



MOVING OFFICE

CREATIVE GROWTH PILOT PROJECT

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Centre for Culture & Business
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1. Introduction and background

The Interreg 4 C project Creative Growth has three specific objectives:

- Improved and more effective policies on regional and local level through evidence-based policy making
- Improved business support services and solutions for the creative sector
- Increased knowledge on how creativity can be a catalyst for increased regional competitiveness

Spinderihallerne – Centre for Culture & Business, the project’s Danish partner, took the second of these as the starting point for its pilot activities.

The pilot project put emphasis on the importance of physical presence of networking activities. Many international network that already exists, appear to have their main focus on the virtual aspects. We pledge to “walk the talk” - to work the network instead of talking about it. Therefore, we are creating a new concept: Moving Office.

Basically, the idea with Moving Office is to assemble a chain of creative communities/studios/offices within the Creative network, where you can swop places and facilities with other creative entrepreneurs around the world.

Moving Office will as pilot enable workspaces between co-operative entrepreneurs in an international network. In this way, one can easily be working in Bologna one week and doing a project in Edinburgh or Tokyo the next. This enables and assists entrepreneurs to explore other communities, environments and countries in order to keep developing and professionalising their business. Thereby creating new ideas and growth, locally as well as globally.

It could be said that Moving Office is an entrepreneur’s “free ticket to the world” – as a common forum for exchanging thoughts, ideas and knowledge in a global framework.

The concept of Moving Office will be transferred to other European regions in order to develop an interregional network among entrepreneurs and incubators aimed at the creative sector.

The pilot project Moving Office will be led by Spinderihallerne - Centre for Culture and Business, Vejle Denmark.

Spinderihallerne - Centre for Culture & Business is an innovation environment that uses artistic and aesthetic skills to create professional and organisational development. Spinderihallerne host and develop a dynamic business environment with 50 creative and design-related entrepreneurs. It cooperates with public and private organisations, art, cultural- and knowledge institutions to bring development and innovation. It creates business development for established companies in the municipality of Vejle and the Region of Southern Denmark by strengthening the use of design, aesthetics and knowledge. The Centre serves as the development and inspiration unit for the municipality of Vejle within the areas of innovation, strategy and organisational development. Organisationally, the Centre is a department within the municipal administration.

www.spinderihallerne.dk

2. Aims and objective

Moving Office will exploit the opportunities for collaboration between international entrepreneurs to enhance innovation and growth, by creating an international network and community for creative entrepreneurs.

The mission is to make it more accessible for creative entrepreneurs from around the world to network and cooperate with each other - virtually as well as physically. This helps entrepreneurs to develop professional and international minded businesses, build up an extensive international network, inspire and learn from each other, create projects together, export abilities/products/projects to foreign companies and countries, obtain clients and collaborative relations from around the world, and become visible as a professional working culture.

To achieve this Moving Office aims to make it possible for creative entrepreneurs to swap office facilities between different incubators in shorter periods and access other creative networks and environments in other European regions.

Objectives:

- give the creative entrepreneurs the opportunity to explore new markets, learn about other processes and methods of working from other likeminded international entrepreneurs.
- help to strengthen the creative entrepreneurs in other regions in Europe and transfer knowledge on creative networks to less experienced regions.
- build closer relationships between international incubates and their advice services to allow for exchange of expertise and experience.
- improve and strengthen incubators in Europe and their physical environments as well as allowing for the development of better tailor-made business support mechanisms for the creative sector and transfer of knowledge for building strong creative networks.

Enrolling a full functional “Moving Office” concept across all transnational partners would require that all partners have well functional creative networks and creative incubators in their regions. However, during the development of the report and analysis carried out by the Thematic Working Group¹ on “Incubators” the evaluation showed that most incubators were generic or aimed at other specific areas. Only a few had dedicated incubators aimed at the creative sector.

