



Evaluation study WPT2 – alternative funding N-POWER

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1. Introduction: explanation of the N-Power project and WPT2 on alternative funding

This evaluation study of pilot projects experimenting with alternative funding methods is created within the framework of the N-POWER project¹. The N-POWER Project aims to support more innovative "neighborhood development policies", allowing the cities of the Euregio Meuse-Rhine to reintegrate troubled neighborhoods and their population into a positive urban dynamic. Offering lighter and more co-constructed complementary approaches co-managed with the inhabitants of these neighborhoods (empowerment approach), the project's aim is not only to reduce environmental inequalities between neighborhoods, but also to contribute to their economic revitalization, through the creation of new local activities and jobs, and to the social development of neighborhoods.

However, neighborhood development policies (often grouped under the banner of "city policies") traditionally focus on heavy and expensive physical renovation of neighborhoods, which not always have proven to be effective in the long term. Additionally, the structural funding of the neighborhood development policies tends to decrease and is not sufficient to finance neighborhood empowerment projects. Therefore, within the work package on alternative funding (WPT2), a review study of alternative funding methods has been established. In the pilot projects of this work package, the partner cities experimented with one of the studied alternative funding methods and used it in practice, in a pilot project within their municipality. In the following evaluation study, these experiments will be evaluated.

¹ N-power is co-financed by the EU, ERDF, the partner regions (Wallonia, the Belgian and Dutch provinces of Limburg, and the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia) and the partners themselves.
www.n-powerinterreg.eu
www.interregemr.eu

2. Evaluation of the different alternative funding methods used

All used alternative funding methods had the aim to improve the neighborhood by strengthening the social cohesion between inhabitants, for example by providing a better living environment with new equipment or by organizing projects, activities or events to bring the people of the neighborhood together. Besides improving social cohesion, it was also the aim to build a network around the projects in order to ensure the sustainability of the projects, using an alternative funding method.

However, the method to improve the targeted neighborhoods and their social cohesion, differed. Some municipalities used the local businesses and SME's as a starting point, some used the existing social organizations and some used the inhabitants of the neighborhood as starting point, asking them to participate in the project as a volunteer, participant or donator. The different used methods we will discuss are volunteering (corporate and civic), sponsoring and civic crowdfunding. We will also explain shortly the methods of raising financial resources with an event and the establishment of a network to intensify collaboration. However, since the pilot projects using these methods are not fully implemented yet, the description and evaluation of these methods are limited and preliminary. On top of this, it was for all used alternative funding methods and pilot projects very difficult to do an extensive evaluation, since all projects experienced some kind of delay due to the impossibility of organizing events and activities during the COVID-crisis or due to the floods of the summer of 2021. Because of these delays, projects are not fully carried out yet, making it difficult to evaluate the results and to reach out to participants and volunteers to ask their opinion.

a) Volunteering

Volunteering is a very important and effective alternative funding strategy, as was observed in the pilot projects using this method. In Aachen, corporate volunteering was used with volunteers from businesses working on projects from social initiatives while being paid by these businesses. In Liège associations and their volunteers were involved in opening and maintaining the conviviality space.

Regarding corporate volunteering, we could observe that this was really successful since most consulted businesses were very enthusiastic to make employees available for the social initiatives' projects, although the reputation as a social engaged company, businesses got from participating in this project, could also have contributed to the success of this method. On top of

this, businesses not only made employees available, they also paid for all necessary materials for the projects. They did thus more than was asked for.

Since it was the first time the 'Aktionstag', using corporate volunteering to connect employees from businesses with social initiatives, was organized in Aachen, it was not clear if this would be a success. However, it turned out to be very successful and an element contributing to this was the matching event wherein social initiatives and businesses got to know each other and could make agreements on carrying out a project together, even though this event needed to be organized online due to the COVID-regulations. Another important aspect was the balance between the number of involved social initiatives and the number of participating businesses. There needed to be enough projects for the businesses to work on and there needed to be enough participating businesses to carry out all the proposed projects. For the businesses part, it was very successful to have a single point of contact at the municipality administration reaching out to all businesses in the targeted neighborhood and using the already established trust relationships between the businesses and the business department at the municipality administration. However, attention should be paid to engaging all colleagues of the department to guarantee that the project can keep going on when the single point of contact drops out or leaves the function. To summarize, the alternative funding method of corporate volunteering was very successful in Aachen and could be recommended to other municipalities.

In Liège the pilot project consisted of opening a conviviality space in the park where inhabitants of the neighborhood could gather, socialize and organize activities. A consultation of the inhabitants of the neighborhood showed the need of such a place. In order to find and reach volunteers for maintaining this place and keeping it open for other inhabitants of the neighborhood to visit it, existing organizations were involved. These organizations already had contacts with possible volunteers, participants and inhabitants in general and their network could thus be used as a leverage for the project of the space of conviviality. For this project and the method of volunteering in general, it is thus important to involve existing organizations and to have their support in order to avoid double work and start the capacity building over new.

This alternative funding method seemed to be successful in Liège because of consultation beforehand to check the inhabitants' needs and the involvement and support of existing organizations involved in the project. This pilot project also consisted of doing a crowdfunding campaign for a project idea developed by the citizens, next to the alternative funding method of volunteering. A combination of different funding methods is thus also an option. However, this crowdfunding aspect of the project is not carried out yet since there need to be first a more

sustainable dynamic for this place and visitors and volunteers have to take the ownership. On top of this, the conviviality space is only open once a week and opened last summer, which resulted in a very short timeframe to evaluate this project and alternative funding method. Further research and evaluation are thus required. Nevertheless, we could evaluate and observe this method enough to recommend both volunteering by citizens as corporate volunteering to other municipalities.

b) Sponsoring

Sponsoring is another alternative funding method consisting in this project of raising funds with SME's or companies for some specific items whereon their name will be noted or their sponsoring will be mentioned. In Eupen they analyzed the network of all stakeholders in the municipality and they found out that there were opportunities to involve businesses in alternative funding. Because of this diagnosis, they used the method of sponsoring, asking local businesses and SME's to pay for new equipment in Park Loten. The businesses and SME's were all very willing to contribute to this project and the equipment out of solidarity with the neighborhood and even without mentioning their name on the sponsored equipment, even though some were going through hard financial times due to the COVID-crisis and the floods of the summer of 2021. However, this enthusiasm and solidarity can be attributed to the small scale of the municipality and would possibly be less in other, larger municipalities, making it difficult to transfer the use of this method directly to other cities.

Still, this alternative funding method can be recommended to other municipalities since it activates a new form of social and financial capital in times of prosperity. SME's and companies can do their bit for the neighborhood and contribute to the improvement of the municipality. However, an analysis of the municipality and its network of stakeholders (both public and private) is important in considering this method to check if it could work. Another advantage of this method is that businesses connected with their neighborhood, are less likely to leave this neighborhood, which is good for the community in terms of employment. However, contacting all businesses and SME's in the neighborhood or municipality can be very time consuming, especially by a single contact person. Nevertheless, a single point of contact works very well in establishing collaborations and building trust between the municipality and the businesses, just like we saw in the preparation process of Aachen's corporate volunteering project. The same warning as for Aachen is applicable here: other colleagues from the department should also be involved in order for the project to be not dependent on the work and presence of the contact person alone.

c) Civic crowdfunding

Civic crowdfunding is a way to collect funds from citizens supporting the project idea on an online platform. The project initiators develop a crowdfunding campaign to run on the platform explaining their project and offering rewards for certain amounts of support. For example, if you support the campaign, and thus the project idea, for 15 euros you get a free entrance ticket at the first project event. Important for this alternative funding method is providing support from the municipality, not only for organizing such a campaign but also for the administrative procedures. The municipality can also collaborate with a civic crowdfunding platform providing services such as workshops for organizing a campaign or support for developing the rewards. In this case, the civil servants can refer the project initiators to the crowdfunding platform for support in setting up and managing the campaign and provide support in the administrative procedures for the project or events themselves.

However, if municipalities choose to support civic crowdfunding by citizens for realizing their project ideas or initiatives, it is important to understand that this can only be successful if there is coordination between grant-awarding programs and the support for crowdfunding. If the municipality, the regional or national level already has extensive grant-awarding programs, citizens will not be likely to organize a crowdfunding campaign since it is much easier to apply for a grant. If you chose thus, as a municipality, to implement support for crowdfunding, you can try to reform the grant-awarding program, if there is one, to a match funding tool. This means that project initiators need to collect a certain amount of money and if this is collected, the municipality doubles this amount or awards a grant from a certain budget. This way of working also allows the municipality to check if there is support from the community or neighborhood for the project idea since people donating money for a project probably support it. Civic crowdfunding is thus not only about raising money but also about capacity building for a project, building a network around it and involving the supporters and donors in its execution (for example with the rewards provided).

However, the pilot projects with the idea of doing a civic crowdfunding campaign, Genk and Liège, did not launch or finish the campaign until now, which makes it difficult to evaluate and examine the success of this method. Nevertheless, an important element we already identified in the processes of these projects is the fact the rhythm of the citizens needs to be followed. It is useless to push, as a municipality, certain project initiators to work with civic crowdfunding. Since setting up a campaign is such an intensive process, there needs to be motivation, will and support from the citizens themselves to work with this alternative funding method, otherwise, it will not be successful. The project idea where the campaign is running for also needs to be developed by the citizens themselves, and not pushed by the municipality. If not, there will rise resistance against

this method since the municipality can use tax money for realizing their aims instead of raising private money. We can conclude that it is important to leave the initiative for starting a crowdfunding project with the citizens, as well as the ownership of the project ideas. Therefore, patience to realize something is needed since volunteers are not always as soon in developing a project as may be the desire of the municipality. On top of this, there needs to be coordination between the grant-awarding program and the support for crowdfunding, otherwise, the latter will not be successful.

For further insights on how to apply civic crowdfunding policy-wise as a municipality, you can consult the crowdfunding scheme attached.

d) Raising financial resources with an event

As explained above, civic crowdfunding is about raising money on an online platform for a particular project. Of course, raising money can also be done offline, for example by organizing an event with an entrance or participation fee. The money collected with the paid fees by participants or visitors can then be used for a certain project idea in the neighborhood or a good cause. This was the project idea in Seraing, where they wanted to organize a flea market to help the victims of the flood.

However, fund raising events can have a double aim. Of course, it is about collecting money, but it can also have the aim to organize a social gathering if there is a need for this. It is important to investigate the needs of the inhabitants in the neighborhood in order to organize a fund-raising event with the right aims. In Seraing the aim of the pilot project was to collect money for the victims of the floods, however inhabitants indicated that they needed a social event or gathering to break the isolation of some inhabitants during the confinements in the COVID-19 crisis. On top of this, the citizens also needed occasions to buy affordable clothes and household items because of the severe financial situation of some, due to the COVID-crisis and the floods that devastated houses and its furniture. These aims were combined in the project idea of organizing a flea market. The participants paid a fee for a spot to sell their clothes and household items, the money raised by these fees and the revenues of the drinks and food sold, would be transferred to a social organization helping the victims of the flood. However, this flea market is also an occasion to meet other inhabitants and to socialize, as well as an opportunity to buy affordable clothes and other items.

