

Startup City Summit

10.05.2019

TNW Conference /Amsterdam

Summary of Roundtable Discussions

On May 10th city representatives from all over the world came together at TNW conference for the Startup City Summit. Together they discussed the latest trends in global (startup) ecosystem building and shared their experiences and ideas of how to move things to the next level. In the following, there is a brief summary of major take aways which we hope will help to get started on new initiatives.

Since we believe that ecosystem building is a process and not finished with a one-time event, we want to encourage you to also join the **Movers & Shakers Summit in Cologne this year during [PIRATE Summit \(June 26th\)](#)**. Our friends of the PIRATE TEAM will pick up many of the discussed topics and put a special focus on **the role of governments as lead customers** and **how to get started as a city** ([Register here for free](#))

Roundtable 1: Activating the ecosystem on female entrepreneurship & inclusivity

Although the number of female founders is on the rise, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to empower women to become entrepreneurs and start their own business. In this roundtable-discussion participants worked focussed on highlighting the relevance of this topic and came up with concrete measures they consider as best practices and can actively increase the numbers of female founders.

1. Cities must acknowledge that female entrepreneurship is a topic that needs concrete actions

Although it should be seen obvious by now, it is still necessary to put the topic of female entrepreneurship on the agenda and create awareness amongst policymakers that there is a need for structural changes to increase female founders

2. Cities increase the numbers of female founders by creating support structures

A major obstacle regarding starting your own business is missing support. Activities that focus on women and their life circumstances should be actively supported. Such activities should include improvement in childcare, inclusive co-working spaces or VC's focused on female entrepreneurship.

3. Cities should act as and also promote role models

As one of the most promising activities to boost female entrepreneurship, participants identified the relevance of role models. Not only should governments give those female founders a voice that potential female entrepreneurs in their city can relate to, they should also function as a best practice of how women can be integrated into an organization.

4. Cities should develop a clear strategy of how to boost female entrepreneurship and not only rely on individual measures.

Instead of only supporting single events and activities that exist within a city, governments should have clear and measurable sets of goals when it comes to female entrepreneurship. Knowing your goal will help to evaluate your progress.

5. Cities should build platforms where women can connect amongst each other but also with relevant players

It's important for women to exchange their experiences amongst each other to build a common understanding of the challenges that are out there. To support structures that allow women to meet should, therefore, be a priority for governmental activities. Nevertheless, there needs to be a platform for exchange where women and men come together not as male and female but as founder and founder/ founder and VC etc.

Roundtable 2: Creating a clear ecosystem identity & branding on a global scale

When it comes to the identity of ecosystems there is one major take away: A clear value proposition in form of specialization is a much smarter way to promote your ecosystem than trying to be good at everything. Governments should use their birdseye perspective on the local startup scene to identify closely with the players of their ecosystem what makes their ecosystem unique and focus their activities on promoting this.

This does not mean to leave out any players but to position yourself in a global context there needs to be one (a few) focus topics your ecosystem is associated with.

Roundtable 3 + Roundtable 8: Sub-sector; vertically focused programs policies and partnerships

The support of vertical programs/policies (e.g. building an Insurlab Initiativelike in Cologne, Germany – which supports and aligns the activities of the insurance/insurtech scene) is a promising way to develop a specialization (see Roundtable 2) for your ecosystem.

A first takeaway from the roundtable discussion is the realization that every ecosystem is unique in its way, so there is no “one size fits all” solution to building vertical focussed programs.

Nevertheless, this doesn't mean that there are no proven actions that can be taken to make subsector activities work. There are three concrete actions governments can take:

- 1. Governments as lead customers**

To boost subsector activities governments can strategically support initiatives and programs by becoming a major customer. By that they help to overcome initial (financial) bottlenecks while getting the chance to give relevant input and learn about the industry demands.

- 2. Build mentorship structures**

When it comes to growing subsector activities it is extremely helpful to integrate existing knowledge and experience into the setup process. By including experts from established industries in combination with mentors from in and outside the ecosystem who gained experience in building similar activities, newly founded initiatives will avoid known mistakes and deliver tangible results much faster.

- 3. Integrate existing initiatives into the process**

Similar to point two, this advice builds on the logic of using existing knowledge and resources. By pooling (non-profit) initiatives and giving them clear roles in the process of building subsector initiatives not only more resources are at hand, but there is also a much better recognition, visibility and acceptance within the startup ecosystem.

Roundtable 4 + Roundtable 6 (Round 2): (International) Talent attraction and retention

One of the key challenges across startup ecosystems around the world is the attraction of (international) talent. Within the discussion, there were a variety of ideas that can help to increase the number of talent in an ecosystem.

- 1. Educational Programs**

First and foremost increasing the availability and variety of educational offers is seen as the number one driver of talent within ecosystems. Governments should increase their support for existing public and private programs but also scout for existing programs of other ecosystems and support them to start their activities in their ecosystems

- 2. Integration Offers for those who want to come back**

Especially small/young ecosystems experience an increased migration of talent into larger/ more mature ecosystems. Nevertheless, there is a great chance to win such talents back later in their career. If governments offer attractive relocation offers for such individuals they not only move back to their place of origin but also bring business with them. Either by relocating their head offices or a specific department. Relatives that are affected by such changes are also a potential source for talent

- 3. Market your ecosystem's USP**

To compete with our ecosystems around the world, it's important to highlight why one ecosystem is more attractive than the other. To do so it's worth spending time to work on an ecosystems Unique Selling Proposition (USP) and actively promoting this/these one(s) to show potential talent what they can expect.

Note: Not only economic factors are relevant here: Way of Life, Cultural Programs, etc. might influence somebody's career plans.

Roundtable 5 and Roundtable 7: Helping startups and scaleups go global + Regional and Global Networks

In a world of globalized business activities, startups/scaleups don't limit their activities to a specific region. For that reason, one of the key challenges governments can support is the expansion into new geographical regions. A (startup) ecosystem that is well connected around the world, therefore, brings major benefits to its companies.

A great ways to connect ecosystems amongst each other are **Strategic City Partnerships with Delegation Trips**

To help startups and scaleups to enter new markets, governments can actively build partnerships with cities that are adding value to the specific characteristics of their local ecosystem. By creating reoccurring low barrier touchpoints between ecosystems, startups and established companies can learn about the different regions and industries without high expenditures for market evaluation activities. Such activities may include organizing dedicated events in the given regions and the organization of delegation trips where selected startups that then have a chance to experience the ecosystem of a partner city. One example for such an initiative can be the cooperation of the City of Cologne together with SoSa in Tel Aviv ([link](#)).

To accelerate such activities governments should consider installing a **Tech Ambassador who** is actively promoting such activities and also helps to prepare **soft landing packages** for startups.