

# CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC SPACES: A KEY FACTOR FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN HISTORIC CITIES

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## ABSTRACT

Attractive public spaces are crucial for tourism. After all, most tourists that visit a city, experience it by foot and increasingly by bicycle.

Public spaces have to meet a few minimum requirements. If not, tourists will feel uncomfortable. For instance; a lot of rubbish and graffiti, worn out and damaged street furniture can cause a feeling of unsafety. Attractive public spaces are the ones that invite tourists to stay a bit longer than strictly necessary and sit down and relax. Some of these spaces are quiet and green, others more vibrant, well dimensioned and furnished.

In this paper I describe a method for defining and measuring the quality of public space and also for predicting the conclusion tourists may draw based on this; “will I revisit this place or not ?”

In some cities inhabitants, local shop owners and local institutions voluntarily take the initiative to upgrade the quality of public spaces or even act as ‘city hosts’ to welcome visitors. These kinds of civic participation help to provide the unique experience many tourists are looking for.

Keywords: Quality of Public Spaces, Integral Management of Public Spaces, Hospitality, Civic Participation.

JEL Classification: Z39

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is on the increase the world over. In the first half of 2015 it grew by four percent compared with 2014. In total, 21 million more people worldwide took a holiday (UN World Tourism Organisation, 2015). This is due, amongst other things, to the growth in the middle classes. People have more free time and more money. Until the 1950s, holiday-making in Europe was primarily the preserve of the rich. In addition, there has been a significant increase in the number of people who can travel freely, people from Russia and China for instance, and flying has also become far cheaper.

In many cases tourism is a welcome source of income and creates jobs for the local population. It also helps improve shopping facilities and leads to increased funding for museums etc. And money is made available to invest in the regeneration of public spaces.

But tourism can also have a less positive impact. For example, the cost of supermarket food and the cost of housing can increase, making these less affordable for local people. Other issues may include less social behaviour, litter and a shortage of drinking water.

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Foundation for Post Graduate Education, Technology and Management (PAO TM). PAO TM is a non-profit organisation. The objective of PAO TM is to disseminate recently acquired knowledge among graduates of universities of applied sciences and research universities who are working in the broad field of technology and management. PAO TM works closely with leading knowledge and research institutions such as the Royal Netherlands Society of Engineers (KIVI), Delft University of Technology, Eindhoven University of Technology and University of Twente.

At the same time there are a lot of opportunities to stimulate sustainable forms of tourism. More and more tourists are looking for a unique experience, for authenticity, which brings them into contact with the locals. If they are to benefit from this, destinations must stand out from the crowd and deliver real quality. A quality that visitors will rate as 9.5 out of 10. That way, visitors will happily return and will act as ‘ambassadors’ for the city.

In this article I will show you how public spaces can play a crucial role in this. Good public spaces can help make visitors feel as though they’re visiting friends and they will behave accordingly. You could call this ‘friendly tourism’.

Focusing on ‘friendly tourism’ is increasingly important now that, with the increasing use of social media and comparison sites and, more generally, the availability of information online, news of potential ‘issues’ with a destination can spread like wildfire all over the world.

Clearly however, this also brings with it opportunities: a good location can quickly reach the desired target groups and ‘tempt’ them to visit.

In this paper I will consider urban tourism, city breaks and, more specifically, the ability of good public spaces to generate sustainable tourism.

I will look at the following, in that order:

1. The importance of public spaces for tourism.
2. The characteristics of a tourist ‘friendly’ public space.
3. A method for measuring the friendliness of public spaces.
4. The impact of engagement and active civic participation on the friendliness of public spaces.
5. The example of the Vondelpark in Amsterdam.

## **2. THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC SPACES FOR TOURISM**

There are many factors that make a city an attractive destination for a city break: tourist sights, museums, historic buildings, a plentiful supply of accommodation in different price brackets. But vibrant streets, attractive parks, ‘buzzing squares’ and places to meet are often also crucial factors in a city’s appeal to visitors.

In this context, public spaces are often important but, in my opinion, they are not always given the attention they deserve in municipal authorities’ policies on tourism.

