

# THE EYE LEVEL GAME: a new perspective on your streets



# HOW TO ORGANISE AN EYE LEVEL GAME

**Bring new liveliness in your street by hosting an Eye Level Game: celebrate the importance of human scale and approach an urban area from the pedestrian's point of view.**

**This game will not only help with the engagement of the local community in improving their own street, it will also give those with a background in urban planning, development, urban design and architecture new perspectives on streets and public places.**

In this manual, we will give you a step-by-step guide on how to organise your very own Eye Level Game. But before we start, let us talk a bit more about the principles of a great city at eye level.

We could write a whole book about this -oh wait, we actually did- but in a modest attempt, this manual should give you a concise summary.



Unattractive  
at eye level



Appealing and  
functional  
at eye level

## THE IMPACT OF A GREAT STREET AT EYE LEVEL

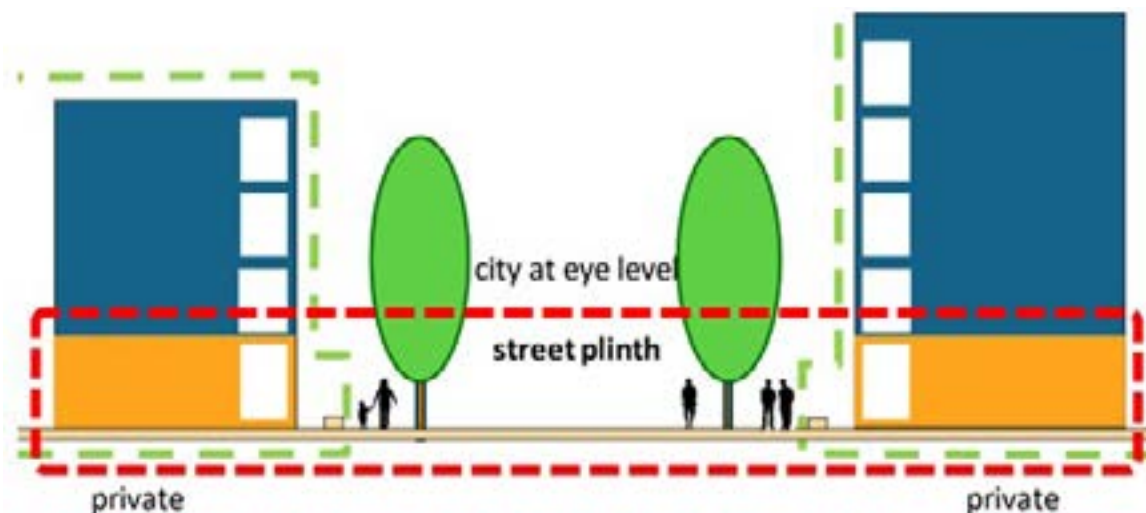
**A good human scale within cities and their streets is beyond doubt the most crucial aspect for a proper living environment.**

When done right, pedestrians can truly enjoy the lively streets in which they live, move and stay every day. While commuting around the area, people will get an instant ‘at home’ feeling in streets with an attractive human eye level. These streets facilitate random small but valuable encounters among pedestrians and radiate a warm inviting atmosphere. When done wrong however, people may feel alienated, as they are walking in a sterile and anonymous neighbourhood.

## REFOCUS ON PUBLIC SPACE

An Eye Level Game teaches you to refocus on public space. It is not limited to the street only - the area controlled by the municipality. Everything you can observe in a public space influences the quality of that space. Given that, the facades of buildings, especially their ground floors (also called “plinths”), of a street play an immensely important role in the ambience of an area. We consider the entire environment that you can see and experience a part of public space.

