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Rooted design, craftsmanship and creative economy in a touristic heritage city *How to make your souvenirs last longer?*

Our young organization (**NGO**) **tapis plein** is active in the field of **participative projects** with a special focus on Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Tapis plein realizes a contemporary approach of our collective intangible heritage. It aims to work strongly with different social fields (education, citizenship, city-policy, ...). Tapis plein is always focussing on interaction with people in its projects, going to schools or youth centres, diving into the city life or the neighbourhood, etc. Heritage education and public sensitisation are important dimensions in our mission. We have a part of our work focussing on **experimental project development** and another part of our work consisting of **sharing expertise** to other organisations and fields.

Tapis plein has its roots in the city of **Bruges**.

Bruges is a touristic UNESCO world heritage city with a vivid cultural scene. The museums of Bruges belong to the top in Western Europe. The Concertgebouw is a renowned stage for classical music, 'De Werf' is the same for jazz, etc

Most of Bruges' big cultural institutions today are focussed on **showing, not as much creating**. Lately, and mostly since 2002 when Bruges was cultural capital of Europe, a shift took place with more emphasis on creation. A cultural youth center Het Entrepot was established, providing rooms and projects for young creators in music, theater, dance, sculpture... Also the theater department of De Werf grew and provides places to experiment to young promising talents.

Next to these bigger institutions Bruges has a long **tradition in the field of handcraft**, especially lace (e.g. the 'Kantcentrum'), calligraphy (with a.o. Brody Neuenschwander) and stone carving, ... These handcrafts are not dead in Bruges, but they live difficult times under pressure of the economy of leisure time, globalisation,

On the other hand there seems a rising popularity and interest though for handmade objects, contemporary designs and works of art. The cultural festival Kantlijnen in Bruges 2009 can be just one of the examples of this, assimilating lace and the idea of lace in contemporary fashion, design, art...

Linking to this tradition can thus form the basis for a revival of Bruges' inner city as center for contemporary design based on traditional handcraft.

This is specifically what the project **Quartier Bricolé** aims to do.

Quartier Bricolé is a project tapis plein realizes in 2009-2013 on the topic of making a future for craftsmanship in the context of a (touristic) heritage city. The project intertwines goals of ICH-transmission to possibilities of creative economy en sustainable city development: 'creative heritage economy'.

Bruges is not Brussels. The city-quality of Bruges is nor cosmopolitan nor industrial but on the contrary it contains a calm and peaceful, mystical atmosphere, small pubs, narrow winding streets and alleys, old houses, ...

Bruges is a town on 'human scale': 'contact' and proximity are key concepts to work on future touristic and citizen experiences.

Tourism can be threatening though. The commercial pressure of tourism risks to **undermine the public sphere and everyday city-life**. The challenge for this city is to develop a sustainable balance for the *diverse* functions of the city.



Craftmanship is one of the domains in the Unesco-Convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (2006).

Tapis plein made the choice as center of expertise in the heritage field to put up an innovating project on craftmanship as intangible cultural heritage. **Quartier Bricolé is a project on contemporary craftmanship based on traditional skills and knowledge.**

For example a traditional technique in contemporary design; or a traditional ornament realized in different or new materials ...

Quartier Bricolé wants to research in the field how traditional crafts can be given a new life or dimension, how skills and knowledge can be transmitted and how young designers deal and experiment with these themes.

Quartier Bricolé realizes therefore **different (local, national and international) trajectories or project levels:**

- **Level 1: local / developing contemporary craft policy and practice**

In working together with the city policy, a street zone was chosen to start with. This street -Langestraat- is near the city centre but isn't in the heart of the touristic routes. That way it is searching for different approaches to make its living in the economic context today (difficult for small shops and enterprises to survive in the market of big scale and international industries). By realizing a central multi-designer shop and meeting-point for handmade craft and design, by putting up pop-up stores and workshops, by organizing masterclasses, by showing the works of artists in a series of empty shop-windows, by having nice markets for handmade stuff twice a year, ...

This zone makes it possible to experiment and work out to become widely known, make up specific and recognizable communications, ... On the long term it attracts a specific public of tourists, looking for something 'more' in their holidays, participating in local workshops, buying unique handmade gifts, ...

The idea is to broaden the scope of this craft-zone from 2011 on to other initiatives and shops in the city-centre, to strengthen networks and visibility, but keeping the Long Street as the recognizable heart of the project.

- **level 2: national / building up and exchange of expertise**

On a national level it is important to realize a reflection on the passing on and the updating of craftmanship. We set up national colloquia and meetings, invite international guests, introduce inspiring international practices and expertise, bring together the fields of creative economy, cultural heritage, entrepreneurship, education, etc

- **level 3 : international / networks and expertise**

Of course the mentioned above national sharing of expertise would not be possible without investing in international networks and inspiration. The project workers are following international evolutions and also we engage in a European cooperation of 8 medium scale cities that invest in city innovation by creative economy. In this process academic research is connected to practices in the different city-contexts and experiences can be brought together and compared. The result of this cooperation research will in 2013 be shared in a publication, summer school for practitioners, etc.