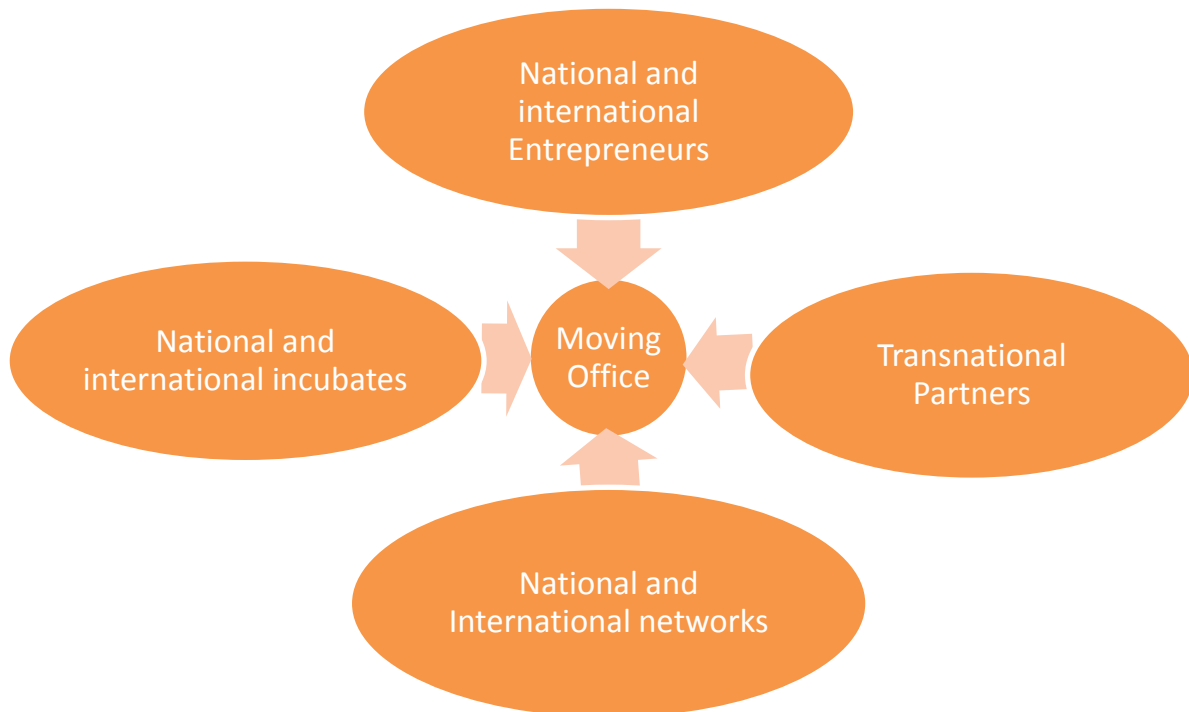
Based on these findings the pilot activities will construct the organisational framework of Moving Office. Creative Growth partners will provide contacts to national and regional incubators and assist the creation of a European map of incubators. Regional and other transnational partners will contribute to the pilot activities with interviews as well as input during workshops. Additionally, a number of minor office swaps will be carried out as case studies for the pilot project.

This long-term aim for the pilot project is to help to constitute an emerging new business support structure across borders.

¹ TWG on Incubators - Good practice activities on business support services and solutions through four thematic working groups (TWGs) on the topics access to finance, business networks, incubator facilities and science & industry relations. These activities were carried out within component 3 of the Creative Growth project: Benchmarking on business support services and solutions.

3. Involved partners and stakeholders

A wide variety of local, regional, national and international partners and stakeholders have been involved throughout the pilot project and contributed to pilot project as illustrated in the figure below.



