

Linking arts and science in practice: how residents' initiatives result in an innovative design for a town square

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Characteristics

- Aim: developing a new design for a local square in the village of Renkum, together with local residents. Renkum can be characterised as an industrial village with low-income neighbourhoods. The square is an important meeting place.
- Participants: residents (children as well as adults), local authorities, MSc students of Landscape Architecture, socio-economic analysts from Wageningen University and science shop researchers.

Method: arts and science

- Organizing a series of workshops allowing children and adults to suggest ideas and express preferences using art and design techniques. These ateliers yielded a wide variety of ideas.
- Using the residents' views as a source of inspiration for the designs, in which we tried to incorporate as many of the residents' preferences as possible.
- Developing several highly contrasting design alternatives, including artist's impressions.
- Producing an attractive, innovative final design.



Children's atelier



Children's art and design



Children's art and design



Adults atelier

Innovative design

Over twenty newly planted trees create a 'French' atmosphere. Various seats have been incorporated in the design, and the centre of the square offers opportunities for various activities. There is an attractive water feature, and the war monument is situated in a colourful flower bed. In short, the square will once again be a place that belongs to everyone, young and old.



Final design of town square in Renkum



Present situation



Final design: Artist's impression of Renkum town square (designed by MSc students of Landscape Architecture)

Results

Socio-spatial analysis

- The significance and value of the square are not only determined by its external appearance and the way people use it.
- The squares are also closely tied to the social, political and spatial context, the relations between younger and older residents and the level of confidence that residents have in the municipal authorities.

Critical success factors

- The growing enthusiasm and motivation of all parties involved, especially the students.
- The formation of stronger alliances between residents and local authorities.
- The step wise approach used by the science shop, stimulating the involvement of university expertise, neighbourhood knowledge and local authorities, and encouraging new links.
- The use of art and design techniques during the process.
- National policies to improve low-income neighbourhoods and increase neighbourhood participation to enhance community building.

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