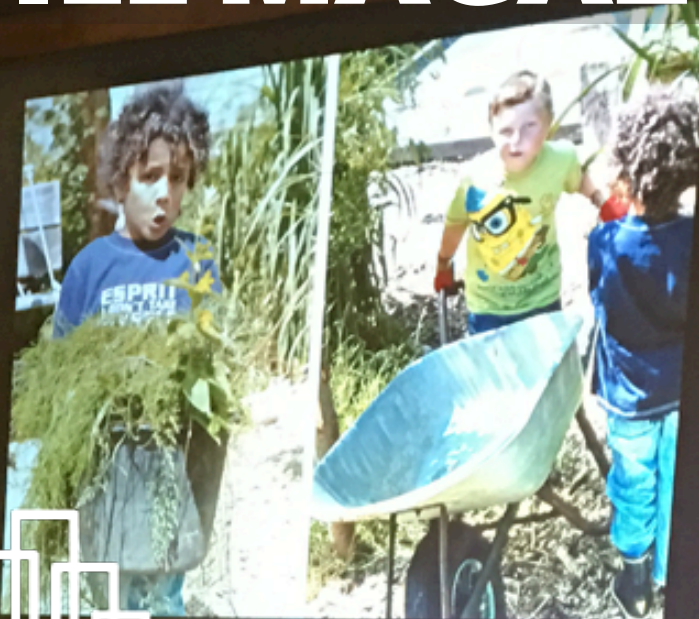


# REFILL MAGAZINE #1

February 2017



# refill

TEMPORARY USE • DYNAMICS FOR LIFE

## FITTING TEMPORARY USE IN THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK



European Union  
European Regional  
Development Fund







Hemelingen workshop, Bremen (Germany).  
Photo by IZZ.

Cover Picture:  
Discussing and assessing social value of temporary use initiatives within URBACT Local  
Group in Amersfoort (Netherlands).  
Photo by Strategic Design Scenarios.

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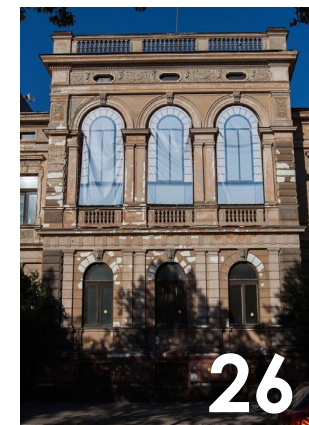
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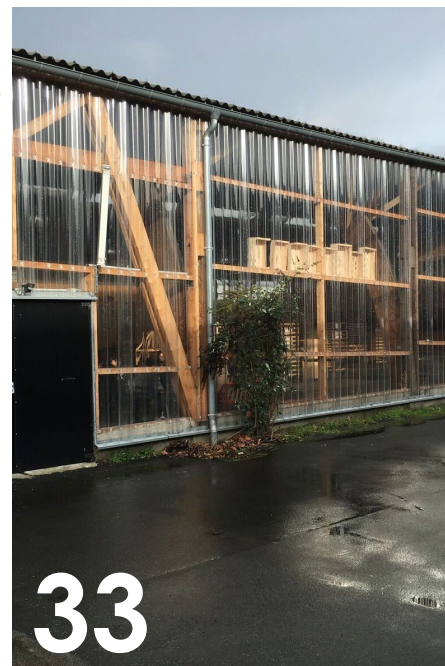


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# THE FIRST STEPS OF THE PATHWAY TO TEMPORARY USE

By François Jégou, Strategic Design Scenarios

The URBACT REFILL thematic network gathers cities that acknowledged the challenge of empty buildings and unused land in the urban fabric. They recognized also temporary use of these vacant places as a fruitful strategy to turn this challenge into a positive asset with multiple benefits from maintaining buildings in better condition, accommodating social cultural and economic initiatives in the city to revitalizing neglected neighbourhoods, intensifying the use of built urban environment and contributing to a fairer and more sustainable city.

But beforehand, cities have to start dealing with these issues. City administrations have to recognize the importance of vacancy in their cities. Stakeholders have to familiarize with the practice of temporary use and its positive mechanisms. Civil servants have to make temporary use actionable and city leaders have to support and promote its development. This first issue of REFILL thematic magazine is therefore to describe the first steps for cities to follow towards temporary use.

## MAPPING AND INSPIRING

The first step is to give pieces of evidence that building vacancy and temporary use potential represents an important challenge for a city. In their article on Why to map emptiness? Irina Mikelsons from the municipality of Riga and Marcis Rubenis from the Free Riga NGO discuss the various entry points to raise awareness on the subject. How can cities find the right mix between getting pieces of evidence and quantitative data of vacancy in the city and raising stakeholders enthusiasm on temporary use, between promoting online contributive mapping tools

and liaising with activists' or artistic movements on vacancy, between stimulating the generation of temporary use ideas at large and focussing on need areas such as accommodating citizens' initiatives or finding plots for growing food? A palette of inspiring examples is presented in detail ranging from the German Vacancy detector shared web platform used in Bremen or the on-line Mapping of Urban Agriculture in Amersfoort to urban activists' Occupy Me sticker campaign all over the city of Riga or the Speleo artistic walk-shop mapping vacant buildings in the Omonoia area in Athens.

Finally, the example of Helsinki experimenting with open data suggests an investigation of temporary use at a strategic level. Maija Bergström and Jenni Niemiahö from Forum Virium Helsinki discuss how the combination of geolocalized datasets could help mapping vacancy in the city and especially, how a refined understanding of micro-local socio-economical data could orient evidence-based temporary use policy making at neighbourhood scale.

## FITTING AND TWISTING THE LAW

The second step is to find the space for temporary use within the current administrative structure and the legal framework. Starting from the analysis of different tools supporting temporary use in the cities of Ghent, Bremen and Riga, Oliver Hasemann and Daniel Schnier, from the ZZZ Agency in Bremen, advocate to use all opportunities of the existing local regulation framework is giving to make temporary use possible. To mainstream the temporary use practice, city leaders and their administrations need to "legally twist" the law, making exceptions on legal lev-

el to enable more temporary use experiences, watching to limit the "twist" to the benefits of temporary use and not of real estate business as usual. Building on the success of these experiences it is then possible to adapt the legal framework to temporary use needs at local levels.

## COPING WITH REGULATIONS

The third step in the pathway to temporary use is to cope with building regulation: in the absence of specific legal framework the technical requirements, security standards, public access rules, etc. of normal construction is applying making temporary use economically unsustainable. Everybody says "don't" claim Boris Meggiorin and Elena Eizaguirre from SAMOA development agency in Nantes and Miruna Draghia from Urbasofia, the urban planning agency working for Cluj-Napoca. They share their experiences of negotiating with all stakeholders from building security control to insurance companies, fire fighters, etc. in order to assess the risks in each specific temporary use project, to justify the application of a different regulation for a

REFILL case studies exhibition during the transnational meeting in Ghent (Belgium).  
Photo by Strategic Design Scenarios.





temporary uses and to find the balance between the different parties and to build the consensus among the regulations, the expected impacts and the risks.

### TRANSPARENCY AND SOCIETAL VALUES

The last step of the pathway to temporary use discussed here is the more ethical concern: how can cities deliberate democratically between social, environmental and economic benefits around temporary use and property economic value? Properties in urbanized environments represent generally high economic values. Temporary periods of vacancy may be opportunities to accommodate economically weak initiatives but sooner or later the real estate market reclaims profit and temporary users are pressed to leave the place. In order to inform political decision-making, Amersfoort municipality developed a tentative Decision tree built on the idea of assessing the value of temporary use initiatives against political priorities democratically decided by the elected representatives of the city. Anne de Feijter, Arno Goossens, Els van Kooten and Marc van Leemt, from the city of Amersfoort, in their Expedition Refill in search of a decision tree discuss the issue at political/philosophical level: what does it mean for a municipality to be transparent about decisions taken on temporary use? Should it develop an instrument to assess the societal value of temporary use initiatives? Is it advisable to measure this societal value and to compare it against the potential societal value relating to the economic benefit of selling the property? Etc. They also investigate practical issues: which procedures are used to assess the societal value of a tempo-

rary use project (i.e. for validating a temporary use; for the attribution of subsidies; etc.)? Can we design a simple tool that would at the same time inform decision making and enhance the transparency? Etc.

### IN A NUTSHELL

Last but not least, a word on the form of this thematic magazine: why designing a magazine where everybody expect a classical report? Reports have the unfortunate tendency to finish quickly their lives in forgotten drawers. Reports are also mainly read by reports-readers and don't reach broader audiences. Finally reports tend to assume that communication is mainly based on written linear language contrasting with nowadays explosion of interactive visual information. This thematic magazine is a tentative chimera, an attempt to turn upside-down reports' contradictions listed above: it is a temporary media that may last longer than a magazine. It is welcoming and addressing a large range of readers including reports-readers. It focuses on a thematic issue like a magazine special edition offering multiple entry points, technical content, lessons learned, insights for cities but also stories, testimonies, experiences and pictures to flip through!

