City of Utrecht, the Netherlands

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UTRECHT:
FOOD AS A MEANS OF REDUCING INEQUALITIES

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Utrecht “Healthy Urban Living for everyone”

• Fastest growing city of The Netherlands
• Economically successfull
→ risk of widening gaps between people and neighbourhoods.

City council and administration
2018-2022
“Utrecht a place for everyone”
Health inequalities

Life expectancy in good health, per neighbourhood

- Above average
- Similar to average
- Beneath average
Healthy and Sustainable Food Environment

Change in (health) behaviour is one of society’s great challenges.

Until recently: focus on food and health literacy and awareness raising.

Now focus on food environment.

Why?
Healthy and Sustainable Food Environment

• Changing behaviour in an unchanging environment is asking too much of (especially more vulnerable) citizens.
• Food and eating behaviour is mostly habituous and influenced by physical and social cues supermarkets, marketing, close relatives
• Stress due to debts or other problems takes up mental bandwidth
  (Scarcity theory, Mullainathan and Shafir)

"In the last years I have had a lot of stress. I gained weight. I know what is healthy. But when a lot of things are happening in your life, it is easier and cheaper to make unhealthy choices."

Quote of person living in poverty.

This approach takes longer AND lasts longer
Contribution municipality

On the agenda:

• Departments within municipality
• Projects, initiatives, businesses
• Networks: bank, university, Economic Board, province, retailers, ...
• Local, regional, national
Contribution municipality

Action:

• Advise on health and food issues in urban planning within the municipality
• Advice to building companies
• Public procurement of catering municipality

“Health at the heart of urban development strategy”
For more information

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