**“The ground floor may be only 10% of a building but it determines 90% of the experience.”**

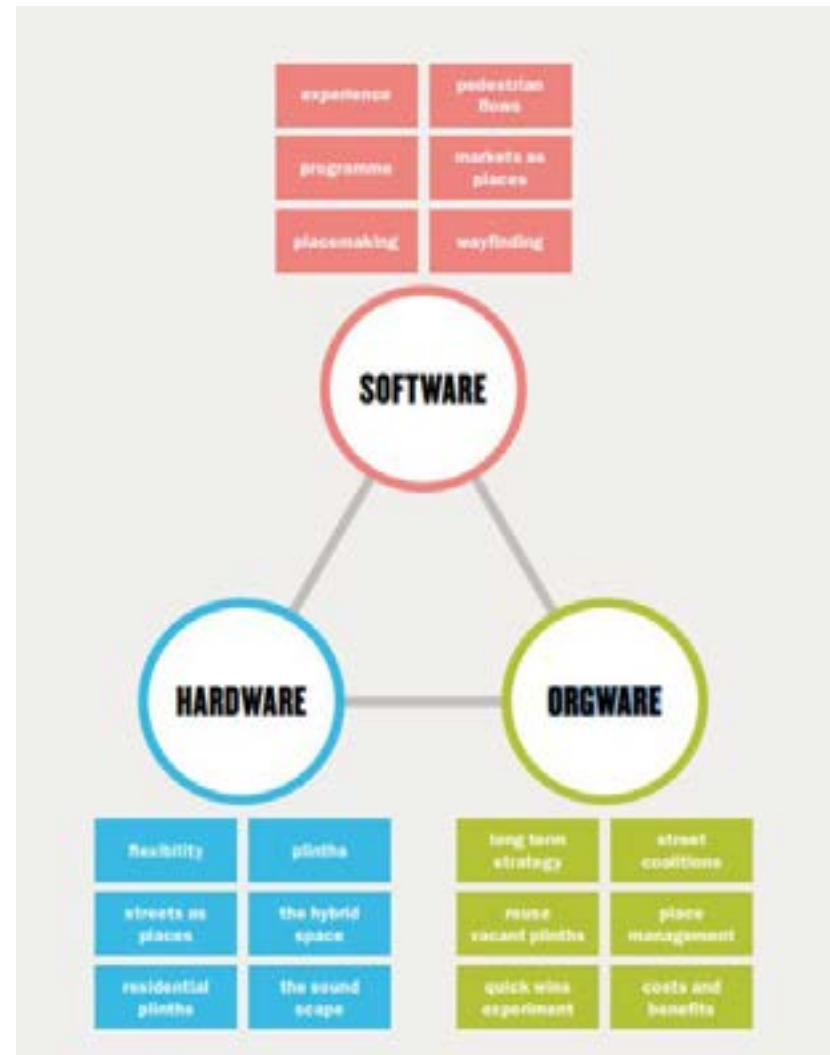


## Three dimensions: hardware, software, orgware

Subsequently, it is important to look at public space in a three-dimensional perspective. An area is not only its built environment (the hardware), but is formed primarily by its software – the experience an area gives you, the placemaking of the area, the pedestrian flows etcetera – and its orgware – the management of a place, its long term strategy, and street coalitions. Great streets most of the time have all three of these angles at once. If you want to improve your street, a better design alone is not enough. You also need to think of how to improve the use and activities, and the organising mechanisms behind it.

## What to look for during an Eye Level Game?

Criteria for a great city at eye level differ between certain types of areas. For retail areas, a great human scale offers a rich experience for pedestrians by street, place, and portfolio management, and develops coalitions of entrepreneurs. For residential areas, a great human scale has good connections between the houses and the street on ground level, allowing great ‘homey’ hybrid zones where residents personalise their space with a table, chairs and plants, creating pleasant sidewalk experiences. In areas where businesses and offices are dominant, a great human scale has a high level of diversity. Avoid (or change) long and boring façades by creating smaller units and bringing the inside out.