We hope you will enjoy it. And if you do, don't spare your pleasure, as we will publish 6 such thematic magazines along the REFILL project!

*REFILL preparation phase city visits  
in Ghent (Belgium).*

*Photo by Ariana Tabaku and Emma Tytgadt.*



# HOW CAN CITIES MAP THE POTENTIAL OF VACANCY AND TEMPORARY USE OFFER?

*Speleo, Omonoia, Athens (Greece).  
Photo by Strategic Design Scenarios.*



# Why mapping emptiness?

By Irina Mikelsons, City of Riga (Latvia) & Marcis Rubenis, Free Riga (Latvia)

An issue that is not visible cannot be worked with and tackled. This is especially true with vacant buildings. It can often be that there is a considerable number of vacant buildings in the city, however, without “a bird’s” overview of the situation, the true scale, impact and potential of temporary use of vacancy is as if invisible. Is your city in need for more affordable housing, work or public spaces? Or is vacancy and degradation of buildings an issue not addressed enough? Mapping or visualization of vacancy is the first step to make the challenge visible and frame temporary use of vacancy as a possible solution for revitalization, socialization and maintenance of the vacant buildings. This synthesis walks you through, firstly, questions that we have found to be relevant in order to find the right approach to mapping vacancy and, secondly, through mapping cases studies from partner cities of REFILL.

From the experience of REFILL cities and other cases known to us, we can observe that a city goes through three stages in mapping vacancy: firstly,

to collect data on vacancy; secondly, to engage the public in order to gather ideas or needs or to raise awareness of vacancy; and, thirdly, to facilitate connections for mediating temporary use.

## Why mapping?

To start with, mapping might be necessary when vacancy is not visible and there is not enough information to understand its impact on the city. Such was the contribution of three online collaborative mapping tools: the Leerstandsmelder in Bremen<sup>1</sup> (Germany), in Riga<sup>2</sup> (Latvia) and Prazdne Domy<sup>3</sup> for the whole territory of Czech Republic. In all these cases, any user could submit a report about a vacant building and thus help to source a fuller overview of vacancy in each city. These tools focus on making it easy for a user to submit report of vacancy. Then, when knowledge about vacancy is there, but there is a need to better engage the public to find out ideas, sourcing the existing knowledge and raising the support for dealing with vacancy, other, more engaging

approaches of mapping should be used. Such is the case of the Speleo workshops and walking tours to map, raise awareness and discuss vacancy in a specific area of Athens (Greece); provocative “Occupy Me” stickers campaign to engage broader public in marking empty buildings in Riga (Latvia); as well as use of Maptionnaire online map<sup>4</sup> based survey tool in Helsinki (Finland), which helped the city to source information from citizens about what kind of public spaces instead of vacancy they want to see in their neighbourhoods. All these tools are more engaging and thus require deeper participation from the users. As such there is a tendency for a fewer number of people to use them. However, their impact can be essential in raising awareness and, perhaps, also gaining media attention and gathering larger support group for launching next initiatives.

The last stage is when a city is looking for active ways to facilitate connections between available vacant spaces and initiatives. For example, Helsinki is experimenting with combining open data on vacant municipality owned property and space reservation system (See article “Open data for temporary uses” in this magazine). This system has already enabled 8 000 reservations of municipal property.

Amersfoort engaged in matchmaking initiative, by creating an online map<sup>5</sup> - combining information on existing and planned sustainable food initiatives in city with city properties that are or could be possibly used by such initiatives. Meanwhile Groningen Municipality has created an online platform<sup>6</sup> called RUIIMTE in STAD which consists of mapping municipal and private properties and land available for temporary use, as well as accepting initiative submission from prospective users.

## How to map? Online or offline, formal or informal, presentation or collaborative.

Another choice for a city is to choose between online mapping or offline mapping. “Offline” mapping activities can be a deeply engaging pro-

cess that is catching citizens’ imagination and raising awareness on the issue in the way that purely online campaign could not.

This is demonstrated by Riga case with “Occupy Me” stickers when 5000 stickers quickly found their way from people’s hands to empty houses and public discussions, the same way as Athens’ case of Speleo workshops and walk-shops to identify and exchange stories on unoccupied buildings. Besides, offline activities in the experience of Riga are a good way to draw new participants to join the initial interest group, as well as

**“Any user could submit a report and source an overview of vacancy in each city”**

kick start public discussions and set the conditions for starting online mapping. However, for a municipality to consider such activities, it’s important to see that such stick-

er actions or workshops require some degree of informality, grass-roots spirit and network of organizers. Look for architects or activist groups, who are eager to contribute to the topic of vacancy and temporary use, as well as are ready to experiment with activities that might not always be strictly legal, but are likely to be more resonant, like in the case of “Occupy Me” stickers. Online mapping, on the other hand, as showcased especially by the Bremen online collaborative vacancy mapping platform case, has the potential to reach much larger audiences, with a precondition that the topic is already on the public agenda and that people understand its importance. Some benefits of online mapping are that it can deliver results for an extended period of time, produce quality data providing overview of the vacancy situation in whole city, as well as engage possibly more diverse and harder-to-reach groups of citizens.

When considering mapping vacancy it is also essential to explore levels of interaction and engagement. In some cases, a municipality would choose to make a pure presentation solution, like Amersfoort urban agriculture map, while in other cases collaborative solutions might provide valuable additional knowledge about vacant properties like in case of Bremen’s Leerstandsmelder where people can not only submit vacancy reports, but also add comments about every report.





## What to map? General vacancy, topic related vacancy or needs of society.

Mapping all types of vacant buildings is a good first step for a city to raise awareness on the scope of the problem and gain data to act upon. Mapping topic-related vacancy, on the other hand, is a way to focus on a specific issue related to vacancy and to start connecting people around this topic for a specific solution. Such was the case of Amersfoort where the city focused on mapping sustainable food spaces and initiatives to raise awareness of the need for more sustainable food in the city, or the case of Helsinki's maptionnaire where the municipality mapped citizens' needs for shared work, hobby or leisure spaces in Helsinki to serve as an indicator for the municipality for citizen needs regarding planning process.

**“Give more meaning to the map, inspires action and gives additional perspectives on vacancy”**

If a primary layer of data is the basis for any map or visualization, then a secondary layer of data is important to give more meaning to the map, inspires action and gives additional perspectives on vacancy. For example, Groningen with RUIMTE in STAD initiative mapped not only available vacant buildings and their possible temporary use time, but also showcased the already successful temporary use projects. In the case of the online mapping in Riga, not only vacant buildings were mapped, but also ownership groups like public, bank or privately owned properties were represented and highlighted with different colour pins on the map.

### IN A NUTSHELL

Mapping is a key element in raising awareness and connecting people around the topic of vacancy. It is showcasing both the problems and potentials coming from vacancy and should be considered as one of the first steps for any municipality who wants to start addressing this issue. Before designing a mapping tool or campaign it is impor-

tant for a municipality to explore its aims or the “whys” for mapping like data gathering, engagement or matchmaking; the forms or the “hows” of mapping like online, offline, formal or informal and presentation or collaborative tools; as well as the object or “what’s” of mapping like general vacancy, specific topic related vacancy or needs and ideas of citizens.

<sup>1</sup> [www.leerstandsmelder.de](http://www.leerstandsmelder.de)

<sup>2</sup> Free Riga website is currently offline

<sup>3</sup> [www.prazdnedomy.cz](http://www.prazdnedomy.cz)

<sup>4</sup> [www.maptionnaire.com/fi/1095/](http://www.maptionnaire.com/fi/1095/)

<sup>5</sup> [www.amersfoort-in-beeld.nl/#14](http://www.amersfoort-in-beeld.nl/#14)

<sup>6</sup> [www.ruimteinstad.nl](http://www.ruimteinstad.nl)

## Insights for cities

**1.** Don't save time on understanding “why?” questions and setting appropriate aim for your project. What is the reason you need mapping or visualizing vacancy for? What is the challenge your city faces with vacancy? Is it needed for data gathering to understand the issue or is it a necessity for raising awareness and engaging? Or is it the need to foster matchmaking for resolution of the problem?

**2.** Select the appropriate tools to reach the aim of the project: online or offline mapping, presentation or collaborative, more formal and official or informal and perhaps engaging.

**3.** Identify what type of data has to be mapped. Is it appropriate for your aim to map general vacancy, specific type of vacancy or citizens opinions and ideas? After identifying the type of primary data to be mapped, find the secondary layer of data that gives more meaning, interpretation and different perspectives on the primary data. See if your data tells a good and a focused story.



Vacant warehouse in Riga (Latvia).  
Photo by Strategic Design Scenarios.





