

Planning for Play in Leuven

Participatory development of a safe and adequate play network

(Speelweefsel Leuven: participatieve ontwikkeling van een veilig en toereikend speelnetwerk)

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In order to develop a more child- and play friendly urban environment, the local government of Leuven called on a consortium of researchers and planners.

From April 2017 until September 2018, Expeditions teamed up with socio-spatial innovation team Endeavour and their friends, to explore the play and mobility practices, perspectives, desires and needs of children and youth in the city.

Expeditions' work consisted of qualitative research, working directly with young people in Leuven to grasp their perceptions, practices and needs. In order to explore as many different perspectives as possible, we used observation, interviews, mental mapping, traffic count, gamified walking interviews, focus groups, and especially PLAY. Two games were designed and played with teenagers of the local Scouts and pupils of a local primary school.

These approaches yielded a good understanding of how young people use and experience places and paths in the city; which places are loved or feared, which new opportunities for play they desire, and which infrastructure can be improved.

These insights were transferred onto an experiential map of Leuven, which was integrated in the final product of this project: an interactive tool for the different city services which consolidates all 'PLAY' knowledge. This tool makes it possible for Leuven to strengthen future development projects with the lessons learned, or even to fully reproduce the entire research thanks to the tool book and manuals.

