



URBAN LIVING LAB

EUREKA EUROPEAN URBAN REGENERATORS KNOWLEDGE ALLIANCE

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R.5.1. - URBAN LIVING LAB

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Abstract:	The EUREKA Training Program has mixed the theoretical and practical approached towards the urban innovation developing a curriculum around the urban living lab approach in which the students from the 4 national clusters have emerged themselves, discovering area and issues in their city and working towards prototyping parts of interventions following and implementing tools from design thinking to empathy maps.
Authors:	All Cluster of students from the EUREKA training program in Italy, The Netherlands, Romania and Spain.

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The Following pages collect the descriptions of the urban living labs made directly by the groups of students composing the different national clusters.

AMSTERDAM: The Bajeskwartier

URBAN LIVING LAB PERSONAL ROADMAP

1. Challenge exploration

a.) Action research

- Conversations with AM, municipality, stakeholders at Bajes
- Exploring the area / urban Context
- Defining the challenge (with the help of Theory of change)

2. Exploring

a.) Action research

- Interview each stakeholder
- Collaborative sessions with stakeholder in the area
- executing lowkey interventions to test assumptions and ideas, triggering participation

b.) Desk research

- Deep dive on most important concepts linked to research question

- Case study exploration

c.) Stakeholder mapping

- Continuous research on stakeholders and the area and capturing it within a stakeholder mapping

3. Ideating

- Redefining the challenge
- Planning the outputs: an event and a visual map of the stories collected within the area
- interventions: emotional dumpground station, collecting stories through sounds/ recordings, games, keywords, images, future letters
- geocaching

4. Prototyping

a.) Group 1 (event)

- design event in collaboration with Pakhuis and start prototyping map

b.) Group 2 (map)

- elaborating the gathered stories and materials in a visual map format

5. Impact & Reflections

a.) Group 1

- visitors and speakers continued the conversation. The event created a ripple effect and triggered more talks on the importance of authenticity in storytelling

b.) Group 2

- evolving map that can be extended online which familiarises residents and visitors with the area in an authentic way.



The sessions in Timisoara about scaling down and storytelling helped us make steps in scaling down our challenge from:

Healthy city > Social Infrastructure > Storytelling, with every step being instrumental to defining the following ones. We then identified stories and decided on bringing up authentic voices of the area as a task we could actually work on.

[Mural board](#) was used to map the stakeholders, map out the approach and use it as a research ground.

THE CHALLENGE

In our case we have been focusing on **the Bajeskwardier** - an emerging district with a compelling transformation: going **from a former prison site that was closed in 2016 to what aims to become the most healthy neighbourhood of Amsterdam.**

This promise of course sounds extremely compelling - **but what exactly does that look like in real life?**

But what does a “healthy neighbourhood” mean? A broad definition that is agreed upon defines it as a combination of the **physical environment - the “hardware”** (infrastructure, public spaces, greenery and the social infrastructure to support it, the so called “software”. The people and communities that make use of the city every day, the way they program. public space. Their activities dictate whether a space is useful or not.

While the physical hardware structure was taken care of by the developer, we took a closer look at the social structures that are indispensable when creating a healthy neighbourhood. Even though the area is in full development, we have been seeing existing social networks that took time to form, but haven't been fully acknowledged. The local Dna hasn't been taken into account in the narrative of the area to come

However, the **story that is being told** about this neighbourhood in transition **is imperative to the social infrastructure** that is yet to be formed.

It **immediately impacts the sense of belonging** among existing residents and those to come.

- “Do I belong here?”
- Who is my neighbour?
- Is this where I want to live in the future?
- What is this area all about?”

These are questions that can be creatively integrated in marketing communications for new urban development projects. BUT are rarely included.

Challenge: How can we build social infrastructure to create a healthy neighbourhood around Bajeskwartier?

CHALLENGE OWNERS

Our focus has been two-fold:

1. On understanding the context and challenging the stakeholders most benefiting positively from the development to open up a conversation about inclusive development of Bajeskwartier. These included the developer AM, the Amsterdam East Municipality and Hotel Jansen.

2. In parallel, we have been mostly exploring the perspectives and stories of the local communities that would be the most impacted by the Bajeskwartier development, especially in more of a negative way that meant relocation, erasing or fading their local stories in the process of rebranding / gentrification. These included the residents in neighbourhoods around Bajeskwartier (e.g., Amsteldorp), key organisations (Bajesdorp, church, school), local businesses currently in transition.



STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED

Pakuis de Zwijger Final Event

- Co-organiser: Pakhuis de Zwijger
- Speakers: AM, Bajesdorp, Reframing Studio, Bijlmer Renaissance

Bajeskwartier Map & Intervention

Collecting of stories that were previously untold by tapping into local stakeholders and residents through our prototype event in June.

- Local businesses and organisations
- Residents in neighbourhoods around Bajeskwartier (Amsteldorp, Bajesdorp, etc.)
- Full list of stakeholders involved: <https://sites.google.com/view/storiesofbajes/content-downloads?authuser=0>

THE URBAN INTERVENTION IDEATION OF POSSIBLE PROTOTYPES

Prototype 1: Map of existing social infrastructures and stories

- First step was collecting the stories from the places and actors in Bajeskwartier with an action research intervention in the neighbourhood that allowed us to gather emotional personal stories (emotional dumpground), views on the future (letters to the future), discovery of the neighbourhood (placemaking game) from residents around Bajeskwartier
- The data was then captured as stories of the neighbourhood into a living document and an online map
- We explored different ideas such as doing an open exhibition with the stories, sending stories via mail to the different actors in the neighbourhood to put them in contact

- We settled on the idea of a map with a physical and virtual component that would serve our role as outsider, observers and facilitators of Connections in this neighbourhood