Before we look at these issues in more detail, a clear definition of public spaces is needed. This paper focuses on the definition described by Benn & Gaus. (Benn & Gaus, 1983). They describe public spaces as a place (1) socially and physically accessible to all, including the activities in it, (2) controlled by public actors which act on behalf of a community and used by the public, (3) which serves the public interest. Examples of these spaces are streets, squares and parks

Public spaces can have various functions. One important function is to connect and transport people, goods, energy, waste and water. Public spaces of course also provide access to houses, shops and businesses and they fulfil a social function, providing a space for meetings, recreation and markets. They can also be used to store water for irrigation and for drinking and offer opportunities for nature and landscape.

What’s more, there is a growing recognition that green public spaces have a very positive impact on people’s health. They reduce stress and promote vitality and social contact because green spaces encourage people to be active (Hamer M. & Chida Y., 2010). Besides this, the economic value of homes that have a view of a park, lake or river is several percent higher

than that of comparable homes without such a view (Visser P & Dam van F., 2006; CROW, 2012).

How important are public spaces for tourism? Very important! Public spaces are crucially important both in terms of the visitor experience and in terms of the wellbeing of local residents and businesses. Not least because, when visiting the city, visitors spend much of their time outdoors. And they also get a real feel for the public spaces because they generally get around the city on foot or by bike. Local residents temporarily share the public spaces with visitors. And that's where they encounter the majority of the 'impact' of their presence. This is often regarded as positive, e.g. in terms of meeting new people, but sometimes it is regarded as somewhat less positive, e.g. due to crowded places, the mess left behind by and less social behaviour of some tourists (Neuts B. & Nijkamp P. & Leeuwen van E. 2012).

It is crucial therefore that the quality of public spaces is good. In other words, they must be clean, safe (Elffers, H. en De Jong, W., 2004), vibrant and attractive.

In recent decades many European cities have done a great deal to improve their public spaces. Barcelona was one of the first cities to invest heavily in making the city more attractive for visitors and residents. This was done with a view to the Olympic Games in 1992. Squares, parks and boulevards were improved and cars were banned from several places in the inner city. Copenhagen did this even earlier. Shopping streets were made traffic free from the late 1960s, leaving more space for terraces for alfresco eating and drinking and for people to 'amble' and shop. A large number of terraces sprung up and these are still in full use today. The University of Copenhagen researched this consecutively for a number of years from 1968 onwards. They found that the number of pedestrians and terraces and the length of time visitors spent in the city centre increased significantly as more roads were made traffic free (Gehl J. & Gemzoe L., 1996). Many Dutch cities followed this example, and large areas of virtually all city centres in the Netherlands are now traffic free, which has created vibrant, attractive shopping areas and squares with terraces for eating and drinking outdoors.

Such public spaces also encourage visitors to the city to stay longer than is strictly necessary. And even better.... they come back for more!

Improving public spaces can increase the appeal of a tourist destination. However, if we are to take full advantage of this, we have to know what characteristics public spaces must have if they are to offer tourists the desired '9<sup>plus</sup> experience'.

### 3. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TOURIST 'FRIENDLY' PUBLIC SPACE

People have been trying to define the concept of quality since time immemorial. Around 60 BC, Roman builder Vitruvius used the terms *Utilitas* (functionality), *Venustas* (attractiveness) and *Firmitas* (durability) to describe the quality of buildings. (Vitruvius Pollio, 2010). Fred Kent, founding father of the US organisation Project for Public Spaces (PPS-org) has devised a very detailed set of quality criteria. These are grouped into four main categories; Comfort and Image, Access and Linkage, Uses and Activities and Sociability. Essentially, they all relate to the use of public spaces for social purposes. In other words, it's all about the extent to which the space is used by people for sitting, walking, playing, exercising, chatting and generally being friendly to each other (Project for Public Spaces Inc., 2000)

Jan Gehl devised his own 'measurement method' for measuring the quality of public spaces and also focused entirely on the 'social quality' of public spaces. The quality of a public space is good if it encourages people to walk, sit, play and exercise and to talk and listen to each other (Gehl J. & Gemzoe L. & Sondergaard S., 2006). Gehl works on the basis of 12 key quality criteria which he sub-divides into three groups: protection, comfort and

enjoyment. These can be used to evaluate a location; a score being given on three levels for each of the criteria. The PPS method doesn't evaluate quality at different levels.

