NATURE TAKEOVER

Turning unused or dilapidated infrastructure into community gardens, small parks or natural playgrounds has increased spaces where children can play and families can meet.

This gives babies and toddlers access to nature, creates a stronger sense of community and improves environmental awareness. It also improves children’s self-efficacy – or their sense of achievement, their sense of cause–effect and their nutrition and understanding of where food comes from.

Exposure to nature on a regular basis has a positive impact on mental health for both children and caregivers, in addition to improving self-regulation skills and physical development in children.

At a glance...

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<th>COST</th>
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GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT
- Social Services
- Education
- Health
- Parks
- Planning
- Transport

MINIMUM SCALE
A few square meters

EXISTING IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL
Tested and implemented

Photo: Vanessa Touzard/Bernard van Leer Foundation
OUTCOME AREAS

- Increased time spent outdoors together by caregivers and children
- Increased exposure to nature
- Reduced caregiver stress and isolation
- Increased connectivity and trust between caregivers and children from different families
- Increased exercise
- Increased frequency and efficiency of public space usage
- Improved air quality
- Increased tree coverage

REAL WORLD EXAMPLES

- In Antwerp, Belgium, Kind en Samenleven is turning small, sterile plots of land in front of homes into green zones where young children can play and learn gardening activities.

- In Recife, Brazil, the Comunidade dos Pequenos Profetas is an urban farming project on a rooftop, which produces healthy food and hires local young people. The project has educational, vocational and nutritional impacts on local families, while providing 400 square metres of green space.

- In Sydney, Australia, Waverley council’s Urban Interventions programme received an award for ‘best planning idea’ for their parklet project – turning car parking space into pop-up parks – from the Planning Institute of Australia in 2014. The idea, originating in San Francisco, USA, has since spread and is now a common sight in most western countries.

RELATED IDEAS

- Design for play
- A tree for every baby
- Merging green and play spaces
- Targeted air quality improvements