Prototype 2: Event on authentic storytelling in urban development projects

- Mapping (and reaching out to) possible speakers and discussing their contribution together
- Rethinking the storyline of the evening, based on speakers availability and goal
- Writing the script in a way that is clear for an audience which is new to the topic
- Briefing everyone involved
- Including the map in the presentation and making sure both groups contributions come together seamlessly
- Inviting people to the event via LinkedIn and email etc. (promotion)

TOOLS USED IN THE PROCESS

- Brainstorming in collective setting to identify different types of executions that would respond to the challenge
- Mural mapping of all ideas and prioritisation based on potential for impact
- Desk research to identify the needed materials, resources etc to bring the ideas to life as prototype
- Planning session with the team to link the prototypes to the short and long term impact on the challenge and stakeholders engaged
- Theory of Change to define the challenge and desired goal for the project
- Gamified tools to collect stories with physical interactions - e.g. gamification, emotional dump ground, letters of the future

- Expert session on skills building for urban innovation process
- Exploration of case studies on the ground to serve as inspiration
- Learn-do experience in Timisoara prototyping a small intervention
- Online communications platforms (WhatsApp) to allow us to stay in the loop

MAIN INTERVENTION

Both the event and the map are considered our main interventions. They complete each other.

Group 1. - Event

- **Concept:** collaborating with pakhuis de Zwijger, learning how to create a program of constructive dialogue on a topic of our choice. Discussing the role of storytelling as a crucial tool in creating a sense of belonging for neighbourhoods in transition with experts from the field.
- **Roles:** copywriter(scriptwriter), speakers, event organiser.

• **Process:**

1. **step:** Setting a goal of the evening, Deciding on the theme and storyline of the evening, making a long list of speakers of different disciplines (combination of two triple helix: Triple helix 1: Big companies, research/educational institutions, government, Triple helix 2: SMEs, NGO's, Active Citizens and Citizen groups), and a fitting moderator
2. **step:** Making the list of the speakers short, Invite Speakers
3. **step:** Prepare Interviews, conduct interviews with confirmed speakers, translate the output of the interview into a script for the moderator of the evening
4. **step:** Prepare communication materials in the pakhuis format (Setup Program page on pakhuis event including an image, bio of the speakers and short description of the event) Set up promotional packages for social media platforms including a short video and posters
5. **step:** Communicate the script with the speakers and the moderator
6. **step:** Send out last invitations
7. **step:** Have the event



Group 2. - Map

- **Concept:** the map visualises stories and stakeholders of people and organisations (present and past) in Bajeskwartier. The objectives are to 1) building a stepping stone platform to piece together a visual representation of the evolving identity of the area 2) shed light on authentic stories of the area, 3) present the neighbours to the neighbours in a fun and visual way, 4) foster knowledge and connection through exploration, 5) making a buildable work, that people can add to make it a collective work of which people feel ownership of.
- **Roles:** designers, content writers, editors, web designers, creatives, organisers
- **Process:**
 1. **step:** first elaborating the collected stories and filtering/editing the material, also taking into account the old and new phases when making a selection
 2. **step:** Edit the text of the selected stories & simultaneously kicking off the design process by designing the icons of each place
 3. **step:** Designing an user experience around the map: including challenges/ reflection exercises and games, checking the radius of each place, making sure it's an open format (online and offline)
 4. **step:** Putting everything together into the different formats: the map, the website, the postcards and the stickers
 5. **step:** PRINT!

6. **step:** intervention on-site, presenting the map in a big print, inviting people, and hand out prints and stickers to passants and local

LESSONS LEARNED / REFRAMING THE CHALLENGE

Learnings:

- Breaking down this abstract huge topic of health at the session in Timisoara: learning to make things smaller and smaller in order to create more tangibility and pick focus areas
- Stories are instrumental for creating an inclusive DNA of a neighbourhood and the process that needs to be taken into account when building a neighbourhood
- Shining the light on the goal of collecting stories and navigating the different agendas of stakeholders involved in a process
- Importance of negative stories that are the ones that stay with people longer, being important for the sense of belonging but they are put to the side because they are difficult to navigate
- People are happy to be seen and recognised, all the residents and actors were embracing the idea of being part of something bigger - the stories made them proud to feel they come together with others in a neighbourhood that otherwise didn't offer them this connection.
- We've seen eagerness to continue collecting and sharing the stories of Bajeskwartier

- Answering the rephrased challenge (see below):
- We need more, diverse stories; apart from the new marketing story from a project developer. Old and new.
- Giving space to conflict in stories is important
- It's important to give the diverse stories a podium in a visible / visual way
- Work in a participative and horizontal way
- Storytelling is an important tool / sharing stories is important because it shapes the DNA of a neighbourhood > social cohesion.
- Storytelling provides the opportunity for local stakeholders and residents to talk to each other

Rephrased challenge:

- How might we uncover and give space to stories to shape a collective identity of a neighbourhood in transition?

Potential questions/actions to explore:

- Finding ownership from one stakeholder to continue creating the context for collecting stories in the neighbourhood
- Further collection of personal stories of residents in the neighbourhood through the online living map that we designed associated with the physical one
- Additional layer to the map through the design ways for people to interact and create bonds as activities and games
- Explore deeper with the municipality and AM how the dynamics between actors

involved in the process of storytelling can be reimagined between private and public interests - what role could stories play in processes of urban development?