# The properties of streets that DO get the human scale right...

- ...have been developed with lasting quality in mind, instead of quick returns.
- ...embrace the soul of the city by respecting and reusing heritage and by a locally rooted approach.
- ...are heterogenous and have a mixed use of retail and residential buildings.
- ...have great public quality, quality green space and facilities for sitting and leisure.
- ...are streets where people have a sense of ownership.



*Residential ground floors*



*Shopping street*



*Office ground floors*



## USES OF THE EYE LEVEL GAME

An Eye Level Game will bring out the best ideas for long- and short-term improvements when performed with a varied group of people: the local community, real-estate developers, building-owners, civil servants, and urban planners.

*A few examples of how you can use the game:*

- STIPO hosted an Eye Level Game with designers and developers in the Zuidas area in Amsterdam, the booming business district also called ‘the Financial Mile’. The game reintroduced the human scale to these developers and inspired them with the huge impact a lively and open ground floor can make. Learning from the streets developed in the last 5 years, they brought a lot of lessons for improvement for the development in the next 5 years. In another context, urbanism students in Stockholm gained new insights for their own future careers. STIPO played an Eye Level Game with them in which they discovered ways to make streets more welcoming and lively places.
- With the local community and people from the municipality on the Spuistraat, Amsterdam, STIPO used the Eye Level Game to infuse positivity in the street. Together with residents we found ways to create more diversity and developed a ground floor activation strategy for that street.

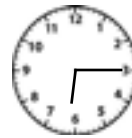
## → IMPORTANT NOTE

Only execute an Eye Level Game with the local community if you are actually planning on making improvements in that neighbourhood. Otherwise, the Eye Level game will create expectations to which you cannot live up.

## TIME SCHEME WHEN EYE LEVEL GAME STARTS AT 18:00



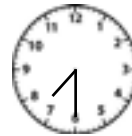
18:00 welcome – intro (people introduce themselves 1 minute each, name, organisation, maybe a statement on the street)



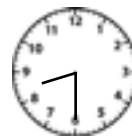
18:15 Introduction to the city at eye level method, feed with examples and inspiration from elsewhere



18:45 Split up in groups, go outside, do analyses



19:30 Come up with plan: short term, long term, partners, investors.



20:30 Present plan



21:30 Discuss next steps and conclusions

# STEP 1-5 GETTING READY

## 1.1 SELECT A SITE

The first step of organising an Eye Level Game is selecting a site. Eye Level Games are most commonly used, and most suitable for analysing streets. If you are looking for tools to evaluate parks or squares, we recommend using our PlaceGame Manual.

The street can be underused, well used or overcrowded. In underused streets, ask yourself: how can we start to bring back life? In (fairly) well used streets: how can we get from adequate to extraordinary? In overcrowded streets: how can we make this a more enjoyable place for the human scale? In all places: how can we create a bigger diversity of use?



## 1.2 OBSERVE THE STREET AND GET IT TO KNOW THE BEST WAY POSSIBLE

Before you let participants execute the eye level game, you should first get to know the street yourself. Observe the street at different times of the day and different days of the week. Take a look at how pedestrians walk through the area and rate the quality of its buildings and its ground floors and frontages.

Get to know what goes on. Talk with stakeholders like shop owners and residents. Ask their view on the quality, the attractiveness and the ambiance of the street. Ask about happenings or events that take place in that street. Tap into their knowledge of what they think should happen. And make get them motivated to join the eye level game. All streets are unique, even the people living near that street, and you will see that every conversation will lead to new perspectives.

Do some analytic research as well. Get to know the future plans for the street, the characteristic of the local community living around the street, and search for traffic and pedestrians counts of the street. Find data on traffic accidents, safety and pollution, if available. Get an understanding of the street profiles, measure the amount and types of ground floor spaces per 100 m, map the owners of the buildings. Observe the quality of trees and other green elements. Observe how many 'destinations' or pocket places there are. Count the seating, both public and private. Look for signs of mental ownership by the users. And get an understanding of how the street is embedded in the larger network of public spaces of the city around it.

