

## **Ideale Realitäten**

Potsdam und die Rolle von Peter Joseph Lenné

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Potsdam and the role of Peter Joseph Lenné

Abschlussarbeit: Wintersemester 2011 | 2012  
Masterstudium der Landschaftsarchitektur

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Die Verantwortung für Inhalt, Rechtschreibung und Wahrung von Urheberrechten liegt ausschließlich bei der Verfasserin.

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### Abstract

Potsdam, the “Holistic Artwork”, the “Arcadia of the North”, the “unique unity of art, nature and parks,” arrives in the real world. The city of Prussian kings, formerly marked by castles and garrisons, reconstructed after the war’s destruction under the ideology of the GDR, and today characterized by a superposition of different structures, faces the challenges of the 21st century as state capital, research location and cultural city with a growing population.

During the first half of the 19th century, under the reign of Friedrich Wilhelm III. and Friedrich Wilhelm IV., the last significant landscape architectural reformation was carried out in Potsdam. The transformation was achieved by Peter Joseph Lenné, one of the most distinguished landscape designers of the time, assisted by Karl Friedrich Schinkel, a renowned architect. Thus, the Potsdam landscape is mostly affected by Lenné’s and Schinkel’s work and is even today celebrated as one of Europe’s most valuable cultural heritages.

The topic of this paper refers to Potsdam city, which is located about 30km southwest from Berlin. This paper is divided in two main parts. The first part analyses the landscape architectural work of Peter Joseph Lenné, whereas the second part consists demonstrating the design of an open space in Potsdam’s central area.

The paper begins with a theoretical debate about the landscape architect Peter Joseph Lenné himself. Firstly, his designing methods, as well as the intentions behind them, are analyzed. His designing approaches are then discussed in a critical reflection seen from a modern point of view. Are Lenné’s methods in today’s landscape architecture still accurate? Can he still be seen as a role model and can we therefore learn from his work almost 150 years after his death? As a summarized result, although not in all aspects, one can state that Lenné can be seen as an innovative and brilliant artist of his time, from whom we can still learn today. He was aware of the social responsibility he had as a designer and the importance of his work for the city structure and development. Furthermore, he realized the necessity to connect aesthetics of an open space with a purpose. Only by the combination and interaction of beauty and functionality can a lasting protection of the landscape be guaranteed. Lenné’s viewpoint towards landscape and the awareness of the duty of a landscape designer, can be compared with modern comprehension and therefore taken for granted. However, 150 years ago, artists designed gardens for aristocrats and thus limited themselves and their designs to the plot boundaries. Lenné overcame these (designing) boundaries, for instance by connecting the city structure with landscape elements and by doing so revolutionized landscape design.

The second part of the thesis describes the creation of a new design for Potsdam’s central area. The city’s constant growth results in insufficient space for its expansion. The city center presents a high potential for development. The planning site described lies in the central area, north from Potsdam’s central station. Here, an open space is to be designed, evaluating the site from a landscape (architectural) perspective. The adjacent quarters and the river Havel should be incorporated into the conceptual design.

The concept “SouthLine Potsdam” consists of three layers, which interact with one another: the “green center”, the “urban backbone or spine” and the construction layer. The existence and function of one layer depends on that of the other two, therefore the layers cannot be seen isolated from each other. The Freundschaftsinsel, a small island located in the center of Potsdam, is a popular recreational area in the city. The conceptual design aims to emphasize this

“green center” in combination with the other two layers. The “urban backbone/spine” consists of an urban belt, which connects all surrounding areas and quarters south from the river Havel. The connecting function of the belt is accentuated by the pavement design, hereby achieving a unity of the entire area. The heterogeneity of each quarter should be conserved and therefore any function, requirement and attraction can be “attached” to the belt as necessary. Differentiated landscapes and spaces along the urban belt are created, which are emphasized by the neighboring buildings.

SouthLine Potsdam is a modern landscape architectural design; an intentional decision not to create another English Garden. Bearing in mind that Potsdam has a great number of historical English Gardens, to create yet another would only result in a poor copy of one of Germany’s greatest landscape architects of all times. In consequence, no artistic similarities and connections can be found between the first and the second part of this paper. Yet the fact, of developing a conceptual design from its environmental context can be seen as a parallelism between Lenné and the design of SouthLine Potsdam.