# Mapping urban agriculture

## A website with possible locations for future initiatives

By Anne de Feijter, City of Amersfoort (Netherlands)

*"We have found a perfect location for our new initiative: 'Gardens of Connection'!", Volunteer Arjan.*

The Urban Agriculture Map<sup>1</sup> is an instrument that plays a role in the matchmaking between new initiatives and available locations in the city. It is a way to map the potential of vacancy and temporary use offer.

Amersfoort is a city in the Netherlands with 155 000 inhabitants. It was part of the URBACT II project 'Sustainable Food in Urban Communities'<sup>2</sup>. Together with local stakeholders (farmers, restaurant owners, distributors, etc.) the city administration made a Local Action Plan<sup>3</sup>. In this plan developed jointly, one of the actions for the city administration was to develop an urban agriculture map to encourage the development of sustainable food projects. It has been functioning since May 2014 and it has already helped several new initiatives to find a place where to start.

This map gives an overview of existing locations: allotments, urban farms, school gardens and community gardens. Besides that, the map also shows possible locations for future initiatives in the city. The map is being used to make matches between new initiatives (demand) and possible locations in the city (supply). The possible locations are owned by the city administration. Three different departments within the administration worked together in selecting 17 possible locations in the city that are owned by municipality. Vacant lots that are owned privately are currently not on the map.

Urban farming often does not fit into the green zoning of the planning regulations. If necessary, the city administration makes it possible with a temporary environmental permit for up to 10 years. This procedure takes eight weeks and costs €1250. For a simple neighbourhood garden that can count on support in the neighbourhood, a self-management agreement will often do. This is free of charges and takes less time.

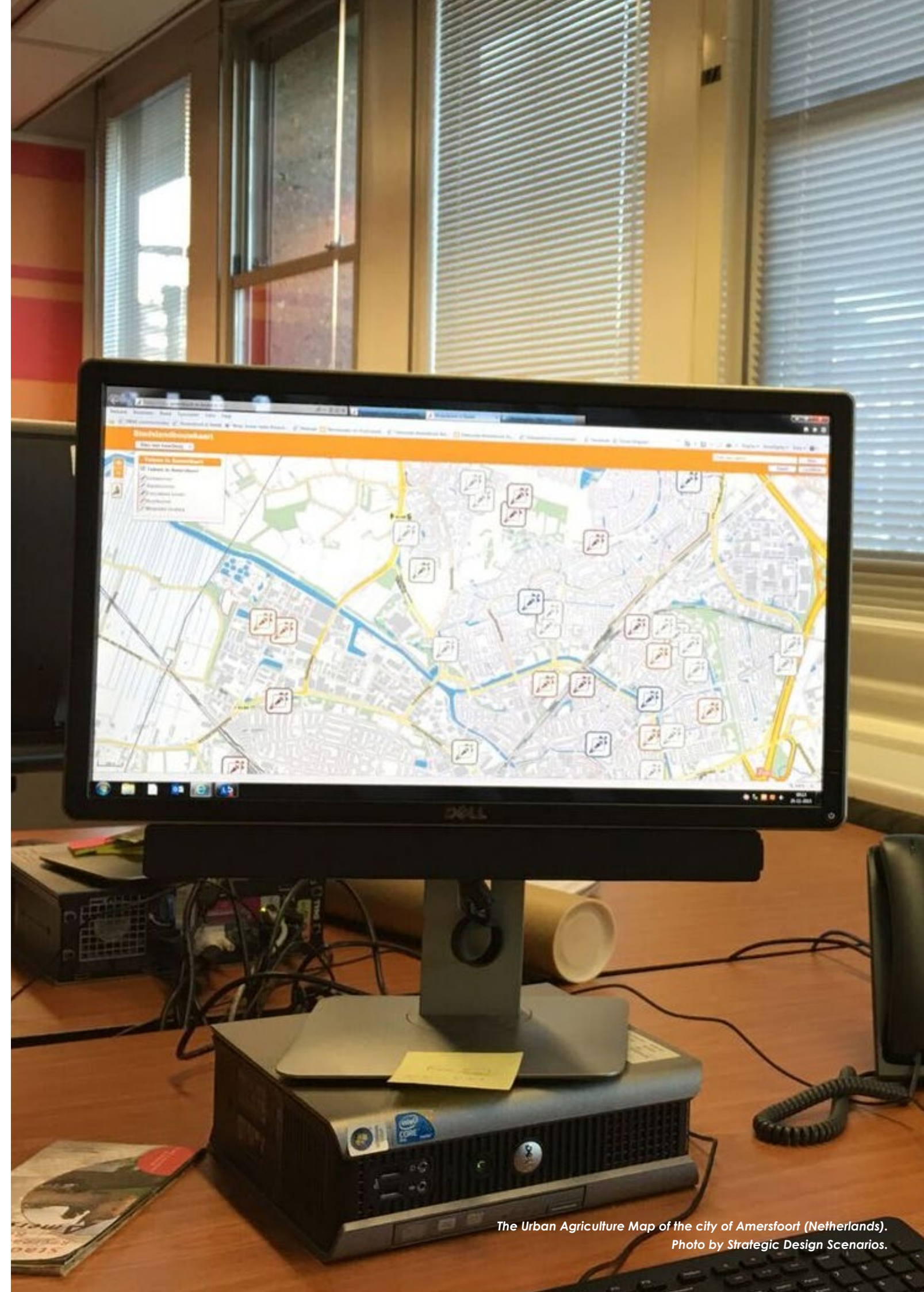
The Urban Agriculture Map of Amersfoort has proven to be a useful instrument for internal use. It has strengthened the collaboration between the Departments of Sustainability and Environment of Urban Planning and of Urban Maintenance within the administration. It is being used by civil servants when new initiatives ask for help in finding a right location for their new project. Yet, the map has not been necessarily widely promoted to the general public. When it was launched it was in the newspaper once. It is a way to show the willingness of the municipality to support new initiatives of urban agriculture, community gardens and sustainable food.

A map can be a useful instrument for a city administration to support initiatives in their search of a place to start their project. It also helps the city administration to adjust to the role of 'matchmaker' (broker), without taking over the initiative.

<sup>1</sup> [www.amersfoort-in-beeld.nl/#14](http://www.amersfoort-in-beeld.nl/#14)

<sup>2</sup> [www.urbact.eu/sustainable-food-urban-communities](http://www.urbact.eu/sustainable-food-urban-communities)

<sup>3</sup> [www.sustainable-everyday-project.net/urbact-sustainable-food/download/5945/](http://www.sustainable-everyday-project.net/urbact-sustainable-food/download/5945/)



The Urban Agriculture Map of the city of Amersfoort (Netherlands).  
Photo by Strategic Design Scenarios.





# The Online Vacancy Detector

An online collaborative vacancy mapping platform adapted to Bremen (Germany)

By Oliver Hasemann & Daniel Schnier, ZZZ, (Germany)

The vacancy detector<sup>1</sup>, Leerstandsmelder, is a private initiative, which has been launched in Hamburg in 2010. The Bremen section of Leerstandsmelder<sup>2</sup> was launched in February 2012. It is a Europe-wide platform, which enables registered users to map vacant spaces and vacant buildings. Each city in Leerstandsmelder has a separate subdomain and a city profile, which shows an overview of the vacancy in the city. It is used especially by activists, who want to map the whole vacancy as a statement for getting those spaces in better use. It is used by initiatives which are seeking a space for their ideas or entrepreneurs for their shops. Finally, it is used by the administration, even though it is not a 100% correct tool, as it relies on individual contributions.

Vacancy report can be filled in by any registered users directly and easily.

