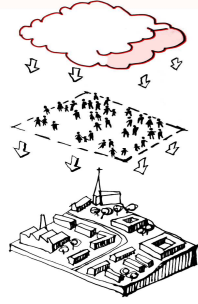


Change through neighborhood activism

CHANGE! Good practice factsheet

Title of good practice/initiative	Image/photo of good practice/initiative
<p>Image change through neighbourhood activism</p>	 <p>Three layers which form the Image of the place: Mental space – social space – physical space</p>
<p>Description of the good practice /initiative: history, activities, number of involved people, territorial scope, current scale, future plans, impact and benefits (Max. 400 words)</p>	
<p>The aim of neighbourhood activists was to change the negative perception of run down, post-industrial, working class neighbourhood of Riga (760 ha out of which 30% industrial area, 17,5 k inhabitants) and in the same time to become a part of decision influencers (to have a voice) in the city planning processes that affects the quality of life in the neighbourhood.</p> <p>Since 2012 when official neighbourhood organisation was founded (Sarkandaugava development association, further on «association»), activists lead various types of activities in the area including public clean-ups, guerrilla gardening, cultural happenings, events, civic engagement gatherings (forums), public space projects etc. To represent, foster communication and inform neighbourhood residents a lot of social media is being used (mostly Facebook, less Twitter). To strengthen the community the association reached out for the main stakeholders of the area such as local youth and sports centre which plays a big role in neighbourhood life, local library, big enterprises (brewery and machinery factory), mental health hospital into supporting and co-creating activities in the neighbourhood.</p> <p>In the 2014 when city of Riga became the European capital of culture (and just before that), many other cultural setups (individual curators, other cultural organizations) reached through association and discovered the potential for realization of their own projects in the new and unknown grounds (public space project, contemporary art projects, street art, contemporary dance project and similar) thus marking the neighbourhood as the culturally experimental hot-spot of Riga. The most known and popular project in the neighbourhood is a public space project «Aleksa skvērs» (Alex square), piloted for ECoC in 2013 by a team of architects and designers which cooperated with association (including the association in the management team) and local inhabitants in transforming neglected green area in the very centre of the neighbourhood into new public space with new identity and image.</p> <p>Besides activities in the neighbourhood the association is participating into activities organized by development department of Riga city thus becoming an active partner in decision-making processes (territorial planning, Riga long term strategy). Now according to the new city development strategy the neighbourhood stands as the neighbourhood where improvements of public space shall be the priority. The future aim of the association is to work on facilitating the active groups of people in the neighbourhood to target more place-led initiatives (improvement of housing areas).</p>	



European Union
European Regional Development Fund



Brief description of how the specific local public service has been challenged (with figures, if possible)

The most important challenge for the local government in the beginning was to accept the association as the real stakeholder and partner (representing the number of inhabitants). Sometimes local government lacks legal tools to respond to inquiries. Also administrative procedures or how-things-are-done are often major obstacle but it is not impossible to trigger, just needs more patience.

Role of the municipality within the process (e.g. how the municipality facilitates or coordinates the process to systematise/upscale a civic initiative)

The Process itself is poorly discussed in general, however it holds many important answers of how to work better and save up on unnecessary steps and time. The success in completing some tasks lies upon individuals in the municipality departments and on how willing they are to co-operate between the other departments and be flexible in finding solutions. At the moment the civic initiatives has to undergo the same administrative procedures in the municipality as municipality departments who wants to make these initiatives themselves. Delegation of certain public services is still rarity.

Budget (in total and municipality's own contribution)

Association's budget is mostly human capital involved in the day-to-day running the organization and executing events. Outsourcing of project management was possible only in rare occasions when association got funded (ECoC projects for example).

Key attributes (success factors) enabling (municipal) staff to implement the project successfully

Ambitions and believe that it is possible to change something and dedicated people with local patriotism feelings. Image change comes together with positive feedback and expanding of the network, professional contacts and cooperation with multiple institutions (universities who wants to use the area as the case study for specific areas, like environment, architecture, landscape).

Key internal, organisational, behavioural weaknesses the municipality/organisation had to overcome during the process

Mostly it is lack of personal time (organization runs purely on volunteering) and available, worry free funding for activities.

Links to website for further information on the good practice/initiative

Associations web site (Latvian only) www.sarkandaugavai.lv
Neighbourhood Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Sarkandaugava/>
Insight to the Alex square project
<http://fineyoungurbanists.tumblr.com/post/110118023068/alek%C5%A1a-skv%C4%93rs-atkl%C4%81%C5%A1ana>