

The Urban Pergola : street furniture of the future?

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The Urban Pergola : street furniture of the future?

You may know the pergola as an esthetical element in the backyard, but can this well-known garden piece also be implemented as multifunctional street furniture in the public space? In urban areas where space is limited, many different interests and needs come together, and it's worth exploring which diverse demands from a neighbourhood can be met by 'the Urban Pergola'. In this workshop, we discuss why 'the Urban Pergola' is a valuable asset for the city, not only addressing climate resilience by introducing shade, but also the need for a circular society, promoting wellbeing and inclusiveness.

Due to climate change, rising temperatures lead to more extreme heat stress in urban areas. Last summer, there were poignant images of people looking for shade in cities. Trees are effective measures to provide shade and decrease the perceived temperature. However, trees cannot grow in healthy conditions due to the conflicting interests of the many functions and infrastructure in cities. Also time is a limiting factor; before trees are fully grown and can fulfil its various functions (shade, biodiversity, appearance), it takes not only physical space but also time. Alternative interventions, such as a pergola, can help increase urban resilience by reducing the negative impacts of climate change.

Pergolas are known, for example, in more southern Europe cities. However, despite the described promising effects of the pergola in documents to reduce heat stress and provide shade, we barely see these structures in the Dutch public space. We all know the pergola as an esthetical piece in the backyard where it provides shade, privacy and contributes to well-being, but they are not widely used in the public realm.

Next to that, there are few or no known preconditions for an urban pergola. The functions that an urban pergola can offer go beyond providing shade. The pergola might help reduce noise and pollution, provide a meeting place in a neighbourhood and support biodiversity. Since space is scarce in cities where many different interests come together, we want to explore the potential contribution of an urban pergola to different problems. Therefore, at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, we have worked on an urban pergola as a real 'boundary object' where we bring education, research, municipalities, and entrepreneurs across disciplines and sectors together to discuss the potential of such an object.

For this workshop, we would like to show our first results of this interdisciplinary action research and continue answering the question: how can a pergola fit in the Dutch urban area? **Therefore, we would like to explore the functions and forms of the urban pergola with stakeholders, such as municipalities, entrepreneurs, citizens, students, and researchers all from different disciplines.** The desired outcome of this workshop is a joint proposal for implementing urban pergolas that can meet the versatile needs of cities and thereby make cities more liveable.