FAILURES AND LEARNINGS

- Learning to truly listen and distill information that is less openly presented
- Realizing our position as an outsider - benefit as connector in a space where actors didn't know each other, but also the limitation of not being able to actually build a community when not being a member of the community physically
- Building a solid team through sharing circles and team building helped us achieve better results (despite being scattered over many places)
- Difficult to define a challenge and navigate an uncertain and abstract topic - being lost while continuing to work through it
- One step forward, two steps back - didn't assign strict roles and the loose structure was very difficult to keep momentum
- Role of flat communications to keep everyone in the loop with different engagement levels from everyone in the team
- Space for everyone to go in and out with different levels of energy - benefit of being present without pressure for showing up
- Share the load - splitting the work into smaller groups to make everyone be involved and feel more manageable

BILBAO: Zorrotzaurre area



URBAN LIVING LAB PERSONAL ROADMAP

1. RESEARCH PHASE

Zorrotzaurre, located in Bilbao, Spain, is an island that encapsulates a complex urban landscape. What used to be an industrial peninsula is today an island that holds a diverse range of activities and facilities such as a climbing sports center, cultural hubs or universities.

Zorrotzaurre faces the common challenge of post-industrial cities of working around long-term development plans, and it becomes visible in the contrast between neighborhood activism and the long period of neglect from the municipality which is now rapidly taking over in the form of construction.

1.1 Mapping

To grasp the complexities of Zorrotzaurre, the research phase of our Urban Living Lab

(ULL) started by studying news articles, maps, and local archives to understand the island's transformation over time, and subsequently moved onto visiting local stakeholders and getting a grasp of the past, present and future of the island through their stories.

a.) Online

Most of the work done initially consisted of mapping existing initiatives present in the island, creating a timeline of events related to the island, and collecting news articles related to Zorrotzaurre. Our main tool for this stage was Miro, which gave the creative space to gather all our findings in a visual way.

Figure 1 and 2 illustrate some of our findings in Miro.

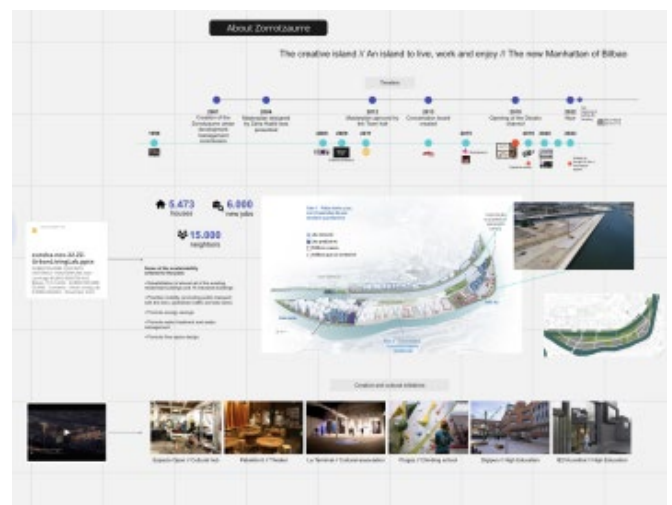


Figure 1

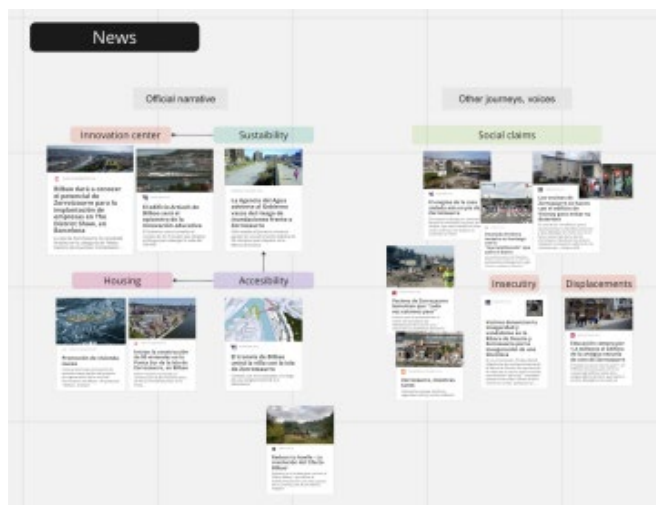


Figure 2

Mapping the stakeholders was crucial as it allowed us to identify long-standing residents, newcomers, city officials, developers, and activists. Looking into news articles was crucial as well, as it allowed us to gain a better idea of the current views and perspectives on the island that were communicated to broader audiences.

b.) Onsite: Meeting stakeholders

Our hosts from Espacio Open and Deusto organized a few opportunities for us to meet some of the stakeholders. Figure 3 illustrates some pictures taken during these moments.

We met with a representative of a housing developer that is active in the area (Grupo Mariatomasa), as well as one of the managers from the Mondragon University which just inaugurated a brand new campus near the center of the island. During that same day, we also met with a number of creatives - craftsmen and culture professionals who regularly come to the island to work in their studio inside the

framework of the Artiach complex (the same that hosts Espacio Open).

During these few interviews we were able to grasp the feelings and future prospects of people who came to the island in recent times, either to do business or to take advantage of unused spaces and promote cultural activities that would serve all citizens of Bilbao. Nevertheless, we were still missing the side of people that had been living there for more than a few years, or maybe for their whole life, but we finally got to meet with them some months after, at the beginning of the summer in our in-person June cluster meeting.