However, this event was organized several times but had to be postponed every time. Important to take into account here is the political support for organizing events like this. Of course, during

a lockdown or flood, it is impossible to organize events and priorities of the municipality are elsewhere. Nevertheless, if this keeps being the excuse for months, we can observe a lack of political will to let it take place. The support of the political level is thus also needed for organizing fund raising events like these and an important factor to consider. Because of all delays and postponements, it is difficult to completely evaluate this alternative funding method. When the event has taken place in 2022, a full evaluation of this method, should be done.

e) Intensifying collaboration by building a network

Building a network of collaboration with different citizen initiatives or projects can be a good way to share resources like materials and machines only needed once in a while (like construction and maintenance materials), expertise, insurances and human resources such as volunteers. This was the project idea in Heerlen, however the execution is still in a preliminary phase. That is why evaluating this method for alternative funding is difficult up to now because we could not observe its implementation. However, this project idea helps highlighting the importance of realizing alternative funding has not only to be about money. Since there are a lot of grant awarding programs in Heerlen, the need for money was not so urgent. Realizing a project or initiative needs money but human resources, expertise and other materials are as important as financial budget for implementing a project idea. Network building can be a solution for collecting the other needed resources, besides money. In such a network, different initiatives or project initiators can agree to collaborate in order to share volunteers, expertise and other needed resources.

Especially when the municipality or national level has an extensive grant awarding program, the need for volunteers and expertise is more urgent than for budget since project and initiatives can apply for a grant. It is thus important to consider alternative funding as something broader than just money and to realize the importance of sharing volunteers and expertise. However, in order to build such a collaboration network, different initiatives and projects in the area are needed. If there are no other initiatives and projects in the neighborhood or municipality, it is difficult to start such a network.

3. In-depth evaluation of the project of each partner city

This evaluation study is based on a questionnaire filled in by the project leaders of each city partner at the beginning of 2021 and on interviews carried out with civil servants involved in the pilot projects on alternative funding in the summer of 2021. The original plan was to do site visits as well as additional information to the interviews and the questionnaires. In these site visits volunteers and participants of the project could have been interrogated on what the project means for them and on their experience and opinion. However, because of the delay that almost all projects experienced in the implementation due to the COVID-crisis and the floods of the summer of 2021, the projects were not finalized or fully implemented yet on the moment this evaluation study was written, which resulted in a lack of time to carry out site visits and to do additional interviews with participants and volunteers before the end of the N-POWER project. For the projects already implemented and where site-visits would have been possible, timewise, COVID-regulations on, for example, traveling and the attendance of events, hindered this. Attempts to reach volunteers and participants of the projects online with a questionnaire were made but since the target groups of most projects are vulnerable people, who do not always have the skills to participate in online interviews or questionnaires, this was overall not much of a success.

The following evaluation of the projects of all partner cities is thus mainly based on the information obtained by examining and evaluating the questionnaires filled in by the civil servants involved in the projects, on the interviews with these civil servants and on the additional documentation made accessible by them. For each project, there is given some basic information like the idea and aims of the project, the target group and the implementation phase and timeframe. Besides this, we also evaluate the projects and their used methods by indicating the difficulties faced and the lessons learned. However, because of the limited implementation of some of the projects until now, evaluation of the results of these projects was difficult. For some projects that still have to be carried out in the future, the evaluation is thus mainly based on the preparatory process, more than on the results and the way they are carried out. This is mainly the case for the projects of Heerlen, Genk, Seraing and Verviers. Nevertheless, we still tried to identify some difficulties and lessons learned in the preparation phase of these projects.

a) Aachen (GE): Action day – Aktionstag (corporate volunteering)

The project: general explanation, target groups and aim

On the 6th of May, the action day, or in German “Aktionstag der Wirtschaft”, took place in Aachen. The aim of this day was to bring together social initiatives with a specific project and companies who were willing to let their employees work on the projects of the social initiatives for one day. The alternative funding method used was thus corporate volunteering, since the companies kept paying the salaries to the employees while they were working somewhere else, on the project of one of the participating social initiatives, more specifically. The resources made available by this alternative funding method are thus the knowledge and time of the employees of the participating businesses. The project also wanted to initiate long-lasting collaborations between the initiatives and the businesses, by engaging them in a network causing synergies with good side effects for the social initiatives, the businesses participating, the neighborhoods wherein the projects are carried out and its inhabitants. Businesses could for example get in touch with organizations working with unemployed young people and offer them an internship, which is of benefit for them as well since a lot of the businesses are desperately looking for trainees. The project was thus targeted at on the one hand, local businesses and on the other hand social initiatives and its target groups and in this way all inhabitants of a neighborhood.

The reason this alternative funding method was chosen was thus the desire to connect the businesses to the neighborhood and get employees from the businesses (although they are not all living in the neighborhood) and volunteers of the social initiatives in contact with each other. A neighborhood can profit from businesses being present in the quarter since they can offer jobs. Especially for the quarter of Aachen North this is needed because of the very high unemployment rate in this area while a lot of young people are willing and available to work. Businesses connected to the neighborhood are also not as likely to leave as when they would have no connection with the neighborhood at all. If the businesses and the neighborhood are in contact with each other, they can also talk more easily if problems are arising.

The civil servants from Aachen’s department of businesses contacted all the local businesses with which the department is in contact in Aachen North (the focus of the N-Power project) and some in Aachen Ost and explained them the project. Since the civil servants of this department have good contacts and relations with the local SME’s, this contacting process went well and many businesses were willing to participate. If they were enthusiastic to collaborate, they were asked to look for or select some employees who could or were willing to work on a project from a social initiative. The civil servants contacted 100 SME’s and about 30 agreed to participate. On

top of this, there were some businesses who were not contacted and who called to the civil servants themselves to ask if they could be part of the project. The fact that the managers of the SME's know each other and are connected through their network, resulted in some talking between them about the project, which stimulated the participation of some SME's not initially contacted.

At the same time, the civil servants also contacted social initiatives and groups with social projects and asked them to think about a project that would help them to improve their service and the work they are doing in the neighborhood. It was very easy to find these social initiatives since there was something interesting in the project for them as they could get help for carrying out one of their projects. To avoid a mismatch between having only few businesses who want to participate and much more social initiatives, the business department stopped looking for additional projects when they gathered 15 initiatives willing to participate. Every social initiative could develop three ideas in order to avoid that the ideas of some social initiatives could not be carried out because they were too complicated. They thus tried to stimulate the social initiatives to develop both complicated and more low-key project ideas, hoping that at least one of the ideas of each social initiative could be carried out.

Aktionstag and its preparation: event to match social initiatives with SME's

All submitted project ideas were published on a leased website to present them to the businesses in order for them to examine for which idea their skills would best be of added value and thus to choose which idea they want to help to be carried out. The original plan was to do a matching event, in German "Project Messe", in real life, organized as some kind of fair with posters, pictures and stalls for every social initiative. This would allow the businesses on the one hand and the social initiatives on the other hand to get to know each other and socialize in order to agree on who will be involved in which project from which social initiative. However, the corona situation did not allow any event to happen physically. Everything needed to be done online. Therefore, the civil servants hired a camera team and made clips of all the participating social initiatives with the aim of giving the businesses an impression of the initiatives and projects they can support. In these clips, every initiative could present them self, show where they are located, what they are working for and present the project ideas that were finalized by that time. The clips were uploaded on the leased website in order for the businesses to check them out and preselect the projects wherein they are interested. Next, the civil servants set up a space for the Aktionstag on the platform wonder.me, which is a tool for video calling or conferencing but with a twist and special features. On this platform, everyone participating has a small avatar which can be

moved within the virtual space with a computer mouse. As soon as an avatar comes close to another avatar, a video chat between these two participants pops up. This only happened when the avatars were close enough. This also created an opportunity for the civil servants to move in the created space, meet everyone, have a talk and answer questions about unclarities. The platform also has the function to draw small areas on the background so one area for every social initiative was created in order to allow everyone to visit this specific area or room to raise questions about the project of this initiative. The use of this platform costed the municipality 850 euros.

The businesses had thus the website with the clips to have an overview of all participating social initiatives and to preselect in which they are interested. With these initiatives they could set up a personal (digital) meeting on the platform to get to know each other and to talk about the aims and desires of both of them, for example how many employees the project needs as a volunteer. As soon as it got to an agreement, the civil servant registered it on the website with all project ideas. As mentioned before, this website had a small introduction video, a small text with an explanation about the project and after the agreement, the site also indicated which business or SME participates in the project, with the logo of the involved business on this page. There was thus some kind of publicity in it for the companies as well. Originally the plan was even to do a big marketing campaign as promotion for the participating businesses but this seemed to be not feasible because of the amount of businesses (and thus logos) involved.



Example of project web page

A lot of businesses and social initiatives got in touch during the online event on the platform in February 2021 and a lot of partnerships were created. Although the social initiatives were expected to provide the necessary materials themselves so that the companies did not have to pay for materials, many companies were willing to provide and pay for materials themselves. The ratio of businesses to social initiatives present on the matching event was 2 – 1. There was one initiative who did not find a partner on the day of the matching event. However, this social initiative did have contacts with businesses and they still are planning to do something together, which was in the end the main aim of the Aktionsstag, to connect both parties for a longer term. After the event, the civil servants called some businesses again and asked them to do the last projects left, who did not find a partner at the matching event.

This online matching event worked thus well, as a last-minute experiment. Doing the matching event online via Zoom, even with break-out sessions, would not have been a success and would have been very difficult to manage. Organizing this on the platform of wonder.me was lowkey, all participants liked it as second-best alternative to a real-life event, after they got used to it. 40 persons of 20 organizations were attending the event and 14 engagements for 9 projects were made at this occasion. There was even interest from another municipality, which already organized many action days, on how they carried this out because this other municipality want to repeat it at their projects.

The Aktionstag and examples of carried out project ideas

After the matching event in February 2021, the lead and the initiation were passed to the social initiatives and the participating businesses collaborating. In the beginning of April, the civil servants called the social initiatives to check if everything is going well and if concrete plans for the actual Aktionstag in May 2021 were developed yet. For a few projects, the civil servants had to perform an intermediary role but for most of them, the communication and collaboration went well.

The involved civil servants made an overview of all projects in the neighborhood and on the day itself, the 6th of May, they visited as much initiatives as possible with the corona regulations, in order to make a video about all projects carried out and post some updates on the ongoing projects on the website. Some projects had to be done online and were organized in the format of a workshop on a platform made available by a local company. Other businesses had to cancel their participation in the Aktionstag due to COVID-infections in the company. One company sent their medical team as volunteers to do corona tests for all participants and visitors of the projects. Eventually, more than 60 volunteers of 16 businesses participated in 15 projects of 10 different social initiatives.

An example of a project idea that was carried out on the Aktionstag was the refurbishment of the outside area of a kindergarten. The playground, located next to a parking lot, got a new flower bed, a vegetable garden box and an insect hotel installed by volunteers from different SME's. The involved businesses were, an architecture company, an IT-company, an environmental company giving advice on plant care and a business providing education for longtime unemployed people. The latter built the vegetable garden box together with some of the people they guide in their program. The architecture office was matched with the kindergarten at the matching event and afterwards, they asked their partner for building machinery if they wanted to participate and make their heavy machinery available to install the flower bed. So, in this

way not only the initially matched partners took part in the Aktionstag but supplementary partners got involved as well. All the materials were paid for by the participating businesses, so the kindergarten did not have to pay anything itself.

Another example is the match and collaboration between on the one hand, the youth center and on the other hand a painting firm that paints walls after a move out. This firm sent one of his oldest trainees to paint a wall with two participants of the youth center. In this way, it was kind of a job training for the young people in order for them to have an idea what this kind of work would be like. Because of the collaboration in this project, the painting firm got in contact with the youth center which can be useful since the youth center is trying to get unemployed young people into jobs. However, due to corona the youth center was not fully operational as usual and there could thus not participate as many young visitors of the center as planned (15-20).

