

LDE Thesis Lab 2026-2027

Healthy City the Hague: social (in)equity and (un)equal access to green environments

Health, Urban Design, Finance, Social Geography and Governance for a Greener City



Den Haag



Individual thesis assignments

The students will work on their individual thesis assignment. You can choose an assignment (see pages below) within one of the following topics:

Health/medical

Design/urban planning

Financial system

Social geography

Organisation

Health/medical

1. Situation analysis

What can we learn from existing policies or research/experiments in other cities in the Netherlands and abroad regarding the reduction of social inequality in public green spaces? What is known about the relationship with health disparities?

2. Access to green spaces and health disparities

Is the amount of public green spaces distributed evenly across neighbourhoods with different socioeconomic status? What differences exist in access to green spaces between low- and high-income neighbourhoods? Do residents of vulnerable neighbourhoods have less access to high-quality green spaces? Which groups (age, income, immigrant background) make the least use of urban green space – by their own choice?

- Or a variant in which you investigate this in terms of "compliance with the green spaces rules of thumb."

3. Green spaces and perceived health

Is there a relationship between the number of green spaces in the residential environment and residents' perceived health? Does this relationship differ between socioeconomic groups? To what extent is proximity to green spaces linked to stress, loneliness, or mental well-being? Which characteristics of green spaces (size, accessibility, maintenance, biodiversity) are most strongly related to perceived health? Which types of greening offer the greatest opportunities for health gains?

(Note: It is important to first check whether this has not already been researched. We are aware of a few relevant studies – for example in Amsterdam – but do not have a complete overview of them).

4. Green spaces, physical activity, and lifestyle

Do green spaces in neighbourhoods encourage physical activity, such as walking and cycling? Are there differences between population groups in how green spaces are used for physical activity? What factors promote or hinder the use of green spaces for recreation? Can greening help reduce differences in physical activity levels between neighbourhoods?

5. Climate, living environment and health

To what extent do green spaces reduce heat stress in vulnerable urban neighbourhoods? What health gains can be expected from greening in neighbourhoods with high heat stress?

Do vulnerable groups benefit as much from the climate-adaptive functions of green spaces as other residents?

What spatial claim is needed in heavily paved, hardscaped neighbourhoods to genuinely make a difference – i.e., to actually provide cooling? What percentage of canopy cover is needed for this, what size of trees are required, and how many?

How do we deal with the rise in hay fever sufferers and increasing airborne pollen levels due to climate change? How can we take this into account when planning and landscaping green spaces?

Design/urban planning

6. Equality in the design of playgrounds/sports facilities in parks

Do the design aspects differ between the various neighbourhoods? Is there social equality here? Which design is best for a child's mental development, and is this approach actually being implemented in the neighbourhoods? For example, the Schilderswijk has a lot of artificial turf and poured rubber surfaces along with traditional playground equipment, while Scheveningen has sand surfaces and natural playground equipment. What are the considerations behind these choices, and what is the policy?

7. Qualitative needs of a neighborhood

Even if there are fewer green spaces in a neighbourhood in terms of quantity, does the design of the parks (+0.5 ha) meet the neighbourhood's qualitative needs? What are the needs of disadvantaged neighbourhoods? Who are the target groups, taking into account cultural background and social needs? Are those needs being met? Take a few parks as examples. What are the recommendations for those specific parks?

8. Ensuring high-quality access to green spaces for vulnerable groups (children/older adults)

Research on accessibility, walking routes, preventing heat stress, rest periods, etc. What are some practical tools?

9. Construction in socially disadvantaged neighborhoods

How should we approach construction in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods (area development of buildings and outdoor spaces) so that it actually leads to health gains?

Financial system

10. Financing strategies in the U.S.A.

In what way do urban park financing strategies work in the U.S.A., and what opportunities or points of reference does this system offer for the Netherlands? What financial methods do American cities such as Minneapolis and Pittsburgh use to reduce social inequality?

11. Development of equity investment strategies and policies for park systems

Is there equitable investment in public green spaces in The Hague – new construction, management, maintenance, and replacement of green spaces? What is the financial ratio of green space in the city, the quality of management, and investment equality? (value of green space, management, and design costs). If social inequality exists: What proposals exist to improve this financial system? Is the strategic choice of investing unequally to achieve equal opportunities being implemented?

12. Financial equity in allocation of subsidies

Is there financial equity in allocation of subsidies such as climate adaptation subsidies and subsidies for green schoolyards? What systems are desirable, and what other examples exist nationally? What recommendations exist?

Social geography

13. Green gentrification

What is known about the topic of green gentrification? What effect on gentrification is expected from greening, based on greening-opportunity studies conducted by the municipality of The Hague for eleven heavily paved neighbourhoods?

14. Social cohesion and activation

Do green spaces contribute to social cohesion in the neighbourhood? Do residents interact more often in green neighbourhoods than in less green ones? Can green spaces help reduce loneliness among older adults? What role does social safety play in the use of parks and neighbourhood green spaces?

From the perspective of social inequality, are there visible differences in residents' involvement in the adoption and self-management of green spaces? Do we see differences

in this regard between heavily paved neighbourhoods and green neighbourhoods? Further elaboration on the principle of “unequal investment for equal opportunities”

Organisation

15. Collaboration between physical and social domains

How can the physical and social domains of the Municipality of The Hague and GGD Haaglanden collaborate more holistically with each other and with other domains? Would it help to develop a shared language between the social and physical domains, given that we often use the same terms but mean slightly different things by them?

16. Unequal investment for equal opportunities

How can the municipality apply the principle of “unequal investment for equal opportunities” to greening initiatives?