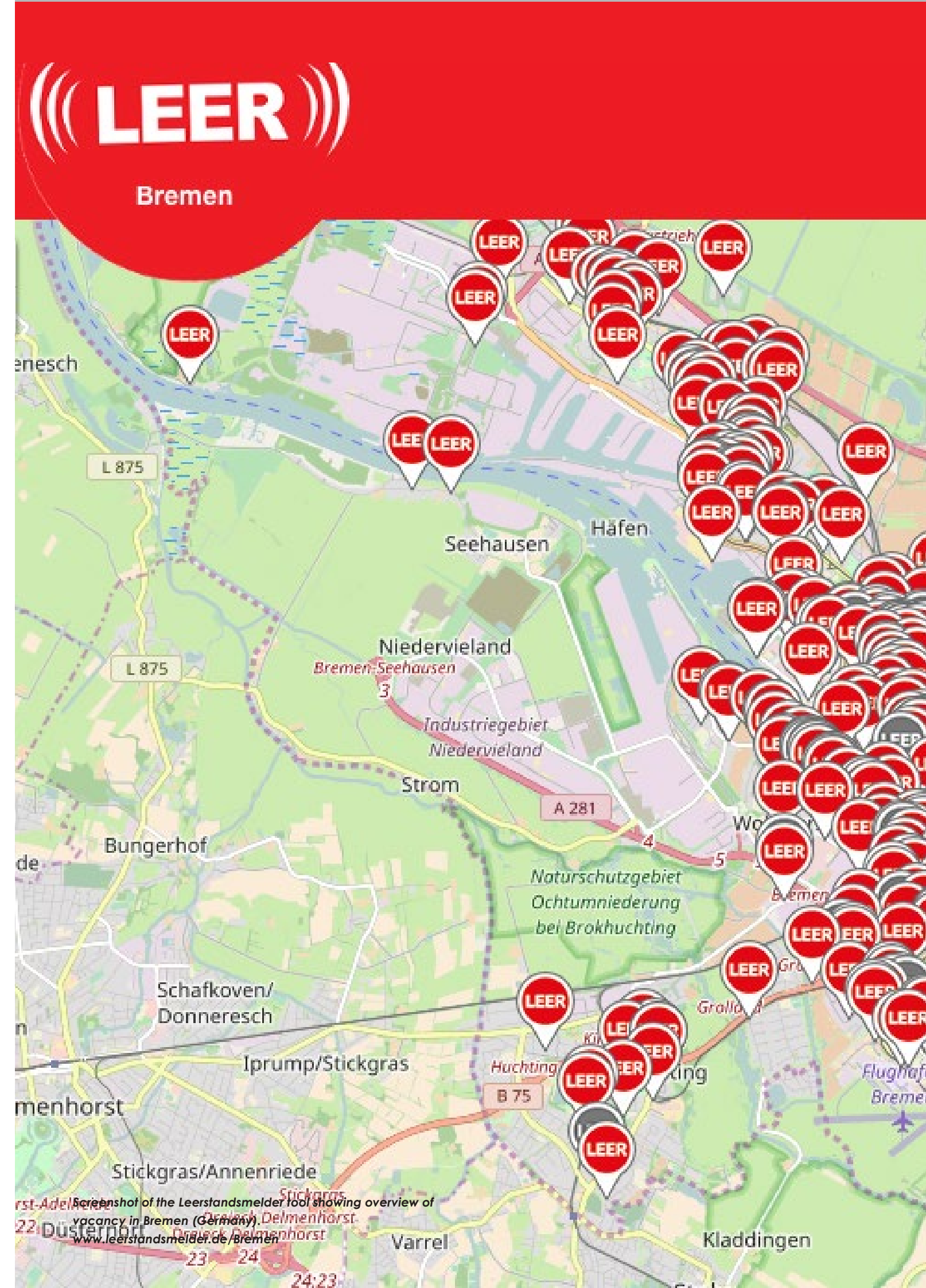
Contributions gradually create collective and freely accessible data on the vacancy, including photos, comments and ideas for dealing with the vacancy. Since 2012 about 900 buildings and brownfields have been mapped in Bremen with the help of this tool. Many of these have been demolished or are back in rent. As of June 2016, the tool is showing 770 vacancies in Bremen.

The vacancy detector is run by a private association in Hamburg and the responsible for the “vacancy detector-Bremen” website are founders of “ZZZ-Bremen”, temporary use agency bridging the efforts of the Bremen city looking for revitalization of degraded areas and private initiatives looking for space.

The advantage of this tool is that it is a uniform platform adapted by many cities, thus the tool has much larger community and recognition than any tool that would be used in a single city only – all the cities working with the tool are indirectly helping new cities to get started in an easier manner.

One of the main challenges in starting and implementing the tool have been the difficulties to convince the city

of Bremen to use the vacancy detector as an official tool. There is a considerable awareness of private owners’ reaction to that. Some have already complained about the mapping of their empty property, however, most people do not care too much about it. Additionally, it is a problem to have enough people on the crowd to keep the site updated for every part of the city. Especially, in the case of cancelling buildings which are in use again. More so, it was easy to fund it in the beginning and to get attention to it and people starting it in the beginning, however, it is difficult to keep it in peoples’ mind for a prolonged time period.



<sup>1</sup> [www.leerstandsmelder.de/bremen](http://www.leerstandsmelder.de/bremen)

<sup>2</sup> [kontakt@leerstandsmelder.de](mailto:kontakt@leerstandsmelder.de) and [bremen@leerstandsmelder.de](mailto:bremen@leerstandsmelder.de)



# Unoccupied Buildings Project

Mapping occupation of buildings during a citizens' walk in omonoia area in Athens

By Fanis Kafantaris, City of Athens (Greece)

Speleo is an open and participatory workshop, organized by a group of architects during the Athens Biennale for Omonoia neighbourhood. The project aims to publicly trigger and enhance the debate on the continual and intensive presence of abandoned buildings in the centre of Athens.

Speleo workshop started with a group-walk mapping of unoccupied buildings in Omonoia Square. The square and its surrounding area have a particular history, once the centre of the city, then a symbol of decay and in the past few months an area that seems to regain its old vibe. There are plenty of vacant as well abandoned buildings in the area and its nearby streets.

The visitors and the participants of the workshop had the chance to answer the following question "Is an alternative economy in long-term unoccupied building possible in order to...?" and their answers were exhibited to the room until the end of the Biennale. The project is a part of Fanis Kafantaris (the main initiator)'s research and until today hasn't concluded in concrete matchmaking results. However, projects like this have the potential to highlight the negative impact of vacancy in a very interesting and thorough way. Speleo provided a participatory platform with gaming and creative characteristics, which could be the basis for a systematic mapping of vacant building in the city with the help of the citizens and the possible users.



Speleo, Omonoia, Athens (Greece).  
Photo by Strategic Design Scenarios.





# 5000 “Occupy Me” Stickers

Art's action  
leading to online  
collaborative mapping  
of empty spaces

By Marcis Rubenis, Free Riga (Latvia)

“Occupy Me” was a stickers’ campaign implemented by non-governmental and activist circle in Riga, Latvia as part of an annual contemporary arts festival “Survival Kit 2013”, Latvia. Started as an arts action, it led to the formation of a wider coalition and, eventually, NGO working with temporary use and partnering with the City Council. In 2013, Riga was preparing to become the European Capital of Culture 2014. The idea to create “Occupy Me” stickers to mark the vacant buildings was created in a loosely associated group of 10-12 well known arts, culture organizers and city-makers, who all had organized activities or founded temporary spaces based on vacant property and thus saw both the potential and problem of vacancy. This group observed a paradox of large numbers of vacant spaces, but no space for the many new cultural, arts and social initiatives arising in the city. How comes there is no public attention to issue of vacancy when it seems that nearly every 5th building is empty?

5 000 “Occupy Me” stickers were printed as part of the contemporary arts festival “Survival Kit 2013”, which in 2013 had Arab Spring and Occupy movement inspired topic “Slow revolution”. Stickers were distributed to the public in the creative quarters and places in Riga in the day before the “White Night”, an annual mass cultural event in September of 2013. Additionally, to give the campaign the first push and stir the imagination of the public, initiators of the stickers action, firstly, organized the marking of the first 100 vacant buildings one night before the “White Night” by themselves and, secondly, co-created a manifest highlighting the paradox of vacancy and often crumbling valuable heritage buildings on the one hand and the many people looking for space on the other hand. The manifest was spread in the creative quarters and places in paper alongside the “Occupy Me”



Occupy me sticker campaign, Riga (Latvia).

Photo by Free Riga.



Occupy me sticker campaign, Riga (Latvia).

Photo by Free Riga.





stickers, as well as shared online in the Facebook pages of around 15 places/spaces/groups participating in the campaign.

This arts action turned out to be an astounding success. The online manifest was spread and shared with at least 100 000 Facebook viewers and gained many thousands of “likes” and “shares”. “Occupy Me” stickers were gone from the creative places in one day. The aim was reached - the issue was raised high in the public consciousness and had given visibility to the problem that many had noticed, but nobody had publicly spelled out. It led to articles and interviews in the largest media of Latvia, as well as invitations to discuss the topic with representatives of the State and Municipal institutions working with property. It was also the first step in the partnership between the initiative group and the Property Department of Riga City Council, which had shortly before started tackling another side of the problem – degradation of property left unused for long periods of time.

Inspired by this success, the initiative group created a website with a collaborative mapping tool<sup>1</sup> (application of an online map based survey tool<sup>2</sup>) inviting the public to add empty and abandoned buildings to this map. Although the use of the tool was campaign-like and not permanent, it helped to gain information on more than 350 empty buildings with people submitting not only the address of the buildings, but in many cases also valuable information on the previous history and possible use idea of the buildings. Eventually, the success of the visualization campaign led to the formation of NGO “Free Riga”<sup>3</sup>. It has since then organized various activities to promote and organize cultural and social temporary use of vacant spaces and has become cooperation partner of the Riga City Municipality in addressing the issue of vacancy.

