



## **Bewonersparticipatie in het openbaar groenbeheer**

'State of the art' na vijf jaar zelfbeheer in  
de wijk EVA-Lanxmeer (Culemborg)

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## Summary

In spring 2009 the Terra Bella foundation took the initiative for a critical review of its own practice of eco based self-maintenance. Because of the 'state of the art' research self-reflection was possible. It resulted in practical recommendations for the foundation itself and initiatives elsewhere.

Questions that were asked during the self-reflection were: what did the eco based self-maintenance bring to the inhabitants? Are the original ideals still met? How did it work out for the local council? Did eco based self-maintenance positively influence public green biodiversity? Can we formulate recommendations to realize self-maintenance of public green in regular neighbourhoods?

EVA-Lanxmeer is a sustainable neighbourhood in the city of Culemborg. It is an internationally acknowledged example of sustainable urbanism and participatory policy development. The neighbourhood is, for governments and groups of interested citizens, a learning model for innovations in sustainable urbanism through involvement of citizens. On September 18<sup>th</sup> 2004 the Terra Bella foundation signed a management contract concerning the eco based maintenance of the public green. The other partners that were involved were the local council and the drinking water company Vitens (they are the landowners of the area). An important consideration for introducing the special management concept was to improve the maintenance of the urban green, the environmental quality in general and public involvement in maintaining public green space. After a successful period of 5 years, the management contract was renewed in autumn 2009.

The results of the research show that inhabitants are very pleased with their neighbourhood. The preceding expectations were met. The neighbourhood is valued because of its diversity, green space and strong social bond. The local council and Vitens are content with the cooperation. The eco based self-maintenance does not lead to higher costs. The special management concept in Lanxmeer is budget neutral.

Due to a lack of structure in the collected data (species), it is impossible to make a scientific based judgment on the development in the biodiversity. Found species (animals and plants) suggest that there is a lot more biodiversity in EVA-Lanxmeer than one can generally expect from an urban neighbourhood. A structured inventory format was developed to be able to make a solid judgment on biodiversity development for plant and animal species in the future. This inventory can be executed by volunteers.

Due to many specific circumstances it is not realistic to 'copy paste' this approach as an answer for self maintenance in regular neighbourhoods. Nevertheless many aspects of the strategy do can be very inspirational for organising self maintenance in other local councils, neighbourhoods or comparable initiatives.

An important factor of the success of EVA-Lanxmeer is the relatively homogeneous life style of the inhabitants. They truly want to interact and cooperate with each other and create their own living environment. The high level of participation results in a great sense of responsibility for the public space. The collective activities induce informal encounters with fellow citizens. Knowing your neighbours and having the certainty that you can rely on them leads to a high level of solidarity and security. To maintain this situation, we suggest to involve newcomers in the (social) activities of the neighbourhood. Another advice is to evaluate, e.g. every 5 years, if the layout of the public green still meets the wishes of the inhabitants.

# Wetenschapswinkel



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