A symbolic project idea, showing gratitude to workers, was a business making a car with a driver available for women in a qualification project for long-term unemployed and undertrained women. This program aims to give these women a qualification for cleaning hotels, apartments, flats and so on. Normally they have to do the transfers between their different working places by bus. Two businesses made a car available with someone who drove them around. This won't change their work forever but it was a little thank you, a small sign of gratitude, much appreciated by the women in the program.

Difficulties faced

Because it was the first time an event like this was organized in the municipality of Aachen, it was of course a question if it would be a success. Organizing it was a risk, as is of course every pilot project or experiment. Both the social initiatives and the businesses had questions, mostly on what initiatives or businesses were participating and thus with who they could match. At the start of the project, this was of course very difficult to answer for the civil servants since all the participants still had to be found. In the end, the pilot project of the Aktionstag turned out to be a success, which makes it easier to organize it again next year, since all the experience and expertise gathered the first time can be transferred to the next edition. If businesses or initiatives have questions, examples of the first edition can be given and they can be reassured that there will be enough participants and that their participation will be a success. On top of this, the social initiatives and businesses that participated this year will also be more likely to participate again next year, so there is a base of potential participants to work with.

The matching event was very important for the success of the project, since a good match between the skills, expectations and motivations of the volunteers and the needs of the projects is crucial for a good execution. Of course, corona made it very difficult to organize the matching event. As said above, this was in the end organized online which seemed to work extraordinary well. However, beforehand, the civil servants experienced a lot of stress to organize this and they considered it also as a risk since it needed some investment and it was not sure if anyone would show up to attend the online event and if matches would have been made.

Corona also delayed the execution of the project a little bit and resulted in some rescheduling. It was sometimes hard to stay in touch with the companies and the social initiatives in the months between the first contact and the actual matching event, especially since everything needed to happen online. For the social initiatives the digital way of working was extra challenging since they are not always that used to working online. On top of that, there was also the aim to involve neighborhood groups as social initiatives to participate as well but due to corona these groups were not very active anymore, so it was difficult to reach them and let them create a project.

A few days before the actual Aktionstag took place in May 2021, new rules regarding the corona situation were implemented. This caused, of course, a lot of stress for the organizers of the event since it was not sure anymore if it could actually take place because the strictness of the rules depended on the number of infections in the past few days. In some SME's there were also cases of corona infections preventing this business from participating. On top of this, some of the initially participating companies had to send their employees in temporary unemployment, paid by the government, because of the corona regulations and situation. They could thus not participate as planned.

A last difficulty faced in the project of the Aktionstag was that some project ideas were too ambitious or they just could not find a proper match with any of the participating businesses. It was thus important to manage the expectations of the social initiatives beforehand in order to make them clear that not finding a match or volunteers from the businesses for the project is something that can happen. From the businesses' side there were also SME's who wanted to make only 1 or 2 employees available for a project and thus not their entire or a reasonable share of their workforce. For these businesses it was difficult to carry out a whole project with only one or two volunteers but they could join another project idea, matched with another business.

Lessons learned

Just like in the pilot project in Eupen, it works really well if there is one single point of contact for the businesses who they trust and can come back to with questions and concerns. However, if this person leaves one day, it is important to have a good team behind this contact person and involve them along the process in order for them to take over tasks if this person leaves or drops out. The intense contacts all team members of the municipality's department of business are having with the local SME's, made them more likely and willing to participate since there is a relationship of trust between the businesses and the municipality department. This good relationship of the department with the local businesses could thus be used as leverage in this project to encourage the businesses to participate. Not only the manager of the Aktionstag project contacted businesses, he also passed a note to the colleagues from the department to explain the project in order for them to implement this in their communication to businesses and stimulate them to take part in the project. We can conclude that it is very important to use existing networks for the success of this kind of project wherein businesses need to be involved.

The inhabitants of the neighborhood were not reached and involved enough in this project, although it was the aim to make them participate as well. Corona was an important cause for this, since the inhabitants of the neighborhood were not allowed to visit the projects during the Aktionstag because of the strict corona regulations. Another cause for the unsatisfying level of involvement was the fact that there was little press attention for this event. These problems could be solved by organizing this kind of event again when the pandemic situation is under control and by doing more efforts to inform the inhabitants of the neighborhood and attract the press to the event.

The businesses were very enthusiastic to participate in this social project. They did not only want to make their employees available as volunteers, they also wanted to pay for the needed materials and resources, even though it was clearly stated that this was not obliged, the Aktionstag was just about providing workforce. Of course, their participation in this project improves the reputation of the businesses and gives them the impression of being a socially engaged firm and provides publicity. Because of the success of this experiment with the alternative funding method of corporate volunteering and the enthusiasm of both the social initiatives and the businesses, the political level was satisfied as well and the city council gave permission to repeat the Aktionstag in 2022.

We can conclude that it is of added value for both the businesses and social initiatives to get connected and involved in a project. The businesses make their skills available and in turn they get good publicity for their company. Because of the employees volunteering, the social initiatives can realize something with an added social value to the neighborhood. The concept

of the Aktionstag was a good way of realizing these aims. However, when there would have been no COVID-regulations, it would be better if inhabitants of the neighborhood could be more involved as well. An important aspect to realize this is publicity through local channels.

b) Eupen (BE): sponsoring of new equipment for park Loten in the mountain district (Bergviertel)

The project: general explanation, target groups and aim

The pilot project on alternative funding in Eupen is closely linked to the pilot project for WP11 since it is carried out at the same place, in park Loten in the neighborhood of Bergviertel (in English: the mountain district). The municipality received budget in the context of the N-Power project to develop park Loten in the district of Bergviertel. Of course, the citizens living in this neighborhood were consulted on what they would like to do with the park and which equipment should be brought to it in order to develop it in line with the desires living in the neighborhood. However, the budget the municipality received from Interreg for the N-Power project, was not enough to realize all the desires of citizens living in the neighborhood. The pilot project on alternative funding had thus the aim to realize some additional ideas of the inhabitants of Bergviertel, who could not be realized in the context of the pilot project for WP11. Examples of these ideas for additional equipment are football goals, additional seating in the park, a neighborhood mobile and a community radio.

An analysis of Eupen as a municipality and its network and stakeholders was conducted. This analysis showed that Eupen has a lot of successful SME's, the so-called local champions. They could be consulted and asked for sponsorship. The alternative funding method of sponsoring, seemed thus the best way to realize the additional desires of the neighborhood. And indeed, the SME's located in Eupen were willing to show their solidarity by sponsoring equipment for the park. The consulted SME's could choose to finance one element of the equipment desired by the neighborhood, in exchange for mentioning their contribution with a sign or notice of their name, the classic method of sponsoring. Another option was that they donated equipment themselves or produce it custom-made as sponsorship. There was also the aim to organize inauguration events for the new equipment in the park together with all the inhabitants of the neighborhood, which would also give visibility to the businesses who sponsored. However, most businesses would have sponsored without the mentioning and visibility as well, out of solidarity with the neighborhood and region.



*Wooden cable bobbins made
for park Loten*

One example of sponsored equipment or in-kind donations are the football goals for the park, sponsored by KAS Eupen, the local football team, playing the highest division. Other examples, are tables for the park made of wooden cable bobbins, custom-made by one of the local SME's, food plancha's delivered by a local restaurant for an event in the park, benches, the neighborhood mobile, equipment for a community radio station and flea market coupons for poor children. In total, a sponsoring budget of 10 000 euros was collected.

For some pieces of the equipment, the municipality co-funded them using the grant awarding program for neighborhood initiatives (the VIP program: Viertel – Initiativ – Program or in English: the Neighborhood Initiative Program). This grant awarding program offers a budget of 2 500 euros for neighborhood projects. Besides this way of co-funding, the municipality also took responsibility for building some of the pieces of equipment. After the project, the building department of the municipality will take responsibility for maintaining the equipment as well, together with volunteers of the neighborhood initiative. Both the municipality and the volunteers have the expectation that the expansion of the facilities will encourage visitors to the park to show respect for all the material and thus result in proper maintenance and use of the park.

Since the equipment has been placed in park Loten, the main target group were the inhabitants of the neighborhood wherein the park is located, the mountain district, including people of different ages and different cultures. Special efforts were done to reach a diverse public for the inauguration events in order for everyone to get to know the park, see what good equipment it has and return to it often. Although extra efforts have been made to reach certain groups of the neighborhood, residents of other neighborhoods in Eupen (and elsewhere) are of course welcome in the park as well. Citizens from other neighborhoods were at first suspicious of why a project was only implemented in the mountain district and they were curious about what was happening there. However, the neighborhood manager could explain the choice for carrying out the project in the mountain district well, referring to N-POWER.

A lot of different communication channels were used to reach out to inhabitants of the neighborhood and to get in contact with them, both for consulting them on what equipment the park needs, inviting them to the (inauguration) events and to involve them as potential volunteer. The channels used are Facebook, flyers, the local newspaper, exhibition projects, personal conversations of the project manager within the neighbourhood, advertising pillars for both information and a call to action, the regional radio station, etc. It was difficult to reach some groups in the Muslim community although the Ahmaddiyas and the Bosnian Muslims were reached successfully. The project manager tried, in close cooperation with the integration officer of the city of Eupen, to inform all of the different groups among the inhabitants and generate a higher participation of citizens with diverse beliefs.

Besides the inhabitants of the neighborhood, other stakeholders can benefit from revaluing the park as well. Another stakeholder involved is, for example, the culture house (Jünglingshaus), which would like to use the outside area as a venue for events and performances. This would of course also be of benefit for the park itself, making it more attractive to visit for people living in the neighborhood, with activities and events. The animation centre (Ephata), which serves as a social meeting place and has direct access to the park is also very supportive of the developments made and would, of course, like to use the park for its activities. Both involved stakeholders cooperate very well together with the municipality officials and the volunteers of the park, in order to improve the quality of the neighborhood in every way.

Since a new big apartment building is being built in the vicinity of the park, the project initiators responsible for the construction works of this new building are also involved. However, until now they do not realize the potential added value of investing in an active neighborhood community. Still, there is a good contact between the neighborhood manager and the construction company. Maybe they can be involved in the future as a bigger sponsor in the project and invest in the equipment of the park.

Difficulties faced

One of the difficulties this project had to deal with was the fact that it is very time consuming to approach all potential sponsors individually. On top of this, the project experienced that the decision to sponsor an element or not is related to the personal sympathy, will and feelings of the person approached and is thus very dependent on this particular person. Concerning the businesses, the economic insecurity and uncertainty resulting from the COVID-crisis, made it also very difficult to convince SME's to sponsor. On top of the difficulties caused by COVID, came the floods of the summer of 2021. The floods intensified the uncertainty for the SME's in several

areas. Of course, both causes of troubles for the SME's, also created problems to organize events as an inauguration and with the aim to bring together the inhabitants of the neighborhood. For several months this was forbidden by the rules to fight the COVID-crisis.

Building an identity for a neighborhood is not easy. In retrospective, even more activities during summer could have been organized in order to build a collective identity and establishing a stronger connection between the inhabitants of the neighborhood. However, everyone, even the inhabitants of the neighborhood not involved in the implementation, noticed that concrete ameliorations have been made to the park and that they were initiated and executed collectively.

Lessons learned

Many SME's are willing to sponsor equipment in the neighborhood, this can thus be a good occasional funding source, which can be explored by other municipalities as well. In several cases, the businesses did not even need recognition in the form of a sign with their name on and would do it just to be solidary with the neighborhood and the region. If the project is well managed, it is not difficult to find sponsors since every business wants to invest in a success story. However, in municipalities or cities much larger than Eupen, this method would probably be more difficult to apply, since the method explicitly uses to the feeling of solidarity and cohesion in the community which can be found in a small city like Eupen.