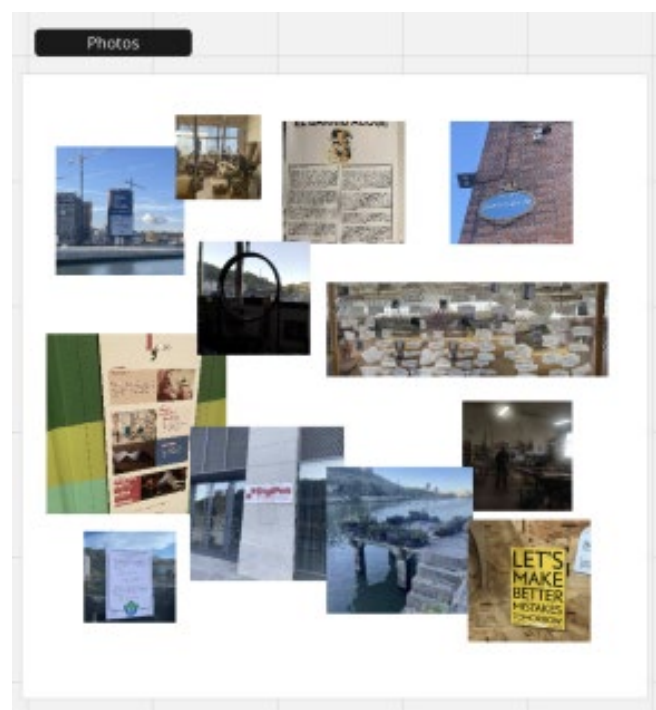


Figure 3

1.2 Difficulties

From early on we had the intention of talking to locals, that is, people that had been living in the area for some time, but our hosts and tutors kept reminding us that many of them were suffering from ‘participation fatigue’ caused by the many different initiatives started by the administration to involve locals in the transformation of the island. These past initiatives turned out to be quite useless, and so we were warned that the locals didn’t want to spend more time talking with strangers about their life and expectations, although we never really experienced this. We tried to imagine what we could do to influence any small part of the transformation process through temporary interventions and/or different activities, but we were constantly redirected to spend more time identifying a specific challenge before thinking about possible solutions.

Between January and March we got stuck as we were constantly asked to focus on defining the challenge or problem of the area. Even though we proposed some intervention ideas to understand better the challenges of the island from the point of view of locals, we were always brought back into the dialogue space and asked to reflect on the challenge or problem we were trying to address.

It was only after Timisoara that we decided to take more action. Timisoara offered us time to work in person and pinpoint how we wanted to tackle the challenge that we were observing as externals to the island. During our final meetings on-site we finally came back to interviews and got to take them to the streets, talking with inhabitants, students coming to the area, and workers.

1.3 Focus

The process of analyzing the data from our first meetings allowed us to form opinions and get a general picture. This was an enriching process, as many of our team had never seen this area of the city. But it rapidly became very clear that the transformation process taking place in Zorrotzaurre was influencing many different topics, making it hard to point out a single one to work on.

We came to the realization that one of the biggest problems of the island was the dissemination of an “official” narrative on the long-term development of Zorrotzaurre, including plans and messages that overtook all the other narratives of the island, namely those created by cultural initiatives and the experiences of the locals.

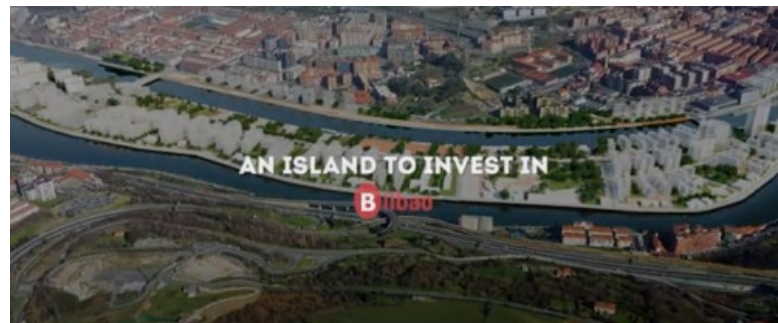


Figure 4

In Timisoara we presented this as the challenge which we wanted to try to tackle as urban innovators. See Figure 5.

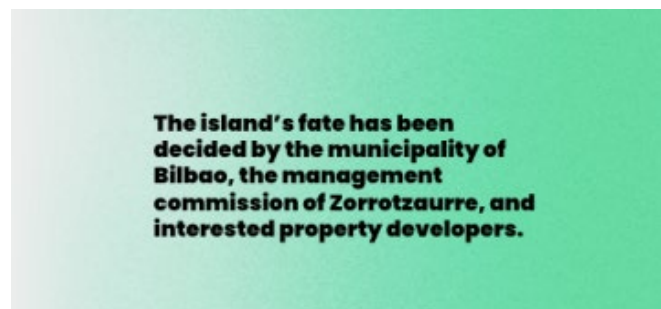


Figure 5

2. CHALLENGE

Residents' voices, especially long-time inhabitants, are not being taken into account in the narrative of Zorrotzaurre even though they can play a vital role in defining the island's identity and future. The official narrative of Zorrotzaurre, driven by municipal urban development goals, does not integrate the demands of the local communities. It doesn't include the voice of people and initiatives present in the island. For this reason we wanted to start giving them one, and our challenge was formulated as:

Challenge

How can we visibilize the alternative narratives so the island can be understood in a more holistic way?

Figure 6

We share Almudena Garrido's view (see her article "Al participar se hace ciudad en el entretanto. Urbanismo emergente en Bilbao", published in Cuadernos de Vivienda y Urbanismo, Vol. 11, N°. 22, published in 2018)

that transformative narratives are needed as they can allow us to move from mega-project-based city planning to movement-based forms of city planning. Stories are vitally important, yet we have a huge shortage of stories.

Our interest in contrasting the official narrative with local ones grew from the moment we realized how many different stories and perspectives the island housed, yet how few of them became visible. This urged us to get in direct contact with the neighbors to have first-hand knowledge of their stories, experiences and testimonies that would help us in this process of giving visibility to them.

2.1 Challenge owners

The stakeholders most affected by the fact that the island's fate has been decided and communicated through the official narrative are without doubt the locals inhabiting the island, as well as those that have a connection to it (they may not have lived on the island but have been visiting it and engaging with it). The challenge of giving visibility to the alternative narratives of the island should be owned by the municipality, the management commission and developers, but for this project we have taken on this responsibility as urban innovators. Those most positively affected by the challenge will be locals, as important questions and perspectives that aren't brought up through the official narrative can gain visibility.

