

# De meerwaarde van tuinparken

## De betekenis van tuinparken in een stedelijke omgeving



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## Summary

### Revalorising community-run garden complexes: the role of such complexes in an urban area.

There is growing pressure on open space in the Netherlands and as a result the government wants 40% of new houses to be built in the Netherlands to be located within existing urban areas. This will increase the pressure for developing on “siertuinen parken”. There is no direct English translation of this term. They can be described as community-run garden complexes. They bear some resemblance to allotments, but there is more emphasis on leisure and recreation than on growing prize vegetables. Members usually have a chalet on their plots and the complexes contain communal garden spaces and buildings. They were developed to meet urban outdoor leisure needs in the days before mass car ownership and, because of their proximity to urban centres, offer a particularly sustainable form of leisure.

At present the social value of these community-run garden complexes is not always fully appreciated or utilised. They are often not as welcoming as they could be and they could offer more to local residents. Improving their quality would lead to more people using and enjoying them and this would increase the value placed on them and strengthen the case against viewing them as potential development sites. This brochure draws on the example of the *Ons Buiten* garden complex in Utrecht and shows how such a transition towards better managed and more highly valued garden complexes can be achieved.

Searching for a new and appropriate direction and role for a garden complex involves exploring its meaning for local residents, the qualities they see in it and how they think these could be improved. This brochure describes criteria to measure these social perceptions of quality and ways in which these can be improved. The brochure describes quality in three main terms: ecological, social and cultural. The ecological level refers to the quality of the natural environment; the social level concerns people, and how they use the complex, for example for leisure and for meeting each other, and the cultural level covers both personal development and maintaining a shared cultural heritage. Ideally a garden complex will allow expression of all of these qualities.

The brochure also sets out a route-map for establishing more durable and valued garden complexes. It identifies four pre-conditions in this transition process: the pressure to change, the development of a clear and shared vision, the ability of the actors involved to bring about change and achieving initial (even small) successes. The process also involves different activities: exploration of the potential, information gathering, participation, structuring and coordination and evaluation. This case study shows how garden complexes can re-establish their role in contributing to sustainable urban living, briefly reviews similar projects and provides contact details.

