tools will not work? Landscape architects were brought in, especially because an additional 150 hectares of ecological mitigation measures had to be accommodated.

The landscape masterplan for the Industrial Park was designed by bgmr in cooperation with AS & P, and implemented during the following



Avenues of trees integrate the new access roads into the landscape concept and provide spatial structure (above). Rainwater retention basins are not hidden but made into features of the undulating landscape (above right).

A two-kilometre band of hedges planted in staggered sections and a straight double row of trees, the tree "filter", emphasise the retention basins in between.



years. The working title of the project was “patchwork”. Apart from the large BMW site, single commercial clusters and landscape modules can be added independent of one another, on any site and at any time. The system is very robust and flexible, creating few interdependencies and opening many opportunities. In this spatial context an appropriate design approach to the transformed landscape is required. It should neither idealise the “natural” countryside nor should it result in an artificial event landscape.

The concept of the new landscape provides a robust spatial structure, in response to the scale and grain of the commercial and industrial uses. It is a composition of landscape elements comprising wedges of dense tree planting and long, alternating strips of woodland contrasted by open meadowland. The request by the nature conservation authorities to use existing landscape elements was met, but implemented at a macro scale. A band of hedges, two kilometres in length, was planted in staggered sections. A

straight double row of trees, the tree “filter”, also two kilometres long, underlines this alienation of traditional man-made landscape elements. The rainwater retention basins are located on a plane, between the band of hedges and the tree filter. The production building is displayed on the raised plateau of the BMW site in the background. New paths, following the old topography traverse the area. The scale of the area, favouring fast cyclists and skaters rather than slow walkers, determines its recreational use.

To strengthen the identity of the space the access infrastructure and its technical buildings were incorporated in the design. Roads, railway tracks and rainwater retention basins and associated dams, cuttings and embankments are not hidden, but made into features in the undulating landscape. The soft topography of the old landscape and the hard new constructions were deliberately contrasted and made evident.

The switchboxes, pumping stations and electric substations were designed along the

theme “technology creates the landscape, the landscape informs the technology”, as an element of the urban man-made landscape. Tagebau Architects + Designers from Leipzig developed a design guide for the use of colour, paving materials and open mesh fencing to keep boundaries transparent.

This conception of landscape architecture, looking further than mitigation concepts restricted to the consideration of nature conservation issues, by addressing the transformation of the complete landscape in its design, will help to create a new regional identity.

The response to the changes in land use give rise to new, “urban” landscape types, in this case one in which fast cars are produced out of modern, designed buildings – by reacting to the process of change new standards for the development of the landscape can be brought to bear. This forward-looking new landscape type is, incidentally, managed by grazing in the traditional manner with a flock of sheep.

