

INNOVATION CAMP ST. PETERSBURG CHALLENGE 2: HOW TO ATTRACT PUBLIC TO THE CREATIVE CLUSTERS AT POSTINDUSTRIAL SITES?

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St.Petersburg is a renowned cultural capital of Russia, which is also the city with one of the highest indexes of creative capital in the country. The level of educated professionals engaged into the creative industries is high, as well as the share of people interested in arts, culture and education. At the same time St.Petersburg is one of the mostly industrialized cities of the former Soviet Union with a vast brownfield circle located around the city centre. The recent spatial tendency is refunctionalizing of the postindustrial territories into congestions of small service economy businesses (such as car maintenance, storehouses, artisan workshops), sometimes - into bigger functional areas such as business centers and even more rarely - into creative clusters. Though transformation of the postindustrial sites into cultural and creative quarters has half of a century long history in the world and has already shown its profits for the city prosperity and attractivity in terms of vibrant public life, human capital and tourism, St.Petersburg prospects in this area are yet quite underdeveloped. The reason for constraining the tempo for the creative recharge of the postindustrial sites are most often the following: 1) the urban planning limitations, such as official functional zones these territories undergo which do not allow business or housing usage, 2) the fragmentation of the territory into dozens of little plots under different owners - the consequence of the post-soviet mass privatization of the land and buildings, 3) the poor ecological status of lands which implies restriction of the public use. However several cases of transition of the former industrial sites into the cultural and creative centers have occurred, the most famous examples being Loft Project “Etaji”, “Tkachi”, “Sevcabel Port” and “Planetarium 1”.



While Loft Project “Etaji” is located in the former milk factory in the centre of the city in the reach of huge public flows, the other three are located in the more remote territories. “Tkachi” has closed down just recently after a 10 years long history. Apart from these 4 cases, study on the life cycles of the creative spaces in St.Petersburg made by Quality of Life Urban Laboratory at ITMO University has shown numerous examples of the creative clusters and smaller spaces such as art galleries popping up in the voluminous spaces of the former factories and plants, but shot down after a short-term period of life, “Artplay St.Petersburg” being one of the brightest examples of such failure. All of the above mentioned cases did not face the general obstacles: they were located in privatized territories, they had a relevant functional zone (either “transition” or “business” functional zones, which give opportunity for public dependent usage of the land) and were meeting ecological requirements. However, there is a fourth factor which brings in disorder into the plans of the owners and managers of the creative clusters at postindustrial sites - ignorance of these spaces as a destination by citizens and tourists.

Studies by QULLAB also show that mentally the brownfield territory is not perceived as a destination by citizens and that they head to the historic city centre or to the large trade and recreation centers in the non-central areas close to their place of dwelling to satisfy their cultural and leisure needs. The challenge faced by the current and come-to-be creative clusters located in the postindustrial sites is formulated as follows: How to attract the public flow and to include their area into the mental map of culture and leisure which people have in their mind? The already mentioned clusters of “Sevcabel Port” and “Planetarium 1” steadily combat for their audience with specific means, such as unique exhibitions, educational and cultural projects, facilities for all-day activities for families with kids, and even water routes uniting these clusters with other parts of the city. But still the question of increasing the public flow into the clusters is constantly at the table. Strategically the “mental map” issue is targeting all future projects of creative centers in the vast former brownfield and has to be addressed with smart solutions.

DESIRED OUTCOME OF THE CHALLENGE:

In addressing this challenge we invite the team to consider a wide range of possible solutions. They may be of cultural origin and target marketing and public positioning of the creative clusters and their event program. They may include spatial solutions, such as new routes or transport means. They also may include solutions for tracking down the audience of the clusters to design the program for scaling up its variety and numbers.