

How to make an inventory of slow paths?

User's manual for volunteers

TRAGE
WEGEN



Starting with slow paths

A dense network of paths where walkers and cyclists feel fine and safe. That's something you'd like.

Well, you can do something about it yourself. You can develop a slow paths plan, all by yourself or together with your community. A plan that says which paths will be dealt with on short and on long term.

Making the plan starts with a detailed inventory of all slow paths; the paths we see today but also those paths that should be there today, but have disappeared due to lack of maintenance, negligence or someone adding the path to his private property..

Which paths disappeared?

Which paths still exist?

What is the condition they are in?

The answers to those questions are the foundation of slow paths policy.

You can help providing those answers.

This manual will tell you how.



Principles of the method

The inventory of slow paths can be done in many ways. Of course, the method proposed in this manual by Trage Wegen is not the only one. But it is the result of almost ten years of practical experience.

Slow paths are best known by the people who use them, i.e. people living in the neighbourhood. This method is suitable for anyone interested, making optimal use of local knowledge.

The Trage Wegen inventory focuses on one key factor: today's condition of slow paths. The method is standardised but flexible. The inventory of neighbouring areas can be done without problems. The use of a standardised method facilitates the comparison of different slow path networks.

What do you need?

For the inventory of slow paths you need two documents: the operational map and the checklist.

The operational map

Each zone to be studied has its own operational map, based on a cartographic sources like a topographic map

The lines on the operational map indicate the location of slow paths in the area. Each path has a number.

Purple lines indicate vicinal paths,

- Vicinal path on topographic map
- - - Vicinal path not on topographic map
- Factual path on topographic map
- - - Factual path not on topographic map

blue lines indicate factual paths.

Slow paths that are not shown on the topographic map are indicated by pointed lines on the operational map, which may be the case for a recent path that is younger than the topographic map.

A pointed line can also indicate a road that still exists legally, but has disappeared in reality.



Werkkaart op basis van Open Street Map

What is the difference between vicinal paths and factual paths?

All paths principally destined for non-motorised traffic are slow paths. They might be wide (e.g. tow paths, old railroad beds) or narrow (passageways, hiking trails, church paths). They can be situated in a densely-built town centre, on the countryside or in a forest. Indeed, slow paths exist in all shapes and sizes. But their legal status might differ. We make a distinction between vicinal paths and factual paths.

Vicinal paths

All paths indicated by the Atlas of Vicinal Paths (ca. 1840) but not integrated in the street network are shown on the operational map. Paths that have been closed officially are not indicated on the operational map. Vicinal paths are shown in a different colour because of their clear legal status. A vicinal path officially has the same status as any road for through traffic.

Factual paths

All other paths figuring on topographic maps having 'slow' features, i.e. soft-surfaced, narrow, forest trails, etc. are also

indicated, including small paths shown on municipal street maps.

If some cases, even older maps can be used (Ferraris, Popp, Vandermaelen) or aerial photographs. These factual paths are not registered in official documents such as the Atlas of Vicinal Paths, but through continuous public use they can acquire legal status as well.

The checklist

The goal of the inventory is to check each path on the terrain, providing a clear overview of the actual situation.

We proceed systematically: for *each* path on the map we need a filled-in checklist and pictures. Only by walking all paths and filling in checklists we will trace all problems.

The inventory has to be carried out **as objectively as possible**.

If you plan to hit the paths with several people, first check a few paths together to ensure the coherence of your interpretations.



If a path consists of several very different parts, fill in several checklists.

Tip

Add a letter to the number of the path and indicate the location of the different parts on the operational map.



Number of path: (You can put several paths on one form)

Your name : Date of visit : ___ / ___ / 2013

1. Is the path already indicated on the map?

- yes no *Go to question no. 3*
 partly

2. Can you find the path on the terrain?

- yes no *Go to the last question*
 partly What do you see instead of the path?

3. Is the path accessible during the whole day?

- yes no
 When is the path not accessible? Which are the closing hours/days?
- How do you know?
 information sign access was denied at the moment of the inventory
 traffic sign no information available
 other:

4. Can you walk down the path in its entire length?

- yes no
 Where is the path blocked?
- What blocks the way through?
 fence, chain, barrier...
 a building, a structure...
 a prohibition sign
 overgrown, insufficient maintenance
 other:

5. Is car traffic allowed on the path?

- yes yes, but not during the whole day
 I don't know no
- How do you know?
 prohibition sign traffic sign
 physically inaccessible for cars other:

6. What kind of surface does the path have?

- hard (concrete, asphalt, tiles, flattened cobbles...)
 soft (grass, dirt)
 several types
- semi-hard (gravel, dolomite...)
 hard not flat
 round cobbles, ...)