A strength experienced in this project was the single point of contact in the guise of the neighborhood manager. He established contacts with the SME's and had of course intense contact with the inhabitants living in the neighborhood, as well as the volunteers united in the neighborhood committee, since he consulted them to check their needs and desires for the park and the neighborhood in general. Because of this, he could link the desires of the neighborhood very well with the possibilities for sponsoring and communicate them to the SME's. The fact that the neighborhood manager is part of the municipal administration ensures that he knows all services well and has contacts at every department. The municipality administration was very welcoming for neighborhood project ideas from citizens. The neighborhood manager took responsibility for all the administrative processes that needed to be gone through in order to install the equipment in the park. This was of important help for the neighborhood initiatives. Because of his position in the municipality administration, problems arising in the planning and execution of the neighborhood projects, could be solved quick internally at the municipality. However, having a neighborhood manager as a single point of contact, can also cause some small difficulties when the neighborhood manager is living in the neighborhood himself. In this

case this civil servant needs to make a clear separation between the personal private life and the role as member of the municipality administration. On top of this, it also is a risk to have just one single person working on connecting the wishes of the inhabitants with the SME's, since this person could always leave or drop out. It is thus important to involve other colleagues at the municipality as well, just like as was observed in Aachen.

c) Genk (BE): Genk is hot, Do It Together: a hot sauce for Genk

The project: general explanation, target groups and aim

The pilot project for WPT2 in Genk went through a long design and decision-making process. Several projects were considered. We will explain this process in detail. The project finally chosen is called “Genk is hot”². The initiators call it a D.I.T. project, which means Do It Together project (in contrast to a DIY – Do It Yourself project). This project is developed and initiated by a non-profit organization called Fabriek Ecologique. This non-profit organization focuses on sustainability, zero waste, reuse and recycling of materials and the affordability of these kind of actions in favor of the environment. More concretely their aim is to reduce poverty by sharing their knowledge and learning citizens how they can make sustainable products themselves by organizing trainings. Besides this, they also organize camps for children. Fabriek Ecologique is located at the Evence Coppélaan in the neighborhood of Winterslag in Genk.

The project idea consists of producing a hot or spicy sauce made from peppers, garlic and onions grown by inhabitants of Genk and in Genk. In February, the organization Fabriek Ecologique already distributed seed pots and seeds for the local residents to grow peppers. This resulted in a nice harvest of chili peppers. Now they need money to buy supplemental material and ingredients in order to convert this harvest into a spicy sauce. To collect this money in order to continue and reinforce the project, a crowdfunding campaign will be organized. The alternative funding method used in this pilot project is thus civic crowdfunding. The aim of the project is to do and create something together with and for all Genk’s inhabitants in the idea of D.I.T.: Do It Together. In this way, the alternative funding method also consists of volunteering, besides the aim to set-up a crowdfunding campaign. The project wants to show that when doing something together with the whole community, little efforts by a lot of people can result in the realization of something great. The produced product, the hot sauce, will symbolize the warm society in Genk. The target group are thus all inhabitants of the municipality of Genk and especially the inhabitants of the neighborhood of Winterslag where the organisation Fabriek Ecologique is located.

² For more information, check out: <https://genkishot.be/>



Campaign image for 'Genk is hot'

The idea of producing the hot sauce together with all Genk's inhabitants, rose in the former shop of Fabriek Ecologique where a spicy sauce, made by an inhabitant, was successfully sold. In the beginning of 2021, they asked inhabitants to grow peppers. 250 people were willing to participate in this project and they received a kit with seeds, growing pots and tips for growing the peppers. Soon people were sharing their experiences, advice and photos of growing plants in the Facebook group of this project.

Since August, Fabriek Ecologique has been receiving freshly picked red chili peppers in their mailbox almost every week. Right now, the sauce still needs to be produced and bottled. Therefore, 4 000 euros is needed in order to rent fermentation vats and equipment, buy additional ingredients and buy glass bottles and labels.

Fabriek Ecologique decided to run a crowdfunding campaign to collect the needed budget. The municipality referred them to the crowdfunding platform Growfunding who guided and supported the project initiators in setting-up and managing their campaign, as well as developing the rewards. They also got support from the municipality for the administrative matters and the municipality of Genk will match fund the project for 2 000 euros, and will provide thus half of the needed budget, if the crowdfunding campaign succeeds in collecting the proposed budget of 2 000 euros. The campaign will start on the 9th of December 2021 and will end in March 2022³. Rewards consist of an invitation to the pepper fest, which will be organized in 2022 to celebrate the production of the sauce and the project in general, and a cocktail at this party for a donation of 10 euros. For a donation of 20 euros, donors get a bottle of spicy sauce in a wooden box. For 40 euros, donors can get a kitchen apron on top of the bottle in the wooden box. A donation of 60 euros gives the donor an invitation to a brunch with an inspiring guest and a kitchen apron. For a donation of 100 euros, you are invited at a cooking workshop in which a three-course menu with the sauce as central ingredient is prepared. For a donation of 500 euros, a personal reward will be developed together by the donor and the organization. The proceeds from the sale of the pepper sauce will be used by Fabrique Ecologique to start

³ For more information, check out <https://www.growfunding.be/nl/projects/genkishot>

up more social, sustainable projects for creating a new delicious and local D.I.T. product next year.

Earlier project ideas and developments of the project

The 'Genk is Hot' project was not the first project idea in this pilot project. It was only decided last minute to develop this project of producing the hot sauce in depth and to organize a crowdfunding campaign for this. The limited time frame wherein this project is developed and the fact that the campaign is not yet completed by the time this evaluation study is published, are making it difficult to really evaluate it. Therefore, the first project ideas will also be considered in this evaluation study since these went through an interesting development process where we can learn things from.

The first project idea of Fabriek Ecologique was about a piece of non-used forest across the street of their spot. They had the idea to use this little forest to do activities with their non-profit organization and at the same time to open it up for the inhabitants of the neighborhood, in order for them to explore and experience nature and come closer to themselves. They wanted to make this little forest accessible with some paths, in order for it to be a green and relaxing space for the citizens living in this neighborhood. They also wanted to pay attention to adapting the little forest in such a way that it would be suitable for activities for both children and adults, like nature camps and yoga lessons. It was their aim to dress up the paths, that will be made in the little forest, with signs holding instructions for children playing at this spot, such as suggestions for activities to do together or questions to make adults think about their lives. They also desired to install picnic spots in this little forest, accessible for everyone in the neighborhood. Besides adapting the park to children's needs, the project also had the aim to involve all people of the neighborhood, including vulnerable and difficult to reach people. The target group for this project was thus all inhabitants, including children and citizens with a more vulnerable profile, living in the neighborhood of Winterslag, where the little forest is located. The project initiators were also willing to open up the forest for other organizations in the neighborhood, for example organizations providing yoga and meditation lessons. With all the additional facilities and equipment that would have been developed in the forest, it would be, for example, an ideal place to hold birthday parties as well, also for children from families that normally do not have the budget to do this. For this group of children and families kits with additional games, toys and playing material that could be used in the little forest would have been provided.

First of all, the project of 'Discover your place' would have used volunteering as alternative funding method, since the volunteers were planning to do most of the work for the facilities they

wanted to establish in the little forest. The time and effort that would have been invested in this project would have been enormous and the volunteering part could thus not be underestimated. Besides volunteering, it was also the plan to use civic crowdfunding as another alternative funding method for 'Discover your place'. The association behind this project, Fabriek Ecologique, asked the municipality if they could get some help for carrying out their project. Besides the volunteers, they needed most of all money, rather than other resources like material. They had thus the ideal project to test out the alternative funding method of civic crowdfunding. The neighborhood manager proposed the use of this alternative funding method to the volunteers and they immediately were enthusiastic to start up a civic crowdfunding campaign to gather the money needed. They hoped to not only raise the necessary budget for their project but also to gain publicity, support and sympathy for their ideas and to extend their network. Since the volunteers of the organization did not have any experience with carrying out a crowdfunding campaign at all, the neighborhood manager brought them in contact with a civic crowdfunding organization and platform to follow some workshops, making them able to set up such a campaign and make the project to a success. These workshops helped them to focus and specify their project idea more in order to be clear and attractive for possible donors and to be able to start collecting all the necessary resources. The workshops of the civic crowdfunding platform organization also helped the volunteers with carrying out a network analysis, creating rewards, setting the final target amount and establishing a planning for all these activities and the campaign. The neighborhood manager gave the initiative to carry out this crowdfunding campaign to the non-profit organization, she did thus not take up a pulling role, rather a facilitative one. Since they have to set-up this campaign themselves, it was important to do it at their pace. However, as explained above, the project initiators eventually chose for another project idea to carry out, the one of 'Genk is hot'. However, for this project, they could still use the skills they learned in the crowdfunding workshops and they could rely on the support of the crowdfunding platform, to define new goals and specify their new project idea.

Difficulties faced

Regarding the project idea of discover your place, there were of course some rules regarding the use of this little piece of forest that had to be taken into account when carrying out a project at this place and establishing the paths, for example. The fact that the land on which the forest is located is owned by the municipality itself and that it is classified as a recreation zone according to the spatial planning policy, made the process easier but still a lot of different procedures had to be gone through. The neighborhood manager guided the project initiators

very well since she figured out all the possibilities and examined through which administrative procedures the project needed to go, although it was a matter not included in the policy planning and thus not a day-to-day issue. She also stayed in touch with the other municipal services and departments, as well as the agency for nature and forests at the higher level (Flemish region) that were involved because of these rules and regulations. Some advocacy, persuasion and network consulting were needed to get all the departments on the same line, which was also taken care of by the neighborhood manager, so the volunteers did not have to get involved in these matters themselves. In the end, all the necessary permits were gathered to exploit the forest and neither additional forest had to be planted nor there had to be paid for forest compensation in return for building the paths. However, the search for and obtaining of the necessary permits did cause some delays to the project and demotivation for the volunteers. Besides the delay, another difficulty was faced by the neighborhood manager. The extraordinary nature of the project brought her in a difficult position, the questions of the volunteers regarding the project were not quick and easy to solve like most other questions were municipality departments have to deal with. This resulted in the need to convince the other municipality departments of the usefulness and importance of the project in order to obtain their cooperation and to get them on the same track.

One of the other difficulties in this project with the aim to test an alternative funding method, was the implementation of a new policy tool in the municipality of Genk which consisted of a grant of several thousands of euros that could be awarded to citizen projects. Since this opportunity was communicated in the same period as the one wherein the neighborhood manager was looking for a project to test an alternative funding method, it was very difficult to find a project willing to use such an alternative method when they could get money from the municipality for their project without doing the effort of setting up a campaign, for example. It is always easier to apply for this opportunity, a grant of thousands of euros, than to look for resources (and/or money) as a project yourself. On top of this, in a normal course of action, the idea and initiative to set up a civic crowdfunding campaign should come from citizens or associations themselves. There should be no active search for a project that wants to work with this method and the civil servant should have only a facilitating role instead of a pulling role as booster of the project. However, in the context of this Interreg project, it was necessary to actively look for a project that wanted to experiment with an alternative financing method. Although the ideas for the project itself came from the volunteers of the association, the proposal to use civic crowdfunding came from the civil servant, which would, without the N-Powerproject, in a normal course of action, not be the case. This created stress and an uncomfortable feeling for the civil servant because this is not how a civic crowdfunding project normally arises.

Moreover, the first project that would normally have done civic crowdfunding, called the garden of Betty, decided to apply for a citizen budget of 50 000 euros and put their effort in the grant application instead of developing a crowdfunding campaign. This initial project could thus no longer serve as a pilot project on alternative funding.