2.2 Stakeholders Involved

In integrating the different stories and perspectives into the official narrative, a diverse array of stakeholders hold pivotal roles:

- **Local Community:** Lifelong inhabitants possess the deepest connection to Zorrotzaurre's heritage. Their concerns revolve around preserving their neighborhood's character, maintaining their quality of life, and safeguarding their historical and architectural treasures. In fact, locals refer to the island as "La Ribera de Deusto" or "Erribera" in Euskera instead of using the term "Zorrotzaurre", which shows their differences with the official narrative.
- **Cultural Groups:** Dedicated organizations work to safeguard cultural and historical heritage, advocating for the protection and integration of historical sites and structures in development plans by developing activities that can be engaged by both the inhabitants of the island and visitors that come to enjoy them.
- **City Authorities and Urban Planners:** Municipal officials and developers drive transformation, focusing on development projects, infrastructure enhancement, and economic growth. They navigate the complex task of balancing these goals with historical and cultural preservation, often amidst budget constraints and diverse interests. It is paramount that city authorities are able to take into account the history and culture of Zorrotzaurre and continue certain activities that give the character of this island.
- **Newcomers:** arrivals will seek the urban revitalization promised by the city, desiring improved living conditions and a vibrant community, but it is important that the identity of the island is not erased by city authorities and urban planners so new arrivals can connect with the island and preserve its essence.
- **Tourism Sector:** Zorrotzaurre's transformation appeals to tourists, benefiting hotels, restaurants, and cultural venues. However, a delicate balance is needed to ensure tourism aligns with the community's needs without erasing local character.
- **Universities:** educational institutions such as Kunsthal and Bilbao AS Fabrik - Mondragon Unibertsitatea are mentioned in the official narrative and contribute to shaping it. It will be important that local initiatives can be kept in mind and given visibility through these institutions in order to not connect to the island and not become detached from it

These stakeholders are central to incorporating the different perspectives of the island and continuing their life, having an important role in significantly shaping the island's future. Effective communication, collaboration, and balanced decision-making involving these stakeholders is essential to address the evolving urban landscape's challenges.

3. THE URBAN INTERVENTION

3.1 Stakeholders Involved

Our challenge - visibilise the alternative narratives - brought us to ideate a series of possible prototypes that focused on documenting and showing the experiences of people who in one way or the other, inhabit the island. At the same time they confront the question: to what extent and how can residents' stories, emotions, knowledge and experiences be considered in development projects? What kind of strategies urban innovators can apply to make it part of the urban planning process? At the same time, these prototypes are meant to support the community to maintain a deep connection with their island 'in construction', preserving the local narratives and practices in the face of ongoing urban transformation.

- **Digital Storytelling Platform/Collective Memory Archive:** Residents can share photos, videos, and narratives digitally, preserving their connections to locations that are the most significant to them. A digital archive ensures the preservation of user-generated content for future generations. As a variation to this: an archive focused on the craftwork memory of the island, depicting also the initiatives that arose in the "meantime".
- **Community-based art installations:** Creating emotional maps that allow residents to express their feelings and connections to the evolving landscape and what they retain important to save for the future. An installation that consists of the island silhouettes as a result of this process with the aim of calling attention on the multiplicity of experiences.

- **Walking Tours:** Historical content overlays physical landscapes, offering a bridge between past and present.
- **Collaborative Documentary:** Engage the community in a documentary project, emphasizing the significance of preserving the island's identity.
- **Children and Youth Workshops:** Collectively ideate and create a game that can be replicated and used as a storytelling tool and educational material in other contexts to learn from the story of Erribera/Zorrotzaurre

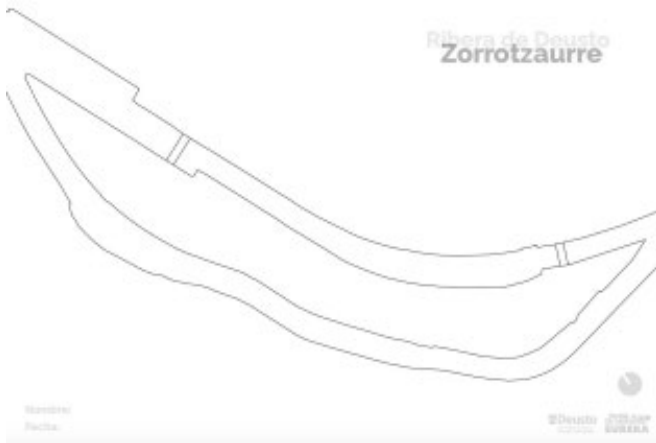
The project "*Enmarca lo que te marca*" (this sentence is a word game that literally means "frame what strikes you"; although unfortunately the rhyme is lost when translating it into English), our main intervention, is a combination of some of the listed approaches to tackle the challenge of preserving the local narratives and emotions as urban development projects reshape the area.



Group of students working on the project

3.2. Tools used in the process

The desk research provided essential historical and socio-economic context, while stakeholder mapping and analysis helped identify key players. Our visual collaboration platform (Miro) in the initial phase served as a container for our gathered knowledge and to document our first ideas for the prototypes.



As a previous step to our main intervention, we invited people in the street to identify significant places on a printed map, this way conducting a mini-interview in which they talked about the past, present and the future of the island. Later we systematised this information and analysed the most common narratives. Interviews using the printed map gathered direct community insights in an accessible way. The databases helped to codify, systematise and analyse the information allowing for remote collaboration and data analysis software extracted valuable information.



