

Neighborhood Power for renewable energy

→ GHENT, BELGIUM

KEYWORD: COMMUNITY ENERGY; ENERGY POVERTY

DURATION: Since 2018

WHO: City Council, citizens, energy cooperatives, distribution system operator, university, social protection association

BUDGET: Unknown

SUMMARY

In 2018 the city of Ghent initiated a participatory process engaging different local stakeholders that launched the “Buurzame Stroom” (Neighbourhood Power in English) pilot scheme. This project has been organised with the collaboration of different partners: Ghent University, two energy cooperatives, a social protection association and the local distribution system operator. “Buurzame Stroom” aims to increase the **production of local renewable energy** in Dampoort-Sint-Amandsberg neighbourhood by installing as many solar panels as possible and distributing the costs and revenues fairly in the community.

GOALS

- Maximize the potential for locally generated energy in the neighbourhood;
- Make Dampoort-Sint-Amandsberg a green energy district by installing around **5000 m² of solar panels** by the end of 2019;
- Produce ecological, social and economic benefits by making **solar energy affordable** and profitable to a large group of stakeholders and by optimising energy production at the local level;
- Facilitate a collective and participatory approach promoting a **sense of community** in the neighbourhood.



Credits: Buurzame Stroom

HOW IT WORKS

- The project has been engaging residents of the area with various profiles including **vulnerable groups**. It has been considering different types of buildings with different ownership structures.
- Participants in the pilot project can invest themselves or rely on an external financier. They can “equally share the costs and benefits without having to expand the present electricity grid”.

“Without Neighbourhood Power, I would not have thought that solar panels were an affordable option for me. I quickly got a view of the real costs for an installation tailored to my consumption.”

→ **Buurzame Stroom Participant**

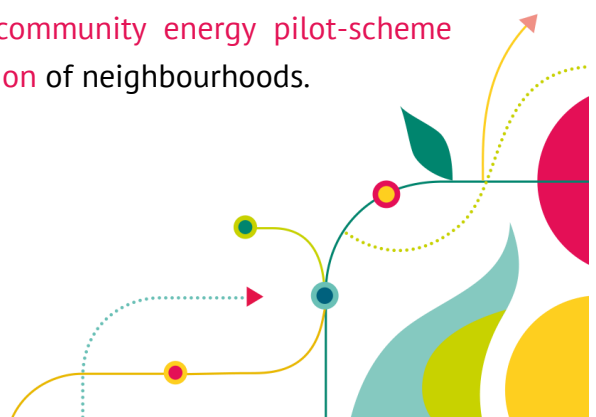
- Residents can choose to install solar panels on their roofs. If they decide not to, they can still register to participate to experiments on the energy network of the future - “WiseGRID” (e.g. digital ‘smart’ meters, home batteries, etc.).

The different partners of the project play different roles:

- The **Municipality of Ghent** is coordinating the project, initiating collaborations with multiple stakeholders and initiatives and mediating potential tensions arising among the different partners of the project;
- The **two energy cooperatives** provide engagement opportunities to residents. Ecopower (the largest energy cooperative in Belgium) plays the role of aggregator, empowering households to improve their knowledge on their energy consumption through demand response management via smart meters and open data applications. EnerGent sells photovoltaic panels to the residents and supporting them in investing in solar power production;
- **Ghent University** is a neutral contributor providing advice and knowledge;
- The **social protection association** engage the most vulnerable groups in the neighbourhood such as migrant families, inhabitants in transit and elderly people.

TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL

The “Buurzame Stroom” project represents an innovative **community energy pilot-scheme** supporting a **social, economic and environmental transformation** of neighbourhoods.



The project represents an important experimentation supporting the creation of multi-actor collaborations and the development of new frameworks, regulations and business models to produce affordable and renewable local energy. The Municipality of Ghent has been playing a key role in initiating and maintaining collaborations and partnerships and integrating technical solutions with a participatory governance approach.

MORE INFORMATION

[Buurzame stroom website](#) (in Dutch)

[Ghent Klimaat stad website](#) (in Dutch)