The grant program implemented by the municipality, called burgerbudget or in English citizen budget, consisted of a grant of minimum 5 000 euros and maximum 100 000 euros. Citizens had to submit a project proposal for a project concerning a topic linked to the themes poverty & inequality, talent development or climate & sustainability.⁴ After several months wherein the citizen groups could concretize their proposals, the projects could be found on a website allowing citizens of the municipality of Genk to vote on their three favorite projects. The projects with the most votes in each neighborhood were awarded a grant and the rest of the budget was spent to the second-best ranked projects of all neighborhoods, in order to distribute the available budget equally across all neighborhoods of the municipality. Participating in this grant-awarding process was of course easier than setting up a crowdfunding campaign, developing rewards and campaign extensively by setting up events. These circumstances made it very difficult to find a project wherein an alternative funding method could be tested. This is one of the reasons for the delay in finding a project suited as an alternative funding method project for WPT2. On top of this, the volunteers of “Discover Your Place” also applied for a grant of this neighborhood budget initiative. The application process also took a lot of time and effort from the volunteers and thus also delayed the preparation and implementation of the civic crowdfunding campaign. This delay, together with all administrative matters and insecurities, resulted in the end in the choice for another project to carry out, ‘Genk is hot’.

In a nutshell, we can conclude that it was very difficult to find a suitable project for the experiment on alternative funding, given the simultaneous launch of the grant awarding system, the citizen budget. However, the fact that it was necessary to find a project that could serve as a pilot project on alternative funding in the framework of N-Power brought stress and an uncomfortable position for the civil servant, since the idea for a civic crowdfunding project should normally originate bottom-up and not be suggested or pushed by the municipality. However, the initiative for developing the campaign was left with the volunteers so that they could do it at their own pace. Nevertheless, this caused delays for the project. All administrative issues with exploiting a piece of forest eventually caused them to put their efforts in the project of ‘Genk is hot’ instead.

⁴ For more information, take a look at: <https://burgerbudgetgenk.be/faq>

Lessons learned

Out of this information, we can conclude that if a municipality supports or wants to actively encourage the use of civic crowdfunding, they need to think about how this alternative funding method can be aligned with the grant awarding policy. If it is very easy and accessible to receive grants for your project, citizens won't be eager to set up a civic crowdfunding campaign, since they need to do efforts for this like creating a campaign, promote it, organize events, think about rewards and deliver them. If a municipality has thus a very extensive grant awarding scheme, it is not beneficial nor opportune as a municipality to promote the use of civic crowdfunding by citizens in their municipality since this won't be used by citizens in this case because it is way easier to apply for a grant than to set-up a whole crowdfunding campaign. However, in this particular case, there was the constraint that projects need to fit into one of the three themes (poverty & inequality, talent development or climate & sustainability) if they want to apply for a grant in the context of the citizen budget.

An option for municipalities is to combine the two logics and use the promotion and publicity for a project created by a civic crowdfunding campaign on the one hand and the accessibility and stimulating character of awarding grants on the other hand. This could be carried out by awarding grants to projects but only on the condition that they raise half, or a third, of the budget themselves by setting up a civic crowdfunding campaign. If they reach their budget goal with the crowdfunding campaign, the municipality awards a grant to the project (or doubles the raised money, which is eventually the same). This is the principle of so-called match funding. The municipality matches the money raised by the crowdfunding campaign with a grant. The set-up of a crowdfunding campaign allows the project to gain promotion by getting it into attention of the citizens and the neighborhood, to possibly recruit volunteers and finally, it also allows the municipality to check the public acceptance and support for the project in the neighborhood. If citizens donate a little money, it is sure that they support the project. On the other hand, not all citizens with good project ideas have the capacity nor the skills to set-up a crowdfunding campaign, that is why grants still have to be in place and if it is chosen to implement such a combination of running a civic crowdfunding campaign and awarding grants, there needs to be extensive support in setting up a civic crowdfunding campaign from the municipality's side.

In the concrete case of Genk, such a combination between crowdfunding and awarding grants, could be done by installing the option of match funding for projects applying to the neighborhood budget of 2 500 euros. To these projects, the possibility of running a civic crowdfunding campaign could be proposed, telling them that in this way they can extend the

support of 2 500 euros by the municipality to 5 000 euros if they collect 2 500 euros with a crowdfunding campaign themselves and they receive 2 500 euros from the municipality as match funding budget. The crowdfunding part of this method allows the project to do capacity building, create support in the neighborhood and involve potential volunteers and participants. However, the municipality of Genk still wants to keep the option of just receiving a grant of 2 500 euros as a neighborhood budget open since not everyone is motivated and has the right skills to run a crowdfunding campaign.

Besides the lessons on the combination of supporting civic crowdfunding and a grant awarding system, the project also learned that the involvement of a civil servant in such an extraordinary project is very important to get things done internally in the municipal administration and on a higher policy level (on the level of the Flemish region for example). The involvement and advocacy of the neighborhood manager is absolutely necessary and crucial to obtain all the necessary permits for exploiting for example a little piece of land. It is thus essential to offer support from a civil servant to innovative projects like these in the neighborhoods to take care of all administrative matters like applying to procedures and regulations.

d) Heerlen (NL): collaboration between citizen and neighborhood initiatives

The project: general explanation, target groups and aim

Heerlen's project for WPT2 on alternative funding is closely related and linked to their WPI1 pilot project on empowerment, which is called Gebrookerbos. The Gebrookerbos project is stimulating citizen initiatives in Heerlen to give a new function to a vacant piece of land in the district of Heerlen North. These different citizen initiatives have several needs and money is often not even the most important one. Since the municipality of Heerlen has a very extensive grant awarding program, the Gebrookerbos fund, where citizen initiatives can apply for in order to receive a budget of maximum 10 000 euros for an initiative, there is thus not so much need to organize a project for raising money. Because of the fund, initiatives mostly succeed in collecting the needed budget for setting-up their initiative to give a vacant piece of land another function. On top of this, there are also other national grant awarding programs where citizen initiatives can apply for. The availability of the grant awarding programs and the Gebrookerbos fund, also makes crowdfunding unnecessary since initiatives will be more likely to apply for a grant than to run a crowdfunding campaign. The question is thus more about how these initiatives can be managed sustainably in the future than how they can raise money. The needs are more diverse than just money and for example more about administrative and managerial support, project management, insurances, materials and volunteers. Until now, the citizens initiatives have mostly been operating separately from each other and do not share nor exchange volunteers and resources. The idea for the pilot project on alternative funding in Heerlen was to change this and stimulate exchange of resources, material and volunteers between the citizen initiatives. The target group of this project are thus the citizen initiatives in (the north) of Heerlen and the aim of the project is to continue the method of Gebrookerbos after the N-POWER project by facilitating collaboration between all initiatives. We would describe the alternative funding method used in this project as intensifying collaboration by building a (sharing) network.

First steps to centralize the management of the volunteers have already been taken by starting a collaboration with Heerlen Stand-by, which is a care and welfare organization providing day-care, support and volunteering activities for citizens living in Heerlen. The citizen initiatives can now also ask the participants in the program of Heerlen Stand-by to do volunteering at their initiative. There are already 5 volunteers from Heerlen Stand-By doing voluntary work at the initiatives of Gebrookerbos on a regular base. But this collaboration could be extended. Since sometimes there is more work at one initiative than at another, it would be interesting if volunteers could be exchanged. This is why starting a collaboration between the initiatives would be so interesting. Besides the exchange of volunteers, this collaboration could also provide a shared

insurance for all initiatives, since it is very expensive for initiatives to take an insurance for them as initiative individually. On top of this, there are also many machines or other materials and resources that are only used once in a while, for example a grass machine. It would also be cheaper, more economical and sustainable to share these kinds of things with all initiatives. This collaboration could for example be done by starting a cooperative. However, the format wherein collaborating will take place is not clear yet.

At this moment, there is already one volunteer of a citizen initiative involved in developing the idea of a collaboration network between the citizen initiatives, together with the project manager of Gebrookerbos (a civil servant). In the end, it would be ideal if one of the volunteers of a participating initiative would lead and manage the collaboration. In this way, the ownership of the project idea to set-up a collaboration can stay with the citizens. However, in the first phase, someone from the municipality could help starting up the collaboration and facilitate agreements between all different initiatives. When a volunteer from an initiative would take the leading role, the municipality can still be involved as a partner, facilitating the organization of events and supporting for the administrative matters. If new initiatives are initiated, they can also become part of the collaboration network, in this way the network and also its leadership will be dynamic.

The idea was to discuss this possible collaboration on a conference with all citizen initiatives. This event could be used to examine if citizen initiatives only want a collaboration for exchanging volunteers or also for the exchange of materials and fixing an insurance. This meeting has been rescheduled several times. It was normally planned for November the 18th but due to the implementation of more strict corona rules in the Netherlands, this had to be postponed again last-minute to 2022.

Difficulties faced

Because of the corona regulations, it was not possible to physically meet with all initiatives. This caused delays in organizing the conference, as explained above. The first conference was already planned in April 2020, this needed to be rescheduled to the fall of 2020, when it could not take place either. Eventually, it was planned for November the 18th in 2021. But then again, it had to be rescheduled last minute because of the implementation of new and stricter corona rules, making it again impossible to organize a big conference. Until further notice, the conference is now scheduled for the first months of 2022. It was the aim to organize a conference physically since it is very difficult for some of the citizens to participate in online meetings because

of a lack of internet access or skills to use video conferencing tools. Everyone should be included and have the possibility to attend the conference for starting-up the collaboration.

Lessons learned

Money is not always the most important thing needed by social initiatives, especially when there already exist a lot of grant awarding programs where initiatives can apply for. In some situations, citizen initiatives can thus benefit more from sharing expertise, volunteers and material. This is why thinking about collaboration between different initiatives can also be very important and helpful, sometimes even more than setting up initiatives to raise money. This is a valuable take away message for other projects and municipalities as well. However, in order for this method to be successful, there must be some initiatives within the municipality. If there are only a few initiatives, there is not so much to exchange.

e) Liège (BE): Espace de convivialité (conviviality space)

The project: general explanation, target groups and aim

The aim of this project was to open up a space in the park within the neighborhood of Droixhe, which is central in the pilot project of WPI1 (empowerment) for N-Power as well. This space, called the conviviality space, can be used by inhabitants of this neighborhood to gather, learn to know each other, have a drink and to develop and carry out ideas to improve and enforce their neighborhood. At this space, a social worker will be present for consulting as well. Consultation of the inhabitants of the neighborhood pointed out that there was a very big need for such a space. In the longer term, it is intended that citizens will appropriate this place, become more and more involved and will themselves organize activities at this space. The inhabitants of the neighborhood Droixhe are thus the target group of this project. The actual visitors of the conviviality space are mainly families living in the neighborhood who heard about this place and decided to take a look while visiting the park. In the months of July, August and September of the summer of 2021, the place was visited by 206 children and 120 adults.