3.3. Main Intervention

As a next step, as our main intervention, we prepared the wood frame to capture the previously identified significant places. We went to the street to take photos, as well as to continue engaging in conversations. We chose 8 of the significant places and related narratives, published them on a digital interactive map (padlet), thus creating the basis for a collaborative virtual platform that invites users to collaborate and enrich the stories and living memory of Erribera/Zorrotzaurre. The Padlet as a both mapping and storytelling tool seemed an appropriate way to share these insights and open them for collaboration. access the QR code/link, can easily add their photo and story to a specific point on the map.

The plaques that we placed to the 8 selected significant points of the island, include a title, photo of the place, link to the padlet and a QR that leads to the padlet. They ensure the connection between the physical and digital space. Those who access the QR code/link, can easily add their photo and story to a specific point on the map.



has a physical presence in the island: placing methacrylate plaques to different points of the island. Beyond its function of informing and connecting to the digital platform, it became an open-air exhibition, an intent of creating physical presence for what is about to disappear/transform. This platform was designed to allow residents to share their personal stories, memories, and emotions associated with iconic locations on the island, thus digitally preserving these unique narratives. The platform has the potential of becoming a living, collaborative memory of the island, and through this, collectively counter the official narrative, showing the multiplicity and diversity of voices and experiences.



To summarise, the “Enmarca lo que te marca” project, our main intervention evolved from our collective process of planning interviews, constructing the framework, and engaging with the local community to understand which were the island’s significant spots for them, and subsequently develop a digital storytelling platform that at the same time

3.4. Lessons Learned / Reframing the Challenge

The intervention illuminated crucial insights about the area and the challenge. It underscored the local community's profound emotional connection to Erribera/Zorrotzaurre, deeply rooted in its history, with their stories and memories forming an integral part of the island's identity. The intervention emphasized the vital role of active community engagement in preserving the area's narrative, as residents' firsthand accounts and emotions were invaluable in shaping the project.

However, as "urban innovators," it posed a challenge to develop an intervention that genuinely considered all stakeholders. Ensuring every perspective was heard proved challenging, emphasizing the complexity of the task and the necessity for comprehensive community engagement to effectively address the challenge while safeguarding the island's narrative. The process deepened our understanding of addressing a challenge embedded in such a complex urban development project and took us on the path of creating meaningful 'soft' interventions.

Throughout the entire process, our group experienced failures that at the same time provided invaluable insights and lessons. Detaching ourselves from specific topics and focusing on the broader process, we can list the following **learnings and failures**:

Mediation and negotiation

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** we struggled to engage stakeholders effectively, due to lack of time and focus on this particular element. On the other hand, due to these

circumstances we learnt how to engage with people and their experiences in a short time by using simple tools.

- **Balancing Interests:** The process exposed the intricacies of balancing diverse stakeholder interests. This taught us the importance of mediation and compromise to align different perspectives.
- **Inclusivity of Perspectives:** We realized the importance of incorporating a wide range of perspectives, even those seemingly opposing our own.

Planning and implementation process

- **Adaptive Planning:** The process taught us that flexibility in planning is essential. Unforeseen obstacles encouraged adaptive planning.
- **Iterative Design:** Our prototypes often required several iterations. This iterative approach reinforced the value of refining and fine-tuning solutions.
- **Embracing Failure:** We learned to embrace failure as a stepping stone to further develop our work. Missteps in our approach encouraged us to reconsider and adapt.

Collective intervention

- **Team Collaboration:** Navigating complex issues necessitated teamwork. Structuring the collaboration process and learning to leverage the strengths of each team member was a continuous challenge throughout the project that provided us with several lessons.
- **Celebrate Diverse Insights:** Incorporating different viewpoints and experiences meant a challenge but at the same time enriched our problem-solving approach.

Our prototype was not meant to solve a specific problem, rather to call attention to the silence and possible oblivion regarding the connection between past, present and future narratives. As such, it stands as a reminder for pending questions for Zorrotzaure and for other similar projects that might happen in other contexts:

- How will the island evolve in the coming years, and can it maintain its unique identity in the face of rapid development?
- What can be done in terms of tactical urbanism and community interventions to mitigate the impact of the development?
- Can the city and developers successfully integrate the voices (stories, fears, needs, desires) of both old and new inhabitants?
- What would be the necessary changes in terms of policies and regulations to value and prioritise these voices in future development projects?

3.5. Reflections

Through engaging in a process aimed at understanding and carrying out urban innovation, our cluster has reflected on some of the aspects of this process that we found to be confusing and challenging.

First, the idea of engaging with neighbors only when a challenge was clear contradicts approaches detailed by renowned urbanists such as Jane Jacobs. As Marcos, M. (2018) writes, Jacobs demonstrated that before changing a city or intervening in it it is necessary to know it in depth. This implies understanding it and learning to live in it through the lens of the neighbors, and to do this you have to go to the streets and talk to the people.

With this perspective at hand, our group can't help but think how we could have developed a larger, richer, and more in-depth project had we gone out to the streets from the beginning and got in contact with locals of the island and their narratives.

Second, looking at the development of the process we see how we mostly experienced complete student autonomy. Only when we explicitly asked that our process be followed more closely was this request fulfilled.

In the view of M.A. Runco and S. Okuda Sakamoto (1993), complete student autonomy does not necessarily promote students' creative activity, nor does it necessarily enhance inquisitive behavior. They suggest a "controlled freedom" in which students are encouraged to explore problems with flexible limitations. These limitations prevent students from taking the most obvious path.

Our group felt alone on many occasions, and we would have liked to have more of this "controlled freedom" and accompaniment. Looking at the outcomes of the process, which are shown in Section 3. The urban intervention, and after some group reflections we can agree that the project took on a more obvious path. We were not able to fully explore the potential of urban innovation through this course, which we connect to the reduced involvement of our tutors, especially in the first half.

