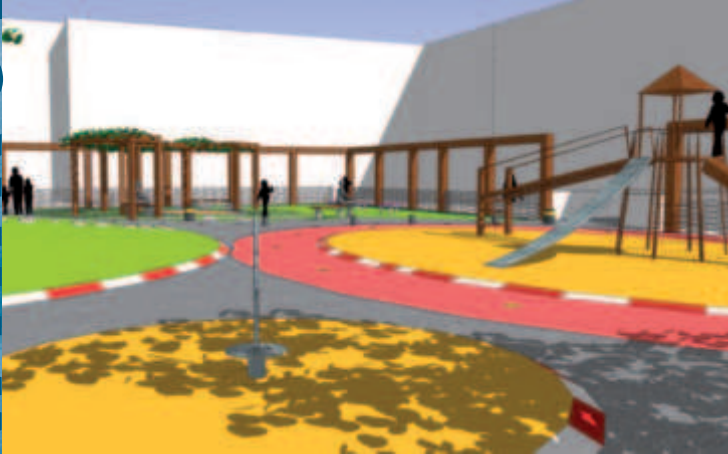




WAGENINGENUR

*For quality of life*

wetenschapswinkel



## Buitengewoon Binnenterrein

Met buurtbewoners ontwerpen aan een plein in  
de Arnhemse wijk Sint Marten

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## Summary

### A special square

Researchers and residents jointly redesign a town square in Arnhem

The Sint Marten district in the Dutch town of Arnhem includes a square located in a social housing estate dating from the 1980s. It is felt, however, that the square no longer meets the residents' needs as an attractive place, where children can play and residents can meet. A group of enthusiastic residents therefore asked the Science Shop at Wageningen University and Research Centre to redesign the square. The researchers who took up this request decided to involve the local residents –adults as well as children– in the design process, to help them design a square which local residents would enjoy and feel responsible for.

Over the period from March to November 2007, two researchers from Alterra and two students from the university's department of landscape architecture worked on the project. They regularly consulted a core group consisting of representatives of the local community centre, the housing corporation and the Arnhem authorities, who offered content- and process-related feedback. At certain moments, a group of district residents, who were asked to reflect especially on the proposals being developed and to contribute their ideas, supplemented this core group.

Points of interest, wishes and views of the local children and adults were gauged by organising a number of events. Children were invited to an afternoon of activities, where they were asked to construct a shoebox diorama showing what their ideal square would look like. Adults were invited to two informal drop-in consultation sessions, one in the afternoon and one in the evening, where they could talk to the researchers and students about the square, about the changes they would like to see, their views on the design and their preferences from among a number of design options presented to them.

These sessions resulted in a wide variety of ideas, which we processed by constructing pairs of highly contrasting alternatives. The sessions with adults and children resulted in a number of divergent preferences:

- A square where children can play, offering exciting opportunities to large numbers of children, versus a quiet square that is pleasant to look at and to enjoy. We referred to these opposites as DOING versus WATCHING.
- The desire for an exciting place with many trees and shrubs versus a preference for an open square for easy surveillance and social safety. We referred to these opposites as GREEN versus STONE.

We combined these two oppositions into four alternatives, which allow very different design options. In producing their designs, the students used the residents' views as a source of inspiration, and tried to incorporate as many of their preferences as possible. Two of the alternatives, *green/doing* and *stone/doing*, were elaborated into redevelopment designs and presented to the residents. Based on their reactions, we made a final design for a square that has an attractive green appearance, offers children many opportunities for playing and encourage parents and elderly residents to spend time there and meet each other.