The idea for the project of the conviviality space arose when the consultation of the inhabitants of the neighborhood, in collaboration with existing organizations, in the context of the pilot project for WPI1 on empowerment, made clear that there was the need for a space in the park where citizens can meet, sit down and have a coffee or other drink. They want a space near or in the park where they can gather and have social contacts to break the isolation of some of them, especially in the aftermath of the corona crisis. On top of this, the project also has the aim to create a dynamic between the pilot project for WPT2 on alternative funding and the pilot project WPI1 on empowerment. It would be good if citizens visiting the conviviality space could get involved in the process for developing improvements (of the equipment) in the park, and the other way around. A space for this aim was found in the park in a not very often used room on the first floor of a church. The municipality provided budget for opening the place but now it is open (since June the 19th of 2021), the citizen-volunteers exploit and maintain it during the moments the space is open, which is once a week. Volunteers thus 'donate' and spend their time for a proper functioning of the conviviality space. These volunteers were reached and found through the mediation of the associations operating in and around the park (La Bobine, L'espace George Truffaut, Collectif autour de l'étang). Working with volunteers allows the project to be sustainable since it does not depend on funding but is managed by citizens who become actors and are in this project thus not merely consumers of services (for example buying food and drinks) at the conviviality space. In order to operate the conviviality space in this way on a long-term base, an agreement was set up with the involved non-profit organizations, active in the

neighborhood. These organizations mobilized the citizens of the neighborhood as volunteers or visitors of the conviviality space. Without the involvement of the non-profit organizations it would have been more difficult to activate the inhabitants of the neighborhood and to stimulate them to become volunteer or participant. This management format, relying on volunteers and not depending on external funding, allows the project to develop a long-term perspective and think about strategies on how to elaborate the place. The ideas to develop the place come from the inhabitants of the neighborhood itself and they will also help to execute these ideas, which initiates an empowerment process. In any case, the activities organized in the conviviality space will be open for everyone in order to make this an inclusive space. An additional questionnaire was carried out to check what activities citizens want to organize in the conviviality space and their ideas were to set-up artistic, culinary and sports activities as well as awareness-raising actions on cleanliness in the park. A neighborhood party has already been organized at the conviviality space, preceded by a clean-up operation in the park so that the area was clean for the neighborhood party.



Activities at the outside area of the conviviality space – Photo by Anne Rahier

The conviviality space opened in the beginning of the summer of 2021 and the aim is to set up a civic crowdfunding campaign to carry out one of the ideas of the neighborhood's inhabitants on what is needed and necessary in this place, once the space is known by a fair share of inhabitants of the neighborhood and enough volunteers are recruited and involved. Right now, the conviviality space is still in the process of co-creation together with the inhabitants of the neighborhood visiting it and the involved associations and volunteers, hoping that the inhabitants of the neighborhood and visitors will appropriate the project. The citizens of the neighborhood should think about what is urgent to carry out in this place in order to define a project idea for which they could run a crowdfunding campaign. The intention of the pilot project is to let the inhabitants of the neighborhood carry out this campaign themselves. Next to the aim of doing crowdfunding in the near future, the option of using sponsoring by businesses located in the neighborhood is also open. The alternative funding method used is thus on the one hand volunteering, which is already implemented today by the neighborhood's inhabitants exploiting the community place at the moment, and on the other hand, civic crowdfunding, which will be implemented in the near future, once there is a sufficient dynamic around the community gathering place and enough neighborhood inhabitants and volunteers are involved. The municipality provides support for this project by offering the guidance and help of a local development officer (a civil servant), paying for the exploitation costs and subsidizing the involved organizations. The civil servant is always available for questions and will help the involved association with carrying out and guiding the consultation and participation processes, as well as with the administrative matters. In this way, the municipality and the involved associations hope to make the conviviality space a central meeting point in the neighborhood and an often-frequented place for all citizens.

At first, there was the idea to open up the spot near the park under the name of a social cafeteria. Since the word cafeteria is rather strongly associated with the hospitality industry and to avoid confusion, the name conviviality space was chosen in order to avoid the hospitality connotation. It became clear that inhabitants do not visit the conviviality space just for having a drink. They visit it to have social contacts and see their neighbors. However, the name can evolve during the project, also in accordance with what the citizens think is the best term.

The execution of this project was delayed because of the COVID-crisis in the first place and because of the floods in Wallonia in the summer of 2021 in the second place. That is why the municipality decided to already open the spot and provide budget for this goal instead of waiting for a crowdfunding campaign to be organized. As said above, they also established an agreement with a non-profit organization for the exploitation of the conviviality space in order for them to start mobilizing inhabitants of the neighborhood as volunteers and visitors. In this

way, the municipality hoped to start a dynamic around this spot in the neighborhood, involving inhabitants visiting the place and who may become volunteers one day. In this way, the alternative funding method of volunteering can be realized and when enough citizens are involved, they can start with setting up civic crowdfunding campaigns in the near future as well, as the second method of alternative funding. Alternative funding projects can thus make use of a mixture of methods.

Difficulties

Working with volunteers can have advantages, for example, as mentioned above, this allows the project to develop a long-term strategy since the project does not depend on external financing. However, working with a strategy of volunteering can also cause difficulties, for example when the volunteers have different expectations, tensions can arise in the group. On top of this, it is very important that the involved associations are available for the volunteers when they have questions. For the civil servants, it was also important to be patient and to realize that it takes time for citizens to get fully involved in the project and to take the ownership of the project. However, when results are not expected too soon and there is time and patience to wait for appropriation of the project, it could be observed that after a while the citizens take the project in their hands out of a great solidarity towards each other and the desire to improve the neighborhood and its social cohesion. For example, at the conviviality space, one of the inhabitants decided to organize nature walks around the park for all visitors.

As all projects, this project faced delays because of the COVID-19 crisis as well. Since it was impossible to organize events or to have social contacts, it was very difficult to recruit volunteers for the project at that moment. Events could also not be organized online since not all inhabitants of the neighborhood, and thus the possible volunteers and visitors, have access to and the skills to use internet and video conferencing tools. However, the involved civil servants tried to establish as much one-on-one meetings as was possible and allowed. In order to engage all inhabitants of the neighborhood in the project, the start of it and the accompanying events needed to be postponed until the sanitary situation improved. In the meantime, the civil servants managed to keep contact with the involved organizations and to keep the work that was already done and the network that was already set-up, alive.

One of the visitors could be reached with a questionnaire and pointed out some of the disadvantages of the place, for example the limited opening times, making it difficult to really invest in the place. It is thus important to open the space frequently enough to create a sustainable dynamic around it. Besides this, the limited heating infrastructure makes it also less

attractive to organize activities in winter and limits the period wherein gatherings can be organized. The fact that there is until now no clarity about if this place can be rented or not, is also defined as a disadvantage. The visitor would like to see an examination on how the rental of the space and its provision to the residents can be merged.

Lessons learned

When one has the time to wait for results and involvement, the alternative funding method of volunteering can be very powerful. A new dynamic of solidarity and engagement for the neighborhood was started at the conviviality space. Even though no financial resources have been made available to this project, the human resources invested were very important and cannot be underestimated. However, a visitor pointed out that it is important to open up the space often enough in order to stimulate people to invest their time in it. On top of this, clarity about the opening hours is also very important, to keep people motivated and involved.

This case shows us the importance of the involvement of local organizations to mobilize inhabitants of the targeted neighborhood. These organizations are already in contact with the inhabitants of the neighborhood and the citizens trust them. Without the involvement of the local associations, it would have been very difficult for the civil servants to involve people of the neighborhood since they are difficult to reach and engage. The floods also stimulated the municipality and the associations to intensify their collaboration for this project. The importance of collaborating, co-creating and involving local non-profit organizations can thus not be underestimated for a project like this with the aim to set up a community gathering place. The capacity and the already existing contacts of the non-profit organizations can for this kind of project be used as a leverage to build up a network and to involve inhabitants of the neighborhood as visitors and volunteers.

At the beginning of the project, the involved civil servant had a more pulling and initiating role. Now that volunteers are found and involved, they take more ownership of the project and they appropriate it. The role of the civil servant becomes thus less important. As a result, this role evolves to a more facilitating role by taking care of administrative matters and support the consultation processes.

f) Seraing (BE): flea market

The project: general explanation, target groups and aim

In Seraing the idea for the pilot project consisted of organizing a flea market for household items and a closet sale for clothes. People can rent a place on the flea market for 1,5 euro per meter on the main square of Seraing (Place de l'Avenir). These revenues will be transferred to the social organization 'Vivre Solidaire' (meaning 'to live solidary') in Seraing who will invest these in the aid of victims of the floods and people financially deprived and socially isolated because of the COVID-crisis. Vivre Solidaire helps people living in the city centre of Seraing by providing food parcels and second-hand clothes. The alternative funding method chosen for this project is thus fund raising by setting up an event in which people can participate. The municipality makes the square available for this event, provides protective barriers and other necessary infrastructural material but does not grant an additional financial remuneration for the organization of the event. The non-profit organization "Vivre Solidaire" is the organizer of the event and gets facilitating help from AREBS. Vivre Solidaire will take care of the reservations by people who want to sell things on the flea market and thus want to reserve a spot. They will also be responsible for the advertising. On top of this they also will be taking care of the practical side on the day of the event: setting up the stalls for food and drink and selling this, guide every seller to its dedicated place, doing the dishes and hosting a barbecue. The association can count on its volunteers to carry out all of these tasks. The facilitating help of AREBS consists of making requests to the municipal government and the police to obtain the necessary permits, communicating with the political level, establishing flyers, contacting and engaging the shopkeepers around the square. This was successful and shopkeepers were willing to participate, for example by making their sanitary facilities available.

The date for the flea market was set several times but always had to be postponed. First because of the different waves of COVID-19 and the regulations making it impossible to organize it, then due to the floods that hit Wallonia in the summer of 2021 and in the fall of 2021 again due to a new rise in the corona infections. The event would require a covid safe ticket, which makes it very difficult to keep the volunteers at the base involved and without them being available it is very difficult to organize the event. The social association Vivre Solidaire and the prevention department of the municipality of Seraing decided thus to not let the event take place in the fall of 2021. However, there is still the plan and desire to organize the event during the spring of 2022 to gather money for Vivre Solidaire in order for them to help all inhabitants of their target groups. There will also be set up a long-term agreement between the municipality of Seraing and Vivre Solidaire in which they declare to collaborate for organizing a few editions of the

flea market in the future (starting of spring 2022). During the preparations of the flea market there has been established a group meeting once in a while, simply called the flea market group, with all stakeholders of this project including citizens, shopkeepers, the municipality's prevention agents and the involved association, Vivre Solidaire. This group is very motivated to organize the flea market in 2022 and they even are already looking for extra spots wherein they could organize such an event.

The aim of the pilot project of the flea market is twofold. In the first place, the aim of this project on alternative funding was to raise money for the victims of the floods and the citizens heavily touched by the impact of the coronacrisis in both financial and social terms. On top of this, there was also the supplementary aim to provide the opportunity for people in financial difficulties to buy affordable clothes and household items at the closet sale and flea market. It was asked by the citizens themselves to provide and organize an opportunity for this. Because of the floods, the need for affordable household items and clothes increased for people already in financial and social precarious situations (which are also enforced by the health crisis). In addition to the fees paid for participating by the sellers on the flea market, the involved social organization can also set up a stall to sell drinks and foods to collect revenues, which was difficult last year due to the corona crisis and the prohibition to organize events following out of this. Vivre solidaire will use the collected income at these food and drink stalls to help out the victims most affected by the floods and the corona crisis as well. However, besides the financial goals for both the non-profit organization (raising money) and the citizens (providing a chance to buy clothes and household items less expensively), the project also had an extensive social aim. Since the confinement resulted in social isolation for people already socially and financially vulnerable, this event wanted to allow people to meet again in an authorized outdoor place and get in touch with each other.