TIMIȘOARA: Flavia area

URBAN LIVING LAB PERSONAL ROADMAP

Research phase - Understanding the urban area

- Research on literature and institutional documents (General Urban Plan, urban zoning plans, Google Maps, Google Earth historical images, Satellite images from 1978) (oct - nov 2022)
 - first contacts with the area (individual and group field trips to different landmarks of the area: lake, flea market etc.) (oct 2022)
 - brainstorming and creation of the observation grid and the questionnaires (nov 2022)
 - field observations based on an observation grid (4 groups split in four areas of the neighborhood at street level - see link); (nov - dec 2022)
 - application of the research methods and tools (feb - mar 2022):
1. [Survey](#) (feb - mar 2023, 31 residents, 18 buyers & market sellers)
 2. [Interview](#) (mar - apr 2023, residents, main entrepreneurs from the area)
 3. Panel 1 (mar 2023, pin-point map with main areas of interest, applied to 40 locals)
 4. Panel 2 (mar 2023, sticky notes method)
 - looking for answers for 2 questions: lackings and needs;
 5. Ad-hoc interventions (may 2023, Timișoara Short Summer School, 40 international participants, approx. 50 locals)



Panel 1



Panel 2



Ad-hoc interventions

The Challenge

Unavailability of people to answer the questionnaires. The questionnaires were addressed to a single target audience. People did not trust our initiative and were reluctant. Changing the focus from Aurora Square and the lake area to pedestrian and small places in the neighborhood (public spaces).

- C1.** Lack of proper community spaces (gathering) The area has very few social spaces. We have identified only two such spaces, the pedestrian area in the neighborhood and the children's park between the blocks.
- C2.** Lack of recreational spaces.
- C3.** Bad management of the green and parking spaces.
- C4.** We have neighbors but not a community
- C5.** Effects generated by the existence of the flea market.
- C6.** Land ownership challenges.

Challenge owners

- **Residents** C1, C2, C3, C4
- **Sellers** C3, C5
- **Buyers** C3

Stakeholders involved

1. Local authorities - neighborhood managers, urban planning departament, local police,
2. Local/private investors - should be: NGO, Associations of owners

THE URBAN INTERVENTION

Ideation of possible prototypes

- The initial finding of some general urban regeneration solutions based on the previous experience and knowledge of the group (setting up some green areas, playgrounds, parking spaces, pedestrianizing the main area as well as the adjacent areas), which weren't innovative.
- Integrated approach to the area's problems through an urban regeneration masterplan.
- Reformulation of possible proposals after public consultation and orientation towards community engagement activities (Closing completely the traffic on the pedestrian walkway in the neighborhood and holding a networking event, Drawings on asphalt (children's games), planting operation, temporary local produce market, Agora.).
- Keeping the playful approach, tested during the spring international short school in Timișoara, we thought about using the local culture with the aim of transposing it into a personal „story” which is based on placenames and tales; this idea could be materialized both through digital media, both through physical interventions (the second one needing more financial resources). This story also has the purpose of encouraging the „explorers” of the thematic route to discover and to pass through forgotten green pockets of the neighborhood.

Tools used in the process

- Brainstorming,
- desk research,
- field observation,
- interviews,
- questionnaires,
- panel/sticky notes/pins,
- GIS mapping,
- stakeholder's validation,
- jamboard,
- flyer

Main intervention

The thematic route outlined above, titled “Journey Through the Realm of Dâmbovița,” is a carefully curated trail designed to interconnect various green spaces in the Dâmbovița area of Timișoara. This unique route is inspired by a fairy tale woven around the local toponyms, incorporating street names, the lake's name, and the names of the squares to create a captivating narrative.

Recognizing the need to enhance community engagement with the city's green spaces and celebrate its rich cultural heritage, the idea was born to create a journey that seamlessly blends nature, history, and fantasy.

1. Narrative Foundation:

- The route is anchored in a fairy tale, “The Journey Through the Realm of Dâmbovița,” which unfolds as visitors traverse different parts of the area.
- This narrative follows a protagonist on a quest, utilizing the local toponyms as integral elements of the story. It introduces a sense of wonder and adventure into the exploration of the region.

2. Connecting Green Spaces:

- The primary objective is to establish connections between various green spaces, promoting a sense of continuity and coherence in the urban landscape.
- Parks, green pockets and the shores of Balaurului Lake are strategically incorporated into the route to highlight the natural beauty and biodiversity of the area.

3. Environmental Awareness:

- The thematic route serves as a platform to raise awareness about environmental conservation and sustainable development.
- It encourages visitors to appreciate the importance of preserving green spaces and introduces them to local initiatives promoting ecological responsibility.

The Impact:

The thematic route is envisioned as a dynamic tool for community engagement, education, and recreation. By incorporating elements of storytelling, nature exploration, and cultural appreciation, it aims to foster a deeper connection between residents and their urban environment. Moreover, the infusion of a fairy tale narrative adds an imaginative layer to the experience, making the journey not only informative but also enchanting for visitors of all ages. Through this innovative approach, the city of Timișoara seeks to create a lasting and memorable experience that promotes a sense of pride and stewardship among its residents.

Lessons learned / reframing the challenge

- The survey wasn't working and was replaced by the panel.
- Leadership matters.
- Is also important to act.
- Online work meetings do not work.
- Professional diversity matters.

Failures and learnings

- Failure to establish a fruitful communication with the market administration.
- Getting lost in the academic process without focusing on the final results.
- Lack of leadership and group management.
- Inconsistency of learning experience
- Theory and practical parts uncorrelated (the curriculum is too general, and not linked to the study case).
- Lack of curriculum checkpoints on international level
- Unclear purpose of Eureka project (what is our final outcome? new competences or a functional proposal plan?)
- The GIS database was not finished.
- Too many social channels.
- Decentralized data management.