<sup>1</sup> [www.tinyurl.com/hgk8fng](http://www.tinyurl.com/hgk8fng)

<sup>2</sup> [www.stakeholde.rs](http://www.stakeholde.rs)

<sup>3</sup> [www.freeriga.lv](http://www.freeriga.lv)



Occupy me sticker campaign, Riga (Latvia).  
Photo by Free Riga.



# Open data for temporary use

By Maija Bergström & Jenni Niemiahö, Forum Virium (Finland)

## Open data for many means

The open data experiments of the City of Helsinki are well known abroad. Helsinki was the first of European Real-Time Cities by Frost & Sullivan in 2015<sup>1</sup> and 3rd in the Global City evaluation by CIT-IE report in 2015<sup>2</sup>. Helsinki has been praised in the field of innovation, democracy and openness, and open data has been a very elementary enabler in that. In this paper we'll peek into different ways of opening the data and then connect the discussion to the topic of temporary use. Helsinki Region Infoshare (HRI)<sup>3</sup> is a service where you can find open datasets. The "Six City Strategy- Open and Smart Services"<sup>4</sup> is a strategy for sustainable urban development with the harmonization of Application programming interfaces (APIs)<sup>5</sup> in the six largest cities in Finland (Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Tampere, Turku and Oulu). Within the Strategy, "Respa" and "Linked Events" API are two relevant examples that could contribute towards effective and well-informed ways of temporary use. Traditionally the data has been collected to be used for the city planning and governance. When opened, this information can support research, business and of course different citizen-based initiatives that are related to temporary use.

### Helsinki Region Infoshare

Running since 2011, Helsinki Region Infoshare (HRI) offers easy access for several kinds of open data sources between the cities of Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen. HRI aims at making regional information quickly and easily accessible to all.

The published data is mainly statistical, giving a comprehensive and diverse outlook on different urban phenomena, such as living conditions, economics and

well-being, employment and transport. A good proportion of the data material offered by the service is GIS based, and as such easy to connect with locations. In the autumn 2016, 3D models of buildings were released. Using this data, applications such as empty location detectors could be formed.

### Harmonized APIs to support wider use of data

The Open data spearhead project of the "Six City Strategy" aims at boosting data driven business by opening up data and APIs in a harmonized manner, and making opening of data a part of cities' normal functions in the six largest cities in Finland: Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Tampere, Turku and Oulu. By 2017, the APIs of issue reporting, events information ("Linked Events" – see below), decisions made by a city or municipality and resource reservation are going to be harmonized. The harmonization of the APIs gives better opportunities for commercial uses of the APIs by enabling scalability of the applications built on an API. The resource reservation API would allow booking of locations, such as underused or empty rooms, buildings or even places such as empty lots. Harmonized APIs create further opportunities for building new kind of services using open data provided by cities. Harmonized APIs lower the costs because they establish common guidelines and best practices for integration with several solutions. This way the same digital service – e.g. service for reserving empty spaces – could work across several cities or even countries without facing high integration costs.

### Respa – Database for spaces

The Helsinki City Library<sup>6</sup> leads a project that aims at creating a database, which

contains information about public spaces. Respa API<sup>7</sup> is a prototype of a city-wide reservation booking system API, allowing for easy searching and filtering of resources based on resource type, purpose, location and availability. Respa API has been used for creating a service called Varaamo<sup>8</sup>, which is a beta service you can use to book different city owned spaces that belong to different departments. Varaamo has been running since winter 2015 and has more than 2200 registered users who have made over 8 000 reservations by now. In Varaamo the spaces are categorized by their purpose and the user starts by answering "what do you want to do?" after which the service provides different spaces that could suit for the user's needs.

Respa API could work for storing data about empty premises that would be available for temporary uses. A specific service similar to Varaamo could be built to search, look up and even rent empty premises suitable for different needs.

### Mapping events and services

What's happening around the city? Where can I find the services that I need? Event and service data are the cornerstones for building interfaces that support active and easy city life in a smart city.

Linked Events API<sup>9</sup> has been created to help discoverability of event information. The main problem is that event data is scattered around even in a city, and the data is stored in various, non-harmonized formats. The Linked Events API provides categorized data collected from various sources in a harmonized format.

Harmonizing the event information helps the city to build more functional

services and provide business developers easier access to events. The city also benefits when the city employees does not need to spread event information to every event provider but the event providers can utilize the API. In addition, the information is updated when you add and format the information in one There are several commercial applications using the API, and the API has been used for creating map-based interfaces that serve citizens and tourists on public screens, too. The city has produced also an event calendar of their own based on information in Linked Events. City Service Map<sup>10</sup> offers information on the locations and accessibility of different city services.

People form an understanding of new places through the activities they provide. When event data is public, the activities that are going on in different places can be shown in many channels to reach a wider audience.



Helsinki Region Infoshare offers hundreds of datasets as open data. Screenshot on "http://www.hri.fi/en".

## Applications for vacant spaces and temporary uses

New kinds of space related services could be built by using the already existing data sources and by creating new ones. Harmonized resource databases and APIs could be used further for storing information about empty premises or lots with no use or temporary gaps in use. The same tools that support intensification of the use of spaces can help with temporary use, too.

Data sources could be used for tracing the social or economic effects of temporary uses. Some of the open data available in HRI3 gives measures on place-based indicators such as investments, or living conditions of people in a certain area. By combining this kind of information, the strategic potential of temporary use could be taken to next level. Precise knowledge of socio-economical context at the area that the empty premises are located in, would help to create even more accurate targets for what can or should be achieved. Combining data-sources about the desired locations

and about the socio-economical features of their surrounding areas would help backing up arguments for certain type of temporary uses. This would help the cases grow stronger: well-informed projects would be more likely to gain support from the city. Also the potential local collaborators could be found or made visible by using this data.

Contrary to old-fashioned way of thinking that city is a producer of services, Helsinki is now also focusing to be an enabler for new services. As an enabler of new services, the city also aims at boosting businesses based on open data provided by the city<sup>4</sup>. Open data and harmonized APIs play a remarkable role in this way of thinking. APIs such as Respa in Helsinki allow easy searching and filtering of resources based on resource type, purpose, location and availability. By drawing on these opened databases, and by integrating API's the City itself, NGO's, active citizens and private companies can all develop services and applications based on the

most accurate information. The same information can help many users in different contexts. Open data and APIs have a large potential in supporting temporary uses by offering a way for collecting and publishing place-based information, that would allow mapping empty and underused premises and planning their use more strategically.





# Insights for cities

- 1. Digital tools could support temporary uses working as an enabler. Don't do everything by yourself: ensure that the data is open and let the others work with it, too! Seduce other parties to share data as well.
- 2. Could sharing information be fun? What about "Pokemon Go" app combining data with reality to invite citizens to share their observations on empty buildings or find underused spaces?
- 3. Work together with other cities. By harmonizing the data and APIs you allow the services grow from local to even global.
- 4. Combine data at micro-local level. Understanding of socio-economical dynamics at neighbourhood scale could orient evidence-based temporary use policy-making

<sup>1</sup> [www.frost.com/mb02](http://www.frost.com/mb02)

<sup>2</sup> [www.nesta.org.uk/publications/citie-resource-city-leadership](http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/citie-resource-city-leadership)

<sup>3</sup> [www.hri.fi/en/](http://www.hri.fi/en/)

<sup>4</sup> [www.6aika.fi/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/6Aika\\_Brochure\\_2015\\_ENG\\_web.pdf](http://www.6aika.fi/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/6Aika_Brochure_2015_ENG_web.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Application Programming Interface

<sup>6</sup> [www.keskustakirjasto.fi/en/](http://www.keskustakirjasto.fi/en/)

<sup>7</sup> [www.dev.hel.fi/apis/respa/](http://www.dev.hel.fi/apis/respa/)

<sup>8</sup> [www.varaamo.hel.fi/](http://www.varaamo.hel.fi/) (in Finnish only)

<sup>9</sup> [www.dev.hel.fi/apis/linked-events/](http://www.dev.hel.fi/apis/linked-events/)

<sup>10</sup> [www.kartta.hel.fi/?setlanguage=en](http://www.kartta.hel.fi/?setlanguage=en)



Developers hacking with open data in Ultrahack 2015 in Helsinki (Finland).  
Photo by Forum Virium.





# HOW CAN CITIES FIND SPACE FOR TEMPORARY USE WITHIN THE CURRENT ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK?

Vacant building, Riga (Latvia).  
Photo by the City of Riga.

Knowing about the **existing framework** possibilities and fitting it in the local needs is the basis for the support of temporary use

By Oliver Hasemann & Daniel Schnier, ZZZ (Germany)

## *How can regulations help to unleash creativity?*

To make temporary use projects work, it is necessary to use all the opportunities that the existing framework is giving and to use regulations on local level which fit to the needs on local level. Such regulations can be on building permissions, tax regulations or the funding of a third party moderator. The three cities of Ghent (Belgium), Riga (Latvia) and Bremen (Germany) are working with different instruments to reach the same target: the activation of vacant spaces with cultural, social and economic life.