The methods devised by PPS and Gehl offer many useful points of reference for evaluating the tourist 'friendliness' of public spaces. However, there are a number of improvements that could be made to the measurement method. These relate to:

1. The weighting of the various criteria.
2. The importance of maintenance, sustainability, parking facilities for cars and bikes.
3. Further refinement of the criteria on the basis of which the quality of a place is established.

In this paper I describe a method for 'measuring' the quality of public spaces<sup>2</sup> (PLAN Terra, 2011) which takes these three points for improvement into account.

I define the quality of public spaces on the basis of six *key quality criteria*<sup>3</sup>

1. Safety
2. Functionality
3. Maintenance
4. Social use
5. Attractiveness
6. Sustainability

*Re 1. Safety:* On the one hand, this includes public perception of safety, which is influenced by the presence of social control, people/'eyes' on the street, the absence of dominant groups and adequate lighting. On the other hand, it includes any offences, robberies and other types of crime which are known to have been committed there.

*Re 2. Maintenance:* The maintenance criterion indicates how clean the public space is. In other words, is it free from litter, graffiti, illegal posters and stickers, dog waste, leftover food and illegally dumped waste? The extent to which the facilities are intact and in good working order is also assessed. E.g. paving, lighting, drains and furniture, such as benches and waste bins.

*Re 3. Functionality:* Functionality refers mainly to the transport function of the public space. To what extent is the space conducive to safe cycling, walking and driving? It also looks at the accessibility of the space for people with visual or physical disabilities, and considers whether the transport system has enough capacity to prevent traffic jams, queues or parking problems. A public space is also deemed to be functional if it is conducive to the transportation of water, energy and waste. i.e. there is no flooding, the drainage system has sufficient capacity and there are no power cuts.

*Re 4. Social use:* The social quality of a public space is determined on the one hand by how vibrant it is and, on the other, by the social interaction between users and the extent to which users engage with the public space. By vibrant we mean events, markets and lots of people walking, cycling and sitting. Social interaction and engagement means users making contact with each other, talking to each other, playing or exercising together.

*Re 5. Attractiveness:* An attractive public space has a design that attracts people's attention through a harmonious choice of materials, water, green spaces, trees and plants. Sometimes there are references to the history of the site. In addition, the space has been designed with the 'human dimension' in mind, squares are clearly defined and the design has not been

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<sup>2</sup> This method is developed and applied by PLAN terra in several quality scans and policy plans on Public Space in several Dutch cities in the period 2006 -2016. Example PLAN terra (2006 and 2015); *Quick Scan kwaliteit openbare ruimte gemeente Den Haag*; PLAN Terra (2006, 2016)

<sup>3</sup> These criteria are based on the method of describing and measuring quality of public spaces by both Jan Gehl (1996 / 2006) and Project for Public Spaces (2000)

cluttered with a lot of furniture and posts and poles. The space has also been designed in such a way as to provide protection from wind, rain and sun.

*Re 6. Sustainability:* A public space can also contribute to sustainable development. By this we mean not only that it promotes nature and ecology but also that it prevents the pollution of water and air and helps to counter 'heat stress'. On the other hand, when designing and managing the public space, efforts can also be made to keep CO2 emissions to a minimum, to avoid the use of finite resources and to reuse materials wherever possible.

These six criteria are not all of equal importance. Visitors will attribute more importance to some aspects than to others. If part of a public space is regarded as unsafe, due to crime, serious issues with waste or signs of wear and tear and neglect, any 'designer benches' that may have been installed there will go unused. This will also be the case even if it scores well on the other criteria. Conversely, if a public space is deemed to be a safe place and it is functional but a bit cluttered but still very vibrant, the tourist will still give it a good rating. This will still be the case even if the design of the space is very basic and little attention has been paid to sustainability.