If you have done all this, you will be able to manage the Eye Level Game well and know best where opportunities for improvements are.

# STEP 1-5 GETTING READY

## 3 SELECT A CENTRAL VENUE

Look for a central, big enough venue with an informal atmosphere where participants can gather. The venue should have a maximum of 10 minutes walking distance from the selected site, and has to be suitable for facilitating an event for your group size and should have a welcoming and homey feeling.

At the venue, the initiators can give a small introduction about the Eye Level Game and its goals before everyone heads off to the selected street.

After everyone is done evaluating, the venue offers a nice spot where all the new ideas and insights can be discussed, while enjoying some snacks and drinks.

## 4 IDENTIFY PARTICIPANTS

The Eye Level Game is performed best and will bring the best results when executed with a varied group of participants. Think of stakeholders in the local community, but also urban planners and designers, municipal experts and architecture/urban design students. Perhaps there is a manager active who is there every day and knows the street like no-one else. Building owners or developers of new buildings may play a role. You need everyone at the table that is part of the chain of solutions.

In general: aim for people who want to contribute or do something, not people who only want to talk. When it comes to people from the local community, you should be inclusive and be aware that some groups may need more effort to become involved, such as a personal invitation or a talk beforehand. Think of small children, elderly, people with physical restrictions, people with less experience at participating in workshops, or people who may have difficulty understanding the language. Always think of who is still missing in the networks that you have opened up.

Preparing the workshop, we would have 6 to 10 one-on-one interviews of one hour each with the key stakeholders beforehand. This will be extremely helpful to find out what is happening, get a deeper understanding of the challenges and ideas, and get to hear the important stuff that people would not share in a group. It will also be an important investment into the success of the workshop, as you build warm and personal contacts. People will also be able to suggest new networks to be opened up and to be invited to the workshop.

For the Eye Level Game itself, the ideal group size is between 20 and 40 participants.



# STEP 1-5 GETTING READY

## 4.1 SEND INVITATIONS

Now that you have identified participants, it is time to invite them. Ideally this is done via e-mail, so participants can easily let you know they will be present; but again, be aware of the groups you may not reach this way at the same time. We recommend sending an invitation 2-3 weeks before the event, and another reminder 1 week before the event. Even more spontaneous and personal, is walking around the place beforehand while handing out flyers.

Make sure you speak enthusiastically in the invitation! Keep it accessible for everyone, and carefully avoid using any jargon. Give a little bit of background of the area and the Eye Level Game and tell participants about the duration, the location & the free snacks and drinks.

Dear residents, developers, civil servants and other stakeholders,

**We heartily invite you to join us on the 3rd of October to participate in the Eye Level Game!**

### **Why this invitation?**

On the 3rd of October, we will host an event in order to make the Zomerhofstraat a more attractive place for everyone! During the event, we will map short-term opportunities, difficult obstacles and potential actions regarding the further development of the Zomerhofstraat.

Together, we take a closer look and determine how they could be improved from a pedestrian point of view.

### **From street to public place to be!**

The Zomerhofstraat is known for its slow urbanism and creative atmosphere. Together with you, we will investigate how this street can become even more lively, attractive and diverse!

Snacks & Drinks will be provided!