9. How wide is the path?

- less than 1m wider than 2m
 between 1 and 2m varied

7. Is the path covered?

- yes partly no

10. Are there a steep slope or steps on the path?

- yes, steps yes, a slope
 yes, a high step no

8. Is the path located in a park or on a square?

- yes partly no

11. Is the path constructed or has it formed spontaneously?

- constructed both
 spontaneous I don't know

12. Does the path have any of the following facilities?

- trees, grass zones, green facades lightning view on the water
 shops, public services public transport stop other:
 benches, rest zones pedestrian crossing

13. Do you have any other comments or remarks for this path?

.....

How to fill in the checklist?

The checklist is an operational document. You can write, draw or strike out as much as you like.

Not enough space? Then also use **the flipside** of the checklist. Make draft of the path and indicate where you have taken your pictures of the path, hatch closed-off parts, mark problematic points, etc.

On the next pages you'll see where to put what information. Let's start with the first question:

Tip

Please take with you the operational map and a sufficient number of checklists, since you'll need one for each path you'll visit.

Vergeet je fotoestel niet.

Which path is it about?

Number of path: (You can put several paths on one form)

Your name : Date of visit : __ / __ / 2013

1. Is the path already indicated on the map?

- yes no *Go to question 3*
 partly

- Copy the **number of the path** from the operational map on your checklist

Do you want to divide the path into several segments? Make a drawing on the flipside of the checklist. Add a letter to the serial number and write down this combination.

E.g. A-1010A, A-1010B en A-1010C.

If the path is part of a cluster of path that share similar characteristics (e.g. in a park), you can put several paths together under one number.

- Write down your **name**. If you're with more people, you can write down several names.

Just in case of doubt for us to reach you.

- Fill in the **date** of inventory.

This is important, as in winter the condition of paths often worsens.

1. Is the path already indicated on the map?

The operational map shows the theoretical situation, but if you find any other slow paths that don't figure on the that map, we are more to pleased to add them to our inventory. You can name them yourself, e.g. Jean1, Jean2, etc. Draw the path and note the name on the operational map.



No

↓

**Go to
question
no. 3**

The traces in the grass show that this path is used regularly

2. Can you find the path on the terrain?

Visibility and accessibility are two different notions. A path might be visible, but not fit for use. We ask this question to know if there are any traces left of the path. Or has it disappeared completely?

If you can see the path (or any visible traces), mark 'yes'.

A small bridge without 'prolongation', an old sign or an overgrown track may indicate the old bed of the path.

In cases like these, for example:



A muddy, bumpy track does not invite for a walk. Still you can see that this is the path.



Despite the high grass the path is still visible.



The absence of vegetation shows the track

No. What do you see instead of the path? *Please take a picture.*

What do you see?

(e.g. "There is an industrial zone"; "There is only farmland.")

.....
.....

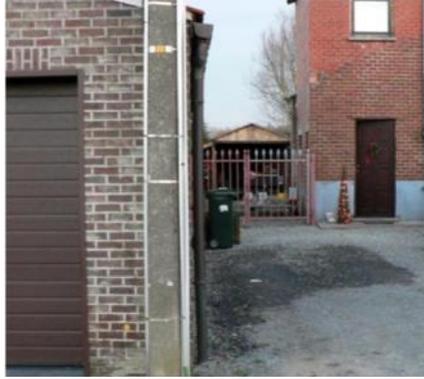
There is no need to answer the other questions.

In case of doubt, please take a photo.

Then there is no need to fill in the rest of the checklist.



The path has been ploughed up



No path, but a garage.



An industrial zone instead of a path.

3. Is the path accessible during the whole day?

For making a route planner it is important to know when a path is open or closed. Especially covered passages are subject to opening hours.

Yes

Mark 'yes' if the path is open throughout the day, all year long



Nothing is indicated



There is no sign showing opening hours

Go to question no. 4.

No.

When is the path not accessible? Which hours/days?

(e.g.. "8pm-6am";)





An information sign showing opening hours



A temporary fence blocks access

4. Can you walk down the path in its entire length?

Yes

Mark 'yes' if you can walk down the path in its entire length



A pedestrian street



An alleyway



A public square

Go to no. question 5.