To create some structure here, we can use the principles of Maslow's Pyramid<sup>4</sup> We can specify, for example, that tourist locations in historical cities must meet basic requirements. These are: public safety, functionality and an adequate level of maintenance. If a public space doesn't score well on these factors, the visitor's overall experience will automatically be unsatisfactory. These are essentially 'dissatisfiers'. If they are not right, dissatisfaction will result. A 'good' for these aspects will not (or will hardly) lead to a higher degree of satisfaction. In fact, in the event of anti-social behaviour: if visitors make a mess and nothing is done about it this will encourage others to do the same or to behave in other socially unacceptable ways. This phenomenon is known as "the broken windows theory" (Wilson, J.Q. en G.L. Kelling, 1982).

Figure 1: Hierarchy of key quality criteria



Source: PLAN terra BV (2016)

<sup>4</sup> Maslow A. (1940). Hierarchy of Needs motivational model principles. Motivation theory which suggests six interdependent levels of basic human needs (motivators) that must be satisfied in a strict sequence starting with the lowest level

Conversely, a ‘good’ for visitor experience can be created by investing more in attractive design, more green space, colour and flowers, art and sustainability. The latter can be achieved, for example, through the use of electrically driven road sweepers and by separating different types of waste. But the most important thing is the social quality of a space! The opportunity to sit in a square, watch people or even meet other people has an extremely positive impact. That’s what most tourists come to a city for. It’s a popular thing to do between visits to museums, sights etc. and can make the difference between a mildly positive experience and a truly exceptional one.

And visitors have an uncanny knack of sensing the atmosphere at specific spots in the city, and will use it as the basis for deciding whether or not to return in the future.

In this context, I distinguish five different ‘levels of experience’ and the associated conclusions:

**Figure 2: Levels of tourist experience and associated conclusions**

| Grade   | The experience                                                                      |                 | Revisit?                                         |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| 1 - 4   |    | Very unpleasant | I will definitely not revisit this place.        |
| 5 - 7   |   | Unpleasant      | I will probably not revisit this place.          |
| 9 - 13  |  | Not special     | I am not sure whether I will revisit this place. |
| 14 - 16 |  | Pleasant        | I will probably revisit this place.              |
| 17 - 20 |  | Very pleasant   | I will definitely revisit this place.            |

Source: PLAN terra BV (2016)

The ‘very pleasant’ experience is the highest level, at which point the visitor can give the city the desired 9+ rating as a destination, and, at this level, the public space could be classified as a ‘friendly public space’.

#### **4. A METHOD FOR MEASURING THE FRIENDLINESS OF PUBLIC SPACES**

In order to make it possible to determine the ‘friendliness’ of a public space, three levels have been defined for all the key quality criteria: The quality can be: inadequate, adequate or good. A smart definition of the differences has been made using a number of core concepts and two photographs by way of illustration.

In all, twelve of such quality measures have been drawn up; two for each of the six key criteria. Example:

*Key criterion “Maintenance” – sub criterion “Clean”<sup>5</sup> (CROW, 2013)*

- Level C: The public space is dirty, which has a detrimental effect on the visitor experience. Litter, chewing gum, weeds and dog waste are visible all over the place and facades and objects are covered in graffiti, posters, slogans etc. The overall picture is one of annoying uncleanness.
- Level B. The public space is moderately clean. There is some rubbish around but visitors do not experience it as annoying. The area is rather weedy and there is litter here and there, and chewing gum and some dog waste. Facades and objects are covered to a limited extent in graffiti, posters, slogans etc.
- Level A. The public space is clean. There is hardly any rubbish to be seen. There are very few weeds and the streets are virtually free of litter and chewing gum. Graffiti, posters etc. are almost entirely absent.

Figure 3: Catalogue with quality scales for the public space (written in Dutch); examples for Maintenance/ Clean, Safety and Attractiveness



Source: (PLAN terra BV, 2011)

Quality can be determined in a number of different ways. You can start by looking for the presence of physical criteria for the key quality concerned. But it's more important to evaluate the impact of these physical criteria. The user's perception of what is on offer is crucial here.

For example, you can determine the quality of a public space in terms of its maintenance/cleanliness by checking that there are enough litter bins in the public space and counting the amount of litter on the street. How residents and visitors rate the city in terms of its cleanliness is also important. This can vary from one target group to another. What an older

<sup>5</sup> Based on the method for measuring quality of maintenance by CROW; the technology platform for transport, infrastructure and public space in Holland.

couple may regard as filthy, a group of students on holiday may find perfectly acceptable. In other words, they will perceive the same situation in different ways.

