Contribution to the UrbGreen session at the 11th Conf City of the Future, HH, 11-12 Nov. 2026:
"Hamburg's urban green diversity – promises and limitations" (RF, SZ)

Rainer Fehr, Stefan Zerbe

This illustrative example of urban green diversity in Hamburg is meant to enrich the debate by highlighting aspects of development and governance. Local history includes a series of horticultural exhibitions. Several neighbourhoods followed the garden city model. From early on, green spaces were recognised as promoting human health. Alongside parks, also sports facilities, cemeteries, allotments, community gardens, street trees and green roofs contribute to the diversity. Distinctive features in Hamburg include the Energieberg (once dioxin-contaminated), the Grünbunker, and green motorway cappings. Hamburg's green spaces are interpreted as a network, including two green belts and 12 landscape corridors plus additional parks and connectors. A recent mapping study presents detailed ecological and social data. However, it is neither easy to assess what ecosystem (dis)services are implied, nor to navigate the web of relevant programs, plans, responsibilities, stakeholders and projects. Notably, Hamburg's urban development strategy (2014) was entitled: "A green, equitable, growing city by the water". There is a formal "Agreement on Hamburg's Urban Green Spaces". Unlike in Berlin, there is no overall charter or action plan. Urban green is featured, e.g., in the Master plan for main roads, the Climate streets project, the Green Rooftops strategy, and the Façade Greening grant scheme. Human health and well-being are a focus "Active city", cycle routes, and various projects and programs related to climate protection and adaptation. – It is positive to notice the popularity of Hamburg's diverse urban green, as well as the current momentum in expanding the green network. At the same time, there are threats like overuse, conflicts of use, aridity, flooding; and under-funding. Better understanding of green governance should contribute to secure this significant resource for health promotion and protection, in Hamburg and beyond.