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**MATE**

Magyar Agrár- és Élettudományi Egyetem  
Tájépítészeti, Településtervezési és Díszkertészeti Intézet  
H-1118 Budapest, Villányi út 35-43.  
Telefon: +36 1 305 7291  
E-mail: [tajepiteszet@uni-mate.hu](mailto:tajepiteszet@uni-mate.hu)  
Web: <https://journal.uni-mate.hu/index.php/4D>



# SZABAD TEREK – DINAMIKUS HELYEK: S M L XL OPEN SPACES – DYNAMIC PLACES: S M L XL

AUBÖCK, MARIA | KÁRÁSZ, JÁNOS

## ABSZTRAKT

A cikk betekintést nyújt Maria Auböck és Kárász János bécsi tájépítészek tervezési gyakorlatába. Ez az írás abból az alkalomból született, hogy a MATE Egyetemen tiszteletbeli professzori címet kaptunk. A kiválasztott módszerek a tájépítészetünk küldetését írják le különböző projektek bemutatásával, mindegyiknek megvan a maga története. A bemutatott kiválasztott tervezési módszerek között szerepelnek válogatott inspirációk, például a helyszíni vázlatkészítés, a növényanyag-választás és a konstruktív kihívások. Az alkalmazott főbb módszerek a csapáértépes változatos aspektusait kínálják, a munka együttműködésének kérdéseit követve.

- Hogyan lehet az ügyfeleket motiválni, hogy az időt mint a döntési horizontjukon túlmutató „építőanyagot” tekintsék?
- Hogyan lehet megfizethető és vonzó tájképeket létrehozni azon belátás alapján, hogy ezeken belül még gazdasági értelemben is képesek vagyunk többletértéket nyújtani?
- Hogyan lehet a városi helyszíneken igényes üres tereket bevezetni, és a közvélemény által elfogadhatóvá tenni anélkül, hogy túlhangsúlyoznánk azokat?

Összefoglalva a bemutatott projektpaletta "Szabad terek – dinamikus helyek: S M L XL" címet választottuk, mivel a cikk különböző léptékű kiválasztott munkákat tartalmaz.

A projektek a belvárosi felújítás szempontjait tartalmazzák: egy barokk kolostor udvarának példáján és egy lerombolt zsinagóga emlékműve alapján, közpénzekből támogatott lakásépítés tájtervezését bemutatva és Baku városi zöldítését több fejlesztési fázisban.

A konklúzió főbb aspektusai a táji urbanizmussal foglalkoznak, a tervezésnek egy új területével a klímaváltozás kihívásokkal teli időszakában.

*Kulcsszavak: táji urbanizmus, kihívások az éghajlatváltozás idején, az idő mint a tájépítészet építőanyaga, poétikus térségek mint inspiráció forrás* ©

## ABSTRACT

The article offers insights in the design practice of Maria Auböck and János Kárász, landscape architects in Vienna, Austria. The purpose of this text is to mark the occasion of us being awarded honorary professorships at MATE University. The selected methods describe the mission of Landscape Urbanism by presenting a variety of projects, each of them has a history and story of its own. The chosen design methods described include selected inspirations, for instance sketching on site, the choice of plant material and constructive challenges. The main methods applied offer varied aspects of team building, following questions for work cooperation

- How can clients be motivated to consider time as a building material that extends beyond their decision-making horizon?
- How can affordable and attractive landscapes be created based on the insight that within these we are able to provide even added value in economic sense?
- How can sophisticated empty spaces be introduced in urban sites, and get public acceptance without overstaging them?

To summarize the presented project palette the title “Open Spaces – Dynamic Places: S M L XL” was chosen as the article includes selected works in different scales. The projects include aspects of inner city renovation by example of a baroque monastery’s courtyard and art in public spaces (a memorial of a destroyed synagogue), explaining landscape designs for subsidized housing quarters and the urban greening of Baku- in four steps. The main aspects of the conclusion deals with landscape urbanism, a new field of planning in the challenging time of Climate Change.