Although the cities have a different access and history on the support of temporary use, the way of enabling it is comparable. They are all giving permissions within the existing framework and use the opportunities given by the framework to make exceptions on legal level. They are also making regulations on local level that fit to the needs within the cities. The knowledge of the existing framework and the use of the local regulations are the basis for people in the adminis-

trations to make decisions, while it still needs responsible supporters within administration and politics to make use of these instruments and third party units like the ZZZ and Free Riga give important support.

### **The Focus**

The work within the REFILL project and the exchanges with the partners have made pretty clear, that there are many different solutions which can work for every city but that there are as well regulations, which just fit to a given local context. National regulations differ from each other and cannot be influenced neither can local regulations. So the focus is very much on the topic of the way the regulations work and what possibilities exist to adapt them in the partner cities. As temporary use is becoming a normal part of city development, this needs to incorporate solutions for everyday business and needs to open links to the possibility that a temporary





Vacant building, Riga (Latvia).  
Photo by the City of Riga.

project become long-term.

The instruments described in this synthesis are the Property taxation in Riga (Latvia), the pop up Regulation in Ghent (Belgium), the Regulation on temporary use in Bremen (Germany) and the regulation for open air festivals in Bremen (Germany). As in times of limited resources and growing tasks, it is important to see how they fit with local needs and resources and how they correspond with national regulations. The existence of regulations does not necessarily imply that they are used, so how can we ensure that they will be used?

**“Use the opportunities given by the framework to make exceptions on legal level”**

#### **DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES – SAME RESULTS?**

The regulations described here are particular local regulations that address a particular situation in those cities but can be seen as a role model for other cities. The regulation on the property taxation in Riga is addressed at the owners of empty property and gives them incentives to offer this space to NGOs.

**“The tax can be reduced by 90% if the buildings are leftover for use by NGOs with a ‘public benefit’ status”**

The Pop up regulation in Ghent is, in contrast, more a legalized exception that gives administration a guideline how they can allow temporary use. The same counts for the regulations in Bremen. The guideline for non-commercial, spontaneous Open-air-festivals sets a frame for the decision making for a local need of the creative youth culture in Bremen. And the regulation on handling of public property defines very clear on which conditions city owned property can be given for temporary use.

If you come to Riga you will notice its historic

buildings from different periods (especially famous Art Nouveau) made from different materials. But you will as well notice that, in some parts of the city, buildings are left empty and are not in good shape. In a way of taking the owner of those buildings into responsibility the city of Riga changed its property tax for those buildings so the tax can be reduced by 90% if the buildings are leftover for use by NGOs with a “public benefit” status.

This regulation on the tax system in itself is not a direct tool to promote temporary use, but it is giving a good argument towards owners of private property why they should give their property to initiatives that will use it on a temporary base (as the shape of the building will attract users which are dependent on affordable space and/or the ambient of derelict buildings). This is important as the regulations on public property are quite strict in Riga and it makes more sense to activate private property. It has to be mentioned that the restriction to have a “public benefit” status is rather strict as the users have to prove in a formal process for this status. At this point, Free Riga works as an umbrella organisation to ensure and fasten the use of the buildings.

Travelling further to the beautiful city of Ghent you will be impressed by its open air activities around the inner city on brownfields and empty industry areas.

Bars and small kitchens are popping here up and bring back new life. Their existence is based on the pop up regulation of the city of Ghent which gives a 90-day exemption for catering industry activities. Instead of being dependent on the regulations for a permanent use this allows getting your permissions within a few days for a limited time. Of course the premises where the café or bar will have to be checked by city officials (fire and police department, department of economy, catering industry coach).

To get this permission, the users have to do an intake with the ‘Horeca coach’ a city official and to explain their plans, ambitions and so on. Having this exemption is important as it gives the administration the possibility to give permissions within days for projects which come up spontaneous and maybe would end as quickly as they (or the good weather) came.

Finally, coming to Bremen (Germany), unlike the



famous town musicians who never reached the city, we'll see through this summer young people gathering on public parks with music and will visit some sites with temporary use projects in public property. After years of discussion the city of Bremen made a regulation on spontaneous non-commercial music events. Right now it's possible to get a permission for this kind of event within seven days as long as the supposed activities fit in with fire and police department. This regulation is only for public spaces and the local representatives have the right to announce spaces where this is not allowed.

**“It's important that cities set a regulation frame for temporary use.”**

With the regulation on public property the city gives advice on which conditions the property can be rented for temporary use. This is very useful for the employees in the administration which can rely on this regulation and mustn't discuss anytime on possible exemption. On the same way it clearly defines that a temporary use is limited to a maximum of one year. Beneath that, it's important to have a supporting unit that helps the temporary users with the other conditions that have to be fulfilled (e.g. building regulations): this is what has been achieved with the ZZZ.

*See article "Waking up snoring spaces" on the REFILL magazine #4*

**IN A NUTSHELL**

It's important that cities set a regulation frame for temporary use. They need to define what a temporary use is and how they can be supported but as well need to make the regulations in a way that they are limited to temporary use and not everyday business. An instrument to support temporary use isn't necessarily made for temporary use, like the property taxation in Riga, but can be used to promote them. Ideally those instruments would all be combined and not only in the need to support temporary use but to open city development for the city inhabitants and those who want to engage themselves.



Parkcafee in Gent (Belgium).  
Photos by City of Ghent.







Opening of an old wool combing factory 100 years after with the neighbourhood and interested people in Bremen (Germany)  
Photo by ZZZ

## Insights for cities

- 1 | Make clear regulations on permissions that can be given to ensure equal treatment. This reduces decision processes and gives a guideline for the administration and the users as well.
- 2 | Beside the framework that regulations set, install or support organisations like Free Riga or the ZZZ, or contact persons like the 'Horeca coach' to support temporary use projects within the framework.
- 3 | Work with incentives on a strict regulated frame as a good tool to motivate private property owners, which can be much more flexible on their decisions than cities can be.
- 4 | Combine regulations, tools, incentives and promoters as a tool box for success.
- 5 | Before implementing tools from other cities, be aware of your local needs!
- 6 | Something which cannot be noted in regulations is the will to support temporary use. This needs a political will, which sets priorities and defines temporary use as an important issue. And it needs to be alive in the everyday business. Only if the opportunities of temporary use are common to the employees working with them they would be as appropriately handled as other

# HOW CAN CITIES ADAPT TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS, SECURITY STANDARDS, AND PUBLIC ACCESS RULES TO FACILITATE TEMPORARY USE?

Solilab, Nantes (France).  
Photo by Strategic Design Scenarios.



# EVERYBODY SAYS “DON’T”

By Boris Meggiorin & Elena Eizaguirre, SAMOA (France) & Miruna Draghia, Urbasofia (Romania)

## Legal challenges of temporary uses

It is a reality that the current legal framework is not adapted to the activity of temporary uses. The phenomenon of temporary uses is not yet standardized in the practice of most local authorities, and as such, there is no clear legal framework to support these practices that are often cross-cutting sectors and needs of the local communities. For this reason, the different local players willing to imagine and structure temporary uses in public and private spaces need to deal with this unexplored environment.

## “The road to temporary uses is a path of negotiation to push the existing standards”

The road to temporary uses is a path of negotiation to push the existing standards and let public authorities get involved as much as possible with the aim of legitimising the context to temporary uses and find a more flexible interpretation of the law regulating each and every space. According to Boukje Keijzer’s presentation of her book entitled *Bending the rules*<sup>1</sup>, all the rules and regulations have enough space to be red between the lines. There are many ways to stretch the rules, but the most important is how you interpret and particularize the cases.

## Focussing adaptation of the building regulation

Temporary uses can challenge the existent, almost as if the urban dwellers were looking for a

glimpse of nomadic experience in a sedentary urban society. This mind-set goes along with the shift in life-expectations brought by the transformation of the job-market in Europe in the last 30 years and the need for a test area in a time of life-long learning and individual professional development.

Opening up the reflection about the needs of citizens to how we can work with a different value chain in a time of global markets, local settings and digital shift, is becoming more and more frequent among researchers, cultural players as well as local authorities.

Getting more specific, some examples of legal issues to be tackled may be:

- security and safety issues of temporary used places;
- accessibility for differently-abled people (e.g. People with reduced mobility, etc.);
- possibility of generating economic incomes from the vacant use of public spaces ;
- processing and selling food and beverages within a temporary context; and,
- signing a contract between the parts for the temporary rent of the space.

## “Direct negotiation with local authorities to find a specific solution to each problem”

The quick life-cycling of companies and the change in the economic local fabric, can bring to the need of retrofitting existing spaces or to re-activate vacant urban areas that are – for exam-





ple – a result of the trade-off between the reduced engagement of local bodies in public services (social support, healthcare) and their replacement by community practices.

