

RE:PLAY project - 2nd Press Release:

RE:PLAY project partners at Dutch study tour!



RE:PLAY team at Schouwburgplein / Theatre Square in Rotterdam; Photo by RE:PLA Project

Amsterdam, 13 September 2021 – The [RE:PLAY team](#) were lucky to have planned a 4 day study tour in the Netherlands to look closely at public spaces that were designed with children in focus. The study tour aimed at looking closely at schoolyards that have been designed for children to thrive in nature while integrating concepts that accommodate water management, climate resilience and education for children that use these parks; and organizations that work in the field of public space place-making with a focus on caregivers and children especially.

RE:PLAY is engaged in rethinking play as a distinctly human capacity which is currently underrated by urban design. It highlights the **importance of designing playscapes with and for children**, as they are primary users and should be co-creators as well. Five pilot sites in five schoolyards have been selected in each partner country – Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. To gain new experience and inspiration partners travelled to the Netherlands, one of Europe's most child-friendly countries. A new report by UNICEF has found that children in the Netherlands are the most satisfied with their lives (90 % of children), with the country scoring highest worldwide for child welfare. The Netherlands also received top scores for access to good education and children's social skills and we believe that is also linked to child-friendly open space design.

The tour started with the [Bernard van Leer Foundation](#) (BvLF) based in the city of Hague whose mission is to improve opportunities for all young children, especially the millions of those growing up in circumstances of socio, economic and environmental disadvantage around the world. The BvLF shared real life implementation projects from around the world and how phasing co-designed interventions in cooperation with local authorities and relevant local stakeholders engages the public more while fostering a sense of ownership on the public space that informs on more demand for similar interventions throughout the city. Second stop was the [Herweijerhoeve City Farm](#) where **Olle Mennema, the Head of Environmental Education at the Municipality of the Hague** explained how the place works: **“The city farm acts as a learning centre for children providing on site learning of gardening, cooking and farming, complete with taking care of farm animals. At the same time, we provide toolkits for schools to cater to a wide range of environmental curricula adapted to each school’s needs.”** The visit to the city of Hague was concluded with a tour of the Koetveld schoolyard which is part of the Green Schoolyard program that aims to turn school yards into small green oases that boost children’s physical and emotional wellbeing while teaching them about nature through play.



Herweijerhoeve City Farm, the Hague; Photo by RE:PLAY Project

In Amsterdam the team had a chance to visit [Stipo](#) – a multidisciplinary urban development team, driven by sustainable quality and human scale. **Hans Karsenberg** shared valuable insights on making public space welcoming and safe for community members and shared projects of Stipo in underused areas of Amsterdam. A bike ride away at OBS Aldoende, a local school RE:PLAY team met with the designer **Renet Korthals Altes from SpaceforPlay** who was able to directly share her methods of involving children in designing their play space: **“We involve children in all phases of design and implementation, from first social and physical analysis to co-designing, co-building simple structures such as low walls, planting the greenery and co-maintenance. This results in children better using**

their schoolyard while feeling included in the creative and design process.” Hortense Berkenveld from the City of [Amsterdam’s Schoolyard Incentive](#) presented the idea and process behind the incentive. Through the subsidy scheme in which schools can apply for funding to redesign their schoolyards, 15 to 20 schoolyards are made over every year. The goal is to render suitable places for children to learn about and play in nature and simultaneously contribute to the rainproof Amsterdam by de-paving and planting, thus providing better drainage for the rainwater. Redesigned playgrounds where pupils are challenged to play and be physically active are serving as a safe and pleasant place to interact even in the off-school time and thus adding to open public space in the city. Playground and play-equipment designer **Jan van Schaik** shared details on the design as well as materials sourcing and maintenance. These are relevant aspects of the process of designing school yards that affect the implementation and sustainability of interventions.



Redesigned schoolyard financed through Amsterdam Schoolyard Incentive; Photo by the RE:PLAY Project

Last but not least, the team visited Rotterdam where local NGO [Huaspichanga](#) walked the team through landmarks of public space in the city that showed both successful and scarce public space that was intended for children and caregivers and commented on why these were successful or not. A clear example was a recently built playground near a busy five lane intersection, catering to mainly high-rise institutions and offices and only one residential building, which was not used by children or caregivers given the difficulty to reach the place through itineraries that are perceived as safe by the latter. Rotterdam is a great example of how public space can be transformed using the principles of natural drainage, shade, seating and biodiversity can improve existing and new public spaces into real landmarks where people feel welcome and thrive in the urban environment. After Rotterdam the team flew back to Tirana, Belgrade, Ljubljana, Bar and Zagreb to reflect on the findings and learning of this

amazing trip to a country where children are put first and can be seen in the design of each neighbourhood and park.

About us

RE: PLAY (Redesigning playscapes with children in the Western Balkans) is the latest project of the European Union with a total value of just over 400 thousand euros, which aims to redesign children's playgrounds with children as the main initiators of the project. Project partners come from 5 Western Balkan countries: Slovenia ([Društvo Pazi!park](#), Ljubljana), Croatia ([Kreativni Krajobrazi](#), Zagreb), Serbia ([Udruženje Škogled](#), Belgrade), Albania ([Qendra Marrëdhënie](#), Tirana) and Montenegro ([Gradionica](#), Bar). In 3 years (2021-2023) partners will engage in cooperation and exchange of experiences, approaches and concepts on co-designing with children, which will result in the design of 5 new playscapes for enriching natural and unstructured outdoor play and guidelines for fellow designers on how to do it.

You can find us on Instagram using [@replay_wb](#)

Browse also on the websites of project partners:

- Društvo Pazi!park (LP, Slovenia): <http://www.pazipark.si/>,
- Kreativni krajobrazi (Croatia): <https://kreativnikrajobrazi.hr/en/>,
- Udruženje Škogled (Serbia): <http://skograd.org/en/home-en/>,
- Qendra Marrëdhënie (Albania): <http://qendra-m.org/>,
- Gradionica (Montenegro): <https://gradionica.me/>

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