

CWE ermöglicht

Chemnitzer Wirtschaftsförderungs- und
Entwicklungsgesellschaft mbH

KRACH+

Regional Test Case Documentation

01 2022



2.3.1



Reporting Period 6



PP 1, CWE



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0. Abstract

The composition and structure of the shops and retail offers in Chemnitz city centre is subject to high transformation pressure. Some business models and offers are either out of date, not in demand or have come under additional pressure due to the pandemic. A trend of increasing vacancy of properties and business premises has been increasingly noticeable in recent years. We wanted to counteract this trend with new impulses. With KRACH+, we have tried to invite European companies, creative initiatives and organisations to temporarily vacant business premises in the city centre of Chemnitz for a period of two weeks, in order to present new concepts for Chemnitz that represent more than just classic retail and are above all shaped by and through cultural and creative business approaches and methods. We did so to contribute to strengthen connections between CCI and other businesses as well as stimulate new thoughts on city development.

1. Introduction

The original plan was to place three companies or organisations in three vacant shop spaces in the city centre and to orient ourselves on the three thematic pillars of personalisation, i.e. the manufacture and sale of products according to individual customer wishes, multi-channel, i.e. a new type of link between a real shop and a sales environment on the internet, and with social entrepreneurship, i.e. the design of business ideas, products or services that offer a problem solution for the community or a broader target group. We were able to win a company from Linz and a social entrepreneur initiative from Bratislava through our partner network InduCCI. The conditions were not ideal to perform such a test but we faced the challenges - as mandatory, with creativity.

2. Objective

With KRACH+, we wanted to test whether and how creative economy-influenced businesses or creative social organisations are able to enhance or complement the mix of offerings especially in the inner city areas of non-metropolitan industrial cities like Chemnitz. Based on the experiences from our initiative Kreativraum Chemnitz (KRACH), a location scheme run in Chemnitz since 2018, where we matched abandoned business spaces with local creative startups, we wanted to set European impulses from the cultural and creative industries and win partners from other European regions. They were set to be brought into contact with Chemnitz walk-in customers in the city centre and with creative entrepreneurs with their business ideas and new approaches.

3. Applied approach

Originally, we wanted to organise a matchmaking process between invited companies and the organisation, the respective vacant shop and creative "patrons" from Chemnitz, because this was a tried and tested method in the KRACH framework. In the end, however, we were glad to have found partners at all who were able to grace the then later and later set period with their presence. We were happy about the arrival of Yokai Studios (customisable textile printing with an industrial robot) as well as Cyklokoalicia from Bratislava, an NGO that runs a bicycle rental system without money but with community work as a counterpart.

At the end we tested Yokai Studios setup as a creative store and Cyklokoalicias space as a communication room and concept store that sold an idea.

We organised two single stores in the Galeria Kaufhof/Karstadt building complex, for which we only had to pay incidental costs and cleaning. The owner company was also very interested in seeing the business concepts to be tested there, as both the personalisation of textile products could be a complementary offer (or even a segment in its own right) for the city centre retail spaces, and a bike-sharing concept was already one of the possible ideas they would have liked to try out on the vacant spaces in question.

4. Results

The Yokai Studios store was transformed into a very colourful, resonant space with the help from partners of the local Cultural and Creative Industries, but mainly because of the creativity and experimentation of the two owners, using only a few design tools, which attracted the apparent interest of passers-by as soon as it was set up.

The space for the bike-sharing offer of Cyklokoalicia was also furnished by the two people in charge with a lot of love and while maintaining the principle of minimalism, and also worked very well as an eye-catcher.

While Yokai Studios was able to offer products, Cyklokoalicia could only rely on contacts and conversations, as a 1:1 set-up of a test bike-sharing was not possible due to the limited time and material required. To compensate for this circumstance, however, we arranged specific contacts for the team from Bratislava with "bike maniacs" and projects from Chemnitz and, on the other hand, recorded a panel discussion on video in which the expert for urban development Dr. Mary Dellenbaugh Losse supported us as a knowledge sponsor. The ensuing document can therefore also be seen as a direct result of the project. Results from the surveys via QR-Code based surveys that were placed in the stores returned little to no value at all. A different set of methods should be used in the next possible runs to gain more insights from the audiences in the stores.