Entrepreneurs

- Bo Virkelyst Jensen, addSoul Design Studio – Denmark
- Ruth Maria Kondrup, Kondrups Visuel Kommunikasjon – Norway
- Michael Fowler – Scotland
- Andrew Nagel, Developa – England
- Louise Nissen, Yellow Business – Denmark
- Tony Langford, Altonis Media – England
- Martino Chieffo, Matite Giovanotte – Italy



Photo: Dorthe Ferveile, Danish Design Centre

Incubators / Incubates

- Lene Lawaetz, Head of Spinderihallerne – Denmark
- Per Hein, Head of Slagteriet – Denmark
- Ulrik Jungersen, House of Design – Denmark

Transnational partners

- Asters S. Cons. p. A. – Italy
- CEEI Asturias – Spain
- Edinburgh Napier University – Scotland
- Regional Council of Southern Småland – Sweden

Networks

- Danish Design Centre – Denmark
- Designers Co-operation – Denmark
- European Creative Business Network – Belgium
- Cultural Enterprise Office – Scotland
- European Business and Innovation Centre – Belgium
- Romagna Creative District –Italy



4. Methodology and work process

The interest in creating an international network and community for creative entrepreneurs to enhance innovation and growth was developed as part of the initial Creative Growth project application.

TWG – Thematic Working Group

The pre-phase research and awareness process was carried out already during the thematic working group (TWG) on incubator facilities. This pre-phase research gave a crucial understanding of incubators and established the foundation for good cooperation between incubator spaces. Transnational partners provided contacts to national and regional incubators and assisted the creation of a European map of incubators. Additionally, they contributed to the results through desk research, online questionnaires, evaluation and discussions during three working group meetings, which took place during December 2009 and June 2010. The final report and results were presented in March 2011.

On the basis of the TWG findings and results the working methodology followed the following different phases:



Information gathering

Spinderihallerne carried out Information gathering and analysis, and exchanged knowledge and experiences between transnational partners during international seminars held in Edinburgh, Asturias, Vejle, Italy and Kaunas.



Office exchange

This activity involved actual exchange between incubators and allowed for evaluating and testing of the office swaps. It involved establishing communication channels as well as negotiating conditions and practices in exchange situations.



Interviews were carried out with entrepreneurs prior to the swap, during and after. This allowed for in-depth evaluation of the swaps between the stages:

Before

- Establishing contact
- Agreeing conditions
- Preparing office swap
 - Aims and objectives of the individual swap
 - Organising meetings with clients and companies of interest
 - Identifying common interest with entrepreneurs at the incubator
 - Telephone contact and/or skype interview with incubator

During

- Initial impression and experiences
- Expectations not meet / meet / meet fully

After

- Lessons learned
- Exchange of experiences
- Evaluation of aims and objectives
- Outcomes

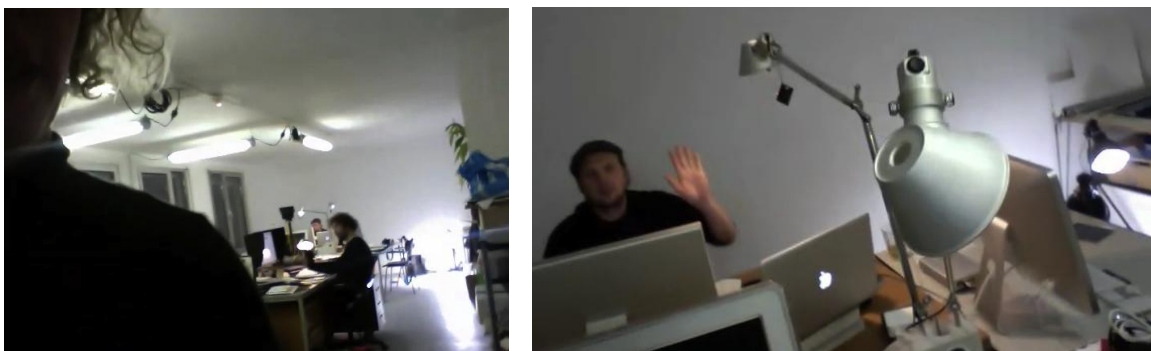


Photo: Skype interviews during office exchanges – Amsterdam and Berlin

Interviews

Interviews were split between stakeholders: entrepreneurs, incubates, networks and transnational partners.

All activities and interviews that have been carried out with stakeholders have been compiled in a video documentation, which support the pilot project findings and results.



