

Support Package for Stadt Altena

Turning disadvantage into opportunities: Working with civil society to reverse decline in small and medium sized towns

1. Good practice summary

Towns and cities caught up in long term decline have lost competitive advantages which brought prosperity in the past. Typically municipalities have attempted to copy and recycle mainstream interventions based on attracting external investment to foster economic growth but ongoing stagnation, decline and shrinkage demonstrate that these interventions are failing. The good practices put forward in this proposal go to the heart of this problem. The success of the work done in Altena is well documented and involves a holistic integrative approach resulting in practical sustainable measures which over time have arrested and are beginning to reverse decline.

The creation of opportunities tends to be heavily dependent on the resources and skills that civil society and local business make available. While external funding is of course an important target of any such initiative, places caught up in long term decline tend not to be able to access the levels of funding needed to tackle decline. This project will illustrate how local actors released local potential to tackle socio-economic and environmental decline in relation to four activity strands which are relevant to most cities in long term decline: Restructuring public agencies and services; economic revitalisation; developing civil society; integration of refugees.

- **Restructuring public agencies and services:** Altena is an example where the municipality reduced schools, nurseries, libraries, sport and other facilities in collaboration with citizens. This included new governance arrangement for the Altena 2015 strategy, downsizing municipality personnel by 40% and resource sharing arrangements with a neighbouring town.
- **Economic revitalisation:** Altena has several examples where new sustainable enterprises and non-for-profit uses were created through innovative collaboration with local actors. These include pop-up shop strategies, improving public transport, pedestrianisation of the town centre and larger tourism related projects
- **Developing civil society:** Investing in the voluntary sector was one of the first actions taken as a result of the Altena 2015 strategy and continues to have far reaching impacts across the city. Today over 500 regular volunteers of all backgrounds and ages contribute to wide a range of services
- **Integration of refugees:** This is closely linked to developing civil society in that Altena has prepared the arrival of refugees with civil society organisations and now manages their integration by combining its municipal with civil society resources.

2. Photographs

We have attached a before and after picture of one of the catalytic projects that captured the energies of the local population.

3. Supporting material

We have attached a number of documents in a zipfile are providing hyperlinks to relevant documents below.

For restructuring public agencies and services see attached PDFs:

- Co-producing the cities of tomorrow, Journal of Urban and regional Studies (2016)
- From Crisis to Choice: Re-imagining the future of shrinking cities (2015)

For economic revitalisation follow links:

Regional prize for improvements to town centre 2015:

http://www.mbwsv.nrw.de/service/downloads/Stadtentwicklung/2015_5_5_Dokumentation_10_Jahr_SUW_NRW.pdf

Regional prizes for town centre re-vitalisation 2014 and 2009

http://www.abindiemitte-nrw.de/fileadmin/AidM-NRW-Daten/PDF/DOKUMENTATION_Ab-in-die-Mitte_2014_ENDVERSION.pdf

[http://www.altena.de/Pressemitteilung.723.0.html?&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=102&Hash=50d320530535728c9dac2c6f0a2e841e](http://www.altena.de/Pressemitteilung.723.0.html?&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=102&Hash=50d320530535728c9dac2c6f0a2e841e)

Prize for innovative concepts for local regeneration 2011

[http://www.altena.de/Pressemitteilung.723.0.html?&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=102&Hash=50d320530535728c9dac2c6f0a2e841e](http://www.altena.de/Pressemitteilung.723.0.html?&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=102&Hash=50d320530535728c9dac2c6f0a2e841e)

Prize for the innovative 'adventure elevator'

[http://www.altena.de/Pressemitteilung.723.0.html?&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=373&Hash=90c21cb7532546b7535a56c8548f3cf6](http://www.altena.de/Pressemitteilung.723.0.html?&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=373&Hash=90c21cb7532546b7535a56c8548f3cf6)

Newspaper articles and reports attached as PDF:

2012 Zeit Online: Altena versucht eine Nummer kleiner

2012 Kölne Stadtanzeiger

2016 Planerin: Zum Beispiel Altena

2016 Turnaround Town

For developing civil society see links and attached PDFs:

Prize for intergenerational strategy 2008: [http://www.altena.de/Altena-Preistraegerin-des-NRW-BANK-](http://www.altena.de/Altena-Preistraegerin-des-NRW-BANK-Ideenwettbewerb.784.0.html?&no_cache=1&sword_list[0]=nrw.bank&sword_list[1]=ideenwettbewerb&sword_list[2]=2008)

[Ideenwettbewerb.784.0.html?&no_cache=1&sword_list\[0\]=nrw.bank&sword_list\[1\]=ideenwettbewerb&sword_list\[2\]=2008](http://www.altena.de/Altena-Preistraegerin-des-NRW-BANK-Ideenwettbewerb.784.0.html?&no_cache=1&sword_list[0]=nrw.bank&sword_list[1]=ideenwettbewerb&sword_list[2]=2008)

For integrating refugees see attached PDF and powerpoint:

eescivilsocietyprize2016 PDF

integrationrefugees2017 PPT