October 3, 2019



18:00 - 22:00



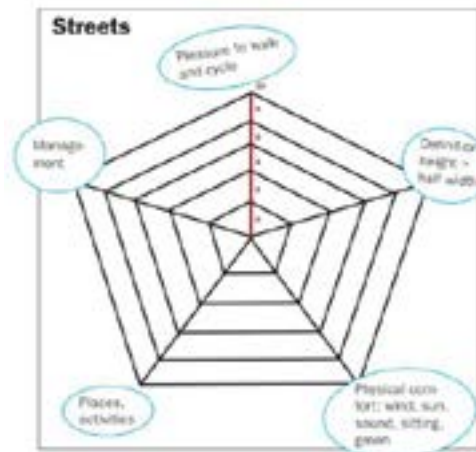
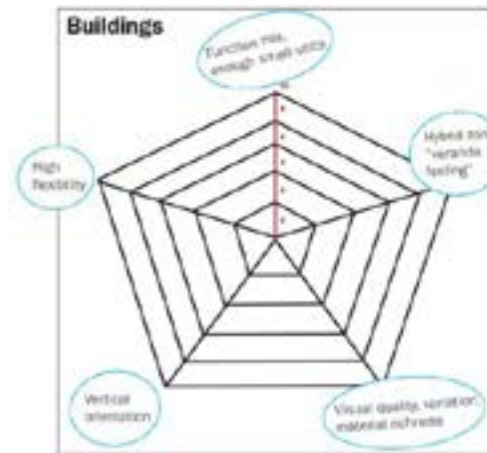
Café Museumplein

# STEP 1-5 GETTING READY

## 5 GET TO KNOW THE EYE LEVEL GAME-SURVEY

In order to execute the Eye Level Game, participants should use The Eye Level Game survey; a very approachable survey that will give you a nice set of open questions and questions where participants will be asked to rate the state of the human scale ([DOWNLOAD THE SURVEY FOR FREE](#)). Read into the survey and understand the questions, so you can accompany participants well when they have to give their answers.

**1** The Form starts with questions to understand the context of the street better. Most streets depend on a user base of around 5-10 minutes walk from around. The characteristics of the community living around is therefore very determining for what the street can and cannot be. Also, streets are very different in terms of their hierarchy: people expect different qualities in a high street in the heart of a city than in residential neighbourhood streets more on the outside.



**2** When you understand the context better, it is time to zoom in on the street as a whole and the buildings in the street. The spider graphs can be scored on the criteria (see figure) for the street and for the buildings, from 0 (extremely bad) to 10 (extremely good). We have described the criteria more extensively in a separate document - check the download list at the end of this manual.

**3** Observe how people use the street. How many passers-by are there per hour (count passers-by for 5 minutes and multiply by 12)? Measure the sidewalk width and calculate the business (0-5 passersby per meter width per hour is desolate, 5-20 is comfortable and lively, more than 20 is overcrowded). Draw a map of how people walk, how they cross the street, where they stand and stay longer, where you see groups of people.

# STEP 1-5 GETTING READY

## 5 GET TO KNOW THE EYE LEVEL GAME-SURVEY

**4** Interview at least two different users, shop owners etc on the street itself on what they like best, what the street is like in other times and seasons, and what they would do to improve the street.



*A - Good ground floor  
- Good physical structure  
- Good use*



*B - Ground floor with potential  
- Good physical structure  
- Use improvement needed*

**5** Rate the ground floors A-E (see pictures on the right)



*C - Ground floor with potential  
- Minor physical investment needed*



*D - Bad ground floor  
- Major physical investment needed*



*E - Bad ground floor  
- No transformation possible*

# STEP 1-5 GETTING READY

## 5 GET TO KNOW THE EYE LEVEL GAME-SURVEY

**6** Make drawings or a map with the improvements. A nice of a map of that type is shown in the figure on this page. By colouring a map you will get a nice overview of the quality of the plinths in an area.

**7** Write down your ideas for the long term (three years or more), the short term (between now and three months) and who the key partners could be. This process will be discussed more elaborate in the further part of this manual.





# STEP 6-8: EXECUTE THE EYE LEVEL GAME

## 6 PRESENTATION

Welcome everyone at the central venue and raise their enthusiasm by showing them a brief presentation of the area where the Eye Level Game will take place. Talk about its history, about its shortcomings, about its future and about its potential. Of course you can always invite others with more knowledge about the area to talk about it and share their insights.

To really make impact with your presentation, we recommend using inspirations from great streets all over the world and streets that face similar challenges as the one you are going to evaluate.

