Creative meets digital in Strasbourg

Tango&Scan - creative cross sector innovation

Strasbourg has developed a highly effective tool for encouraging and enabling creativity to drive growth and confidence in the local economy. Tango&Scan supports ideas proposed by partnerships between creatives and companies from other sectors. It has generated significant new expertise, innovative products and revenues of €2,000 million.

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> Tango&Scan is a tool that has a significant role in Strasbourg's economic development strategy because the cross-fertilisation of knowledge and ideas enables innovation and competitive advantage and that is very important.
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> **Valentine Lepage, creative economy and creative industries manager, Strasbourg**

Strasbourg decided to focus on the creative economy after research undertaken in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis brought home its importance in city development. When its subsequent European City of Culture bid was unsuccessful, the city decided to make use of all the knowledge it had gained. This included the fact that while the digital and creative sectors have huge potential to catalyse innovation this has been underexploited by traditional companies. With this in mind, the city decided to find a way to foster collaborations between creatives and businesses from different industries to boost new skills, processes and ideas.

Taking inspiration from Manchester's Creative Credits scheme, in which small businesses get vouchers to buy services from creative companies, the city came up with the idea now known as Tango&Scan. Tango represents projects led by a creative partner. Scan represents digitally-focused projects. The city decided to focus on this type of project as there is so much to be gained from connecting digital businesses to producers of quality content and to traditional sectors going through the digitalisation process. Initially organised as two separate open calls, Tango and Scan came together in 2015.

cities in action

November 2018

where: Strasbourg, France
what: innovation
when: 2012 - ongoing

Promoting partnerships

Designed as a financial and business support device, Tango&Scan runs an annual open call for collaborative projects with the potential to result in innovative products and services. The city of Strasbourg provides annual funding of €250,000 as well as an additional €40,000 for projects focused on the year's theme. These have ranged from e-tourism and smart mobility to the green economy. Each winning project can receive up to €20,000 and access expert advice on business planning and brand strategy. The initiative is managed by a non-profit organisation, CREACCRO, set up by the city in partnership with the University of Strasbourg and local creative entrepreneurs.

CREACCRO is deeply embedded in the local creative scene and perfectly placed to spread the word about how creative thinking and processes can help all kinds of industries innovate for competitive advantage. It manages the promotion of Tango&Scan and the annual call, which is open to companies, artisans, students and artists. It also assembles the judging panel, made up of a diverse mix of representatives from incubators, cultural venues, chambers of commerce and clusters. Each open call is sponsored by a small group of local companies who also support the subsequent exhibition of winning projects.

Winning innovations

Over 166 projects have been put forward since Tango&Scan opened for business in 2012. Original and ingenious, they encompass an extraordinarily wide range of sectors including healthcare, construction, sports, social action, training, tourism, culture and heritage and the environment. Recent winning ideas include a balcony with nesting boxes for birds conceived by an ecological product designer and made by a local brickyard. Another partnership, between a game studio and a research institute, came up with the idea for a serious game that helps children understand their cancer treatments.

Epopia, one of the most successful of all Tango&Scan winners, exemplifies the creative ideas and innovative technologies the initiative set out to foster. Designed to encourage children to read and write through play and imagination, the concept is a personalised written correspondence. Children are immersed in the story as both hero and part author and, thanks to intelligent editorial software, characters adapt to their wishes. Since Tango&Scan provided Epopia with funding to develop a prototype, the company has increased its turnover tenfold and secured its third round of fundraising.

Sustaining success

An evaluation of Tango&Scan in 2017 by the University of Strasbourg's faculty of economics and management showed that every €1 invested by the city produced at least €3 of revenue and that 25% of projects created new jobs. It also highlighted that the initiative creates new networks, spreads best practice and opens new channels of production for innovative products and services. Two out of three Tango&Scan projects resulted in significant new technical and scientific expertise and the same proportion reported new customers, entry into new markets or impetus to adopt a fresh strategy or business model.

With the evaluation confirming Tango&Scan's ability to help unlock the economic potential of creativity, CREACCRO and the city decided to develop ideas for increasing its impact and sustainability. These include an accompanying programme to boost the quality of applications and business development support for winning projects. Another priority is using Tango&Scan, which has already spread to Nancy, Metz and Mulhouse, as a way of developing relationships with other cities and countries. In May 2018, a multi-national event, LabEurope, sponsored by Tango&Scan stakeholders gave winners a platform to tell the world about their innovative achievements.

> ❝ Tango&Scan is helping industry and entrepreneurs get into the habit of bringing designers and other creatives on board at an earlier stage in their innovative projects so that they can make the most of creative thinking and methods. ❞
>
> **_Tamim Daoudi, designer and president-elect of CREACCRO_**

cities in action

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