No

Where is the path not accessible?

Indicate where the path is blocked if the path is not fit for use for several metres.

For example, when the path disappears into the canal, a field or a garden. Hatch these parts on the operational map, or make a sketch on the flipside of the checklist. **Please take pictures!**

How is access denied?

A path can be closed off in different manners. Please indicate how, for us to know the level of difficulty of a possible reopening.



A fence with a sign,



a wire



or a barrier.



a construction

Try to have a clear image of the entire path's trajectory **Please take photographs!**

Have a look at the other end, which might be accessible.. In that case please indicate until where you can go.



overgrown, insufficient maintenance

What to do in case of doubt?

- Don't enter private property
- Take a look over the gates.
- Describe what you see on the checklist
- Indicate problematic points on the map.
- Try the other end of the path.
- Take pictures.

5. Is car traffic allowed on the path?

On certain slow paths in Bruxelles, like living streets, car traffic is permitted.

Tick **'yes'** if the path is accessible for cars. Tick **'no'** if the path is open only for slow traffic. Please write down how this is indicated.



a traffic sign



The path is physically inaccessible for cars

6. What surface does the path have (pedestrian part)?

To assess the accessibility of the path for different types of users, like wheel chair users, it is important to know the type of surface.

Hard (concrete, asphalt, tiles, flat cobbles, etc)

Tick **'hard'** when the path is paved with asphalt, concrete or tiles, that are suited for less mobile users.

Underline or write down the exact type of surface.



asphalt



tiles

Soft (dirt, grass...)

Tick **'soft'** when the surface consists of grass or dirt

Underline or write down the exact type surface.



grass track



dirt track



Semi-hard (gravel, shingles, dolomite)

Tick '**semi-hard**' when the path is paved with gravel, pebbles, or any other permeable surface.

Underline or write down the exact type of surface.



dolomite



gravel

Hard not-flat (round cobbles, ...)

Certain road surfaces, like round cobbles, may cause problems for certain users. In that case, mark '**hard not-flat**'.



Cobblestones can cause problems for certain users

Several types (concrete slabs interlined with grass or dirt...)



Double track with dirt and grass.



Double track with concrete and grass.

7. Is the path (pedestrian part) covered ?



Covered shopping gallery



Pedestrian underpass

Certain types of paths are covered, like tunnels or shopping galleries. Tick '**yes**' when the path is covered.

8. Is the path located in a park or on a square?



Path in a park



Path marked on a square

Some paths make part of a larger network of paths in a park or on a square. Mark 'yes' if the path is located in a park or on a square.

9. How wide is the path (pedestrian part)?

In order to assess the accessibility of the path for wheel chair users, cyclists or cars, it is important to know the width of the path. Note that we only take into account the pedestrian part of the road or the path.

Less than 2 metres.

You may choose several options. Indicate on the flipside where the width changes.

Mark 'less than 2m' when the path is less wide than a car.



Narrow passage



Narrow dolomite path

Wider than 2 metres.

Tick 'wider than 2m' when the path is wide enough for a car.



Comfortably broad cycleway



This grass track is also wider than 2 metres.

10. Are there a steep slope or steps on the path?

It is important to know if there are steps or a slope on the path regarding the accessibility for certain users. Please indicate if there are steps or a slope that might cause problems for less-mobile persons.



Steps to a higher street



A steep slope

11. Is the path constructed or has it formed spontaneously?

Some paths that don't figure on the map yet might still be very important for the inventory. This is often the case for paths that have spontaneously come into being. Please indicate if the path has been constructed or if it has developed naturally.



Constructed path



Spontaneous path

Photographs

12. Does the path have any of the following facilities?

For the evaluation and the possible regeneration of slow paths it is important to know what facilities there are along the path. Please mark those facilities on the checklist.



Trees



Bus stop



Water view



Street lights



A pedestrian crossing



Shops, public services

What photographs do you take?

- Always picture the **beginning and the end** of the path.
- Always take pictures of **problematic points** or places where the path drastically **changes**, such as a narrowing or a different bed.
- Always take pictures of the **path itself**. There is no need to picture the environment.
- Make sure to make visible remarkable points along the path for orientation.
- Do not zoom too much. For having details, it is better to take an additional picture.

Photographs are very important, as not everybody knows the terrain as well as you do. Thanks to your pictures, other people can make a clear image of the path and its possible difficulties. The pictures might be used later for public sessions.



Above: a good picture shows the path in its environment

Below: a picture taken from upon the path, without the path itself, is not needed.