Photo: Michael Fowler, Scotland and Ruth Marie Kondrup, Norway

For the proposal of a Moving Office model several critical points were taken into account and discussed among stakeholders:

- creative incubators – generic incubators
- incubators split according to branches/areas of expertise (fashion, IT, CCI², etc)
- level of information on incubators (business support, facilities, networks, companies)
- host function
- contract of office exchange – schema of office exchange
- formal – informal network of incubates
- financial funding/support – non financial/support
- cost – no cost for office exchange
- non - full 24/7 access to incubator facilities (personal keys and introduction to alarm setup)

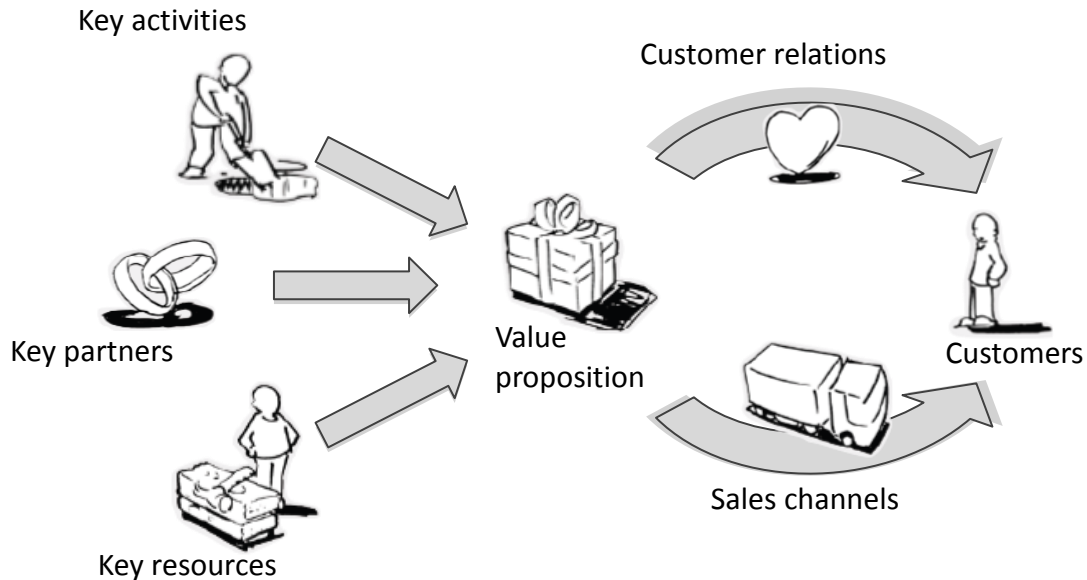


Photo: Ulrik Jungersen, Head of House of Design – Design Incubator

² Creative and Cultural Industry

At the same time a business model was developed to define key points and elements of the pilot project.

Business Model



Customers

- entrepreneurs – design related, CCIs, IT and innovation

Value proposition

- facilities - meeting rooms/office space/studios/workshop facilities in international locations
- an extensive international network

Sales channels:

- Primary websites www.moving-office.eu / www.creative.growth.eu
- Partner websites www.spinderihallerne.dk / www.houseofdesign.biz / etc
- PR through networks and through partner-incubators in Europe and Google maps

Customer relations

- The mind-set of the stakeholders are driven of being part of a professional working culture and all the benefits that it provides, both the intangible; the international network as well as the tangible; the facilities.

Key activities

- access to:
 - business support and specialist incubate services
 - export abilities/products/projects to foreign companies and countries
 - local knowledge and specialists
 - platform of competences and innovative networks
 - contacts to foreign companies, clients and collaborative relations

Key partners

- networks organisations
- international partner-incubates

Key resources

- incubators and facilities in the incubators

The model was validated with stakeholders through interviews. It was considered how the model could be optimised taking the critical points into consideration.



Photo: Lene Lawaetz, Head of Spinderihallerne – CCI incubator

Model transfer

On the basis of a transnational approach, the pilot project was presented at the Creative Growth Final Conference in Kaunas, Lithuania, 1. July 2011.