*Key words: landscape urbanism, challenges in time of climate change, time is a building material for landscape architecture, poetic spaces offer inspiration*

## INTRODUCTION

Mostly working in urban sites, on large as well as small scales, we give our projects site-specific attention regardless of their size. The aim and intention of our landscape architectonic approach is to improve our environments at a time of climate change – at the same time inventing inspiring and poetic spaces that go beyond functional requirements.

Each project has a history and story of its own – depending on the client, the typological implications, the

locations and the future traces over time. We design processes that are open-ended.

Based in Vienna, we work in a small interdisciplinary team, both in Austria and abroad. Often our projects unfold in close cooperation with architects, engineers and artists, sometimes we are invited as landscape architects within the framework of art in public space programmes [1]. At the same time, we consider landscape architecture as an eminently social task and aim to create consumption-free spaces accessible to all. Conversion and reuse are becoming increasingly important strategies alongside the creation of new landscapes.

Against this backdrop, we regard the following as crucial issues:

- How can we address the challenges of climate change as a qualitative and not merely quantitative claim?
- How can we motivate clients to consider time as a building material that extends beyond their decision-making horizon?
- How can we create affordable and attractive landscapes based on the insight that we are able to provide and even add value in an economic sense?
- How can we introduce sophisticated empty spaces that gain acceptance, without overstaging them?
- What are the appropriate contemporary forms of visual representation in contrast to hyperrealistic renderings [2]?
- How can public-private partnerships contribute to innovative solutions in public spaces?

## CLIMATE CHANGE REQUIRES CULTURAL CHANGE

Climate change has brought some daunting challenges for cities. Finding adequate responses in landscape architecture and landscape urbanism will require planners to grapple with ecological issues on all scales: the way building plots are conceived, the reduction of impervious surfaces, the use of the Stockholm system. What our cities require is nothing short of the implementation of new aesthetics for a contemporary urban garden culture. Although this dialogue about urgent issues of design principles in landscape architecture is conducted within the discipline, it still does not sufficiently reach the broader public [3]. Like an architectural work, a work of garden art is a visible statement in the city and part of the urban fabric. Not everything that is green is beautiful.



**Fig. 1:** Maria Auböck and János Kárász in the studio garden in Vienna

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 A + K LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS  
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**Fig. 2:** Bird's-eye view of Central Park, Baku, 2020

►► **Fig. 3:** The large central lawn in the courtyard campus of the Austrian Academy of Science in Vienna functions as a lecture area as well as an infiltration space

►► **Fig. 4:** The weeds due to the previous poor soil condition in the campus courtyard are shown on this foto from 2019

►► **Fig. 5:** The area of the terrazzo plant islands is a popular meeting place in 2023



### DESIGN APPROACH AND WORK ATTITUDE

Having taken into consideration the functional needs and required uses, we follow a path comparable to composing musical chords. Our designs are conceived more in the manner of partitures than as functional setups. We think of topographies, of silent and noisy environments, of slow motion or fast forward areas. Moving in the landscape is – as we understand it – moving in space rather than following a path. When creating a new design, we take our inspiration from diverse sources.

References from the field of art constitute key elements in our work, as does research into elements of the cultural landscape. The city of Munich, for instance, commissioned our studio to conduct a study in 2015, “*Dachlandschaften gemeinschaftlich nutzbar*”, on the communal use of green rooftops worldwide. The goal was to bring about a change to Munich zoning law: higher zoning gains or densification are compensated by shared open spaces on roofs.

