

Spatial planning in the Netherlands is good for walking, nevertheless fails in encouraging walking. Why?

Benchmarking walking conditions and citizen's wishes.

It looks as if in the Netherlands all conditions for encouraging active transportation, such as walking and cycling are there.

- People on bicycle or on foot are at the heart of urban planning. In many Dutch towns low transport modes such as cycling and walking have priority over fast modes.
- Spatial planning ensures that new housing, shops and public transport stops are located and designed so that people can reach them easily on foot
- The concept of the compact city ('de compacte stad') reduces the conditions for car-dependent lifestyles and re-allocate road space to pedestrians and cyclists. The city of Amsterdam e.g. is closing the missing links in existing cycling walking routes to create priority networks for cycling, and intends to do so for walking in the future.

Nevertheless developing and improving outdoor recreational experiences and opportunities into an inspiring recreational habitat, based on an interpretation of citizen's wishes, needs and behaviour still demands a lot of effort, since people do not start walking automatically. The design of neighbourhoods and their distance from daily destinations (groceries, services) requires in the Netherlands not necessarily a high degree of automobile dependence. This state of affairs led to the project 'City and Countryside connected'. We want to offer new opportunities to new and regular daily walkers and to parents with children. A walking environment that tempts them to walk from their own doorstep in their own neighbourhood with no particular goal as to walk and be in the open air or either walk to the city centre or the rural countryside. But networks alone are not enough to stimulate walking.

The Habitat Coalition of recreational, health, sports and tourism organisations is a caucus group with the Dutch government. In 2006 it convinced the Ministry of Transport to give walking the same status as motor transport. In 2010 the Coalition is researching what are the preferences of (maybe) walkers for walking around their home and/or into the country-side. To this purpose the Habitat Coalition developed a questionnaire. The experience from cities such as provincial capital Zwolle and Amsterdam must lead to a benchmark. The results will be presented at Walk '21. This paper highlights the gap between spatial planning and the physical results and makes the case for public appreciation of the efforts of planners.