Production and sales could take place in the Yokai Studios space during opening hours 10am-8pm from 22 November to 4 December. The initially reserved interest of walk-in customers could be improved through communication. We organised Yokai Studios' intro spot in the Capital of Culture newsletter, whereupon the largest local daily newspaper Freie Presse also produced an article with a photo spread and published it already on Wednesday of the first week. The increased media interest subsequently led to good sales of the textile products. In addition, the two owners of Yokai creatively posted about their stay on their social media channels, proactively organised a visit to the Saxon Textile Research Institute STFI and - quasi as a replacement for the cancelled thematic pillar Multi-Channel - also expanded their online shop to present their Chemnitz range to other customers in Europe or for digital purchases by customers from the Chemnitz region.

Cyklokoalicia presented its bike sharing from 29 November to 4 December. In parallel to the talks and mini-lectures they offered, the two people in charge had also installed a beamer installation and artistic window displays so that the idea could be noticed and communicated outside opening hours. For the Cyklokoalicia, we also used the intro of the Capital of Culture newsletter for the presentation and specifically drew the attention of people interested in the topic from the sports, cycling industry and administration to the KRACH+ shop. The result of their stay can probably only be settled in the following years when the project initiations and contacts from Chemnitz bear fruit, or if we can plan and implement a repeat of the pop-up - which we would like to do.

Participants voices:

Tomas Pecia, Cyklokoalicia, Bratislava: "Thanks all for a great experience in Chemnitz, it was a beautiful week in this lockdown times. We are looking forward for outcomes from the KRACH+ especially the recorded panel discussion that was fruitful and very interesting. We would love to see Chemnitz in the summer in a normal times and we would like to be there in 2025. Fingers crossed. We are in contact with some people that we met. The funny fact is, that we had small amount of meetings but those were very intensive and we should collaborate with the people that we met."

5. Goal Achievement and Lessons Learned

What we have proven with this action is that you don't need a lot of material, but you do need a creative desire and a talent for improvisation in order to visibly change the city centre with just a few things. The two shop spaces and their impact on the pedestrian zone have definitely had a positive and invigorating effect. It was probably foreseeable that a concept like individualisation of products would have an attractive effect. What could be shown in the concrete example was the increase in attractiveness when an identity-forming theme, such as robotics and industrial design in this case, meets the right audience. In our conversations with the actors but also with visitors, it also quickly became clear that one could well imagine further creative offers such as graphic design workshops and the like in the neighbourhood of such shops. How the example of bike-sharing can continue to have an effect will certainly only be seen in the immediate future and possibly in a repetition of such actions.

6. Outlook, Sustainability and Transferability

As with the best practice scheme KRACH, KRACH+ has shown the potential that temporary use of space can have - surprise, stimulation of curiosity, public attention and new personal connections between actors. An expansion of the concepts around mainly European-style pop-ups is definitely a gain both for the design of the programmes for the Capital of Culture 2025 and for the immediate design of the start-up years 2022-2024. We will definitely present and discuss the documentation of the regional test case in our joint initiative of owners and traders "Chemnitz City", as well as with the responsible staff members of the Mayor's office. We will keep in touch with both companies and organisations. Invitations to participate in further events in Chemnitz have already been extended to both Yokai Studios and Cyklokoalicia and have been accepted.

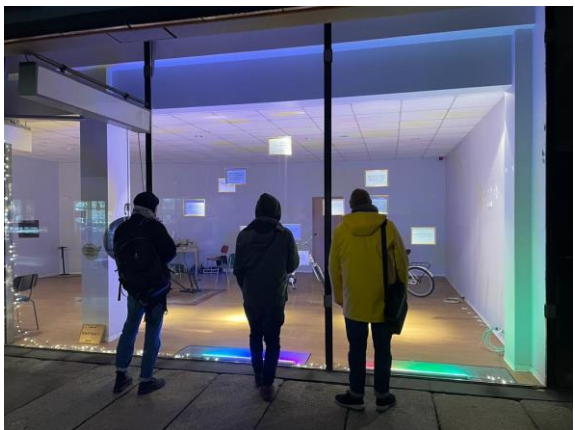
7. Annexes

Pictures of the KRACH+ locations, Nov. 22nd till Dec. 4th

Project results will be published on www.chemnitz-wirtschaft.de/inducci
(German except panel discussion video in English with German subtitles)

Yokai Studios website: www.yokai-studios.com/ (German and English)

Cyklokoalicias website: <https://cyklokoalicia.sk/> (only in Slovak)



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