VENICE: The Giudecca Island



URBAN LIVING LAB PERSONAL ROADMAP

Research phase - Understanding the urban area

The research project started with the analysis of the context. We did it in two different ways: focusing on the territorial exploration of the island, both in group and individually (e.g. “dérive” walks) on one side, and collecting data

and information (historic, demographic, economy, urban, environmental) on the other.

The two research plans then became increasingly refined and they oriented consistently with the outlining of challenges and actions.

The identification of stakeholders started from an initial mapping that was already known to the local contact persons and then broadened as the research progressed and the knowledge of the place deepened.

The approach in the process of understanding the context has always been very open and continuously evolving, also in reference to the information that emerged from the stakeholders’ discussions. For the discussions with them, many different tools were used: moments of classroom debate, small group interviews, meetings and interviews conducted in the most representative places of Giudecca for each of them and a world café with a mixed group.

With respect to the questions left open, it must be said that the stakeholders’ relationship work has involved a significant number of actors, but the Island’s wealth of associations and activism leaves room for further investigation and new relationships. Moreover, this very richness has highlighted the fact that there are a number of projects on the Island that have as a common element the enhancement of the community as a whole but are not always connected to each other.

The process of research and knowledge of the area has never really stopped. Every step in the choice of objectives and actions has been shared (in a more or less direct way) with potentially interested local stakeholders, such as: merchants, voluntary associations, artisans and many other trade associations.

The tool used was often repeated interviews and oral conversations although in the final step (mentioned below in this report) we had a call to action to test the prototypes of our proposed projects within the community.

THE CHALLENGE

Giudecca has experienced a gradual population decline, from 5,861 inhabitants in 1981 to 4,128 in 2021. This demographic shift has made the island vulnerable to touristification, mirroring the challenges currently faced by Venice.



Beyond data, the multiple discussions we had with stakeholders outlined the existence of a strong sense of belonging fighting with an increasing social and territorial fragmentation. This helped to outline the challenge as following:

To promote a well living in Giudecca, giving value to the community and sharing a positive storytelling of the island.

The aim was to engage the local community in collective processes of territorial valorisation through the rediscovery of a shared memory of Giudecca. Considering the identification of a common ground as a starting point to increase the sense of community, reinforcing social relationships and improving the well-living in the island.

Challenge owners

The stakeholders we met were all highly engaged with respect to activities in Giudecca, often with a very active role in associational and social life. None of them are directly affected by the challenge we identified, however, each of them in their own way, noticed how the island's heritage of stories and relationships together with the community dimension more generally, is very fragile. The risk that the phenomenon of touristification - which the historic center of Venice has already experienced - will spread to Giudecca, too, is clear. Giudecca's resilience lies precisely in the resilience of its community and its identity, which is rooted in a past history of workers' struggles, participation and mutualism. Stakeholders are part of this community and as such have revealed to us its strength and fragility, handing it over to us as a heritage to be protected and enhanced.

Stakeholders involved

Schools are definitely stakeholders that could be involved in the future of "Giudecca Paradàis" (that's the name of our project). As a matter of fact, we started talking about "Comunità Educante" (Educational Community) in an early stage of our research, but we were not convinced of the engagement of children at first. Nevertheless, the treasure hunt gave us some hints on the potential of the project as a connector between different generations and the scholastic context could be an interesting scenario to test the educational side of the game in a more institutional context.

Main intervention

The game prototype and the event production have been the main intervention where we could actually see our ideas into action and could collect tangible feedback from inhabitants and stakeholders.

We divided our team into two groups - the game and the event producers - in order to define, implement and test the idea a few months before the final event. In this first phase we divided our roles based on our skills, such as graphic design, text editing, illustration, event production, community involvement and communication among others.

Once on site, the two groups shared the details of each deliverable and came together in a very natural role distribution that ensured a positive outcome and favorable feedback from both inhabitants and stakeholders.

Lessons learned / Reframing the challenge

The final intervention was quite successful in terms of participation, probably because of the playful and festive atmosphere created. Eventually, the key of gamification turned out to be the most interesting to tackle down our initial question. At first, the complex socio-demographic phenomenon of depopulation appeared to be bigger than us but still a quite urgent matter to delve into. During the research process we gradually rephrased the challenge, considering depopulation from a social point of view, as the gradual disintegration of social relations as well as the loss of a common memory. The collection of stories linked to places of Giudecca helped us to rebuild a kaleidoscopic image of the island and its peculiarity/identity.

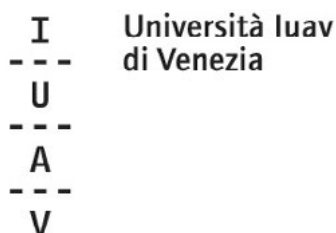
From now on, there could be many possible improvements to Giudecca Paradais/Giud'Oca. It would be exciting to test the game with different targets and in different contexts. For example in schools for a more educational frame. It would be interesting also to keep co-creating the game with people, collecting more life stories about places as well as feedback about the playing experience.

From a different point of view, it would be stimulating to further investigate the scalability of the project. Clarifying the process and perfecting the tools, could give us the possibility to discover a new path of opportunities transforming the activity in a territorial service and a social intervention available for administration, local organizations, schools, etc.

Failures and learnings

Translating the challenge into an action was the most critical part. The multidisciplinary of the group facilitated the proliferation of tons of ideas going in very different directions. In the middle of the process every new stakeholder adding something new - a need, a desire, a problem - could bring us to question the proposals made. We kepted adding layers of complexity until we tremendously expanded our focus, risking the loss of fundamental points. For sure it was time and energy consuming, but it was a necessary phase to deal with to progress as a group. In the end we certainly learned to work as a team, dividing the tasks according to the individual skills, giving space and value to the knowledge of each.





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