

The good practice of Twente: project “Green and Edible City”

In recent years, the local governments in Twente in cooperation with nature organisations and educational institutions have taken increasing action to counteract the consequences of climate change, diminishing biodiversity, and to adapt to new circumstances and societal demands in the Region. One of the projects initiated in this regard is “Green and Edible City”. It started in the spring of 2017 under the initiative of Green Knowledge Portal Twente. The project studies the potential to make cities greener through promoting food production in urban areas, investigating different ways to transform urban buildings, infrastructure and parks into spaces for food production, bringing entrepreneurs from both rural and urban areas together. The project proves successful in raising awareness and providing solutions for important local challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation, and local food production. It has been piloted in the city of Goor and will be up-scaled into a living lab in Region Twente.

The “Green and Edible City” is a joint project between the municipality Hof van Twente and Green Knowledge Portal Twente. It addresses a challenge defined by the municipality which was transferred via the Green Knowledge Portal Twente to students of the Wageningen University. The proposals and recommendations developed by the students were partly directly implemented by the municipality, such as a digital tour through the city, planted bus stops, green parking lots, fruit trees, and new educational programs.

In addition to making cities greener, the project is also a showcase for the rural areas. It raises the awareness of important social issues in the Netherlands to different generations by bringing aspects of the rural areas into the urban environment, for example, the recent developments in the food industry. Scandals that have occurred in the food industry such as those seen by Fipronil activities force consumers to learn more about the origin of their food and the way it has been produced. While raising awareness, the bringing of food production landscaped spaces into urban areas also reduces the heat stress in cities and contributes to mitigating their environmental footprint.

Actors and innovative character

Within the “Green and Edible City” project, Green Knowledge Portal Twente works together with “Green Metropolis Twente: Programme Powerful Twente”. This cooperation provides a means to expand the project to the whole Region Twente. As a next step, the project will be up-scaled to the cities of Hengelo and Almelo, where over 50 students from the Wageningen University and the University of Applied Sciences Van Hall Larenstein will research the potential to make these cities greener and bring food production closer to residents. Local governments acknowledge the importance of the project and are prepared to commit to its activities.

The innovative character of the project lies in the way Green Knowledge Portal Twente brings practical questions from the field to students from different educational institutions initiating real triple helix cooperation. Green Knowledge Portal Twente serves as a “knowledge broker”. It creates knowledge crossovers by combining challenges defined by the local public authorities with different study programs and levels of education. The structure gives students the opportunity to learn in real and authentic situations, whilst also providing valuable new and innovative ideas to the local governments and businesses.



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Once a project is finalised, the Green Knowledge Portal Twente provides an evaluation and when necessary develops new tasks for further improvement together with educational institutions and local stakeholders. Topics that are currently in discussion for further research are “What percentage of the food that ‘Twentenaren’ consumes consists of local food?” and “How can the amount of locally consumed food be increased and the relationship between the rural area and the cities in Twente be strengthened?”



Success factors of the project “Green and Edible City”

Among the main success factors of the project is the cooperation of Green Knowledge Portal Twente with “Green Metropolis Twente: Programme Powerful Twente”. The communication is improved due to regular meetings and the existence of a large network of local actors. This makes it easier to obtain competences and to establish connections with new potential actors. The existing network gives Green Knowledge Portal the chance to further develop the project “Green and Edible City”.

Another factor of success is the methodology used by Green Knowledge Portal in bringing together practical questions from the field with educational intuitions; i.e. the students get acquainted with the field while municipalities searching for solutions for practical challenges get new and innovative ideas. This ensures that the project can be developed further with new and creative ideas, and that it can be duplicated in other cities or regions.

Moreover, the social issues addressed in the project are of significant importance for the population. The local residents can easily relate to these issues and this increases their willingness to follow and support the project’s activities.



“Green and Edible City” as an inspiration

The concept of “Green and Edible City” is straightforward and discusses practical issues that are of relevance for other countries. It can therefore be implemented easily in other cities in Twente or even in other regions in the Netherlands and abroad. The triple helix collaboration tested on the ground in Twente can serve as an example for an innovative and enthusiastic approach to address important local challenges by bringing public authorities, educational institutions and businesses to work together in living labs.