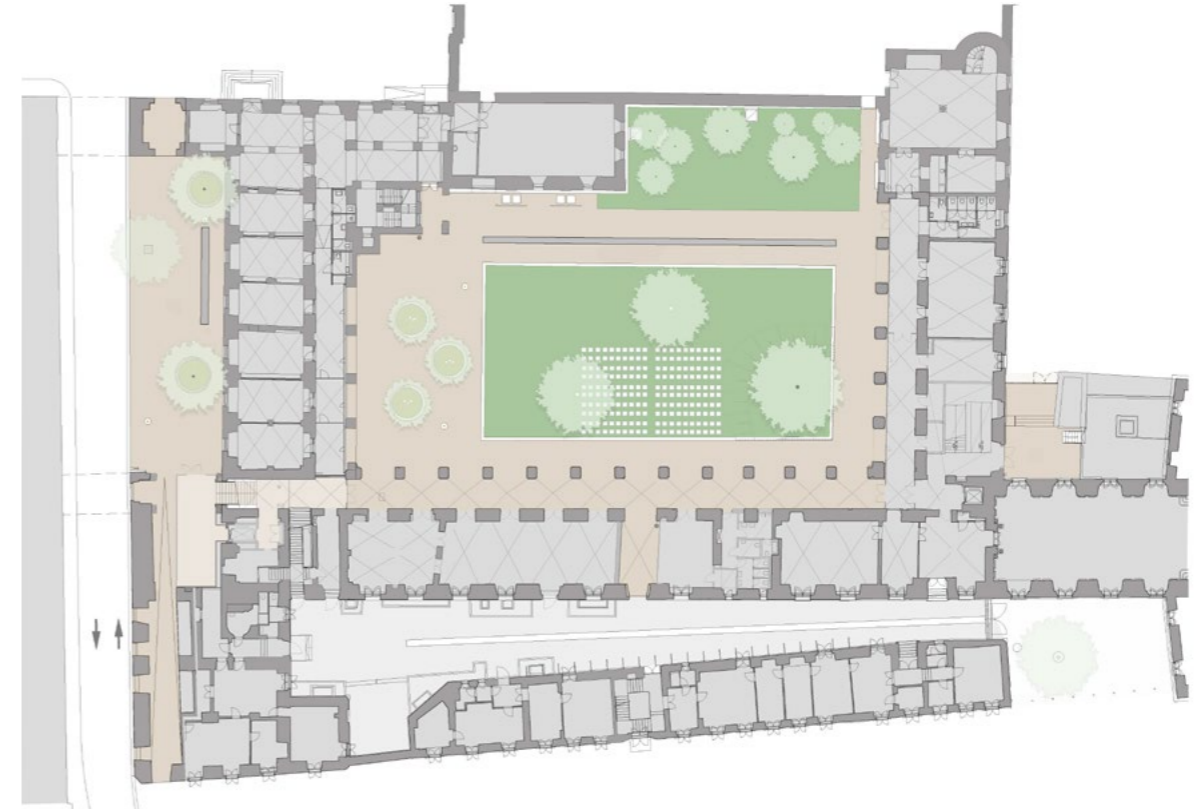
### TEAM BUILDING

Working with a small studio team, we typically cooperate in larger interdisciplinary groups to implement projects.

Depending on the type and location of the project, this kind of extended teamwork has varying dimensions. In fact, the way landscape architects are involved is becoming increasingly important, for instance in coordinating semi-public sites in large housing estates. For projects abroad during the survey and the realization phase we cooperate with local teams.

### NEW ROLES IN PLANNING PROCESSES

In the past, as a landscape architect, it was necessary to assure the architect that the planting will not detract from the overall architectural impression. The spirit of the times has changed: ideally, landscape architects are involved in the design process right from the start of a competition, on an equal footing with the architects and structural engineers [4]. It is important that architecture and nature form a whole, that the planners pursue common goals, as we learnt in several teams designing sites for housing, e.g. “WagnisART” in Munich. It is important for us to be involved in project communication from the start and throughout all planning phases in order to be able to react where necessary. In the following, we present selected works on different scales.



### AUSTRIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES - REVITALISING THE JESUIT MONASTERY

Vienna, 2022

Surface area: 2,200 square metres

Client: BIG Bundesimmobiliengesellschaft

Architecture: Riepl Kaufmann Bammer

The new Austrian Academy of Sciences courtyard was revitalised as a worthy campus space where the faculty and the public could meet. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it served as the Jesuit monastery's kitchen garden – today, the reduced external appearance can be seen as a *hortus conclusus*. It is now accessible to the public: with the character of a downtown contemplative garden, the lawn offers an infiltration space as well as a lecture area.



Enclosed by a walkable frame, a quiet garden space unfolds, the southern side of which is designed as a paved plaza with planted islands. A linear bench on the long side of the garden marks the boundary to the area still used by the Jesuits. In addition to the existing horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), two Japanese pagoda trees (*Sophora japonica*) were planted and in the planting islands we find groups of hop trees (*Ptelea trifoliata*), multi-stemmed magnolias (*Magnolia × loebnerii* 'Merrill') and flowering crab apples (*Malus* 'Majesty'). Coming from the city centre, visitors now encounter a spacious glazed entrance adjoined by a small square: the three existing yews (*Taxus baccata*) have been pruned, creating an inviting urban space.