The project's target group is thus people in financial and social difficulties who will be given an extra opportunity in the municipality to buy affordable second-hand clothes and household items and this group is also the target of the project in a second way since the money raised by this event, will be invested again in this group via the social organization who will receive the collected money. Since the flea market and closet sale will be organized in the city center and the social organization receiving the revenues is also located in this quarter, helping the citizens of this neighborhood, the target group is thus especially the financially deprived citizens in this neighborhood of the city center of Seraing, where the poverty problem is most striking in the municipality. This alternative funding method was therefore not only chosen to raise money for this group but also to offer them the opportunity to buy and choose affordable items themselves – instead of offering them clothes or household items without a choice – since the demand for

affordable items in these categories is increasing day by day. Because of this increasing demand, the event was really asked for by the citizens, they also had the desire to finally have some social contact again after the long-lasting limitations on social life during the COVID-crisis. The choice for this target group was also made because the associations cherished some hope that these inhabitants would attend such an event which would give the associations the chance to get to know them and integrate them in their aid program and service.

At first, the plan was to raise money meant for a holiday for vulnerable children. But the massive floods that ravaged the municipality in the summer of 2021 resulted in a change of the goal for this project to transferring the money to an organization that would use it to help the victims of the flood and the socially and financially deprived citizens in general. The floods also resulted in a delay of the execution of the project, as said above. Helping the victims of the floods and repairing the massive damage became the priority of the municipal leadership in the summer months, when the flea market should normally have been taken place. In the autumn of 2021, where the flea market was rescheduled to, the corona situation began to worsen and new measures including the covid safe ticket (CST) were introduced. This reduced the motivation and availability of volunteers and this, together with the negative health situation, caused the event to be postponed to the spring of 2022.

Difficulties faced

The original plan for the alternative funding project was to let local businesses sponsor the “plaques” or panels around an old children’s playground in the city center of Seraing in order to be able to fund the renovation of this place. The entrepreneurs would then receive advertising space on these plaques in return. However, businesses showed very limited interest in this offer since there is a lot of degeneration in this neighborhood and they held the opinion that this sponsoring won’t be there for a long time since it would soon be damaged. They are thus of the opinion that this investment won’t render and is not worth the money. The difficult living circumstances in this area and the criminality this neighborhood is facing thwarted this first idea and a new project idea must have been developed. Contrary to the pilot projects in other partner cities, there was thus not so much enthusiasm of the entrepreneurs to sponsor the renovation of equipment in exchange for some publicity. We can conclude that it is important for the businesses that the environment is treated with respect in order for them to invest in it. Otherwise, this neighborhood or some equipment in this neighborhood is not worth the money of an investment.

At the moment when a new project must be developed, the consequences of the pandemic became clear and the organization started to think about actions to mitigate the impact of the corona crisis on the already vulnerable people in some neighborhoods in Seraing's city center. Then the idea of organizing a flea market rose since there were needs for affordable clothes and household items because the inhabitants' financial situation worsened due to the lockdown and the consequences of the corona measures, but on top of this, there was also an extensive need for establishing social contacts again, which could be found at a market or fair such as a flea market. At first, it was the idea to use the raised money for buying a bus that families could rent to go on holiday. However, the corona measures made it very difficult to organize such a big event like the flea market, since markets were prohibited during the confinement as well. When these measures were lifted, the municipality was affected by floods, which again caused a delay for the project. Priorities of both the non-profit organization and the municipality were helping the affected people by providing first aid, food, clothes and shelter. When the municipality started rebuilding all the infrastructure, it became clear that the goal of the flea market must be to use the money raised to help the victims of the floods since a lot of inhabitants in the neighborhood of the city center of Seraing lost their clothes, household goods and other personal items in the massive amount of water. However, the goal to raise money for a bus for deprived families to go on holiday is still in the collective memory of the association *Vivre Solidaire* and the flea market group so it could still be the aim for future editions of the flea market. The fact that the event had to be rescheduled so many times also caused some tensions and frustration between the different partners. Ideally the flea market would be organized in summer because of the best chance for good weather conditions. When it became clear that this was not possible, some of the partners were disappointed. Important to realize is that all postponements were also a result of a lack of political will. Of course in the first waves of corona and right after the floods, the municipality's priorities were at helping out the victims, but when events keep being postponed for these reasons, when can say that it is in the end due to a lack of political will to organize them.

Another difficulty that had to be taken into account is the fact that the target group of this project, socially and financially vulnerable people, are a very difficult group to reach. Because of this, the project had to use a multi-channel communication strategy. Besides that, the slowness of the procedures to get the permissions of the municipality and the police force to organize an event like the flea market in the city center, were also an important cause of the delay in carrying out this project. Starting of June, it also became very difficult to reach the authorized persons since they were on summer holidays. Even though the project manager put pressure on the administration to go through the process faster and deliver the necessary permits on time, this

often did not succeed. The role of the project manager as a bridge figure between the social organizations and the volunteers on the one hand and the municipal administration on the other hand is very important for the success of a project but cannot solve all problems, as in this case.

Lessons learned

The circumstances wherein this project was organized and should have been taken place cannot be underestimated. Because of the COVID-situation and the floods, it was very difficult to organize any event. However, we could also observe a lack of political will to organize something. Both the political level and the municipality administration did not do much effort to make it possible for the flea market to be organized. They decided several times last minute that the flea market could not take place. In the beginning of 2021 because of the corona situation, in the summer of 2021 because mitigating the effects of the floods was the priority and, in the fall of 2021, again because of corona. Of course, these were not easy circumstances to organize an event like this but we could also observe a big lack of political will and motivation to organize an event to socialize and raise money. Political support is thus essential for setting up projects and events.

Besides political support, we could also observe in the process of developing this pilot project, that an environment treated with respect is essential to set up a sponsoring campaign for new equipment. The lack of respect for the environment was the reason the method of sponsoring was not successful in Seraing since businesses were not motivated to invest their money in equipment in exchange for publicity if this publicity would soon be devastated because of a lack of respect and responsibility.

g) Verviers (BE): documentary by and for migrants

The project: general explanation, target groups and aim

When the project on alternative funding was developed, it was immediately clear that it must be something in favor of the immigrants living in Verviers, since they were excluded from the general social cohesion plan of the municipality because they do not belong to a specific neighborhood. The target group was thus soon clear, immigrants living in Verviers. The project had the aim to do something to improve the recognition of the migrants in the municipality. However, raising money for the migrants was difficult since this needed to be given to an association in order for them to buy something with it that the immigrants can use or to organize an event, while the immigrants needed to receive the money individually to buy food and drinks themselves or to pay for a place to sleep. On top of this, raising money would have been complicated since Verviers' inhabitants do not trust the municipality enough and would have not been willing to donate, since in their opinion they are already giving enough tax money to the municipality while getting nothing in return. It was thus clear that the project on alternative funding could not be about raising money. The next idea was to collect trash bags for the immigrants because there is a serious need for this since only inhabitants with legal residence documents can get these for free. However, the consulted organization, Voix des Sans-Papiers Verviers (VSPV), with whom the project would have been carried out, wanted to get more out of this project than just collecting trash bags. A new brainstorm was thus organized. The idea rose to make a documentary together with the immigrants, local filmmakers and journalists about the lives of immigrants in Verviers. The aim of this project is to show the living conditions of migrants in the municipality and in what ways they contribute to the community life (for example by making mouth masks for free during the first lockdown) in order to improve the inhabitants' recognition for this group. There already existed some videos but only of poor quality. It was the aim to get the migrants involved in a documentary making process to make them learn how such a documentary can be made in order to enforce their skills and spark their creativity.

Because of the COVID-regulations, it was very difficult to organize meetings with the migrants and the associations representing them, since the number of participants allowed in these gatherings was limited. Most migrants did not have access to a stable internet connection or a device to participate in an online meeting. It was thus very difficult to stay in touch with the target group of the project. The immigrants only had contact with the municipality's social workers or associations for essential needs and services. The circumstances of the COVID-crisis wherein this project must have been carried out, delayed the execution very much. When there was finally an opportunity to start the project again because of less strict corona regulations, Verviers got

hit by the floods of the summer of 2021 and different neighborhoods in the municipality got devastated. The basic needs of some inhabitants of this district are still not met at the moment this study is published (end of 2021): they have no potable water, no electricity and no heating. In these circumstances, it is impossible to organize a social project or to mobilize any volunteers, also because priorities of the municipality were at helping the victims of the floods. All civil servants had to be at service of the victims and got involved in reducing the damage and starting the rebuilding process. Although the migrants were not affected immediately by the floods, since they mostly have no legal homes to stay at, they were affected by the limited capacity of civil servants who would normally help them and try to engage them in projects and services.

The delays caused by the lack of contact during the lockdowns for COVID-19 and the limited capacity from civil servants because of the floods, are the reasons why the project has not been carried out until now and why there are not any plans to carry it out later yet. However, one of the civil servants still tries to contact the migrants, hoping to establish trust in order to organize something together after all, for example making the documentary or organizing a fundraising.

Difficulties faced

As mentioned above, the health crisis and the regulations on COVID-19, made it difficult for the project to be carried out. Gatherings could not be organized and the established contacts with the immigrants and associations could not be continued. The life conditions of the immigrants also worsened since they lost their job (if they had one) at for example restaurants or in the construction industry, they were forbidden to sleep at the places for homeless people and people offering them a place to sleep quitted this because they were afraid of the virus. The migrants thus got isolated and lost the contact with VSPV since this organization was no longer allowed to gather people. During these times, it was of course more urgent for the immigrants to fulfill their primary needs than to participate in social or creative activities.

Besides the delays due to corona and the floods as pointed out above, this project also had to deal with some other difficulties. The most important one, besides the COVID-19 regulations and the floods, was the fight for regularization being more important for the migrants than engaging in a social project like making the documentary. When the migrants get in contact with civil servants, they use this contact moment mainly to ask questions about their legal status and regularization. Their priorities were thus clearly not in engaging in a project but at managing their legal status and protesting in order to get it. The organization VSPV also organized protests and demonstrations between the lockdowns. These demonstrations were a success and a lot of Verviers' migrants engaged in this. This gave new hope to the project that it would be possible

to organize something together with the engaged migrants and associations. However, keeping the target group involved for a long period in a project like this, seemed not possible.

At some point, the civil servants had the feeling that they needed to get the project done before a certain deadline and that they needed to decide what the project would be about, together with the involved organizations, but without the immigrants themselves since they could not be reached due to the corona regulations. The civil servants felt like it was not the right process since the project was initially about empowering the migrants by letting them choose a project to work on themselves and which could enforce their skills. Because of this, the decision to stop continuing the project was made. If civil servants carry out a project themselves, it may be easier and the process is going quicker but if you want to involve a target group, they need to be engaged from the start in order to co-create the project and keep them on board for a longer term.

For the civil servants, it was also difficult to find a proper role for engaging in the project. The civil servants are part of the municipality administration and the migrants also fear the municipality in some kind of way. However, the civil servants tried to make clear that they cannot interfere in the decisions about legal documents but still, they can try to change the politicians' views of immigrants by collaborating.

Lessons learned

If this project could have been started over, a fundraising event would have been set-up, although this kind of alternative funding method was not chosen for in the beginning because individual migrants could not profit from it and there was doubt about how likely people would be to donate. However, this kind of event could have been organized between the lockdowns, when regulations were not so strict. Such an event could have been organized quicker since it does not need a long-term engagement and a lot of trust building between social workers and the migrants. The pilot projects of WPI1 on empowerment also learned that when people only have to engage once or on one day, they are more likely to be willing to participate. Instead of making a documentary, a one-day event appealing to the needs of the target group could have been a good alternative for this project. The money raised at this event could, in that way, have been invested in projects already set-up for the migrants by the involved association, for example the painting workshops, which are also enforcing their skills.