### **“Working with the status of public space occupation, as a street market do”**

The direct negotiation with local authorities in charge of these legal issues to find a specific solution to each problem is fundamental to develop the temporary uses and services. The precarious status, of these temporary activities, gives the opportunity to reduce boundaries to the “usual” legal framework. This negotiation can contribute to a reduced cost for the development of the operation and the administrative follow-up.

#### **Experiences of temporary use in Nantes (France) and Cluj (Romania)**

Although most of the REFILL partner cities haven't developed a specific legal framework for temporary use, there are still some interesting experiences worth to be shared. SAMOA<sup>2</sup>, a local agency for urban regeneration in Nantes (France), is redeveloping the Isle of Nantes (a former brownfield next to the city centre) under the idea of temporary uses to understand the real needs of the area and also the needs of the citizens, in order to adapt the uses, buildings and services of the future city to these real requirements and create together the future public spaces of the city<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, SAMOA needs to know, understand and deal, with the legal framework for temporary uses, adapting its projects to the legal standards. Similar to SAMOA's KARTING case<sup>4</sup> (temporary hoteling for start-ups and SMEs involved in the sector of cultural and creative industries), Cluj (Romania) has recently developed two projects of encouraging temporary use – TEAM centre (Technology, Evolution, Entrepreneurship and Microenterprises)<sup>5</sup> and CREIC (Regional Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries)<sup>6</sup>, which function as incubator hubs for start-ups. Unlike SAMOA, which works on a longer time-span (about 5 to 10 years), Cluj

offers rather a medium-term use (1 to 5 years), but still functions as a catalyst for innovative and creative initiatives. Both experiences deal with a public ownership over the building which hosts the temporary activities (metropolitan public authorities in both cases).

There were some clear examples of negotiation and finding a different way to solve the problem attributed to the fact that it is a temporary activity so there is a real need to reduce the costs. SAMOA succeeded in negotiating with public authorities in terms of regulations (having only one lift and an elevated foot-path without the need of adapting the whole building and the related investment instead of three lifts according to the surface available for the first floor). Instead, Cluj provided all the indoor facilities in order to create functional centres in terms of regulations, without the need of further improvements made by the temporary-users.

#### **A puzzle to be solved**

Even if SAMOA is mainly funded by local authorities, the negotiation process between temporary-users and local administration is not standardised, nor regulated, but still, SAMOA succeeded in providing an additional solution for the renting contract of temporary use in the Karting building in Nantes.

Since the building is publicly owned and there are specific requirements for renting under the French law, the limits have been overcome by granting an agreement for temporary occupation of public soil. This solution between the legal requirements and the temporary status goes along with the lack of a specific legal status of the use and the temporary existence of the warehouse (soon to be demolished). The companies located in the KARTING are working with the status of public space occupation, as a street market do, in order to avoid the engagement or the long-term character of the usual rental contracts.

The KARTING gave to SAMOA the opportunity to learn how to deal with the legal requirements and how to adapt to the restrictions by cheaper solutions due to the temporality of the activities. At the same time, this experience brought exper-



Soma Delivery Festival in Cluj (Romania).  
Photo by Cluj-Napoca.

Soma Delivery Festival in Cluj (Romania).  
Photo by Cluj-Napoca.





tise and know-how about the managements of start-up's hotels and regeneration process of the public spaces for temporary uses; it has been used to develop a new enterprises' hotel, this time dedicated to social and solidary businesses called SOLILAB, adjacent to the KARTING. There are some technical requirements, security standards and legal issues that are shared between both buildings to be more efficient.

### **“A Local Tax Policy for encouraging and facilitating temporary-use”**

On the other hand, Cluj adopted a Local Tax Policy for encouraging and facilitating temporary-use, based on a daily fee/tax for short-term temporary use of outdoor public places (up to 4 months). The local tax policy regulates mostly temporary-use for holidays or popular events/street commerce for festivals and fairs, promotional events, sporting and cultural activities, other open-air installations (e.g. *Somes Delivery*<sup>7</sup>, *Urban Living Room*, *TIFF Urban Event-Transylvania's International Film Festival*<sup>8</sup>).

### **“Build the consensus among the regulations, the expected impacts and the risks”**

The key factors for a smooth process are to open it up to the participation of stakeholders in the search for solutions. The assessment of the risk of each Temporary Use is a fundamental phase, such as establishing who is the ultimate risk-taker. Another possibility is to justify applying a different regulation for a temporary uses, as it is, by definition, temporary.

There is a balance to be found between the different parts to build the consensus among the regulations, the expected impacts and the risks. For reduced risk operation, there should be an advocacy platform dealing with the topic. Having a standardised procedure, such as the ZZZ in Bremen, doesn't mean automatically to have a smoother process when it comes to compliance

to the rules. Some colleagues in SAMOA defined this process as a puzzle to be solved with the involvement of all the stakeholders, such as head of the insurances services, firefighters, ambulance drivers, by including them in the early phase of discussion.

#### **In a nutshell**

Temporary use activities are not easy to accomplish, there are many legal requirements that generate a barrier to access temporary uses for people, products and services. These barriers may raise the costs or slow-down the implementation process. Nevertheless, this isn't stopping the experience in the cities of the REFILL partnership to experiment different kind of activities through temporary uses and try to anticipate the future needs of a city testing the activities in a temporary way.

The citizens participation to build a critical mass and consensus, the quality of the proposed projects and the negotiation skills of the professionals involvement, have proved to be a key ingredient in the process of finding enough room for flexibility in the regulations and to deliver new temporary activities.

#### **Do not forget to check this out!**

<sup>1</sup> [www.deregelsenderek.nl](http://www.deregelsenderek.nl)

<sup>2</sup> [www.samoa-nantes.fr/fr/](http://www.samoa-nantes.fr/fr/)

<sup>3</sup> [www.iledenantes.com/fr/](http://www.iledenantes.com/fr/)

<sup>4</sup> [www.iledenantes.com/fr/projets/247-karting-activites-creatives.html](http://www.iledenantes.com/fr/projets/247-karting-activites-creatives.html)

<sup>5</sup> [www.clujinnovationpark.ro/team/](http://www.clujinnovationpark.ro/team/)

<sup>6</sup> [www.clujinnovationcity.com/overview/somesdelivery.ro/](http://www.clujinnovationcity.com/overview/somesdelivery.ro/)

<sup>7</sup> [www.somesdelivery.ro/](http://www.somesdelivery.ro/)

<sup>8</sup> [www.tiff.ro/en](http://www.tiff.ro/en)

## **Insights for cities**

- 1.** Find your own way of “bending the rules”: go through the legislation and adopt the most suitable to you approach.
- 2.** Negotiate directly with local authorities in charge of the legal issues to find a specific solution to each problem.
- 3.** Find the opportunity given by the precarious status of the temporary activity in order to reduce boundaries to the “usual” legal framework.
- 4.** Get familiar with all the aspects of the legal framework and get helped if need is.



Karting – Nantes (France).  
Photo by Strategic Design Scenarios.







# HOW CAN CITIES DELIBERATE DEMOCRATICALLY BETWEEN SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS AROUND TEMPORARY USE AND PROPERTY ECONOMIC VALUE?

Weggeefwinkel (giveaway shop), Amersfoort (Netherlands).  
Photo by Strategic Design Scenarios.

## REFILL EXPEDITION IN SEARCH OF A DECISION TREE

By Anne de Feijter, Arno Goossens,  
Marc van Leemt & Els van Kooten,  
City of Amersfoort (Netherlands)

### Decision tree and Refill

Temporary use is usually accompanied by low rents. This is the great advantage of the user that outweighs an uncertain future. Yet, these cheap rents often don't cover the cost. On the other hand, the initiatives provide many social and or economic values. We want to make this extra value visible. And then, when we made this extra value visible, we want to make an instrument that helps us to do decide which initiatives will or will not be supported by providing them temporary use.

### Context

In Amersfoort (Netherlands), a few initiatives which were initiated in a temporary location, want to stay at this place. The examples are "the giveaway shop"<sup>1</sup> and "the War"<sup>2</sup>. However, the property where they are located has been nominated to be sold. The initiatives cannot afford the commercial market value but do provide social value. The political question is:

*How to define social value of (civil) initiatives? And how to make sure the social value is being taken into account in the procedure and pricing of municipal property that is going to be sold?*

### The story

Amersfoort has grown in recent decades. Because of the expected growth, several brown-field sites were achieved to be converted into urban residential areas. Farming businesses were bought out, to make way for residential and industrial areas. The municipality also bought many properties within the city borders and thus there has always been a temporary place for social and cultural initiatives. But times changed with the beginning of the real estate crisis. The municipality bought fewer properties and decided to sell a lot of the achieved real estate. There had to be cut back in both the real estate and the culture and welfare budgets.