**TURNER TEMPLE  
 - PLACE OF REMEMBRANCE**

Vienna, 2012

Invited competition, together with artists  
 Andraschek/Lobnig

Surface area: 600 square metres

Client: City of Vienna /  
 Art in Urban Public Space

The memorial is located on the part of the site where the Turner Temple stood before its destruction during Kristallnacht in November 1938. A competition hosted by the Vienna Public Art Office sought solutions in a sculptural vein: in our estimation, however, developing a flexible open space offering an atmosphere of reflexion and togetherness was the fitting response. The small plaza, with six existing linden trees (*Tilia tomentosa*), reveals itself, so to speak, as an imaginary space amid the roof trusses after the fire like a scream that shatters the silence. It is a symbolic image: a piece of reflective archaeology, consisting of anthracite-coloured concrete beams that are situated within a gravel surface, and mosaics at some spots. The floor mosaics show types of fruit that appear in the Torah situated under the trees mediate between the past and the present. These fruits borrowed from the Torah likewise point to the everyday lives of migrants, who will predominantly use this public space today.

We feel that projects that offer new aspects for reuse of public sites in inner city sites create a major ecological impact.



◀◀ Fig. 6: Plan of Turner Temple memorial site in Vienna

◀◀ Fig. 7: The aerial view of the building site shows the set-up of pre-fabricated concrete beams in the building site

◀◀ Fig. 8: View to the south of the memorial site displaying the colour impact of the special selected infiltration-capable surface layer

Fig. 9: View from the Salzburg Festival hall towards the sunken lawn of Furtwängler Garden, showing a huge tulip tree – *Liriodendron tulipifera* – and a Himalayan pine – *Pinus wallichiana* – which survived from the botanic garden in the 18th century

Fig. 10: Detail of ramp made of quartzite in sunken lawn area in Furtwänglergarten, Salzburg

Fig. 11: The aerial view of Furtwänglergarten displays the dense city centre of Salzburg

Fig. 12: The site plan shows the quartzite frame and hedges inspired by Baroque garden theatres as still existing in Mirabellgarten, Salzburg



**FURTWÄNGLER GARDEN  
 - NEW DESIGN**

IN WORLD HERITAGE

Invited international competition,  
 Salzburg, 2010

Surface area: 5,000 square metres

Client: Municipality of Salzburg

To this day, the historical centre of the city of Salzburg does not have enough green spaces. After we received the first prize in an international competition, the city commissioned us to upgrade an existing park dating from the 1970s. Inserted between the Baroque Collegiate Church, the Old University and the Festival House, the garden area unfolds as a contemporary interpretation of the walled-in gardens of the monasteries and cemeteries of Salzburg's historic centre. A walkable "frame", partly made of green quartzite, partly applied in a bright, water-bound coat, delineates the slightly recessed lawns [5]. A row of linden trees (*Tilia platyphyllos*) towards Max Reinhardt Platz gives rise to a new urban edge. This network of promenades provides direct connections between significant urban spaces, yet also serves as an ample recreational area. The generously dimensioned lawns, which contain Japanese pagoda trees, are sewn together, as it were, by the promenades and their carefully orchestrated hornbeam hedges. Artworks by Fritz Wotruba, Anselm Kiefer and Erwin Wurm, among others, complete the ensemble, which likewise serves in the summertime as an "urban foyer" for the Salzburg Festival.





**BELVEDERE GARDENS  
 - RESTORATION  
 AND RECONSTRUCTION  
 IN WORLD HERITAGE**

Vienna, 1995 to 2009 [6]  
 Based on a development concept for an exceptional Baroque garden in Vienna and consultancy on its realisation.  
 Reconstruction of four Baroque broderies.  
 Client: Bundesgärten

This World Heritage site still sits within its original 18<sup>th</sup> century boundaries and form, and is located close to the centre of Vienna. Based on a development concept for the garden monument commissioned by the Federal Monuments Office in 1990, our studio was able to plan and supervise the restoration and renovation of the park areas in a decade-long process, including the

management of World Monuments Fund support for the installation of a rainwater cistern for watering the garden.