A good dynamic between the organization VSPV and the civil servants of the municipality was started because of the attempt to collaborate in this project. Although the concerned civil servants will not be working at the municipality anymore after the N-POWER project, the project may

have opened the mind of the associations and made them think about the goodwill of the municipality's social department and the possibility of collaborating with them.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Although some pilot projects tested out a more innovative alternative funding method than others, in the end, we can conclude that all projects tested out an alternative funding method in complicated circumstances due to the regulations for containing COVID-19 and the floods. More importantly, all projects managed to build a network around their project. They succeed in engaging already known partners but also in involving new stakeholders. In this engagement, the use of already existing relationships of trust was a very good starting point for involving stakeholders like businesses, social organizations and associations and its members and volunteers. Having a single point of contact where partners could reach out to was also a good practice observed in this evaluation study. Nevertheless, it was important to involve other members of the municipal administration as well in order for the project to be continued when the contact point dropped out or left the municipality.

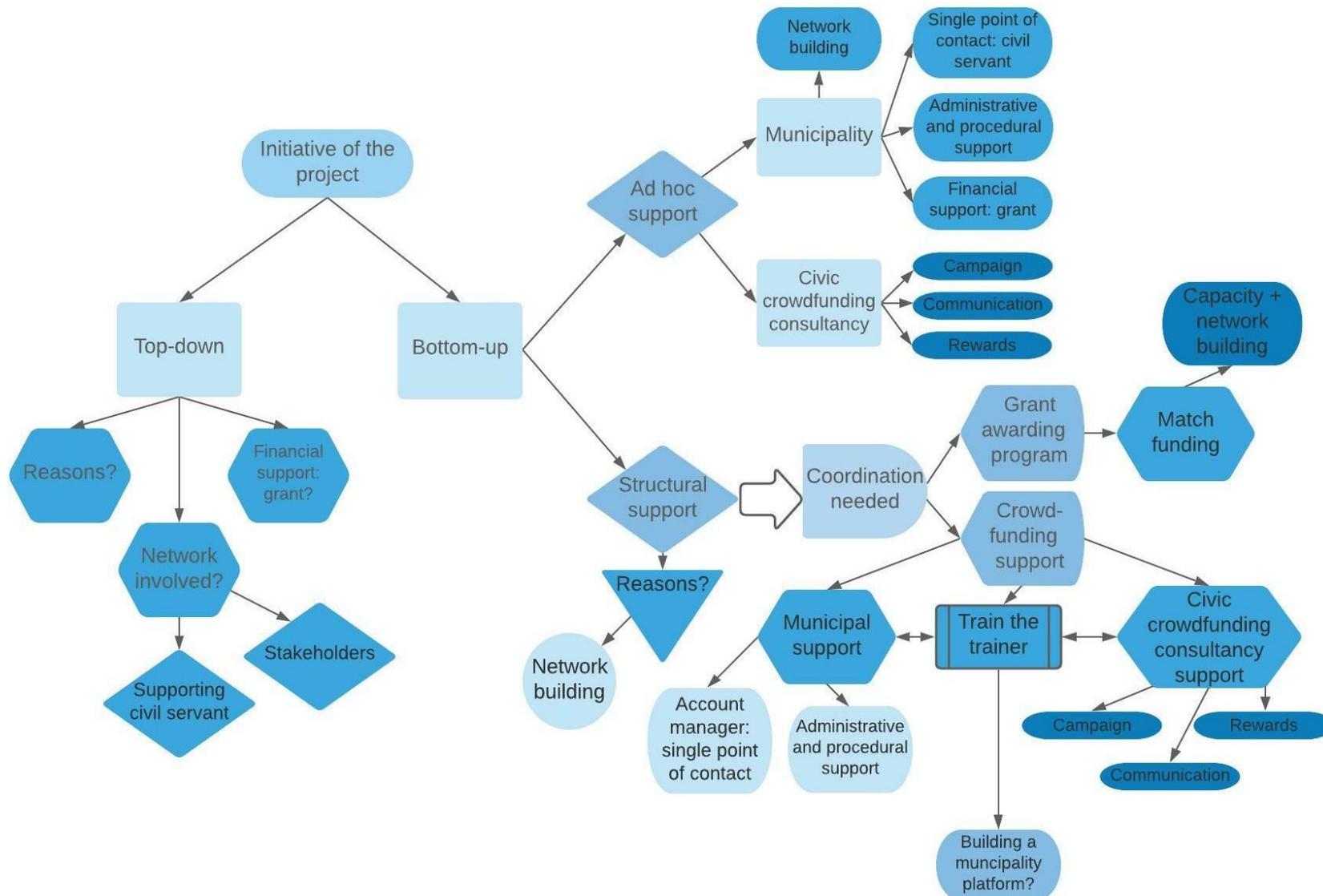
The capacity building done for these alternative funding projects was the real success of these pilot projects on alternative funding, more than the results reached (or not reached unfortunately in some projects). This network is very important for the sustainability of the projects and will allow the projects to continue after N-POWER and without the involvement of a civil servant in most cases. The long-term agreements facilitate the further collaboration between citizen and social initiatives, the volunteers, the municipality administration and the involved associations and other stakeholders. This long-term sustainability was one of the most important aims of the N-POWER project and the pilot projects on alternative funding (WPT2) contributed to fulfilling these aims by building such important networks with different stakeholders.

The fact that building networks is so important for the success and sustainability of the pilot projects, leads to a second conclusion, which is that citizen initiatives or projects do not only need money to carry out their initiative or project. The needs are more diverse than just money and include also other resources such as materials, expertise and most of all, volunteers. This is the reason why several projects were not about raising money but about engaging volunteers or building networks. In the cases where the projects were about raising money or collecting financial resources, this was not the only aim. It was also the aim to do capacity building as well and engaging the community, volunteers, the neighborhood and its inhabitants. We can thus conclude that alternative funding is not only about raising money but goes further and includes the search for materials and especially volunteers and capacity building in the community as well.

This evaluation study has thus two important conclusions: the importance of establishing a network of stakeholders for the projects and initiatives on the one hand and to not only have attention for money as needed resources but to think broader and also take the need for materials, volunteers and expertise into account on the other hand. However, it is also important to point out that this evaluation study was based on a consideration of some projects and initiatives in the preliminary phase of execution, which made it difficult to really evaluate them and make conclusions out of it. Most of the projects are still ongoing. It would thus be interesting to study them again in the future and see if other or new conclusions can be established out of them. Besides this, it is also important to know that almost all pilot projects were set-up in the context of the N-POWER project. They were thus especially developed to test out an alternative funding method and sometimes had to be 'pushed' forward by civil servants in order to get some results before the end of N-POWER. This is not the normal way of working for participatory neighborhood projects. Normally the rhythm of the citizens and their ideas and engagement is respected, resulting in a totally different dynamic. This should be considered when examining the results of this evaluation study.

On top of this, it should also be pointed out that this evaluation study is only based on questionnaires filled in by municipality officials and interviews with the project managers. In order to evaluate the pilot projects entirely and completely, site visits to observe the projects and interviews with the participants and volunteers should have been carried out as well. However, because of the limited timeframe wherein this study had to be carried out, due to the delays that the projects faced, as well as the COVID-regulations, site-visits were not possible. Involving volunteers and participants was also very difficult because they could not be reached and questioned face-to-face because of the same reasons, the COVID-regulations and the limited time. Attempts to reach them anyway were made but did not have the desired success due to the online nature of these efforts and lack of skills and motivation to participate in these online questionnaires of some participants and volunteers. It would thus be interesting to do more research as a follow-up when the projects are fully implemented and to interrogate volunteers and participants for these follow-up studies as well, since they are the target groups of the projects. This is the reason why it is very important to include their opinions in the evaluation as well.

5. Attachments: Crowdfunding scheme



Explanation of the scheme

This scheme is meant for municipalities who want to support or implement the use of civic crowdfunding in citizen projects. The aim of the scheme is to help municipalities reflect on the way they can support project initiators and how they can build a policy regarding civic crowdfunding.

Top-down initiated

The first question important to answer is whether the project is initiated in a top-down way or rather bottom-up. If it is initiated top-down and the initiative came thus from the municipality's side it is important to realize that the method of civic crowdfunding is more successful when projects are initiated bottom-up since citizens will be more motivated to carry the project and the campaign out in this way. It is thus crucial to know what the reasons were for initiating a project using civic crowdfunding in a top-down kind of way and to reflect on them.

Next to answering this question, it is especially for top-down initiated projects, important to provide support from a municipal civil servant in both administrative matters, like obtaining the necessary permits, and support for setting up the crowdfunding campaign. If desired, this crowdfunding campaign support can be outsourced to a crowdfunding platform or a crowdfunding consultancy business. Besides the municipal civil servant, there should be thought about what other partners and stakeholders can be involved and engaged in the project in order to build a network around the project and its initiators. When initiated top-down, it is also important to think about awarding a grant from the municipality. If volunteers are found to carry out the project, they will do their best in setting up a crowdfunding campaign, but this may, of course, be compensated financially for the project, especially if the project idea came from the municipality and was initiated by them.

Bottom-up initiated

When the project is initiated bottom-up and the idea came from citizens themselves, it is important for the municipality to think about whether they will support the project on an ad hoc basis or they want to implement a structural support for civic crowdfunding in their policy.

Ad hoc support

When an ad hoc type of support is chosen, the same elements as for the top-down projects are crucial to consider. Of course, a municipal civil servant will have to support the project, for the administrative matters and for the crowdfunding campaign (possibly by referring them to a crowdfunding service or consultant). Ideally, this support should come from a single civil servant who acts as a single point of contact. For the bottom-up projects it is also important to think about which partners and stakeholders can be involved to create a network around the project. This is something the municipal civil servant can or should support in as well. Finally, it is also important to explore the possibilities to award a grant to the project in order to support it. Since there will also be carried out a civic crowdfunding campaign, this grant can be awarded by using match funding. This means that the project initiators run a campaign wherein they try to collect a certain amount of money and if they succeed, the municipality matches this collected budget with a grant. This can, for example, double the budget raised with the crowdfunding campaign.

Structural support

When the municipality chooses to provide structural support, this will be beneficial for the capacity building of the projects, since this is one of the strengths of the method of civic crowdfunding. However, it is important to coordinate this structural support with grant awarding programs already in charge in the municipality or on the regional or national level. If there are extensive grant awarding programs, it is not so useful for the municipality to intensively support civic crowdfunding since citizens will be more likely to apply for a grant as this is way easier than running a civic crowdfunding campaign. In this case, the solution of providing grants as match funding could be structurally implemented. If citizens have a project idea and want to apply for a grant in order to realize it, the municipality can tell them run a crowdfunding campaign and if they succeed in collecting the proposed budget, the municipality can allocate a grant to the project. In this way, the municipality can also check if there is sufficient support for the project in the community. If citizens donate for a project, it can be assumed they support it. On top of this, running a crowdfunding campaign is also a way to do capacity building and to

reach and engage possible participants, visitors and even volunteers, which is also in favor of the project and its sustainability. However, not all citizens will be able to run a crowdfunding campaign. Because of this, the option to just apply for a (minor) grant should be kept open for some cases.

The structural support should contain both support from the municipality (ideally represented by one civil servant as a single point of contact) for all administrative matters necessary for carrying out the project and support for the crowdfunding campaign itself, including support for the communication timing and for developing the rewards. For the latter, the municipality can decide to structurally collaborate with a civic crowdfunding platform or consultancy provider and establish a long-term agreement in order for the municipality to outsource the crowdfunding support to specialists. However, if civic crowdfunding turns out to be very successful in the municipality and is often used by citizens, they can consider to implement a train the trainer approach and let all the civil servants involved in civic crowdfunding projects follow a program to become a crowdfunding expert. On top of this, a municipality can also consider leasing a platform whereon all projects from the municipality can be gathered.