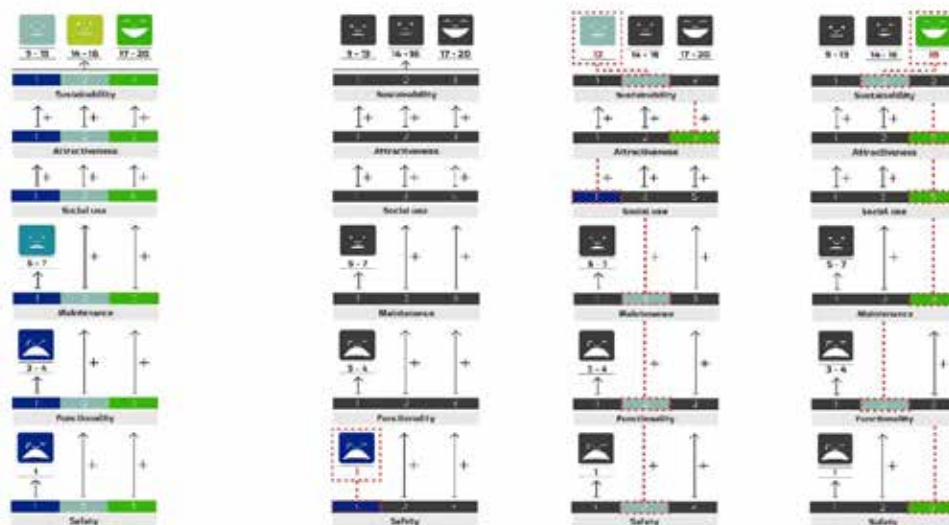
When determining the quality of a public space you can use various sources and research techniques, e.g. counts, technical measurements, observations, interviews with visitors and surveys. And, increasingly, use is being made of the fact that nowadays virtually everyone has a mobile phone, which allows visitor movements in the city to be mapped at meta level.

Visitors and residents rate a city's public spaces based on their overall feel, and draw conclusions as to their 'friendliness' on this basis. The municipal authority must keep its finger on the pulse. In what respects is the quality of the city's public spaces not up to the mark or does it not meet expectations? This allows the appropriate action to be taken to improve the quality of the space. It's also important to make an overall evaluation of the quality of the various locations in the city that visitors visit. This is important in order to obtain an overview of the worst locations and routes. Tackling this can make a huge difference.

As I stated earlier, not all the key quality criteria have the same weight in terms of users' perceptions of a public space. Consequently, it's not enough simply to add the scores (quality levels) for the six quality criteria together to produce an average score.

For this purpose, the method described here includes an 'intelligent' weighting of the various criteria. Thus, for example, an adequate score (score B) for personal safety is a prerequisite for the achievement of an adequate score for the overall quality of the public space concerned. The total score can vary between zero and 10. Scores 1 to 4 represent 'very unpleasant', and scores 5 to 7 'unpleasant'. Scores 9 to 13 indicate that the city and/or specific public space is experienced as 'not special'. Scores 14 to 16 represent 'pleasant'. A public space that scores an A on almost all key criteria will qualify as 'very pleasant'. This is an especially friendly public space that is bound to leave a good impression. It is a space where visitors will behave respectfully. They feel certain they will return in the future, and would certainly recommend the space to others. To do so it is crucial that the basic requirements (safety, functionality and maintenance) are met. If so, the three other criteria (Social use, Attractiveness and Sustainability) can provide a 'plus' in the tourist perception of public space.

Figure 4: method for 'intelligent' weighting of the various quality criteria and three examples of this



Source: PLAN terra BV (2016)

## 5. THE IMPACT OF ENGAGEMENT AND ACTIVE CIVIC PARTICIPATION ON THE FRIENDLINESS OF PUBLIC SPACES

The final rating a visitor gives a city after their visit is influenced by many different factors. Public spaces are a significant factor here. If the basic requirements have been met, the 'social quality' of the public spaces really can make the difference. A destination will be more appealing to visitors if its public spaces are vibrant, there are local markets, events are organised and there are plenty of places where visitors can sit and watch the world go by.

