

Rotterdam norms for outdoor play areas



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Rotterdam norms for outdoor play areas



Child in the City

Rotterdam

3 to 5 November

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Why a set of norms for outdoor play areas?

- **Space for outdoor play is easily sidelined to other interests.**
- **There are no clear guidelines for when a residential area has enough outdoor play areas.**
- **Outdoor play areas are quite often planned in places that are not easily accessible to children, and there is often not enough space closer to home.**
- **Combating a lack of exercise: in Rotterdam, 2 out of every 5 children aged 9-10 is overweight.**



Policy framework

- **City vision 2030: attractive living environments**
- **Action programme for child-friendly neighbourhoods**
- **Action programme for Nutrition and Exercise: combating obesity in children**



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Process

Joint venture between:

- **Sub-municipalities**
- **Municipal Departments:**
 - **Urban Planning and Housing Service**
 - **Public Works**
 - **Municipal Health Service**
 - **Dept. of Youth, Education and Society**
 - **Rotterdam Development Agency**
 - **Sports and Recreation**



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Approach

- **2004: compiling of draft norms based on theoretical study**
- **2005 and 2006: testing in various living environments (e.g. old city neighbourhoods, garden cities, neighbourhoods with single-family homes)**
- **2007: legal and policy grounding**
- **2008: finalisation**



Points of departure

Point 1:

All public space is potentially a play area: children play everywhere, not just on playgrounds and at sport facilities.



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Points of departure

Point 2:

Norms apply to restructuring and re-allocation locations.

The norms are an aid in setting up policy on play areas in existing situation.



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2004: Theoretical study - a draft norm

3 sub-studies:

1. **Analysis of children's development and space requirements for outdoor play**
2. **Analysis of children's traffic skills according to age**
3. **Analysis of existing norms concerning outdoor play areas, in the Netherlands and internationally**



1. Children's development and space requirements for outdoor play

1. Children's development
2. Associated forms of play
3. Associated need for outdoor play areas



Development phases:

- 0 - 1.5 years
- 1.5 - 4 years
- 4 - 8 years
- 8 - 13 years
- 13 - 18 years



2. Children's traffic skills according to age

1. Children younger than 4 cannot play outdoors without being accompanied
2. Children aged 4 - 8 cannot play outdoors without supervision
3. From age 8-11, children can move freely within areas delineated by roads with a speed limit of 30 km/h (18.6 mph)
4. From age 11-13, children can independently cross roads with a speed limit of 50 km/h using crossings with traffic lights
5. From 13, children can independently cross roads with a speed limit of 80 km/h using crossings with traffic lights

(Overview based on “Handboek ontwerpen voor kinderen”,
CROW, Ede 2000)



3. Analysis of existing norms for play areas

Types of norms:

- a. **Distribution norms (distance + size)**
- b. **Demographics-based norms (e.g. % young people = surface area of play area)**
- c. **Surface area norms (e.g. 3% norm of NUSO/Jantje Beton)**
- d. **Facility norms (according to type of play/sport facility)**



3. Analysis of existing norms for play areas

Choice was made for a distribution norm, motivation:

- Location and size of a play area are important
- Children tend to prefer to play close to home
- Simple application by urban planners (norms expressed in urban-planning language)
- Age profile changes as the years go by
(disadvantage of demographics-based norms)



The Rotterdam norms for outdoor play areas



Point of departure:
Sufficient play areas within
'barrier blocks' (residential
areas enclosed by roads
with a speed limit of 50
km/h, a river or canal
and/or rail infrastructure)
for all ages (0-18 years)



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The Rotterdam norms for outdoor play areas

1. When 'barrier block' is larger than 15 ha

- At least 1 central meeting place of 5000 m² (~54,000 sq ft) for all ages + space of at least 1000 m² (~10,800 sq ft) every 300 m (in densely-built areas, every 200 m)

2. When 'barrier block' is smaller than 15 ha

- At least 1 central location of 1000 m² (~10,800 sq ft) + space of at least 1000 m² every 300 m (in densely built areas, every 200 m)



The Rotterdam norms for outdoor play areas

Additional requirements for locations:

- Centrally situated
- Visible from housing
- Unpolluted location
- Access to sun and shade
- Parking ban on side of the road on which children play



The Rotterdam norms for outdoor play areas

3. **'Playable' living environment: a pavement that can be played on that is at least 3-5 metres (10-16 ft) wide along one side of the street, preferably on the sunny side**



2005 and 2006: Testing viability in neighbourhoods



- Centre
- Old city neighbourhoods
- Garden cities/towns
- Neighbourhood with single-family homes

Testing in 9 areas with urban plans



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Conclusions of testing in neighbourhoods

1. Norms are feasible: can be included in urban planning development, if the norms are introduced on time
2. The norms do not need to be further differentiated based on living environment
3. The idea of a 'rigid' norm has been let go of
4. The norms give the municipality an objective instrument to:
 - Determine where there are shortages of space for play and how this can be improved
 - Weigh up interests between space for play and other interests in urban planning (for instance also in the light of participation by residents in cases of a conflict of interests)
 - Anticipate future developments
5. Supplementary urban planning design guidelines have been formulated as an aid to designers.



Legal grounding

- Norms are laid down as *vaste gedragslijn*: deviations are permitted when well-motivated
- The norms are included in the notes with the municipal land use plan



Follow-up



- Drawing up distribution maps for the whole city in co-operation with sub-municipalities, so that it can be clear where there are shortages
- Evaluation of how norms function three years after they are established



For more information

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