



## **Ons Europaplein**

Ontwerp voor een nieuw Europaplein in Renkum

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## Summary

### Europaplein – Our Square

### Design for a new square in the village of Renkum

#### Main message

The Europaplein square in the village of Renkum is a sorry sight. There is a serious maintenance backlog and residents regard the square as too much dominated by bricks and concrete. After a detailed socio-spatial analysis and consultations with residents who use the square, the Science Shop has produced a redevelopment design for a revitalised square, which is attractive for all types of users and offers comfortable places to sit and play, with a multipurpose activities area in the centre. The design is such that it offers a choice of options, which can be implemented or not, depending on the available funds. The design does not have to be implemented all at once, but can be carried out in stages, without compromising the quality of the improvements that the plan was intended for. A basic redevelopment scheme for the Europaplein square is estimated to cost about €100,000 (see Figure 3.27).

#### Part 1 The problem: an uncertain future for the square

The first part of this report deals with the request. It describes how a residents' initiative in Renkum has resulted in an unusual design, which offers a solid and widely supported basis for the further development of the Europaplein square. Landscape architects and socio-spatial analysts of Wageningen University and Research centre collaborated closely with the Renkum residents to arrive at the final design which is presented in this report. This part of the report offers a chronological survey of the process.

#### Part 2 The significance and value of the Europaplein square

The second part of the report presents the results of socio-spatial analysis based on consultations with users, to identify the significance of the square and their preferences for its future. The results show that the significance and value of the square are not only determined by its external appearance and the way people use it. They are also closely tied to the social, political and spatial context of the square, including the relationship between the village of Renkum and the neighbouring villages, the relations between younger and older residents and the level of confidence that residents have in the municipal authorities.

The analysis showed that many preferences for the future of the square were shared by most residents. The main conclusion was that the residents preferred a green and dynamic square, offering multiple uses. Since some of the villagers distrust the municipal authorities, a successful redevelopment of the square can only succeed if the designers take account of the contextual factors that determine the present and future significance and use of the square. This means that the redevelopment and future use of the square must be based on the square's spatial context, the social context and the relationships between users and the Renkum municipal government.

#### Part 3 From concept to final design

The third part of the report describes the process by which the final design was developed. It starts with the results of a landscape analysis of the location and spatial context of the square. Design workshops with children and adults from Renkum resulted in a list of preferences, and an analysis of the outcomes of the workshops determined the main approaches. The results of the landscape analysis were combined with the preferences of the Renkum residents to produce four design options.

The design called 'Trees square' (Bomenplein) emphasised the green elements, while the 'courtyards' (Hofjes) option focused on activities. The 'Village Square' (Brink) option came in two variants, one with additional buildings and one without. A major element in all four designs is the spatial layout of the square. The square is divided into a larger, open part and a smaller, semi-hidden part beside the library building. This situation was included in the design. The four design options, which together offer a comprehensive picture of the opportunities that the square has to offer, were discussed at a second meeting with Renkum residents.

At this meeting, the residents indicated that they wanted more green elements and a greater coherence for the square. After some adjustments, the 'Courtyards' option proved to have the greatest level of support among those present, and formed the basis for the final design.

The new Europaplein is therefore a green square which appeals to all types of users, and offers comfortable places to sit and play. 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 that has always stood in the square is situated in a colourful flower bed. In short, Europaplein will once again be a place that belongs to everyone, young or old.