A destination may also have that 'added extra' in terms of visitor ratings if there are obvious signs that the city's residents and businesses are involved in and participate in 'their' public spaces. If they look after their public spaces like one big 'community garden' this will make a big impression on visitors. This may involve brightening up public spaces with plants and flowers or communal litter-picking, for example. Residents who act as hosts, welcoming visitors and giving them directions, can also make a very positive impression. Clearly, these signs of involvement and friendliness impact on the visual quality of the spaces but, far more importantly perhaps, they also affect visitors' behaviour and mindset. They sense that this is a place that people care about and are proud of. And this is a place that they as visitors will also treat with care and respect. I call this the "community garden theory", which is the counterpart of the "broken windows theory" (Wilson J. Q. & Kelling G., 1982). What's really good about this is that it can also prevent or significantly reduce any anti-social behaviour that tourists may inflict on residents of the city (Bennett T, Holloway K, Farrington D., 2008), (Blokland, T. 2009) (Leidelmeijer, K., 2012).

Examples of this can be seen the world over. In my view, the Netherlands has more of these examples than average, and the number has grown significantly in recent years. In many Dutch municipalities you see residents voluntarily improving public spaces and making them more 'their own' by establishing community gardens, jointly creating artworks for the public spaces, litter-picking, 'adopting' bins and creating what's app groups for local residents in an effort to make their neighbourhood a safer place to live. Just to give you an idea: in the city of Nijmegen, which has a population of around 164,000 people (Municipality of Nijmegen, 2016), there are 272 different projects where residents help manage the city's public spaces (PLAN terra BV, 2016). For example, more than 1400 primary school children litter-pick on a weekly basis in their local area in the city of Nijmegen and some surrounding municipalities (Wijkhelden, 2015). There are also a large number of national initiatives in the Netherlands that involve residents cleaning up their local area together and/or jointly organising community activities. Examples of these include national Keep it Clean Day, national Neighbours' Day etc. Every year, thousands of people take part in these initiatives (Nederland Schoon, 2014).

This kills two birds with one stone. One of the real benefits is that people come into contact with each other, which increases social cohesion and helps prevent loneliness, and local residents and visitors treat the environment with more respect. The "community garden theory" has proven its worth in the Netherlands for many years.

There are also examples of participation and involvement which focus even more on the central theme of this paper: city centre tourism. In Amersfoort city centre, for example, a group comprising primarily of older volunteers/pensioners takes visitors on boat tours of the city. In that same city there is a group of volunteers who perform plays in the city's historic centre, acting as residents of the city in the year 1600 (Waterlijn, 2016).

In the city of Delft, near The Hague, businesses involved in the hospitality sector in the city centre have joined forces to do something about safety on the streets on nights out. They've formed welfare teams who nip any aggressive behaviour between visitors on the street in the bud. There are also examples where residents take on the role of host,

welcoming visitors to city parks or city centres and answering any questions they may have. In Rotterdam, there are the City Stewards (Citystewards, 2016): Fifty or so young people who are finding it difficult to get a job or who are struggling with other issues. They are trained by the municipal authority to act as hosts and they also help clean up the city. In The Hague there's the 'Embassy of The Hague' (Ambassade van Den Haag, 2016): Two hundred and fifty enthusiastic volunteers who act as City Hosts, welcoming visitors during events. They are positioned at hot spots and tourist sites to answer any questions visitors may have about the city, the event or how to get from A to B.

The aim of these kinds of community initiatives is to make the city a better place to spend time in and live in, both for residents and for visitors. It helps visitors feel more 'at home' and can make for a really unique tourist experience. This welcome from residents can complement the welcome that is expected from taxi drivers and bus drivers, police officers, parking attendants and those involved in maintaining the city's public spaces.

## **6. EVERYONE'S A FRIEND OF THE VONDELPARK, AMSTERDAM**

The Vondelpark in Amsterdam is essentially the Netherlands' answer to Central Park, New York. Every year, more than ten million people visit the park (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2010). In recent years use of the park as a place to 'chill', BBQ or celebrate a birthday has rocketed. It's a really vibrant place right in the centre of Amsterdam. The average visitor is around 20 years old. Unfortunately, however, with this level of use, the park gets dirty. Every year visitors leave behind them a total of some 350,000 kg of waste, and, all too often, don't even bother to put it in the bin (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2013).

