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Evaluation report of the uses of the school yards

Summary

This report presents the results of the evaluation carried out by the LIEPP researchers at Sciences Po, in order to assess the impacts of the new Oasis layouts on the uses of the courtyards. The evaluation is based on the study of five schools: two nursery schools (Jean Dolent and Maryse Hilsz), an elementary school (Maryse Hilsz) as well as two middle schools (Pierre Alviset and Octave Gréard). The courtyards were the subject of an observational survey in 2019 and 2021. The courtyard observations were carried out at two points in the project (before development and after development), in order to study how the new Oasis layout impacted these following issues: promoting mixed interactions in terms of gender and age, promoting cooperation between students and reducing conflicts, and finally promoting interactions with nature.

Results vary by institution level. There are clear and positive developments for nursery and elementary schools: a reduction in conflicts, an increase in mixed interactions, and the presence of many positive interactions with nature. The spaces where there were many conflicts in 2019, often dedicated to games such as football, have been replaced by collective play facilities (with wooden cabins, slides, etc.), where interactions are more cooperative and more mixed. Pupils in these schools are encouraged to explore the new elements of the yard, and staff supervise that students respect the new plantations. Conversely, the results in the middle schools aren't as strong: there was already little conflict in 2019, the new layouts don't seem to have modified the compositions of student groups, and the students interact little with the new natural elements. In middle school, the dynamic of appropriation of these school yards seems to be progressing at a slower pace, which underlines the importance of support and pedagogy around the Oasis project, which is very present in nursery and elementary schools.

The layout of these spaces also meets two important needs for the students: being able to take shelter from the rain and the sun. Observations in June 2021 confirm that the shaded spaces in these courtyards are in high demand, for all schools.

The evaluation of school yards in 2021 also integrated the opening of these spaces to the public on Saturdays. The observations in June and July 2021 are encouraging for the objective set by the project to open up these school yards for residents of Paris, and to ensure they are accessible to vulnerable people during heatwaves who would seek out shaded spaces. Variations in the attendance rate between different schools underline the importance of communication efforts around this aspect of the project.