



The Future of Public Spaces

Providing safe, inclusive and
accessible green and public spaces
for all ages



WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH



"Over the past 50 years, nobody has systematically looked after a good urban habitat for Homo Sapiens"

Jan Gehl, architect and urban designer

With up to 70% of the world's population expected to be living in cities within the next few decades, cities have now become the main habitat of human species. One of the biggest challenges for cities all over the world is to ensure that these urban habitats are safe, inclusive and healthy environments that match with our basic human needs and behavior. Public spaces such as squares, streets and parks play a pivotal role in these habitats as they account for up to 25% of all urban surface and sustain the social inclusion, the civic identity and the quality of life of the city.

Our approach: public space at the heart of urban development

The potential of public spaces to contribute to quality of (urban) life has long been neglected. In our approach, public spaces are put at the heart of urban (re)development. Therefore, we focus on three (interrelated) strings of activities:

- Fundamental research on the importance of public spaces for human behavior and wellbeing.
- Inspiration of practical (re)design and development through applied research.
- Strengthening the evidence base for policymaking and design of public spaces through data collection, measuring and monitoring the impact of interventions.

Some examples

A natural environment can contribute to the health of children. Nature can contribute to recovery from stress and can stimulate social contact. Children spend a lot of time in school and school grounds. Greening school grounds can help to create a more positive climate for the children, reduce tensions and improve concentration.

<https://www.wur.nl/nl/project/Groene-schoolpleinen-2.htm>

Operation Steenbreek is intended to encourage cities and citizens to make their public spaces and gardens greener, thereby improve the living environment in their community. Green spaces in the city are healthier, reduce heat stress (more shade), absorb more water (less overflowing drains) and bring more nature into urban areas.

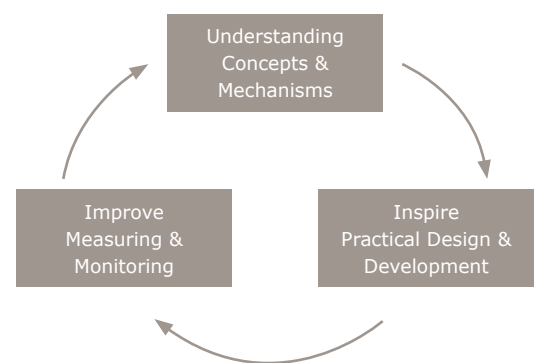
<https://www.wur.nl/nl/project/Operation-Steenbreek.htm>

Services

- Public Health Research
- Monitoring and evaluation (of interventions in public space)
- (Evidence based) design of public spaces
- Data analysis
- Social media analysis
- Behavioural insights
- Use of participatory monitoring / citizen science

Research Programme

Metropolitan Solutions



Learning loop on public spaces

Contact

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