City of Antwerp - Pop up to Date – Good Practice summary

Cities around Europe strive to convert deprived neighbourhoods into vibrant creative districts. This challenge of *creative placemaking* is complex and multi-facetted. Although hard measures of urban regeneration will continue to exist as instruments for redevelopment, soft collaborative processes and measures are gaining importance as budget friendly but essential catalysts of change. The local government can be the broker who facilitates the processes which transform an underprivileged neighbourhood into a creative hub. While not every city is likely to harbour the next Kreuzberg any time soon, the right mix of measures can deliver the necessary impulse to generate significant long lasting socio-economical improvements. Such turnaround at district level produces benefits not only for the direct neighbourhood and its inhabitants, but for the social economic city fabric as a whole.

Conversion of run down (sub)urban trading centers to vibrant hubs of creativity is often a tale of high ambitions and limited realisations. The forecasted long term effects are often lacking or prove to be as ephemeral in nature as the pop-ups themselves. The approach of the city of Antwerp in the Oud Berchem neighbourhood proves that with the right multi-stakeholder approach, remarkable transformations can be facilitated by local governments around Europe. Any city, capable of assuming their role as broker for change will dramatically increase its chances for success, irrespective of budgets and other competences. The crux lies in arranging the proper local stakeholders around the same vision. This vision should match artistic quality and 'field knowledge' to ensure the project fits into the local gene structure of the district, while also generating the necessary dynamic to attract creatives as well as customers beyond the neighbourhood's boundaries.

The soft measures promoted in this good practice are embedded in the city's long term strategy to redevelop the trading center of Oud Berchem. They are complementary to different investments which enabled an upgrade of the public domain during the previous ERDF programming period.

The pop-up project in Oud Berchem is being organized biennially since 2012. This year a fourth edition will take place. The number of participating entrepreneurs has gradually increased from 5 during the first edition to 10 in 2017. Inspired by the idea a new local non profit organization, *Creative cities vzw*, was founded in 2016 and has widened the scope of the project as well as the impact and the links with other government levels and higher education. As a result the local government can generate increasing results, with only small amounts of funding, due to the levering effect.

Through its consecutive editions, the project realized a conversion rate of 70% for the involved vacant retail units. The image of the district has been raised and the diverse local communities were brought closer together. Creative entrepreneurs are flocking to the district, not only during, but also in between the rental periods, due to the improved identity of the district. The advent of creatives and the products and services they offer, has improved the shopping experience of the neighbourhood as a whole, directly benefitting also the established entrepreneurs' revenues. A majority of the involved creative starters are continuing their entrepreneurial activities within the city. The project activities have been displayed as a best practice by local and supralocal TV and newspapers. Other city districts are now starting to implement the same concepts.

An ongoing impact analysis by the University of Antwerp will produce an independent qualitative analysis of the project. This will provide insight into the do's and don'ts as experienced in Antwerp which are useful for other cities interested in implementing the project's ideas.

The project is by no means an all or nothing offer. Different aspects of the approach in Oud Berchem can be implemented to fit other local contexts, strategies and needs. Responsibilities can be spread

differently over the desired partnership of local stakeholders. The size of the project can be upscaled or downscaled accordingly.