Problem statement

Due to the economic crisis, the growth-oriented urban planning in the Netherlands has come to a standstill and we need to consider other types of planning processes with a different emphasis (Kompier, 2009, p.441). It has become increasingly difficult to create large scale complete neighbourhood transformations and hence the demand for small scale interventions is increasing.

Small scale interventions can activate potentials and the smallest effort on a critical point can be used to get the maximum results which is called urban acupuncture (Shidan and Qian, 2011). The small scale interventions of urban acupuncture are mostly applied in public spaces. The majority of the public space is regenerated by the municipality which occasionally causes a mismatch between the needs of the residents and effective implementations. To ensure that the implementation will actually meet the needs of the residents, the integration and understanding of the society is one of the key principles in seeking the correct intervention. Participation is an interesting tool to create support and engagement among its users. The most successful small public spaces are the ones that are responsive to the needs of their users.

Societal relevance

Right now in this modern and electronic society, it is needed to create meeting places as good public spaces increase the quality of life and the social cohesion of the inhabitants of an area.

Academic relevance

The results will be transferable and it will contribute to the academic field because of the innovative approach towards public spaces, citizen involvement and the role of the urban designer.

Design

For three locations, the target group, lifestyle, residential environment, participants and the role of the municipality are used as guidelines in order to determine the process of citizen involvement and the type of intervention. But also the site itself contributes a great deal to the nature of the intervention. For successful urban regeneration it is important to transform the physical environment of residential areas while the existing spatial identity will be maintained or even strengthened (Bijlsma et al., 2008). Therefore the implementation of small scale interventions took into account the preservation of the existing urban identity.

The ideas and outcomes of this research can be used as a generic strategic approach to apply small scale interventions as the study has shown that green spaces can contribute to the identity of a neighbourhood. This enables residents to engage with their living environment which leads to involvement and care for their neighbourhood. The process of participation in spatial interventions can increase the quality of the residential environment in a neighbourhood. Every design location is unique and has to deal with the specific needs of local resident groups and spatial identity which may differ from location to location. Not only the municipality and developers but especially residents can play a large role in the transformation of their residential environment.