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Abstract (for an oral presentation)

Management - Development and Vegetation – Research Project about a Regional Park Maintenance Scheme for the Emscher Landscape Park (Ruhr Region, Germany) REFINA Project (FKZ 0330744)

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The goal of the REFINA research project (May 2006 – April 2009) is the development and implementation of innovative strategies for sustainable land use management in the Ruhr Region of Germany. The key initiative of the project is the development of a regionally coordinated concept of open-space management and maintenance for the Emscher Landscape Park.

The Emscher Landscape Park is the most developed regional park in Europe. Since 1989 more than 500 million Euros - mainly public money – have been invested in some hundred local projects, like new parks on former brownfields. With a total size of more than 440 km² it has become a very important green infrastructure in the Ruhr Region and an instrument of developing a post-industrial cultural landscape.

Until now, regional coordination and dialog have been entirely lacking, nor has there been any development of collective goals with regard to quality. As a result, the standard of maintenance is quite varied and in some cases entirely deficient. In certain areas, continued public funding for the development of new open spaces even appears to be endangered as funding prerequisites are not met due to deficient or faulty care. It is necessary to create new fields of economic support and sustainable value. Research questions are the using of biomass for energy production and the development of regional cycling systems of rainwater and not centralised sewage treatment within the areas of the regional park.

This research and development project is conceived as a pilot project for a necessary regional park maintenance scheme. Its purpose is to put the topic of sustainable development of the urban landscape at the centre of a regionally coordinated project and to provide a regional management organisation with the tools it will require in its future role as the supporting organisation for the Emscher Landscape Park. At the same time, standard approaches for high-quality and sustainable based management of the urban landscape will be developed, and partners and stakeholders will be integrated into the regional park scheme by assuming responsibility for those areas which are most relevant to them.

This can be one element on the way to a more dynamic and flexible strategy of management and maintenance of green spaces in urbanised landscapes, which follows more the care taking development principles, than a strict plan controlled concept.

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