



Reflections after visit to Ghent

It could be my city...

Very first impression which Ghent made on me is that the city looks like Gdansk without II World War... I fell in love with a multitude of canals that cut through the cohesive buildings of the streets. The architectural integrity of the frontage, façades, materials and colors makes a huge impression.



Ghent (picture from: <https://www.internations.org>)



Gdańsk (picture from: <http://www.polskiekrajobrazy.pl>)

A story about a neighborhoods in Ghent...



What seemed to me the most interesting during a visit to Ghent is a developed system of local cooperation in districts. The model based on district managers allows for effective communication between the administration and the residents. The fact that each district has its own dedicated person makes it much easier to unravel actual local needs. We could see it during visits, especially in the place called *UCO ete*, where the idea of commons (community gardens) in the local dimension is practically realized.

UCO ete leaders (pic.: Michal Pielechowski)

It's always good to know what's in the drawers...

I also take home a reflection on legal instruments to support/regulate citizens initiatives.



Presentation by Yoko Gezels Nele Broekaert and Michiel Bonte, showed me that the city of Ghent has no special sophisticated legal regulations other than those we have in Gdansk. But only putting them in a coherent logic system we can clearly realize how many instruments we have to work in the topic of commons. What we have to do in Gdansk, what is our homework, is to identify all legal regulations regarding the activity of residents and build a transparent system of legal frameworks from them, and only then think about what kind of law is still missing.

Fingers crossed...

Last but not least, I keep my fingers crossed for the Sint-Jozef church experiment because I found it as a huge challenge on different fields, but worth a try:

- architectural – it is an empty church 😊
- maintenance, mainly heating - it is an empty church 😊
- to keep it open for the community – in large part Muslim - it is an empty church 😊
- to organize it as a common – risk of privatization.

Michał Pielechowski | City of Gdańsk | acting ULG coordinator | Gdańsk 7.06.2019