

PULL FACTORS FOR METROPOLITAN CCI IN LIMBURG

Regional Test Case Documentation

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PP8, Stebo



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0. Abstract

Stebo promoted the Limburg pull factors for attracting metropolitan CCI to the region. The prior assets were showcased as a promotion package at Corda Campus (Hasselt), a vibrant location where multiple pull factors can be experienced (250 companies and 5000 people located there). We attracted four CCI to the Campus, and offered them the chance to network and discover Limburg as an attractive region to set up their business. They will spread the message to their colleagues in the metropolises.

1. Introduction

The province of Limburg is generally not perceived as an attractive and thriving place for metropolitan CCI. Yet it has a number of assets which are not found in the metropolitan contexts, and which together combine into a competitive advantage for the region, at least if they would be cashed upon. It is clear that CCI have particular needs that are not always answered in a metropole environment, but can be in Limburg. Examples are lower rent for creative spaces (combined with a higher vacancy rate), the natural surroundings, an undiscovered/unreached client niche, motivated policy makers, support offers, and the chance to cooperate with producing industries. Also, in smaller municipalities there are many vacant buildings. But although the willingness to invest in CCI is there, the municipality does not have the budget to develop them into attractive locations and to connect them to a larger offer of pull factors.

Today these assets are not sufficiently activated nor promoted. Within the project InduCCI, Stebo intended to fill this gap and to attract metropolitan CCI to the region.

2. Objective

Stebo aimed at further revealing the known (and possible other) assets present in the province of Limburg, and actively promoting them as pull factors for metropolitan CCI. For this purpose and together with a motivated group of stakeholders, we wanted to develop a promotion package for the Limburg pull factors.

A direct effect of the promotion should be that metropolitan CCI discover, and in a second phase, promote hinterland regions as enticing places for cultural and creative entrepreneurship. Metropolitan CCI are to be convinced of the region's potential for testing and/or setting up their business (on the short- or the long term: e.g. work or live permanently in Limburg, or developing signature projects while making use of the benefits of the location and the cooperation with local entrepreneurs).

3. Applied approach

The development/implementation of the test case can be divided into three phases:

1) Mapping, describing and prioritizing the Limburg pull factors, with input and feedback from metropolitan CCIs.

In the first phase we set up a list of Limburg pull factors. A questionnaire was sent out to metropolitan CCI to rate those pull factors: 'How important would this factor be in your decision to set up or test your business in Limburg?' The results of the questionnaire allowed us to define the prior pull factors to focus on in the promotion package (e.g. work space/atelier space being one of them, as well as cooperation with companies, lower rent, location in the Euregio,...).

The questionnaire was sent out to metropolitan CCI in Flanders via our own network 'The Box Community', via Flanders DC, via the regional development company, and via other coaching organizations targeting metropolitan CCI (such as VAKLab/Bokrijk).

2) Developing the promotion package and selection of test location

The pull factors were printed on a temporary portable system which we used for promoting the pull factors, and which a group of metropolitan CCI used to adapt the space we offered them at the Corda Campus (as such further promoting the pull factor 'availability and adaptability of vacant spaces').

Due to COVID-19 restrictions we did not find a suitable location in the municipality of Heusden-Zolder which was initially designated as a laboratory place. As an alternative the Corda Campus (Hasselt) was chosen. It is a place where multiple pull factors can be experienced and where there is an enticing buzz and dynamic. Over 250 companies and 5000 people are based there, making it the largest business campus in Europe. Companies, CCI and visitors meet up there for cooperation, workshops, meetings,...It is a very vivid location built on the grounds of the former Philips plant. The Corda Campus in the end is a pull factor itself.

3) Attracting a group of metropolitan CCI to the Corda Campus

Metropolitan CCI were invited via several channels: social media and board members of The Box Vlaanderen (a plug and play chain of retail spaces across Flanders), via direct contacts by Starterslabo coaches (organization spread across Flanders offering coaching trajectories for starting entrepreneurs), and via POM Limburg platform (the Regional Development Company).

We were inspired by best practices developed in InduCCI regions (e.g. KRACH, CCI for Görlitz,...) and also found there an interesting network to review the steps taken in the process (from idea towards concept and implementation).

4. Results

The questionnaire has provided us with good/new insights on the potential of Limburg as a thriving location to develop CCI business(es). We found out which of the pull factors are key assets in the eyes of metropolitan CCI. We passed this information on to relevant stakeholders (e.g. POM Limburg). As a result they have decided to invest further and firstly in the promotion of these particular factors.

The action has allowed us to reach out to a group of metropolitan CCI. Four entrepreneurs responded to our call to come and discover the pull factors of Limburg. They were offered a space at the Corda Campus where they met up with companies, other CCI, policy makers, visitors,...passing by there. At the same time they got acquainted with other pull factors which were displayed on the portable system (see above). The CCI were invited to an event organized by POM Limburg (the Regional Development Company of Limburg): 'Portraits of Innovation'. During the event they could network with regional CCI companies. As a result cooperation and contacts between local and metropolitan CCI have been set up.

The CCI mentioned to have been positively surprised about the Limburg assets. Especially the availability of vacant spaces, the networking opportunity with producing industries and the presence of a vibrant community have been mentioned as major pull factors. They said to be taking home a strong message and spread it to their CCI colleagues: "Limburg has many assets for us, and we should set out to discover them!"

5. Goal Achievement and Lessons Learned

The action was about promoting the pull factors of Limburg, which was successfully done at a dynamic location. It can be a first step towards promotion of the pull factors on a larger scale, and via a broader network of actors.

We have already shared our findings with POM Limburg, the regional development company in charge of building fertile grounds for the cultural and creative sector in our region. Having better insights on what pull factors to invest in, supports them in that task.

Municipalities and policy makers benefit from this action as it contributes to enriching the CCI sector as an economic branch and to regional development in general.

We found out that a lot of time and effort needs to be put in the communication process towards metropolitan CCI. Even if you have an interesting location and a promotion toolbox, you need to convince them with a strong message and story on the pull factors. We recommend to include enough time in your action plan to develop this story.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions the action could not be repeated at other locations, which would have led to a larger group of reached metropolitan CCI.

6. Outlook, Sustainability and Transferability

One of the main pull factors was the need for affordable work-/atelier space. During a meeting with POM Limburg, this need was picked up and will be further explored in the frame of The Box Vlaanderen (the chain of plug-and-play spaces - see above).

Results were disseminated via the policy brochure set up by Stebo as part of the InduCCI project. They can be a source of inspiration to further shape policies on reinforcing the CCI sector, providing insights on what a metropolitan CCI needs and how they should be accordingly welcomed.

For example, the test case very concretely contributes to the strategy of the province of Limburg, called SALK. In the action plan, which was set up after the closure of the Ford plant in 2014, developing CCI entrepreneurship as an economic branch was considered one of the spearheads. Today the SALK2.0 is launched, rolling-out new strategic initiatives

while building on good practices developed during the first SALK phase. Attracting more CCI to the region is one of the key ambitions.

The concept and development steps of the promotion package can be offered to other hinterland municipalities with the ambition to attract metropolitan CCI, and to other peri-urban regions in Central Europe who wish to carve out location offers as pull factors.

7. Annexes

7.1 Links

<https://theboxvlaanderen.be/> (Dutch language)

<https://www.cordacampus.com/en/> (English language)

7.2 Pictures Corda Campus test location



Promotion stand of Limburg pull factors displayed at Corda Campus. (left)

Three of four CCI present at Corda Campus, discovering the pull factors. (right)

Work of 4th CCI present at Corda Campus. (below)

