



CIRCUIT: TOWARDS A CIRCULAR ECOSYSTEM FOR THE TRANSITION OF CONSUMPTION PRACTICES

ANTWERP CIRCULAR SOUTH

1st Zoom-In, March 2019

By Marcelline Bonneau



CIRCUIT: TOWARDS A CIRCULAR ECOSYSTEM FOR THE TRANSITION OF CONSUMPTION PRACTICES

KEY LANDMARKS



OBJECTIVES



ACTIVITIES



CHALLENGES



SUCSESSES



NEXT STEPS



KEY LANDMARKS

THE UIA ANTWERP CIRCULAR SOUTH PROJECT

The Antwerp Circular South project positions circularity as a community challenge for the New South district (a newly created district in Antwerp) and to engage its new residents in co-creating online and offline initiatives to change their consumption behaviours. A number of advanced technical solutions covering different resource streams (energy, water and waste) will be tested. 200 Circular South inhabitants will experiment with the so-called 'behavioural nudging', receiving cues to adapt their consumption behaviour of energy, water and waste in the most ideal circular way. Circular behaviours will be automatically rewarded by an alternative online currency, the Circular coin, through a blockchain-based reward and exchange system. A part of the most engaged Circular South participants will form a local Energy Cooperative sharing an innovative collective energy system. The project will finally deliver a community platform (both technological and social) in which future circular economy initiatives can be integrated after the project.

For the purpose to host a number of initiatives related to sharing, repairing and reusing activities, a Circular South Community Centre, so-called CIRCUIT, was set up.

STAKEHOLDERS

- De Kringwinkel is responsible for CIRCUIT
- The City of Antwerp coordinates the UIA Antwerp Circular South Project
- The other project's partners are: Vito/EnergyVille; Digipolis; Imec; Pantopicon; EnergieID; Ecopower
- The Real Estate Developer is Triple Living
- PleinPubliek (a local event organiser) hosts CIRCUIT
- Domitys (a residence service) hosts some of the project's activities in the district's centre.



ANTWERP NEW SOUTH



Part of the district still under construction as of 31st March 2019

Part of the district already built on 31st March 2019

OBJECTIVES

SOCIAL AND SOLIDARY ECONOMY

De Kringwinkel, in charge of CIRCUIT, is a professional reinsertion NGO. It works with 450 people, out of which 370 are far from the labour market (redirected from the unemployment agency, with some psychiatric backgrounds or ex-prisoners). The NGO sorts and repairs material collected from consumers in public bins, from donations at the site and collection from the public waste agency (OVAM). The beneficiaries are trained to reintegrate the labour market with adequate skills. Revenue is generated from the sale of repaired material and objects and donation from citizens.



CIRCULAR ECONOMY

In 2018, De Kringwinkel collected 10 000 tons of material - 2 500 tons of electronics and 7 500 tons of household goods and clothing - out of which 50% could be sold. CIRCUIT shows that citizens can make something out of what they usually give away. It seeks to raise awareness as well as concretely change consumption practices.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CIRCUIT is the visible and static part of Antwerp Circular South. It engages with citizens through co-creating and delivering activities, while creating bonds between them in this new neighbourhood. Debates, workshops, vintage markets are all occasion for residents to meet, learn and exchange.



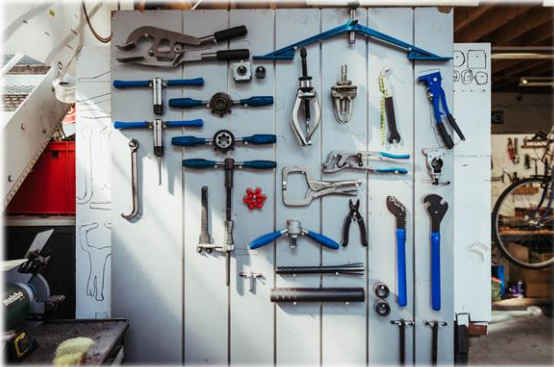
CULTURE

CIRCUIT is a place where people feel comfortable and want to be. It engages residents via culture so that they live an experience that will change their behaviour. CIRCUIT partners with PleinPubliek for organising events (e.g. concert, parties, ...) with local residents.



ACTIVITIES

Leasing tools, devices and household appliances



Open two afternoons per week, 1 Friday and 1 Sunday per month

RESULTS: 3 participants have leased tools so far.

Weekly repair service for bikes, clothing and electronics



Open two afternoons per week, 1 Friday and 1 Sunday per month

RESULTS: 100 participants so far. On weekly basis 7 bikes are repaired (7x13, 15kg), 2 electric devices (2x3, 4kg). Total amount of 2083kg since the launch of CIRCUIT (leasing of materials not included). Average of 8,9 kg/person.

Monthly workshops: bike and clothing repair



Every first Monday of the month

RESULTS: 15 participants for the first one.

ACTIVITIES

Workshop room where residents can fix their products



Workshops by designers, craftsmen (cloth and bike repair) organised on two afternoons per week, 1 Friday and 1 Sunday per month

RESULTS: 120 participants.