Spinderihallerne transferred the model to all the transnational partners and other participating business support actors within several workshops. The transnational partners were during the workshops, which were held as round tables presentations, able to reflect and discuss the findings and model of the pilot project. This allowed for in-depth discussions and opportunities for changing of ideas and experiences.

The model and concept of Moving Office was also transferred to transnational partners and actors within the creative sector and representatives from the EU Commission during the Creative Growth Breakfast Briefing held on 6th September 2011 in Brussels. The compiled report of recommendations from the Creative Growth project was distributed and presented during the briefing and Spinderihallerne held a presentation on the TWG findings and the pilot project model and results.

5. Outputs / outcomes

The interviews and input gathered from the pilot project indicates strong satisfaction with, and enthusiasm for the Moving Office concept.

The incubates identified a huge advantage with the concept both in terms of the advantages for the entrepreneurs within the individual incubator and the advantages for the individual incubate.

Advantages for incubates

The network of international incubates in Moving Office provide an opportunity where incubates are able to share experiences with incubates across borders, on:

- political and strategically level
- everyday challenges
- financial issues
- price structures
- support services
- good practices

The Moving Office network will provide an environment for incubates in which they can constantly learn and growth to improve their facilities and support services for the benefit of entrepreneurs within the incubators.

Through Moving Office the incubates are able to provide export advice service and access to new markets. They will be able connect entrepreneurs with key contacts, competences and specialist services across borders. Entrepreneurs will be able to borrow meetings room in any of the incubators that are part of Moving Office, which will allow the entrepreneur to expand their business national as well as internationally.

The network also provide a good selling point for new tenants – as the incubators does not just provide the entrepreneur/tenant with a local network but also an international network, which they become part of and can benefit from.



Photo: Per Hein, Head of Slagteriet – Incubator for growth companies

Advantages for entrepreneurs

Additionally, the entrepreneurs identified advantages with the concept of Moving Office both in terms of their personal advantage for growing their businesses, the advantages for their clients as well as their competitiveness advantages.

In general incubators provide a great opportunity for entrepreneurs to work together and for companies to overlap each other. Many single person companies benefit from being in an incubator and gain knowledge from the network as much as possible. To expand that into an international network is of great advantage in terms of benefiting from the local expertise, knowledge on the local area and cultural understanding. This would align out a lot of problems that could appear by not being locally when creating a global product or service for your own company or a client. Applying knowledge and experiences from other places into projects and customers products is essential if you wish to work on a strategic high level in an international and competitive market.

The Moving Office network provide the opportunity for entrepreneurs to benefit from:

- access to a new networks
- update on trends
- likeminded companies
- being pushed to growth and expanding new markets
- access to competences
- time saved through sharing knowledge with con-colleagues
- knowledge on the local environment
- team feeling – being part of something bigger
- input into what it means to be a business
- insight into different branches (design/fashion/etc.)
- meeting people who have in-depth knowledge into an area that you are developing products/ services within
- share other peoples skills or inspiration

Nothing can beat the live experience!