At the same time the municipality is more and more relying on the initiatives of citizens in the field of culture and wellbeing. These initiatives need low-cost housing which is difficult in the present market and ask the support of the municipality.



Here's the problem: the real estate has to make money. Welfare and culture have fewer resources and private initiatives need help from the municipality to function properly. How can you choose being a vice-mayor or city councillor? Who will be supported and who will not? From which budget this is going to be paid?

To make the decision process more transparent we are looking for a "decision tree". We started by identifying the current policies and policy objectives of the municipality. We then submitted indicators, with the intention that the initiatives will demonstrate how they contribute to the realisation of policy objectives of the municipality. The overview of policies which has been made so far, seems very complicated. It became a wide tree that's not easy to use or manage. Therefore, we have organized, together with our ULG-members and the local politicians, a conversation about 'the value of an initiative'. In this conversation we wanted to get an idea of how detailed an instrument needs to be to objectify the value in the eyes of local stakeholders and city leaders. What is necessary to be able to make a transparent choice that can be monitored in the future? The decision tree is not yet ready, but the expedition to look for it has begun! In the meantime, we started selling the building complex: Warner Jenkinson. This is the temporary home of the initiative 'De War'. An interested party must present a vision in which they explain how they add value to the place and the city. The vision counts for 40% in the consideration of which party will be the new owner. In addition, the financial bid and the risk account for 60%. In this way, the social and cultural values are being taken into consideration in the use and sale of municipal property. De War gets a better chance to become the buying party because it's not only the financial offer that counts.

### In a nutshell

The demand for transparency on the use of municipal property for temporary use is not easy to answer. The various conversations and meetings have helped to get the complexity of the issue in focus. And at the same time new solutions have been put forward. Maybe we should not develop the decision tree but organize the rating off initiatives otherwise, for example, through the use of an expert or a neighbourhood council.



Weggeefwinkel (giveaway shop), Amersfoort (Netherlands).  
Photo by Strategic Design Scenarios.





We continue to develop a model to bring transparency into the temporary use of municipal property. But it is highly questionable whether this is ultimately in the form of a decision tree.

### Lesson learnt so far

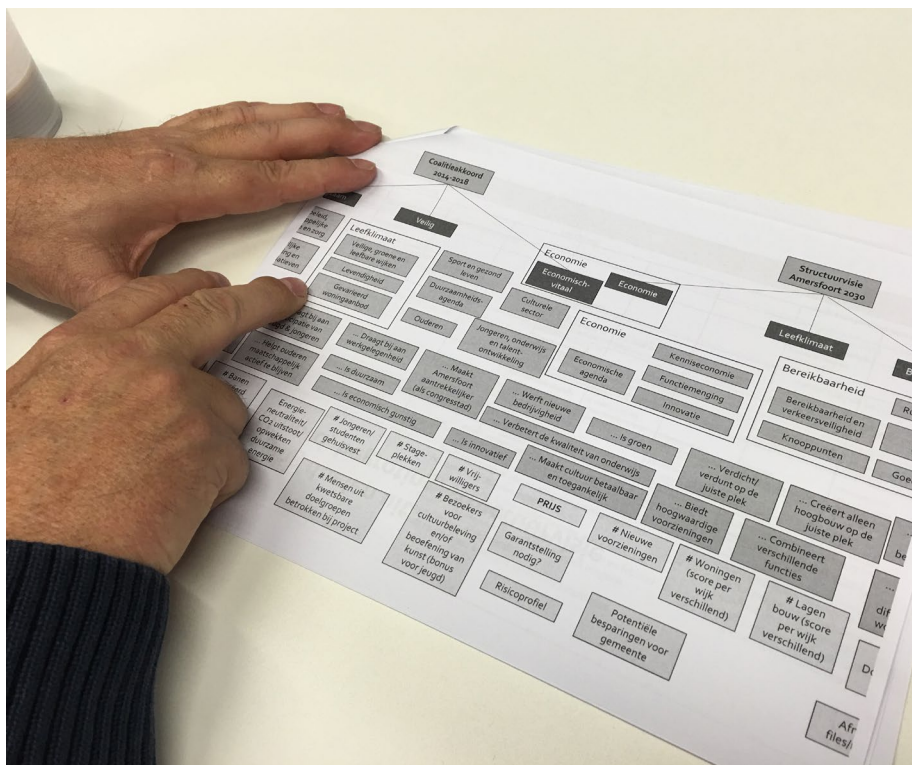
Property that loses its original function can arouse many emotions. If it remains empty, while there is a high demand for cheap space, there is indignation. If it's being used on a temporary basis by initiatives that bring much good in the neighbourhood, it gives a lot of enthusiasm. But when these initiatives have to leave because there are other plans for the property, there's often a lot of disappointment, frustration and confusion.

The lesson learnt is that initiatives should in advance have a clear view of what they can expect of the municipality and what is being expected from them. Then, during the time that they may use the property, the agreements will be prolonged or readjusted together, yet, with the strong intention of use during an agreed temporary period. When initiatives have had a start-up period in the temporary use they should be able to take care of themselves financially and find another place on the real estate market. The temporary place can then be used by new initiatives.

We are searching for a decision tree to give more clarity to existing and new initiatives, but so far it has not succeeded yet. The instrument we made has some drawbacks: measuring different social, economic and cultural value is very subjective and difficult. The components measured separately are difficult but to weight against each other is even more difficult. The instrument can also have a negative effect if initiatives are fully focused on the policy objectives on which to score. This can have significant impact on creativity and innovation. Other methods are also presented during the meeting in order to achieve greater transparency.:

- Involve residents and community organizations in the rating of the initiatives
- Include an independent expert assessing the initiatives
- Politicians assessing the various alternatives

## Insights for cities



1. The matchmaking process between property owners and initiatives is a tailor-made process. Every initiative and building differs from another. This tailor-made way of working requires a clear framework that is being used to make liable and transparent decisions.

2. Have a dialogue with stakeholders and interesting parties on how the temporary use can be organised and assigned.

3. Think carefully about how you decide which initiative you want to facilitate and which not. Does an initiative have a decent business plan and is the initiative being supported by a larger group of inhabitants? Does an initiative contribute to the realisation of your policy goals?

4. On the other hand: think carefully of what you want to achieve with the temporary use of the property in each location. What does the surrounding neighbourhood need?

5. If there is a match between an initiative and a property: make clear rules for the temporary use of the building. Communicate them clearly with the temporary user.

First attempts for a decision tree.  
Photo by City of Amersfoort



Outside of Weggeefwinkel (giveaway shop), Amersfoort (Netherlands).  
Photo by Strategic Design Scenarios.

<sup>1</sup> [www.weggeefwinkelamersfoort.nl](http://www.weggeefwinkelamersfoort.nl)

<sup>2</sup> [www.dewar.nl](http://www.dewar.nl).



# Do you want to know more about Refill?

Check out the issue #2 of the **REFILL MAGAZINE!**

*By Marcelline Bonneau, Strategic Design Scenarios*

Brokering between stakeholders involved in temporary use can take many shapes, imply responsibilities, as well actors playing this role. Indeed, temporary use requires an accurate and dedicated mediation between stakeholders, support on the field and all along the temporary use period and beyond. As a start, it is about communicating the benefits of temporary use for the concerned stakeholders. A next step is to identify the mediations needs and skills both at a tactical street level and at a strategic policy making level. It is then about fostering the match-making between temporary users, owners of vacant properties, residents living around, and different cities departments potentially involved. This indeed what the REFILL city partners have identified amongst their practices and this, for each of these three aspects of brokering, with the practices of:

- Communicating: The ZZZ in Bremen (Germany), the Policy Participation Unit in Ghent (Belgium) and SAMOA in Nantes (France);
- Identifying mediation needs and skills are street level: The Wijkregisseur in Ghent (Belgium) and the City District Managers in Amersfoort (Netherlands);
- Identifying mediation needs and skills are policy level: The Amersfoort Business District network in Amersfoort (Netherlands), the ZZZ steering group in Bremen (Germany), the Political support of a new Vice Mayor for Civil Society and Municipality Decentralization in Athens (Greece);
- Matchmaking: The Synathina platform in Athens and Free Riga scouting for owners in Riga (Latvia).







# refill

TEMPORARY USE • DYNAMICS FOR LIFE

REUSE OF VACANT SPACES AS DRIVING FORCE  
FOR INNOVATION ON LOCAL LEVEL

## PARTNER COUNTRIES

Ghent (Belgium-Lead partner) - Amersfoort (Netherlands) - Athens (Greece)  
Bremen (Germany) - Cluj-Napoca (Romania) - Helsinki (Finland) - Nantes (France) - Ostrava  
(Czech Republic) - Poznań (Poland) - Riga (Latvia)

[www.urbact.eu/Refill](http://www.urbact.eu/Refill)



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