

Urban oases, tranquil spaces to relax and enjoy nature

Authors: Kaat Smets and Gilke Pée, Department of Environment and Spatial Development (Flemish government) and Stefan Acke, Agency for Care and Health in collaboration with the Luwte-oases program team.

Various Flemish organizations in the domain of environment, spatial planning, health, nature, tourism and culture work together in the “Luwte-oases” program. Luwte-oases are tranquil spaces that function like urban oases to relax and enjoy nature. Especially now that living and working are increasingly converging in densely populated urban districts and villages, it is even more important to preserve and create tranquil spaces to establish a healthy environment. This program team focuses on the relationship between a biodiverse, high-quality environment and health. There is a range of spaces that can be called a “luwte-oase”, but we focus on working and living environments. It concerns green spots that offer tranquility and quietness in a busy environment. The team wants to accelerate the realization of these oases by fully supporting local initiatives. Components discussed include further efforts to raise awareness about the need for tranquil spaces in densely urbanized environments, to illustrate the potential of Green Infrastructure with a contribution to health, to valorize the input from early adopters, to provide criteria for qualitative oases and to consider a call to facilitate and support coalition building. Local authorities are a privileged target group, because they also act as a link to other key actors.