

## **Standaertsite – a public park developed by temporary use and inhabitant initiatives**

How to create a lively and engaging public space in a neighborhood that has too little of it? The Standaertsite old workshop area in the densely populated Ledeborg neighborhood seems to have one of the best answers. And it relies much on the city's practice and support of temporary use as tool for planning, engagement and co-creation.



### **Standaertsite – important public space goes bankrupt.**

Standaertsite is an old workshop territory in densely populated Ledeborg neighborhood of Ghent, which previously hosted a “Do it yourself” workshop where people could do their dirty, technical jobs or repair and build things. However, when it went bankrupt local inhabitants had a feeling that Standaertsite is an important public part of the neighborhood and shouldn't transform into something like a new housing or other ordinary real estate project. Locals were clear about one thing - the neighborhood is missing public spaces and this should remain one. So they formed an initiative “We can do it ourselves!”.



**City buys the area to develop it into a public park.**

As the City of Ghent recognized the lack of public spaces in Ledeberg, it was willing to join the vision of local inhabitants and work together with them. Therefore, city bought the area in November 2013 in order to develop it into green, open meeting space for local people.

**Opening area for temporary use to reimagine and co-create it together**

Our visit to the area and lunch in its central meeting place, a container based one room-cafeteria, was however short, but convincing of the energy of local people to claim their space. What does the neighborhood need? It is visible in the initiatives that the locals are providing to fill the space.



One day a week this little, homely space hosts an open soup cafeteria and neighborhood initiative meetings. It is run by two energetic women who wanted to experiment with creating their own little place as a side project of their worklife, but

now are seriously thinking about how to develop it into a permanent project. Other days of the week the space accommodates other neighbors – there are two days with theater training for youth from social risk background, there is a day for community school and dance lessons for toddlers and one day for coffee and pastries. Whatever the project applying, the ladies that run the space tell us that the only demand was that the container house is open for public. Yes, and the day we were visiting Standaertsite hosted also a peasants market.



**Temporary use as a tool for planning and co-creating.**

Standaertsite project is supported by Ghent's temporary use fund and is overseen by a steering committee from local inhabitants. The fund has given money to transport and to set up the container house here, to install water and to comply with all the city safety regulations. It didn't cost little, the budget from the fund was a bit more than 20.000 EUR. With this city aims both to support initiatives that address the needs of the neighborhood while its final development is still planned, as well as to engage inhabitants in reimagining the area and creating it together.



Is such investment worth it for the city? In the end 20.000 EUR might be nothing in comparison with the total investment in the physical infrastructure and construction. And therefore the question should go differently. Is 20.000 EUR, perhaps not even 5% of the budget of creating the public park here, a lot for really well planned, popular and loved space?