

Cookbook:

ideation tools to create successful (smart city) ventures



Citizen Innovation Challenge

Abstract

The aim of the Citizen Innovation Challenge is to find and incubate user innovations in the district Kanaleneiland in Utrecht. The challenge intends to engage with ordinary citizens in a structured way to elicit problems they face and collect coping strategies that exist. Subsequently, it is assessed whether (some of) these coping strategies contain the starting point of a social impact venture that can be incubated, scale-up and/or replicate to areas with comparable characteristics. The project was initiated by Utrecht University (UU) and Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Utrecht (HKU), with support of Labyrinth Research Agency. Labyrinth Research Agency is a local network partner that was able to reach out and effectively engage local citizens. Labyrinth conducted a survey and organized focus groups to collect information on problems the inhabitants of Kanaleneiland are facing in their daily life. Using these insights, Utrecht University formulated topics on which citizens could send in their innovative coping strategies. The most innovative idea that also could be incubated in Utrecht could win a cash prize of €2.500.

Dish:

challenge | 0,4 FTE
3M preparation + 1M execution
€13.500

Recipe for:
ideas



IRIS
Utrecht



The Ingredient List

- **Budget**

- €11.000 organization cost of local field partner
- €2.500 award money

- **Time**

Preparation (12 weeks)

- Street interviews: 10 weeks
- Focus groups: 2 weeks

Challenge (5 weeks):

- Challenge open for entries: 4 weeks
- Final evaluation: 1 week



- **Resources**

Types of organizations involved

- Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Utrecht (citizen engagement)
- Utrecht University (research & business development)
- Labyrinth Research Agency (local research and network partner)

Types of roles involved (mentors, organizing team, experts, etc.)

- Organizing team
- Judges for selection of ideas
- Experts with district knowledge and network

Location(s)

- Registration and selection via prijsvraagkanaleneiland.nl
- Location for pitches

The Preparation Method

- **Preparation (= Planning)**

The Citizen Innovation Challenge is an initiative that stems from several activities in the IRIS project, both in WP5 Utrecht Demonstration and WP3 Business Modelling. At its core is TT5 Citizen Engagement. The main aim of TT5 is to actively engage and intrinsically motivate the inhabitants of the district Kanaleneiland Zuid to save energy, match the moment energy use to the supply of renewable energy, and to use electric means of transport. The project was initiated by Utrecht University (UU) and the Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Utrecht (HKU), with support of Labyrinth Research Agency.



The diversity in stakeholders and the crucial role of citizens as enablers of the energy transition, especially in the low-income and multicultural district Kanaleneiland Zuid, require co-creation and attractive and inclusive services that support them in their own objectives to engage, express ownership, and behavior change.

During an earlier project focusing on Smart Lighting (in TT4 City Innovation Platform), inhabitants expressed their concern that energy and mobility weren't the pressing issues in their district. Therefore, the Citizen Innovation Challenge took another course and intended to engage with ordinary citizens in a structured way to elicit problems they face and collect existing coping strategies. The aim of the Citizen Innovation Challenge is to find and incubate user innovations in the district Kanaleneiland Zuid.

The first step in the preparation of the challenge was to attract a local network partner, deeply rooted in the local civic network. Labyrinth Research Agency helped implement the challenge, as they have a broad network in the district and have extensive experience with doing research amongst groups that are difficult to reach.

First, Labyrinth set-up, distributed, and collected a survey among inhabitants of Kanaleneiland Zuid. A team of interviewers visited different places in the neighborhood to approach a wide range of people. The questionnaire consisted of several questions regarding several topics, i.e.: nuisance, neighborhood, housing, public space, traffic, health, transport, income, work, youth, elderly, and cultural differences. Depending on the available time of respondents, 1 up to 12 topics were covered during the interview and each topic was randomly chosen by the software system. Between July and September 2019, 126 respondents were interviewed, covering 205 topics.



After completing the street interviews, Labyrinth organized several focus groups with residents of Kanaleneiland. The aim of these focus groups was first of all to retrieve new ideas on how people cope with daily problems. The information and insights gathered during the street interviews were used to prepare for the focus groups.

The yield of both the street interviews and focus groups was disappointing. At October 1, 2019, it was concluded to not continue the efforts on the challenge. UU analysed the effort of Labyrinth and came to the conclusion that:

- ▶ The target group does not feel it has the influence and/or ability to change the social issues in the district;
- ▶ There is a low degree of organization among residents. The critical mass is often limited to one person;
- ▶ Kanaleneiland Zuid is a former 'krachtwijk' (= neighborhood where several social and societal problems occur simultaneously, i.e. unemployment, crime and addiction problems). Over the past years, the district was continuously monitored and received outside help. As these organizations tend to come and go, no organizations has been responsible for the district for a long time. This limits the amount of confidence inhabitants tend to have in outside organizations.

These three conclusions combined led to the overarching feeling that the challenge would not get enough inhabitants engaged and/or would not attract the desired types of user innovated ideas.



- **Serving instructions (= Event)**

Although the challenge in itself was cancelled, the Citizen Innovation Challenge was supposed to launch at October 1, 2019, through prijsvraagkanaleneiland.nl. Inhabitants of Kanaleneiland Zuid could enter their ideas for the problems in the neighborhood until October 27, 2019. Entries would be judged on two criteria: 1) readiness of the idea, and 2) does it improve the life of inhabitants of Kanaleneiland Zuid.

Dissemination of the challenge focused on channels being used in the district. These included online channels (Facebook groups and pages, Instagram, websites of social organizations active in the district), offline channels (flyers and posters in frequented spots), and local and district media. Especially multilanguage offline promotion was important, considering that the residents have below average access to internet and not all residents have a sufficient level of Dutch. Considered languages were Dutch (B1-level), Arabic, Turkish and English.

The winner or winners were supposed to be announced at November 3, 2019. The total award money was budgeted at €2.500, and could be shared amongst the winning ideas or through a winner-takes-all principle. Students of the Utrecht University would then take on the ideas and further develop them using the Smart City Business Model Canvas developed by Giourka et al. (2019) for this purpose.



- **Review (= Evaluation)**

It is critical to have a partner organization who has an engaged network of residents and business owners in the neighborhood.



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Co-creating Smart and Sustainable Cities

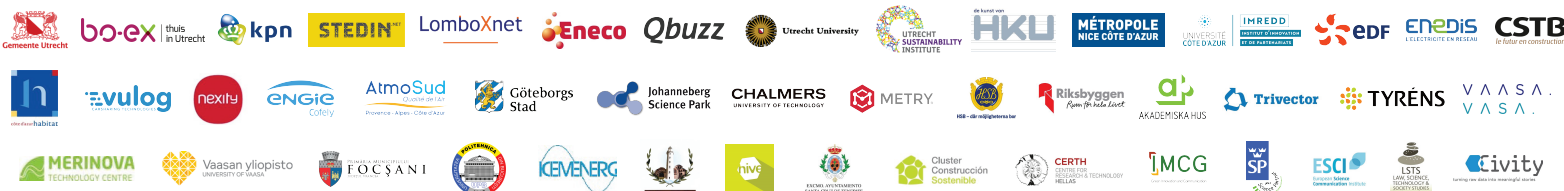
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