Above: a good picture shows the beginning of the path and its context.

Below: by not showing the beginning, one might get a false image of the path

Please number your pictures

This will make it possible later to find the right picture for the right path

Please indicate on the flipside of your checklist:

- **from which place** you have taken your photo.
- **in what direction** you have taken the picture.

Please also add the number of the picture.



Number of Path¹ – Serial Number of Picture of Path² – Small Description³ .jpg⁴

¹ = number as shown on operational map

² Start with 01, 02, ..., 10

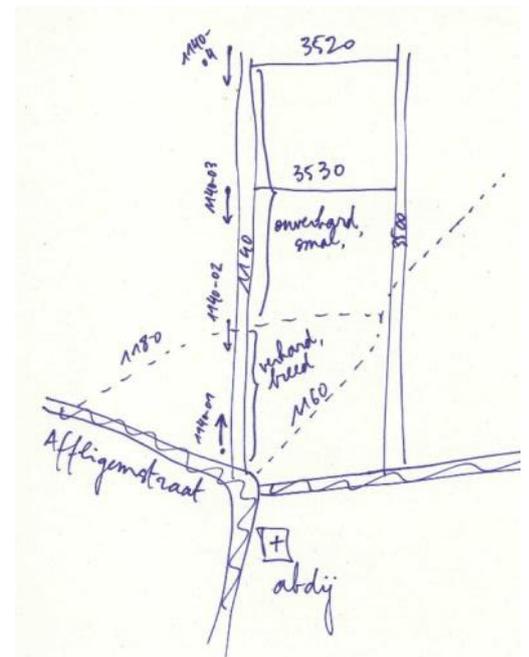
³ Makes searching easier

⁴ Please don't forget!

As soon as you come home, take a moment to look at your pictures, to number them and to indicate them on the operational map or in the drawing on the flipside of your checklist. Please do this systematically, otherwise you might forget quickly where you have taken which photograph.

Describe your pictures

Describe each picture on the checklist. Indicate from which position you have taken your picture and what is to see on the picture.



Describe your pictures . (e.g.. "From Kapellestraat"; "Muddy near turn in road.")

- > photo 01 -
- > photo 02 -
- > photo 03 -
- > photo 04 -

Remarks on the path

Here you can write down all additional information that

An example of pictures for path number 520.

might be useful:

Examples:

- > "Dogs make



[520-01 - beginning side Beemdenstraat.jpg](#): beginning of path between house numbers 51 and 53huisnr 51 en 53.



[520-02 - problem1.jpg](#): fence closing off the path after 100 metres from Beemdenstraat.



[520-03 - beginnin side Bosstraat.jpg](#): near turn in Bosstraat



[520-04 - problem2.jpg](#): path finishes with fence

the path feel unsafe”

Have you got any other remarks or information on the path? *Feel free to also use the flipside of the checklist.*

.....
.....

- > *“A marked hiking trail passes here.”*
- > *“Now I can pass, but I know by experience that this path can be extremely muddy in winter.”*
- > *“There is a lot of cut-through driving on this path.”*
- > *“The path has been damaged by quads, motorcycles.”*
- > *“There is a lot of litter”*



A path accessible in spring isn't always accessible in summer



Some tips

Keep it friendly

Make sure people are not offended by your presence. When a landowner or a neighbour of a closed-off path addresses you, don't charge immediately. Try to explain the reason of your visit. Perhaps the landowner will tell you why he has closed off the path.

Does the situation get unpleasant or do you feel threatened? Just go back and don't let things get violent. Just tell us what happened.

Violation of private property?

Each path from the Atlas of Vicinal Paths is public space by definition. On the operational map those paths have a purple colour. By principle, all purple paths are publicly accessible.

Even if the land under the path is private property, a vicinal path remains a public path. This is also true for factual paths. When they are used regularly by different people, they acquire an official status. If you, as a pedestrian, cannot see if a certain path is private, you can pass through in any case.

In forest zones pedestrians have free access to all unmarked paths.

Feel free to enter someone's driveway. You might do so when you visit someone as well. As long as you cause any damage, and if you don't enter anywhere illegally, there is no problem.

Thank you very much!

Have you got the feeling a path is private and you prefer not to enter?

Then don't go further, but do mention it on your checklist.



→ Any more questions?

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Please visit us for any questions or
for a visit to our library.
From Monday to Friday:
9-12.30 am and 1.30-5.00 pm