The amount of litter in the Vondelpark was becoming a major issue for local residents. On warm days, the huge number of people using the park for picnics and celebrations generated vast quantities of litter and there were also marks on the grass where their BBQs had been. At the start of the new millennium the litter problem in the Vondelpark was frequently in the news and the issue was high on the political agenda. "The huge amount of rubbish generated over the first warm weekend in spring 2011 was even reported in the national media. (Het Parool, 2011)"

For a long time the council tried to solve the problem by employing ever more people to clean up the mess. But the amount of waste and filth in the park just kept increasing. It was clear that this approach was not delivering the desired result in all respects. On peak days visitors left a mountain of litter in the park. The mess was cleared up by council workers the next morning but the outrage over the visitors' behaviour grew by the day. And at a time when cuts were being made in many areas there was no political will to deploy ever more manpower and spend ever more money to clean up the mess.

In 2012, in an effort to tackle the mess and the negative press it was generating, the council decided: "to encourage users to take responsibility for their use of the Vondelpark along the lines of: 'good host, good guest'. The city council and local residents, united under the Association of Friends of the Vondelpark, launched a new, integrated approach for a cleaner Vondelpark, which aimed to change the behaviour of visitors to the park, so that, even on busy days, the park would be a clean and attractive place for both residents and tourists. (Vrienden van het Vondelpark, 2016)."

One of the key factors here is encouraging people to be 'friends' of the park. Friends don't drop litter or make a mess and may even be prepared to roll up their sleeves and help clean up the park. If they use the park on a sunny day, on a night out or for a celebration of any kind, wherever possible, they would put their rubbish in the bin. Through four pillars (participation, management, enforcement and communication) the approach focuses more

than had previously been the case on preventive measures, such as visible cleaning, hosts and encouraging participation by volunteers, and on encouraging the desired behaviour through various means of communication.

This approach has now been in place for more than four years. Large numbers of local residents, businesses and staff from local hotels periodically help pick up litter, tend the gardens or act as hosts. This has made litter less of an issue. And, more importantly, satisfaction surveys among visitors indicate that they think the park is getting cleaner all the time (PLAN terra, 2014).

The latest development is a plan to involve tourists by offering them a remarkable 'excursion'. Visitors can support this civic initiative by actually 'giving a hand' with maintenance of the park.

I trust this approach, "Everyone's a friend of the Vondelpark", can offer inspiration for a strategy to make the public spaces used by tourists in the city centre even more welcoming.

Visitors who themselves make an active contribution to the friendliness of public spaces... it really is possible. I believe that a growing number of tourists are looking for a unique experience which really brings them into contact with local people and which, at the same time, allows them to do something in return for the welcome which they have received. This can help make people more tolerant and increase their understanding of other cultures and can also lessen the impact of any problems caused by visitors to your city.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Attractive public spaces are crucial for tourists. Public spaces have to meet some minimum requirements. They have to be safe, clean and functional. Attractive and sustainable design can influence the opinion of a tourist in a more positive way. But, in my view the criterion "social use" is the most important of all. Public spaces should have a pleasant social use to be attractive to tourists. They are vibrant and you find people that stroll, sport, play, sit and talk. This makes tourists to decide to come back again. The social quality can be improved even further when tourists feel welcome and 'at home' and they will behave according to that feeling. A 'nine plus' experience can be provided when tourists meet inhabitants of the city who voluntarily act as hosts of the city or who help improving the quality of public space by removing litter of nursing plants and flowers. This is a proof of the highest possible level of social quality and it makes 'friendly' public spaces. I call this the "community garden theory", which is the counterpart of the "broken windows theory".

In this paper I describe a new method of measuring of the integral quality of public space. In this method I also assume a correlation with the experience and associated conclusion of tourists; will I revisit this place ?. I believe civic participation can play a very positive role in this decision. In the case study of the Vondelpark I found some evidence for this.

But, it is clear more research is needed to validate the described method and the impact of civic participation.

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