Cultural evenings (e.g. purchasing power debate series)



4 evenings exploring policy and practice on 4 sustainable themes: behaviour, travel, supermarket, energy

RESULTS: 400 participants.

Study visits for schools and companies



International makers exchange, Study visit #1 De Markgraeve, Study visit #2 Ecolife

RESULTS: 42 visitors, half of them were students.

CHALLENGES

From building 14 to building 20

Due to a change in the district's development plans, CIRCUIT had to be relocated from the originally planned building 14, in the centre of the district and built at the beginning of the project, to building 20 which will only be finalised at the end of the UIA project, while delaying the full potential for experimentation of CIRCUIT in real-life situation.

The need for a temporary location

CIRCUIT was relocated in the meantime in the container-built premises of an event organizer, PleinPubliek. The location is at the outskirts of the district centre which prevents residents to pass by "by chance". It also prevents residents to come for late workshops. PleinPubliek's events are organized mostly in the evening with guests from all over the city, as such CIRCUIT can benefit from this visitors' stream only to a limited extent.

From piloting to experimenting

The planned area in building 20 will be 1350 m². Yet, the space at PleinPubliek is composed of only 100m²: it does not enable experimenting the CIRCUIT project to its full potential, i.e. with spaces dedicated to catering, shared workspaces, fixed workshops, cultural space, and shops. CIRCUIT needs to adopt a form of "proxy", simulations and to carry out activities outside of its physical location, e.g. at Domitys in the district centre.

Constant readjustments

Working with partners which are outside the UIA partnership, Triple Living and PleinPubliek, is a necessity to ensure anchorage in the neighbourhood. Yet, it forces the team of CIRCUIT to get adjusted to different priorities and agenda without any control of it. It makes the team seeking to move away from stress and worry but looking constantly for creative readjustments.



Adjusted human resources

Due to the lack of experience of De Kringwinkel in applying for projects such as the UIA – with a large partnership and funding – the initial plans of the project were overoptimistic in terms of human resources needed. It appeared that De Kringwinkel had to invest some of its own human resources to ensure that the project would be adequately implemented.

The need to diversify financial resources

De Kringwinkel was also overoptimistic with regards to the revenues generated from its activities in the project, which would in turn have supported the development of a viable Business Model. As more human resources are needed than originally foreseen and less revenue is available, CIRCUIT is seeking to diversify its funding sources. It has for example received a funding for the development of a local radio on circular economy.

SUCCESSSES

A new trend

De Kringwinkel is seen by some as "old-fashioned". As such, CIRCUIT has developed its own independent branding, separate from that of De Kringwinkel: it enable to "engage with new people, new concepts and new ideas, and for CIRCUIT to become trendy", explained Frank Dingemans, Director of CIRCUIT, "this is part of a new trend we want to be part of". Trendiness is also the backbone of the cultural life experience of PleinPubliek: as CIRCUIT is hosted at its premises, it hopes to leverage on its visibility and activities to make circular economy even trendier.



Addressing a real need

The interest in CIRCUIT exists and is growing. It appears to be fulfilling a need that apparently many people felt: "For a large section of the population, linear economic thinking does not feel right anymore. Especially now that 'climate' is top-of-the-list with many. The idea that Circuit provides an alternative to consumer society in the form of repair or second-hand use has been well received! The circular message we expound is inspiring for visitors from all over Antwerp. We regularly receive requests from schools and companies and are currently working on a strong customized package to embed the idea of the circular economy as broadly as possible in the community. The Koopkracht Debatten evenings were a good example of this!", expressed Katrien Van Den Bleeken, Project Manager at CIRCUIT, referring to consumption and sustainability to four debates organized to exchange on the relationship between consumption practices and sustainability.

Strengthening the local community

In addition, CIRCUIT organised a workshop to co-create the activities and services that CIRCUIT could provide. They wanted to exchange on what CIRCUIT is offering that can be of use and what services CIRCUIT could offer. It appeared for example that people wanted not only to rent machines but their workforce as well. Via CIRCUIT's activities, experiences are exchanged, while services and other connections are set up between residents. The co-creation of CIRCUIT's activities with residents has also increased the link between citizens.

Collaboration with the City

One major lesson learnt is that De Kringwinkel and the City of Antwerp came to understand each other (vocabulary, way of working). De Kringwinkel combines its grassroots and creative experience on the ground with the administrative and strategic capacities of the City of Antwerp. They made their activities complementary and worked together on identifying new financial inputs for the buyout of the Building 20. They are also collaborating closely on the design of the financial and contractual agreement between the Real Estate Developer and De Kringwinkel.