The four Baroque broderies north of the Upper Belvedere constitute a key element in the course of the renovation process of the Prince Eugene gardens. They were reconstructed between 2004 and 2009 based on the so-called Stuttgart Plan. The botanical parts consist of boxwood ferns, the mineral parts of various sorts of gravel, including that from Giallo Sienna marble, as well as brick chippings and red cullet. A particular challenge entailed - in the overlapping of various historical properties - adapting the current proportions of this part of the garden to the broderies, which were altered on the sides by the gravelled troughs from the 19<sup>th</sup> century that served as drainage [1].



**Fig. 13:** Bird's-eye view of Belvedere, 1731, by Salomon Kleiner  
**►► Fig. 14:** The colours of the Concept plan refer to special selected brick and gravel colours, lawn and box ornaments based on the colour scheme in the original site plan for the broderies north of Upper Belvedere by Edel 1726, a+k  
**►► Fig. 15:** Work site of broderies north of Upper Belvedere under construction



**Fig. 16:** Site plan of the “Floating Islands Concept” for the “In der Wiesen” housing complex, Vienna  
**Fig. 17:** Bird’s-eye view of the playground under construction in the central public space  
**Fig. 18:** View of Iles Flottantes – the “Floating plant islands” form a neighbourhood recreation area

### ILES FLOTTANTES - MOVING SHAPES FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

Vienna, 2017

Landscape architecture competition for a large social housing complex in an urban expansion area

Surface area: 15,000 square metres

Client: Heimbau, Altmannsdorf and Hetzendorf, Wien-Süd

Architecture: ARTEC Architekten, Dietrich I Untertrifaller Architekten

Housing has been a primary political issue in Vienna since the end of First World War. To this very day, Vienna is the largest owner of housing units of any type in Europe, maintaining and administering some 220,000 communal housing units. We have taken part in some of the municipality’s influential initiatives, including themed projects such as “Carfree Housing”, “Urban housing by women for women”, and “Biotope City”. All of these urban sites possess landscapes that offer an extension to the apartments.

It is not just because of the ecological and building physics aspects mentioned that urban gardens are increasingly taking on the role of problem solvers. In order to guarantee affordable rents, each housing unit is allotted less floor area, and the shared outdoor spaces are expected to make up for the lack of space inside. It becomes a “free space” in every respect – a place where children run and play, where residents of all ages spontaneously meet friends and acquaintances, and where it is also possible to seek out a secluded spot in sunny as well as shaded areas for quiet activities.

As an example, here we want to show the central unit and the “landscape core”, where we designed rows of grasses and birdbaths for ecological impact, which served as the lead project for a large housing estate with a team of investors, architects and landscape architects.

The design of *Iles Flottantes* offers a common public space to the inhabitants of a large new housing complex, subsidised by the Municipality of Vienna. The urban

landscape financed by six different developers and non-profit cooperatives has served as outdoor meeting place, recreation area and playground for children and adults since 2017. The name *Iles Flottantes* is reminiscent of childhood memories of “Havas Desszert”, a beloved dessert, and reflects the formal aspects as well as the atmosphere of the outdoor space, with its carefully-selected furniture, planting concept and paved areas: this site includes an explicitly public area extending from east to west and a part belonging to the central housing complex. We worked closely with the architects to arrive at a coherent unity in function and perception. The area is defined by floating green islands incorporating different functions and offering diverse possibilities for informal use. Our design includes highlights such as a water surface at the meeting square, a boulder wall for children and a chill-out zone for the youth – a rare amenity in social housing complexes. A so-called upper garden introduces a more intimate part at first-floor level [7], while the ground floor of the central buildings is reserved mainly for uses such as shops and small offices. The tree selection includes among others Mediterranean hackberry (*Celtis australis*), claret ash (*Fraxinus angustifolia* ‘Raywood’) and wild cherry (*Prunus avium* ‘Plena’); a mix of flowering shrubs and ornamental grasses is complemented with some evergreens. Roof gardens offer intimate spaces for families, and there are even herb gardens and individual vegetable garden plots to rent.