Make the presentation very visual, and about the intuitive feeling of the place. Make people feel the value of placemaking, but avoid any jargon at all time, keep the presentation accessible to everyone. It helps a great deal if you or someone else can speak from your own experiences.

Round up the presentation with giving specifications about the Eye Level Game: set up a time-frame and make clear what is expected of everyone. Let participants introduce themselves for about 10 seconds each.

In general, the presentation can turn out to be a nice way to activate participants' thoughts before they actually go out to 'the field'. Moreover, it is important to set the tone of the Eye Level Game: it has to be informal, suitable for open discussions, and there has to be no hierarchy whatsoever among participants.

## CHECKLIST

- Surveys (the Eye Level Game Form) printed for everyone
- Lots of pens, markers in different colours
- Snacks, fruits and drinks
- Enough chairs and tables for up to 10 groups to each sit down around one table
- A projector and screen, a clicker and laptop with presentation
- Big white papers for everyone to write their ideas on
- A large real photo printed on A0
- 120 green dots, 120 yellow dots and 120 red dots (3 of each colour per participant)
- A list on which participants can leave their names and e-mail addresses
- Music and an informal atmosphere!



# STEP 6-8: EXECUTE THE EYE LEVEL GAME

## 7 SPLIT INTO GROUPS

Hand out the Eye Level Game Survey and don't forget to give everyone pens. When splitting up it is important to create diverse groups. A nice way of obtaining that is to assign numbers to everyone in order to make sure that people who already know each other are spread over different groups.

Remind them to be back in an hour or so, this way there will be enough time left to discuss all the new insights. Most importantly: remember to have fun! Make sure everyone is enthusiastic and keep in mind that the Eye Level Game is a great interactive way to improve your urban space in a positive way!



# STEP 6-8: EXECUTE THE EYE LEVEL GAME

## 8 START WITH THE SURVEY

And now it's time to really execute the Eye Level Game. Let participants walk around the area, and make sure they observe the street as a whole.

It is important that every participant fills in the survey all by themselves, as it's common for participants to be influenced by one another.

As you can tell, the survey covers many different subjects, such as the context, the mix of functions, its character etc. Think of why you are seeing what you are seeing: why does the place have a certain atmosphere? Why are pedestrians walking around the area the way they are and not in another way?

Another method to efficiently see the strengths and weaknesses of the street is to count the number of doors (and the units behind them of course) per 100m. Great streets have an average of 10-20 units per 100 m. Boring streets often have larger scale buildings or blocks with only 1 or a few doors per 100 m.