LESSONS & KEY ASSETS

PLANNING THE NEW CIRCUIT

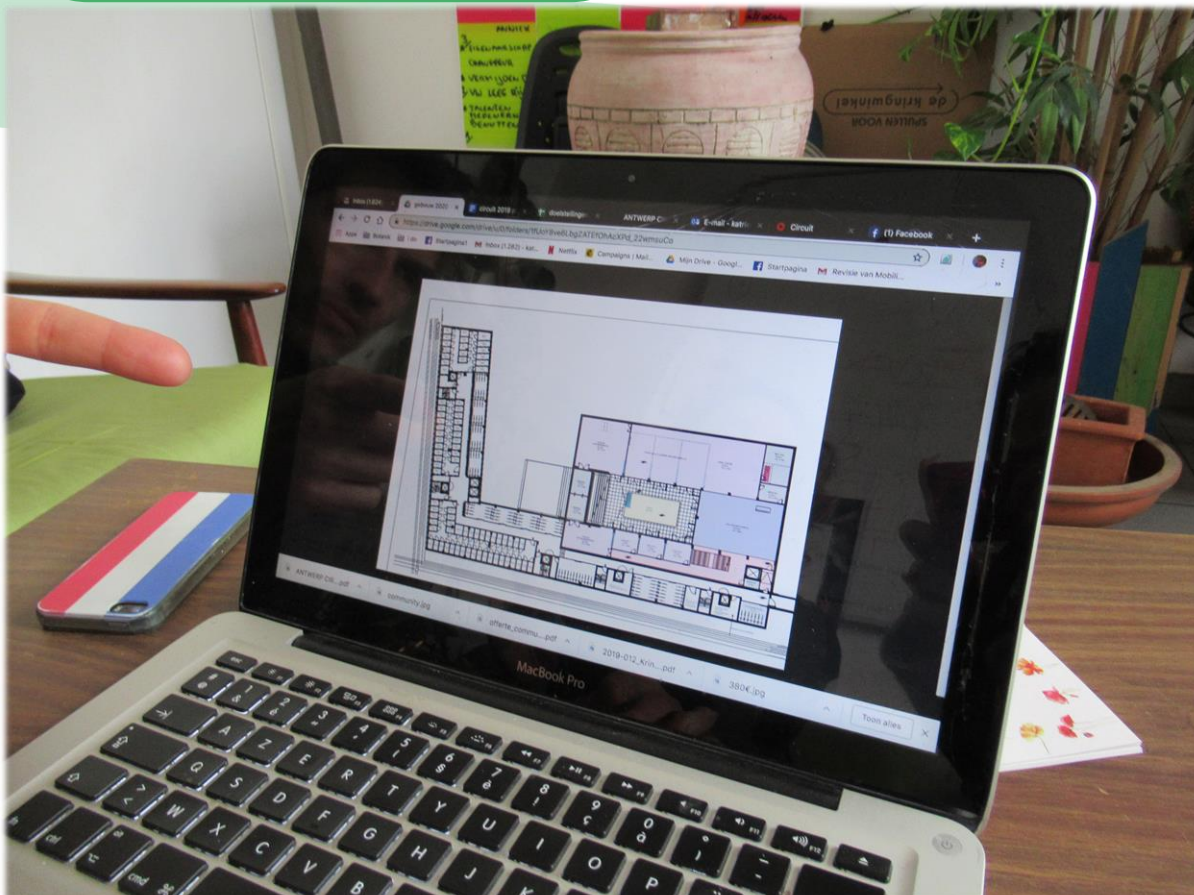
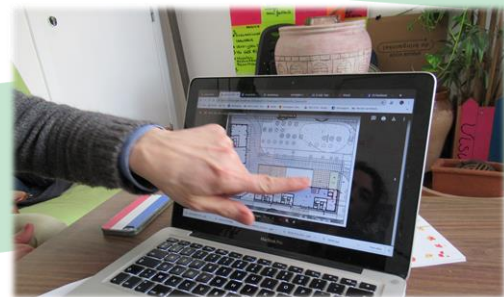
In order to be successful, centres such as CIRCUIT need to be envisioning the long term. As such, the financial and contractual agreement between CIRCUIT and Triple Living CIRCUIT is for 50-years.

TOWARDS A CIRCULAR ECOSYSTEM

CIRCUIT will offer an overall experience for both the visitors and its residents: a terrace and a playground, workshops, and a social restaurant will compose the groundfloor, whereas the basement, will be the location of a wood workshop, shared workplaces and a cultural centre. Social and commercial activities will get the opportunity to be linked up to each other by their physical and thematic proximity.

A SUSTAINABLE FINANCIAL MODEL

CIRCUIT is reflecting upon its financial model to make it viable at the same time as to engage all its members and partners and to serve as a model for the rest of De Kringwinkel and for society. De Kringwinkel is an NGO, with a Management Board, employees and beneficiaries, focusing on offer and demand. CIRCUIT wishes to test the form of a cooperative whereby all its members (visitors as well as entrepreneurs) will be participating on an equal basis in the governance and (financial and ethical) success of the project.



CIRCUIT: TOWARDS A CIRCULAR ECOSYSTEM FOR THE TRANSITION OF CONSUMPTION PRACTICES

This Zoom-In is a deliverable of the UIA Expert of the ANTWERP CIRCULAR SOUTH project.

It was published in March 2019 on the basis of interviews with Katrien Van Den Bleeken and Frank Dingemans, responsible for CIRCUIT at De Kringwinkel, as well as with Gabriëlle Van Zoeren and Maud Coppentrath from the City of Antwerp.

The pictures are credited to CIRCUIT, Yoshi Claessens and Marcelline Bonneau.