Today, urban landscapes gardens are not only used for recreation and tranquillity, but can also make a contribution to ecology, especially if they take over brownfield sites to create intensively green areas.

These transformations generate large parks and green city centre areas and offer important benefit in times of climate change. We were invited to the city of Baku by the government of Azerbaijan to participate in this city development in relation to local vegetation and ecological challenges. The economic power of the oil business made it possible to implement a four-step programme to create a large central park.



### CENTRAL PARK, BAKU – PHASE 1: LONG ISLANDS

Baku, Azerbaijan, 2019

Area: 20 ha

Client: Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Architecture: Hoffmann Janz Architects

A new central park will be built on a site of 58 hectares over four stages in Baku. This project is part of an ambitious urban development that will create more green spaces and recreational areas in a central city location and thus sustainably improve the quality of life in this city on the Caspian Sea with 2.2 million inhabitants.

This park is situated on a slope of 8- to 15% and contains a robust selection of local trees and shrubs, including white cedar (*Melia azedarach*), mulberry trees (*Morus plataniifolia* 'Fruitless'), Turkish pine (*Pinus brutia* var. *eldarica*), pomegranate (*Punica granatum*) and lentisc shrubs (*Pistacia lentiscus*). Around 1,200 new trees have been planted, significantly increasing biodiversity in the city.

The first stage (Phase 1) of the park is intersected by previously constructed highways. A modulated topography creates a landscape in which these traffic arteries disappear among hills. Among other elements, this phase includes a public square that floats above the highways, a bridge and the redesign of the public spaces in front of the National Theatre in the east. One of the Long Islands contains a series of playgrounds and sports areas, each of them extremely well-equipped and brightly coloured for orientation purposes. All in all, these components add up to a generously-scaled public amenity.

### CENTRAL PARK, BAKU – PHASE 2: MOSQUE GARDEN

Baku, Azerbaijan, 2019

Surface area: 1.1 hectares

Client: Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Architecture: Hoffmann Janz Architects

The garden for the Taza Pir Mosque in Baku is built as a rooftop above an underground garage. Being a part of the Central Park, it follows a particular design in the tradition of Islamic gardens. Framed by cypresses (*Cupressus sempervirens*) and pomegranates (*Punica granatum*), the garden enfolds different compartments. The planting concept is based on the prestigious and decorative

expectations of this special place. The carpet-like mosaic layout is underlined by the diligent choice of suitable plants. The changing effect of groundcover, perennials and herbs, which bloom at different times, is supported by drift roses, a reliable and colourful groundcover plant in white-yellow, yellow-orange and lemon-yellow. Herbal species such as lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) and rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) guarantee not only wonderful planting formations, but also stimulate the visitor's sense of smell. Evergreen lines of Ebbinge's silverberry (*Elaeagnus × ebbingei*) along the water axis and oleander (*Nerium oleander*) plantings along the pathways underscore the importance of axis in ornamental gardening. Water is a key element of the conceptual layout; it structures the site linearly, and a central fountain marks the garden's centre.

### CENTRAL PARK, BAKU – PHASE 3: FOREST HILL

Baku, Azerbaijan, 2022

Surface area: 1.1 hectares

Client: Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Architecture: Hoffmann Janz Architects

A wooded park with 4,500 site-appropriate new trees, two-thirds of them evergreen species, unfolds on the steep hill west of the Mosque Garden. Structured by a serpentine path, and including two large playgrounds and a major staircase element with tree groups and pergolas on the landings, this park provides a significant contribution to the urban development of central Baku at a time of climate change.

In the coming year, we will contribute to the enlargement of the park west of the mosque, probably offering more water features for this special urban location.

The "x large" category is definitely reaching out towards landscape urbanism. ©



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**Fig. 19:** Plan of BAKU Central Park including the areas of the Mosque Garden, the Sports Park with playgrounds and areas for sport and the Forest Park in the western hill area

**Fig. 20:** Aerial View of Baku showing city center related to Central Park area

**Fig. 21:** Project map of BAKU Central Park including the Mosque Garden, the Sports Park with playgrounds and areas for sport and the Wood Park in the West



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