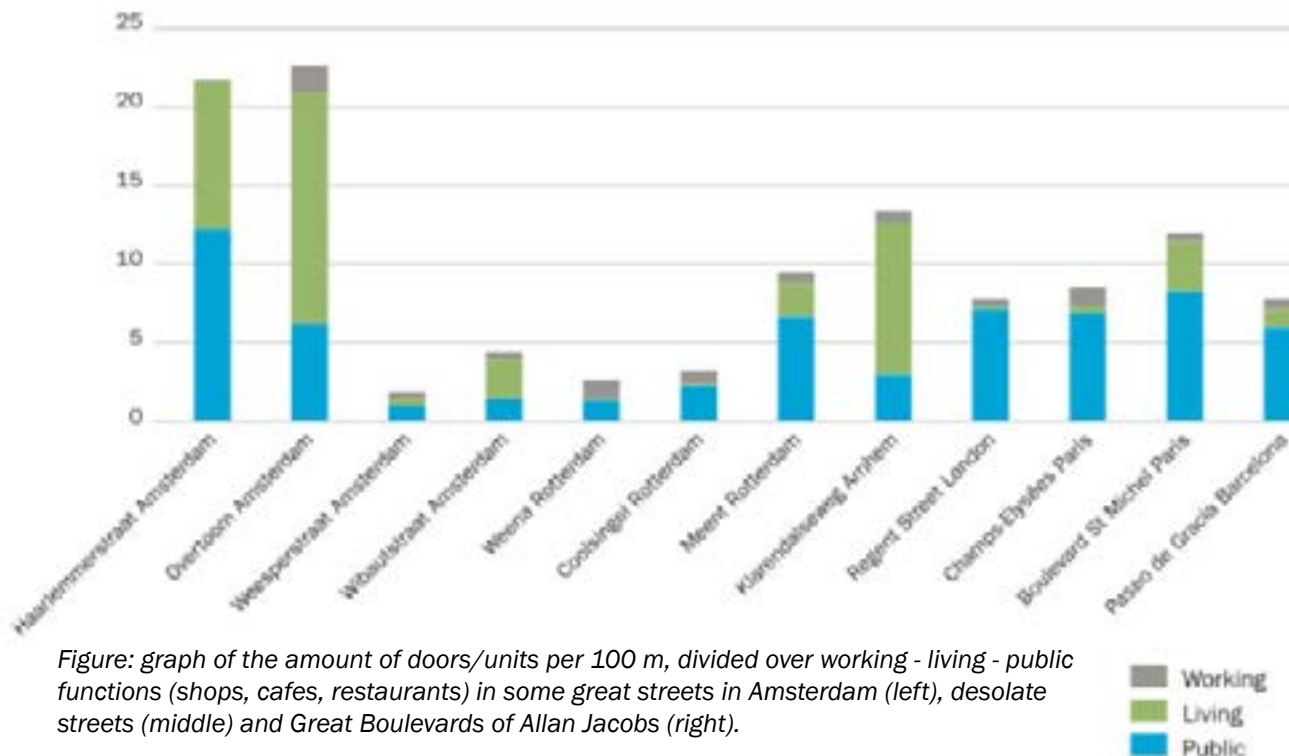


Figure: graph of the amount of doors/units per 100 m, divided over working - living - public functions (shops, cafes, restaurants) in some great streets in Amsterdam (left), desolate streets (middle) and Great Boulevards of Allan Jacobs (right).

## 8.1 DON'T FORGET TO TAKE PHOTOS!

Taking pictures is a very efficient way to back-up certain findings and observations. Furthermore, pictures will prove to be of great help when everyone has returned to the venue for the expected presentation.

Given that, let the inner-photographers of your group come out and encourage them to take photos as much as they can!



# STEP 9-11: DETERMINING AND IMPLEMENTING POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS



## 9 WRITE DOWN SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

Now that everyone has successfully completed the survey, it is time to come together again and let all the groups write down their findings divided between four different topics:

1. a brief characteristic of the street they analysed
2. short term improvements (between now and three months)
3. long term improvements (three years or more)
4. possible partners to put these ideas into action.

The results of these evaluations reveal a lot about the street and highlight areas for improvement and offer clues as to what is working and what could be improved. Use a big piece of paper for this, so all the other groups can clearly see the listed ideas.

# STEP 9-11: DETERMINING AND IMPLEMENTING POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

## 10 COMPARISON, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Let each group present their findings, using their photos taken during the Eye Level Game and the sheet of paper with listed ideas and possible partnerships, in a 5-min presentation. First let them tell about the characteristics of the space, followed by short and long term improvements, eventually talking about possible partnerships and lastly about participants' own role in this process. Surprisingly often it is found that participants come to similar conclusions on what would make a space better. Even more surprisingly, the necessary and proposed changes are often quite easy to execute.

### → 10.1 DON'T FORGET

Ask all the participants to put their names and group numbers on their Eye Level Game Evaluation Forms and to hand them in for the final report. Also ask them to share their photographs with you. And don't forget to get everyone's names and e-mail addresses for further actions.