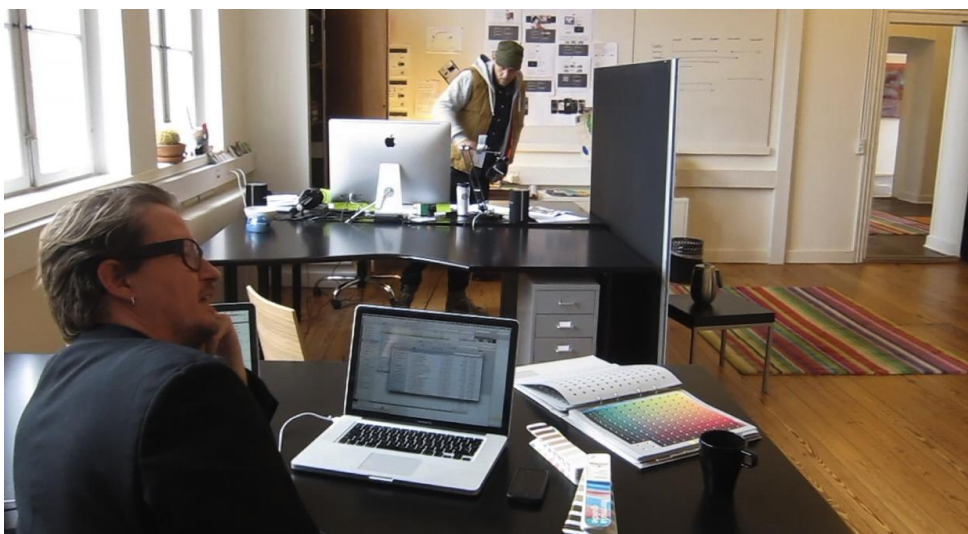


Photo: Entrepreneurs at House of Design – Design incubator

Other outputs

The incubates can assist the office exchange and the entrepreneur:

- establish meetings with the right contacts and companies
- inform about cultural differences entrepreneurs need to be aware off
- open up doors and establishing contact through their local knowledge and network
- provide local contacts to accommodation, print services, contacts of interest, etc.
- make preparation for the entrepreneurs exchange or visit
- operate as a host or appoint a host among the companies in the incubator

To allow the incubator to provide the above services, it requires that the incubators have a certain amount of knowledge of the entrepreneur. This is only possible through a questionnaire and contact between the incubators and the individual entrepreneur prior to the office exchange. By enabling this there is a much higher level of success and actual potential outcome from the office exchange. Particularly in terms of providing business support structures across borders.

Some incubators may charge a fee for the office exchange, where as others may not. It all depends on the individual incubate, as they differ in the services they provide, their location – micropolis vs metropolis, etc.



Photo: Jens Bøgetoft, Projectleder of Designers Corporation, Spinderihallerne – CCI incubator

6. Reflections and recommendations

To develop the full potential of the Moving Office concept it is essential that incubates know each other and establish a co-incubate relationship. Personal contact within the individual incubate is necessary - both in terms of developing the network and to benefit from the potential of the network. On a very practical level the incubate need to ensure that they send the entrepreneur to the right incubate, with the right network of businesses, services and so on. Otherwise it is very unlikely that incubates will take part in arranging and preparing the exchange/office swap or draw on their local contacts and networks.

To overcome this the level of information on the incubators need to be high, personal relations need to be established and yearly incubate meetings will need to take place.

Entrepreneurs also require a level of knowledge of the incubators to use the opportunities that the Moving Office concept provides. A level of visibility is required and level of Information of the network that is associated with the incubator; meaning the companies in the incubator and people that operate in the building as well as the focus area of the incubator. Otherwise it is very unlikely that the entrepreneurs will actually take the step further to fulfil the experience of the office swap opportunities.

The Moving Office concept has a huge advantage, as it does not only operate on a virtual level, where a lot of things are known to disappear when they only operate in virtual networks. Face-to-face you establish a personal relationship where it is easier to make an agreement and actually use the contact again later in your professional life. You have to meet personal to make it work!

Transferability

The pilot project has been documented in a video documentation, which is available to any body and entity interested in the Moving Office concept. The video documentation is available on the Creative Growth partner website and transnational partners and stakeholders, who which to have the video link available at their website.

The video is a documentation of the work processes and activities carried out in the pilot project and which describes the Moving Office concept and contain parts of the interviews that have been carried out with stakeholders.

7. Conclusion

This pilot project has been stimulating and a rewarding exercise. In keeping with the aims of the Creative Growth project, Spinderihallerne – Centre for Culture & Business, has been able to open up for an opportunity to provide support services across borders through incubators in Europe.

8. Annexes

TWG report on Incubators, containing research and study based on 27 incubators, March 2011

Creative Growth Final Conference - presentation of TWG on Incubators and recommendations,
Creative Growth Final Conference – presentation on Moving Office pilot project,
Kaunas 30th June and 1st July 2011