# STEP 9-11: DETERMINING AND IMPLEMENTING POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

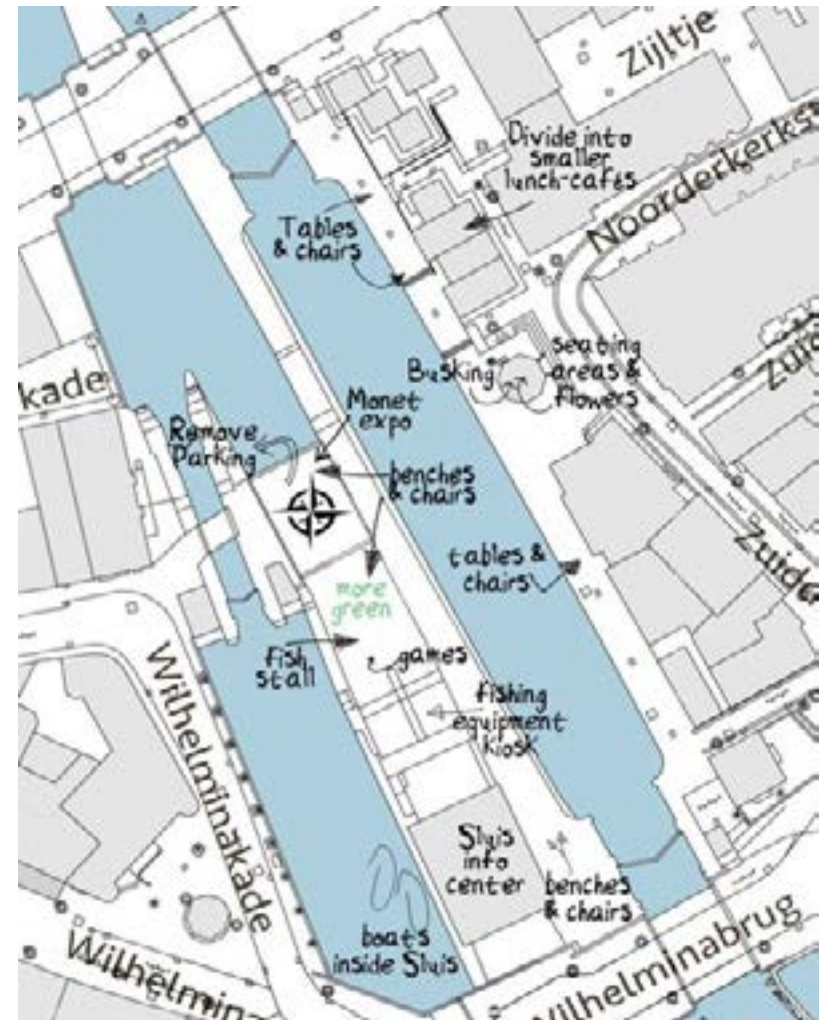
## 11 TRANSLATE IDEAS INTO ACTION

Congratulations! You set up an event which not only brought positive change in a public space, but also cultivated civic involvement among participants and brought new insights to people familiar with the field of urban development! Now, you might be thinking, how do I convert all these insights in actual concrete long-term change in my urban setting?

Try to reserve time immediately after the Eye Level Game to make a Street Action Plan, containing:

- The aims of selecting the street
- A map of the street
- A brief description of the atmosphere and participants of the Eye Level Game
- A summary of each Eye Level Game Form, with scores based on the forms, the characteristic, short term, long term actions, coalition partners, pictures and drawings
- An overall map of the short term actions
- An overall map of the long term actions.

Please find an example of the Street Action Plan in the download list at the end of this manual. As an organiser, the most important thing to do is implementing achievable short term improvements quickly. Show the community that some things are actually being done, and keep the momentum going.





## DOWNLOADS

- [The Eye Level Game Form](#)
- [The City at Eye Level Book](#)
- [The City at Eye Level Website](#)

## SOURCES

**STIPO**, The City at Eye Level:

- <https://thecityateyelevel.com/biglearning/criteria-for-great-streets-and-plinths/>
- <https://thecityateyelevel.com/stories/the-city-at-eye-level/>